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Luxury, Aesthetics And Politics: The Social Lives Of Medieval Romance

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Abstract

This dissertation project traces a cultural reception of the romance genre in England and France in the late fourteenth century. In compiling lengthy descriptions of courtly trappings, medieval romances serve as vehicles for idealized aristocratic self-presentation and thereby become complicit in associating material luxury with aristocratic power. I argue that while the changes in material technologies of medieval textual production break down the exclusivity of romance by opening the texts to wider reading publics, the positive representations of luxury in verbal ornament and visual programs of narrative art objects continue the perpetuation of aristocratic privilege. Chapter One examines the Shield of Gawain in Sir Gawain and the Green Knight and the Trojan image-texts in Chaucer's House of Fame as imitatio of Virgilian ekphrases, theorizing medieval understanding of a Greek poetic device. Chapter Two analyzes the Tryst beneath the Tree episode from Tristan and Isolde as it is rendered on fourteenth-century Parisian ivory caskets, situating the composition within the larger visual program that teaches aristocratic women about heterosexual desire through a negotiation of sight and touch. Chapter Three reads Pearl as a romance-adjacent text and a material object, identifying an emotional community within which the positive vocabulary of aristocratic luxury is deployed as a vehicle for communicating intricate feelings of loss, and where salvation becomes the ultimate aesthetic experience. The dissertation culminates with Chapter Four, which examines Chaucer's Troilus and Criseyde and the Breton lay Emar� as texts that thematize a romance encounter and invite the associative reading of romance. By attending to the surface pleasures of romance within these seemingly disparate texts, this dissertation locates the genre's unique aesthetic—a preoccupation with surfaces, conventions, and the boundaries of the perceptible and the experiential. As such, this project intervenes in the growing field of medieval aesthetics. As a feature of both its internal worlds and its physical media, luxury gives us a sense of how romance mediates the aesthetic encounter, while constructing aristocratic ideals and celebrating earthly pleasures.

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LUXURY, AESTHETICS AND POLITICS:

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Lydia Yaitsky Kertz

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Lydia Yaitsky Kertz

For my grandmother, Bella Dynkina,

who has inspired in me a love of learning,

may your memory be for a blessing.

For my husband and son,

who remind me daily

what it means to love.

For my parents,

who know all too well

the meaning of sacrifice.

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ABSTRACT

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This dissertation project traces a cultural reception of the romance genre in England and France in the late fourteenth century. In compiling lengthy descriptions of courtly trappings, medieval romances serve as vehicles for idealized aristocratic self-presentation and thereby become complicit in associating material luxury with aristocratic power. I argue that while the changes in material technologies of medieval textual production break down the exclusivity of romance by opening the texts to wider reading publics, the positive representations of luxury in verbal ornament and visual programs of narrative art objects continue the perpetuation of aristocratic privilege. Chapter One examines the Shield of Gawain in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* and the Trojan image-texts in Chaucer's *House of Fame* as *imitatio* of Virgilian ekphrases, theorizing medieval understanding of a Greek poetic device. Chapter Two analyzes the Tryst beneath the Tree episode from *Tristan and Isolde* as it is rendered on fourteenth-century Parisian ivory caskets, situating the composition within the larger visual program that teaches aristocratic women about heterosexual desire through a negotiation of sight and touch. Chapter Three reads *Pearl* as a romance-adjacent text and a material object, identifying an emotional community within which the positive vocabulary of aristocratic luxury is deployed as a vehicle for communicating intricate feelings of loss, and where salvation becomes the ultimate aesthetic experience. The dissertation culminates with

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LUXURIA AND ROMANCE

> Medieval "aesthetic experience is both multi-sensory and whole. It is the multiplicity and variety of sensations received in their total complexity that is pleasurable—to divide them from one another is also to lessen, perhaps destroy their delightfulness. Sights, sounds, tastes are perceived as one integral whole, as *quaedam proportio*, *quaedam* meaning both 'particular' and 'undivided'. An aesthetic experience is multimodal, each particular sense being affected by a proportioned mixture of those stimuli which it can perceive. The mind receives these together in what was called the *sensus communis* or 'common sense', and fashions them into a mental construct from which concepts and memories can be made. So the result is a pleasure that is simultaneously multiplex and yet has integrity."[1]
>
> -Mary Carruthers, *The Experience of Beauty in the Middle Ages*

This dissertation project examines luxury in textual and material form as a definitive feature of medieval romance. Medieval romances cultivate imagined opulence as a signifier of aristocratic identity, deliberately conflating displays of luxury goods with genealogical claims to power. At the same time, luxury art objects from the late medieval period, such as fourteenth-century Parisian ivory caskets (Figures 1, 10-13) and fifteenth-century Flemish/Netherlandish tapestries (Figure 2), also visualize romance scenes. Both literary texts and art objects tell stories—not only the tales inscribed on their surfaces, but also stories of their own circulation and uses. To these material and imaginative forms of luxury I add a consideration of narrative and aesthetic pleasure as luxury experiences derived from interacting with romance storylines in their various physical forms. My approach to the genre of romance through the study of luxury engages both the narrative impulse toward uncritical

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[1] Mary Carruthers, *The Experience of Beauty in the Middle Ages* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 47.

idealism, which celebrates specifically aristocratic values, and the external expectations of aesthetic enjoyment.

To that end, this project analyzes the textual and material genealogies of romance and traces a cultural reception of the genre in England and France from its beginnings in the twelfth century as a courtly narrative to its wide dissemination in printed form in the fifteenth century. This approach identifies narrative functions of intradiegetic luxury, which transform 'things of romance' into literary devices. Ekphrastic descriptions of luxury objects within romance narratives conscript the visual arts into the service of literary production, creating verbal images that cannot exist outside of textual media. Applying similar strategies to reading material artifacts reveals their transformation from 'things' of romance into commodities whose cultural meaning depends on their networks of circulation. In bringing together the literary and the art historical data, I analyze the compositional techniques implemented in the construction of medieval romance in both literature and visual art. I argue that while the changes in material technologies of medieval textual production break down the exclusivity of romance by opening the texts to wider reading publics (including the gentry and the merchant classes), the positive representations of luxury in literary tropes, verbal ornament, and visual programs on narrative art objects continue the perpetuation of aristocratic privilege, essentially reifying social divides.

Romance as an episodic narrative genre lends itself to both visual and textual representation. Medieval philosophy identifies three categories of works: the highest is the work made by God during Creation; the second is work made by Nature, who brings out things that lay dormant since Creation; and the third and lowest is the work made by human beings, who can only reshape things found in nature. Thus, any human-made images are

seen as imitations of Nature's work, and therefore mechanical or derivative.[2] In *The Physician's Tale*, for example, Chaucer describes Virginia as a woman of unparalleled beauty because Nature herself formed her; he then compares Nature's handiwork to the best of human art and finds Nature to be far superior (ll.7-28).[3] To address this distrust of human-made images, the compilers of the richly illuminated English prayer book known as the St. Albans Psalter (c.1130s) included an excerpt from a Letter of St. Gregory the Great that defends the use of devotional images in religious practice:

> For it is one thing to venerate a picture and another to learn the story it depicts, which is to be venerated. The picture is for simple men ['illiterati' in Latin and 'ignoranz' in Old French] what writing is for those who can read, for those who cannot read see and learn from the picture the model which they should follow. Thus pictures are, above all, for the instruction of the people.[4]

While some scholars have taken this passage to validate their claims that medieval people could not read, I focus on the presence of both visual and textual symbols that Gregory envisions as constitutive components of religious learning and literacy. While the ideal reader would be able to decipher both the visual narrative and the written text that accompanies it, the pictorial representations would serve as memory aids in order to bring to mind the narrative they depict. In looking upon the visual representation of the Passion (Figure 3), for example, the laity were reminded to think about the larger lessons behind Christ's sacrifice and appreciate the workmanship of the object only insofar as it helped bring the biblical

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[2] *The Didascalicon of Hugh of St. Victor: A Medieval Guide to the Arts*, trans. Jerome Taylor (New York: Columbia University Press, 1961) Book I, Chapter 9, "Concerning the Three Works" 55-56, Book II, Chapters 20-27 on the Mechanical Arts, 75-79; Michael Camille, *The Gothic Idol: Ideology and Image-making in Medieval Art* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 35-36.

[3] Geoffrey Chaucer, *The Physician's Tale*, Fragment VI, Group C of *The Canterbury Tales*, in *The Riverside Chaucer*, ed. Larry D. Benson, 3rd edn. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1987), 190-193.

[4] Quoted in Michael Camille, "Seeing and Reading: Some Visual Implications of Medieval Literacy and Illiteracy," *Art History* 8.1 (1985): 26-49, at 26.

narrative to mind. This concept of narrative as a bridge between the two modes of representation, between literature and art, is where I position my study.

Romance as a genre is notoriously difficult to define. On a purely semantic level, "*mettre en romanz*," a term that gained traction in the twelfth century in French and Anglo-Norman courts, refers to a large body of vernacular literature, including epic tales of adventure, amatory fictions, hagiography, and historiography. Modern scholars take various approaches toward narrowing down this generic category. Roberta Krueger, for example, categorizes romance as "a dynamic network of fictions" "that emerged at the royal and feudal courts […], first in verse and then in prose, that recounted the exploits of knights, ladies, and noble families seeking honor, love, and adventure. These narratives did not conform to a single, easily discernible type; rather, they sprang from diverse origins and took a myriad of shapes."[5] Krueger's definition stresses aristocratic audiences and their expectations to see themselves and their concerns reflected in imaginative fiction. The stories written and performed for these audiences often blend a careful mix of instruction, idealization, and critique. Unlike Krueger, Helen Cooper focuses on a set of internal narratological expectations of what may be found within romance texts. She refers to these repeating narrative patterns as "memes." Some of these recurring memes include: a removal from space and time, individual quests, the supernatural or otherworldly elements, exploration of interiority and sentiment, an encounter with death, and a happy ending.[6] Conceding that romance is difficult to define, Cooper considers these recurring 'memes' as a

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[5] Roberta L. Krueger, "Introduction," in Roberta L. Krueger, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval Romance* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 1-10, at 1-2.

[6] Helen Cooper, *The English Romance in Time: Transforming Motifs from Geoffrey of Monmouth to the Death of Shakespeare* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004); this cultural knowledge of romance established through repetition is a crucial component of Susan Wittig's argument in *Stylistic and Narrative Structures in Middle English Romances* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1978).

set of 'family traits' that appear to various degrees of resemblance and alterity across generational iterations of the genre. Thus, both Krueger and Cooper identify the narrative preoccupation with aristocratic ideals as a marker of romance.

Christine Chism identifies the idealism of romance in later Middle English iterations as a means of spreading aristocratic values beyond the elite class: "Romance's focus on identity and performance […] becomes a way of purveying to wider audiences not just the ideals and issues embraced by the aristocracy, but the capacity to investigate self-determination itself, and thus to imagine wider, better polities."[7] The imaginative scope of romance permeates other social strata, bringing implications of chivalric identity and ideals to bear on larger concepts, such as community formation and good governance. The universalizing tendency of Middle English romance reads a knight as an everyman character despite the layers of privilege encoded into his storyline. Cooper observes that "Typical of the treatment of all these elements in romance [referring to the memes listed above] is a concern with ideals, especially secular ideals, and with human perfectibility within a social context[. …] Even if perfection is not achieved, even if the hero in some way fails[,] or the ending is not happy, the ideals themselves are not therefore treated with cynicism."[8] This idealizing force of romance is both a definitive feature and a defense mechanism against internal systems of critique that normalize and reintegrate failure (consider countless defeated knights who pledge their troth to the victor, reimagining defeat and as an opportunity for new social formations) and against external criticisms of the genre's detractors, who viewed romance stories as nothing more than mere fables.

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[7] Christine Chism, "Romance," in Larry Scanlon, ed., *Cambridge Companion to Medieval English Literature 1100-1500* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 57-70, at 60-61.

[8] Helen Cooper, *The English Romance in Tim*, 10.

For Pearsall, romance is "the principal secular literature of entertainment of the Middle Ages."[9] Building on Pearsall's formulation, Rosalind Field notes that this definition "usefully places the emphasis not on form or content, both shifting grounds, but on the essentially recreational function of romance." Field goes on to formulate a functional definition of romance, in which narrative pleasure becomes a definitive feature of the genre:

> The lure of romance is primarily the lure of the story and secondarily of the exotic setting or enviable achievement it describes. It is entertainment for an audience. [...] Some audiences may like to display their status, discrimination and moral rectitude through their choice of entertainment, some may prefer to escape from just such concerns; but a successful romance is one which gives pleasure, whether or not accompanied by information or instruction.[10]

Field's assessment of romance focuses not just on audience expectations, but also on the aesthetic enjoyment derived from an engagement with the literary form. This capacity of romance to give pleasure—to achieve *delectatio*—rather than instruct (or please through instruction) places the secular genre at odds with the proscriptive prohibitions against too much leisure, or *otium*, which could lead to a laziness of the mind and the soul. My approach to the genre of romance through the study of luxury engages both the internal expectations of uncritical idealism and the external expectations of narrative pleasure.

In his *Ars Poetica*, Horace urges poets to strike a balance between what he recognizes as the two aims of poetry: to please (*delectare*) and to instruct (*prodesse*).[11] Medieval texts achieve *delectatio* through formal features—such as rhyme, meter, and use of rhetorical

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[9] Derek Pearsall, "Middle English Romance and its Audiences," in Mary-Jo Arn and Hanneke Wirtjes, eds., *Historical and Editorial Studies in Medieval and Early Modern English for Johann Gerritsen* (Groningen: Wolters-Noordhoff, 1985), 37-47, at 37.

[10] Rosalind Field, "Romance in England, 1066-1400," in David Wallace, ed., *The Cambridge History of Medieval English Literature* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 152-176, at 152-153.

[11] Horace, *Ars poetica*, in H. Rushton Fairclough, ed. and trans., *Horace, Satires, Epistles, The Art of Poetry*, LOEB Classical Library Vol 194 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1966), pp.442-490, Latin text, ll.333-44, translation at p.479.

devices—as well as through carefully crafted plot. Matthew of Vendôme compares verbal ornament with material objects, claiming that both lead to a more welcoming reception from a 'pleased audience':

> Ex superficiali ornatu est elegantia in versibus, quando ex verborum festivitate contrahit versus solemnitatem vel venustatem et sibi gratiorem amicat audientiam […] Et sicut in constitutione rei materialis ex appositione alicujus margaritae vel emblematis totum materiatum elegantius elucescit, similiter sunt quaedam dictiones, quae sunt quasi gemmarum vicariae, ex quarum artificiosa positione totum metrum videbit festivari.[12]

> [Elegance in verses is derived from the surface of ornament of words when the verse draws its beauty from the charm of its words and makes friends for itself of a more pleased audience. […] Indeed, as in the forming of a material object the whole material shines more beautifully because of the close positioning of some pearl or inlay; similarly, there are some expressions which are, as it were, substitutes for jewels; from skillful positioning of these the whole meter will seem to be celebrating.][13]

Ornamentation of word choice and meter add to the overall elegance of verse. At the same time, use of rhetorical colors (figures, tropes, etc.) create an additional polish to the poetic composition. But pleasure can also be derived from the story itself, from the way it is told, from a careful selection of episodes and details described and withheld. Citing medieval medical treatises, Glending Olson argues that "literature for pleasure [*cause delectandi*] rather than profit [*prodesse*, *edificare*] was acknowledged, if not venerated, in the Middle Ages."[14] Olson outlines medieval defenses of literary pleasure as contributing "to physical or mental well-being and hence to one's capacity for activities more directly related to one's final

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[12] Matthew of Vendôme, *Ars Versificatoria*, in Edmond Faral, ed., *Les Arts poétiques du XIIe et du XIIIe siècle: recherches et documents sur la technique littéraire du Moyen Âge* (Paris: Champion, 1924, 1958), 109-193, at 154.

[13] Matthew of Vendôme, *Ars Versificatoria*, trans. Roger P. Parr (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1981), 64.

[14] Glending Olson, *Literature as Recreation in the Later Middle Ages* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1982), 31.

end."[15] While Olson does not outright address medieval romance specifically as a genre intended to bring pleasure, as Field does, he looks at a few romance examples such as *Kyng Alisaunder* and *Aucassin et Nicolette* for textual examples of how medieval literature constructs its own claims to refreshment of spirit or mood as an effect of reading and/or listening. To Olson's suggestions I would add the pleasurable nature of associative reading, which capitalizes on the episodic nature of romance by encouraging avid readers to make connections between various romance texts based on shared motifs, tropes, symbols, and allusions.

Medieval attitudes to luxury bring out the productive tensions between aristocratic values and the religious climate of the period. In medieval sermons and penitential treatises, the Latin concept of *Luxuria* generally stands for Lust. In a painted panel called "The Seven Deadly Sins and the Four Last Things," Hieronymus Bosch presents *Luxuria* as a scene of courtly extravagance (Figures 4a and 4b). A seduction in a richly decorated tent forms the focal point of the scene, while the reclining male courtly figure in the foreground performs a plethora of aristocratic behaviors: he wears fashionable clothing, indulges in an overabundance of food, engages in inappropriate dalliances with ladies in garden settings, and enjoys theatrical performances by court jesters. Other attributes of courtly life, such as musical instruments and a wine pitcher, are strewn about in a careless manner. The painting is a critique of a lifestyle of leisure, expressly linking displays of luxury goods with inappropriate sexual conduct.

As one of the Seven Deadly Sins, *Luxuria*—most commonly translated as Lust or Lechery—appears in various diagrammatic paradigms, generally along with instruction on

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[15] Glending Olson, *Literature as Recreation in the Later Middle Ages*, 38.

how to resist or avoid it. An early fourteenth-century manuscript, known today as the De Lisle Psalter, contains thirteen such theological diagrams that explain, among other things, the Ten Commandments and the Twelve Articles of Faith. On two facing pages (Figures 5 and 6), the parallel diagrams of the Tree of Vices and the Tree of Virtues invite meditation on their relationships. *Luxuria* is included in the Tree of Vices (Figure 5), placed as the central offshoot of the Original Sin, which is depicted at the bottom of the tree. Branching out from *Luxuria* are incontinence, lack of consideration, love of self, hastiness, hatred of the Lord, instability, and worldliness. On the Tree of Virtues (Figure 6), which grows out of a lily pot, associated with the Virgin Mary, *Caritas* (Charity) is opposed to *Luxuria* (Lust). The seven subsets of Charity are harmony, leniency, peace, grace, piety, compassion, and mercy. The Seven Deadly Sins appear a second time in a septinarian arrangement that brings together in concentric circles the seven petitions of the *Pater Noster* (Figure 7); the seven sacraments; the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit; the seven spiritual weapons of the virtues; the seven works of mercy; the seven principal virtues; and the seven criminal vices.

The Vernon Manuscript presents this material in a bilingual *Pater Noster* diagram that is conducive to conceptual learning (Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Eng. Poet.a.1, fol. 231v). The highest level of decoration in the diagram is accorded to the Latin petitions, their significance marked with burnished gold and large painted initials called *littera notabilior*. The learning begins with the roundels, which contain Middle English paraphrases of the petitions, gifts, virtues, and vices. Connecting the roundels are Middle English instructions in red textura: "this preyer…leduþ a man to…leduþ a man to…is a ȝenst." These repeated horizontal instructions define the relationships between the four major vertical categories in the diagram. The diagram utilizes vernacular and visual literacy to activate memorization and

aid in understanding of Latin doctrine. What a lay reader learns from such a chart regarding the sin of *Luxuria* is the following: "þis preiere 'lord þou deliuere us from wikidnesse' leduþ a man to 'Sauour and liking in his god', [which] leduþ a man to Chastite and clannesse, [which] is against Lecherie" (fol. 231v). *Luxuria*, then, is seen as "earthly wickedness" from which a soul must be delivered through chaste and clean living.

And yet despite these generally negative attitudes toward material luxury, medieval romances deploy luxury as an idealized self-fashioning by the aristocracy, as an uncritical outward sign of a genealogical claim to power. In *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, the magnificence of King Arthur's court is described through a detailed portrait of Guinevere and her luxurious clothing. Even the Green Knight is dressed in fashionable courtly attire, decorated with emeralds and lined in furs. This ideal aristocratic identity is externalized through elaborate displays of luxury objects, some of which are decorated with romance images. Take, for example, the carved ivory boxes (Figure 1), about the size of a jewelry box. They served as courtship and marriage gifts for aristocratic women and functioned as compilations of idealized imaginings on the subject of love. Glorifying knightly prowess and courtly refinement in a medium that often underpins descriptions of Western female beauty—Emaré's mother, for example, is described as "a lady/ That was both fayr and seemly/ Whyte as whales bone" (ll.31-33)[16]—these caskets traverse the medieval Mediterranean, replicating the translatio studii et imperii via mercantile trade routes.

While my project historicizes medieval attitudes to luxury, it is also informed by Arjún Appádurai's anthropological theory on the circulation of commodities in pre-capitalist

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[16] Anne Laskaya and Eve Salisbury, eds., *The Middle English Breton Lays*, TEAMS Middle English Text Series (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 2001), critical edition of *Emaré*, pp.145-199. Electronic TEAMS edition of *Emaré* is available at < http://d.lib.rochester.edu/teams/text/laskaya-and-salisbury-middle-english-breton-lays-emare>.

societies. Appádurai proposes that "we regard luxury goods not so much in contrast to necessities (a contrast filled with problems), but as goods whose principal use is rhetorical and social."[17] This approach through the lens of cultural anthropology helps identify narrative functions of intradiegetic luxury.[18] Appádurai clarifies this definition further:

> it might make more sense to regard luxury as a special "register" of consumption… The signs of this register…are some or all of the following attributes: (1) restriction, either by price or by law, to elites; (2) complexity of acquisition, which may or may not be a function of real "scarcity"; (3) semiotic virtuosity, that is, the capacity to signal fairly complex social messages (as do pepper in cuisine, silk in dress, jewels in adornment, and relics in worship); (4) specialized knowledge as a prerequisite for their "appropriate" consumption, that is, regulation by fashion; and (5) a high degree of linkage of their consumption to body, person, and personality.[19]

Luxury goods in medieval romance bring attention to their origins, their various histories, their production (through elaborate and often hyperbolic descriptions of their making), their uniqueness and scarcity, and especially to themselves as markers of aristocratic belonging. In studying the social lives of romance, I establish a larger category of aristocratic luxury objects that I call "things of romance" and trace their reception in and outside of the romance genre.[20] Luxury goods introduced into romance via lists or ekphrastic descriptions create a

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[17] Arjun Appadurai, "Introduction: Commodities and the Politics of Value," in Arjun Appadurai, ed., *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 3-63, at p.38.

[18] Recent scholarship in object-oriented ontologies reminds us of capabilities and limitations of cultural critique through careful attention to things and objects. Jane Bennett, *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010); Bill Brown, "Thing Theory," *Critical Inquiry* 28 (2001): 1-22; Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, *Stone: An Ecology of the Inhuman* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2015); Andrew Cole, "The Call of Things: A Critique of Object-Oriented Ontologies," *Minnesota Review* 80 (2013): 106-118; Diana Coole and Samantha Frost, eds., *New Materialism: Ontology, Agency, and Politics* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010); Daniel Miller, ed., *Materiality* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005); Timothy Morton, "An Object-Oriented Defense of Poetry," *New Literary History* 43 (2012): 205-224; Kellie Robertson, "Medieval Materialism: A Manifesto," *Exemplaria* 22 (2010): 99-118.

[19] Arjun Appadurai, "Introduction: Commodities and the Politics of Value," 38.

[20] Innovative approaches to narrative art in the discipline of Art History emphasize viewer participation and experience through multi-sensory engagement with decorative art objects. Jennifer Borland, "Unruly Reading: The Consuming Role of Touch in the Experience of a Medieval Manuscript," in Jonathan Wilcox, ed., *Scraped, Stroked, and Bound: Materially Engaged Readings of Medieval Manuscripts* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2013), 97-114;

set of cultural and ideological expectations; and, at the same time, extra-diegetic luxury objects with images of romance provide material spaces for evaluating social uses of romance narratives, such as in private exchange or through public display.

The social lives of romance can also be measured through genre cross-borrowing—when elements of romance appear in other generic contexts. In this sense of romance-adjacent narrative, *Pearl* as a penitential text written for an aristocratic audience borrows elements of romance to fit its particular context. This term, 'romance-adjacent', can function as a codicological descriptor as well as an indicator of generic fluidity. The porous boundaries between medieval genres invite cross-influence between religious and secular texts (distinctions that were not so rigidly drawn in the medieval period as they tend to be in contemporary scholarship).[21] This genre cross-influence moves in both directions, resulting in what we now call penitential or hagiographic romances (e.g., *SGGK*, *Sir Isumbras*, and *Emaré*) and hagiography framed as romance (e.g., *The Life of Saint Alexis*, *The Legend of Saint Agnes*[22]). The presence of romance images on floor tiles and misericords in churches and cathedrals further blurs the distinctions between secular and sacred spaces; examples include

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Jacqueline E. Jung, "The Tactile and the Visionary: Notes on the Place of Sculpture in Medieval Religious Imagination," in Colum Hourihane, ed., *Looking Beyond: Visions, Dreams, and Insights in Medieval Art and History* (University Park, PA: Princeton University and Pennsylvania State University Press, 2010), 203-240; Suzanne Lewis, *The Rhetoric of Power in the Bayeux Tapestry* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999); Otto Pächt, *The Practice of Art History: Reflections on Method* (London: Harvey Miller Publishers, 1999).

[21] Alfred Hiatt, "Genre without System," in Paul Strohm, ed., *Middle English* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 277-294; Christine Chism, "Romance" in Larry Scanlon, ed., *Cambridge Companion to Medieval English Literature 1100-1500* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 57-70.

[22] Courtney E. Rydel, "Legendary effects: Women saints of the *Legenda aurea* in England, 1260-1532" (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Pennsylvania, 2012), ProQuest Dissertations Publishing (2012), 3509405. For more specific examples, see chapter 3 "Virgin Martyrs in the Family Way: Poetic *Passiones* by Bozon, Chaucer and Lydgate," 138-204.

the Tristan images on floor tiles found in Chertsey Abbey as well as on misericords found in

Chester and Lincoln Cathedrals.[23]

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The aesthetic codes of romance have grown out of a long monastic tradition of envisioning

spiritual happiness in material terms. As Mary Carruthers has demonstrated, early medieval

monastic practice encouraged the construction of mental images for the purposes of

meditation and invention. The more ornate the mental image, the more focused attention it

requires for interpretation: "The various details are moralized and spiritualized on the basis

of an internal picture which the words paint in our minds. We have an internal temple and

tabernacle, says Jerome, and because all the things in Ezekiel [or in John's vision in

Revelations] are shown to us and to the prophet in a sort of image and picture, we can paint

them in our own hearts and minds."[24] These mental images of Heavenly opulence are then

translated into rhetorical and verbal ornament. Such ornamentation "plays the essential role

of catching the attention of a reader and orienting his/her cognitive procedures. All of the

figures and tropes, but especially the difficult ones like allegory and oxymoron, were

understood to offer to a hearer or a viewer a site for his or her further invention, acting as a

marker on the text's 'surface' of matters that might especially require attention,

concentration."[25] Monastic rhetoric offered tools for interpreting these complex verbal and

visual signs.

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[23] Melissa Furrow, *Expectations of Romance: The Reception of a Genre in Medieval England* (Rochester, NY: Boydell & Brewer, 2009), 163–69; Elaine C. Block, *Corpus of Medieval Misericords* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2003); Paul Hardwick, *English Medieval Misericords: the Margins of Meaning* (Rochester, NY: Boydell Press, 2011).
[24] Mary Carruthers, *The Craft of Thought: Meditation, Rhetoric, and the Making of Images, 400-1200* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 133-4.
[25] Mary Carruthers, *The Craft of Thought*, 122.

Medieval romances flourished at the same time as the great Gothic cathedrals of Northern France became the dominant architectural models. The principles of Gothic architecture can be found in the literary structure of romance narratives. Chretien de Troyes' *conjointure*, the principal mode of verse narrative construction (which later evolved into entrelacement in prose romances), is modeled on architectural groupings of separate forms such as columns and arches. With the proliferation of Gothic architecture, a new decorative aesthetic of brilliant light and color brought imagined opulence of Heaven down to earth. Following on the seminal work of Robert M. Jordan, Muriel Whitaker observes: "The fundamental principles of Gothic style combine Neo-Platonic idealism, Aristotelian materiality and Christian didacticism. Beauty depends on proportion, light (including colour), allegory and symbolism, the means by which the material form adumbrates God's invisible and perfect beauty."[26] The beauty and costliness of Gothic church adornment point toward the invisible beauty of the world to come, just as a golden and bejeweled crucifix is a visible sign of invisible grace. Medieval romances inherit this valorization of earthly opulence as a marker of social status as well as an indication of a spiritual state. The most worthy knight of romance, like Malory's Sir Galahad, for example, carries the most intricate and richly decorated sword.

In the late medieval period, the increasingly fashionable practice of establishing private chapels within larger church and cathedral structures merged aristocratic and religious values. Material luxuries used in the decorative programs of these sacred spaces

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[26] Muriel Whitaker, *The Legends of King Arthur in Art* (Rochester, NY: D.S. Brewer, 1990), 20; Robert M. Jordan, *Chaucer and the Shape of Creation: The Aesthetic Possibilities of Inorganic Structure* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1967); most recently R. Howard Bloch has positioned romance at the transition period between the Romanesque and the Gothic aesthetic, R. Howard Bloch, "From Romanesque Architecture to Romance," in R. Howard Bloch, Alison Calhoun, Jacqueline Cerquiglini-Toulet, Joachim Küpper, and Jeanette Patterson, eds., *Rethinking the New Medievalism* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2014), 249-270.

conflated aristocratic displays of wealth and power with spiritual perfection. As Ann R. Meyer has argued, the phenomenon in England, which she calls the English chantry movement, "provided an unprecedented opportunity for [the wealthy] religious and laity alike to participate in the organization of the church, the design of private liturgies [e.g., personalized masses sung for the souls of the dead], and the decoration of ecclesiastical monuments all for the purpose of facilitating personal salvation." More emphatically, Meyer claims that "it was in the design and decoration of the private tombs and chantry chapels that the aspirations of an individual founder were most clearly and enthusiastically displayed, where religious awareness frequently mingled with a fondness for worldly ideals of wealth and authority."[27] Meyer lists several surviving late medieval chapels (as most of these had been destroyed during the Reformation), including the Fitzhamon, Warwick, and Trinity (Despenser family) Chapels in Tewkesbury Abbey, as important examples of architectural spaces that use material opulence to signal both power and moral superiority of English noble and royal families. Moreover, these same aristocratic families tend to serve as patrons for courtly literary production of the period.[28] Interestingly, Langland criticizes this form of lay spirituality in his attack on Lady Meed and her financially generous gesture of providing funds for the stained glass windows in the church. Without proper piety behind the act of architectural endowment, Lady Meed's actions become morally suspect. In *Piers Plowman*, aristocratic charity without proper intent is viewed as empty at best, or as vain at worst.

The positive value assigned to displays of luxury within romances is normalized through a system of internal rewards that generate good will. Such romance conventions acquire interpretive meaning within what Barbara Rosenwein has identified as "emotional

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[27] Ann R. Meyer, *Medieval Allegory and the Building of New Jerusalem* (Rochester, NY: D. S. Brewer, 2003), 100.
[28] Ann R. Meyer, *Medieval Allegory and the Building of New Jerusalem*, 126.

communities," or "groups in which people adhere to the same norms of emotional expression[,] and value—or devalue—the same or related emotions."[29] While Rosenwein's methodology is not the most applicable to literary study (as it treats texts as transparent indices of historical emotion), the concept of emotional communities as a designation for groups of aristocratic romance readers in the late fourteenth and early fifteenth century in England is useful, insofar as it allows us to consider romance conventions as interpolating social codes.[30] The same human experience can be described using different measures of value, and this value is determined by social norms constructed within a particular emotional community (here, specifically a community of romance readers). For example, in Chrétien's *Erec et Enide*, Enide's aristocratic identity and worth are marked by Queen Guinevere in a ceremonial conferral of regal garments. The readers are expected to share in Enide's joy before her wedding as she assumes her rightful place at court, wearing a beautiful robe. The emotional community of romance readers learns how to respond to displays of luxury objects and heightened emotions through iterative inundation with romance narratives, which reinforce specific values: the best heroes, such as Tristan and Gawain, wear the most splendid armor and are capable of the finest of emotions (love, love-sickness, anguish, and joy), while the worst villains, such as King Mark and Mordred, get foreshortened descriptions and are only capable of the base emotions like jealousy and hatred. This community is self-perpetuating in so far as it fosters associative reading practices,

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[29] Barbara H. Rosenwein, *Emotional Communities in the Early Middle Ages* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006), 2.

[30] Rosenwein concedes that alhough they are generally social, emotional communities can also spring around textual conventions: "An emotional community is a group in which people have a common stake, interests, values, and goals. Thus[,] it is often a social community. But it is also possibly a 'textual community,' created and reinforced by ideologies, teachings, and common presuppositions. With their very vocabulary, texts offer exemplars of emotions belittled and valorized." Romance as a "textual community" values displays of luxury objects as indicators of status as well as performances of certain extreme emotion as markers of refined feeling. (Barbara H. Rosenwein, *Emotional Communities*, 24-5).

encouraging readers to make explicit connections between narratives based on shared tropes and other recurring motifs. This same audience also reads devotional texts, scrutinizes illustrated prayer books and Apocalypses, listens to homilies on Sundays, participates in charity work, commissions masses for the souls of the dead, decorates private chapels, engages in political and military endeavors, etc. All these contexts, textual and social, constitute distinct emotional communities and are absorbed into the larger emotional scheme. These various emotional communities in which the aristocratic readers participate contribute to their complex understanding of emotional experience as it is articulated in romance literature.

The highly stylized emotions of romance literature constitute social expectations through their very exaggerations. According to Rosenwein, "Artificial sentiments […] tell us about conventions and habits; […] insincerity tells us about how people are supposed to feel[;] it tells us about prevailing emotional norms."[31] I would specify further that this norm does not necessarily signify outside of romance texts, and therefore does not tell us about actual human experience. Stylized emotions may be more prescriptive rather than descriptive of cultural norms, but they nevertheless serve a cultural function of identifying normative values within romance. Frank Brandsma, Carolyne Larrington, and Corinne Saunders approach the study of emotions in imaginative Arthurian fiction with a similar corrective on Rosenwein: "Literary texts, in particular romance texts, not only represented characters as experiencing emotion and reacting emotionally to the behaviour of others within the text, but they also, intentionally, evoked and played upon emotion in the audiences who heard

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[31] Barbara H. Rosenwein, *Emotional Communities*, 29.

and saw them performed or read."[32] Furthermore, "Arthurian literature," and I would stress Arthurian romance in particular, "in its fixed points of love and loss, its emphasis on enchantment and the supernatural, and its emotional extremes, offers a remarkably fruitful corpus for the study of medieval emotion in literature."[33] These emotions are felt in and displayed on the imaginative (and perfected) aristocratic body. Collectively, romance expression of emotions constitutes an expected literary norm, a pattern that is recognizable to its target emotional community (i.e., aristocratic readers).

<p style="text-align:center">***</p>

Medieval romances make ample use of luxury objects that add other stories to the existing narrative. For example, dynastic rings serve as genealogical testaments, enabling characters to regain their place in society; and painted cups with reinterpretations of the Trojan War add historical depth to an ahistorical text. In compiling lengthy descriptions of courtly trappings, medieval romances serve as vehicles for idealized aristocratic self-presentation and thereby become complicit in associating material luxury with aristocratic power. At the same time, the actual decorative art objects collected by the nobility—for example, carved ivory boxes, mirror-backs, writing tablets, and tapestries—begin to render romance narrative scenes on them, thus solidifying the connection between displays of luxury and romance literature. In my approach to medieval romance, I address both material

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[32] Frank Brandsma, Carolyne Larrington, and Corinne Saunder, "Introduction," in Brandsma et al, eds., *Emotions in Medieval Arthurian Literature: Body, Mind, Voice* (Rochester, NY: D. S. Brewer, 2015), 1-10, at 7-8.
[33] Frank Brandsma, Carolyne Larrington, and Corinne Saunders, "Introduction," 8.

and imaginative forms of luxury, while also considering the aesthetic pleasure derived from interacting with romance as a luxury experience.

What this project elucidates in the slippage between prescription, criticism, and literary practice is the idea of the aesthetic—a preoccupation with surfaces, conventions, and the boundaries of the perceptible and the experiential. The aesthetic encounter is not coterminous with luxury or pleasure, although all three terms are key concepts at play here. The aesthetic encounter is a border touching, a confrontation with a work of art that is first apprehended through the senses. Neither is the aesthetic coterminous with the beautiful. It is a state of apprehension and recognition followed by an emotive response. Within romance, the aesthetic encounter often inspires a sense of wonder, while the aesthetic encounter with romance elicits certain kinds of pleasures, including the delights of surfaces, of viewing romance as an art object, as well as the vicarious pleasures of narrative. As a feature of both its internal worlds and its physical media, luxury gives us a sense of how romance mediates the aesthetic encounter, while constructing aristocratic ideals and celebrating earthly pleasures.

The twin axes of this project are luxury and romance, and both are thoroughly preoccupied with surfaces. Both luxury and romance capitalize on surface values, projecting a hermeneutic that attaches immaterial worth to material surfaces. The inherent value of a luxury good is very much dependent on its surface level recognition as such. A pearl is only worth something when it looks and signifies as a pearl. In a religious environment that holds luxurious materiality suspect, romance becomes a test-case for negotiating these questions of surface and depth. Romance as a genre is notoriously difficult to define, but like any other genre it delimits itself via its internal regulation of convention. This negotiation of borders—

the spaces where romance comes into contact with other genres—happens at the surface level of plot and rhetorical ornament.

This project begins with an investigation of the entirely immaterial images introduced into romance via literal and literary modes of ekphrasis (Chapter One). The first mode builds on synesthesia, providing cues for visualizing the image in the mind of the reader and/or listener. Literal ekphrasis is most commonly used to describe the making process of a narrative object, while the object itself is generally described using literary ekphrasis. While one may seem more concrete than the other, both modes construct a textual surface. An object introduced into a poem using literary ekphrasis cannot possibly exist outside the verbal medium because the surface construct is the thing—ekphrasis is nothing but a literary surface. I read the Shield of Gawain in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* and the images of Dido and Aeneas in Chaucer's *House of Fame* as *imitatio* of Virgilian ekphrases, theorizing medieval understanding of a Greek poetic device. In rewriting the Fall of Troy narrative using two distinct modes of ekphrasis, what I identify as the literal and the literary, the *Gawain*-poet and Chaucer emulate Virgil and insert their work into a poetic *translatio studii et imperii*.

Chapter Two continues this inquiry of the immaterial and/or the insubstantial by investigating shadows and reflections in what is perhaps the most material manifestation of romance—an ivory casket with images of romance carved on five surfaces (Figures 1, 8-13). The size of a jewelry box, the ivory casket is also a perfect metaphor for the inside/outside dynamic of this project. So while the ivory substrate teaches about human-animal border touching, and the medium warms in response to human touch, the only legible and intelligible access is through its external surfaces—through the visual images of romance. This compilation in ivory brings together images from several well-known romance

narratives, including Pyramus and Thisbe and Lancelot crossing the sword bridge. But the image that resonated with me the most was the Tryst beneath the Tree scene from *Tristan and Isolde*, rendered together with the capture of the unicorn scene from Richard de Fournival's *Bestaire d'Amour* (*Bestiary of Love*). While the ivory casket as a whole teaches women, their intended owners, about the intricacies of heterosexual desire through border/surface negotiation of sight and touch, The Tryst in ivory questions the limitations of visuality as an access to reality. The materialization of reflection (with the reflected image looking just as solid though disembodied as the human body positioned in the tree), the Tryst in ivory raises the important questions of power regarding what is and is not seen, who is observing whom and to what end, and inadvertently introduces doubt into the reliability of surfaces as access points to abstract concepts beyond themselves (like aristocratic identity).

The slaughter of the unicorn betrays the violent past of ivory as a luxury substrate. Medieval attitudes to ivory are doubly Christological. Bestiaries accord Christ-like qualities to elephants, and their tusks were considered particularly suitable for representing divine flesh, as multiple liturgical items in the exhibition attest. A thirteenth-century English *Liber Bestiarum*, MS Bodley 764, presents the elephant as part of a Christian army defending the castle of the faith. In the accompanying text, the male elephant is described as a noble creature that avoids fornication and performs acts of mercy and kindness toward others. Elephant reproduction connects him to Adam, and expounds the ritual in misogynistic terms: the female elephant seduces the male by offering him a fruit, directly reenacting the Original Sin. The story of a small elephant lifting a large fallen elephant identifies the smaller creature as Christ, who achieves what the Hebrew prophets could not. As Christopher de Hamel explains, "For many people in medieval England an elephant must have been almost

inconceivable. In 1253, however, about the date of Bodley 764, a live elephant was brought to England for the first time […] and was much admired in Henry III's menagerie in the Tower of London."[34] This fascination surrounding elephants did not prevent their slaughter, which predicates all trade in ivory. The fact that an elephant had to die in the process of retrieving bone ivory only reinforced the connection with the crucified Christ, as the most common use for elephant ivory in medieval Europe was in devotional objects (Figure 3). The practice of importing elephant ivory from Africa through the medieval Mediterranean trade routes was established as early as the seventh century, though the supply dwindled for 500 years before increasing significantly in the thirteenth century. The representation of secular love in ivory capitalizes on the spiritual connotations of both martyred elephants and their bones being used as symbols of Christ's sacrifice and Divine Love.

Chapter Three approaches the most abstract concept in Christian dogma, the concept of salvation, as it is rendered in *Pearl* with particular recourse to images of material luxury. The dreamer sees his late daughter as a member of the Heavenly Court, participating in the aristocratic drama of service and adoration. But the sight of the New Jerusalem, with all its gems, precious stones, and metals is only a dream. The father learns that he has no physical access to it despite the poetic insistence on its concrete and very measured materiality when he is unceremoniously expelled from it. The chapter situates the stanzaic structure of the poem as well as its central image of the New Jerusalem within the rich tradition of the illustrated English Apocalypse manuscripts. Reading the anonymous fourteenth-century alliterative poem as a romance-adjacent text, I identify an emotional community within which the positive vocabulary of luxury is deployed unapologetically as a

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[34] Christopher de Hamel, "The Commentary," in *Liber Bestiarum, MS Bodley 764* (London: The Folio Society, 2008), 8-35, at 15.

vehicle for communicating intricate feelings of loss, and salvation becomes the ultimate aesthetic experience.

The fourth and last chapter addresses the delight of surfaces found in romance literature. The particular pleasure accorded through imaginative fiction (*delectatio*) is generally attenuated by its moral profit (*prodesse*). In romance, we find that the surface is both the *delectatio* and the *prodesse*. The appeal of romance is that it pleases through surface levels of recognizable tropes, which can be read intertextually or cumulatively across the romance corpus; and this pleasure derived from surfaces acts as its own validation for moral utility. Romance is useful insofar as it teaches readers about emotions and courtly ideals, both of which are externalized on the aristocratic body. This pleasure of narrative as edifying to the general well-being of an individual becomes its own justification for the genre. The two texts examined in this chapter, Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde* and the anonymous Middle English Breton lay *Emaré* are not straightforward romances, but both texts invite the associative reading of romance. By attending to the surfaces and the surface pleasures of romance within these seemingly disparate texts, this chapter locates the genre's multi-valent appeal.

The overall aim of the project is to delimit what it is that romance is and what it is that romance does by attending to the surfaces and the borders, the spaces where romance comes into contact with other genres. My interdisciplinary research into the descriptive practices of medieval romances interrogates the changing social landscape of medieval imaginative fiction. As the literary genre of romance becomes more expansive, transforming from verse to prose, literary ekphrasis of luxury objects gives way to descriptive lists, pointing us toward an understanding of luxury that is acquisitive, rather than genealogical or innate.

CHAPTER 1
TRANSLATIO STUDII AND
MEDIEVAL POETICS OF EKPHRASIS

The image of Aeneas escaping the burning city of Troy is deeply engrained in medieval literary history. His flight from Troy constitutes the standard geographic trajectory of *translatio studii et imperii*, moving from Greece to Rome, and eventually to Western Europe. The English *translatio* follows the genealogical tradition established by Geoffrey of Monmouth in *Historia Regum Britanniae* (*The History of the Kings of Britain*), which traces the lineage of British monarchs to Aeneas' grandson Brutus. This line of cultural transmission privileges Virgil's *Aeneid* as a key redemptive text for learning and empire. In my study of ekphrasis in fourteenth-century Middle English texts, the Troy narrative looms large, and unsurprisingly so, as the most famous example of literary ekphrasis for a medieval reader can be found in Book VIII of the *Aeneid*, in a highly politicized description of Aeneas' shield.

The long history of ekphrastic poetics in the West connects literature from classical Greece to post-modern Europe, and from Britain to the United States, thereby replicating the geographic movement of *translatio studii et imperii*. Literary and cultural surveys on the subject of ekphrasis, however, tend to overlook the role of medieval poets in the genre formation: they either omit the Western Middle Ages entirely, moving from Classical Antiquity to the Renaissance, or briefly mention individual works such as Dante's *Comedia* as representative of medieval ekphrasis.[35] Recently this gap has been addressed by medieval

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[35] James A. W. Heffernan, *Museum of Words: The Poetics of Ekphrasis from Homer to Ashbery* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), Heffernan analyzes ekphrases found in Dante's *Comedia* (pp.37-45) and Chaucer's *Knight's Tale* (pp.61-73) without addressing how the two fourteenth-century poets learned to use the classical Greek

literary scholars, who have identified continuities between classical and medieval conceptions

of the poetic device.[36] Andrew James Johnston, Ethan Knapp, and Margitta Rouse critique

what they call the narrow definition of ekphrasis, which delimits its use to verbal

descriptions of works of art. Instead, they argue for a broader understanding of the device as

poetic device; Peter Wagner, ed., *Icons—Texts—Iconotexts: Essays on Ekphrasis and Intermediality* (New York: W. de Gruyter, 1996); Valerie Kay Robillard and Els Jongeneel, eds., *Pictures into Words: Theoretical and Descriptive Approaches to Ekphrasis* (Amsterdam: VU University Press, 1998); Ellen Spolsky, ed., *Iconotropism: Turning toward Pictures* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 2004); Frederick A. de Armas, ed., *Ekphrasis in the Age of Cervantes* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 2005); Shadi Bartsch and Jaś Elsner, eds., *Classical Philology* 102.1 (2007), Special Issues on Ekphrasis; Stephen Cheeke, *Writing for Art: The Aesthetics of Ekphrasis* (New York: Manchester University Press, 2008); Laura M. Sager Eidt, *Writing and Filming the Painting: Ekphrasis in Literature and Film* (New York: Rodopi, 2008); Rui Carvalho Homem, ed., *Relational Designs in Literature and the Arts: Page and Stage, Canvas and Screen* (New York: Brill, 2012); Elizabeth B. Bearden, *The Emblematics of the Self: Ekphrasis and Identity in Renaissance Imitations of Greek Romance* (Buffalo, NY: University of Toronto Press, 2012); *Word & Image: A Journal of Verbal/Visual Enquiry* 29.2 (2013), Special Issue: New Perspectives on Ekphrasis; Asunción López-Varela Azcárate and Ananta Charan Sukla, eds., *The Ekphrastic Turn: Inter-art Dialogues* (Champaign: Common Ground Publishing LLC, 2015); Gabriele Rippl, ed., *Handbook of Intermediality: Literature-Image-Sound-Music* (Berlin: de Gruyter Mouton, 2015), includes an essay by Andrew James Johnston, "Medieval Ekphrasis: Chaucer's *Knight's Tale*," 50-64, which situates the text in late medieval theories of vision and attitudes toward image-making.

[36] Jean H. Hagstrum, *The Sister Arts: The Tradition of Literary Pictorialism and English Poetry from Dryden to Gray* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958); Margaret Bridges, "The Picture in the Text: Ecphrasis as Self-Reflexivity in Chaucer's *Parliament of Fowls*, *Book of the Duchess*, and *House of Fame*," *Word & Image: A Journal of Verbal/Visual Enquiry* 5 (1989): 151-158; Stephen G. Nichols, "Ekphrasis, Iconoclasm, and Desire," in Kevin Brownlee and Sylvia Huot, eds., *Rethinking the* Romance of the Rose*: Text, Image, Reception* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1992), 133-166; Bruce Holsinger, "Lollard Ekphrasis: Situated Aesthetics and Literary History," *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 35.1 (2005): 67-89; Lorraine Kochanske Stock, "'Peynted ... text and [visual] glose': Primitivism, Ekphrasis, and Pictorial Intertextuality in the Dreamers' Bedrooms of *Roman de la Rose* and *Book of the Duchess*," in John F. Plummer and T. L. Burton, eds., *'Seyd in forme and reverence': Essays on Chaucer and Chaucerians in Memory of Emerson Brown, Jr* (Provo, UT: Chaucer Studio Press, 2005), 97-114; Robert Epstein, "'With many a floryn he the hewes boghte': Ekphrasis and Symbolic Violence in the *Knight's Tale*," *Philological Quarterly* 85.1 (2006): 49-68; Mary Olson, "Speaking Walls: Ekphrasis in Chaucer's *House of Fame*," *Enarratio* 14 (2007): 118-138; Claire Barbetti, *Ekphrastic Medieval Visions: A New Discussion in Interarts Theory* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011); Charles Russell Stone, "'And sodeynly he wax therwith astoned': Virgilian Emotion and Images of Troy in Chaucer's *Troilus*," *The Review of English Studies* 64.266 (2013): 574-593; Andrew James Johnston, Ethan Knapp, and Margitta Rouse, eds., *The Art of Vision: Ekphrasis in Medieval Literature and Culture* (Columbus, OH: Ohio State University Press, 2015); James H. Brown, *Imagining the Text: Ekphrasis and Envisioning Courtly Identity in Wirnt von Gravenberg's* Wigalois (Boston: Brill, 2016).

"verbalized visuality."[37] They do, however, concede that "for more than two millennia the narrow notion of ekphrasis [as a verbal description of visual art] existed as a well-known literary commonplace and played a crucial, albeit indirect, role in discussions on the relationship between the visual and the verbal in literature."[38] Andrew Laird, Shadi Bartsch, and Jás Elsner have addressed the critical debates surrounding narrow and broad definitions of ekphrasis, ultimately arguing for the validity of maintaining the narrow understanding as a useful critical category, as a "consideration of how the visual itself is inscribed in [written] discourse."[39] My work on ekphrasis in Middle English poetry suggests that the versatile application of this classical Greek poetic device in fourteenth-century England warrants a reevaluation of the aesthetic and intellectual history of the period. More specifically, I identify learning practices that had ensured a transfer of poetic knowledge between classical and medieval poets, a literary *translatio studii*.

According to classical definitions, ekphrasis is a verbal description of a visual phenomenon. The Greek term can be broken down into two parts: 'ek' meaning 'out,' and 'phrassein' meaning 'to speak', together creating a sense of 'speaking out.'[40] From this auditory or aural event, we derive the concept of ekphrasis as a speech act that communicates a visual presence to a reading or listening audience. The speaker of ekphrasis

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[37] Andrew James Johnston et al., "Introduction: The Dynamics of Ekphrasis," in *The Art of Vision*, 1-16, at 7. Half of the contributors' essays address specific instances of medieval poetic practice in which real or imagined works of art (art objects, statuary, paintings, wall hangings, and architecture) are rendered in textual form.

[38] Andrew James Johnston et al., "Introduction: The Dynamics of Ekphrasis" in *The Art of Vision*, 3.

[39] Andrew Laird, "Sounding out Ecphrasis: Art and Text in Catullus 64," *The Journal of Roman Studies* 83 (1993): 18-30, at 30; Shadi Bartsch and Jaś Elsner "Introduction: Eight Ways of Looking at an Ekphrasis," *Classical Philology* 102.1 (2007), i-vi; Jaś Elsner, "The Genres of Ekphrasis," *Ramus* 31 (2002), Special issue, The Verbal and the Visual: Cultures of Ekphrasis in Antiquity, ed., Jaś Elsner, 1-18; Shadi Bartsch, *Decoding the Ancient Novel: The Reader and the Role of Description in Heliodorus and Achilles Tatius* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), 7-10.

[40] "ecphrasis, n." OED Online. Oxford University Press, September 2015.

converts visual data into verbal form by describing and/or giving voice to the visual object, while the audience attempts to reverse the process by creating an image in their minds based on verbal cues. Since the middle of the twentieth century, literary scholarship has particularized the term 'ekphrasis' to designate a body of literature that engages with the visual arts.[41] The modern critical definition of ekphrasis as "the verbal representation of visual representation"[42] positions the device as an intermediary between text and image and reveals a power structure that always privileges the verbal.[43] Whether the visual object of ekphrasis exists outside the textual medium or not,[44] ekphrasis as a literary device constitutes either a bridge or a barrier between the silent art object and its would-be viewer, whose experience of the object is mediated through the verbal construct.

There is something inherently voyeuristic in the experience of the image created by a detailed verbal description; this promise of unmediated access to a visual site disempowers the object of the gaze. At the same time, the hegemonic overlay of speech onto a silent image replaces visual agency with a verbal construct, beneath the layers of which the image disappears from sight. In this essay, I explore the disjunction between the theory of ekphrasis as expounded in late antique and medieval treatises on rhetoric and poetry and late medieval poetic practice. These theoretical handbooks provide a broad definition of

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[41] Ruth Webb, "Ekphrasis Ancient and Modern: The Invention of a Genre," *Word & Image: A Journal of Verbal/Visual Enquiry* 15.1 (1999): 7-18; Janice Hewlett Koelb, *The Poetics of Description: Imagined Places in European Literature* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 1-18.

[42] James A. W. Heffernan, *Museum of Words*, 3.

[43] W. J. T. Mitchell, "Ekphrasis and the Other," in *Picture Theory: Essays on Verbal and Visual Representation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), 151-182, at 164. Mitchell focuses on the triangulated relation between the visual image and its audience, positioning the speaker of ekphrasis in the intermediary role, rather than the poetic device itself.

[44] John Hollander distinguishes between actual and notional ekphrasis based on whether or not the visual object exists outside of the poem. John Hollander, "The Poetics of Ekphrasis," *Word & Image: A Journal of Verbal/Visual Enquiry* 4.1 (1988): 209-219; See also John Hollander, *Gazer's Spirit: Poems Speaking to Silent Works of Art* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 3-91.

ekphrasis, suggesting that a Latin term like *descriptio* may cover all its forms. The pedagogical texts emphasize the mimetic capabilities of language, helping the writer/speaker create vivid images in the mind of the reader/listener, or what I consider here as 'literal ekphrasis'; medieval examples of literal ekphrasis include a detailed description of Castle Hautdesert in *SGGK* and the storm at sea in Chaucer's *House of Fame*. And yet, it is an entirely untheorized, non-mimetic form of ekphrasis that has captured the imagination of classical and medieval poets alike; Homer's and Virgil's famous descriptions of epic shields expressly resist visualization, setting imitable examples of what I call 'literary ekphrasis' for subsequent generations of poets. Despite this lack of theoretical guidelines for learning the versatility ekphrasis, medieval poets incorporated a classical understanding of the device, using both literal and literary modes in their work. I propose that late medieval poets like Geoffrey Chaucer and the *Gawain*-poet learned the versatility of ekphrasis through emulation of Virgil, filling in the gaps in theoretical knowledge through the practice of *imitatio*. Distinguishing between the literal and literary modes of ekphrasis in late medieval English poetry acknowledges the complex ways in which medieval poets aligned themselves with their classical predecessors as masters of wordcraft, conscripting the visual arts into the service of literary production.

Ekphrasis and the Sister Arts Debates

Positioned between the visual and the verbal modes of representation, ekphrasis participates in (and often perpetuates) the Sister Arts debates. Over the course of two millennia, questions about human perception and representation of the world in texts or images have

given rise to intellectual rivalry between the arts of poetry and painting. From Horace to Philostratus (the Elder and the Younger), from Hugh of St. Victor to Alberti and Da Vinci, from Burke and Lessing to Foucault, poets, artists, and philosophers have endeavored to explain this relationship between the Sister Arts of Poetry and Painting as either complementary, competitive, or entirely incompatible. Carrying over into present day scholarship in aesthetics, art history, media, and translation studies, ekphrasis becomes a theoretical model for conceptualizing the relationship between literature and the visual arts.

The traditional origin point for such debates is Horace's infamous declaration: "ut pictura poesis," loosely translated "in poetry as in painting."[45] In *De arte poetica* (c.19 BCE), Horace identifies similarities in analytical approaches to studying poetry and painting: both require distant and close observation, whether it is through looking or reading. In two separate works titled *Imagines* (c.3 AD), Philostratus the Elder and his grandson Philostratus the Younger provide descriptions of paintings as teaching resources for students who wish to learn how to interpret them.[46] Their work privileges the verbal medium by constructing an inter-diegetic audience who does not have access to the same visual objects. In this literary conceit, or what John Hollander calls 'notional ekphrasis', the actual existence of the work of art is not as important as the quality of the descriptive discourse.

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[45] Horatius (Quintus Horatius Flaccus), *De arte poetica (epistula ad Pisones)*, the Library of Latin Texts - Series A, LLA 234, versus: 361 (p.325), available online at <http://www.brepolis.net>. For a brief overview of some aesthetic theories that participate in Sister Arts debates, see Judith Harvey, "ut pictura poesis" entry in The University of Chicago: Theories of Media, Keywords Glossary. Available online <http://csmt.uchicago.edu/glossary2004/utpicturapoesis.htm>. More recently, Heffernan has returned to the subject of ekphrasis, situating it in the Sister Arts debates and extending the concept to literature's engagement with photography and cinema. James A. W. Heffernan, "Ekphrasis: a Theory," in Gabriele Rippl, ed., *Handbook of Intermediality*, 35-49.

[46] *Elder Philostratus, Younger Philostratus, Callistratus*, trans. Arthur Fairbanks, Loeb Classical Library 256 (Cambridge, 1931). Available online through The Theoi Classical E-Texts Library <http://www.theoi.com/Text/PhilostratusElder1A.html>.

In *Didascalicon* (c.1127), Hugh of St. Victor identifies useful aspects of the mechanical arts in a theological environment that generally distrusted human-made images. Medieval philosophy identifies three categories of works: the highest is the work made by God during Creation; the second is work made by Nature, who brings out things that lay dormant since Creation; and the third and lowest on the list is the work made by human beings, who can only reshape things found in nature. Thus, human-made images are seen as imitations of Nature's work, and therefore mechanical (or derivative and somehow adulterate).[47] Hugh's approach brings the crafts, or *artes mechanicae*, into a productive conversation with the liberal arts, focusing on their practical wisdom and the ways they help humans understand the world. Late medieval and early modern artists entered the Sister Arts debate in order to rehabilitate the cultural status of painting. In *Della pittura* (1435-6), Leon Battista Alberti argues for the inclusion of paining into the Seven Liberal Arts, worthy of academic study alongside grammar, logic, rhetoric, geometry, arithmetic, astronomy and music. Alberti's visual theory of world perception privileges artists as uniquely qualified to observe and represent the world. Though Alberti recognizes that visual artists can learn narrative concepts from poets to improve their compositions, when discussing Lucian's ekphrasis of a painting on the subject of Calumny, Alberti claims superiority for the original painting, implying that language cannot adequately transmit visual data.[48] Leonardo da Vinci escalates the debate by arguing that painting is the highest of all arts. Painting's paragonal relationship

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[47] Jerome Taylor, trans., *The Didascalicon of Hugh of St. Victor: A Medieval Guide to the Arts* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1961), Book I, Chapter 9, "Concerning the Three Works" (55-56), Book II, Chapters 20-27 on the Mechanical Arts (75-79); Michael Camille, *The Gothic Idol: Ideology and Image-making in Medieval Art* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 35-36.

[48] Cecil Greyson, trans., *Leon Battista Alberti, On Painting* (New York: Penguin, 1991), 88-89.

to poetry is particular relevant here.[49] According to Da Vinci, the mind activates the same sensory system to observe the world as it does to view a painting, whereas in processing poetry the mind must first convert it into a visual image. Therefore, with its privileged relationship to sight, painting conveys visual information to the mind better and faster than poetry.

Eighteenth-century philosophers delineate formal differences between the Sister Arts, and argue for poetry's supremacy over the visual arts. In *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origins of Our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful* (1757), Edmund Burke maintains that painting and poetry affect their audiences in entirely different ways.[50] Painting relies on imitation of nature to create believable shapes and proportions that elicit beholders' senses of beauty and/or the sublime. Poetry, however, works through intersubjective connections that do not require imitations. Words elicit pathos easier than the visual arts, and as such they become better vehicles for communicating abstract ideas.[51] Burke challenges a central tenet of Da Vinci's argument by negating the need for forming mental images in processing sensorial data. Gotthold Ephraim Lessing's *Laocoön: An Essay upon the Limits of Poetry and Painting* (1766) establishes categorical differences between the two arts: painting renders bodies in space, while poetry concerns itself with actions in time.[52] Lessing insists that each art can only suggest the domain of the other: painting can only imply sequential movement by hinting at actions before and after the depicted singular moment; similarly, poetry

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[49] Martin Kemp and Margaret Walker, trans. and ed., *Leonardo On Painting: An Anthology of Writings by Leonardo da Vinci with a Selection of Documents Relating to His Career as an Artist* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), 23.

[50] Edmund Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origins of Our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful* (London, 1757), Part V, Section i "Of Words" (167-168). Available online through Eighteenth Century Collections Online: Text Creation Partnership < http://name.umdl.umich.edu/004807802.0001.000>.

[51] Edmund Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry*, Part V, Section vi "How WORDS influence the passions" (180-1).

[52] Edward Allen McCormick, trans., *Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, Laocoön: An Essay upon the Limits of Poetry and Painting* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1984), 78.

connects actions to bodies, thereby portraying objects acting in space. Ultimately for Lessing, any extended encroachment of one art into the realm of the other should be discouraged. He deploys these territorial metaphors to argue that poetry occupies the larger domain, making it the superior of the Sister Arts.[53]

Among Lessing's many detractors, Murray Krieger gains prominence for his formalist theory of ekphrasis. In "The Ekphrastic Principle and the Still Moment of Poetry; or *Laokoon* Revisited" (1967), Krieger finds texture and plasticity in the formal features of ekphrastic poetry, identifying ekphrasis as a language imbued with spatiality. Moreover, for Krieger the ekphrastic principle is an experiment in language to stagnate the teleological drive of narrative by infusing language with the 'still time' of the visual arts.[54] By combining the movement of action via syntax and the stillness of visual tableaux through description, ekphrasis creates an atemporal narrative. Similarly, George Kurman compares the aberrant temporality of ekphrasis to that of an epic simile in so far as both devices remove the audience from narrative time.[55]

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[53] The influence of Lessing's formulation and the subsequent border policing between the visual and the verbal arts are still felt today. Art historians have turned to cognitive psychology and cultural materialism for means of expanding the narrative capabilities of visual art. Wolfgang Kemp, Otto Pächt, and Suzanne Lewis address the role of the viewer in activating the storytelling ability of pictures. Wolfgang Kemp, "Narrative," in Robert S. Nelson and Richard Shiff, eds., *Critical Terms for Art History*, 2nd edn. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), 62-74; Otto Pächt, *The Rise of Pictorial Narrative in Twelfth-Century England* (New York: Clarendon Press, 1962); Suzanne Lewis, *The Rhetoric of Power in the Bayeux Tapestry* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999). More recently, borrowing from the work of cultural anthropology and object-oriented ontology, art historians ask us to consider the affective and agential capabilities of artistic media such as ivory and stone. See essays in Jonathan Wilcox, ed., *Scraped, Stroked, and Bound: Materially Engaged Readings of Medieval Manuscripts* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2013).

[54] Murray Krieger, "The Ekphrastic Principle and the Still Moment of Poetry; or *Laokoon* Revisited" (1967), reprinted in Murray Krieger, *Ekphrasis: The Illusion of the Natural Sign* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992), 263-288, at 265-6.

[55] George Kurman, "Ecphrasis in Epic Poetry," *Comparative Literature* 26.1 (1974): 1-13, at 5.

Perhaps surprisingly, Michel Foucault finds Lessing's binaries to be useful in addressing the limits of both poetry and painting as modes of representation. In *The Order of Things* (1970), Foucault laments the futility of forcing painting to do the work of poetry and vice versa.[56] Reifying Lessing's space and time dichotomy and revisiting some of Burke's arguments, Foucault meditates on the limits of human knowledge through sensorial perception. When deriving his theory of visual representation, Foucault engages in an extended ekphrasis of Diego Velázquez's *Las Meninas*. Velázquez creates an illusion of seeing an artist, his work, and his models. But as Foucault argues, both the observer and the observed can never be present in the same representational space at the same time. What the painting reveals through its interplay of gazes, gestures, and reflections are the limits of representation.[57] For Foucault, a visual representation can only function as such when divorced from the actual subject. Only by stripping away the relations of verisimilitude placed upon figural painting can a visual image exist as a surface in the world.

Lawrence Venuti counters Foucault by insisting on ekphrasis as a viable mode of translation between painting and poetry. Working with a category of ekphrastic literature that John Hollander has labeled 'actual ekphrasis', or poems about known artworks, Venuti presents both ekphrasis and translation as second-order creations. Both remediate source material by radically decontextualizing it (removing its constitutive meanings) and then recontextualizing it in order to communicate with a new audience. This process of translation from one language to another, or from visual form to written discourse, involves

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[56] Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archeology of the Human Sciences*, translation of *Les Mots et les choses* (New York: Random House, 1970), 9.

[57] Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things*, 16.

what Venuti calls an application of interpretants,[58] revealing aspects of the source material as well as influences from the poet/translator's socio-cultural moment. Thus, according to Venuti a translation between word and image is not only possible, but it is also generative. Jaś Elsner extends the practice of 'actual ekphrasis' to the critical work of Art History. As we see in Foucault's ideological deployment of ekphrasis, critical approaches to visual art involve interpretive descriptions of the art object, which participate in the ideological structures of argumentation. Ekphrasis as translation between modes of representation becomes a standard disciplinary practice, revealing power structures between a critic and his or her object of study, often replacing the visual object with layers of theoretical discourse.[59] Although a reproduction of *Las Meninas* usually graces the cover of *The Order of Things*, Foucault's philosophical meditation eclipses the visual object, which by the very act of opening the book must be turned away from the reader in the process of textual consumption.[60]

Stephen Cheeke and Linda Hutcheon find Lessing's space/time dichotomy still relevant in aesthetics and media studies of the twenty-first century. Cheeke argues that the relationship between painting and poetry should be viewed as one of "radical difference or alterity,"[61] building a case for actual ekphrasis (or 'poems for pictures' as he calls them) as a lens through which aesthetic ideology and politics of power can be examined. For Cheeke, ekphrasis serves as a moment of encounter and/or rupture between two distinct aesthetic fields, which invites contemplation of both as sensual experiences. In *A Theory of Adaptation*,

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[58] Lawrence Venuti, "Ekphrasis, Translation, Critique," *Art in Translation* 2.2 (2010): 131-152, at 140.

[59] Jaś Elsner, "Art History as Ekphrasis," *Art History* 33.1 (2010): 10-27. Heffernan makes a similar argument in James A. W. Heffernan, "Speaking for Pictures: the Rhetoric of Art Criticism," in *Cultivating Picturacy: Visual Art and Verbal Interventions* (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2006), 39-68.

[60] For Elsner, even photographs of art objects constitute a form of ekphrastic translation, or visual ekphrasis.

[61] Stephen Cheeke, *Writing for Art*, 6.

Linda Hutcheon identifies differences between verbal and visual media according to their modes of engagement: telling versus showing. While Hutcheon is less rigid in her prescriptions than Lessing or Foucault, in her discussion of adaptation as translation from one mode of engagement to another (most commonly from telling to showing, i.e., from novel to film), she nevertheless identifies the strengths and weaknesses of each mode, arguing that the adaptation process necessitates formal changes in the adapted work.[62] For example, extensive narration works better in the telling mode such as in literature, while dramatic visual contrast works better in the showing mode of cinema. Unlike Venuti, who is content with viewing translation and ekphrasis as second-order creations, Hutcheon contends that a successful adaptation resists the stigma of derivativeness by engaging the audience in entirely new ways.

In *Iconology: Image, Text, Ideology*, W. J. T. Mitchell proposes that rather than positing a universal theory of interarts relations, we should historicize the different approaches to the Sister Arts debate. He asks us to consider why we keep policing the boundaries between words and images. His semiotic approach emphasizes the shifting ideologies that influence our world perception.[63] In *Picture Theory: Essays on Verbal and Visual Representation*, Mitchell argues that all written language is always already spatial and sequential, and should therefore be analyzed as a hybrid imagetext.[64] An ekphrastic encounter, for Mitchell, is the meeting of language and its relationally 'other' modes of representation. This encounter elicits three

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[62] Linda Hutcheon, *A Theory of Adaptation*, 2nd edn. (New York: Routledge, 2013), 24.

[63] W. J. T. Mitchell, *Iconology: Image, Text, Ideology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), 43.

[64] W. J. T. Mitchell, "Beyond Comparison: Picture, Text, and Method," in *Picture Theory*, 83-110. In "Ekphrasis and the Other," in *Picture Theory*, (151-182), Mitchell contends that from a semiotic point of view, there is "no essential difference between texts and images"; however, he recognizes that there remains a difference "between visual and verbal media at the level of sign-types, forms, materials of representation, and institutional traditions" (at 161).

types of responses: 'ekphrastic indifference', which recognizes the impossibility of representing in words a visual phenomenon (recalling Foucault's point on the futility of such endeavors); 'ekphrastic hope', which hinges on a willingness to imagine the described object in the mind (and aligns with classical definitions of the poetic device); and 'ekphrastic fear', which triggers border policing in an attempt to prevent a translation from one mode of representation into another. Mitchell contends that the three stages create a sense of ambivalence, thematizing the relation between the modes of representation as that of self and other, "in which the 'self' is understood to be an active, speaking, seeing subject, while the 'other' is projected as a passive, seen, and (usually) silent object"[65]; this dynamic privileges the verbal/poetic mode, projecting onto it a stereotypically masculinist and ableist discourse of power, while distancing itself from the feminized and disabled visual object.

Learning Ekphrasis: the Literal and the Literary

In late antiquity, ekphrasis constituted one of the basic exercises in Greek *progymnasmata* textbooks.[66] In these rhetorical exercises, students were encouraged to describe in detail places, people, objects, seasons, battles, and action. These exercises in ekphrasis are similar

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[65] W. J. T. Mitchell, "Ekphrasis and the Other," in *Picture Theory*, 157.

[66] The four surviving *progymnasmata* textbooks are representative of the Late Antique rhetorical curriculum. Listed by attribution and in chronological order: Alius Theon (first century CE), Hermogenes of Taurus (misattributed, second century CE), Aphthonius of Antioch (fourth century CE), and Nicolaus of Myra (fifth century CE). These textbooks contained Greek exercises for Roman schoolboys, and were intended to prepare them for public speaking. Ruth Webb, *Ekphrasis, Imagination, and Persuasion in Ancient Rhetorical Theory and Practice* (Burlington: Ashgate, 2009), particularly chapter "Learning Ekphrasis: The *Progymnasmata*," pp.39-60; Frank J. D'Angelo, "The Rhetoric of Ekphrasis," *JAC: A Journal of Composition Theory*, 18.3 (1998): 439-447.

to the examples of *descriptio*[67] as they are explained in Latin treatises on rhetoric and poetry. In the *Progymnasmata* misattributed to Hermogenes (second century CE), ekphrasis functions by synesthesia, creating a visual image that is mediated through aural receptors: "Ekphrasis is a descriptive speech, … which is vivid and brings the subject shown before the eyes"; "The virtues of ekphrasis are above all clarity and vividness (*enargeia*); for the expression should almost bring about sight through the sense of hearing."[68] In Priscian's *Praeexercitamina*, a Latin translation of this Greek text, the term "*descriptio*" is used as a direct synonym for "ekphrasis," with a functional definition that similarly hinges on synesthesia: "Descriptio est oratio colligens et praesentans oculis quod demonstrat."[69] [*Descriptio* is a speech that brings together and presents to the eyes that which it demonstrates.] These exercises in ekphrasis and *descriptio* teach students to engage multiple senses to create an image in the listener's mind.

In the popular oratory manual *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, attributed to Cicero, *descriptio* is defined with attention to vividness of language:

> Descriptio nominatur, quae rerum consequentium continet perspicuam et
> dilucidam cum grauitate expositionem...Hoce genere exornationis uel

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[67] According to Douglas Kelly, *descriptio* is a term applicable to both the visual arts and poetry and designates supplementary material that expands mental visualization of the subject matter. Douglas Kelly, *The Conspiracy of Allusion: Description, Rewriting, and Authorship from Macrobius to Medieval Romance* (Boston: Brill, 1999), 42.

[68] Quoted and translated in Ruth Webb, *Ekphrasis, Imagination, and Persuasion*, 200. In "Appendix A: Translations," pp.197-211, Webb provides extracts and translations from various *progymnasmata* textbooks and later commentaries, all of which emphasize vividness and clarity of mental visualization as goals for successful ekphrasis.

[69] Hermogenes sec. translationem et retractationem quas fecit Priscianus - Praeexercitamina (Praeexercitamenta) [magna ex parte ex Hermogenis Progymnasmatis latine uersa] CPL 1549, LLA 703, cap. 10, par. 29, pag. 438, linea 21, The Library of Latin Texts - Series B. The *Progymnasmata ,* misattributed to Hermogenes, was translated into Latin by Priscian, and circulated as *Praeexercitamina.* However, as Manfred Kraus has recently established, the circulation of this handbook was too limited to have served as a standard text in the medieval classroom. Manfred Kraus, "Grammatical and Rhetorical Exercises in the Medieval Classroom," *New Medieval Literatures* 11 (2009): 63-89, at 67.

indignatio uel misericordia potest commoueri, cum res consequentes conprehensae uniuersae perspicua breuiter exprimuntur oratione.

[Vivid Description is the name for the figure which contains a clear, lucid, and impressive exposition of the consequences of an act...With this kind of figure either indignation or pity can be aroused, when the consequences of an act, taken together as a whole, are concisely set forth in a clear style.][70]

These descriptive details are selected for the purposes of eliciting an emotional response in the audience as part of the visualization process. The orator is advised to establish a clear sequence of events using "ocular demonstration" (*evidentia*), laying out the precursors and the consequences of an event to help the audience envision it in their minds (Book IV, ch.2, 55). Thus, both *descriptio* and *evidentia* deploy details in ways that are similar to the exercises in ekphrasis in the *progymnasmata* textbooks.

Although Quintilian does not directly discuss ekphrasis in his *Institutio oratoria*, he addresses the vividness of description in persuasive speech as an essential element of narration (Book IV, ch.2, 63). The Greek concept of *enargeia* (*evidentia* in Latin) refers to the vivid quality of an orator's language, which contributes to the audience's ability to form mental images, known as *phantasiai* in Greek, or *visiones* in Latin.[71] Quintilian connects the concept of *enargeia* with emotions and categorizes it as a subset of stylistic ornamentation (Book VI, ch.3, 61-62). Drawing on Cicero, Quintilian explains this vividness in oratory and its effect on an audience:

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[70] *Rhetorica ad Herennium* (LLA 287), liber 4, cap. 39, par. 51 (pag.165, linea 10 - pag. 166, linea 22), The Library of Latin Texts – A Series; Harry Caplan, trans., *[Cicero] Ad C. Herennium De Ratione Dicendi (Rhetorica ad Herennium)*, Loeb Classical Library, (Cambridge, 1954), 357-359.

[71] Mary Carruthers, *The Craft of Thought: Meditation, Rhetoric, and the Making of Images, 400-1200* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), entire chapter "Cognitive Images, Meditation, and Ornament," pp.116-170 is relevant here, particularly pp.132-133; Ruth Webb, *Ekphrasis, Imagination, and Persuasion*, particularly chapters "*Enargeia*: Making the Absent Things Present," pp.87-106, and "*Phantasia*: Memory, Imagination and the Gallery of the Mind," pp.107-130.

quas φαντασίας Graeci vocant (nos sane visiones appellemus), per quas imagines rerum absentium ita repraesentantur animo, ut eas cernere oculis ac praesentes habere videamur, has quisquis bene conceperit, is erit in adfectibus potentissimus. ... Insequitur ἐνάργεια, quae a Cicerone inlustratio et evidentia nominatur, quae non tam dicere videtur quam ostendere, et adfectus non aliter, quam si rebus ipsis intersimus, sequentur.

[What the Greeks call φαντασίαι (*phantasiai*) we call *visiones*, images by which the representations of absent objects are so distinctly represented to the mind that we seem to see them with our eyes and to have them before us. Whoever shall best conceive such images will have the greatest power in moving the feelings....Hence will result that ἐνάργεια (*enargeia*), which is called by Cicero 'illustration' and 'evidentness,'[72] which seems not so much to narrate as to exhibit, and our feelings will be moved not less strongly than if we were actually present at the affairs of which we are speaking.][73]

A successful orator uses *enargeia* to connect with his or her audience on an emotional level. By showing the subject of the speech with appropriate visual and emotional detail rather than reporting or telling them about it, the speaker establishes a bond with the audience, giving them a sense of immediacy, a sense of having been there, a sense of having seen it for themselves. As Webb has argued, for Quintilian (among others), the goal of *enargeia* is "a controlled and conscious process of visualization,"[74] and "it [*enargeia*] has the additional function of making the audience into virtual witnesses."[75] Like other elements from the rhetorical toolbox, this skill could be honed through practice and training.

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[72] Janice Hewlett Koelb translates the two terms as "illumination" and "actuality" respectively in *The Poetics of Description*, 30.

[73] M. Fabius Quintilianus - Institutio oratoria (LLA 390) lib. 6, cap. 2, par. 29-32, pag. 327, linea 19-pag. 328, linea 7, The Library of Latin Texts – Series A; Quintilian, *Institutes of Oratory,* ed. Lee Honeycutt, trans. John Selby Watson (Iowa State, 2006). Online available 29 July 2016. <http://rhetoric.eserver.org/quintilian/>.

[74] Ruth Webb, *Ekphrasis, Imagination, and Persuasion*, 95.

[75] Ruth Webb, *Ekphrasis, Imagination, and Persuasion*, 90.

This pedagogical tradition continues in medieval treatises on poetry.[76] Matthew of Vendôme devotes over half of *Ars versificatoria* to the art of writing descriptions.[77] He provides examples of *descriptio* from classical authors and rhetoricians, while placing the burden of achieving truth value in poetry on aggregation of detail. In *Poetria nova*, Geoffrey of Vinsauf categorizes *descriptio* as a means of amplifying a given narrative:

> Septima succedit praegnans descriptio verbis,
> Ut dilatet opus. Sed, cum sit lata, sit ipsa
> Laeta: pari forma speciosa sit et spatiosa.
> In celebri forma faciat res nubere verbis.
> Si cibus esse velit et plena refectio mentis,
> Ne sit curta nimis brevitas vel trita vetustas. (ll. 554-59).

> [Description, pregnant with words, follows as a seventh means of amplifying the work. But although the path of description is wide, let it also be wise, let it be both lengthy and lovely. See that the words with due ceremony are wedded to the subject. If description is to be the food and ample refreshment of the mind, avoid too curt a brevity as well as trite conventionality.][78]

Geoffrey presents *descriptio* as a chance for the poet to introduce aesthetic values into the subject matter. Geoffrey recommend that in composing descriptions one should strive for a unity of subject and form rather than truth value; he then returns to synesthesia to explain the success of a good description.

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[76] On pedagogical uses of *Poetria nova* by Geoffrey of Vinsauf see Marjorie Curry Woods, *Classroom Commentaries: Teaching the* Poetria nova *across Medieval and Renaissance Europe* (Columbus, OH: Ohio State University Press, 2010), 1-93.

[77] Matthew of Vendôme, *Ars Versificatoria* in Edmond Faral, ed., *Les Arts poétiques du XIIe et du XIIIe siècle: recherches et documents sur la technique littéraire du Moyen Âge* (Paris: Champion, 1924, 1958), 109-193; Matthew of Vendôme, *Ars Versificatoria* (The Art of the Versemaker), trans. Roger P. Parr (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1981).

[78] Geoffrey of Vinsauf, *Poetria Nova*, in Edmond Faral, ed., *Les Arts poétiques du XIIe et du XIIIe siècle*, 194-262, all references to the Latin text of *Poetria Nova* refer to this edition by line number; Margaret F. Nims, trans., Geoffrey of Vinsauf, *Poetria Nova*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1967), 36.

These Greek and Latin handbooks on rhetoric and poetry stress the mimetic capabilities of language in their explanations of descriptive practices. While young students were given the concept of ekphrasis or *descriptio* as an exercise in description, poets who had mastered this device recognized its flexibility and employed it in at least two different ways. The first, which I term here 'literal ekphrasis,' adheres to the handbook prescriptions on *enargeia*, following the mimetic principles of verbal representation to create a vivid image of an object, person, place, or thing in the mind of the reader or listener. Literal ekphrasis deploys synesthetic cues to create an illusion of voyeuristic immediacy between the object described and the extra-diegetic audience. The second narratologically distinct type of description, which I label 'literary ekphrasis,' breaks away from the constraints of mimesis, creating a verbal image whose visuality is subordinated to its poetic message. In implementing literary ekphrasis, classical and medieval poets draw attention to the capabilities of language, creating verbal constructs that could not possibly exist outside of textual media.

These are not entirely new categories in scholarly approaches to ekphrasis. Murray Krieger insists on distinguishing ekphrasis from *enargeia*, arguing that ekphrasis is "a verbal representation of a fictional visual representation" and that it expressly defies visualization. Krieger contends that "to look into *ekphrasis* is to look into the illusionary representation of the unrepresentable, even while that representation is allowed to masquerade as a natural sign, as if it could be an adequate substitute for its object."[79] It is precisely this illusory effect, the privileging of the verbal over the visual, that I call literary ekphrasis, but without denying the existence of *enargeia*-style ekphrasis, which I identify as literal ekphrasis. Andrew Laird

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[79] Murray Krieger, *Ekphrasis: The Illusion of the Natural Sign*, xv.

agrees with Krieger insofar as he finds the narrow definition of ekphrasis useful because "it forces us to confront both the nature of the visual artistic medium and that of the verbal medium describing it."[80] Laird further distinguishes between 'obedient' and 'disobedient' types of ekphrasis based on literary effect: "*Obedient* ecphrasis limits itself to the description of what can be consistently visualized. […] *Disobedient* ecphrasis, on the other hand, breaks free from the discipline of the imagined object and offers less opportunity for it to be consistently visualized or translated adequately into an actual work of visual art."[81] While I am not entirely comfortable with Laird's disciplinary terminology, I recognize the relation of the two terms 'obedient' and 'disobedient' to the expectations of verisimilitude. In his reading of ekphrasis in Catallus 64, Laird notes the predominance of 'disobedient' ekphrasis, marked by an intrusion of "succession of time, movement, sound, and especially speech."[82] As such, 'obedient' is similar to 'literal' ekphrasis, providing cues for mental visualization, while 'disobedient' is akin to 'literary' ekphrasis, resisting visualization through recourse to non-iconic language. Laird's categories, however, are explicitly connected to the narrow definition of ekphrasis—to descriptions of works of art. Literal/literary as terms for ekphrasis, on the other hand, refer to verbal encounters with visual phenomena broadly defined, and the distinction between the two lies in the rhetorical effect, and not in the artistry of the visual object. Literal ekphrasis attempts to render its visual object—person, place, action, or work of art—with synesthetic details, facilitating visualization in the mind and bordering on voyeuristic spectacle; literary ekphrasis pushes the limits of descriptive language, creating verbal images that do not translate into mental ones.

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80 Andrew Laird, "Sounding out Ecphrasis: Art and Text in Catullus 64", 18.
81 Andrew Laird, "Sounding out Ecphrasis: Art and Text in Catullus 64", 19.
82 Andrew Laird, "Sounding out Ecphrasis: Art and Text in Catullus 64", 29.

More specifically, in recent approaches to medieval ekphrasis, we find differentiations being made between various forms of ekphrasis. Larry Scanlon looks at ekphrasis in late medieval poetry through the lens of Barthes' essay "The Reality Effect" to identify continuities between premodern ekphrasis and modern realism. Scanlon argues that "Ekphrasis conflates its mimetic impulse with its insistence on the materiality of the signifier. It thus anticipates both ends of the modern trajectory Barthes suggests, that is, from referential plentitude to referential emptiness [… or,] the mimetic and the deconstructive."[83] Addressing the twelve foundations of precious stones in *Pearl's* description of the New Jerusalem, Scanlon insists on their materiality and "their literal existence as particular precious stones."[84] The reality effect of the ekphrastic description creates a referential, mimetic plentitude, what I call literal ekphrasis, or what Scanlon calls "that part of the scene that is the way it is because that is just how it happens to be."[85] In a literal ekphrasis, even precious stones are just things. In his polemic essay on the uses of ekphrasis in Lollard writing, Bruce Holsinger focuses on the recursive and the self-referential aspects of ekphrasis—what Scanlon would call the impulse toward the deconstructive, or the ekphrastic description whose referent appears empty the closer one examines it, and what I deem to be a defining feature of literary ekphrasis. At his most dramatic, Holsinger crowns ekphrasis as "the most narcissistic mode of literary discourse" as well as "the most idolatrous of literary practices."[86] Carrying this metaphor further, Holsinger argues that:

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[83] Larry Scanlon, "Ekphrasis, Trope of the Real: or What the *Pearl*-Dreamer Saw," in *The Art of Vision*, 247-268, at 257.

[84] Larry Scanlon, "Ekphrasis, Trope of the Real," 263.

[85] Larry Scanlon, "Ekphrasis, Trope of the Real," 263.

[86] Bruce Holsinger, "Lollard Ekphrasis: Situated Aesthetics and Literary History," *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 35.1 (2005): 67-89, at 75 and 78.

> If ekphrastic writing worships at the altar of the visual arts, it does so by transforming the visual into an image of its own scripted beauty[; …] ekphrastic poetics elaborates a kind of literary hall of mirrors: a recursive self-reflexivity that is also a self-reflectivity, a mode in and by which literary language gazes at the visual as a lens upon the beauty of its own performance.[87]

This hyper-literariness and self-consciousness are the markers of literary ekphrasis, which breaks mimetic façade in bringing attention to the building blocks of its own constructed nature, a verbal showmanship so to speak.

These categorical distinctions based on rhetorical function do not appear in either Greek or Latin handbooks, but the distinctions are preserved in poetic practice of Homer, Virgil, and Ovid, whose works were analyzed and emulated in the Roman, late antique, and medieval classrooms—the latter of which lacked Homer and privileged Virgil as a model for poetic emulation. I contend that it is from *imitatio*, from emulating the works of classical poets, particularly Virgil, that medieval poets learned to distinguish between literal and literary ekphrasis, without the help of technical terminology. In stressing the values of *imitatio*, the Roman, late antique, and medieval classrooms exhibit very similar practices. Canonical works by Homer and Virgil were combed for poetic elements that could be appropriated, serving as raw material for new texts.[88] Through repeated practice of *imitatio*, medieval curriculum similarly encouraged internalization of classical poetic models.[89] As Rita Copeland has demonstrated in her study of Horace's *Ars poetica* in the medieval classroom, "Medieval grammar students were taught how to compose by imitating the examples from

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[87] Bruce Holsinger, "Lollard Ekphrasis," 75.

[88] Ruth Webb, *Ekphrasis, Imagination, and Persuasion*, 23; Alexandru N. Cizek, *Imitatio et tractatio: die literarisch-rhetorischen Grundlagen der Nachahmung in Antike und Mittelalter* (Tübingen: M. Niemeyer Verlag, 1994); Rita Copeland, *Rhetoric, Hermeneutics, and Translation in the Middle Ages: Academic Traditions and Vernacular Texts* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

[89] Manfred Kraus, "Grammatical and Rhetorical Exercises," 82.

classical poetry, which they also expounded for grammatical usage. The *Ars poetica* [by Horace] served to reinforce these exercises, with its teaching on decorum, the faults of style, coherence of narrative, poetic license, and imitation of traditional materials."[90] I argue that in learning *descriptio* through the practice of *imitatio* medieval poets perceived the difference between literal and literary ekphrasis, learning the fine distinctions through emulation of Virgil's *Aeneid*, which was a standard classroom text.[91] In the process of extensive engagement with the *Aeneid*, medieval poets constructed a poetic genealogy with the classical ones, positioning themselves as their direct successors, and forming a literary *translatio studii et imperii*.

Virgil's Murals and the Chaucerian Ekphrasis

Chaucer's most extended engagement with ekphrasis occurs in Book I of *House of Fame*. In describing a series of paintings, the Chaucerian narrator/dreamer[92] reinterprets the *Aeneid*, with a special focus on Dido, in what Marilynn Desmond and Christopher Baswell have categorized as Chaucer's "Romance of Dido."[93] As the narrator walks through a gallery of

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[90] Rita Copeland, "Horace's *Ars poetica* in the Medieval Classroom and Beyond: The Horizons of Ancient Precept," in Frank Grady and Andrew Galloway, eds., *Answerable Style: The Idea of the Literary in Medieval England* (Columbus, OH: Ohio State University Press, 2013), 15-33, at 20.

[91] On pedagogical uses of Virgil's *Aeneid* along with various commentaries see Christopher Baswell, *Virgil in Medieval England: Figuring the* Aeneid *from the Twelfth Century to Chaucer* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 41-83; on the popularity of Virgil's *Aeneid* as a grammar school text see Manfred Kraus, "Grammatical and Rhetorical Exercises," 66-67. Baswell identifies a commentary by Servius, while Kraus focuses on Priscian's *Partitiones*, as a widely used classroom commentaries on Virgil's epic.

[92] Claire Barbetti argues that medieval dream vision as a genre is intrinsically ekphrastic. Claire Barbetti, *Ekphrastic Medieval Visions: A New Discussion in Interarts Theory* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011).

[93] Marilynn Desmond, *Reading Dido: Gender, Textuality, and the Medieval Aeneid* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994), 128-51; Christopher Baswell, *Virgil in Medieval England*, 220-55.

images in the glass temple dedicated to Venus,[94] he recounts the events from the first three books of the *Aeneid*, constantly reinforcing the truth of his words with the authority of visual evidence using various formulations of "there sawgh I." The statue of Venus and the tempest at sea are particularly vivid. But the descriptive narration pulls away from the paintings when he reaches the events of Virgil's Book IV. When confronted with the love between Dido and Aeneas, the narrator admits his limitations: his "words" fail to "peynte" (l.246).[95] From this point forward, the narrator informs the ekphrastic Virgilian text with Ovidian alternatives and disrupts the classical storyline with a discussion of Dido as an exemplum. Chaucer's literary ekphrasis celebrates a multiplicity of narrative styles, while the images disappear beneath the layers of rhetorical showmanship.

The texts most available to Chaucer as sources for his extended ekphrasis would have been Virgil's *Aeneid*, possibly mediated through medieval translations and commentaries.[96] One such influential commentary, a twelfth-century treatise by Bernardus Silvestris, introduces Virgil's *Aeneid* as an imitation of Homer.[97] Although Bernardus, like Chaucer, had no direct access to the Greek Homeric texts, both medieval writers viewed the relationship between Homer and Virgil as predicated on *imitatio*, with Virgil rewriting the Greek epic for the greater glory of the Roman Empire. Although Bernardus views the literal level of plot of the *Aeneid* as nothing more than "verbal ornament," he nevertheless praises

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[94] David K. Coley reads Chaucer's *House of Fame* alongside surviving examples of medieval stained glass narrative cycles, contextualizing both literary and visual art within networks of aristocratic patronage. David K. Coley, "'Withyn a temple ymad of glas': Glazing, Glossing, and Patronage in Chaucer's *House of Fame*," *The Chaucer Review* 45.1 (2010): 59-84.

[95] All quotations from *House of Fame* are taken from *The Riverside Chaucer*, ed. Larry D. Benson, 3rd edn. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1987).

[96] Christopher Baswell, *Virgil in Medieval England*, 15-40.

[97] Earl G. Schreiber and Thomas E. Maresca, trans. and eds., *Bernardus Silvestris, Commentary on the First Six Books of Virgil's* Aeneid, (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1979), 3.

the poetic prowess that went into its composition and endorses any attempt by later poets to imitate Virgil. [98]

While the Shield of Aeneas may be the most studied of Virgil's ekphrases, Virgil first uses the device in Book I of the *Aeneid* to describe the murals on the walls of a Carthaginian temple dedicated to Juno.[99] Veiled behind Venus' protective cloud, Aeneas gazes upon the murals without being observed by the locals. As the epic speaker describes the paintings, he presents Aeneas' emotional response to the images as an affective guide for the reader: "Sic ait, atque animum pictura pascit inani,/ multa gemens, largoque umectat flumine voltum" ["With many tears and sighs he feeds/ his soul on what is nothing but a picture"] (*Aeneid*, Book I, ll.464-5; Mandelbaum, ll.658-9).[100] The visual program of the murals is designed to elicit sympathy for the Trojan side of the conflict. The murals confirm that the Trojan War, which represents Aeneas' past, constitutes a worthy subject for memorialization in public art, recognizable as much to strangers as it is to Trojan refugees.[101] Most relevant to Chaucer's project in the *House of Fame* is this immortalization of Trojan fame and suffering in poetry and painting through notional ekphrasis: "videt Iliacas ex ordine pugnas,/ bellaque iam fama totum volgata per orbem" ["He sees the wars of Troy set out in order:/ the battles famous

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[98] Bernardus Silvestris, *Commentary on the First Six Books*, 4.

[99] Stephen G. Nichols, "Ekphrasis, Iconoclasm, and Desire," 133-166; Christopher Baswell, *Virgil in Medieval England*, 230-36; Michael C. J. Putnam, *Virgil's Epic Designs: Ekphrasis in the* Aeneid (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 23-54; John M. Bowers, "Speaking Images? Iconographic Criticism and Chaucerian Ekphrasis," in *The Art of Vision*, 55-76.

[100] J. B. Greenough, ed., *Bucolics, Aeneid, and Georgics Of Vergil* (Boston, 1900), made available online through the Perseus Project <http://data.perseus.org/texts/urn:cts:latinLit:phi0690.phi003.perseus-lat1>. All references to the Latin text of Virgil's *Aeneid* refer to this edition by line number. All references to the English translation refer to Allen Mandelbaum's verse translation by line number, unless otherwise specified. Allen Mandelbaum, trans., *The Aeneid of Virgil* (New York: Bantam Classics, 2004).

[101] For a recent discussion of emotion in Virgil see Charles Russell Stone, "'And sodeynly he wax therwith astoned': Virgilian Emotion and Images of Troy in Chaucer's *Troilus*," *The Review of English Studies* 64.266 (2013): 574-593.

now through all the world"] (*Aeneid*, Book I, ll.456-7; Mandelbaum, ll.647-8). Trojan fame and suffering are irrevocably linked in both the larger epic and in the ekphrastic description of the murals, functioning in Virgil as a *mise-en-abyme*. At the same time, this worldwide fame pivots on the concepts of *translatio* and *imitatio*, connecting Homer and Virgil as well as anyone else who participates in the retelling of the Matter of Troy.

The two competing interests in this Virgilian ekphrasis are "pictura inani" and "fama totum volgata per orbem." Bernardus Silvestris insists on the deceptive quality of all human-made images and disregards the ekphrastic descriptions, labeling them as "temporal goods."[102] If the images are indeed empty, as Bernardus would have us believe, how can they serve as a medium for everlasting fame? Can images be both lifeless and eternal at the same time? Virgil ponders these questions in an extended ekphrasis, wherein he endows empty pictures with temporality and pathos. He uses a combination of literal and literary ekphrasis to activate the images and establish empathy for his main character. In the mode of literal ekphrasis, Virgil provides us with spatial references and synesthetic cues to bring us into the world of battle and human pain. Deploying literary ekphrasis, Virgil establishes Aeneas as an intermediary between the images and the epic's audience. References to Aeneas' acts of observation, his tears, sighs, and occasional exclamations remove the audience from the tableaux and contextualize the images as a tragic prehistory of the epic's hero.

Temporal markers and references to events that precede and follow the episodes depicted in the murals infuse the images with temporality of narrative. At the same time, the spatiality of the tableaux is reinforced through figurative imagery: even lifeless bodies of Hector and Troilus appear to be in constant motion as, respectively, the first is dragged three

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[102] Bernardus Silvestris, *Commentary on the First Six Books*, 13.

times around the walls of Troy, and the second is pulled backwards through the dust. References to multiple temporalities and bodies in motion threaten to give life to the 'pictura inani', while Aeneas' exclamations directly speak for the paintings, attesting to their truth value as history, and their emotional impact. The Virgilian ekphrasis becomes especially vivid when describing Penthesilea.[103] On the level of language, Virgil simulates immediacy through his use of present tense active verbs. The action of the painting is frozen in the eternal present, grammatically distinct from the epic past tense of the poem's historical narrative. In this prime example of how voyeuristic literal ekphrasis can be, our intermediary Aeneas seems to disappear together with any references to the fact that he is looking at a wall painting. We are asked to envision her semi-naked body as she moves in battle. And, at the same time, in the mode of literary ekphrasis, we are given a glimpse of her state of mind: the narrator communicates to us her agitation and determination, attributing interiority to the "pictura inani" without actually speaking for the silent image.

This voyeuristic quality of literal ekphrasis extends to the very first description of Dido, which immediately follows that of Penthesilea.[104] There is a slippage between an ekphrastic description of the murals and a description of Dido's beautiful form. While Aeneas is still mesmerized by the paintings, the epic narrator turns to look at Dido, who is entering the Temple of Juno. The superlative 'pulcherrima' ['the most beautiful'] begs comparison either with the other youths in her company or with the images in the tableaux. We are asked to envision Dido's 'forma'—her appearance, her figure, her shape, her form— as the most beautiful image in the gallery. Dido is thus inscribed into a series of paintings that represent Aeneas' past and the lamentable fame of Troy, foreshadowing that like Troy

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[103] *Aeneid*, Book I, ll.490-3; Mandelbaum, Book I, ll.693-7.
[104] *Aeneid*, Book I, 494-7; Mandelbaum, Book I, 698-701.

she too will be remembered as a tragic ruin Aeneas leaves behind. Though the most beautiful

of all the images, Dido nevertheless becomes yet another 'pictura inani', open to voyeuristic

gazes of literal ekphrasis.

This slippage between a description of a painted image and that of a female form is

collapsed in Chaucer's *House of Fame*, where Dido crosses over into the pictorial plane,

becoming the subject of a series of imagetexts.[105] In his dream state, Chaucer's narrator

enters the Temple of Venus, the walls of which are covered in "moo ymages" (l.121), "moo

curiouse portreytures,/ And queynte maner of figures/ Of olde werk" (ll.125-7) than he has

ever seen. The repeated comparatives "moo" ask us to consider this passage in relation to

Virgil's ekphrasis, suggesting a competition between the classical text and its medieval

imitatio. As the narrator/dreamer orients himself in this hall of images, he comes across an

engraving – "writen on a table of bras" (l.142) – with the opening lines of Virgil's *Aeneid*

translated into English:

> I wol now synge, yif I kan,
> The armes and also the man
> That first cam, thurgh his destinee,
> Fugityf of Troy contree,
> In Itayle, with ful moche pyne
> Unto the strondes of Lavyne. (ll.143-148).

The visual quality of written language as an inscription blends almost seamlessly with the

series of imagetexts that the narrator describes. Variations of phrases "sawgh I", "And I

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[105] In deploying a term like "imagetext," I am following W. J. T. Mitchell's designation for "composite, synthetic works (or concepts) that combine image and text." W. J. T. Mitchell, "Beyond Comparison: Picture, Text, and Method," in *Picture Theory*, 83-107, at 89, note 9. I am particularly interested in the ambiguity of Chaucer's language in the lines "there sawgh I graven" and "see hyt peynted." Written language can be engraved and or painted as part of the tableaux. The narrator experiences the entire temple as part of his larger dream vision, which makes the entire experience visual. At the same time, he writes down what he sees, translating the visual experience into a textual form.

saugh next", "there sawgh I graven", and "see hyt peynted" are reiterated throughout the 350-line ekphrasis, confounding the categorical distinctions between visual and verbal representation, as both are experienced visually by the narrator and conveyed to the reader through a purely textual medium. The Chaucerian tableaux thematize the dynamic relationship between word and image in ekphrasis as a *translatio studii et imperii*: Aeneas' flight from Troy to Italy, captured in this liminal moment between his doomed Trojan past and his glorious imperial future, becomes a model for trans-historical relations between Classical Antiquity and Chaucer's England.

Chaucer's dreamer occupies a narratorial position that Virgil splits into two in the *Aeneid*—the omniscient third person epic speaker and the limited character Aeneas. Like the epic speaker, the dreamer stresses the superb quality of the decorative features in the temple in the mode of literal ekphrasis. Also like the epic speaker, the dreamer determines the sequence in which he describes the imagetexts. But the dreamer is also like Aeneas, for he infuses the descriptions with his own emotional reactions to them. The affective relationship between Aeneas and the Trojan tableaux in the Temple of Juno serves as a model for the dreamer's emotional responses as he empathizes with the plight of fallen Troy and the hardships endured by the Trojan refugees.[106] Chaucer's dreamer universalizes these affective ties between image and viewer, and extends them to the relationship between text and reader, explicitly telling us how to experience narrative art: "Ther saugh I such tempeste aryse/ That every herte myght agryse/ To see hyt peynted on the wal" (ll.209-11). Dreamer as an everyman cannot remain indifferent, and neither should we. As moments of literal

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[106] On the dangers of rhetorical empathy in Chaucer's *House of Fame* see Thomas Hahn, "Don't Cry for Me, Augustinus: Dido and the Dangers of Empathy," in Fiona Somerset and Nicholas Watson, eds., *Truth & Tales: Cultural Mobility and Medieval Media* (Columbus, OH: Ohio State University Press, 2015), 41-59.

ekphrasis, these affective exhortations establish a bond between the speaker and the reader, helping the latter visualize and respond to the image on both cognitive and emotional levels.

With the introduction of Dido, Chaucer's narrator pulls away from the imagetexts almost entirely. Unlike the epic speaker in Virgil's *Aeneid* who simulates a voyeuristic experience of Dido through literal ekphrasis, Chaucer's narrator retreats into the highly textual space of literary ekphrasis, admitting the limitations of poetic discourse as a conduit for the emotional experience of love:

> What shulde I speke more queynte,
> Or peyne me my words peynte
> To speke of love? Hyt wol not be;
> I kan not of that faculte. (ll.245-8)

When confronted with the love between Dido and Aeneas, the narrator begins to mix metaphors before finally admitting his failure as a story teller. His words cannot paint love, whether visually on a manuscript page or textually through figurative language, for he claims a lack of experiential knowledge of the subject. He makes excuses for his failure in the form of *occupatio*—"Hyt were a long proces to telle,/ And over-long for you to dwelle" (ll.251-2), and minor attempts at description, but ultimately settles for summarizing Book IV of the *Aeneid* as a sequence of actions before switching to commentary on the events. In the mode of literary ekphrasis, the narrator speaks for the imagetexts, providing us with imagined conversations between Dido and Aeneas. His commentaries break the linearity of narrative and shatter the illusion of an atemporal and silent painting, looking ahead to Aeneas' betrayal of Dido and her eventual suicide while purportedly describing an engraved imagetext of Dido accepting Aeneas as she would a husband.

But even his commentaries are thoroughly grounded in image-text relations. The tragedy of Dido and Aeneas, according to the Chaucerian dreamer, is a tragedy of misrepresentation. While Aeneas recounts his hardships to Dido and swears that his story is true, Dido empathizes with his verbal narrative and assumes that a speaker of poignant truths must himself be honest:

> As he hir swor; and hereby [she] demed
> That he was good, for he such semed.
> Allas! what harm doth apparence,
> Whan hit is fals in existence! (ll.263-6)

In the end, both words and images prove to be unreliable, and neither words nor images can serve as guarantors of truth. When pleasant outward appearance fails as an index of inner goodness, and verbal oaths are broken in an utter failure of troth, the narrator/dreamer switches to a mode of complaint, resorting to a verbal articulation of emotion. This diatribe against fallibility of the senses echoes Bernardus Silvestris' warnings regarding 'pictura inani', which as temporal goods are never guaranteed to be what they may seem.

In speaking for Dido, the narrator eclipses her visual presence, constructing an entirely verbal narrative for the silent image. In Chaucer's complaint of Dido, her life is envisioned as a text to be read and sung, recorded for posterity in a textual medium that allows for a wide dissemination geographically and linguistically:

> "O wel-awey that I was born!
> For thorgh yow is my name lorn,
> And alle myn actes red and songe
> Over al thys lond, on every tonge,
> O wikke Fame!—for ther nys
> Nothing so swift, lo, as she is!" (ll.345-50)

Just as the Virgilian Dido is translated through literal ekphrasis from human woman into a silent image open to voyeuristic gazes (like the objects in the murals), the Chaucerian Dido, whose sentimental image threatens the narrator/dreamer into verbal impotency, is transformed through literary ekphrasis into an exemplum.

Both modes of ekphrasis serve as a means of containment. Interarts relations criticism has long treated poetry as masculine and painting as feminine. W. J. T. Mitchell theorizes the gender relation between masculine language and feminine visual art: "If a woman is 'pretty as a picture' (namely silent and available to the gaze), it is not surprising that pictures will be treated as feminine objects in their own right and that violations of the stereotype (ugliness, loquaciousness) will be perceived as troublesome."[107] While I hesitate to draw such reductive binary distinctions, the gendering of the described object often happens to be feminine (like Keats' Grecian urn as the "unravish'd bride of quietness"). The phallic gaze objectifies the image, and through literal ekphrasis the male speaker invites the audience to participate voyeuristically in viewing the image as spectacle. The hegemonic power of literary ekphrasis erases all possibility of agency of the art object by super-imposing a poetic narrative onto an otherwise silent work of art. The art object can no longer exert power through visuality and ultimately disappears beneath the multiple layers of poetic cooption. Thus, while posing as a translation between the arts, ekphrasis ultimately celebrates the masculine mode of poetry, eclipsing any agency the feminine art object may have had.

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[107] W. J. T. Mitchell, "Ekphrasis and the Other," in *Picture Theory*, 163; see also Mary Olson, "Speaking Walls: Ekphrasis in Chaucer's *House of Fame*," *Enarratio* 14 (2007): 118-138, at 120-21.

The Shield of Aeneas and the Shield of Gawain

The Fall of Troy frame narrative in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* anchors the Middle English romance in a recuperative moment that rises from the ashes of a burning city:

> Siþen þe sege and þe assaut watz sesed at Troye,
> þe borȝ brittened and brent to brondez and askez,
> þe tulk þat þe trammes of tresoun þer wroȝt
> Watz tried for his tricherie, þe trewest on erthe:
> Hit watz Ennias þe athel, and his highe kynde,
> þat siþen depreced prouinces, and patrounes bicome
> Welneȝe of al þe wele in þe west iles.
>   […]
> And fer ouer þe French flod Felix Brutus
> On mony bonkkes ful brode Bretayn he settez
>   wyth wynne,
>   Where werre and wrake and wonder
>   Bi syþez hatz wont þerinne,
>   And oft boþe blysse and blunder
>   Ful skete hatz skyfted synne.
>   […]
> Bot of alle þat here bult, of Bretaygne kynges,
> Ay watz Arthur þe hendest, as I haf herde telle. (*SGGK* ll.1-26)[108]

The epic war has ended. In lamenting over the image of fallen Troy, the Homeric storyline gives way to the Virgilian one as Aeneas escapes the flames and sets sail across the sea to found a new empire in Italy. These opening alliterative verses outline the geographic trajectory of *translatio studii et imperii*: the rapid westward movement stops in Britain, home to Aeneas' grandson Brutus, with the epic narration ("werre and wrake") giving way to romance ("blysse and blunder"). The Virgilian frame positions the Middle English romance

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[108] J. R. R. Tolkien and E. V. Gordon, eds., *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, 2nd edn, rev. by, Norman Davis (New York: Clarendon Press, 1967). All further references to the Middle English text of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* will refer to this edition parenthetically by line number.

as its genealogical successor: Arthur and his nephew Gawain are the descendants of Aeneas, Camelot is the new Troy, and English vernacular is replacing classical Latin.

Much controversy has surrounded these opening lines as the Middle English grammar leaves the identity of the "þe tulk [who]… tresoun þer wroȝt" unclear. Sylvia Federico (among others) identifies Aeneas as both "þe athel" and "þe tulk," a noble founder of Rome (and indirectly Britain) and the traitor of Troy, arguing that "He had to be the latter in order to be the former."[109] Russell Rutter negotiates the conflicting readings of Aeneas in late medieval England, from the vision of Aeneas as a traitor as propagated in the pseudo-historical 'eyewitness' accounts of Dares Phrygias and Dictys Cretensis, which gained literary currency via Guido delle Collonne, to the allegorized version of Aeneas as everyman in medieval Latin commentary tradition of Fulgentius and Bernardus Silvestris.[110] Federico pushes the fraught nature of this dual identity further, identifying moral shortcomings among other English founders like Brutus and Arthur, all of whom had committed atrocities not so different from Aeneas's betrayals. Reading Gawain as a direct descendant of Aeneas, Federico argues that Gawain is simultaneously a knight of Arthur's court as constructed via his heraldic emblem, the pentangle, and a man who carries the burden of the Trojan legacy. She invites a reading of Gawain's shield as a parallel to his Virgilian ancestor's, seeing it as "an insistent sign of more than [their] personal identity." Like medieval Aeneas' body, Gawain's body becomes a contested textual site, "always available for multiple

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[109] Sylvia Federico, *New Troy: Fantasies of Empire in the Late Middle Ages* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), 34.

[110] Rutter argues for a reading of Gawain as an Aeneas-like everyman, progressing from childhood to maturity, doing their best to uphold certain virtues and values, but ultimately recognized as fallible in Russell Rutter, "The Treason of Aeneas and the Mythographers of Vergil: The Classical Tradition in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*," in E. L. Risden, ed., Sir Gawain and the Green Knight *and the Classical Tradition* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, Inc., 2006), 30-48.

interpretations by a wide range of readers."[111] Gawain's pentangle as an *imitatio* of Virgilian ekphrasis has proven to be equally elusive as decades of scholars have attempted to pin down its non-iconic meaning.[112]

Both literal and literary forms of ekphrasis or *descriptio* appear in Virgil's depiction of the Shield of Aeneas [Book VIII, ll.370-453; ll.626-728].[113] The passage begins with Venus pleading with her husband to create special armor for her son, and continues by describing in vivid detail the metallurgical process of its creation. These two scenes, the seduction and the act of forging weaponry, are prime examples of literal ekphrasis. The poet provides all the sensual cues for the reader/listener to envision Venus in all her beauty, whose appearance and voice physically stimulate her husband. Vulcan's forge is described just as vividly, creating a sensation of heat and metal. But the description of the shield and the visual narrative engraved upon it are achieved through the device of literary ekphrasis, which resists mimetic visualization. The material form of the shield, its beauty and function as a defensive weapon of classical warfare, are subordinated to the narrative of cultural

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[111] Sylvia Federico, *New Troy*, 38.

[112] R.W. Ackerman, "Gawain's Shield: Penitential Doctrine in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*," *Anglia* 76 (1958): 254-65; Richard Hamilton Green, "Gawain's Shield and the Quest for Perfection," *English Literary History* 29 (1962): 121-39; John A. Burrow, *A Reading of* Sir Gawain and the Green Knight (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1965); A. Kent Hieatt, "Sir Gawain: Pentangle, Luf-Lace, Numerical Structure," *Papers on Language and Literature* 4 (1968): 339-59; Gerald Morgan, "The Significance of the Pentangle Symbolism in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*," *Modern Language Review* 74 (1979): 769-90; Stephanie J. Hollis, "The Pentangle Knight: *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*," *The Chaucer Review* 15.3 (1981): 267-81; A. D. Horgan, "Gawain's *pure pentaungel* and the Virtue of Faith," *Medium Aevum* 56.2 (1987): 310-16; Geraldine Heng, "Feminine Knots and the Other: *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*," *PMLA* 106 (1991): 500-14; Eugenie R. Freed, "'Quy the Pentangel Apendes . . .': The Pentangle in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*," *Theoria: A Journal of Social and Political Theory* 77, Special Issue: Aesthetics and Ideology (1991): 125-41; Laura F. Hodges, "'Syngne,' 'Conysaunce,' 'Deuys': Three Pentangles in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*," *Arthuriana* 5.4 (1995): 22-31; Susan Powell, "Untying the Knot: Reading *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*," in Susan Powell and Jeremy J. Smith, eds., *New Perspectives on Middle English Texts: A Festschrift for R. A. Waldron* (Rochester, NY: D.S. Brewer, 2000), 55-74; Peter Whiteford, "Rereading Gawain's Five Wits," *Medium Aevum* 73.2 (2004): 225-34; Jamie McKinstry, *Middle English Romance and the Craft of Memory* (Rochester, NY: D.S. Brewer, 2015).

[113] Michael C. J. Putnam, *Virgil's Epic Designs*, particularly chapter "The Shield of Aeneas," pp.119-188.

superiority and imperial ambition imbued in the poetic language. The political message, intended for Virgil's reader and utterly incomprehensible to Aeneas, inserts the temporal present of the audience into an eternal historical past of epic time. Through the deployment of literary ekphrasis, the poet occludes the visual object, which disappears beneath the layers of political discourse. And therein lies the difference between the two types of ekphrasis: in describing the seduction and the forge, Virgil uses literal ekphrasis to create a vivid image in words, providing all the emotional and representational cues for readers/listeners to recreate the images in their minds; but the object introduced into the narrative using literary ekphrasis resists visualization—the shield does not and cannot exist outside the verbal medium if it were to satisfy the temporal, spatial, and ideological burden fulfilled by literary ekphrasis.

Attention to internal temporality further distinguishes between the two types of ekphrasis. A vivid description or literal ekphrasis functions through synesthesia to draw the audience into the narrative moment, inviting them to witness the action, feel the heat, hear the noise, etc. By contrast, literary ekphrasis removes the audience from narrative time entirely. While both types may function as a pause, a brief respite from narrative movement, literary ekphrasis introduces a new temporality, quite separate from the rest of the story line. George Kurman compares this function of literary ekphrasis to epic simile: "both ecphrasis and the long simile involve the presentation of tableaux not at all or only remotely related to the main narrative of the epic, and both serve to slow the pace of the narrative in characteristic epic retardation. Both devices, in other words, provide a break in the narrative

by evoking a figure beyond it."[114] In its narrative function as simile or metaphor, literary ekphrasis becomes a temporal *translatio*, removing the audience to another time and space.

The ekphrastic descriptions of Gawain's armor and shield [ll.566-618; ll.619-669] combine literal and literary forms of ekphrasis found in Virgil. Nicholas Haydock identifies Gawain's shield as a figural echo of the Virgilian one, arguing that "The *Gawain* poet does not imitate his source in the *Aeneid* so much as he makes an ethical translation of its contents from ancient to Christian culture, a *translatio virtutum*."[115] The rich detail of the literal ekphrasis used to describe Gawain's armor is so vivid that it allows Michael Lacy to perform a comparison with contemporary armor handbooks and archeological objects, and to conclude that it is consistent with late fourteenth-century practice.[116] In describing Gawain's inner perfection through heraldic symbols, the poet reinterprets the Shield of Aeneas into a Christian Shield of Gawain, using the distancing effects of literary ekphrasis. Here, the enigmatic shield stands in direct contrast to the vividness of the arming ceremony, as a juxtaposition of literary and literal ekphrases. In the arming *topos*, we are invited to envision Gawain as the quintessence of a knight in shining armor; but the more we read or hear about his shield and all the devotional practices and theological virtues imbued into it, the more the image dissipates. The narrator insists on describing the shield at length, deliberately interfering with narrative time: "I am intent you tell, though tarry hit me should" (l.624). Not only do the descriptions of the Virgin Mary on the inside and the pentangle on the outside

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[114] George Kurman, "Ecphrasis in Epic Poetry," *Comparative Literature* 26.1 (1974): 1-13, at 5.

[115] Nicholas Haydock, "Treasonous Founders and Pious Seducers: Aeneas, Gawain, and Aporetic Romance," in Sir Gawain and the Green Knight *and the Classical Tradition*, 82-111, at 100; Derek Brewer notes parallels between the arming *topos* in *SGGK* and those found in the *Aeneid* as well as other epics in "Armour II: The Arming *Topos* as Literature," in Derek Brewer and Jonathan Gibson, eds., *A Companion to the* Gawain-*poet* (Rochester, NY: D.S. Brewer, 2007), 175-179.

[116] Michael Lacy, "Armour I," in *A Companion to the* Gawain-*poet*, 165-173.

of the shield slow down the narrative pace, but they also introduce salvation history and apocalyptic eschatology into romance time. The pentangle, or "the endless knot" (l.630), and its long list of theological associations including the five wounds of Christ and the five joys of the Virgin, add a duty of "pité" (l.654, 'pity' or 'piety')[117] to the courtly and military obligations of knighthood. In defying mimetic representation, the shield thematizes Gawain's failure: as an image introduced into the narrative using literary ekphrasis, the Shield of Gawain fails to signify as a material object just like Gawain ultimately fails to uphold the standards of *trawþe*.

Sarah Stanbury's monograph on descriptive poetics in the poems of the Cotton Nero A.x manuscript (of which *SGGK* is the last item) addresses the mechanics of perception and the hermeneutics of focalized description.[118] In many ways, what Stanbury identifies as a detailed focalized description amounts to a subcategory of what Scanlon calls the 'reality effect' (borrowing terminology from Roland Barthes) in *Pearl*, and what I call literal ekphrasis. Like Scanlon, Stanbury applies the term ekphrasis only in the narrow sense as a poetic description of a work of art. For Stanbury, in *SGGK* only the description of Castle Hautdesert [ll.763-806] warrants a discussion as both an ekphrastic passage and as focalized description, organized around the lines of sight of an intra-diegetic spectator. While Stanbury argues that this type of description is not explained in manuals on poetry, its effect constitutes a cinematic visualization by the reader, taking in the castle the way Gawain does, first from a distance and then up close, looking from the ground upwards. The spatial and architectural details provided in this description enable the construction of mental images,

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[117] A duty of piety as a descriptor for Gawain further associates him with his Trojan ancestor who is repeatedly described as "pius Aeneas" in Virgil's text.

[118] Sarah Stanbury, *Seeing the* Gawain-*poet: Description and the Act of Perception* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1991).

which is the goal of *descriptio* and literal ekphrasis. In fact, the details are so vivid that Michael Thompson uses the description of Castle Hautdesert to posit a composition date for the poem after the 1360s based on significant architectural changes introduced into the construction of late medieval English castles.[119] Interestingly, Stanbury does not discuss the structures of visuality in the description of Gawain's shield. This prime example of literary ekphrasis deviates from the descriptive practices she examines in astute detail elsewhere in *SGGK* and other poems in the same manuscript. In fact, the organizing principles of the pentangle ekphrasis are closer to the Chaucerian ekphrases, which Stanbury deems to be disorganized and "spatially indeterminate."[120] This resistance to visual focalization and spatial determinacy is precisely the verbal quality of literary ekphrasis that has captured the imaginations of classical and medieval poets.

The *Gawain*-poet and Chaucer distinguish between the two types of descriptive strategies in poetic practice, implementing literal ekphrasis when wishing to achieve a high level of mimesis and deploying literary ekphrasis when the visual image is secondary to the poetic message. These distinctions are not delineated in either Greek or Latin treatises, as the handbooks on rhetoric and poetry only emphasize the mimetic qualities of literal ekphrasis or *descriptio*. The absence of theoretical discussion of literary ekphrasis as an ideological use of visual language in late antique and medieval rhetorical treatises and the unexplained presence of it in medieval literary practice indicate that poetic learning happened through other pedagogical means. Medieval poets turned to Virgil's *Aeneid* as a text privileged for

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[119] Michael Thompson, "Castles," in *A Companion to the* Gawain-*poet*, 119-130. Thompson among others suggests specific castles as inspiration for Hautdesert based on the detailed literal ekphrasis.
[120] Sarah Stanbury, *Seeing the* Gawain-*poet*, 121.

poetic *imitatio* (inside and outside of the classroom setting) and learned to recognize the uses of literal and literary ekphrasis without recourse to theoretical frameworks, consequently inserting their work into a literary *translatio studii et imperii.*

CHAPTER 2
TRISTAN AND ISOLDE
IN MANUSCRIPTS AND IVORY

The Tryst beneath the Tree, also known as the Orchard Rendezvous, has become an iconic episode in our modern appreciation of the medieval *Tristan and Isolde* romance (Figures 1, 12, 13). The adulterous lovers meet secretly at night by a fountain underneath a tree. King Mark is stationed in the tree, ready to catch them *in flagrante delicto*. Unfortunately for the king, the lovers notice his presence and convince him of their innocence through dissembling speech and modest behavior. The ubiquity of the scene in visual form has led to a fairly simplistic conclusion that by synecdoche the scene represents the legend as a whole.[121] The central issue is a seeming contradiction: Anglo-Norman, and to a lesser extent continental, romance is generally uncomfortable with narratives of adultery, yet the frequency with which the Tryst is rendered in ivory and other media suggests that visual treatments of romance are less restricted by generic codes than their textual counterparts. My analysis of the Tryst beneath the Tree as it is rendered on fourteenth-century French ivory caskets posits an increasingly divergent relationship between artistic and literary interpretations of the *Tristan* legend, thereby challenging this modern understanding. While the medieval literary narratives treat the scene as one of multiple instances of deception in a narrative inevitably ending in death, the visual representations of the Tryst in ivory isolate the scene and position it alongside

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[121] I use the term "legend" as the broadest category that includes oral, written, and visual iterations of the *Tristan and Isolde* romance. In doing so, I am following the distinctions outlined succinctly by Molly C. Robinson in "*Tristan*: A Story of Precarious Belonging," *Tristania* 18 (1998): 1-15.

scenes from other romances, thus replacing the emphasis on tragedy and deceit with a visual portrayal of heterosexual desire.

Medieval literature and art differ in how they present the Tryst beneath the Tree episode, particularly in the amount of evidence made available to the lovers for recognizing Mark's presence at their secret rendezvous. The verse and prose romances create tension in two distinct ways. The *Tristan* verse tradition generates suspense by restricting signs of intrusion to a shadow cast by the intruder(s) either on the ground or on a water surface. Keenly aware of their surroundings, the lovers in verse romances interpret the minutest visual details as signs of danger and perform a verbal defense against accusations of sexual misconduct in order to suppress the visual evidence of wrongdoing. In the prose romances, the lovers boldly look at the source of danger, seeing a silhouette in the tree as a clear sign of intrusion. Both methods of detection rely on mediation, but to varying degrees: a shadow obliquely indicates a presence, an immaterial manifestation of a material body, while a silhouette is in itself a poorly visible material body. Unlike the literary romances, the visual interpretations provide an obvious indication of Mark's presence in the tree and double that presence by adding a reflection of Mark's face in the water. The visual composition has the lovers deceive Mark not through equivocal speeches as the verse tradition does or through shameless lies as in the prose romances, but through a careful spatial arrangement of figures and their double-meaning hand gestures. The lovers' defense is a semblance of chastity, visible to the viewers of the casket as well as to Mark.

My theoretical approach to ivory compositions adheres to the methodological precepts outlined in Herbert L. Kessler's *Seeing Medieval Art* and recent explorations of

tactility in the medieval experience of material objects.[122] Centering on this complex interplay of visuality and materiality in the Tryst episode, I argue that the shift in representation from an enigmatic shadow in literary texts to an explicit reflection in ivory has contributed to the popularization of the episode in visual form, adding a crucial fourth focal point to balance the composition. In medieval art, and particularly in low-relief ivory carvings, what was insubstantial has taken on material form, thus raising questions about the reliability of visual evidence as an access to reality. In identifying the crucial ways in which the visual programs of the *Tristan* ivory caskets diverge from the extant textual sources, I expand our scholarly understanding of the medieval concept of "ombre" in connection with the more technical vocabulary of shadows and reflections as it is used in Latin optical treatises. In doing so, I situate the *Tristan* romances in the larger context of medieval textual and material production, both of which were influenced by a changing understanding of the way human beings perceive and represent the world. I contend that any analysis of the Tryst as a visual emblem for the romance as a whole elides the rupture in narrative trajectory from verse to prose and posits a continuity where discontinuity, between verse and prose, prevails. In theorizing this shift from visual to material, I bring the *Tristan* romances into a productive conversation with Guillaume de Lorris' *Roman de la Rose*, the central episode of which questions the nature of both the visuality and the materiality of reflected images.

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[122] Herbert L. Kessler, *Seeing Medieval Art*, Rethinking the Middle Ages Series (Peterborough: Broadview Press, 2004); Jacqueline E. Jung, "The Tactile and the Visionary: Notes on the Place of Sculpture in the Medieval Religious Imagination," in Colum Hourihane, ed., *Looking Beyond: Visions, Dreams, and Insights in Medieval Art and History* (University Park: Index of Christian Art, Princeton University, and Pennsylvania State University Press, 2010), 203-40; I am also influenced by the sessions sponsored by the International Center for Medieval Art at the 47th International Congress on Medieval Studies at Kalamazoo (May 2012) which delved into visuality and materiality as ways of approximating the medieval experience of physical objects. My argument enters into a dialogue recently reopened in the essay collection Jutta Eming, Ann Marie Rasmussen, and Kathryn Starkey, eds., *Visuality and Materiality in the Story of* Tristan and Isolde (Notre-Dame: University of Notre-Dame Press, 2012). This argument had been raised previously by Helaine Newstead in "The Tryst beneath the Tree: An Episode in the *Tristan* Legend," *Romance Philology* 9 (1956): 269-84.

In this comprehensive study of the Tryst beneath the Tree I argue that, rather than collapsing into a single unified tradition of the *Tristan* legend, medieval literature and art separate chivalry from adultery, identifying them as two competing trajectories for narrative development of the *Tristan* legend, with the literary genre preferring chivalric prowess and the artistic tradition valorizing heterosexual desire even when it happens to be adulterous. As the Tryst episode became more and more popular in luxury art objects, the Tryst as a literary episode became less central in medieval romance literature, appearing toward the end of the prose cycle, if included at all. These diverging trajectories provide insight into ways romance was understood and enjoyed by its medieval audiences. While romance texts, in verse or prose, do not necessarily target a gender-specific readership, the primary audience for these ivory boxes consisted of aristocratic women,[123] in whose private possession these narrative receptacles functioned as idealized imaginings on the subject of love, representing desire as an allegory of the senses, primarily of sight and touch. While much of my argument is informed by visual programs of the illustrated *Rose* manuscripts, I would like to add a caveat by suggesting that the *Tristan* material maintained its romance identity in a uniquely mutual exploration of love and desire.

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[123] To date only one of these caskets has been traced to a specific medieval owner. The ivory casket stored at the Crakow (Krakow) Treasury and Armoury at Wawel Hill belonged to Jadwiga, a Hungarian princess who ascended to the royal throne of Poland in 1384. It is currently on display as part of an exhibition of the royal apartments Queen Jadwiga shared with her husband, royal consort Wladislaw Jagiello II, prince of Lithuania. More about Wawel Hill and its exhibits can be found on the official website <http://www.wawel.krakow.pl>. For more about Jadwiga's ownership of the multi-romance casket see Richard H. Randall, Jr., "Popular Romances Carved in Ivory," in Peter Barnet, ed., *Images in Ivory: Precious Objects of the Gothic Age* (Princeton: Detroit Institute of Art and Princeton University Press, 1997), 63-79, esp. 64. I was able to analyze high-resolution images of the Krakow casket with the help of Catherine Yvard of the Gothic Ivories Project at the Courtauld Institute of Art, London, <http://www.gothicivories.courtauld.ac.uk>.

Relationship between the Textual and Visual Sources

The textual transmission of the *Tristan* narrative is complicated by the fragmentary nature of its earliest written sources. It is generally accepted by romance scholars that the love story of Tristan and Isolde is Celtic in origin,[124] that its earliest sources were probably oral, and that the textual survivors represent patterns of oral narrative transmission. The earliest written texts are Béroul's fragmentary poem *The Romance of Tristan* (Old French, 1150–1190), to which Eilhart von Oberg's *Tristrant* (Middle High German, 1170–1190) is closely connected. Thomas of Britain's *Tristran* (Anglo-Norman, 1170–1175) represents the second narrative strand, from which derive Gottfried von Strassburg's *Tristan* (Middle High German, c.1210), *Sir Tristrem* (Middle English, 1300–1330), and *Tristrams Saga ok Isondar* (Old Norse, c.1226).[125] Marie de France's *Chevrefeuille* (Anglo-Norman, 1160s), *Folie Tristan* (Anglo-Norman, 1180–1200), and the multiple variants of the French prose *Tristan* (Old French of varying dialects, 1250–1275) represent additional strands that attach episodes to the *Tristan* legend not present in either Béroul or Thomas. These are not the origins of the stories, nor are they complete versions of the tale. Each version contains some episodes that overlap, some that make singular appearances, and some that hint at further episodes not included. Although the prose *Tristan* attempts to bring together various French sources, its narrative framework is more concerned with inscribing Tristan into the Arthurian world rather than celebrating the love between Tristan and Isolde.

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[124] In addition to Newstead's analysis of the Celtic analogues, see W. J. McCann, "*Tristan*: The Celtic and Oriental Material Re-examined," in Joan Tasker Grimbert, ed., *Tristan and Isolde: A Casebook* (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1995), 3-36.

[125] I use Gottfried's poem and the Middle English romance as Thomas-type narratives to approximate the episodes now lost in Thomas of Britain's *Tristran.*

The history of the *Tristan* legend in medieval art can be separated into narrative cycles and single-scene works that circulated sometimes together with the textual tradition, such as in manuscript illumination, but were more often visualized in non-textual media, such as in ivory and wood carvings, in textile embroideries, and on ceramic tiles. The current position in art history as articulated by Julia Walworth urges scholars to treat the visual and the literary manifestations as "essentially independent responses to the Tristan story."[126] Even when they appear in spatial proximity to textual exemplars, the artistic programs often differ significantly from the text in emphasis, tone, detail, and sometimes even in plot. The most frequently cited example of this divergence is the Forrer Casket (Cologne, c.1180–1200), now held at the British Museum, which represents one of the earliest narrative cycles of the *Tristan* legend in decorative arts (Figures 8 and 9).[127] Roughly contemporaneous with the earliest surviving written sources, the visual program of the Forrer Casket focuses on Tristan's courtly prowess as warrior, musician, and lover. The scenes chosen for depiction include Tristan's battle against Morholt, a version of the potion scene, and Tristan's successful rescue of Isolde in the harp and the rote episode. Interestingly, the Forrer Casket does not include the Tryst beneath the Tree episode, which does not become ubiquitous in visual compositions until the fourteenth century.[128] The visual representation of the *Tristan* as found on the Forrer Casket constitutes a type of narrative production that thrived

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[126] Julia Walworth, "Tristan in Medieval Art," in *Tristan and Isolde: A Casebook*, 255-99, at 257. Walworth is building upon Hella Frühmorgen-Voss's work in "Tristan und Isolde in mittelalterlichen Bildzeugnissen," *Deutsche Vierteljahrsschrift fur Literaturwissenschaft und Geistesgeschichte* 47 (1973): 645-63. Earlier in the twentieth century, Roger Sherman Loomis and Laura Hibbard Loomis explored a similar position in their survey volume *Arthurian Legends in Medieval Art*, Modern Language Association of America Monograph Series (New York: Modern Language Association of America, 1938).

[127] In describing the Forrer casket, Michael Camille notes the disparity between the visual narrative and the extant written versions and attributes it to the influence of oral versions. Michael Camille, *The Medieval Art of Love: Objects and Subjects of Desire* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1998), 16.

[128] One of the side panels does have an image of the two lovers by a tree, enclosed in an architectural motif, but there is no sign of intrusion. The scene may constitute the beginnings of the Tryst composition.

alongside written and oral manifestations of the romance, one in which buyers and consumers of romance narrative participated creatively in interpreting the story.[129] What the Forrer Casket demonstrates is that by the end of the twelfth century the *Tristan* romance had already acquired a wide variety of episodes that could be interlaced together to create a visually recognizable sequence, which functioned as a narrative in its own right without depending on preexisting written or oral texts.[130]

In the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, the production of narrative luxury objects increased, including the manufacture of carved ivory caskets and costly illuminated manuscripts with scenes from the *Tristan* romance.[131] Written narratives of the *Tristan* legend had expanded, now accruing many more episodes not present in the twelfth-century poems. This trend becomes especially noticeable by the end of the thirteenth century with the proliferation of prose vernacular romances and the increased demand for luxury items that commodify them for private ownership. *Le roman de Tristan en prose* proved to be the most popular French version of the *Tristan* romance both in manuscript and in print, surviving

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[129] In this assertion I am aligning myself with Suzanne Lewis' stance on narrative images in medieval art: "Images can only evoke a story the viewer already knows; the narrative lies in the perception of the pictorial rhetoric of bodies, gestures, and gazes enacting the drama of the moment within a strategically constructed framed space." (Suzanne Lewis, "Narrative," in Conrad Rudolph, ed., *A Companion to Medieval Art: Romanesque and Gothic in Northern Europe* [Malden: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010], 86-105, at 93).

[130] None of the scenes rendered on the Forrer Casket is listed in Stephanie Cain Van D'Elden's catalog of "specific scenes," in which she identifies visual compositions specific to the *Tristan* legend. Neither is the casket included in her catalog of visual representations of Tristan verse romances, though it may be included in her forthcoming book on the subject. Nevertheless, the example of the Forrer Casket demonstrates what is lacking in Van D'Elden's rationale: she focuses on our modern (scholarly) identification of de-textualized scenes, but in doing so she disregards the recognition value of the visual sequence for the original audience of the caskets. For people who commissioned luxury objects like the Forrer casket, the basic story was already known. The narrative as it was given to the artist and even to the receiver of the casket pre-existed visualization. The Tryst becomes iconic to us (or a "specific scene" to borrow Van D'Elden's term) only after it has been taken out of its original network of commodity circulation. See Stephanie Cain Van D'Elden, "Specific and Generic Scenes in Verse Tristan Illustrations," in Eming et al., eds., *Visuality and Materiality in the Story of Tristan and Isolde*, 269-98.

[131] Fiona St. Aubyn, ed., *Ivory: An International History and Illustrated Survey* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1987), 105-106.

today in seventy eight manuscripts and fragments.[132] It also served as the base text for multiple translations, including Italian, Spanish, and even Slavic. The illustrated manuscripts of prose *Tristan* began to be produced in Paris in the last quarter of the thirteenth century, including Bibliothèque nationale de France (BnF), MS fr. 772, in which a variant of the Tryst beneath the Tree miniature serves as an incipit illustration. From the last quarter of the thirteenth century and into the first half of the fourteenth century the prose *Tristan* manuscripts made in Paris came into iconographic contact with the illuminated *Roman de la Rose* manuscripts.[133] Produced in a series of closely connected workshops, the *Tristan* and the *Rose* shared production resources and audience, creating a network of interpretive cross-influence.

Fourteenth-century Ivory Caskets

Fourteenth-century ivory caskets featuring narrative images of the *Tristan* legend carved in bas-relief constitute the primary art objects of this case study (see Figures 1, 8-13).[134] These small luxury items, about the size of a jewelry box, became popular presents for women,

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[132] The data are reconstructed from Renée L. Curtis's edition of the prose text, *Le roman de Tristan en prose*, ed. Renée L. Curtis, 3 vols (Woodbridge: D. S. Brewer, 1985). The quantity of prose *Tristan* manuscripts exceeds the total number of all surviving manuscripts of Béroul, Thomas, Gottfried, Eilhart, the Norse Saga, and the Middle English poem combined. It continued to be popular in print, with at least nine separate editions printed between 1489 and 1533. In fact, the prose *Tristan* enjoyed such popularity in its post-medieval reception that it eclipsed the verse tradition, which was not rediscovered until the nineteenth century.

[133] Margaret Alison Stones explores connections between *Tristan* and *Lancelot-Grail* manuscript illuminations in "The Artistic Context of Some Northern French Illustrated *Tristan* Manuscripts," in Eming et al., eds., *Visuality and Materiality in the Story of Tristan and Isolde*, 299-336.

[134] The large-scale production of French ivory caskets with romance images has been localized to a series of closely connected workshops in rue de la Tableterie, near Porte Saint Denis, Paris, c.1330-1350 in Raymond Koechlin's seminal study *Les ivoires gothiques français*, 3 vols, vol. 1 (Paris: Auguste Picard, 1924-1926), 472–523. More updated information, including images and provenance, is made available online through the efforts of the Gothic Ivories Project at the Courtauld Institute of Art, London <http://www.gothicivories.courtauld.ac.uk>.

especially as tokens of courtship and as marriage gifts.[135] While smaller personal items, such as ivory mirror-backs and combs, hair pins, leather shoes, and writing tablets, capture individual romance scenes and make them available for private use,[136] an ivory casket may capture multiple scenes from one story or join together one or two scenes from multiple romances, blurring temporal and linguistic boundaries.[137] Even a casket devoted entirely to a single romance such as the *Tristan and Isolde* could serve as a repository for smaller personal items with romance images of their own, drawn from the same or other romances, which in turn may signify as personal romance narratives, telling stories of past, current, and/or future courtships. Unlike the illuminated manuscripts, these ivory narrative objects were consumed and collected by readers in a network of production and accumulation of commodified and de-textualized romance, commissioned by those who enjoyed romances for others who also enjoyed them. The mutual pleasure derived from an aesthetic appreciation of these luxury objects implicated both the giver and the receiver, drawing them together into an experience of a shared story. In this network of narrative exchange, the author disappears, while the

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[135] For a discussion of ivory caskets as marriage gifts see Thomas T. Hoopes, "An Ivory Casket in the Metropolitan Museum of Art," *Art Bulletin* 8.3 (1926): 127-39. For a discussion of decorative art objects as part of New Year courtly gift exchange see Brigitte Buettner, "Past Presents: New Year's Gifts at the Valois Courts, ca.1400," *Art Bulletin* 83.4 (2001): 598-625.

[136] Elizabeth L'Estrange discusses the female tournament spectators on the lid of multi-romance ivory caskets as models for how female owners interacted with images of male bodies in "Gazing at Gawain: Reconsidering Tournaments, Courtly Love, and the Lady who Looks," *Medieval Feminist Forum* 44.2 (2008): 74-96. Kathryn Starkey provides an excellent discussion of the Tryst beneath the Tree image in the context of fourteenth-century leather slippers found in the Low Countries, "Tristan Slippers: An Image of Adultery on a Symbol of Marriage?," in E. Jane Burns, ed., *Medieval Fabrications: Dress, Textiles, Clothwork, and Other Cultural Imaginings* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 35-53. Michael Curschmann provides images and a brief discussion of an ivory mirror back, an ivory hairpin, and a wooden comb with images of the Tryst, "From Myth to Emblem to Panorama," in Eming et al., eds., *Visuality and Materiality in the Story of Tristan and Isolde*, 110-16.

[137] The following romance caskets include scenes from Tristan and Isolde: St. Petersburg, Hermitage Museum I, Inf. N. T.60 (all images from Tristan); Hermitage Museum II, Inf. N. T. 61 (multi-romance); New York, Metropolitan Museum, Inv.17. 190, 173 (multi-romance); Baltimore, Walters Art Museum, Inv. 71. 264 (multi-romance); London, British Museum, Inv. 368 (multi-romance); London, British Museum, (Forrer Casket, all images from Tristan); Cracow, Cathedral Treasury (multi-romance); Birmingham, Barber Institute of Fine Arts, Inv. N. 39. 26 (multi-romance); London, Victoria and Albert Museum, Inv. 146-1866, 35549 (multi-romance); Florence, Museo Bargello, Inv. 123c 248170 (multi-romance); Paris, Musée de Cluny—Musée national du Moyen Âge, Cl. 23840 (multi-romance).

reader/viewer fills the space by supplying or superimposing the missing textual narrative onto the visual object.

These ivory caskets were a product of a series of closely connected workshops, located along rue de la Tableterie, near the Porte Saint-Denis, in Paris, in the first half of the fourteenth century.[138] These workshops lay within a three-kilometer distance from the center of manuscript production along rue Neuve, near Notre-Dame Cathedral. The practice of importing elephant ivory from Africa through the medieval Mediterranean trade routes was established as early as the twelfth century, though the supply improved significantly over the course of the thirteenth century. Along these routes came already-carved luxury objects from the Islamic world, inlaid with intricate animal and floral motifs, inspiring European imitation and appropriation.[139] While the same ateliers generally carved religious and secular ivory objects, the shiny white surface which glistens when polished became a particularly popular medium for small statuettes of the Virgin Mary, as well as the Christ Child, and Christ on the Cross compositions.[140] The subject and the medium reinforced visual and material

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[138] The Parisian and other centers of ivory carving are discussed in Danielle Gaborit-Chopin, *Ivoires du moyen age* (Fribourg: Office du Livre, 1978), 131-56. The guild structure in Paris is discussed in Elizabeth Sears, "Ivory and Ivory Workers in Medieval Paris," in Peter Barnet, ed., *Images in Ivory: Precious Objects of the Gothic Age*, 19-37.

[139] Eva R. Hoffman, "Pathways of Portability: Islamic and Christian Interchange from the Tenth to the Twelfth Century," in Eva R. Hoffman, ed., *Late Antique and Medieval Art of the Mediterranean World* (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2007), 317-49. Hoffman provides a telling example in her discussion of the reception room in the Norman Palace in Palermo, the design of which is influenced by carved royal ivory boxes from Andalusia. Jerrilynn Dodds discusses the production of ivory objects in royal workshops of al-Andalus, including carved boxes with figural imagery, and locates some of these ivory objects in church treasuries in Northern Spain, revealing admiration for Islamic art in Christian settings; See Jarrilynn Dodds, "Islam, Christianity, and the Problem of Religious Art," in *Late Antique and Medieval Art of the Mediterranean World*, 350–66. Herbert Kessler provides yet another example of Islamic influence in Christian ivory carving in his discussion of the ivory covers for a mid-twelfth-century Book of Psalms, the borders of which "deploy acanthus scrolls in a fashion characteristic of Islamic carved work," framing six circular mandorlas with Biblical images (Herbert Kessler, *Seeing Medieval Art*, 40-41).

[140] The subject of ivory as a medium for Gothic statuettes of Mary appeared in two sessions sponsored by Dom-Museum Hildesheim at the 47th International Congress on Medieval Studies at Kalamazoo (May 2012).

signification of chastity, purity, and fidelity.[141] While gilding and polychromy on ivory objects added new color schemes, the final products of figurative carving and sculpture left the natural color of ivory in faces, bodies, and limbs, thus emphasizing the fleshy quality of the material.[142] The ivory medium also invited human touch, with the surface warming in the organic interaction between bone and skin.

In the past decade, much scholarly attention has been devoted to the multi-romance caskets in which the Tryst beneath the Tree scene stands for the entire *Tristan* narrative amidst other well-known images, such as the Sword Bridge scene from *Lancelot* (Figure 11).[143] Paula Mae Carns provides a thorough overview of the various images on a single multi-romance casket that is now on display at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (Figure 1) and identifies a possible correlation between the production of multi-romance caskets and that of compilation manuscripts.[144] Carns, however, does not fully explain why, on these multi-romance ivory caskets, the Tryst beneath the Tree scene is generally depicted together with the Capture of the Unicorn scene (Figures 1, 12, 13).[145] In various iterations of the unicorn scene, the hunter places the virgin in the woods to lure the unicorn while he

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[141] "Ivory, the smooth, creamy tusk of an elephant or walrus, conveyed the luxuriousness it had already acquired in antiquity and the symbolism Christianity had given whiteness and also elephants" (Herbert Kessler, *Seeing Medieval Art*, 27). Though walrus bone was frequently used as a substitute for ivory, it appears slightly darker in color but still retains the spiritual significance attributed to ivory.

[142] Danielle Gaborit-Chopin, "The Polychrome Decoration of Gothic Ivories," in Peter Barnet, ed., *Images in Ivory: Precious Objects of the Gothic Age*, 47–61.

[143] A good overview on the subject complete with illustrations can be found in Richard H. Randall, Jr., "Popular Romances Carved in Ivory," in Peter Barnet, ed., *Images in Ivory: Precious Objects of the Gothic Age*, 63–79; also see Randall's catalogue of secular ivories pp. 217-48. Images of the various multi-romance caskets are available online through the cataloging efforts of Catherine Yvard and the Gothic Ivories Project at the Courtauld Institute of Art, London <http://www.gothicivories.courtauld.ac.uk>.

[144] Paula Mae Carns, "*Compilatio* in Ivory: The Composite Casket in the Metropolitan Museum," *Gesta* 44.2 (2005): 69-88, at 70. Carns' focus, however, is limited to a single composite casket, and she provides only one, albeit famous, example of fourteenth-century *compilatio*—BnF MS fr.1450, in which Chrétien's romances are inserted into Wace's chronicle. Carns bases her opinions regarding BnF MS fr. 1450 on Lori J. Walters' study "Le Rôle du scribe dans l'organisation des manuscrits des romans de Chrétien de Troyes," *Romania* 106 (1985): 308-13.

[145] The two exceptions are the Cluny casket and the multi-romance Hermitage casket.

hides behind a tree, ready to attack the mystical animal. In the ivory caskets, the hunter is often depicted in the act of killing the unicorn. The Capture of the Unicorn composition circulated in narrative sequences and as a stand-alone single-scene image in both religious and secular contexts in medieval manuscripts, tapestries, murals, panels, as well as wood and ivory carvings.[146] The biblical interpretations of the unicorn connect the creature with a single horn to Christ himself, to the unity of Christ and his Church, and to the unity of Christ and God the Father. This scene was interpreted as the Annunciation, Incarnation, Passion, and Resurrection, with the unicorn representing Christ, who descends into Mary's virginal womb and whose death will bring salvation to the human race. The image of Mary with the unicorn in her lap was frequently included in medieval books of hours as a marker for the Hours of the Virgin. A beautiful example can be found in Morgan Library manuscript MS G.5, fols. 18v-19.[147]

Richard de Fournival's *Bestiaire d'Amour* (*Bestiary of Love*, thirteenth-century) popularized the secular interpretation of the Capture of the Unicorn scene (Figure 14). The killing of the unicorn becomes an allegory for the process of falling in love, in which the unicorn is the lover, who is lured by the sweet scent of the maiden, only to be struck down by love who takes on the guise of a clever hunter.[148] The connection between the Tryst

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[146] The most famous of these unicorn images are known as sequences of Unicorn Tapestries, different versions of which are currently part of permanent collections at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York and Musée national du Moyen Âge, Musée de Cluny. See Margaret B. Freeman, *The Unicorn Tapestries*, Metropolitan Museum of Art (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1983). For a thorough discussion of the unicorn in wood carvings see Christa Grössinger, "The Unicorn on English Misericords," in Gale R. Owen-Crocker and Timothy Graham, eds., *Medieval Art: Recent Perspectives, a Memorial Tribute to C. R. Dodwell* (New York: Manchester University Press, 1998), 142-58.

[147] Book of Hours, use of the Augustinian Canons of the Windesheim Chapter (Hours of the Virgin), and Utrecht (Office of the Dead), in Latin and Dutch. Netherlands, Utrecht, c.1500. New York, The Morgan Library & Museum, MS G.5, fols. 18v-19.

[148] Richard de Fournival, *Le Bestiaire d'amour et la réponse du bestiaire*, bilingual edition, publication, translation, presentation and notes by Gabriel Bianciotto, Champion classiques (Paris: Champion, 2009). So far I have

beneath the Tree and the Capture of the Unicorn becomes more significant in the wider context of the entire visual program of multi-romance caskets. While the exact combination of images varies from one casket to another, all scenes present models and triumphs of heterosexual love and desire. In this context, the secular interpretation of the Capture of the Unicorn continues the message of the Tryst, as both of them are invested in elucidating the proper ways of falling in love.

Similar compositional principles appear in single-romance caskets as well. The episodic structure of interlaced romance lends itself to visual interpretation, providing a range of scenes to choose from and rearrange graphically. This artistic interlace imposes a new structure onto the narrative, combining scenes from various romance traditions, and creating a visual product that adheres to the general principles of *compilatio*. Examples of this type of fourteenth-century ivory caskets include the *Perceval* Casket, the multiple *La Chatelaine de Vergi* Caskets, and the Hermitage *Tristan* Casket.[149] Uniquely devoted to the *Tristan* narrative, the visual program of the Hermitage *Tristan* Casket, now housed at the Hermitage Museum in Saint Petersburg, Russia, brings together scenes in which Tristan and Isolde successfully overcome obstacles and reaffirm their love.[150] The episodes on the casket appear thematically, often contrasting private and public scenes, and collapsing several actions into a

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found several instances of *Le Bestiaire d'amour* bound together with *Roman de la Rose* texts, but never in combination with a *Tristan* narrative.

[149] Martine Meuwese catalogs a number of ivory caskets according to subject matter in appendices to her article "Chrétien in Ivory," in Elizabeth Archibald and David F. Johnson, eds., *Arthurian Literature* XXV (Rochester, NY: D. S. Brewer, 2008), 119-52. For appendices see pp. 148-52.

[150] Only four panels of this casket are medieval. The central panel (or the lid) of the Hermitage Casket is a late nineteenth-century addition. In a conference paper, presented at the 23rd Triennial Congress of the International Arthurian Society, Bristol, England, July 2011, I address the "emergence" of the lid with the Tryst and the Separating Sword scenes as a late nineteenth-century addition to the casket. If the Tryst had been planned for display on the original lid, it probably would appear in conjunction with Tristan's arrival at Mark's court in a fool's disguise, as it does in the Cluny casket as well as in the Hermitage multi-romance casket. Considering other instances of disguise on this single-romance casket and the uncertain temporality of narrative sequences, the visual program may have been influenced by the anonymous *Folie Tristan*.

single frame. One large panel combines a private scene of the lovers naked under the covers together with the public scene of Isolde's ambiguous oath. The composition conveys both their vulnerability and their efforts at concealment. The thinness of the sheet reveals the naked and bulging forms underneath; the lifted bed curtain at the top of the frame provides only a hint of seclusion, inviting the viewer into the private space of the bed. The second quatrefoil on the same panel emphasizes the lovers' boldness. The frame is split into two parts. In the first, Tristan in disguise lifts Isolde on his back over the waters of Malpas, physically touching her in front of the entire court. In the second half, Isolde, kneeling with proper piety and humility, makes an audacious and ambiguous oath in front of a bishop and a king. This single-romance casket is able to convey a positive reading of love between Tristan and Isolde through the interplay of sight and touch, reiterating a single motif of private desire vindicated in public action. The artist places the viewer into a conspiratorial position: knowing about the private love affair between Tristan and Isolde, the viewer witnesses the lovers' public triumphs at concealing their love. This interplay of sight and touch, visuality and materiality, is reenacted by the viewer/owner of the casket: a woman who owns an ivory casket is encouraged to touch the figures carved into it in the process of interacting with the luxury object. At the same time, heterosexual desire, which is represented visually through touch (privately in bed and publicly at Malpas), is elided through the elements of disguise and ritual. The Tryst beneath the Tree episode similarly collapses private and public spaces, with the lovers enacting a private meeting for the public observation of King Mark. Indeed, the positive appeal of the Tryst was so great that in the nineteenth century the Tryst scene was added to the Hermitage Tristan casket.

The Tryst beneath the Tree in Ivory

The centrality of the Tryst beneath the Tree episode in the visual programs of multi-romance ivory caskets contrasts sharply with the literary treatments of the scene. Despite compositional variation, the Tryst beneath the Tree scene remains visually recognizable. The frame is balanced among four focal points. Mark's face at the top is mirrored at the bottom, while Tristan and Isolde provide visual counterpoints for each other. The figures of the two lovers are separated vertically by a tree trunk (as in Figures 12 and 13) or a fountain (as in Figure 1), creating an appearance of modest and chaste behavior. The exact placement of the lovers changes from one image to another. They are generally sitting. Tristan is usually on the left, while Isolde is on the right, though occasionally their positions are reversed (compare Figures 12, 13, and 1). The appearance of the fountain changes as well. Sometimes it is a disproportionally large man-made fountain (as in Figure 1), and sometimes a small body of water outlined by stones (as in Figures 12 and 13). But despite all these variations, the scene itself remains easily identifiable because of the reflection of Mark's face in the water.

In two separate projects, Michael Curschmann and Jacqueline Thibault Schaefer note the parallels between the Tryst scene and the Fall of Man or Temptation compositions in medieval sculpture and manuscript illumination. A tree separates Adam and Eve, while the serpent watches them from a slightly elevated position in the tree. Carefully placed either behind or in front of the tree, a body of water pours forth the Four Rivers of Paradise. Curschmann uses these compositions to suggest a conflation of the sin of adultery with the Original Sin in the Garden of Eden. However, he couches this connection in purely

hypothetical language, admitting rhetorically that the iconographic link between the two is extremely tenuous.[151] In his recent return to the subject, Curschmann revisits the same images, concluding that "the generic relationship [of the Tryst] to the Fall of Man iconography added a measure of titillating ambiguity to the whole scene."[152] In an independent study of the Tryst and the Temptation scenes in medieval manuscript painting, Schaefer argues against making quick conclusions regarding iconographic borrowing between secular and religious compositions.[153] She therefore chooses not to assign either positive or negative connotations to the secular Tryst.

If we were to base our interpretation of the Tryst solely on iconographic parallels, we should note the similarity of composition — a figure in the tree looking down on two figures below — in the images of the God of Love and Two Lovers, which appear on numerous fourteenth-century ivory writing tablets and mirror backs. The connotations of this composition are entirely positive: the human figures stand under the tree, about to receive the arrows of love from an angel-like Cupid figure. Like the secular version of the Capture of the Unicorn, the God of Love and Two Lovers image allegorizes the process of falling in love.[154] Similar images of a winged and crowned figure, a secular deity of love, flanked on

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[151] Michael Curschmann, "Images of Tristan," in Adrian Stevens and Roy Wisbey, eds., *Gottfried von Strassburg and the Medieval Tristan Legend: Papers from an Anglo-North American Symposium* (Rochester, NY: D. S. Brewer, 1990), 1-18, at 14.

[152] Michael Curschmann, "From Myth to Emblem to Panorama," in Eming et al., eds., *Visuality and Materiality in the Story of Tristan and Isolde*, 116.

[153] Jacqueline Thibault Schaeffer, "Modulations of Moduli in the *Tristan* Illuminated Manuscripts: Secular 'Tryst' and Biblical 'Temptation' Scenes," in Brigitte Dekeyzer and Jan Van der Stock, eds., *Manuscripts in Transition: Recycling Manuscripts, Texts and Images*, Proceedings of the International Congress held in Brussels 5-9 November 2002 (Paris: Peeters Leuven, 2005), 139-48. Particularly relevant is her conclusion on p. 146.

[154] Mark Cruse connects the visual construction of this scene with the material function of a writing tablet on the ivory cover of which it appears, concluding that both conveyed messages of love. See Mark Cruse, "Intimate Performance: An Ivory Writing Tablet Cover at the Cloisters," in Eglal Doss-Quinby, Roberta L. Krueger, and E. Jane Burns, eds., *Cultural Performances in Medieval France: Essays in Honor of Nancy Freeman Regalo* (Rochester, NY: D. S. Brewer, 2007), 57-70, at 67. Cruse's argument could be extended to the Tryst beneath the Tree scene as it appears on a leather pouch, which served as a container for a writing tablet with images of

either side by lovers or groups of lovers appear in illuminated manuscripts of Richard de Fournival's *Le Bestiaire d'Amours*, as well as in the illustrated *Roman de la Rose* manuscripts. This positive amatory association directly counters Curschmann's negative reading, suggesting as Schaefer does that the image should not be judged solely on the basis of its iconographic proximity to other known configurations.

Even conceding an iconographic relationship between the three image types, I contend that the presence of Mark's reflection in the water radically alters the composition. The reflection shifts the image from a triangular arrangement to a quadrilateral one, creating a fourth focal point. As Kenneth Tiller suggests, scenes with wells and fountains in *Tristan* literary narratives serve as interpretive sites where characters either learn a truth or fail to do so.[155] The Tryst beneath the Tree scene contains both — a recognition by the lovers that they are being spied upon, and a failure on Mark's part to discern that his position has been compromised. The rendition of this scene in ivory captures this moment of simultaneous recognition and obliviousness, connecting sight to intellectual prowess. As we can see in Figures 12 and 13, all four focal points are connected through gazes and hand gestures: Mark looks down at Tristan from the tree, Tristan points at Mark's reflection in the water, Mark's disembodied face looks up at Isolde from the water, and Isolde raises her hand toward Mark's face in the tree. The hand gestures communicate private information between the lovers while emphasizing a modest distance between them. Their eyes are cast down without fixing their gazes on any particular object, creating an appearance of decorum and propriety. In some variations of this scene, the movement of gazes and gestures is interrupted, as in the

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courtship on its ivory covers. This fourteenth-century French writing tablet is currently held at the Musée provincial des Arts anciens du Namurois-Trésor d'Oignies.

[155] Kenneth Tiller, "Reading like a Knight in Malory's *Book of Sir Tristram*," paper presented at the 23rd Triennial Congress of the International Arthurian Society, Bristol, England, July 2011.

multi-romance casket at the Metropolitan Museum of Art (Figure 1), but the interruption only reinforces the four-point structure of the composition: Mark looks down on Isolde who gestures back up at him, while Mark's reflection looks up at Tristan who points down toward it. These two parallel diagonal lines, doubly reinforced through gaze and gesture, establish a relationship between Mark and each of the lovers while eliding the forbidden horizontal line between the two lovers. And yet the symmetrical positioning of the lovers' bodies, placed as mirror images of each other on opposite sides of a tree or a fountain, prompts a connection to be drawn between them. The lovers appear as equals, with no hierarchical difference between them. This configuration encourages the viewer/owner of the casket to superimpose a narrative of mutual love and heterosexual desire onto the complementary figures of the two lovers.

By contrast, in the triangular compositions of the Fall of Man or Temptation image and in the God of Love and Two Lovers image, the figure in the tree is not only fully cognizant of the behavior of the human figures below, but also controls their actions. The all-knowing figure in the tree manipulates the human figures below him, projecting power from the top of the frame downward, reinforcing the triangular structure in a series of gestures and gazes. In the Tryst beneath the Tree scene, however, the power dynamic is reversed through the introduction of the crucial fourth focal point; the reflection at the bottom of the frame undermines the vertical advantage of the figure in the tree, allowing the lovers in the Tryst to manipulate the scene, asserting control over interpretation from the center of the frame upward. The materialization of shadow as reflection upsets the politics of visuality, denying Mark visual access to truth. At the same time, it aligns the viewer/owner of the casket with the lovers, granting her access to privileged visual information. I argue

that the materialization of Mark's reflection in the water as a disembodied crowned head instead of an insubstantial shadow betrays a visual influence of the illuminated *Roman de la Rose* manuscripts, specifically the overtly Ovidian scene of Narcissus at the Fountain. The following section explores the semantic and representational possibilities of Old French "ombre," derived from Latin "umbra." I turn to Guillaume de Lorris' *Roman de la Rose* to disambiguate medieval literary use of the two words in relation to indirect vision. I then return to the Tryst beneath the Tree, reading the episode in the literary tradition and manuscript painting informed by the politics of visuality and materiality in the illuminated *Rose*.

Medieval Optical Theories and *Roman de la Rose* Illustrated Manuscripts

The illuminated *Rose* manuscripts circulated contemporaneously with the prose *Tristan* manuscripts, their height of popularity corresponding to the production of ivory caskets in the first half of the fourteenth century. In tracing the illumination programs of the *Rose*, I am building on Suzanne Lewis' theory of word and image relations, focusing on "how visual representations of the text can function as strategies of appropriation" and "how images engage the reader in an interpretive process."[156] I concentrate on the famous episode of Narcissus at the Fountain and its less frequent corrective variant Amant at the Fountain of Narcissus to elucidate a medieval reader's understanding and/or interpretation of "ombre" as both shadow and reflection. I situate the optical phenomena of shadow and reflection within a changing context of medieval literary and scientific understanding of vision.

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[156] Suzanne Lewis, "Images of Opening, Penetration and Closure in the *Roman de la Rose*," *Word & Image: A Journal of Verbal/Visual Enquiry* 8.3 (1992): 215-42, at 215.

In the first half of the fourteenth century, the *Rose* and the prose *Tristan* manuscripts shared production resources (some ateliers producing both) as well as audience (commissioning, readership, ownership). R. H. Rouse and M. A. Rouse have identified a series of interconnected workshops they call *libraires* along rue Neuve near the cathedral of Notre-Dame in Paris, which operated collaboratively from the last quarter of the thirteenth century into the first half of the fourteenth century. These *libraires* specialized in illustrated vernacular books for educated lay readers from the upper strata of society, boasting such commissioners as Louis I duc de Bourbon, Mahaut countess of Artois,[157] Clémence of Hungary, and Jeanne of Burgundy. Among the *libraires*, Rouse and Rouse identify a close working relationship among Geoffroy de St-Leger, Thomas de Maubeuge, Richard de Montbaston, and Jeanne de Montbaston. In explaining this business arrangement, they posit that "a *libraire* who accepted an order for a specific book often turned to his neighbors on the rue Neuve for help in finishing the job within a reasonable amount of time."[158] These men and women worked together on vernacular illustrated bibles, illustrated prose chronicles, the *Ovide moralisé*, several anthologies of *romans d'antiquité*, at least three manuscripts of *Roman de la Rose*, and several Arthurian romances,[159] among which Alison Stones has identified at least one prose *Tristan* manuscript produced by Jeanne de

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[157] Mahaut, Countess of Artois was one of the few female patrons who owned both an ivory casket and several romance manuscripts. Unfortunately, the decorative program of her ivory casket is unknown. Paula Mae Shoppe (Carns), "Reading Romances: The Production and Reception of French Gothic Ivories in the Context of Late Medieval Literary Practices" (unpublished PhD thesis, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 2000), 5-7, available through Proquest Dissertations and Theses Fulltext; Paula Mae Carns, "*Compilatio* in Ivory," 84-85.

[158] R. H. Rouse and M. A. Rouse, "The Commercial Production of Manuscript Books in Late-Thirteenth-Century and Early-Fourteenth-Century Paris," in Linda L. Brownrigg, ed., *Medieval Book Production: Assessing the Evidence* (Los Altos Hills: Anderson-Lovelace, Red Gull Press, 1990), 103-16, at 110.

[159] Rouse and Rouse, "The Commercial Production of Manuscript Books," 109-10.

Montbaston.[160] In this collaborative milieu of manuscript production, the visual programs of

prose *Tristan* manuscripts entered into a design relationship with the visual programs of the

Rose. Moreover, as mentioned above, these *libraires* were located within a three kilometer

radius of rue de la Tableterie in the Porte Saint-Denis area of Paris. What I explore below is

the predominance of reflections in the visual programs of the illustrated *Rose*, and I posit a

potential cross-borrowing or sharing of iconography between *Rose* manuscript illustrations

and the Tryst visualizations in ivory. While the late twelfth-century *Tristan* verse tradition has

influenced the poetics of love as suffering, which permeates the *Rose*, the visual tradition of

the illuminated *Rose* has reversed this chain of influence, changing how the *Tristan* material

was interpreted visually. Moreover, by the fifteenth century, luxury *Rose* manuscripts begin to

exhibit iconographic borrowing from the Tryst in their visual exploration of love and desire.

The significant change that occurred over the course of the thirteenth century, and

the one most relevant to my discussion of the differences and similarities between a shadow

and a reflection, was a growing interest in optics, which influenced the way philosophical,

theological, and literary works explain how people saw and understood the world. Vision

was considered the highest of the five senses, with its direct link to memory and intelligence.

Moreover, both vision and optics are intrinsically connected with desire. As Suzanne

Conklin Akbari explains: "The meeting of subject and object is the purpose of vision: the

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[160] Stones situates a mid-fourteenth-century prose *Tristan* manuscript (Los Angeles, J. Paul Getty Museum, Getty Ludwig XV.5), in a Parisian circle of manuscript workshops/ateliers associated with Jeanne de Montbaston. Stones also connects a prose *Tristan* manuscript now held at the Vatican (Pal. lat. 1964) with the Maubeuge Master, whose work features prominently in this Parisian center in Rouse and Rouse. Other manuscripts produced in this circle include: BnF fr. 12577; Munich, BSB Clm 10177; BnF fr. 24391, and the Busch Collection *Roman de la Rose* manuscripts; BnF fr. 24388; BnF fr. 12577. See Stones, "The Artistic Context of Some Northern French Illustrated *Tristan* Manuscripts," 331. Sylvia Huot adds BnF fr. 25526 manuscript of the *Rose* to this list, also completed in the 1330s in Paris by Jeanne and Richard de Montbaston. See Sylvia Huot, The Romance of the Rose *and its Medieval Readers: Interpretation, Reception, Manuscript Transmission* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 274.

description of how this encounter takes place, and whether the encounter is direct or through a mediating third term, is the purpose of optics."[161] This interest in optics was certainly not new. As David Lindberg reminds us, human beings have been looking for ways to explain sight, how it works, and various visual phenomena such as mirrors and the rainbow since as early as 1500 BCE.[162] Early medieval thinkers have expanded upon the classical intromission and extramission theories of vision, working toward more collaborative theories, in which neither the subject nor the object remains entirely passive. In the works of Augustine, Macrobius, and Boethius, both subject and object actively work toward producing "visio." What changed the vision theories of the later medieval period was the introduction of Islamic treatises on optics, newly translated into Latin. Lindberg identifies the scientific work of Alhazen and Al-Kindi as the most influential for Western perspectivists, such as Roger Bacon and John Pecham. Both Bacon and Pecham were extremely invested in the physics of vision, explaining the processes through which visual rays made contact with the object of sight. According to perspectivists, vision was either direct, refracted, or reflected, all depending on the nature of the medium that intervenes between the subject and the object.

Akbari connects these changes in the medieval understanding of vision and optics to changes in allegorical literature.[163] While the present discussion of the *Rose* in connection with medieval optical theory is more concerned with romance literature and its material packaging in luxury form, Akbari's discussion helps to explain this shift in the understanding of vision and its effect on late medieval literature and art. The verse *Tristan* tradition predates

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[161] Suzanne Conklin Akbari, *Seeing through the Veil: Optical Theory and Medieval Allegory* (Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 2004), 22-23.

[162] David C. Lindberg, *Theories of Vision from Al-Kindi to Kepler* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1976), 1.

[163] Suzanne Conklin Akbari, *Seeing through the Veil*, 23.

this shift and aligns itself with late twelfth-century allegory, while the prose *Tristan* and the *Rose* were written during this transitional period, roughly 1225-1265. Unsurprisingly, the later manuscripts (fourteenth century) and luxury objects demonstrate a more thorough integration of the perspectivist view of the world.[164]

The image of a young man looking into a fountain, or the Fountain of Narcissus episode, is a key moment of transformation and learning in Guillaume de Lorris's *Roman de la Rose*, composed around 1225.[165] In this episode, the visual nature of desire is thematized and sight is privileged as a mode of falling in love. Narcissus and Amant both approach the fountain, and both become transfixed by what they see inside. Narcissus leans into the water to the point of falling and sees only his own image, while Amant (the Lover) sees the entirety of the garden, acknowledging his desire as something beyond himself, allegorically presented as a beautiful Rose. The allegorical figure of Amors, the God of Love, is responsible for both experiences. Narcissus falls in love with his own image as a punishment for refusing love. Amant, a corrective figure to the fallen Narcissus, undergoes a doubly visual process. Not only does Amant see an image of the rose bud as it is rendered in the mirror-like surface of the fountain, but he also receives a love wound through the eye. Amors shoots Amant with five arrows that enter through his eye and penetrate his heart.

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[164] Akbari has demonstrated an influence of perspectivist theories on allegorical writing of fourteenth-century poets, particularly Dante and Chaucer. Suzanne Conklin Akbari, *Seeing through the Veil*, 23.

[165] I am following Akbari among others who argue for a purposeful division of the poem into two parts. The first (ll. 1-4028) was completed by Guillaume de Lorris around 1225, and the second and much larger part (ll.4029-21,750) completed by Jean de Meun around 1265. As Kevin Brownlee has established, the first half was intentionally left incomplete, and its aims are radically different from those of the second half. Kevin Brownlee, "Reflections in the Miroer aus Amoreus: The Inscribed Reader in Jean de Meun's *Roman de la Rose*," in John D. Lyons and Stephen G. Nichols, Jr., eds., *Mimesis: From Mirror to Method, Augustine to Descartes* (Hanover: University Press of New England, 1982), 60-70. Also see David Hult, *Self-fulfilling Prophecies: Readership and Authority in the First* Roman de la Rose (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986).

When describing Narcissus falling in love with his own image in the water, Guillaume de Lorris uses the word "ombre," a term that is frequently translated as "shadow" in both *Roman de la Rose* and the *Tristan* romances:

> Sus la fontaine toz adenz
> se mist lors por boivre dedenz,
> si vit en l'eve clere et nete
> son vis, son nés et sa bouchete;
> et cil maintenant s'esbahi,
> car ses ombres l'avoit traï,
> qu'il cuida voair la figure
> d'un esfant bel a desmesure.
> Lors se sot bien Amors venchier
> dou grant orguil et dou dangier
> que Narcisus li ot mené.
> Bien li fu lors guerredoné,
> qu'il musa tant en la fontaine
> qu'il ama son ombre demainne,
> si en fu morz a la parclouse,
> c'est la some de ceste chose. (ll.1479–1494)[166]

> [Lying flat on his stomach over the fountain, he began to drink from it and saw his face, his nose and mouth, clear and sharp. Then he was struck with wonder, for these shadows so deceived him that he saw the face of a child beautiful beyond measure. Then Love knew how to avenge himself for the great pride and the resistance that Narcissus had directed toward him. And Narcissus was well repaid: he mused so long at the fountain that he fell in love with his own reflection and died of his love in the end. (Dahlberg 50)][167]

The garden setting is very similar to the Tryst scene in the *Tristan* romances. The fountain is set under a pine tree; the shady spot is attractive, particularly in the heat of the day. The *Tristan* verse romances, Béroul's and the anonymous Folie text, also situate the Tryst by a fountain underneath a pine tree. Narcissus stretches out to drink some water from the

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[166] Guillaume de Lorris et Jean de Meun, *Le Roman de la Rose*, published by Félix Lecoy, 3 vols, vol. I (Paris: Librairie Honoré Champion, 1973). All further references are cited by line number.

[167] Charles Dahlberg, trans., Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meun, *The Romance of the Rose* (Hanover: University Press of New England, 1983). All further translations are cited by page number.

fountain and sees his own features, but what he actually sees are shadows that only resemble a beautiful youth. Narcissus falls in love with his own shadow, "qu'il ama son ombre" (l.1492), which Charles Dahlberg translates as "his own reflection" (50). Dahlberg's translation is not incorrect or misleading as, unlike the *Tristan* romances where "ombre" remains ambiguous, Guillaume de Lorris tells us that whatever it is that Narcissus sees has a face, a nose, and a mouth. These distinguishing and seemingly corporeal features identify the visual presence as a reflection rather than a shadow.

This linguistic conflation of shadow and reflection goes back to the source of the *Rose* passage, which may also be the source for the *Tristan* episode, found in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* Book III. When describing the doomed self-love of Narcissus, Ovid uses both "umbra" and "repercussa." The first time Ovid's narrator explains it as a misunderstanding: "spem sine corpora amat, corpus putat esse, quod umbra est" [He loves a hope without substance, he thinks it is material that which is a shadow] (l.417).[168] In a moment of misapprehension, Narcissus confuses something immaterial with a material — perhaps corporeal — form. The second time the narrator addresses Narcissus, explaining the situation to him: "ista repercussae, quam cernis, imaginis umbra est:/nil habet ista sui" [What you see is that shadow of a reflected form: it has nothing of itself] (ll.434–435). As a shadow of a reflected image, it cannot possibly have a substance. In explaining the insubstantiality of a reflection, which Narcissus finds so irresistible, the narrator is using the concept of a shadow. It is not just a shadow or a reflection; it is a shadow of a reflection. The visuality

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[168] Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, Books 1-8, Loeb Classical Library, ed. Jeffrey Henderson (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1977). All further references to the Latin text are cited by line number. All translations are my own.

and materiality of the object are at odds with each other. Reflection is visuality divorced from materiality — an immaterial form, a shadow of an image.

Medieval optical theories provide multiple ways of explaining the visual phenomenon of reflections, which to Ovid's audience would have been explained with either intromission or extramission theories, possibly informed by Euclidian geometrical understanding of angles. By the end of the twelfth century, collaborative theories, requiring active participation from both subject and object, were gaining prominence. In his *Dragmaticon*, William of Conches (c.1090–1154) combines Galen's physiological explanations of sight (optical nerve) with philosophical treatments, improving upon the late antique extramission theories. According to William, visual power begins in the brain, leaves the brain through the eye, and returns to it informed by the object through the optic nerve. When leaving the eye, the visual beam merges with light beams and reaches outward until it makes contact with an object that acts as an obstacle in its path. The obstacle (or object) makes an impression upon the visual beam, and that impression — *figura* or form — is registered and interpreted in the brain upon the beam's return, again through the eye. The physical features of the object, such as shape and color, enter the brain as immaterial impressions in the visual beam. The thirteenth-century perspectivists elaborate on this concept of immaterial form, developing a theory of species. According to Roger Bacon (c.1220–1292), all physical objects are capable of producing species of themselves in the medium between the subject and the object. In his *De multiplicatione specierum*, Bacon uses a wide range of synonyms that elucidate the concept of species: "similitude, image, idol,

simulacrum, phantasm, form, intention, passion, impression, and shadow."[169] What all these terms have in common is their visual presence without material form. A species is a likeness of a physical form, an image without a body, which continues to generate subsequent likenesses as it travels through the medium. And it is as species that the impression of the object enters the subject through the eye.[170]

Roger Bacon considers a shadow and a reflection as a bending of species upon an encounter with a dense object. What distinguishes the two phenomena is the quality of the surface.[171] Both shadow and reflection are the products of reflected visual rays, which in their own right constitute imperfect or inferior products of vision. However, depending on the surface, these reflected rays create two different types of images. When encountering a rough surface, the angles of incidence are different at each point of contact, creating a multiplicity of reflections and confusing the image produced by the species in the medium. This confused, indistinguishable image, made up of multiple reflections, is Bacon's explanation for a shadow. A reflection, on the other hand, occurs on the surface of a polished or smooth dense body, where the angles of incidence are equal, providing a unified though reflected transference of species. But Bacon is careful to remind the reader that even though there is a geometrical and qualitative difference between a shadow and a reflection, both are products of reflected and therefore indirect species. A sense perception of reflected species constitutes inferior vision.

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[169] Suzanne Conklin Akbari, *Seeing through the Veil*, 24, referencing Roger Bacon, *De multiplicatione specierum*, Book 1, section 1.

[170] Bacon's theory of species was available as its own treatise *De multiplicatione speciorum* as well as part of his *Opus maius*. In his popular short treatise *Perspectiva communis*, John Pecham (c.1235-1292) made Bacon's (and Alhazen's) work even more widely available.

[171] David C. Lindberg, ed., *Roger Bacon and the Origins of Perspectiva in the Middle Ages*, A Critical Edition and English Translation of Bacon's *Perspectiva* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), 253.

This concept of species as immaterial images of a physical object informs the conflation of shadow and reflection, as both are immaterial copies that register form but not substance in a medium. If understood for what they are, species help human subjects make sense of objects around them. But, if species are mistaken for the objects from which they are generated, or worse if reflected species are accepted as true material forms, deception takes root in the mind. In Guillaume de Lorris' *Roman de la Rose*, Amant's learning process continues through various stages of distinctions between reality and his perception of it. As he approaches the Fountain of Narcissus, he is reminded of the kind of doom misprision can cause, and yet he looks into the water anyway. In this early stage, Amant as a character in his own dream can only recognize the dangers of a reflective surface but not their consequences:

> C'est li miroërs perilleus,
> ou Narcisus, li orgueilleus
> mira sa face et ses ieuz vers,
> dont il jut puis morz toz envers. (ll.1569–1572)
>
> [It is the perilous mirror in which proud Narcissus gazed at his face and his
> gray eyes; on account of this mirror he afterward lay dead, flat on his back.
> (Dahlberg 52)

Amant's recognition of the water surface as a perilous mirror is only informed by external experience, by the suffering of someone other than himself. It is only from the vantage point of Amant the poet, informed by experience of the dream, that he can acknowledge the deceptive nature of immaterial forms as they appear in the mirror:

> Las! tant en ai puis soupiré!
> Cil miroërs m'a deceü:
> se j'eüsse avant coneü
> quex ert sa force et sa vertuz,
> ne m'i fusse ja enbatuz,

que maintenant ou laz cheï
qui maint home a pris et traï. (ll.1606–1612)

[Alas! How I have sighed since then because of that deceiving mirror. If I had known its powers and qualities, I would never have approached it, for now I have fallen into the snare that has captured and betrayed many a man. (Dahlberg 52)][172]

Just as Narcissus falls victim to an immaterial image, so does Amant get drawn to the immaterial image of the *Rose*; but as a corrective to Narcissus, Amant sees an image of something beyond himself, allegorically presented as a Rose. This deceptive nature of images in mirror-like surfaces becomes the predominant subject in the visual programs of the illuminated *Rose* manuscripts. It is this visual vocabulary of "ombre" in connection with "miroërs perilleus," which became more systematic in fourteenth-century *Rose* manuscripts, that informs the visualization of "ombre" as reflection in the Tryst beneath the Tree images.

In analyzing facsimiles of seven thirteenth-century manuscripts of *Roman de la Rose* available through the *Roman de la Rose* Digital Library project, I have noted the following trends. Two manuscripts, BnF 12786 and BnF 1573, have no illustrations at all, while Dijon 526 provides only an incipit illustration of Amant sleeping (even though the manuscript includes a fully illustrated text of Richard de Fournival's *Le Bestiaire d'Amours*). Two manuscripts, BnF 1559 and BnF 378, illustrate the Narcissus episode with an image of a prostrated man on the bank of a stream in a wooded setting; there is no reflection or shadow in the water. Two more manuscripts, BnF 1569 and BnF 1575 (last decade of thirteenth century), include pen-and-ink drawings of a disembodied head in the water, which looks up at the prostrated figure (Figures 15 and 17). This outline is a shadowy image of the man

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[172] The distinction in tenses in Old French (and in Dahlberg's English translation) creates a temporal distinction between the past tense of the dreamer as lover and the present tense of the dreamer as poet. The term "Amant" encompasses all three: dreamer, lover, and poet.

looking down at it. Furthermore, BnF 1575 creates a visual contrast between Narcissus and Amant, presenting two miniatures set at the Fountain of Narcissus (Figures 15 and 18). In the first (fol. 10v), Narcissus leans over a square fountain, and his reflection (pen-and-ink outline) looks up at him. In the second (fol. 12r), Amant sits by the square fountain, pointing toward it, and sees a rose vine just beyond the fountain. Both figures are framed by trees to remind us of the garden setting.

In examining the eighty-eight facsimiles of fourteenth-century *Rose* manuscripts available through the *Roman de la Rose* Digital Library project, I was able to find more systematic approaches to illustration. Of the eighty-eight manuscripts, thirty were either unillustrated, damaged, or fragmentary. A further nine manuscripts contained only incipit illustrations, generally of Amant sleeping or dreaming. Subsequently, my analysis is based on the forty-nine manuscripts that contain a narrative cycle of illustration. I have found forty-five images of Narcissus at the Fountain. Of these, twenty-six include a reflection in the water. While the fountains vary in form — they are rendered as streams, as circular or rectangular pools, or as architecturally complex structures — the reflection in the water is predominantly a pen-and-ink outline of a face, with an occasional touch of color added to the hair. I have found seventeen images of Narcissus at the Fountain that do not include a reflection. Some of these, however, illustrate the death of Narcissus rather than the cause of his death. A few manuscripts include both image types, showing a progression from self-desire to death. The two outliers in the Narcissus iconography include Echo in the scene. I have also found eighteen images of Amant at the Fountain of Narcissus. These images, though found less frequently, occur in close proximity to images of Narcissus. Of these eighteen, five include a pen-and-ink reflection in the water, four leave the water surface

empty, four render an image of a rose vine or rose petals in the water, and five show a rose vine just beyond the fountain. As this fairly equal spread in the iconography of Amant at the Fountain indicates, manuscripts that do include the illustration find ways to contrast Amant's vision with that of Narcissus. Their postures are frequently contrasted: while Narcissus leans dangerously close to the water's surface, Amant either stands, sits, or otherwise distances himself from the water. The visual nature of falling in love is further thematized through another recurring image: twenty-three images show crowned and winged Amors shooting Amant with an arrow through the eye (similar to Figure 16); eleven images show Amors shooting Amant in the heart; while eight more have Amors shoot Amant elsewhere in his body (stomach or genitals), shoot him with multiple arrows (eye, heart, and genitals), or leave the entry point unmarked.[173] The forty-five images of Narcissus at the Fountain (twenty-six of which include a shadowy reflection), the eighteen images of Amant at the Fountain of Narcissus, and the twenty-three images of Amors shooting Amant with an arrow through the eye reinforce the visual nature of desire at its inception: love enters the body as an immaterial form of the object of desire.

In the following section, I explore the influence of the illustrated *Rose* manuscripts on the designs in ivory and posit that the quadrilateral Tryst composition found in one prose *Tristan* manuscript illustration (BnF 340, fol. 128, see Figure 19) and appearing more frequently in the visual programs of fourteenth-century ivory caskets owes its balancing feature of reflection to the Fountain of Narcissus episode in *Roman de la Rose* manuscript

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[173] In Guillaume de Lorris' text, Amors shoots Amant with five arrows that enter through his eye and penetrate his heart. The five arrows are Biauté or Beauty, Simpleice or Simplicity, Cortoisie or Courtesy, Compaignie or Company, and Biau Semblant or Fair Seeming (see Lecoy ll. 1679-1878, Dahlberg 54-56). Most visual representations of this allegorical process of falling in love reduce the sequence of five arrows to a single event.

illuminations. I will end by discussing two fifteenth-century *Roman de la Rose* manuscript images that demonstrate cross-influence between the Tryst and the *Rose*.

The Tryst beneath the Tree in the Literary Tradition and Manuscript Painting

In this section, I address the textual and visual representations of the Tryst in medieval manuscripts, following a chronological arrangement by approximate date of composition as opposed to date of manuscript production. While Mark's reflection in the water appears so prominently in fourteenth-century visual representations of the Tryst, the extant literary sources mention only a shadow either on the ground or in the water, or a silhouette directly in the tree. Indeed the literary tradition deemphasizes the scene by relegating it to the second half of the narrative, where it repeats a familiar pattern of discovery and deceit. Here I focus on the manuscript presentation of the scene, addressing word and image relations whenever the scene is included in the illumination program. I inform this reading with an exposition of the linguistic capaciousness of the word "ombre," as well as its visual representations in illustrated *Rose* manuscripts, examining cross-influences between the two traditions.

Part 1: Verse *Tristan* Manuscripts

In our modern experience of reading Béroul's twelfth-century poem, preserved imperfectly in a single thirteenth-century manuscript, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS. fr. 2171, the Tryst beneath the Tree scene constitutes the opening lines of the extant fragment. For a medieval reader, however, the episode would have occurred in the second half of the

romance. The scene as we have it begins in the middle, with Mark already stationed in the tree and both lovers already conversing at their rendezvous. The narrator is introducing Isolde's careful speech, in which she prevents her lover from saying anything incriminating. Her speech constitutes an ambiguous oath:

> Li rois pense que par folie,
> Sire Tristran, vos aie amé,
> Mais Dex plevis ma loiauté,
> Qui sor mon cors mete flaele,
> S'onques fors cil qui m'ot pucele
> Out m'amistié encor nul jor!" (ll.20–25)

> [Lord Tristran, the king thinks
> that I have loved you sinfully;
> but I affirm my fidelity before God,
> and may He punish me
> if anyone except the man who took my virginity
> ever had my love! (ll.20–25)][174]

This equivocal vow to God, the truth of which is mediated through double meaning epithets, is directed to Mark, who is elevated God-like in the tree. Tristan, the man who has claimed her maidenhead, continues the conversation, denying any misconduct, insisting on his innocence and loyalty to both the king and the queen, and finally imploring Isolde to plead his case with the king so that he may return safely to Mark's court. Tristan is asking her to assume an intercessory role proper for her position as a queen. In instructing Isolde on ways in which she may intercede for him with Mark, Tristan is actually pleading directly to Mark, providing all the reasons that either one of them would have presented before Mark in person. Their behavior and conversation are carefully staged for Mark's eyes and ears: "Li

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[174] Norris J. Lacy, ed. and trans., "Béroul's *Tristran*," in Norris J. Lacy, ed., *Early French Tristan Poems*, 2 vols., vol.1 (Rochester, NY: D. S. Brewer, 1998), 3-216. All references to the Old French text and all modern English translations are cited by line number from this edition.

rois qui sus en l'arbre estoit/Out l'asenblee bien veüe/Et la raison tote entendue" (ll.258–260) ["The king, who was up in the tree,/had witnessed the meeting first hand/and had heard the whole conversation" (ll.258–260)]. Mark has observed everything from the vertically elevated position of power without recognizing that the seemingly private meeting unfolding below has been carefully performed for his public observation. This staged semblance of chastity acts as a protective veil, occluding Mark's sight and sundering the false dichotomy between appearance and reality. E. Jane Burns emphasizes this divergence between visual and aural evidence in the process of establishing truth in Béroul's *Tristran*. What Mark sees and what Mark hears constitute two contradictory narratives: he sees the lovers alone together at night, which suggests impropriety, but their conversation creates an alternative narrative of innocence. Mark is forced to choose which evidence to believe, and he chooses to believe their verbal deceptions.[175]

It is only from the subsequent conversation between Isolde and Brangain that the modern reader is able to reconstruct the scene and learn how Isolde recognizes danger and avoids detection:

> Brengain, ne vos vel pa mentir:
> Ne sai qui hui nos vout traïr,
> Mais li rois Marc estoit en l'arbre,
> Ou li perrons estait de marbre.
> Je vi son onbre en la fontaine. (ll. 347–351)
>
> [Brangain, I will not lie to you:
> I do not know who tried to betray us today,
> but King Mark was in the tree
> near the marble stone.
> I saw his shadow in the fountain. (ll. 347–351)]

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175 E. Jane Burns, "How Lovers Lie Together: Infidelity and Fictive Discourse in the *Roman de Tristan*," in Joan Tasker Grimbert, ed., *Tristan and Isolde: A Casebook*, 75-93, at 85.

According to Isolde's account of the situation, the lovers meet by a spring or a fountain under a tree. The presence of a marble block suggests that it is a man-made structure built on the spot of a natural spring. In either interpretation, it is a body of water, upon which Isolde sees a shadow ("onbre").[176] The setting is quite similar to the Narcissus at the Fountain episode in both Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and Guillaume de Lorris' *Rose*. Isolde's powers of observation are exaggerated in Béroul's poem, as the visual evidence she interprets is so meager (after all, it is a mere shadow) in contrast to Mark's failure to interpret ample visual evidence of impropriety (a married woman alone at night with a man who is not her husband). As the shadow appears on a water surface, it could potentially be a reflection, but the language of the poem remains ambiguous, allowing for a more narrow interpretation of "onbre" as a "shadow" to heighten the suspense.

The late twelfth-century *Folie Tristan d'Oxford* recounts the Tryst episode toward the end of its one thousand-line verse narrative. Disguised as a fool, Tristan comes to Mark's court and seeks an audience with Isolde. In hopes of gaining his lover's recognition, he recounts some of the famous episodes from their adventures together, including the Tryst beneath the Tree. This abbreviated account confirms some key points in Béroul's description of the setting:

> Li rais vint la nuit el gardin
> E si est munté [sus] el pin.
> Jo vinc aprés, ke mot ne soi,
> Mais si cum j'oi esté un poi,
> Si aparceu l'umbre le roi
> Ke sëeit el pin ultre moi. (ll.797–802)
>
> [That night, the king came to the garden

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[176] 'Onbre' and 'umbre' are variant spellings for 'ombre'.

and climbed up into the [pine] tree.
I came later, suspecting nothing,
but once a little time had passed,
I noticed the shadow of the king,
who was perched in the [pine] tree above me. (ll.797–802)][177]

The tree is identified as a pine, just as it is described in Ovid and in the *Rose*. The king's

vertical advantage in the pine-tree is thwarted by a shadow ("l'umbre"), though Tristan does

not specify whether the shadow appears on the ground or on a water surface. Like Isolde in

Béroul's text, Tristan immediately interprets the shadow as belonging to the king. The only

illustrations of the *Folie* narratives appear on two fourteenth-century multi-romance caskets:

the Cluny Casket and the Hermitage multi-romance casket.[178] Both caskets juxtapose the

Tryst beneath the Tree episode with an image of Tristan, dressed as a fool, appearing before

King Mark and his courtiers. Placed in the left frame on both caskets, the Tryst visually and

temporally precedes the disguised court appearance. On the right in the Cluny casket and in

the second frame of the Hermitage multi-romance casket, Tristan's tonsure, short tunic, and

wooden club identify him as a fool and form a contrast to his courtly locks and proper

appearance in the Tryst. The caskets unravel narrative time, placing the flashback episode of

the lovers' secret meeting before Tristan's disguised appearance at court.

The poetic tension of the Middle High German text of Eilhart von Oberg's *Tristrant*

is generated by a similarly hyperbolic contrast. King Mark and his dwarf advisor climb up a

linden tree to observe the lovers' secret tryst. Both Tristan and Isolde reach the same

conclusion after examining the shadows ("schatten") on the water: "der kúng waß

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[177] Samuel N. Rosenberg, ed. and trans., "La Folie Tristan (Oxford)," in Norris J. Lacy, ed., *Early French Tristan Poems*, 2 vols., vol. 2 (Rochester, NY: D. S. Brewer, 1998), 278-309. All references to the Old French text and all modern English translations are cited by line number from this edition.

[178] V. A. Kolve provides a black-and-white image of the Hermitage multi-romance casket as well as a brief discussion of its visual narrative in *Telling Images: Chaucer and the Imagery of Narrative II* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009), 240, figure VIII.18.

beliben/uff dem bom mit sinem gatten./do ersach er iren schatten/von dem mon in dem brunnen" (ll.3622–3625)[179] ["Then Tristrant saw the shadow of the king and his companion in the tree which the moon had cast onto the surface of the water" (88)].[180] Isolde notices two shadows as well: "do ward och die frow gut/der speher do gewar./der mon trug och den schatten dar/in den brunnen von inen zwain." (ll.3656–3659) ["Then the lady noticed the shadows of the two spies which the moon cast into the water" (88)]. Independently, the lovers interpret the shadows ("schatten"), and they both resist the instinctive urge to look up to ascertain the source of danger. The efficacy of the lovers' subsequently staged conversation, very similar in its equivocation to the one preserved in the Béroul fragment, follows the "duper duped" scenario, which depends on the figures in the tree not knowing that their position has been compromised.

Two late medieval visualizations of Eilhart's poem depict the Tryst without rendering a reflection in the water. Henrike Manuwald and Nick Humphrey have identified a specific narrative connection between a fourteenth-century painted wooden casket held at the Victoria and Albert Museum, London and Eilhart's Middle High German text.[181] On the lid of the casket, the Tryst scene is rendered in four compartments, separated from each other by metal mounts and wooden grooves. Isolde and Tristan stand on either side of an oval fountain, their slender figures elongated by the height of the compartments and the tall trees next to them. The shape of the fountain and the metal mounts exaggerate the distance between the lovers. King Mark and the dwarf appear in the tree behind the fountain, their

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[179] Danielle Buschinger, ed., Eilhart von Oberg, *Tristrant und Isalde* (Reineke: Verlag Greifswald, 1993). All line numbers are cited from this edition.

[180] J. W. Thomas, trans., Eilhart von Oberg, *Tristrant* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1978), 88. All translations are cited by page number from this edition.

[181] Henrike Manuwald and Nick Humphrey, "A Painted Casket in the Victoria and Albert Museum, London," *Antiquaries Journal* 90 (2010): 235-60, at 247, figure 2.

faces and upper bodies emerging from the foliage. Isolde points down at the fountain, but there is no reflection in the water. Tristan's hands are missing due to damage to the casket, so the lines of sight and gesture are now interrupted. The lovers' eyes are lowered in a semblance of modesty, but they reinforce Isolde's hand gesture, bringing the viewer's attention to the oval pool. King Mark and the dwarf look intently at each other, ignoring the scene below. Mark threatens the dwarf with an upraised sword, which is a narrative feature unique to Eilhart's poem. The composition creates two distinct spaces – one in the tree and one below – with minimal connection between them. The violent confrontation between King Mark and the dwarf, as well as their close proximity to each other, exaggerates the staged propriety of the lovers and the distance between them.

A fifteenth-century manuscript of Eilhart's poem preserves a simplified but still recognizable pen-and-ink Tryst composition, with the corresponding text above it on fol. 66 of Heidelberg, Universitätsbibliothek, Pal. germ. 346.[182] The lovers sit on either side of a square pool or fountain, which stands at the base of a tree. On the left, Isolde wears a crown and a long flowing dress. A long-haired Tristan is sitting on the right, wearing a form-fitting tunic. Two faces are outlined in the tree, observing the lovers from above: Mark's crowned head on the right is visibly larger than the head on the left, which helps identify the second spy as the dwarf. Mark looks intently at Isolde, while the dwarf looks down at Tristan, but neither one of the lovers returns their gaze. The lovers' eyes look away from the tree and from each other, possibly glancing at the observer. Their hand gestures follow the familiar postures, with Isolde casually pointing at Mark's face in the tree and Tristan pointing down into the pool, but the rectangular structure at the base of the tree is empty. There is neither

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[182] A black-and-white facsimile of the illustration appears in Jacqueline Thibault Schaeffer, "Modulations of Moduli in the *Tristan* Illuminated Manuscripts," 140, Ill. 2.

water, nor shadow, nor reflection in it—nothing to indicate how the spies' presence has been detected. The absence of a reflection interrupts the quadrilateral movement of implied lines of sight and gestures, creating instead a chiasmus, with a point of intersection in the middle of the tree.[183] While the image and text in this manuscript narrate the episode in close proximity to each other, the triangular composition of the pen-line illustration leaves the shadow unmaterialized.

The Middle High German text of Gottfried von Strassburg's *Tristan* also mentions a shadow ("schate").[184] Tristan arrives first and sends a message to Isolde to meet him in the orchard by placing his tokens into a running stream of water. As he waits for Isolde, he surveys his surroundings:

> Tristan gienc über den brunnen sâ,
> dâ beidiu schate unde gras
> von dem öleboume was.
> aldâ gestuont er trahtende,
> in sînem herzen ahtende
> sîn tougenlîchez ungemach.
> sus kam, daz er den schate gesach
> von Marke und von Melôte,
> wan der mâne ie genôte
> durch den boum hin nider schein. (ll.14622–14631)[185]

> [Tristan at once crossed the brook to where the olive cast its shadow on the grass. There he took his stand, pondering his secret woes. And so it chanced

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[183] Interestingly, the addition of the dwarf in the tree provides a different fourth focal point, shifting the balance of the composition.

[184] Due to the fragmentary nature of Thomas of Britain's *Tristran*, Gottfried's work is generally used to approximate the content of the missing episodes. I am supplementing Gottfried's account with the Middle English *Sir Tristrem*, which is also based on Thomas of Britain's *Tristran*.

[185] Walter Haug and Manfred Günter Scholz, eds., Gottfried von Strassburg, *Tristan und Isold*, Band I: Bibliothek des Mittelalters (Berlin: Deutcher Klassiker Verlag, 2011). All line numbers are cited from this edition.

that he noticed Mark's and Melot's shadows, for the moon was shining down through the tree very brightly. (234)][186]

The setting is very similar here, but a few details are added. The tree is an olive, as opposed to a pine in Béroul and the *Folie* texts or a linden in Eilhart. The spring is situated near the tree, but not directly below it. There are no signs of artificial structures around the water like the marble block in Béroul. The moon shines brightly and casts distinct shadows. Arriving soon after her lover, Isolde first notices Tristan's odd behavior; he does not move toward her in greeting. As she approaches the meeting spot, Isolde pays closer attention to the scene before her, noticing the shadows. Once again, what the lovers see is a shadow, or multiple shadows. In fact, here there can be no reflection, for the brook is located some distance away from the tree. Tristan explicitly crosses the brook to arrive under the tree, which casts a shadow over grass, not water. There is not even a marble block to provide a polished surface for a reflection. Isolde's observation adds another detail: the shadows unambiguously belong to human forms. The observers in the tree would have to be standing for their bodies to cast distinctly human shadows, clearly illuminated by the bright moonlight that shines through the branches. Both Tristan and Isolde interpret the shadows correctly as indications of the presence of intruders (Mark and one of his spies) in their secret rendezvous spot. The two German texts are consistent in identifying two spies in the tree, and subsequently two shadows, but differ as to whether the shadow is on a water surface or on the ground.[187]

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[186] A. T. Hatto, trans., Gottfried von Strassburg, *Tristan*, in *Gottfried von Strassburg Tristan Translated Entire for the First Time with the Surviving Fragments of the Tristran of Thomas* (New York: Penguin Books, 2004), 40–297. All translations are cited by page number from this edition.

[187] In her discussion of how the Tryst illustrations are specific to the *Tristan* verse romances, Van D'Elden bases her analysis on the German texts of Eilhart and Gottfried, both of which position two figures in the tree. In doing so, she disregards the French and Anglo-Norman textual sources, such as Béroul and the anonymous *Folie Tristan*, which place only a single person in the tree. Van D'Elden does not address the shadow/reflection distinctions. See Van D'Elden, "Specific and Generic Scenes in Verse *Tristan* Illustrations," in Eming et al., eds., *Visuality and Materiality in the Story of Tristan and Isolde*, 272-81.

An illustrated thirteenth-century manuscript of Gottfried von Strassburg, Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Cgm. 51, renders the Tryst beneath the Tree episode on fol. 76 (Figure 20).[188] The full-page illustration consists of three registers, in two of which the lovers meet by a tree, but their postures are radically different. Each register consists of two frames, and each frame contains written explanations either in the form of tituli (labels) or banderols (speech scrolls). In the top register on the left, a man and a woman are shown in conversation near a tree; a smudged label tells us that the woman is Brengain, who is making plans with Tristan on behalf of her mistress about a future rendezvous. In the second frame, Tristan drops a token into the stream, letting Isolde know that he is waiting for her at the appointed spot; a speech scroll conveys his intentions to the reader. In the middle register on the left, the lovers embrace next to a tree. A stream safely separates them from the dwarf on the right, who discerns their secret in the stars; again, a speech scroll explains his discovery. In the bottom register, King Mark and the dwarf appear in both frames: on the left the two are riding toward the lovers' meeting point; on the right their faces appear up in the tree. Mark's crowned head looks down on Tristan and Isolde who stand to the left of the tree and apart from each other. Their placement and attitude indicate a semblance of modesty, but this may only be recognized as such when compared with the image in the register diagonally above, in which they share a secret embrace. In fact, their postures in the bottom right frame are similar to the postures of Tristan and Brengain in the top left frame, both of which rely on spatial distancing and conversational hand gestures to convey an appearance of propriety. There is no water in the bottom register, and consequently no reflection. Neither are there

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[188] For a detailed discussion of this image in relation to the visual program of the manuscript as a whole see Julia C. Walworth, *Parallel Narratives: Function and Form in the Munich Illustrated Manuscripts of* Tristan *and* Willehalm von Orlens, King's College London Medieval Studies XX (London: King's College London Centre for Late Antique & Medieval Studies, 2007), 188-89.

any shadows on the ground. Only the viewer is aware of the danger awaiting the lovers, and yet Tristan and Isolde are somehow able to overcome that danger without the help of visual clues. The dwarf's stargazing and Mark's ambush of the lovers both prove ineffectual as modes of detecting the truth. This image predates the ivory carvings and deviates from the familiar quadrilateral Tryst compositions. While the pen drawing in the later Eilhart manuscript demonstrates an influence from the French tradition, the Gottfried illustration establishes the Tryst episode through a cyclic structure, relying on a sequence of related scenes and verbal cues that label characters and actions. In many ways this narrative cycle establishes a more symbiotic relationship of image and text, both of which position the Tryst as one of many secret meetings, unwilling to isolate it as a synecdoche for the romance as a whole.

The Middle English *Sir Tristrem* returns to the single figure or spy in a tree setting we have seen in the French texts, suggesting that Thomas of Britain's Anglo-Norman text probably followed a similar pattern. It is unclear whether Isolde sees a shadow or a person in the tree, but Tristan most certainly sees a shadow on the ground:

> Sir Mark sat in þe tre
> Þer metten þai to.
> Þe schadowe Tristrem gan se
> And loude spac he þo,
> Þat Ysonde schuld Mark se
> And calle Tristrem hir fo. (ll.2102–2107)[189]

The condensed narrative of the Middle English poem does not describe the setting in detail, so the Ovidian or *Rose* parallels are missing, but it does capture the vertical arrangement of

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[189] David Burnley and Alison Wiggins, eds., *Sir Tristrem*, The Auchinleck Manuscript, National Library of Scotland Digital Library (July 2003) <http://www.nls.uk/auchinleck/mss/tristrem.html>. All line numbers are cited from the transcription provided by Burnley and Wiggins.

the scene. Mark sits in the tree, observing from above the meeting of the two lovers. His shadow appears down below. There is no mention of a fountain or a spring, so the shadow is most likely on the ground under the tree. Tristan notices the shadow and warns Isolde. The dissembling language used by Isolde in her reply echoes the equivocal oath she makes in Béroul's and Gottfried's versions: "Y swere bi Godes rode…/Y loued neuer man wiþ mode/Bot him þat hadde mi maidenhede" (ll.2127, 2133–2134). The lovers' dissembling language achieves the same results in all verse texts. Mark disregards the visual fact of the lovers meeting alone together and believes their verbal denial of the visual truth. He feels sorry for the banished Tristan and blames the informants for making him suspect the loyalty of his nephew and wife. Unfortunately, the Middle English romance appears incompletely in a single early fourteenth-century manuscript. National Library of Scotland, Advocates MS 19.2.1, commonly known as the Auchinleck manuscript, has been vandalized, and the image that once appeared at the opening of *Sir Tristrem* has been cut out, so there is no way to tell whether the illuminator had selected the Tryst as a thematic introduction to the romance or not.[190]

Two late fourteenth-century wooden misericord carvings, found in Chester and Lincoln Cathedrals, display distinctive Tryst beneath the Tree compositions.[191] Melissa

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[190] The date of production for the Auchinleck manuscript is roughly 1330, but the composition of the romance texts it anthologizes is approximately 1300. The manuscript illuminations found in the Auchinleck remain largely understudied mostly due to the level of vandalism that befell the manuscript. The vast majority of the manuscript illuminations have been removed: either cut out, leaving behind rough rectangular holes (this practice occurs in thirteen places in the extant manuscript), or removed together with the entirety of the folio (at least eighteen folios that correspond to opening pages of new texts have been excised). Of six remaining illuminations, only five are potentially recognizable, as one is thoroughly defaced. Four out of five images are connected to romance texts, and the fifth appears at the opening of the Paternoster. The remaining illuminations introduce texts thematically. My observations regarding the Auchinleck manuscript are based on archival research conducted at the National Library of Scotland in July 2011, March 2013, and October 2013.
[191] Christa Grössinger addresses the physical proximity of Capture of the Unicorn and Tryst beneath the Tree compositions on misericords in the Chester and Lincoln Cathedrals in "The Unicorn on English Misericords," in Gale R. Owen-Crocker and Timothy Graham, eds., *Medieval Art*, 142-58.

Furrow argues that these particular compositions derive from the Middle English *Sir Tristrem* or from a similar retelling of Thomas of Britain's Anglo-Norman romance.[192] The misericord composition is unique in collapsing two separate rendezvous scenes into a single meeting in the orchard. Tristan and Isolde stand on either side of an oak tree. Their trusted servants stand a short distance away. Mark's crowned face looks down from the foliage, but there is no reflection underneath the tree. Isolde's dog forages in the undergrowth, demonstrating behavior that Furrow interprets as that of a dog pointing to a shadow on the ground. This shadow, however, is not materialized in any visible form. Instead of sending each other discreet signals with hand gestures, the lovers exchange a ring right under Mark's face. The ring exchange takes place at a later point in the romance, but its placement in the Tryst only highlights the lovers' daring in the face of danger and further underscores Mark's inability to interpret visual evidence.

Part 2: Prose *Tristan* Manuscripts

The setting and the dialogue between the lovers have changed significantly in the shift from verse to prose. In the prose text, there is no mention of a water source, of a reflection in the water, or of a shadow on either the ground or on a water surface. The texts of the French prose *Tristan* manuscripts that include the Tryst beneath the Tree episode eliminate the fountain altogether, along with any shadows or reflections, while preserving the enclosed garden setting and a tall tree. Only seven out of nearly eighty known manuscripts of prose *Tristan* contain the episode: Bibliothèque nationale de France, mss. fr. 97, 100–101, 340, 349,

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[192] Melissa Furrow, *Expectations of Romance: The Reception of a Genre in Medieval England* (Rochester, NY: D. S. Brewer, 2009), 163–69, at 164, plate 1.

757, 772, and Chantilly 648.[193] Both Tristan and Isolde see Mark's face directly in the tree, for the night is clear and the moon is bright: "[I]l regarda vers le lorier et vit que lassus avoit un home. Il ne set pas bien qu'il est, mes totes voies pense il miex que ce soit li rois Marc qe autre" (378).[194] ["(H)e looked towards the laurel and saw that there was a man up in the tree. He could not make out who it was, but he thought it more likely to be King Mark than anyone else" (306).][195] The orchard is an enclosed garden, with walls designed to keep out intruders like Tristan. These same walls provide a sense of security for the lovers who believe themselves to be the only nocturnal visitors in this space. By the time the prose *Tristan* manuscripts gained popularity, the enclosed gardens had become a familiar site in romance topographies, largely due to the proliferation of the illustrated *Roman de la Rose* manuscripts. Tristan sees the shape of a man in the tree and immediately draws two correct conclusions: the shape is Mark's, and Mark is there to spy on the lovers. Tristan examines the visual evidence at its source, not mediated through shadows on the ground or in the water. Isolde demonstrates similar deductive skills when she arrives shortly after Tristan and notices a figure in the tree. The lovers are no longer interpreting shadows or reflections, or any other indirect visual manifestations. Their glances are directed up, toward the source of danger. Yet despite such boldness, Mark still fails to recognize that his presence has been

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[193] Emmanuèle Baumgartner groups six of these manuscripts together--BnF fr. 97, 100–101, 540, 349, 772, and Chantilly 648--as belonging to a single textual tradition, which she categorizes as the Third Variant (v.III). BnF fr. 757 belongs to the First Variant (v.I or the short version) but overlaps textually with the Third Variant group in the second half of the narrative, which includes the Tryst scene. See Emmanuèle Baumgartner, *Le "Tristan en prose", Essai d'interprétation d'un roman médiéval* (Genève: Droz, 1975), 67-71. The Third Variant was partially edited by Joël Blanchard, *The Romance of Tristan in Prose, Two Captivities of Tristan* (Paris: Klincksieck, 1976). The First Variant was edited by Joël Blanchard and Michel Quéreuil in *Le Roman de Tristan en Prose: Version du manuscrit fr. 757 de la Bibliothèque nationale de Paris* (Paris: H. Champion, 1997).

[194] Blanchard and Quéreuil, *Le Roman de Tristan en Prose*, 378. All further references are cited by page number.

[195] Renée L. Curtis, ed. and trans., *The Romance of Tristan: The Thirteenth-Century, Old French "Prose Tristan"* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994). All translations are cited by page number from this edition.

detected. The elements of suspense are gone in the prose texts: the danger is prominently featured and observed in the tree.

Similarly, the dialogue between Tristan and Isolde is no longer an elaborate construction of verbal riddles, the literal truth of which is evident to the reader but not to Mark. In the prose text, the lovers swear false oaths shamelessly and without reservation, rejoicing in the fact that Mark will be swayed by their lies:

> Iseut: "Je vos aing sanz faille et amerai tote ma vie, einsi come bone dame doit amer preu de chevalier, celont Dieu et selonc l'onor de son mari. Dieux le set bien, et vos meïsmes le savéz, conment je vos ai aimé selonc Dieu, et que vos oucquez ne pechastes a moi, ne je a vos." (380)

> [Isolde: "I certainly do love you and shall love you all my life, but as a loyal lady should love a worthy knight in accordance with God and with her husband's honour. God knows the truth, and so do you, that I've loved you according to His will, and that you never sinned with me nor I with you." (307–308)]

Isolde's speech no longer relies on the mediation of equivocal phrases and clever substitution of epithets. She denies any sexual misconduct committed with Tristan. She admits her love for Tristan and characterizes it as honorable. In making this particular oath, Isolde blames God for the love that has blossomed between them, shifting the blame from the human to the divine. Tristan displays similar audacity in his oath: "Diex le set bien, qui tot set et connoist, que je oucquez ne penssai vers vos de fole amor, ne ne penserai ce Diex plest" (381). ["God knows it well, He who knows and perceives everything, that I never had any thoughts of committing adultery with you, and never shall, please God" (308).] In making these oaths, the lovers subvert justice, claiming God as their witness while bearing explicitly false testimony. The audacious irony of their speech, however, is maintained in contrasting omniscient God with ignorant King Mark, elevated God-like in a laurel tree.

Of the seven manuscripts that contain a prose retelling of the Tryst, only four illustrate it: BnF mss. fr. 97, 340, 772, and Chantilly 648. The late thirteenth-century manuscript BnF ms. fr. 772 opens with a two column miniature, the largest in the manuscript, which depicts the Tryst episode.[196] The placement of the image adds a certain degree of importance to the episode, and it is also the primary reason for its poor condition. Alison Stones explains the privileged positioning of the Tryst illustration as an opening image for the manuscript with a nod toward the production of ivory artifacts with Tryst scenes. The composition of the Tryst in BnF ms. fr. 772, however, bears little resemblance to the quadrilateral image in the ivories (Figures 1, 12, 13). Instead, the composition shares more similarities with the image found in Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Cgm. 51 of Gottfried von Strassburg (Figure 20). It also demonstrates iconographic parallels with *Roman de la Rose* illuminated manuscripts. A tower and a crenellated wall frame the image, suggesting an enclosed garden. Suzanne Lewis discusses the significance of these architecturally enclosed spaces in several illustrated *Rose* manuscripts, paying particular attention to moments when these barriers are breached, as they are in the Tryst episode.[197] This sense of enclosure becomes more of an ambush, with the figures of Mark and his informant Audret flanking the lovers on both sides. King Mark's full body and crowned face appear in the tree on the left, while Audret's armed and mounted body closes the frame on the right. In the

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[196] A color facsimile of the image can be found in Stones, "The Artistic Context of Some Northern French Illustrated *Tristan* Manuscripts," in Eming et al., eds., *Visuality and Materiality in the Story of Tristan and Isolde*, 306, figure 12.6.

[197] Suzanne Lewis, "Images of Opening, Penetration and Closure in the *Roman de la Rose*," 215–42. In addition to Lewis' examples, the following *Roman de la Rose* manuscripts contain images of Amant entering the Garden of Deduiz: Bodleian Library, MS Douce 195, fol. 6r; Bodleian Library, MS Selden Supra 57, fol. 5r; Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal, 5226, fol. 6v; Bibliothèque nationale de France, fr. 801, fol. 5r; J. Paul Getty Museum, Ludwig XV 7, fol. 6v; Morgan Library & Museum, M. 948, 12r. Many more *Rose* manuscripts show Amant conversing with Oiseuse outside the Garden of Deduit, with towers and crenellated walls enclosing trees and sometimes birds inside.

middle, Tristan and Isolde construct a semblance of chastity by maintaining a modest distance from each other; their barely distinguishable hands indicate conversation. The lovers escape this trap by staging a false but convincing image.

A similar but less threatening one-column Tryst composition appears on fol. 279 of the fifteenth-century manuscript BnF. ms. fr. 97, marking the opening of the episode.[198] The image is reduced to three figures in a field, without the enclosing effects of a wall; King Mark's reclining body appears prominently in the tree on the right, while the lovers stand modestly apart from each other, dressed in courtly attire and engaged in a seemingly innocuous conversation.[199] Their delicate hands are so close they are almost touching, providing a hint of intimacy. In both images, Isolde faces away from the tree, positioned meaningfully between Tristan and Mark. Tristan faces Isolde, and therefore the tree, allowing for the possibility of his having noticed the very visible crowned figure in the branches. This arrangement is consistent with the prose text and does not require a shadow or a reflection to detect intrusion.

A rather large one-column miniature on fol. 286v of a richly decorated early fifteenth-century manuscript, Chantilly 648, provides a more familiar Tryst composition (Chantilly, Musée Condé, MS Chantilly 648, fol. 286v. c.1400–1430). The orchard is fully enclosed with walls and towers that recede into the night sky, again resembling the enclosed garden compositions of the *Rose*, particularly the fifteenth-century Narcissus at the Fountain

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[198] A large color facsimile of the image can be found in Stones, "The Artistic Context of Some Northern French Illustrated *Tristan* Manuscripts," 308, figure 12.7. Another reproduction together with a thorough discussion appears in Schaeffer, "Modulations of Moduli in the *Tristan* Illuminated Manuscripts," 141, Ill. 4.

[199] The composition is a mirror image of the one found in the Munich manuscript of Gottfried, as the positions are reversed: the tree is on the right and the lovers stand to the left of it.

illustrations.[200] King Mark is situated in the tallest tree, his crowned head, long legs, and sword clearly visible in the branches. His profile is facing his wife. Crowned Isolde in a blue dress stands to the left of the tree; Tristan clad in a red tunic over a shirt of mail and armed with a sword stands to the right of the tree. The triangular composition is reminiscent of the designs in ivory, but there is no reflection or shadow to create a fourth focal point. Yet even in this triangular composition, the lovers create a kind of symmetry as mirror images of each other, separated by a tree. Isolde holds her hands close to her body in a protective gesture that is also indicative of a listening posture. Tristan holds his hands out, in an open gesture of speech. The image is not as threatening as the one in BnF ms. fr. 772, but a sense of entrapment prevails. Even Mark's relatively small body looks ensnared by the tree, a complete opposite of the relaxed reclining posture in BnF. ms. fr. 97. In a sense, they have trapped Mark, forcing him to view and believe a false image.

A much smaller one-column miniature found on fol. 128 of the late fourteenth- or early fifteenth-century manuscript BnF. ms. fr.340 shows a quadrilateral Tryst composition (Figure 19). In a narrative departure from the prose text in which there is no fountain, shadow, or reflection, the miniature renders the scene in an exact iconographic correspondence with the ivory caskets. The lovers are seated by a small rectangular body of water. A slender tree separates them. Mark's crowned face looks out of the foliage and down toward Isolde, while his reflection looks up at Tristan. This pen-line reflection follows the Narcissus style of reflections as shadowy images on water (Figures 15 and 17), rather than a fully substantiated head that emerges from the water in ivory caskets. This may be a difference in media between manuscript painting and ivory carving, but, when we compare

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[200] Fifteenth-century *Rose* manuscripts feature elaborate architectural designs that delimit the garden, while fourteenth-century manuscripts exhibit smaller crenellated towers and/or wattle fences.

and contrast the two reflections, the ivory reflections appear to be carved with slightly less depth than the technique used in carving Mark's head in the tree. The hand gestures are also different from the images in ivory (compare with Figures 1, 12, and 13). Isolde discreetly points with her right index finger, but she appears to be pointing at Tristan instead of the reflection. Her left hand is raised toward Mark's face in the tree, reinforcing his gaze. Tristan's hands are raised up at the elbows in a conversational gesture. But despite the small differences in hand gestures, the quadrilateral balance is maintained through body postures. Both Tristan and Isolde lean in slightly as they converse; their heads approach the tree while their feet touch the fountain. Without a wall or a tower in the background to enclose the garden, the lovers seem to be more at ease: Isolde sits comfortably on a blue cushion, and Tristan looks directly at her as he speaks. The green slabs upon which they sit, however, do form a type of enclosure. In breaking with the convention of both the prose text and the other known *Tristan* manuscript illustrations, the composition of the image in BnF. ms. fr. 340 provides evidence of cross-influence from Narcissus images in the *Rose* as well as from the visual programs of the ivory caskets.

The physical placement of the Tryst episode in the prose romance cycle indicates that it has become of relatively marginal importance by the end of the thirteenth century. Even though the scene opens the only known fragment of Béroul's poem, there is no real indication as to where in the complete poem it would have appeared. It is quite possible that the scene would have appeared in the second half of the verse romance. This placement is supported by the location of the scene in the two German poems. In the Middle English *Sir Tristrem*, the scene also appears in the second half. Quite tellingly, the episode is missing entirely from Malory's English prose rendition of the *Book of Tristram of Lyoness*. But the

literary texts that do include the scene emphasize shadows or silhouettes as visual evidence of intrusion and contrast this indirect or incomplete vision with a semblance or simulacrum of chastity performed for Mark's direct observation.

The Tryst and the *Rose*: Conclusion

How does an understanding of the illustrated *Rose* help us understand the Tryst in visual *Tristan* narratives? For one, it helps us widen the semantic field of "ombre" to include both shadow and reflection. It also delineates the inextricable connection between sight and desire. A reflection is a sign of improper desire in the Narcissus episode. In looking down upon his nephew and wife, King Mark falls prey to the deceptive capabilities of images and sees what he wants to see — two faithful people behaving honorably. What the lovers see is his reflection, but what Mark sees is an altered reality, refracted by his own desires. This visual change from shadow to reflection is not a mere representational tool. A thematic connection with Narcissus reveals an irony embedded in the Tryst composition. Narcissus falls in love with his own reflection in a fountain, an image that is a mere illusion. Like Narcissus, King Mark becomes ensnared by a false image, though the illusion is not his own reflection (which he misses entirely) but the semblance of propriety and fidelity performed by the lovers.

A conflation between Narcissus and *Tristan* iconography occurs in fifteenth-century *Roman de la Rose* manuscript New York, Pierpont Morgan Library, MS M.245, fol. 11, produced in Paris around 1405. I do not want to blame the artist for misreading the text, as Suzanne Lewis does in her discussion of the image, which she explains as "the ludicrous

result of the designer-artist's gross misreading of the text in which Charlemagne now appears in the tall tree — in response to the passage: 'Not since the time of Charlemagne has such a fair pine tree been seen' (1426)."[201] Rather, I believe this to be a conflation of the two fountain scenes. As I have noted, there are multiple manuscripts of the *Rose* that visualize Narcissus and/or Amant at the Fountain, most of which place the figure kneeling by the water's surface. The male figure is generally young, and the wholeness of his body is contrasted with the disembodied head in the water, when the reflection is rendered. Furthermore, the often brightly colored clothing that marks his social status is contrasted with the faintness of the outlined form in the water, separating the human subject and his reflection. The vertical arrangement of the Morgan image follows the Tryst compositions in showing two disembodied crowned and bearded heads — one in the tree and the other in the water. The face looking down from the tree is older than either Narcissus or Amant, his age and position of responsibility are clearly marked in the forked beard and gold crown.

The confusion may have been in the instruction: 'paint a man looking down at his own reflection in the fountain'; such a description would fit both compositions, the *Rose* and the *Tristan*. The crowned head in the tree is not a conflation of Charlemagne and Narcissus as Lewis argues, nor is it the God of Love as the Morgan Library catalog description of the manuscript image suggests. Instead I believe that it is a conflation of Amant and King Mark, caused by a representational borrowing from the *Tristan* tradition. Amant, mindful of the story of Narcissus inscribed onto the fountain, dares to look into the water anyway, knowing that the water will reflect back that which he most desires. His desire to pluck a beautiful rose bud is literalized in an incomplete embrace of a courtly lady to the left of the tree and

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[201] Suzanne Lewis, "Images of Opening, Penetration and Closure in the *Roman de la Rose*," 226.

fountain. As Lewis notes, the crowned head in the tree and the head of the lover are placed at a relatively similar height and incline in similar postures. I would push her observation further and interpret these representational choices as two visualizations of the same person. A man looks down into the fountain and what he sees is visualized twice: once as an expected reflection, and a second time as an interpretation of his desire. Unlike Narcissus, he acknowledges his desire for the *Rose* as an entity beyond himself, which materializes in the form of a woman. As Lewis remarks, "She [the woman] appears literally to flow out of the fountain, the train of her voluminous dress sweeping through its narrow gate, into the arms of the Lover as he attempts to pluck a rose."[202] Barely visible horizontal lines on her dress connect the female figure to the horizontal wave lines in the fountain. I interpret the fluid connection between the woman and the water as a concretization of desire and an explication of the allegory. A further sign of conflation between the two fountain scenes is in the night-time setting of the Morgan miniature. The garden scenes in the *Rose* take place in the daylight, while the Tryst is a nocturnal rendezvous.

Schaefer discusses the Morgan *Rose* image in connection with the Tryst, but she rules out any correspondences as irrelevant.[203] I disagree with Schaefer on this point, particularly because I have found another such conflation in a fifteenth-century manuscript, J. Paul Getty Museum, Ludwig XV 7, fol. 11 (Figure 21), where Echo and Narcissus stand by a fountain, assuming the postures of Isolde and Tristan. If medieval artists could conflate the two images, then so could a medieval reader. The illuminated *Rose* manuscripts circulated contemporaneously with the prose *Tristan* manuscripts, and both continued to be produced in Paris in the first quarter of the fifteenth century. Shared production resources and shared

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[202] Suzanne Lewis, "Images of Opening, Penetration and Closure in the *Roman de la Rose*," 226.
[203] Jacqueline Thibault Schaefer, "Modulations of Moduli in the *Tristan* Illuminated Manuscripts," 146.

audiences inevitably brought the two narrative traditions into constructive conversations with each other. Not only do both the *Tristan* and the *Rose* provide extended though diverging meditations on the nature of love and desire, but both textual and visual presentations of the *Tristan* and the *Rose* enter into an ongoing dialogue regarding appearance and reality.

Ultimately, the manuscripts of the verse and the prose *Tristan*, like the *Rose* manuscripts, question human purchase on the physical world when visuality is severed from materiality. By seeing these manuscripts in conversation with each other as the discourse of optics develops with more mutual roles for subjects and objects, we can understand how interpretations developed through iconographic codes that interpreted textual and visual information simultaneously. The ivory caskets, inviting their owners to touch the adulterous lovers as they express their forbidden passions, also suggest a different interpretation altogether: namely, a focus on the heterosexual desires of Tristan and Isolde. As the medieval viewer and owner of the casket finds herself implicated in the adulterous relationship — possessing the same knowledge of Mark's presence as the lovers themselves — she occupies the position of mediator that the dwarf and Brangain often occupy in the verse narratives. The subterfuge always depends upon a fourth focal point, be that an additional spy or Mark's reflection in the water, clearly visible to a spectator of the represented scene. Yet the Tryst episode, like the stories of Amant and Narcissus, also depends on another figure, namely the outside spectator who interprets these stories and connects the visual image to the narrative from which they derive. Without the romance reader's knowledge, these images remain simply figures in enclosed gardens, just as insubstantial as shadows or reflections.

CHAPTER 3
"PRECIOUS PERLES UNTO HIS PAY": THE HEAVENLY PLEASURES OF LUXURY IN *PEARL*

Surviving in a single late fourteenth-century manuscript, MS Cotton Nero A.x, Art. 3, ff.41-59v (formerly ff.37-55v),[204] the anonymous poem *Pearl* is one of the finest examples of late medieval English poetry. All four poems in the manuscript—*Pearl*, *Cleanness*, *Patience*, and the more famous alliterative romance *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* (*SGGK*)—were likely written by the same poet. *Pearl*, however, surpasses *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* in its formal complexity; indeed, the poem is structurally perfect, or nearly so, internally merging alliterative and rhyming poetic forms of the late fourteenth century. The poem's 12-line stanzas are linked together into twenty groups with an intricate concatenation pattern, which ultimately brings the poem full circle as the final word in line 1,212 appears in the terminal rhyming position of the very first line. That word is 'pay[e]', meaning 'pleasure'. Over the course of the poem, the connotations of this term change from marking earthly aristocratic pleasures derived from an experience of beholding (and possessing) a luxurious object ("Perle, plesaunte to prynces paye" [l.1]) to expressing the bliss of Heaven as shared by the souls of the saved and Christ ("And precious perles unto His pay" [l.1212]).[205] In this final

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[204] High resolution images of the manuscript are available through the Calgary Cotton Nero A.x. Project <http://contentdm.ucalgary.ca/cdm/search/collection/gawain>. The ongoing annotated transcription project is available at <http://www.gawain-ms.ca>.

[205] Sarah Stanbury, ed., *Pearl*, TEAMS Middle English Texts Series, 2001, available online <http://d.lib.rochester.edu/teams/text/stanbury-pearl>. All references to the poem are cited parenthetically by line numbers based on this edition. I reference the edition discursively as either the TEAMS edition or the Stanbury edition. Occasionally I compare the text with the Charles W. Dunn and Edward T. Byrnes, eds., *Pearl*, in *Middle English Literature* (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1990), 339-75.

concatenation, salvation is explained through a metaphor of aristocratic luxury: earthly princes are compared to the King of Heaven, and in this Heavenly court, clean human souls bring delight to their Prince. With its intricately woven poetic form self-consciously enfolding the end into the beginning, *Pearl* becomes a luxury object in its own right, bringing aesthetic pleasure to its aristocratic audience.

The poetic beauty of *Pearl* lies not only in its formal perfection but also in its emotional intensity. *Pearl* is a dream vision experienced by a bereaved father. He has lost his daughter before she had reached the age of two, and in his grief he finds himself in the garden where she was laid to rest. He falls asleep upon that spot, and in his dream he meets his daughter as a Bride of Christ, blissfully residing in the New Jerusalem. To console her father, the daughter paraphrases the Book of Revelation, explicitly aligning her father's dream with the prophetic Vision of Apostle John.

The identities of both the father and the daughter are established through the Parable of the Pearl, expressly cited and explicated by the daughter.[206] The father is a jeweler, who specializes in fine metalwork; the daughter is the "pretiosa margarita" –"the pearl of great price", whose name may have been Margaret or Margery. The parable is one of many similes in Matthew 13 used to explain the Kingdom of Heaven. The *Pearl*-maiden paraphrases the parable in the English vernacular:

> This makelles perle, that boght is dere,
> The joueler gef fore alle hys god,
> Is lyke the reme of hevenesse clere -
> So sayde the Fader of folde and flode -
> For hit is wemles, clene, and clere,

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[206] "Iterum simile est regnum caelorum homini negotiatori quaerenti bonas margaritas. inventa autem una pretiosa margarita abiit et vendidit omnia quae habuit et emit eam." (Vulgate, Matthew 13: 45-46) ["Again the kingdom of heaven is like to a merchant seeking good pearls. Who when he had found one pearl of great price, went his way, and sold all that he had, and bought it." (Douay-Rheims, Matthew 13: 45-46)]

> And endeles rounde and blythe of mode,
> And commune to alle that ryghtwys were.
> Lo, even inmyddes my breste hit stode!
> My Lorde, the Lombe that schede Hys blode,
> He pyght hit there in token of pes.
> I rede thee forsake the worlde wode
> And porchace thy perle maskelles. (ll.733-744)

The physical perfection of the pearl and its rarity function as a metaphor for the preciousness of salvation; the *Pearl*-poet attempts to mimic this perfection in his poetic form. The personal drama of the poem expands upon the scriptural passage of Matthew 13, literalizing the metaphor of the jeweler and the pearl in order to console the bereaved father with an Apocalyptic vision. This poetic conceit creates a doubled illusion of privileged space: firstly, in the frame narrative, the reader becomes privy to the agonizing grief expressed so eloquently by the father—an emotion so intense that it moves modern readers to tears;[207] secondly, in the dream sequence, the reader witnesses the beauty of Heaven, which is a privileged sight revealed only to the truly deserving. This special access to emotional and spiritual experiences, both figured as physically exclusive and luxurious spaces, cultivates aristocratic privilege that we so frequently associate with romance literature.

More specifically, what brings *Pearl* into the sphere of romance is its use of luxury as an unapologetically positive vocabulary for communicating intricate feelings of loss and for understanding the bliss of Heaven. For its fourteenth-century aristocratic audience,[208] well-versed in romance literature, these emotional extremes of 'devely dele' and 'gret delyt' were

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[207] Sarah McNamer, "The Literariness of Literature and the History of Emotion," *PMLA* 130.5 (2015): 1433-1442; Daniel T. Kline, "The Pearl, a Crayon, and a Lego," in David Raybin, Allen J. Frantzen, and Bailey Young, eds., *Essays in Medieval Studies 15* (1998): 119-122.

[208] For a thorough discussion of the *Pearl*-poet's attachment to the Ricardian court and the more local Cheshire aristocratic circles of patronage, see John M. Bowers, "*Pearl* in Its Royal Setting: Ricardian Poetry Revisited," *Studies in the Age of Chaucer* 17 (1995): 111-155; John M. Bowers, *The Politics of* Pearl: *Court Poetry in the Age of Richard II* (Rochester, NY: D.S. Brewer, 2001).

familiar romance tropes that indicated separation and (re)union of lovers. The hyperbole may read as cliché for a modern reader, but it has become so after centuries of indoctrinating audiences into the conventions of an emotional community. Medieval romance established its rules and precepts through repeated formulations of emotional norms: the hero is the most handsome, noble, chivalrous, and capable of articulating the most refined emotions of delight and despair, communicating them through conventional language and postures. The happiest and most beautiful romance heroines like Queen Guinevere in *SGGK* dress in the most lavish and richly decorated clothing and reside in the most glamorous courts like Camelot. According to Corinne Saunders:

> Romance treatments of emotion are dependent on the intimate connections made between minds and bodies within the medieval thought world. Writers rely on and creatively adapt conventional notions of love and grief, exploring how these are felt in hearts and minds, and probing their physiological force. They repeatedly engage with suffering and conflicted psyches, writing the experience of affect on the lived-body, often in extreme ways.[209]

The emotional drama in *Pearl* adapts these psychosomatic romance conventions. The disjunction between the two extreme emotional states marks the separation between the father and the daughter, between earthly understanding and Heavenly knowledge. This separation is figured as a bejeweled river (ll.133-144), dazzling to the beholder. The poem offers confession and penance as the key to bridging this gap, as a promise of spiritual healing in the form of salvation, as the only path to the golden streets of the New Jerusalem.

Within this penitential framework, *Pearl* enters into conversations with other vernacular didactic texts, including William Langland's *Piers Plowman* (*PPl*) and Geoffrey Chaucer's *Parson's Tale*, as well as the numerous non-narrative diagrammatic aids for learning

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[209] Corinne Saunders, "Mind, Body and Affect in Medieval English Arthurian Romance," in *Emotions in Medieval Arthurian Literature*, 31-46, at 31.

key tenets of the faith, such as the Vernon *Pater Noster* chart and the Trees of Virtues and Vices in the De Lisle Psalter. Like *Pearl*, *PPl* borrows romance tropes—such as the quest structure for seeking Truth and the emotional intensity of courtly love poetry to express desire for Salvation.[210] Yet in its fraught attitude to *Luxuria*, simultaneously presenting truth as the best treasure while condemning ostentation in clothing, *PPl* breaks with the romance tradition of forthright positivity and of unabashed enthusiasm for luxury items, the influence of which is so central to *Pearl*'s poetics. Even more critically than *PPl*, the *Parson's Tale* eschews material luxury as antithetical to the project of teaching its readers how to avoid the Seven Deadly Sins. *Pearl*, however, deploys luxury as a material thread that sutures together its poetic form and devotional content. The beauty of Heaven as well as the moral purity of the *Pearl*-maiden are described in expressly material terms, and the positive valences of this aesthetic are promulgated by chivalric romances. As a romance-adjacent text, *Pearl* coopts the positive romance vocabulary for discussing rightful pleasure derived from aesthetic experience of luxury to communicate a didactic narrative to its aristocratic audience.

This term, 'romance-adjacent', can function as a codicological descriptor as well as an indicator of generic fluidity. In the first case, all three texts—*Pearl*, *PPl*, and the *Parson's Tale*—appear in manuscripts alongside romance material. In most critical discussions of *Pearl*, the poem's codicological affinity to (and affiliation with) *SGGK* is inescapable, so much so that scholarship refers to the poem's anonymous author as the *Gawain*-poet. Langland's *PPl* frequently appears in manuscripts that also feature romance texts; for example, the A-

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[210] "*Piers Plowman* borrows romance tropes in order to sustain a compelling narrative about Christian faith. For Langland, the origin of narrative is the desire for salvation, and the purpose of narrative is to explore that same desire." (Emily Steiner, *Reading* Piers Plowman [New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013], 182).

text of *PPl* appears in the Vernon Manuscript,[211] which also features *King of Tars* and *Robert of Cisyle* romances. In the larger context of the *Canterbury Tales*, the *Parson's Tale* serves as a morally edifying conclusion to a multi-generic compilation that includes multiple romances (e.g., *Wife of Bath's Tale*, *Franklin's Tale*, and *Man of Laws' Tale*). Secondly, the porous boundaries between medieval genres invite cross-influence between religious and secular texts (distinctions that were not so rigidly drawn in the medieval period as they tend to be in contemporary scholarship).[212] This genre cross-influence moves in both directions, resulting in what we now call penitential romances (e.g., *SGGK*, *Sir Isumbras*, and *Guy of Warwick*) and hagiography framed as romance (e.g., *The Life of Saint Alexis*, *The Legend of Saint Agnes*[213]). The presence of romance images on floor tiles and misericords in churches and in cathedrals further blurs the distinctions between secular and sacred spaces; examples include the *Tristan* images on floor tiles found in Chertsey Abbey as well as on misericords found in Chester and Lincoln Cathedrals.[214] *Pearl* as a luxury object in its own right becomes a perfect example for explaining the idealizing deployment of luxury in romance-adjacent texts.

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With the institution of yearly confession after the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215, basic doctrinal knowledge became a prerequisite for all Christians.[215] In England, at the Council of

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[211] *A Facsimile edition of the Vernon manuscript*: Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS. Eng. Poet. A. 1, ed., Wendy Scase (Oxford : Bodleian Library 2011), DVD-ROM.

[212] Alfred Hiatt, "Genre without System," in Paul Strohm, ed., *Middle English* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 277-294.

[213] Courtney E. Rydel, "Legendary effects: Women saints of the 'Legenda aurea' in England, 1260—1532" (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Pennsylvania, 2012), ProQuest Dissertations Publishing (2012), 3509405. For more specific examples, see chapter 3 "Virgin Martyrs in the Family Way: Poetic *Passiones* by Bozon, Chaucer and Lydgate," 138-204.

[214] Melissa Furrow, *Expectations of Romance: The Reception of a Genre in Medieval England* (Rochester, NY: Boydell & Brewer, 2009), 163–69; Elaine C. Block, *Corpus of Medieval Misericords* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2003); Paul Hardwick, *English Medieval Misericords: the Margins of Meaning* (Rochester, NY: Boydell Press, 2011).

[215] Vincent Gillespie, "The Literary Form of the Middle English Pastoral Manual with Particular Reference to the *Speculum Christiani* and Some Related Texts," unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Oxford, 1981.

Lambeth in 1281, six texts were specifically identified for the purposes of liturgical learning throughout the year: the Articles of Faith, the Ten Commandments, the Works of Mercy, the Seven Deadly Sins, the Seven Virtues, and the Seven Sacraments.[216] This rather small set of Latin liturgical texts created a matrix from which the lay practitioners could extrapolate other tenets of the faith. Aspects of this required penitential knowledge (or things explicitly tested in confession) appear in various non-narrative forms, particularly in charts and diagrams. An early fourteenth-century manuscript, known today as the De Lisle Psalter, contains thirteen such theological diagrams that explain, among other things, the Ten Commandments and the Twelve Articles of Faith. On two facing pages (Figures 5 and 6), the parallel diagrams of the Tree of Vices and the Tree of Virtues invite meditation on their relationships. *Luxuria* or "Lust" is included in the Tree of Vices (Figure 5), placed as the central offshoot of the Original Sin, which is depicted at the bottom of the tree. Branching out from *Luxuria* are incontinence, lack of consideration, love of self, hastiness, hatred of the Lord, instability, and worldliness. On the Tree of Virtues (Figure 6), which grows out of a Lilly pot, associated with the Virgin Mary, *Caritas* (or Charity) is opposed to *Luxuria* (Lust). The seven subsets of Charity are harmony, leniency, peace, grace, piety, compassion, and mercy. The Seven Deadly Sins appear a second time in a septinarian arrangement that brings together in concentric circles the seven petitions of the *Pater Noster* (Figure 7); the seven sacraments; the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit; the seven spiritual weapons of the virtues; the seven works of mercy; the seven principal virtues; and the seven criminal vices.

The Latin wording of the *Pater Noster* is taken directly from the Sermon on the Mount, in which Christ teaches his disciples how to pray (Matthew 6:9-13 and Luke 11:2-4).

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[216] Marjorie Curry Woods and Rita Copeland, "Classroom and Confession," in David Wallace, ed., *Cambridge History of Medieval English Literature* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 376-406, at 396.

In recitation, both the speaker and Christ are included in the first person plural: "Our Father." Early in the commentary tradition, the seven petitions of the *Pater Noster* became associated with the Seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit. In this form, the Trinitarian aspect of the prayer becomes more legible: through the words of the Son, the petitioner addresses the Father, and the Holy Spirit answers by distributing His Gifts. The Vernon Manuscript presents this material in a bilingual diagram that is conducive to conceptual learning (Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Eng. Poet.a.1, fol. 231v).[217] The highest level of decoration in the diagram is accorded to the Latin petitions, their significance marked with burnished gold and large painted initials called *littera notabilior*. The learning begins with the roundels, which contain Middle English paraphrases of the petitions, gifts, virtues, and vices. Connecting the roundels are Middle English instructions in red textura: "this preyer…leduþ a man to…leduþ a man to…is a ȝenst" (Vernon MS, fol. 231v). These repeated horizontal instructions define the relationships between the four major vertical categories in the diagram. The diagram utilizes vernacular and visual literacy to activate memorization and aid in understanding of Latin doctrine. What a lay reader learns from such a chart regarding the sin of *Luxuria* is the following: "þis preiere 'lord þou deliuere us from wikidnesse' leduþ a man to 'Sauour and liking in his god', [which] leduþ a man to Chastite and clannesse, [which] is against Lecherie". *Luxuria*, then, is seen as "earthly wickedness" from which a soul must be delivered through chaste and clean living.

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[217] Avril Henry, "'The Pater Noster in a table ypeynted' and Some Other Presentations of Doctrine in the Vernon Manuscript," in Derek Pearsall, ed., *Studies in the Vernon Manuscript* (Rochester, NY: D.S. Brewer, 1990), 89-114.

Augustine tells us that recitation of the *Pater Noster* has the spiritual efficacy of "a personal daily baptism."[218] This salvific power accorded to the *Pater Noster* is one of the many reasons for its significance in Langland's *PPl*.[219] In Passus X of the B-text, Langland presents the *Pater Noster* as a prayer that can lead the simplest of laymen to Heaven: "Souteres and shepherdes—swiche lewed juttes/ Percen with a *Paternoster* the paleys of hevene" (B, X, 461-2).[220] Alliterating Latin and English words, Langland accords the level of vernacular familiarity to the petitions of the *Pater Noster*. But reciting the *Pater Noster* and learning the attendant gifts, virtues, and vices forms only one small aspect of the larger system of Confession. The central question of *PPl* asked by Will the Dreamer early on in the A-text: "Hou I may saue my soule?" (Vernon MS, fol. 395). Several allegorical figures attempt to answer this large question. Piers tells Will: "þat pardoun and penaunce and preyers don sauen/ Soules þat han sunget seuen siþes dedlich" (Vernon MS, fol. 400). His answer brings together the efficacy of prayer and the power of Confession and Penance as keys to Salvation. While this may vastly oversimplify Langland's poem, it provides a framework through which to analyze other penitential texts, including *Pearl*, which similarly ponder how lay Christians may save their souls. According to at least one reader of the Vernon Manuscript, in which we find this elaborate diagram together with an instance of the A-text of *PPl*, the entire purpose of the codex is the health of one's soul. At the opening of the manuscript, above the table of contents, we find an inscription that reads: "þe book þat

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[218] "quasi quotidianum baptismum vestrum," *Patrologia Latina* XXXVIII 1064, quoted in Avril Henry, "'The Pater Noster in a table ypeynted,'" 97.

[219] Nicholas Watson, "*Piers Plowman*, Pastoral Theology, and Spiritual Perfectionism: Hawkyn's Cloak and Patience's Pater Noster," *The Yearbook of Langland Studies* 21 (2007): 83-118; David F. Johnson, "'Persen with a Pater-Noster Paradys Oþer Hevene': *Piers Plowman C. 11.296-98a*," *The Yearbook of Langland Studies* 5 (1991): 77-89.

[220] All citations to the B-text of *Piers Plowman* refer to the A. V. C. Schmidt edition. A. V. C. Schmidt, ed., William Langland, *The Vision of Piers Plowman, A Critical Edition of the B-Text Based on Trinity College Cambridge MS B.15.17*, 2nd edn., (North Clarendon, VT: J. M. Dent and Charles E. Tuttle, 1995).

is cald in latyn tonge Salus anime and in englyhs tonge Sowlehele." Thus, to at least one early reader of the manuscript, the combination of texts it anthologizes serves as a spiritual syllabus for gaining the proper knowledge for Confession.

In his treatment of *Luxuria*, Chaucer's Parson separates material from sexual aspects of the sin. He categorizes displays of costly clothing as part of the sin of Pride. Costly sartorial refinements represent wasteful expenditures when the money or the materials could have been directed toward helping the poor. Against this wastefulness, the Parson recommends "humylitee, or mekenesse" (l.475). The fleshly sins of *Luxuria* are listed under the Middle English category of "Lecherie." Here the Parson lists incest, rape, several forms of adultery, impure thoughts, and nocturnal emissions. Against the sin of Lecherie, the Parson recommends "chastitee and continence" (l.914)—very similar recommendations to what we find in the Vernon diagram.

The opulent visions of paradisal landscape and of the New Jerusalem frame what is really the heart of the poem: the didactic—and almost catechetic—conversation between the dreamer and the *Pearl*-maiden. By patiently answering her father's questions, the maiden delivers the salvation-historical explanation of Christian dogma rooted in confession and penance. For Sarah Stanbury, the central paradox of *Pearl* is what she calls an interpretive crisis: "the dreamer's visionary process is vision itself," but the spiritual authority in the poem, the *Pearl*-maiden, criticizes him for over-relying on his senses (ll.301-302, 307-312), insisting on doctrinal and liturgical knowledge as the true path to understanding God.[221] As a text thoroughly concerned with showing the way to salvation, *Pearl* participates in the pedagogical project of teaching the laity the importance of proper penance. Reading *Pearl*

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[221] Sarah Stanbury, *Seeing the* Gawain-*poet: Description and the Act of Perception* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1991), 16-17.

within this context of medieval didacticism and diagrammatic learning aids on the subject of the Seven Deadly Sins reveals the visual frame in *Pearl*, the luxurious landscapes, the regal attire, and the opulent architecture, as romance adornment for the didactic core of the poem.

My approach to luxury in *Pearl* is divided into two parts. In the first section, I address the formal features of the poem as rhetorical and material ornament. Its complex adornment presents the poem as an object in need of interpretation, whose various allegorical layers enfold infinite meanings. I argue that the emotional language of the poem constitutes one of its many layers of adornment, bridging the visionary and romance traditions with its insistence on materiality and hyperbolism of felt experience. In the second part, I situate the stanzaic structure of the poem as well as its central image of the New Jerusalem within the rich tradition of the illustrated English Apocalypse manuscripts and other aristocratic luxury objects. The most abstract concept in Christian dogma, the concept of salvation, is rendered with recourse to images of material luxury. The dreamer sees his late daughter as a member of the Heavenly Court, participating in the aristocratic drama of service and adoration. But the sight of the New Jerusalem, with all its gems, precious stones, and metals, is only a dream. The father learns that he has no physical access to it despite the poetic insistence on its concrete and very measured materiality (even as he is being unceremoniously expelled from it). Reading the emotional and the material aspects of *Pearl* within the late medieval penitential system reveals how the narrative structure of a dream-quest in *Pearl* and its pursuant idealism of romance reshape the message of salvation through penance into an idiom appropriate for aristocratic pleasure. At the same time, *Pearl* as a romance-adjacent text constructs an emotional community within which the positive vocabulary of luxury is

deployed unapologetically as a vehicle for communicating intricate feelings of loss; for this community, Christian salvation becomes the ultimate aesthetic experience.

Emotion as Adornment and the Form of *Pearl*: from 'devely del' to 'gret delyt'

The form and content of *Pearl* are intricately linked. The frame narrative establishes earthly grief through the language of love-loss, a trope generally found in courtly literature, particularly in romance and troubadour lyric. At this nadir of human emotion, the Apocalyptic vision communicates Heavenly bliss ('pay[e]' or 'gret delyt'—the height of human emotional experience) through the language of material luxury, grounded in Biblical descriptions of precious stones and gems but filtered through the romance ethos of valorizing them as rightful markers of status. This rhetorical tension between material luxury, which carries the potential danger of keeping the mind focused on earthly pleasures, and envisioning Heavenly bliss as radically luxurious beyond human expectation (pearly gates, foundations of precious stones and gems, etc.,) taps into romance idealization of luxury as an unapologetically positive aristocratic value. These diametrically opposed emotions, pain and pleasure, grief and joy, are linked together in an instructional dialogue between father and daughter. As the daughter guides her father through the steps of the salvation doctrine, she locates this ultimate goal of Christian happiness in a physical and decorative space of the New Jerusalem, the very streets of which are paved in gold. But unlike Apostle John, who is given admittance to this privileged space before death, the living father is unable to reach the City; barred from crossing the river, he wakes up in the same place where he fell asleep, returning to the gravesite of his daughter, consoled with the knowledge of her salvation and

with the hope that he can be saved as well. This emotional journey from grief to joy to consolation is accomplished through an intricate and circular poetic structure that acknowledges how easy it is to fall into despair despite the privileged knowledge of Christian salvation. These very raw and human emotions are not fully consistent with either romance or didactic literature of the fourteenth century; in the slippage between these genres, *Pearl* as a romance-adjacent text articulates emotional experience as another layer of literary adornment.

Pearl is arranged in 12-line stanzas, with four stressed syllables per line. More than two-thirds of the poem's 1,212 lines alliterate internally. Though the alliteration scheme is not as regular as it appears in other poems in the same manuscript, it serves to highlight the poem's capacious vocabulary. The rhyme scheme for each stanza follows the general formula of **ababababbcbc**, creating a set of four couplets, followed by a four-line refrain. Together the alliteration and the rhyme scheme form a rhythmic pattern of alternating and repeating consonant and vowel sounds.[222] The stanzas are further linked together into twenty groups of five (with one outlier) through concatenation of the terminal c-rhyme (Figure 22). A thematic word or phrase from the refrain is then repeated in the first line of the following stanza. Lastly, the refrain of the final group (XX) concatenates with the very first line of the first stanza (Figure 23), bringing the poem full circle, like an ornamental luxury art object, engraved in the round.

The intricate concatenation pattern that sutures the poem's stanzaic form brings attention to the emotional and material registers of the poem (Figure 24, "Concatenation

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[222] Mary Carruthers, "Taking the Bitter with the Sweet," in *The Experience of Beauty in the Middle Ages*, 80-107; Sarah McNamer, "The Literariness of Literature and the History of Emotion," 1436-39.

Chart"). The words or phrases chosen as concatenation terms[223] carry significance if only through the sheer power of repetition. Each of the twenty concatenation terms appears ten times within the span of sixty-one consecutive lines, moving from the terminal c-rhyming position of one stanza to the middle of the first line in the following stanza. This spatial and sonic proximity brings attention to the term, while the changing contexts elucidate its range or sliding scale of connotations. Several of these concatenation terms directly refer to aristocratic luxury objects and/or their attributes: Groups I 'spotte/ withouten spot', XIII 'maskelles', and XVI 'mote/ moteles/ wythouten mote' share semantic variations on the concept of 'a spotless jewel,' at times referring to both earthly and heavenly value; Groups II 'adubbemente', IV 'pyght', and V 'juelere/ juel' refer to the ornamental aesthetic of aristocratic décor and clothing. Other concatenation terms identify aristocratic qualities: Groups VI 'deme', VIII 'cortaysye', and XII 'by ryght', such as discernment, courtliness, and privilege. Language of abundance permeates other stanza groups: III 'more and more', X 'more', XI 'innoghe', XV 'never the less' refer to both quantifiable and qualitative concepts. Questions of temporality and eternal time as great privilege appear in Groups IX 'date' (meaning time or end), XIV 'Jerusalem' (as simultaneously Old and New Jerusalem), XVII 'apostel John' (visionary time), and XVIII 'mone' (as mutable but eternal celestial body). The language of aristocratic materiality and affect find shared articulation in Groups VII 'blysse', XIX 'gret delyt', and XX 'Prynces paye/ His pay'; these emotional concepts of bliss, delight, and pleasure function as both concrete aristocratic values and more abstract metaphors for explaining the ecstasy of salvation.

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[223] The 2015 issue (volume 9) of the *Glossator* is devoted to explicating, or glossing, the meaning of *Pearl*. The issue contains 20 articles with an introductory preface, and each of the articles is organized around a concatenation term, moving consecutively from Group I to Group XX. Even the preface takes the concatenation of Group XI 'innoghe' as its instantiation. Nicola Masciandaro and Karl Steel, eds., *Glossator: Practice and Theory of the Commentary* 9 (2015): *Pearl*, available online <https://glossator.org>.

The concatenation structure of repetition with a difference works in tandem with the poem's ever-shifting figuration of its central image—the pearl. The natural variation of non-synthetic pearls is a mark of perfectibility; no one natural pearl is exactly like another, and most are not perfect (most natural pearls are darker in color and irregular in shape), which makes finding a round and spotless pearl a rarity. In the poem, this natural rarity is figured as preciousness ('precious perle'), which works on both material and emotional levels. As an aristocratic luxury object, the perfect pearl (perfectly small, round, and clear) pleases princes and jewelers alike; as an unblemished soul in the New Jerusalem, the *Pearl*-maiden teaches us how to please the Lord. Even salvation, the most precious thing a Christian mortal could hope to achieve, is figured as a rare and precious pearl. The vocabulary of luxury, scarcity, and privilege surrounds the pearl in both earthly and eternal registers. At the same time the affective valence of pearl as a precious child—from emotionally charged scenes of bereavement, to reunion, to separation again—emblematizes the connection between luxury and emotion in *Pearl*.

On the level of verbal adornment, concatenation works as an elaborate layer of ornamentation. Matthew of Vendôme compares verbal ornament with material objects, claiming that both lead to a more welcoming reception.[224] Ornamentation of word choice and meter of the chosen words add to the overall elegance of verse. At the same time, use of rhetorical colors and tropes creates an additional polish to the poetic composition. In the octosyllabic rhyming prologue to his prose tale, Chaucer's Parson claims to eschew all such poetic embellishment. Unlike courtly poets or romancers, who aim to please their audiences

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[224] Matthew of Vendôme, *Ars Versificatoria* in Edmond Faral, ed., *Les Arts poétiques du XIIe et du XIIIe siècle: recherches et documents sur la technique littéraire du Moyen Âge* (Paris: Champion, 1924, 1958), 109-193, at 154; Matthew of Vendôme, *Ars Versificatoria*, trans. Roger P. Parr (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1981), 64.

with elaborate verbal and rhetorical adornment, the Parson is concerned with the proper

kinds of pleasures: "plesaunce leefful" (l.41). He promises to tell a tale that will be morally

edifying without the distraction of narrative or ornament:

> But trusteth wel, I am a Southren man;
> I kan nat geeste 'rum, ram, ruf,' by lettre,
> Ne, God woot, rym holde I but litel bettre;
> And therfore, if yow list -- I wol nat glose --
> I wol yow telle a myrie tale in prose
> To knytte up al this feeste and make an ende.
> And Jhesu, for his grace, wit me sende
> To shewe yow the wey, in this viage,
> Of thilke parfit glorious pilgrymage
> That highte Jerusalem celestial. (ll.42-51)

The Parson disavows elaborate poetic forms such as alliteration and rhyme in favor of

unadorned prose. And his prose treatise on the Seven Deadly Sins promises to help the

readers of the *Canterbury Tales* figure out how to save their souls through penance. But even

in his diatribe against verbal ornament, the Parson is using a pilgrimage to Heavenly

Jerusalem as a metaphor for Christian Salvation. The *Pearl*-poet, on the other hand, embraces

ornamentation as a didactic strategy, which culminates in his use of concatenation as both

verbal and rhetorical adornment. Together with the poem's treatment of intricate emotion,

the ornamental surface of the poem constructs a veneer of aristocratic luxury in *Pearl*.

Felicity Riddy has argued that the Middle English understanding of 'jewel' includes

decorative art objects, and that the structure of the poem can be described as a well-crafted

'jewel'.[225] She suggests that "As a jewel, the poem locates itself among other highly-wrought,

prestigious art objects, religious and secular, of the later fourteenth century: the elaborate

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[225] Felicity Riddy, "Jewels in *Pearl*," in Derek Brewer and Jonathan Gibson, eds., *A Companion to the* Gawain-*Poet* (Rochester: D. S. Brewer, 1997), 143-155, at 147.

reliquaries, caskets, crowns, brooches and cups."[226] Several scholars have followed through

on Riddy's intriguing claim, proposing specific material objects like the coronal of Princess

Blanche (Elizabeth Harper)[227], English chantry chapels and their decorative programs (Ann

Meyer),[228] and various English reliquaries (Seeta Chaganti)[229] as objects that help us think

about the form and content of the poem. Dovetailing onto their work, I consider medieval

romances and their material manifestations—illustrated manuscripts, ivory caskets, floor

tiles, misericords, tapestries, and mirror backs—as items that help us read the emotional and

material adornment in *Pearl*. This lens of romance valorizes the emotional pleasure derived

from the aesthetic experience of Heavenly beauty and at the same time explains the

experience of the ineffable in concretely material and luxurious terms.

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The narrative of *Pearl* is richly adorned with emotive language. Human emotion is inscribed

both in response to and in opposition to vivid landscapes and dreamscapes. As Sarah

Stanbury reminds us, "These 'objective correlatives' of landscape or even of ornamental

objects and interior spaces [in the works of the *Gawain*-poet…] can exist […] only because

there is a textual spectator whose emotions are reflected in the objects or places he

perceives."[230] In *Pearl*, that intra-diegetic spectator is the father, also figured as the jeweler

and as the dreamer. All descriptions, both earthly and otherworldly, are communicated

through his limited point of view, with the benefit of occasional correction from the *Pearl-*

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[226] Felicity Riddy, "Jewels in *Pearl*," 147-148.

[227] Elizabeth Harper, "*Pearl* in the Context of Fourteenth-century Gift Economies," *The Chaucer Review* 44.4 (2010): 421-439.

[228] Ann R. Meyer, *Medieval Allegory and the Building of New Jerusalem* (Rochester, NY: D. S. Brewer, 2003).

[229] Seeta Chaganti, *The Medieval Poetics of the Reliquary: Enshrinement, Inscription, Performance* (New York: Palgrave, 2008).

[230] Sarah Stanbury, *Seeing the* Gawain-*poet*, 5.

maiden. As such, they are filtered through the speaker's shifting emotional state and his emotional responses to various aesthetic encounters. The father's emotional path from 'woe' to 'weal' in *Pearl* has recently been addressed by Sarah McNamer within the context of the history of emotion. Following other literary historians, McNamer accounts for the 'literariness' of *Pearl* and other medieval poems not as a hindrance to the study of historical emotions; rather, she sees such poems as "scripts that generate a performance of feeling."[231] As such, the formal features of *Pearl* construct a musical consolation through pleasing sound, which McNamer describes as polyphonic. Thus, the very constructedness of *Pearl*, its intricate merger of alliteration, end rhyme, and concatenation, performs the process of consolation. While McNamer uses this complex sound pattern to identify a specific royal father in need of said consolation, I am more concerned with the poem's presentation of the emotional extremes—extreme sadness, or 'devely dele' (grief, despair) and extreme happiness, or 'gret delyt' (the bliss of salvation) as a romance-adjacent layer of adornment; this sharply affective contrast is frequently found in romances as lovers lament their separation and rejoice in their time spent together. In juxtaposing emotional extremes *Pearl* capitalizes on its aristocratic audience's knowledge of romance conventions, participating in the 'emotional community' of romance readers; in scripting a movement from secular to sacred, from 'prynces paye' to 'His pay', *Pearl* bridges two predominant and interrelated forms of aristocratic reading entertainment: romance material and the illustrated Apocalypse manuscripts.

 Pearl opens with the speaker bemoaning the tragic loss of his beloved, which weighs heavily upon his heart. He envisions the object of his loss as the best and rarest pearl that

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[231] Sarah McNamer, "The Literariness of Literature and the History of Emotion," 1436.

has slipped through his fingers. The romance elements of the poem contribute to the ambiguity surrounding his beloved's identity: she is figured simultaneously as a young child, an infant who has not yet learned her *Pater Noster*, and a beautiful young maiden, who joins the ranks of the saved elite as a Bride of Christ in the New Jerusalem. The first five stanzas establish an emotional nadir, a ground zero, with the speaker's heart in so much pain that it may break from love-sickness. But the main danger for the speaker and the security of his soul is the very real possibility of him succumbing to despair, sinking into a "devely dele" (l.51), the lowest point upon, or just below, a Christian emotional spectrum.

The opening line of the poem, "Perle, plesaunte to prynces paye" (l.1) envisions the beloved as a precious pearl, pleasing to a princely pleasure. The line sets the tone (or an emotional norm) for the rest of the poem in valorizing aristocratic pleasure ("paye") as a positive emotional response to precious gems and stones, the beautiful luxury items that rightfully belong to royal and noble owners. Seeking pleasure from luxury objects is an aristocratic value, praised and made normative in medieval romance. The conflation between pearl as luxury object, *Pearl* as poem, pearl as a child, and pearl as a young maiden (or beloved) encourages a reading of superlative descriptors to be applied to all four. Her uniqueness is reiterated through platitudes: "Ne proved I never her precios pere" (l.4 'I never found her peer', peerless); "I sette hyr sengeley in synglere" (l.8 'I set her apart as unique' among all other gems/women); "that pryvy perle wythouten spot" (l.12 'my own pearl without blemish', unblemished, perfect). These conventions are common in descriptions of romance heroines who stand out among all other women as the most beautiful and the most perfect. For example, in *SGGK*, the ladies of Arthur's court are "þe louelokkest ladies þat euer lif haden" (*SGGK*, l.52 'the loveliest ladies that ever lived'), and

Queen Guinevere is "Þe comlokest" (*SGGK*, l.81, 'the most beautiful') of them all.[232] Thus, the *Pearl*-maiden in her superlative singularity becomes one of many romance heroines.

The speaker distances himself from these positive emotions of aristocratic pleasure ("princes paye" l.1) by noting the loss of his "pryvy perle" (l.12); without his pleasing pearl, his life is without pleasure. He describes the loss of his beloved as the physical loss of a small precious object that has slipped through his fingers and into the ground. The smallness, the texture, the luminescence of the pearl remind the reader of the beloved's tender young age, of the smoothness of a child's skin, of the sparkle of a child's eyes. The possessiveness of the "pryvy perle" construction conflates a father's love with that of a courtly lover. He performs his sadness using romance conventions, crying "Allas!" (l.9), and describing his current existence as a love-sick romance hero: "I dewyne, fordolked of luf-daungere" (l.11).[233] The *Middle English Dictionary* (MED) translates "fordolked" as "severely or mortally wounded"[234], stressing the physical nature of emotional pain. The rare compound "luf-daungere" can be translated roughly as "love power" or "love sway."[235] We find this type of language in courtly poetry and romance, where a lover bemoans the loss of his beloved using the tropes of love-sickness, love wound, or madness. Chaucer's Black Knight laments the loss of his beloved Blanc in the *Book of the Duchess*, describing his emotional pain as physical debilitation. In Chrétien's *Yvain* and Marie de France's *Lanval*, the two eponymous characters bemoan the

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[232] J.R.R. Tolkien and E.V. Gordon, eds., *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, 2nd edn., rev. Norman Davis (New York: Clarendon Press, 1967). All references to the poem are cited parenthetically by line numbers based on this edition.

[233] This line has been variously glossed as "I languish, wounded by unrequited love" by Sarah Stanbury in the TEAMS edition of the poem, and as "I pine away, grievously wounded by love power" by Charles W. Dunn and Edward T. Byrnes. Both translations stress the emotional state in courtly terms.

[234] "fordolked", MED entry, University of Michigan, 2014, available online <http://quod.lib.umich.edu/cgi/m/mec/med-idx?type=id&id=MED16754>.

[235] Sarah Stanbury notes further that "[a]pparently a unique compound in Middle English, luf-daungere is a term from courtly love and evokes desire for the unattainable as well as feudal service to the lady, from OF [Old French] daungere, 'feudal power'." (Sarah Stanbury, ed., *Pearl*, TEAMS Middle English Texts Series, 2001, available online <http://d.lib.rochester.edu/teams/text/stanbury-pearl>).

loss of their beloveds once they recognize that they have broken their respective promises; Yvain fails to return at the pre-appointed time, and Lanval reveals his beloved's existence despite her express prohibition. Both actions are interpreted as betrayals of trust/troth by the heroines, and the heroes confront the emotional consequences of their actions in solitude. Lanval languishes alone ("Pensis esteit e anguissus" l.338), lamenting, sighing, begging mercy from his beloved, and occasionally falling down in a swoon.[236] Yvain's feelings of loss are so acute that he succumbs to madness, running naked through the forest, tearing at his clothes and his flesh.[237]

Interestingly enough, these moments of emotional nadir take romance lovers out of court and into the green space of a garden or the woods. Similarly, the speaker in *Pearl* finds himself in an enclosed garden "erbere" (l.9, later referred to as "erber grene" at l.38), where the maiden was laid to rest.[238] While the sacred associations of a walled garden as *hortus conclusus* are well documented by literary scholars and art historians,[239] for fourteenth-century aristocratic audiences, these spaces also signify as romance landscapes. I address some of

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[236] Marie de France, "Lanval," in Jean Rychner, ed., *Les lais de Marie de France* (Paris: Librairie honore champion, 1966), 72-92, passage at ll.337-351.

[237] David F. Hult, ed., Chrétien de Troyes, *Le chevalier au lion ou le roman d'Yvain*, Lettres gothiques (Paris: Librairie générale Française, 1994), ll.2781-2830.

[238] Commenting on the multiple layers of enclosure within the erber as well as within the poem as a whole, Stanbury notes that: "the garden is a circumscribed space in which [the bereaved father] is the central figure. This enclosed space serves both as the locus of the jeweler's spiritual chance and as a metaphor for his spiritual stasis. The narrator at the first encloses his own troubled spirit within an enclosed garden, mourning the loss of a tiny pearl that paradoxically seems to enclose or subsume both the emotional and the physical space of the poem." (Sarah Stanbury, *Seeing the* Gawain-*poet*, 17).

[239] *Hortus conclusus* in *Song of Songs*; On the Virgin Mary as a *hortus conclusus* see Jill Ross, *Figuring the Feminine: the Rhetoric of Female Embodiment in Medieval Hispanic Literature* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008), particularly chapter 4 "The Metaphorics of Mary: Language and Embodiment in Berceo's *Milagros de Nuestra Señora*," 108-144; Sylvia Landsberg, *The Medieval Garden* (New York: Thames and Hudson Inc., 1995); Elisabeth B. MacDougall, ed., *Medieval Gardens* (Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks, Trustee for Harvard University, 1986); Derek Pearsall and Elizabeth Salter, "The Enclosed Garden," in *Landscapes and Seasons of the Medieval World* (Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 1973), 76-118; P. M. Kean, The Pearl: *An Interpretation* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1967), 16, 31-52; C. A. Luttrell, "*Pearl*: Symbolism in a Garden Setting," *Neophilologus* 49 (1965), 160-176; Marie P. Hamilton, "The Meaning of the Middle English *Pearl*," *PMLA* 70 (1955): 805-24; R. W. V. Elliott, "*Pearl* and the Medieval Garden: Convention or Originality?" *Les langues modernes* 45.2 (1951): 85-98.

these secular romance interpretations in my reading of the enclosed garden in *Roman de la rose*

and the enclosed orchard rendezvous scene in the *Tristan* romances in chapter two. In this

green space, the *Pearl*-speaker's heart and mind open up to a spiritual adventure, marked in

romance fashion by references to summer time (l.39),[240] still time, and the aural perception

of the sweetness of bird song. The speaker recognizes the distance between his feelings of

sadness and the happiness that a pearl brings to princes. His "wyschande that wele" (l.14)—

his wishing for that precious thing—presents desire for a luxury object as a metaphor for

healing, since 'wele' can mean both 'worldly wealth' and 'well-being.'[241] The distance between

what he is wishing for and his current emotional state is presented in a series of oppositions

placed in rhyming positions: wishing for "wele" that used to drive away "wrange" (l.15,

'grief,' 'sorrow', but also any kind of contrary or less-suitable feeling);[242] wishing to raise up

his happiness and "hele" (l.16, 'health', 'well-being'), but his sorrow only weighs him down

and pains his heart "thrange" (l.17, 'grievously', 'painfully'[243]). This turning from grief to

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[240] The *Pearl*-speaker enters the green garden in the height of summer:
>   To that spot that I in speche expound
>   I entred in that ereber grene,
>   In Auguste in a high seysoun,
>   When corne is corven wyth crokes kene. (ll.37-40)

This conventional opening is very similar to the opening lines of Langland's *PPl*, creating a sight that is meant to be uplifting and joyous:
>   In a somer seson, whan softe was the sonne,
>   I shoop me into shroudes as I a sheep were,
>   In habite as an heremite unholy of werkes,
>   Wente wide in this world wondres to here. (B Prologue, ll.1-4)

Langland positions his speaker Will up on the Malvern Hill overlooking a valley of folk. The temporal markers of 'somer seson' in *PPl* and 'hygh seysoun' in *Pearl* introduce an expectation of 'wonders' (or marvels) and an embarkation on a quest-like adventure. But the fields of plenty in *Pearl* and the various flowers upon the hill are all products of some other death and decay. Similarly, the world of wonders in *PPl* is populated by a flawed society, imperfect like Will.

[241] "wele", MED entry, University of Michigan, 2014, available online
<http://quod.lib.umich.edu/cgi/m/mec/med-idx?type=id&id=MED52107>.

[242] Charles W. Dunn and Edward T. Byrnes gloss 'wrange' as 'grief'; Sarah Stanbury glosses it as 'sorrow'; "wrong, adj", MED entry, University of Michigan, 2014, available online
<http://quod.lib.umich.edu/cgi/m/mec/med-idx?type=id&id=MED53703>.

[243] "throng, adv", MED entry, University of Michigan, 2014, available online
<http://quod.lib.umich.edu/cgi/m/mec/med-idx?type=id&id=MED45551>.

adventure is signaled by an oppositional "yet" (l.19). While his heart swells and burns with sorrow (l.18), his mind somehow opens up to receive "so swete a sange" (l.19) like a balm to soothe his grief.

This moment of aural enjoyment amidst sorrow is described as "stylle stounde" (l.20)—a time out of time, or a moment when time stands still. This quiet, still time generally characterizes romance.[244] The opening of *SGGK* narrates a relentless (and inexorable) march of time, a chronology of war and conquest, which slows down when it reaches the reign of Arthur (*SGGK*, ll.1-26). When "werre and wrake" (*SGGK*, ll.17) give way to "blysse and blunder" (*SGGK*, ll.19), romance stretches the historical progression of time, allowing space for human happiness and adventure. Perhaps the most famous *translatio imperii* statement appears in the prologue to Chrétien's *Cligès*, contextualizing the story of love and adventure as a pause in historical time. This metaphorical still time is literalized in the compilational strategy of a fourteenth-century manuscript Bibliothèque nationale de France (BnF), MS fr. 1450: upon reaching the reign of Arthur in Wace's chronicle, the compiler of the volume switches to Chrétien's Arthurian romances, thus inserting romance into chronicle time.[245]

Hearing the birdsong, however, is not enough to distract the distraught speaker of *Pearl* from envisioning his beloved's decaying body. His thoughts return to grief, contemplating "hir color so clad in clot," he exclaims, "O moul, thou marres a myry juele" (ll.22-3). Clay stains the perfect pearl, and earth besmirches the pleasant jewel. The alliteration of 'marres' and 'myry' juxtaposes their emotional valences. The first is negative, suggesting an action of defilement, while the second is positive, implying harmonious,

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[244] Patricia Parker, *Inescapable Romance: Studies in the Poetics of a Mode* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1979), 54-63.

[245] Lori J. Walters discusses this fascinating manuscript in the context of other Chrétien manuscripts in "Le rôle du scribe dans l'organisation des manuscrits des romans de Chrétien de Troyes," *Romania*, 106 (1985): 308-313.

pleasing qualities. This motif of vibrant vitality devolving into death in the ground links together organic and material imagery. Multicolored blooms, flowers, spices, and fruit may shine in the sun for a time before they all succumb to "moldes dunne" (l.30)—to brown earth. Material luxuries are not immune to decay either: "such riches to rot is runne" (l.26). A glimmer of hope appears in the cyclical nature of vegetative life. The death of one plant gives life to another: "For üch gresse mot grow of graynes dede" (l.31)—for each blade of grass must grow out of dead grains. This circularity is ever-present in the poem with recurring insistence on the pearl's roundness and the formal closure achieved through concatenation. Within the enclosed space of a garden, the cyclical movement from life to death to life does not provide sufficient solace to the speaker; though figured as an emotional center of a small green universe, surrounded by natural (vegetative) beauty, the speaker feels more alone and alienated from the aesthetic delights of the garden. Like the fleeting happiness achieved through bird song, the knowledge that the death of his beloved gives life to new vegetation in the garden keeps his mind focused, arrested, on her decaying body.

The verdure of *Pearl*, pleasant to look upon and fragrant to smell, roots the speaker to the spot where his beloved must dwell. The concatenation of the word 'spotte' also forces the reader to dwell upon the gravesite as the word is repeated ten times in the span of sixty one lines, appearing in the terminal c-rhyme position as well as in the middle of the opening lines of stanzas II-VI. This fixation on a physical space induces sorrow in the speaker, again and again, as he returns to the garden and meditates upon the death that sustains life in the arbor. But the temporal marker of summer season ("In Auguste in a high seysoun" l.39) interrupts this ritualistic pattern of mourning to bring attention to a particular experience of

grief on a specific occasion. The speaker describes the onset of this emotion through a feeling of coldness that suddenly seizes him: "Bifore that spot my honde I spenned/ For care ful colde that to me caght" (ll.49-50). As he attempts to clasp the spot with his hand, sorrow seizes him, and he feels cold as the blood rushes out of his body and into his heart. As Corinne Saunders has observed, according to medieval understanding of emotion, "In experiencing excessive grief, distress or fear…the vital spirit and heat [would] withdr[a]w from the arteries into the heart, with the possibility of causing unconsciousness or even death."[246] The emotion that debilitates him so is described as "devely dele" (l.51), generally glossed as 'desolate grief.'[247] I would like to posit that 'devely dele' here is closer to despair[248]—an emotion that is categorized as a sin in Christian thought. The MED glosses 'del' as 'valley' or 'dale', and the phrase 'develes del' as 'the pit of hell'[249], which in this context is the emotional nadir, or the lowest spiritual level. Lanval reaches this point in his emotional anguish, and the narrator wonders how he does not attempt suicide. Like Lanval, the *Pearl* speaker externalizes his emotions, voicing his lament ("I playned my perle," [l.53]) and making strong arguments ("Wyth fyrce skylles," [l.54]). The *Pearl*-speaker's experience and performance of grief ultimately lead to a swoon "slepyng-slaghte" (l.59). He goes into sensory overload amid bright and fragrant flowers, and falls into a sudden sleep.

The *Pearl* speaker's spiritual journey out of the 'devely dele' is preconditioned on his "kynde knowynge" of Christ. Both "resoun" (l.52) and "kynde [knowledge] of Kryst" (l.55)

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[246] Corinne Saunders, "Mind, Body and Affect in Medieval English Arthurian Romance," 34.

[247] Charles W. Dunn and Edward T. Byrnes gloss 'devely dele' as 'desolate grief'; Sarah Stanbury glosses it as 'desolating grief.'

[248] Jeremy Lowe's brief reading of the passage supports my association of 'devely dele' with despair. Jeremy Lowe, *Desiring Truth: The Process of Judgment in Fourteenth-Century Art and Literature* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 202. Also relevant here is Lee W. Patterson, "Chaucerian Confession: Penitential Literature and the Pardoner," *Medievalia et Humanistica* 7 (1976): 153-73.

[249] "del" [1a 'develes del'], MED entry, University of Michigan, 2014, available online <http://quod.lib.umich.edu/cgi/m/mec/med-idx?type=id&id=MED10923>.

attempt to comfort the speaker, but his "wreched wylle in wo ay wraghte" (l.56)—his will (soul, intellect) continues to suffer in sorrow. This internalized knowledge of Christ, or "kynde knowynge" in *PPl*, is understood as instinctive knowledge, which resides in the heart, where it teaches Christians to love God above themselves and to avoid mortal sin.[250] Langland's Holy Church explains "kynde knowynge" using the Latin text of the Sermon on the Mount, thus equating natural knowledge with basic aspects of Christian doctrine such as the *Pater Noster*. This internalized knowledge of Christ rescues the *Pearl* speaker from his despair and opens his heart and mind to a spiritual vision which he receives in his swoon, which marks the end of the frame narrative and the beginning of the dream vision. In this liminal space, the speaker notes a separation of his body and soul, with his body remaining upon the ground while his spirit goes forth on a journey. This embarkation on a spiritual quest is once again described in romance terms: "My goste is gon in Godes grace/ In aventure ther mervayles meven" (l.63-4). Through God's grace, his soul embarks upon a

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[250] In Passus I of the B-text of *PPl*, Holy Church admonishes Will for his lack of "kynde knowynge":

> It is a kynde knowynge that kenneth in thyn herte
> For to loven thi Lord levere than thiselve,
> No dedly synne to do, deye theigh thow sholdest—
> This I trowe be truthe. (B, I, 142-145)

What follows is a series of elucidations on this concept, including an illustration of how the *Pater Noster* helps lay Christians reach, internalize, and live this knowledge. Holy Church then modifies this definition of instinctive knowledge by claiming that it comes directly from God and into Christian hearts:

> And for to knowen it kyndely—it cometh by myghte,
> And in the herte, there is the heed and the heighe welle.
> For in kynde knowynge in herte there [coms]eth a myghte—
> And that falleth to the Fader that formed us all. (B, I, 163-166).

This particular type of knowledge originates with God and pertains to God, and yet it resides within a human heart. The vernacular definition requires further clarification, which Holy Church provides in the form of a quotation from the Latin Gospels: "*Eadem mensura qua mensi fueritis remecietur vobis*" (B, I, 178a, quoting Luke 6:38, which is part of Christ's Sermon on the Mount). Thus in order to understand what "kynde knowynge" is one must learn Christ's teachings as they are given in Latin of the Vulgate Gospels of Luke and Matthew. In using the Sermon on the Mount to define "kynde knowynge," Langland is privileging that particular Latin text, much of which becomes available to the laity in liturgical form through hearing sermons in church and through learning and reciting the *Pater Noster*.

quest, with spiritual revelations cast as romance marvels[251] (similar to Will's expectation of wonders at the opening of *PPl*). Answering this call to adventure, the speaker enters the vision of afterlife as a romance world. From here on, his vision is described in material terms, filtered through his emotional responses to aesthetic experiences, even though they are perceived spiritually, or entirely out of body. This romance trope of adventure-quest via dream vision was made incredibly popular by *Roman de la rose.*

The *Pearl*-speaker's dream-quest begins in a paradisal garden, the shimmering sight of which temporarily allows him to forget his grief.[252] The concatenation for Group II takes us from the "spot" in the earthly garden to the marvelous "adubbement"—adornment—of Paradise. Repeated ten times, carrying over into the first line of Group III, this otherworldly adornment is constructed through a detailed description of shimmering light, gems, precious stones and metals. The costliness of this adornment is further underscored by the repetition of such descriptors as "rych" and "dere." The speaker is startled by indigo trees with silver leaves, gravel made of pearls, brightly colored birds, riverbanks made of beryl, and pebbles made of emeralds, sapphires, and other precious gems in the crystal clear waters. This multi-colored gleaming landscape is accompanied by the sweet melodies of birdsongs and the pleasant fragrances of fruits and flowers. These sights, smells, and sounds constitute the marvelous adornment of Paradise, joined together to inspire "gracious gle" (l.95) in the soul of the beholder. And so the dreamer responds accordingly to his new surroundings: "The adubbemente of tho downes dere/ Garten my goste al greffe forget" (ll.85-86); the adornment of those glorious hills persuades his spirit forget his grief. As he attempts to

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[251] For marvels of romance, with a special attention to *SGGK*, see Helen Cooper, "Magic that doesn't Work," in *The English Romance in Time: Transforming Motifs from Geoffrey of Monmouth to the Death of Shakespeare* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 137-172.

[252] Derek Pearsall and Elizabeth Salter, "The Landscape of Paradise," in *Landscapes and Seasons of the Medieval World*, 56-75.

narrate his surroundings, the vocabulary of luxury seems to fail him: "The derthe therof for to devyse/ Nis no wyy worthé that tonge beres" (ll.99-100); using the rhetorical device called *occultatio*, also known as the inexpressibility topos, he claims that human language is simply incapable of describing such splendor.

The synesthetic grandeur of this paradisal garden prepares the dreamer's spirit for encountering his lost Pearl. The concatenation pattern of Group III continues the adornment motif by attempting to quantify both ornament and feeling through the repetition of "more and more." Reflecting on his emotional state, the dreamer admits that:

> The dubbement dere of doun and dales,
> Of wod and water and wlonke playnes,
> Bylde in me blys, abated my bales,
> Fordidden my stresse, dystryed my paynes. (ll.121-124)

Sarah Stanbury argues that the dreamscape of paradisal garden teaches the speaker how to perceive the world as a de-centered observer; in the visionary landscape, the speaker is no longer the center of a small enclosed universe (as he was in the *erber*).[253] The open space with cliffs rising above him, the valley stretching below him opens his spirit, allowing him to perceive beauty in the shimmering light and the many reflective surfaces. Responding to this unearthly and unbounded beauty, the speaker's sorrows, grief, and pain dissipate, beginning the process of building bliss inside him. Positive emotions take over his spirit, including bliss, joy, mirth, and gladness. These otherworldly sights cause unearthly feelings in the dreamer:

> More of wele was in that wyse
> Then I cowthe telle thagh I tom hade,
> For urthely herte myght not suffyse
> To the tenthe dole of tho gladnes glade. (ll.133-136)

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[253] Sarah Stanbury, *Seeing the* Gawain-*poet*, 19.

Just as he lacks vocabulary for describing the rich sights of Paradise, he also lacks the ability to explain the joy that fills his heart in response to them. If he had all the time and leisure in the world, he would not be able to tell of the delights he experienced, for earthly hearts are only capable of a tenth of that gladness.

The dreamer first recognizes his lost Pearl as a young child across the water, who transforms into a beautiful courtly maiden. The sight of her instigates a simultaneous gladdening and recognition, causing him to stand still in admiration and disbelief. The dreamer exclaims, "I knew hyr wel, I hade sen hyr ere" (l.164). Though unable to place her for a moment, he responds to her appearance emotionally as someone who had been an integral part of his life. We experience the dawning of recognition alongside the dreamer as an emotional transformation:

> On lenghe I loked to hyr there--
> The lenger, I knew hyr more and more.
> The more I frayste hyr fayre face,
> Her fygure fyn quen I had fonte,
> Suche gladande glory con to me glace
> As lyttel byfore therto was wonte. (ll.167-172)

The more he scrutinizes the maiden's face and body, the knowledge and memory of her get stronger, until he realizes that a feeling of gladness "gladande glory" has glided into his heart—a feeling that had not been there before.[254]

This transformative emotion of gladdening—not quite bliss, but an improvement in his spirits nonetheless—is physically manifested in momentary stupefaction which gives way to dread. Although he wishes he could call out to her, the dreamer finds himself rooted to

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[254] The quantifying "lyttel" may refer to the amount of gladness he had experienced before this moment or to the duration of time, indicating that this feeling is new—that it has not been there just a little while before.

the spot as "baysment[255] gef myn hert a brunt" (l.174)—as confusion, bewilderment, or shock of recognition give his heart a blow. This bodily experience of emotion is intensified through repetition with a difference: "Such a burre myght make myn herte blunt" (l.176) and "That stonge myn hert ful stray astound" (l.179) describe a physical response to sight. The image of the *Pearl*-maiden enters his body through the eyes and shocks his heart into astonishment. As a response to ineffable beauty, the dreamer experiences an emotional gamut, from gladdening to stupefaction to dread:

> More then me lyste my drede aros;
> I stod ful stylle and dorste not calle.
> Wyth yyen open and mouth ful clos
> I stod as hende as hawk in halle. (ll.181-184)

Unable to speak, he stands still, staring with eyes wide open and mouth closed shut, as the feeling of dread rises through his body. The courtly ("hende") image of a hawk in the hall operates on several levels here: while he may be experiencing extreme terror, he is also afraid to spook the object of his gaze.

His lost Pearl appears to the dreamer as a marvelous sight across the stream. The dreamer's longing for the distant shore temporarily replaces his longing for the lost pearl. The two desires merge in the new sight beyond the river. In a dazzling cascade of light, reflected and refracted from water and crystal, the dreamer sees a child sitting at the foot of a crystal cliff. In this shimmering landscape of light and water, the Old French "faunt"[256]

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[255] "banishment" (n.) Also bashment, baisment, Embarrassment, confusion, MED entry, University of Michigan, 2014, available online <http://quod.lib.umich.edu/cgi/m/mec/med-idx?type=id&id=MED3465>.
[256] "faunt" (n.), (a) A young child of either sex, an infant, babe; (b) a son or daughter; (c) fauchun fantes, the young (of a falcon), MED entry, University of Michigan, 2014, available online <http://quod.lib.umich.edu/cgi/m/mec/med-idx?type=id&id=MED15364>.

(l.161)—meaning a young child—appears and sounds like the Old English "font"[257] (also spelled as "fant" or "fount")—meaning a fountain. The term marks our first indication that the beloved pearl is an infant, whose youth and innocence are accentuated in the sacred connotation of 'font' as a baptismal font.[258] Without transition or explanation, the young child transforms into a courtly heroine, "A mayden of menske ful debonere" (l.162). All three descriptors pertain to her virtue, emphasizing her virginity, her honor, and her graciousness. Both "menske"[259] and "debonere"[260] also pertain to courtliness and courtesy. She is clothed in a costly white silk gown "bleaunt"[261] (l.163, from Old French "bliaut"), a vestimentary term that generally appears as a marker of status in medieval romance descriptions of heroes' and heroines' attire.[262] The MED lists *Pearl* among Middle English

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[257] "font" (n), 1(a) A receptacle for the water used in baptizing, a baptismal font; 2 A fountain; fig. well-spring, source, MED entry, University of Michigan, 2014, available online
<http://quod.lib.umich.edu/cgi/m/mec/med-idx?type=id&id=MED16637>.

[258] The primary indication of the *Pearl*-maiden's age at the time of her death comes out in a conversation between the bewildered father and the radiant daughter, who explains her position as a Bride of Christ. Asking her to elaborate on how such a transformation is possible, the father wonders at his infant daughter's ability to reach such spiritual perfection when she was not old enough to learn the most basic prayers such as the Crede and the Pater Noster: "Thou lyfed not two yer in oure thede;/ Thou cowthes never God nauther plese ne pray/ Ne never nawther Pater ne Crede" (ll.483-5).

[259] "menske" (n.), (a) An honored state or condition, honor; reputable station in life, repute; also credit for an action, etc.; for ~, for the sake of (one's) honor or repute; mid ~, with honor, honorably; with ~, honorable, honorably; saven ~, to preserve (someone's) honor; taken ~, receive honors, be honored; (b) ~ of maithhod (maidenhede, maiden), maithhodes (maidenhedes, maidenes, maiden) ~, the honored state of virginity; (c) honor shown to someone or something; respect, reverence; worship [quot.: a1333]; praise [quot.: ca1400]; to ~, to (something's) honor, as an honor to (sth.); with ~, respectfully, reverently; beren (don) ~, to do honor to (sb. or sth.), honor; ~ be (un)to, honor be to (this company), may (this company) be honored; (d) a source of honor or praise; (someone's) honor or glory; ~ of maithhod, maidenes ~, virginity, MED entry, University of Michigan, 2014, available online <http://quod.lib.umich.edu/cgi/m/mec/med-idx?type=id&id=MED27359>.

[260] "debonaire" (adj. & n.), Also debeneire, debonar; debonere; deboneure, debonoure., (a) Mild, gentle, kind; courteous, gracious; humble, meek; (b) of things: benign, favorable; of winds: mild; of words or speech: kindly, courteous; of life, actions: gentle, meek; of eyes, countenance: expressing kindness; of the heart: gentle, submissive, MED entry, University of Michigan, 2014, available online
<http://quod.lib.umich.edu/cgi/m/mec/med-idx?type=id&id=MED10639>.

[261] "bleaunt" (n.) Also blihand, blehand & blihaut, blyot, bleaut, (a) A costly silk fabric; (b) a garment of this fabric, a tunic; (c) a bedspread of this fabric, MED entry, University of Michigan, 2014, available online
<http://quod.lib.umich.edu/cgi/m/mec/med-idx?type=id&id=MED5134>.

[262] The combination of *chemise* and *bliaut* "form part of the unisex dress worn by knights as well as ladies in the courtly world. The standard ensemble of garments in twelfth- and thirteenth-century France, known collectively as the *robe*, is worn by elite men and women alike in literary accounts. It includes a loose-fitting quasi-undergarment termed a *chemise*, which is mostly covered by a loosely draped tunic (*bliaut* or *cotte*), followed

romances *Sir Tristrem*, *SGGK*, *Guy of Warwick*, and *Wars of Alexander* in its contextual explanation of the term. In all instances, the material costliness of the garment worn by either the hero or the heroine is emphasized. As Susan Crane reminds us, "Clothing is literally superficial (above the body's surface), but neither moralists nor legists of the period took it to be trivial or insignificant."[263] Clothing constitutes rhetorical adornment that signifies status, particularly in romance. In *Pearl*, the luxurious descriptions of Paradisal landscapes, emotions, and clothing create a layer of romance adornment in an otherwise didactic dream vision.

Concatenating on the term "pyght," yet another term for 'adorned' or 'decorated', Group IV solidifies the association between the maiden and the pearl. The beloved's appearance as "So smothe, so smal, so seme slyght,/ Ryses up in hir araye ryalle,/ A precios pyece in perles pyght" (l.190-192) makes the maiden both emotionally dear to her father (the dreamer) and a precious luxury object. The daughter's slender body is emphasized through its association with the pearl: so small and so slight—simultaneously a maiden and a little girl. Using the rhetorical trope of *effictio*, a detailed description of garments and jewelry, the dreamer depicts the Pearl-maiden as a romance heroine. Adorned in precious pearls from crown to hem (ll.197-228), the maiden gleams and glistens with iridescent light. Medieval romancers often use the *effictio* trope to conflate the noble body with its luxurious clothing, insisting that the costly garments serve as the outer layer of the body, occupying the border space between the self and the world that is traditionally reserved for skin. Poetic

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by a floor-length mantle. Very different from the close-fitting and sex-differentiated attire that developed in fourteenth-century France, the courtly garb from the High Middle Ages actually did little to distinguish women from men." (E. Jane Burns, *Courtly Love Undressed: Reading through Clothes in Medieval French Culture* [Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002], 166-7).

[263] Susan Crane, *The Performance of Self: Ritual, Clothing, and Identity during the Hundred Years War* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002), 11.

construction of identity for knightly heroes and aristocratic heroines often hinges on such material externalization of nobility. Chretien de Troyes' Enide receives costly garments from Guinevere in recognition of her noble lineage and as an affirmation of her suitability for her new social position as Erec's bride and future queen. In Marie de France's *Fresne* and its Middle English version *Lay le Freine*, the titular heroine is abandoned at birth near an abbey wrapped in a rich cloth, so that whoever finds her rightly interprets her social status; that same cloth later leads to identification and social reintegration. Similarly, in the Middle English romance *Havelok the Dane* a symbolic restoration of order occurs when a royal body takes its rightful place in the hierarchy, clad in its proper clothes of privilege. Similarly, in the middle of her description, the *Pearl*-maiden's visage is compared to that of a duke or an earl (l.211), endowing the daughter with a noble heritage suitable for a romance heroine. As Nicole D. Smith elucidates: "romances used descriptions of fashionable clothing to express aristocratic beauty, wealth, and social standing. On the other [hand], clerical chronicles and spiritual guides highlighted a growing trepidation that these provocative garments could express prideful excess or incite lascivious passions."[264] In this polarizing paradigm, *Pearl* participates in the romance convention of reading luxurious clothing as a sign of moral and social privilege.

The moral perfection of the maiden is described through the physical perfection of body, face, and dress. Her skin is variously described as "whyt as playn yvore" (l.178), "more blaght then whalles bon" (l.212), as fair "as flor-de-lys" (l.195), and as smooth as a pearl. All three of these similes carry religious connotations of purity through their associations with

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[264] Nicole D. Smith, *Sartorial Strategies: Outfitting Aristocrats and Fashioning Conduct in Late Medieval Literature* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2012), 3; for additional discussion of clothing as luxury consumption and marker of status see Susan Crane, *The Performance of Self*, 10-38.

Christ and the Virgin Mary, but they are also frequently found in romance descriptions of courtly ladies.[265] For example, in the anonymous Middle English romance *Emaré*, the titular heroine is described as "a lady fayr and fre" (l.22) with skin as "whyte as lylye flour" (l.205); her mother's beauty is articulated in comparison with bone ivory: "a lady/ That was both fayr and seemly/ Whyte as whales bone" (ll.31-33).[266] In *Pearl*, these traditional vegetative and animal similes are reframed with an explicit association with pearls—their color, sheen, and smoothness. Even more wondrous than her crown and clothing is the flawless pearl set over hear heart:

> Bot a wonder perle wythouten wemme
> Inmyddes hyr breste was sette so sure,
> A mannes dom moght druyyly demme
> Er mynde moght malte in hit mesure.
> I hope no tonge moght endure,
> No saverly saghe say of that syght,
> So was hit clene and cler and pure,
> That precios perle ther hit was pyght. (ll.221-228)

The purity of the maiden's soul is made explicit through the flawlessness and indescribable perfection of this jewel. Neither human reason ("dom") nor the human mind ("mynde") is able to comprehend the value ("mesure") of this pearl. And as a result, the human tongue is incapable of describing its cleanness, clarity, purity, and preciousness. The recurring *occultatio* trope connects the beauty of the maiden to the unspeakable beauty of Paradise and the ineffable emotions they inspire in the dreamer. Only the maiden herself is able to explain the significance of the pearl at her breast as the visible sign of her salvation. The Pearl-maiden's

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[265] On a brief overview of the Christological reading of ivory and elephants, see Herbert Kessler, *Seeing Medieval Art*, 27. Also see romance descriptions of Isolde, Guinevere, and Enide.

[266] Anne Laskaya and Eve Salisbury, eds., *Emaré*, in *The Middle English Breton Lays*, TEAMS Middle English Text Series (Rochester, NY: Medieval Institute Publications, 1995), Available online <http://d.lib.rochester.edu/teams/text/laskaya-and-salisbury-middle-english-breton-lays-emare>.

fine dress and spiritual perfection connect her to a long line of female allegorical and aristocratic instructors, including Lady Philosophy from Boethius, Natura from Alain de Lille, Fama from Chaucer, and Holy Church from Langland.[267] Their authority is constructed through striking (or even startling) apparel, appearance, and genealogy. But the human connection between the dreamer and the Pearl-maiden prevents her from becoming fully allegorical.

The sight of her adorned in pearls radiates Heavenly delight and inspires true gladness and joy in the dreamer's heart. At the same time, the familial connection registers within him: "Ho was me nerre then aunte or nece" (l.233, she was nearer than an aunt or a niece).[268] Dazzled by the mere sight of her, the dreamer asks the maiden to verify her identity:

> "O perle," quoth I, "in perles pyght,
> Art thou my perle that I haf playned,
> Regretted by myn one on nyghte?
> Much longeyng haf I for thee layned
> Sythen into gresse thou me aglyghte." (ll.241-245)

In this first communication addressed to the *Pearl*-maiden, the dreamer pours out all his mournful sadness, emphasizing his physical loss and his emotional turmoil: 'playned,' 'regretted,' 'longeying,' 'layned.' All his newfound joy is resting on her response to his one heart-wrenching question, "Art thou my perle?" Through direct address, the father interpolates his daughter into a system that understands spiritual perfection through the

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[267] Although the dresses worn by these aristocratic female allegorical figures vary in adornment, their fine craftsmanship serves as a call to attention and awe.

[268] In her review of Simon Armitage's 2016 translation of *Pearl*, Josephine Livingstone discusses the father-daughter bond and the emotional power of the often bewildering language in *Pearl*. Josephine Livingstone, "The Strange Power of a Medieval Poem about the Death of a Child," in *The New Yorker* (June 16, 2016). Available online <http://www.newyorker.com/books/page-turner/the-strange-power-of-a-medieval-poem-about-the-death-of-a-child>.

vocabulary of luxury. At the same time, the physical manifestation of the beloved as an aristocratic maiden, dressed in a white *bliaut* decorated with pearls like a romance heroine, brings otherworldly delight to the dreamer's soul as an emotional aesthetic response to an experience of beauty.

The dreamer's emotional journey from 'devely del' to 'gret delyt' is figured as an aesthetic experience. While lost in his earthly grief, the father is unable to appreciate fully the beauty of the natural world—the green garden with its flora and fauna are mere distractions to him as he contemplates his daughter's decaying body, which gives life to all the vibrant vegetation. Yet in romance fashion, his mind seeks marvels. Responding to a call to adventure like a romance hero, the father begins his dream-quest—an out-of-body experience, during which he is given a privileged glimpse of earthly paradise. This vision as consolation yokes emotional and aesthetic responses both to the Paradisal landscape and also to the visually stunning appearance of his beloved pearl. As such, both emotion and aristocratic luxury serve as rhetorical adornment for the vision-quest in *Pearl*.

Pleasures of Heaven: *Pearl* and the English Illustrated Apocalypse Manuscripts

The *Pearl*-maiden's gown, her golden hair, and her general appearance as a marvel of romance are accentuated by a flurry of descriptors, all having to do with brilliant light and color: "blysnande" (gleaming l.163, 197), "glysnande" (glistening l.165), "schon" (shone l.166), "schorne gold" (cut gold, l.213), "bornyste whyte" (burnished white, l.220). The dazzling simile "As glysnande golde that man con schere,/ So schon that schene anunder

schore" (ll.165-6) invites comparison of her physical manifestation to the burnished gold that artists use in manuscript illuminations. In the late Gothic decorative style, burnished gold backgrounds increase the significance of the image but also bring the figures closer to the reader/viewer. Muriel Whitaker suggests specific models for the *Pearl*-maiden from among illustrations of female figures in English illustrated Apocalypse manuscripts. Whitaker examines 35 illustrated Apocalypses, and while she does not identify any one particular manuscript as the source for the *Pearl*-poet's descriptions, she identifies six late fourteenth-century manuscripts as closest to the type of illustration program she believes to have influenced the poem's composition; all six of her selections are deluxe volumes intended for aristocratic audiences, and she postulates that the *Pearl*-poet's patron may have owned (or otherwise had access to) one such manuscript.[269] More specifically for the visualization of the *Pearl*-maiden, Whitaker suggests the images of the Woman clothed in the Sun standing on the crescent moon and of the Bride of the Lamb, both of which are rendered as elegant courtly ladies in later Gothic Apocalypse manuscripts. Sarah Stanbury and Rosalind Field have also noted the possibility of the *Pearl*-poet's familiarity with the illustrated Apocalypses.[270] Citing the continued popularity of these manuscripts over the course of two centuries leading up to the composition of the poem, both Stanbury and Field believe that the visual tradition of the illustrated Apocalypses has influenced the poet's depiction of the New Jerusalem. While I agree that the illustrated Apocalypse tradition permeates the visual poetics of *Pearl*, I hesitate to approach the topic as a source or analogue study. The

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[269] Muriel A. Whitaker, "*Pearl* and Some Illustrated Apocalypse Manuscripts," *Viator* 12 (1981): 183-196. The following are the six manuscripts Whitaker has identified as possible sources for *Pearl*'s descriptive poetics: British Library MS Royal 19 B.XV, British Library MS Harley 4972, the Dublin Apocalypse, British Library MS Additional 18633, Cambridge Corpus Christi 20, and Oxford New College 65 (195).

[270] Sarah Stanbury, *Seeing the* Gawain-*poet*, 24-33; Sarah Stanbury, "Visions of Space: Acts of Perception in *Pearl* and in Some Late Medieval Illustrated Apocalypses," *Mediaevalia* 10 (1984): 134-158; Rosalind Field, "The Heavenly Jerusalem in *Pearl*," *Modern Language Review* 81.1 (1986): 7-17.

anonymity of both the poet and the patron creates considerable difficulties in any verifiable attempt to identify specific manuscript influences on his or her poetics. Instead of suggesting specific manuscripts as instigators or sources for the *Pearl*-poet, I address the reception of the poem as filtered through an aristocratic culture steeped in the narrative knowledge of romance and the iconographic conventions of the illustrated Apocalypse manuscripts, murals, and stained glass windows. How do we think about *Pearl* in the context of the highly illuminated verse and prose romances (like the *Roman de la rose* and the prose Arthurian romances) as well as the illustrated Apocalypses—the most popular reading material of the upper classes?

Apocalyptic imagery and numerology pervade both the content and structure of *Pearl*. The significance of the number twelve that structures the poem's stanzaic form comes directly from *Revelations* Chapter 21, in which the perfect measure of the New Jerusalem is revealed in units of twelve, including the length of each side as twelve thousand furlongs (twelve furlongs in the Berengaudus commentary and in *Pearl*), the twelve gates adorned with pearls, and the twelve foundations of precious stones:

> And the building of the wall thereof was of jasper stone: but the city itself pure gold, like to clear glass. And the foundations of the wall of the city were adorned with all manner of precious stones. The first foundation was jasper: the second, sapphire: the third, a chalcedony: the fourth, an emerald: The fifth, sardonyx: the sixth, sardius: the seventh, chrysolite: the eighth, beryl: the ninth, a topaz: the tenth, a chrysoprasus: the eleventh, a jacinth: the twelfth, an amethyst. And the twelve gates are twelve pearls, one to each: and every several gate was of one several pearl. And the street of the city was pure gold, as it were transparent glass. (Douay-Rheims, *Revelation* 21: 18-21)[271]

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[271] *Douay-Rheims 1899 American Edition* (DRA), Available through Bible Gateway project, <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Revelation+21&version=DRA>.
"(18) et erat structura muri eius ex lapide iaspide ipsa vero civitas auro mundo simile vitro mundo
(19) fundamenta muri civitatis omni lapide pretioso ornata fundamentum primum iaspis secundus sapphyrus tertius carcedonius quartus zmaragdus

Following the *Book of Revelation*, *Pearl* depicts eternal bliss as a life of material luxury: the streets of the New Jerusalem are paved in gold, and its foundations are made of precious stones. These stones feature prominently in medieval lapidaries and encyclopedias as having healing properties.[272] Medieval exegetical texts (such as the Berengaudus commentary) frequently appended to or intercalated with the Vulgate text of *Revelations* in the Anglo-French (or English) illustrated Apocalypses include this information, sometimes copied verbatim from the lapidaries and/or encyclopedias. *Pearl* reframes this Scriptural passage as the maiden's testament and the father's vision. The twelve-line structure of the Middle English poem is an attempt to mirror Heavenly perfection in metrical form. While the vocabulary of luxury is thoroughly Biblical, its idealizing and uncritical deployment in the vernacular context aligns the poem with the aristocratic luxury system and situates *Pearl* as a romance-adjacent narrative, intended for an aristocratic audience, familiar with these richly illuminated Apocalypse manuscripts.

In describing the New Jerusalem in such material detail, the poet concretizes what medieval thinkers considered as a spiritual state; the poet is externalizing internal meditative feeling, inscribing Heavenly bliss into the foundations of gems and precious stones, thus building a spiritual state using the vocabulary of aristocratic luxury. For example, in Bonaventure's *Itinerarium mentis in deum*, journey to the New Jerusalem is a metaphor for

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(20) quintus sardonix sextus sardinus septimus chrysolitus octavus berillus nonus topazius decimus chrysoprassus undecimus hyacinthus duodecimus amethistus
(21) et duodecim portae duodecim margaritae sunt per singulas et singulae portae erant ex singulis margaritis et platea civitatis aurum mundum tamquam vitrum perlucidum"
Biblia Sacra Vulgata (Vulgate), Available through Bible Gateway project,
<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Revelation+21&version=VULGATE>.
[272] Interestingly, modern day homeopathic remedies mention some of these stones as having very similar effects on one's health. If you search for the more obscure gemstones online, you will find dozens of sites that explain the healing powers of biblical gems and just as many virtual storefronts that will attempt to sell these stones and crystal to you.

enlightenment—the ability to transcend the visible into pure spiritual understanding—an 'inner Jerusalem' as opposed to the opulent sight of the City in *Pearl*.[273] Chaucer's Parson appears to be more in line with Bonaventure in providing a spiritual description of the New Jerusalem, framing Heavenly bliss as a reward for penance:

> Thanne shal men understonde what is the fruyt of penaunce; and, after the word of Jhesu crist, it is the endelees blisse of hevene,/ ther joye hath no contrarioustee of wo ne grevaunce; ther alle harmes been passed of this present lyf; ther as is the sikernesse fro the peyne of helle; ther as is the blisful compaignye that rejoysen hem everemo, everich of otheres joye;/ ther as the body of man, that whilom was foul and derk, is moore cleer than the sonne; ther as the body, that whilom was syk, freele, and fieble, and mortal, is inmortal, and so strong and so hool that ther may no thyng apeyren it;/ ther as ne is neither hunger, thurst, ne coold, but every soule replenyssed with the sighte of the parfit knowynge of god./ This blisful regne may men purchace by poverte espiritueel, and the glorie by lowenesse, the plentee of joye by hunger and thurst, and the reste by travaille, and the lyf by deeth and mortificacion of synne. (ll.1076-1080).

Unlike the *Pearl*-dreamer who gives us an opulent description of the New Jerusalem filled with gold, precious stones, and pearls, Chaucer's Parson renders the same scriptural lessons with an emphasis on spiritual feeling. The radically poor Parson's incorporeal understanding of Heaven highlights the expressly material understanding of Salvation in *Pearl*. *Pearl* emerges from these constructive tensions surrounding attitudes to luxury as a penitential text that embraces the positive uses of luxury that we find in medieval romances and Apocalypse manuscripts.

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The *Book of Revelation*, better known in the Middle Ages as the *Apocalypse of Saint John*, is the last canonized book of the Bible and the most problematic. Replete with vibrant and visceral

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[273] See Sarah Stanbury's discussion of Bonaventure's *Itinerarium* in connection with *Pearl* in *Seeing the* Gawain-*poet*, 14-16, 24-25.

imagery, cryptic numerology, and prophetic opacity, the eschatological vision has posed interpretive dilemmas to Christian exegetes and lay readers alike. Contemporary Biblical scholars identify the author of the *Book of Revelation* as "a late first-century itinerant Christian prophet active in Asia Minor,"[274] but in the late antique and the medieval period, John of the Apocalypse was considered one and the same as the Apostle who wrote the Fourth Gospel. And yet, it is precisely this complex rhetorical ornament of the Apocalypse and its centuries-long exegetical tradition that have ensured the book's prominence in the medieval cultural imaginary.

Although the books of the Bible have a long history of circulating as independent codices, none are more likely to be encountered as a stand-alone volume than the Apocalypse. Medieval people, the laity and the monastic alike, most likely encountered the Apocalypse in an illustrated manuscript form. These manuscripts generally comprised of the Vulgate text, a cycle of illustrations, and some form of exegesis.[275] All three components worked together to explicate the *Book of Revelation* and to make its allegorical and symbolic meanings more accessible. In their massive census of the illustrated Apocalypse manuscripts, Richard Emmerson and Suzanne Lewis have compiled a detailed list of 139 entries, including single-text volumes, multi-generic compilations, multi-text bibles, books of hours, *Bible moralisée*, and *Liber floridus*.[276] Seventy-nine of these manuscripts belong to what Emmerson

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[274] Bernard McGinn, "Introduction: John's Apocalypse and the Apocalyptic Mentality," in Richard K. Emmerson and Bernard McGinn, eds., *The Apocalypse in the Middle Ages* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992), 3-19, at 13.

[275] On earliest forms of Apocalypse exegesis, see Paula Fredricksen, "Tyconius and Augustine on the Apocalypse," in *The Apocalypse in the Middle Ages*, 20-37; E. Ann Matter, "The Apocalypse in Early Medieval Exegesis," in *The Apocalypse in the Middle Ages*, 38-50.

[276] Richard Kenneth Emmerson and Suzanne Lewis, "Census and Bibliography of Medieval Manuscripts Containing Apocalypse Illustrations, ca. 800–1500," *Traditio* 40 (1984): 337-379; "Census and Bibliography of Medieval Manuscripts Containing Apocalypse Illustrations, ca. 800–1500: II," *Traditio* 41 (1985): 367-409; "Census and Bibliography of Medieval Manuscripts Containing Apocalypse Illustrations, ca. 800–1500: III," *Traditio* 42 (1986): 443-472.

and Lewis categorize as the Anglo-French tradition. Writing elsewhere about the thirteenth-century Anglo-French illustrated Apocalypses (22 total), Lewis suggests that the large half-page illustration cycles that appear in the majority of these (15 out of 22 manuscripts) served as additional layers of exegesis as well as prompts for contemplation for members of the lay aristocratic and clerical audiences who may not have been as fluent in Latin as the Vulgate text and its attendant commentary by Berengaudus necessitate.[277] Michael Camille picks up Lewis' argument and extends it to fourteenth-century instantiations of the Anglo-French Apocalypses. Focusing on the increasingly diverse readership for the illustrated Apocalypses, Camille cites clerical and institutional ownership for some of these books, while also recognizing that many of them were made for aristocratic lay women.[278] According to the data in the Emmerson and Lewis Census, at least eighteen of the Anglo-French illustrated Apocalypses have an established or (otherwise) indicated aristocratic or royal provenance; and many of these owners were English and Scottish noblewomen.[279] Furthermore, at least

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[277] "The illustrated Berengaudus commentary appears to have been conceived primarily as a cycle of pictures to which the texts were attached. While the Corpus-Lambeth Apocalypse [also known as the French prose gloss manuscripts] was designed as an illustrated vernacular text, the pictorial cycles in the Berengaudus Apocalypses tended to gain ascendancy over their glossed texts and perhaps even supplant them where their aristocratic lay and even clerical owners were not fully literate in Latin." (Suzanne Lewis, "Exegesis and Illustration in Thirteenth-century English Apocalypses," in *The Apocalypse in the Middle Ages*, 259-275, at 266-7).

[278] Michael Camille, "Visionary Perception and Images of the Apocalypse in the Later Middle Ages," in *The Apocalypse in the Middle Ages*, 276-289, at 278, footnote 6.

[279] Richard Kenneth Emmerson and Suzanne Lewis, "Census II," no. 42, 50, 54, 57, 60, 62, 71, 74, 75, 85, 86, 87, 88, 89, 101, 107, 110, 111. Known aristocratic and royal owners include Jeanne de Leybourne, Countess of Huntingdon; Philip the Good, Duke of Burgundy; Charles I of Savoy; Pope Clement IX and the Rospigliosi family; Giles de Bridport, bishop of Salisbury; Queen Joan of Scotland; Caecilia Welles; Godefroid de Maillen; Charles the Bold, Duke of Burgundy; Jean, Duc de Berry; Margaret of York, Duchess of Burgundy; Charles de Croy, Comte de Chimay; John, Duke of Bedford; Charles V of France; Blanche of France, daughter of King Philippe le Long; Isabella of France. A fascinating example of a vernacular English manuscript with a monastic owner is no.46 Cambridge, Magdalene College MS, a two-volume fourteenth-century manuscript with 48 half-page illustrations that belonged to a monk named John London of Crowland Abbey. The manuscript contains prefatory material in English, the text of the Apocalypse with a commentary by Bergundus in Latin, and an additional English commentary, with English verses at the end.

four of the twenty-five illustrated Beatus Apocalypses were in royal libraries during the medieval period.[280]

George Henderson summarizes the mid-century critical view that connects the illustrated Apocalypses with romance material: "Artists and patrons alike recognized in the Apocalypse the one Biblical text which fell into line with the upper-class literary entertainment of the day. The Apocalypse, regarded superficially, dealt with the same subjects as, say, Chrétien de Troyes' romances, ladies in affliction, noble knights riding into battle, magic and mysteries and monstrous beasts."[281] More recently, Rosalind Field has observed that "Material drawn from the Apocalypse was well suited to the taste of a late medieval courtly audience. Commentators and artists had changed the awesome and rather grotesque nature of the Apocalypse into one of romance and beauty with a spiritual message of hope and joy."[282] While these claims are rather broad, we find at least one late thirteenth-century manuscript, BNF MS fr. 375, which demonstrates a convergence of these exact reading interests and an execution style of a high end production.[283] The manuscript opens with an illustrated Vulgate Latin text of the Apocalypse accompanied by the Berengaudus commentary also in Latin (ff. 1-17v), followed by unillustrated French prose gloss (explication de l'Apocalypse, en français, ff. 18-26v) and some additional prophetic texts. The bulk of the manuscript (ff. 36-294v), however, is devoted to romance texts, including *Li Sieges de Tebes*, *Le Roman de Troie* by Benoît de Sainte-Maure, several Alexander romances, *Le Roman de Rou* de Wace, *Le Roman del roi Guillaume d'Engleterre* (*Romance of King William of*

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[280] Richard Kenneth Emmerson and Suzanne Lewis, "Census I," no.15, 19, 23, 25 (owned by Abbot Gregory de Montaner and later Cardinal de Sourdis), 26.

[281] George Henderson, "Studies in English Manuscript Illumination. Part II: The English Apocalypse, I," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institute* 30 (1967): 104-137, at 116.

[282] Rosalind Field, "The Heavenly Jerusalem in *Pearl*," 7.

[283] Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS fr. 375, available online through Gallica <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b90589342>.

England misattributed to Chrétien de Troyes), *Le Roman de Floire et Blanceflor*, *Le Roman de Blancandin*, *Le Roman de Cliget* (*Cligés*) by Chrétien de Troyes, *Le Roman d'Erec et d'Enide* by Chrétien de Troyes, *Le Roman d'Ysle et de Galeron* by Gautier d'Arras, *Le Roman d'Amaldas et de Ydoine*, and *Le Roman de le Castelaine de Vergi.* The manuscript closes with the *Miracles of Our Lady* in Old French (ff. 344-346). Most of the manuscript is ruled in a tight four-column format for short octosyllabic romance verse. The prose texts appear in slightly wider three-column format (including the French prose gloss), while the Apocalypse section is ruled in wide double-column format, and includes large, framed, tinted-drawing style illustrations at the top of each column. Large red-and-blue filigreed penwork initials provide a unifying decorative program for the manuscript as a whole. The ruling and the decoration indicate a high level of planning for the compilation. In the middle, in the romance section, there is a brief genealogical table Des Dus de Normendie (généalogie des comtes de Boulogne), which further confirms an aristocratic patronage/commission for the manuscript.

Penn Szittya argues that the thirteenth-century prose Vulgate cycle of Arthurian romances (and, consequently, Malory) turn apocalyptic in their treatment of the Grail narrative.[284] Citing the relative contemporaneity for the genesis and proliferation of these prose French romances and the Anglo-French gothic Apocalypses, Szittya addresses several important structural and narrative parallels between the two genres. Firstly, the two manuscript traditions share the compilational practice of intercalating the text and the gloss on the page: in the Anglo-French Apocalypses the gloss is incorporated into text proper (unlike the marginal glosses found in other glossed books of the Bible), while in the Grail

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[284] Penn Szittya, "Domesday Bokes: The Apocalypse in Medieval English Literary Culture," in *The Apocalypse in the Middle Ages*, 374-397; Valerie M. Lagorio, "The Apocalyptic Mode in the Vulgate Cycle of Arthurian Romances," *Philological Quarterly* 57 (1978): 1-22.

romances the gloss is interlaced into the narrative using a network of hermit-like characters who explicate various mysteries. Szittya argues that "These embodied and speaking glosses in the Vulgate cycle [of Arthurian romance] are the product of the same historical sensibility that inscribed the subtext explicitly and prominently onto the page of the illuminated Apocalypse manuscripts."[285] Secondly, addressing genre cross-influence on the level of plot, Szittya contends that "Arthurian history *was* salvation history, whose meaning was often hidden. Therefore the quests that dominate the Vulgate cycle, like the quest of Saint John in the Apocalypse and of his readers, are ultimately quests for meaning, to be wrested from the mysterious pages of salvation history."[286] At the same time, he reads the courtly attributes in the Apocalypse narrative as romance elements, claiming that:

> Apocalypse *is* a romance plot, depicting the establishment of a court and kingdom, albeit through a long process of scourging and purgation during which the forces of darkness will be quelled. The court is the court of heaven, its throne surrounded by a rainbow, by twenty-four Elders with crowns of gold, by seven lamps burning, by Four Living Creatures with eyes before and behind (Apoc. 5). The defender of this kingdom, with eyes of flame, rides a white horse, is crowned with many diadems, is clothed in a garment sprinkled with blood, and bears a sharp sword that smites the nations (Apoc. 19). After the victories of his armies, a triumphal marriage takes place, accompanied by a bounteous wedding feast, and a new kingdom is established which will last forever (Apoc. 19, 21).[287]

The courtly plot of the Apocalypse, with its opulent visualizations in the illustrated Anglo-French Apocalypses, becomes more legible to an audience already familiar with romance conventions. I would argue that the decorative programs of the French prose gloss Apocalypses (also known as the Corpus-Lambeth stem of the Anglo-French Apocalypse

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[285] Penn Szittya, "Domesday Bokes," in *The Apocalypse in the Middle Ages*, 387.

[286] Penn Szittya, "Domesday Bokes," in *The Apocalypse in the Middle Ages*, 387.

[287] Penn Szittya, "Domesday Bokes," in *The Apocalypse in the Middle Ages*, 388.

manuscripts) share stylistic models with the prose Vulgate romances: mainly, a double-column format with small (one- to two-columns in width) but lavishly painted miniatures interspersed throughout.

Writing about the Beatus branch of the Apocalypse manuscripts, most popular in Spain, John Williams addresses the narrative and instructional function of their images.[288] Out of thirty two surviving medieval manuscripts (including fragments), twenty five are illustrated, which according to Williams demonstrates "the centrality of the miniatures." The images, he argues, "might serve as an efficient guide to a particular *storia* [from the Vulgate text], if not its interpretation, even, we may imagine, to the point of substituting for the passage itself for an indoctrinated viewer." Williams goes so far as to suggest that between the Beatus commentary (an eighth-century exegetical composite of mainly Tyconian and Augustinian model), the extensive captions, and the discursive inscriptions, "the illustrations could function, in some sense, as a surrogate for the Apocalyptic text."[289] These sumptuous manuscripts, some of which may have included upwards of 108 illustrations, encouraged a similar type of contemplative visual literacy, isolating images from the Latin Vulgate text for individual meditation.

Out of the 139 illustrated Apocalypse manuscripts surveyed by Emmerson and Lewis, seventy nine belong to the Anglo-French tradition.[290] Elsewhere, Suzanne Lewis further breaks down the Anglo-French group of manuscripts into two distinctive cycles based on iconography, layout, and selection of text and exegesis. The first has the Vulgate text enriched with selected passages from the Latin commentary by Berendaudus (twelfth

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[288] John Williams, "The Apocalypse Commentary of Beatus of Liébana," in *The Apocalypse in the Middle Ages*, 217-233.

[289] John Williams, "The Apocalypse Commentary of Beatus of Liébana," 227.

[290] Richard Kenneth Emmerson and Suzanne Lewis, "Census II" includes 80 entries, but one of them is a disbanded collection of images, which has since been discounted.

century); the second, also known as the Corpus-Lambeth stem, paraphrases the Vulgate text and intercalates it with an anonymous French (or Anglo-Norman) prose gloss. The distinctive aesthetic of the Berengaudus tradition involves a cycle of large half-page tinted drawings, situated above a glossed Latin text. The manuscripts equipped with the French commentary include smaller painted miniatures dispersed throughout the glossed text. Out of the seventy-nine illustrated Anglo-French Apocalypses, forty eight contain a version of the Berengaudus commentary and a distinctive picture cycle. More than half of these include picture cycles from the life of Saint John, thus appending an apocryphal narrative as a preface to the Apocalypse story. Like the Beatus commentator, Berengaudus offers a recapitulative exegesis, or a cyclical reading of the Apocalypse, in line with Tyconius. Written in the twelfth century, it should have been supplanted by the *Glossa ordinaria*, but the fairly conservative text became popular among English lay and monastic readers. The French prose gloss is more reformist in its theology, (possibly Franciscan in origin), and privileges preaching, penitence and confession. With its unique cycle of miniatures, the French prose gloss is found in twenty five of the illustrated Anglo-French Apocalypses. The Anglo-Norman commentary of the gloss is a composite of mostly interpretive paraphrase.

Analyzing the large, half-page picture cycles of the Berengaudus manuscripts, Lewis argues that the images encourage discontinuous reading practices:

> Larger dramatic and narrative structures tend to become lost as each moment is isolated, causing the reader to linger over each picture, text, and gloss. The reader's perspective shifts from one of expectancy geared to what happens next in a normal narrative mode to one of leisurely contemplation. Differing from twelfth- and thirteenth-century Bibles in which a continuous text is enveloped by marginal or interlinear glosses, the Gothic illuminated Apocalypse offers a structure that effectively moves the reader's experience

from a temporal, sequential context to a timeless framework conducive to a different mode of understanding the text.[291]

This atemporal experience encourages leisurely study and meditation for both the literate and the illiterate alike. While the temporality of the *Book of Revelation* stresses urgency and immediacy of the End, the illustrations function almost as a deferral, allowing time for spiritual rehabilitation through penance. Like the Berengaudus images, the images in the Corpus-Lambeth manuscripts (or the French prose gloss manuscripts) break up the text into readable portions, but unlike the large Berengaudus images, the brightly painted images of Corpus-Lambeth stem are reduced in narrative function, serving more as finding aids for the text rather than illuminating or glossing the text: "The images [in the Corpus-Lambeth stem] function to initiate reading, just as the text inspires action, in marked contrast to the Berengaudus cycles, where the images dominate the page and inspire the reader to pause in a more leisurely contemplation."[292] As such, the visual aesthetic of the French prose gloss Apocalypse manuscripts is more in line with the richly illuminated French prose romance manuscripts (such as the *Roman de la rose* manuscripts and the prose Arthurian romance manuscripts, discussed in more detail in chapter two).

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The apocalyptic section in *Pearl* begins with Group XIV, concatenating on the term "Jerusalem." Over the course of three stanza groups (Groups XIV-XVI), the *Pearl*-maiden instructs her father in the fine distinctions between the Old and the New Jerusalem: between the earthly city which belongs to the biblical past—a city of David, a geopolitical location in Ancient Judea, through the gates of which Christ had passed in His mortal form on three

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[291] Suzanne Lewis, "Exegesis and Illustration ," 260.
[292] Suzanne Lewis, "Exegesis and Illustration," 272.

occasions; and an eternal Heavenly City—also known as the "Ceté of [God]" or "Syght of Pes" (l.952), which the maiden identifies as the rightful destination for all saved souls. Using the concatenation terms 'Jerusalem' (Group XIV), 'nevertheless'/ 'less' (Group XV), and 'mote'/ 'moteles' / 'wythouten mote' (Group XVI), the maiden creates a theological construct of the New Jerusalem as the city of eternal bliss. In her testament, the Heavenly Court is modeled on aristocratic courts of romance, in which the courtiers gather to serve their lord, and increase his status through their collective courtesy. In doing so, she prepares her father for a privileged view of the Heavenly City, modeled upon the vision of the Apostle John.

The *Pearl*-maiden explains, she belongs to the company of the saved, the elite 144,000 virgins who are gathered in the Heavenly City as Brides of Christ. Inserting herself into John's vision of the Apocalypse, the maiden explains her place as a peer in the Heavenly Court:

> The Lambes uyves in blysse we bene,
> A hondred and forty [four] thowsande flot
> As in the Apocalyppes hit is sene.
> Sant John hem syy al in a knot
> On the hyl of Syon, that semly clot;
> The apostel hem segh in gostly drem,
> Arayed to the weddyng in that hyl-coppe,
> The nwe cyté o Jerusalem. (ll.785-792)

Her unblemished spirit has guaranteed the *Pearl*-maiden a privileged place among the saved elite. Her white pearl-studded attire becomes legible as a wedding gown, as she is represented simultaneously as both Bride and Wife of the Lamb upon a hill in Heavenly Jerusalem. The numerology in line 786 seems to be a scribal error as the correct number

from *Rev.* 14:1 and 3 appears later in the poem.[293] In a subsequent citation of the biblical

passage, the maiden states that John saw the Lamb on mount Sion, "And wyth Hym

maydennes an hundrethe thowsande/ And fowre and forty thowsande mo" (ll.869-870).

Referring to the Apocalypse as both a written account and a visual one—"In Appocalyppece

is wryten" (l.866) and "As in the Apocalyppes hit is sene" (l.787)—the maiden may be

conflating its status as a vision ("gostly drem" l.790) and as Scripture, but she may also be

referring to the plethora of manuscript illuminations of the Heavenly Court gathered in

adoration of Christ and/or the Lamb.

The *Pearl*-maiden uses the same language of courtly love to explain her emotional ties

to Christ as her father has used earlier to explain his mortal attachment to her. The maiden's

spiritual love for her heavenly spouse is rendered in erotic terms of romance: "My Lombe,

my Lorde, my dere juelle,/ My joy, my blys, my lemman fre" (l.795-6). She envisions Christ

as a precious jewel, the way her father has envisioned her as a pearl. This language of

aristocratic luxury is entangled in the language of emotional fulfilment as well as in that of

erotic love through the repeated use of possessive "my." The Middle English 'lemman'[294] as

a term for erotic intimacy is frequently found both in devotional and secular literature. The

MED lists several secular instances in chronicles and romances, including Layaman's *Brut*,

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[293] E. V. Gordon emends the numerology in l.786 to read "A hondred and forty fowre thowsande" in his edition of *Pearl* (New York: Oxford at the Clarendon Press, 1953); Charles W. Dunn and Edward T. Byrnes follow Gordon in their emendation "A hondred and forty-fowre thowsande"; Sarah Stanbury provides the manuscript reading without emendation "A hondred and forty thowsande"; I insert the missing "four" in square brackets for clarity.

[294] "lemman" (n.) 1. A loved one of the opposite sex: (a) a paramour, lover; haven (taken) to (unto) ~, to accept (sb.) as a paramour, lover; (b) a concubine; (c) a betrothed lover; (d) a wife; haven to ~, to have (sb.) as wife. 2. A spiritually beloved one: (a) a believer in Christ, redeemed soul; a bride of Christ, esp. a female saint vowed to chastity; desiren to ~, to desire (sb.) as a spiritually beloved one; (b) the Virgin Mary; (c) God, Christ; chesen (loven) crist to ~, to accept (cherish) Christ as lover; (d) fig. a personified abstraction. 3. As a term of intimate address to one's audience, a friend, paramour, spouse, Christ: beloved one, dear one, darling, sweetheart. MED entry, University of Michigan, 2014, available online < http://quod.lib.umich.edu/cgi/m/mec/med-idx?type=id&id=MED25097 >.

Mannyng's *Chronicle*, *Sir Degare*, *Otuel*, *The Travels of Sir John Mandeville*, *Sir Degrevant*, *Richard Coeur de Lion*, *The Seege or Batayle of Troye*, *Sir Launfal*, *Ywain and Gawain*, *Sir Perceval of Galles*, and Malory's *Morte Darthur*. In Chaucer, 'lemman' appears in the erotic secular sense, particularly as extramarital sexual liaisons (as in the *Miller's Tale*, the *Summoner's Tale*, and the *Parson's Tale*). In the *Manciple's Tale*, we find a semantic differentiation between an aristocratic lady love and a common 'lemman':

> If it so be they werke bothe amys--
> But that the gentile, in estaat above,
> She shal be cleped his lady, as in loue;
> And for that oother is a povre womman,
> She shal be cleped his wenche or his lemman. (Fragment IX H, ll.216-220)

Both 'lady love' and 'lemman' designate a sexual relationship, but the first entails respect of matrimony and social status, while the second is denigrated (and othered) as an adulterous and illicit connection with an unworthy mate. The devotional contexts for the erotic meaning include the biblical story of Susanna (when the evil sages proposition her in the garden) and in the more spiritual sense in the lives of female virgin martyrs such as Saint Katherine and Saint Juliana. In the latter texts, both the martyr and Christ are sometimes referred to with the familiar erotic term 'lemman,' demonstrating spiritual closeness.

As the *Pearl*-maiden's 'lemman', Christ is presented as a brave knight who dies for his love. The formulation 'my lemman fre' (l.796) lends the phrase an additional aristocratic connotation, meaning 'a noble beloved,' 'a noble lover,' or 'a noble sweetheart.' In recounting Christ's heroic deeds, the maiden repeats the familiar erotic address: "In Jerusalem was my lemman slayn" (l.805), and again even more intimately "In Jerusalem thus my lemman swete" (l.829). The intimacy of the maiden's address toward her beloved contributes to her presentation as a romance heroine. At the same time, Christ as her lover is

rendered as a romance hero, with a visage "so fayr on to byholde" (l.810). His passion and crucifixion are figured as acts of noble sacrifice (ll.805-828)—giving His sinless mortal life in exchange for all the sinners, dying in a cosmic battle for the salvation of all those who love Him. Earthly historical Jerusalem becomes the site of Christ's heroic action, a romance locale where the marvel of the salvation drama occurs. Group XIV ends with an image of Christ enthroned in the New Jerusalem, surrounded by His saints who make up His Heavenly Court (possibly including the virgin martyrs whose Middle English lives also refer to him as a 'lemman'), and the opening of the seven seals—a scene directly borrowed from the *Apocalypse of Saint John.*

Like Christ and the *Pearl*-maiden, the Jerusalem Lamb is described using the vocabulary of aristocratic abundance, language similar to that found in the *effictio* of the maiden's attire:

> Thys Jerusalem Lombe hade never pechche
> Of other huee bot quyt jolyf
> That mot ne masklle moght on streche,
> For wolle quyte so ronk and ryf. (ll.841-845)

The Lamb's luscious fur is white ('quyt[e]') of hue like the *Pearl*-maiden's *bliaut*, and both are described as beautiful and noble in appearance ('jolyf'),[295] as spotless both externally and spiritually: the maiden's state of cleanness and perfection is designated as "maskelles" in the concatenation of Group XIII (and elsewhere), while the Lamb's coat is so white, so

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[295] "joli" (adj.) Also jolie, golli, yoli(e & jolif(e, jolive, jolef & joili. While its primary meaning is joyful, its additional connotations include pleasing aesthetic qualities (a) Pleasing, comely, beautiful, handsome; noble in appearance; handsomely dressed; (b) ~ robin, a handsome or charming man; a gaily dressed man, a dandy; (c) of things, colors, an action, chanting, a way of life: pleasant, beautiful, pretty, elegant, excellent. MED entry, University of Michigan, 2014, <http://quod.lib.umich.edu/cgi/m/mec/med-idx?type=id&id=MED23916>.

abundant ('ronk'),[296] and so rough, that no stain or spot may adhere to it (l.843). The Lamb's spiritual perfection is attested to via external aristocratic attributes, including expensive unblemished white fur (reinforced again later by "The Lomb ther wythouten spottes blake," l.945).

The noble Lamb as an aristocratic groom welcomes similarly spotless souls to join Him as His worthy wives. The number of brides, all of whom are dressed similarly to the *Pearl*-maiden ("That beren thys perle upon oure bereste" l.854), increases the shared bliss among the company of the saved. The brides of Christ are figured as aristocratic maidens, with their pearls serving as their heraldic devices ("Of spotles perles tha beren the creste" l.856), which attest to their shared noble peerage. Together they transcend earthly existence, placing all their hopes and joys in the Christian knowledge of salvation history: "Of on dethe ful oure hope is drest" (l.860)—in the one death, the death of Christ, that redeems all. Unlike mortals who, like the dreamer, ceaselessly lament human passing, focusing on death and decay, these Brides of Christ (including the *Pearl*-maiden) have perfect understanding ("We thurghoutly haven cnawyng" l.859), which brings them emotional fulfilment. The Trinity Apocalypse brings together the Triumph in Heaven and the Marriage of the Lamb on fol.22r (Figure 25) in a two-compartment half-page illustration.[297] In the top register, John witnesses a crowd of kneeling, crowned, and bearded figures (the twenty four elders) adoring the

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[296] "rank" (adj.) Also rancke, ranc, rang, ronk(e, rong, raunke; sup. rankest, etc. & (error) ranclest. One of its meanings includes richness and abundance "(a) Abundant, copious, profuse; also, excessive; full (of wisdom); abounding (in riches); [...] (b) wealthy; (c) of a plant: healthy, vigorous, mature; also, thickly grown, luxuriant; as noun: the ~, the full ears of grain; of a field: producing luxuriant growth, fertile; (d) sexually mature; also, libidinous; (e) fresh, undecayed." MED entry, University of Michigan, 2014, <http://quod.lib.umich.edu/cgi/m/mec/med-idx?type=id&id=MED35886>.

[297] Trinity College Cambridge, MS R.16.2, known as The Trinity Apocalypse, thirteenth century, English, with Anglo-Norman redaction of the Vulgate text and an abbreviated Berengaudus commentary, listed as no.50 in the Emmerson and Lewis, "Census II," image on fol.22r, available online <http://trin-sites-pub.trin.cam.ac.uk/james/viewpage.php?index=1199>.

enthroned Christ, again in a hieratic position of benediction, holding up a book with Alpha and Omega. Christ is enclosed in a mandorla, surrounded by angels proclaiming His victory and the signs of the four evangelists in quatrefoil lobes. In the bottom register, the Marriage of the Lamb is presented as an aristocratic feast scene, with the bride dressed in white embracing the Lamb while courtiers and musicians entertain the happy couple. The merriment of the occasion is represented through brightly colored clothing, floral garlands, music, and an abundance of food and wine. These two scenes are also joined together vertically in a full-page illustration in the Bodleian Apocalypse, f.18v.[298]

Concatenating on a variation of "nevertheless," sometimes appearing as "less" in the opening lines of a stanza, Group XV presents abundance as a marker of Heavenly bliss, even to the structural inclusion of an extra stanza. These additional twelve lines bring the final line count to 1,212, doubling the apocalyptic numerology of Heaven (which is measured in units of twelve). The Brides of the Lamb constitute the 144,000 chosen souls, who collectively constitute yet another unit of twelve, increased a thousand fold (12x12x1000=144,000). These 144,000 maidens participate in the Heavenly liturgy. They sing in perfect harmony "That nwe songe […] ful cler/ In sounande notes, a gentyl carpe" (ll.882-883). Their melody is more beautiful than any human-made instrument could produce, and the combination of their voices achieves a new discourse, or liturgy.[299] Their privileged knowledge and status

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[298] Oxford, Bodleian Library, Auct. D.4.17, known as The Bodleian Apocalypse, c.1260, English, with excerpts from the Vulgate text and the Berengaudus commentary inserted as inscriptions into images, listed as no. 95 in the Emmerson and Lewis, "Census II," image on fol.18v is available online <http://bodley30.bodley.ox.ac.uk:8180/luna/servlet/s/v37co1>. In the top register, beneath the Triumph in Heaven scene, there is an image of the vanquished whore of Babylon engulfed in flames; in the bottom register, the bride strokes the Lamb while an angel blows a trumpet and courtiers celebrate with food and wine.

[299] "carp" (n.) Also karp, (a) Talking, chatting, conversation, discourse; (b) a statement, a saying; a message (spoken or written); (c) a story, tale, poem, song; (d) mention, news; (e) meaning. MED entry, University of Michigan, 2014, <http://quod.lib.umich.edu/cgi/m/mec/med-idx?type=id&id=MED6849>.

allows them to celebrate the Lamb, in Whom they find gladness, mirth, bliss, and honor. To express their emotional state of 'gret delyt', the Brides perform a new song:

> Nowthelese, non was never so quoynt
> For alle the craftes that ever thay knewe,
> That of that songe myght synge a poynt
> Bot that meyny the Lombe that swe.
> For thay arn boght, fro the urthe aloynte,
> As newe fryt to God ful due,
> And to the gentyl Lombe hit arn anjoynt
> As lyk to Hymself of lote and hwe. (ll.889-896)

This elite group of the saved souls are the only ones capable of singing this song because they are joined to the Lamb and share in His attributes. They look like Him in their regal bridal attire, and they match him in their spotless spirits: these matchless virgins, who have made the ultimate match in Heaven. This musical perfection is unparalleled and unrepresentable, a liturgy that can only happen in a privileged space of the Heavenly Court in the New Jerusalem. As such, the music becomes yet another layer of adornment in *Pearl*, akin to trappings of romance.

The images of the Heavenly Court worshipping Christ (or the Lamb) are fairly standard in the Anglo-French apocalypses. They generally include the saved elite (144,000 represented as a crowd in white), the twenty-four aldermen or Jewish elders, and the four beasts of the Apocalypse (the symbols of the Evangelists). In the Welles Apocalypse, on fol.117v, the Heavenly Court is rendered in a full-page three-compartment illustration. Christ enthroned appears in a hieratic pose of benediction in a central mandorla that cuts across the top two compartments. Crowned and bearded figures in white robes cluster around the mandorla, filling both compartments. Their hands are extended out in singing postures, indicating a group performance of the heavenly liturgy. The two top compartments are

flanked by roundels with the four beasts, representing the Four Evangelists. In the bottom compartment, John is climbing up a ladder with the angel inviting him in through an open door. In the Cloisters Apocalypse, on fol.11r, the Heavenly Court is represented in a three-compartment half-page illustration. Enthroned Christ in a hieratic pose of benediction is joined by the Lamb in a central mandorla, which cuts across the top two registers. The mandorla is then further enclosed in a rectangular frame and flanked by the four beasts. The two top compartments are filled with crowned aldermen clad in white robes and surrounded by brightly colored angels. The bottom compartment is filled with a mass of men and women in white robes, wearing various kinds of headgear to mark their stations in life (including popes, kings, clergy, and laity). These are the saved elite, the 144,000 virgins, which in this image (unlike the Welles Apocalypse) includes women. The Trinity Apocalypse illustrates the Adoration of God by the Heavenly Court on fol.7v, but only includes a single female figure among the saved elite in the bottom compartment. London, British Library, MS Additional 22493 on fol.2v (Figure 26) renders the saved elite as a crowd of crowned women in white robes worshiping the Lamb. The women are seated in postures of conversation in four compartments, two on each side of the central quatrefoil, inside of which the Lamb is carrying a triumphal banner.[300]

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[300] London, British Library, Royal MS 15 D II, known as The Welles Apocalypse, early fourteenth century, English, listed as no.74 in the Emmerson and Lewis, "Census II," image on fol.117v is available online <http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/FullDisplay.aspx?ref=Royal_MS_15_d_ii>; New York, The Cloisters, Metropolitan Museum of Art, known as The Cloisters Apocalypse, c.1330, Normandy, listed as no.86 in the Emmerson and Lewis, "Census II," image on fol.11r, available online <http://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/471869>; Trinity College Cambridge, MS R.16.2, known as The Trinity Apocalypse, thirteenth century, English, with Anglo-Norman redaction of the Vulgate text and an abbreviated Berengaudus commentary, listed as no.50 in the Emmerson and Lewis, "Census II," image on fol.7v, available online <http://trin-sites-pub.trin.cam.ac.uk/james/viewpage.php?index=1199>; London, British Library, MS Additional 22493, France, c.1275-1300, Apocalypse fragment with commentary by Berengaudus, listed as no.66 in the Emmerson and Lewis, "Census II," image on fol.2v available online <http://www.bl.uk/catalogues/illuminatedmanuscripts/ILLUMIN.ASP?Size=mid&IllID=60240>.

The dreamer refers to this group of the saved elite as "Thys moteles meyny" (l.925, using the concatenation term for Group XVI 'mote'/ 'moteles'), meaning this spotless company, thus connecting them to the 'maskelles' *Pearl*-maiden, the Lamb 'wythouten spottes', and to the City of New Jerusalem also known as "Hys mote wythouten moote" (l.948). Playing on two homonyms, 'mote' from Old French and 'mot' from Old English, the *Pearl*-poet establishes the City of New Jerusalem as a physical citadel or a walled city ('mote') which is also flawless or free of imperfections ('whytouten moote').[301] The dreamer also compares the Brides of Christ to a beautiful collection of jewels: "So cumly a pakke of joly juele" (l.929). Their privileged spiritual status is marked by their heart-pearls (pearls worn over their breast), and by the emotional and aesthetic descriptor 'joly', which carries connotations of both happiness and beauty. Just like the Brides of Christ (including the *Pearl*-maiden), who are beautiful and happy in the light of the Lamb, the City of New Jerusalem is adorned as yet another Bride, both aesthetically magnificent and eternally blissful. As the Apocalypse text and its commentaries reiterate, the City of New Jerusalem in all its luxuriant splendor is dressed as a bride to meet her groom (Rev. 21.2).[302]

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[301] "mote" (n.(1)) Also mot, moite. From Old French. (a) A natural or man-made mound; hill; ?also, an island [last quot.]; castel ~, mound or hill on which a castle is built; (b) a castle, dwelling; in ~, among men; (c) a city. MED entry, University of Michigan, 2014, <http://quod.lib.umich.edu/cgi/m/mec/med-idx?type=id&id=MED28748>.

"mōt" (n.(1)) Also mote, mothe, mouthe; pl. motes & (rarely) moten. From Old English. (a) A speck, particle, bit of dirt or foreign matter; an impurity in drink; pl. dust; melten to ~, to be reduced to dust; motes in the sonne (bem, ~ in the sonne, motes in somertide, dust visible in the sunlight; (b) a trifle; piken motes, to take note of small points; ~ in the eie, with reference to Mat. 7.3 or Luke 6.42: a petty fault; (c) as muchel as a ~, at all; mountaunce of a litel ~, in the smallest degree; not a (the) ~, nought a ~, not a bit, not in the least, not at all; (d) a blemish, spot, stain, flaw; also fig.; withouten ~, flawless, pure. MED entry, University of Michigan, 2014, <http://quod.lib.umich.edu/cgi/m/mec/med-idx?type=id&id=MED28744>.

[302] As Field notes: "The resemblance between Maiden and City does not end there [in the matching jewel-encrusted exteriors], for the Apocalypse describes the City of Jerusalem as *sicut sponsam ornatam viro suo*, 'made ready like a bride adorned for her husband' (21.2). In *Pearl*, Maiden and City, the two aspects of the Bride of Christ, appear first as emblematic objects whose significance is only gradually to be revealed." (Rosalind Field, "The Heavenly Jerusalem in *Pearl*," 8-9). In footnote 8, Field cites Johan Chydenius, *The Typological Problem in Dante: A Study in the History of Medieval Ideas* (Munksgaard: Helsingfors, 1958), 136, on the connections between the Bride, Paradise, and Jerusalem.

At the end of Group XVI, the dreamer begs the maiden for access to this wondrous place, referring to the New Jerusalem as a "blysful bor" (l.964), the blissful bower of romance. The maiden replies that as a mortal man, he is not allowed to set foot within the walls of the Heavenly City. Access to the New Jerusalem is strictly forbidden to the uninitiated, with exclusivity figured as a fortified aristocratic space: "Thou may not enter wythinne Hys tor" (l.966). The bower/tower rhyme is a familiar trope of octosyllabic romance to the point of collapsing into cliché. However, the maiden has received special dispensation from her Spouse the Lamb ("thrugh gret favor" l.968), the Lord of the Castle/the walled City, to grant her father a glimpse of the New Jerusalem from the outside (ll.966-972). Without entering the city, the dreamer is able to breach its fortifications through this privileged sight, penetrating the "clene cloystor" (l.969) to the heart of the City in order to witness the aristocratic drama of the Heavenly Court.

Groups XVII-XIX constitute the dreamer's vision of the New Jerusalem. Group XVII concatenates on the term "John", thus providing Scriptural authority as validation for a personal vision. Standing on a hill on one side of the river, the father watches the Heavenly City descend on the other side:

> Byyonde the brok, fro me warde keved
> That schyrrer then sunne wyth schaftes schon.
> In the Apokalypce is the fasoun preved
> As devyses hit the apostel John. (ll.981-984)

Across the river, the City shines brighter than the sun, the way that the *Pearl*-maiden glistens when he first espies her on the riverbank. Even the Apocalypse citation is extremely visual. Using pictorial terms like 'fasoun' (form or fashion) and 'devyse' (to describe or to depict), both of which carry material connotations of visual perception, the dreamer is conflating

ocular and textual evidence.[303] This merging of text and image would be familiar to the poet's audience from their experience with the deluxe Apocalypse manuscripts, in which the Vulgate text is elucidated via textual and visual commentary. As the City descends upon the riverbank, 'Byyonde the brok,' directly across from the dreamer, we are reminded of his earlier impressions of this particular paradisal landscape. According to the dreamer's initial assessment of it, the river is a boundary ('devyse', in the sense of 'divide') between earthly and heavenly Paradise:

> Forthy I thoght that Paradyse
> Was ther over gayn tho bonkes brade.
> I hoped the water were a devyse
> Bytwene myrthes by meres made.
> Byyonde the broke, by slente other slade,
> I hoped that mote merked wore;
> Bot the water was depe, I dorst not wade,
> And ever me longed ay more and more. (ll.137-144)

Even before he sees the maiden, the dreamer feels the emotional draw of the other side. The water becomes a separation between emotional states, between misery and mirth, between human toil and Heavenly delight. The dreamer senses a void 'byyonde the broke', and expresses a hope that a walled city would be situated there (l.142); this void is eventually filled by the best of cities. But the dreamer's instincts tell him not to cross the river, despite his desire to see more wonders.

The river as a physical divide appears in some Anglo-French apocalypses that illustrate the Heavenly Jerusalem descending to earth. The physical separation between John and the Heavenly City is mediated by an Angel, who helps the human visionary cross the symbolic liminal border between life and death. For example, in a large half-page framed

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[303] Various forms of 'devyse' as both verb and noun 'devysement' are used throughout Group XVII almost as an additional concatenation term.

illumination on fol.36r in the Cloisters Apocalypse (Figure 27), the river marks John's horizontal separation from the City as well as the vertical divide between heaven and earth.[304] An angel leans out of a mandorla in the sky, pointing down to John, who is sitting upon a rock on the left side of the river. On the right, the New Jerusalem appears as a walled city, hovering in the air as it descends upon an empty space on the other side of the river. The bright colors on the walls and rooftops, the intricate patterns on gates, the burnished gold on crenellated towers, and the multi-colored gems in the foundations help the reader/viewer envision the glistening City. In Cotton Nero A.x, fol.42v (formerly fol.38v, Figure 28), the *Pearl*-maiden fills the role of the angel, offering her father a privileged sight of the New Jerusalem. The City appears in the top right corner, elevated spatially on the page, if not literally upon the hill. A golden tower and a multi-colored walled fortification follow the traditional representation of the Heavenly City in elevation. The dreamer assumes the posture of a supplicant in prayer, with his arms raised toward his daughter. The maiden extends her hand beyond the City's walls in a gesture of welcome. Leaning out of her enclosure, the maiden's posture is similar to that of the angel in the mandorla in the Cloisters Apocalypse. The two figures are separated vertically by a stream, which serves as a liminal divide between this world and the next; but unlike John, the *Pearl*-dreamer cannot enter the City and must content himself with a vision from 'byyonde the broke'.

Grateful for this privileged sight of the New Jerusalem, the dreamer describes the City, paying particular attention to the dazzling light:

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[304] New York, The Cloisters, Metropolitan Museum of Art, known as The Cloisters Apocalypse, c.1330, Normandy, listed as no.86 in the Emmerson and Lewis, "Census II," image on fol.36r, available online <http://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/471869>; The iconography is closely related to the Metz, Bibliothèque municipale MS Salis 38, known as The Metz Apocalypse, mid-thirteenth century, English, listed as no.82 in the Emmerson and Lewis, "Census II," destroyed during WWII, but facsimile images preserved at the British Library; image on fol.30v reproduced in David McKitterick, ed., *The Trinity Apocalypse: Trinity College Cambridge, MS R.16.2* (Buffalo: The British Library and University of Toronto Press, 2005), Fig.99.

> The borgh was al of brende golde bryght,
> As glemande glas burnist broun -
> Wyth gentyl gemmes anunder pyght,
> Wyth bauteles twelve on basyng boun,
> The foundementes twelve of riche tenoun.
> Uch tabelment was a serlypes ston,
> As derely devyses this ilke toun
> In Apocalyppes the apostel John. (ll.989-996)

The visual aesthetic of Gothic architecture helps in envisioning the foundations of precious stones, the twelve-partite structure of arches, gates, and joinings, all richly decorated and shimmering in the brilliant light. The burnished gold of the Apocalypse manuscripts specifically, or of illuminated bibles more generally, creates a concrete reference point for the aristocratic audience who are trying to envision the golden streets of the New Jerusalem as well as its other decorative features. In the Trinity Apocalypse, Cambridge, Trinity College Cambridge, MS R.16.2, fol.25v (Figures 29 and 30), we find a bird's-eye-view of the New Jerusalem. This image is rare for the Anglo-French illustrated apocalypse tradition as it is more commonly found in the Spanish Beautus Apocalypses (compare Figures 30 and 31).[305] Against the background of burnished gold, which literalizes the gold-paved streets, the City of the Trinity Apocalypse is laid out like an opened (or flattened) three-dimensional model. The multi-colored bricks create a shimmering effect of precious stones, which form the foundations of this city. The Gothic style of the twelve gates interrupts the linearity of the floor plan, jutting out of the square frame; the gates themselves are decorated with penwork

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[305] Stanbury (in line with Whitaker and Field) argues that "For his description of a city with a complex topography, the poet seems to be drawing instead on the pictorial traditions of Apocalypse illustrations that depict a city in both projection and elevation, and even more important, that describe the city's concrete dimensions as they are perceived by an eyewitness who is himself led by an angel guide." (Sarah Stanbury, *Seeing the* Gawain-*poet*, 33.) To explain the view of the New Jerusalem in projection, or what I call a floorplan or a bird's-eye-view of the City, Stanbury points to the now-famous illustration in the Trinity Apocalypse (Figures 29 and 30). She claims that the Trinity Apocalypse is a common and influential form of apocalypse illustration in England, when it is actually unique in merging the Anglo-French and the Beatus style of imagery, particularly in its presentation of the New Jerusalem.

detail without color, the phosphorescence of pearls represented as the natural flesh of the manuscript page, creating a contrast against the dazzling gold and bright colors. Also breaching the frame are the figures of St. John and the Angel, positioned in the bottom left corner and crossing the liminal divide (Figure 29). The Angel holds a scroll, which reads: "Vene[z]! Jo vus mustrerai la femme espuse de l'aignel" ["come! I will show you the woman who is married to the lamb"],[306] thus presenting the City of New Jerusalem as a Bride of Christ. Inside the perfectly square city, Christ is enthroned inside a mandorla, flanked by the Lamb and the image of the Word as a book. From beneath his throne, the rivers of life flow forth (ll.1055-58), pouring out of the mandorla and engendering life via stylized flowers. Beneath the mandorla, an angel measures the length of the city, confirming the perfection of its planning in unites of twelve.

In the last three stanzas of Group XVII, the dreamer directly cites the Apocalypse through the concatenation of John's name. As the dreamer lists the precious stones that make up the foundations of the New Jerusalem, he credits the Apostle John with the nomenclature. The poet dedicates two twelve-line stanzas (ll.997-1020) to a detailed description of these twelve stones (six stones per stanza), paraphrasing *Revelation* 21: 18-21 (cited above); he adds details of color and shimmering light, bringing together the commentary tradition (such as the Berengaudus commentary) and the Gothic aesthetic (as found in Apocalypse illuminations as well as in church architecture). This poetic expansion upon the biblical text, known as *amplificatio*, increases the grandeur of this sight, as each of the stones shines with dazzling beauty:

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[306] Transcription and translation provided in Nigel Morgan and Ian Short, "Description of Illustrations," in *The Trinity Apocalypse*, 76-102, at 95.

> As John devysed yet saw I thare;
> Thise twelve degres wern brode and stayre.
> The cyté stod abof ful sware,
> As longe, as brode, as hyghe ful fayre;
> The stretes of golde as glasse al bare -
> The wal of jasper that glent as glayre -
> The wones wythinne enurned ware
> Wyth alle kynnes perre that moght repayre.
> Thenne helde uch sware of this manayre
> Twelve forlonge space, er ever hit fon,
> Of heght, of brede, of lenthe to cayre,
> For meten hit syy the apostel John. (ll.1021-1032)

In the amplified visual poetics, we have a contest between the textual authority of Scripture and the ocular authority of dream vision, which continues into the first line of the next stanza group: "As John hym wrytes yet more I syye" (l.1033). The privileged and subjective nature of a dream vision precludes the need for corroborative evidence. Yet the poet insists that all his dreamer sees is in accord with the sainted visionary, adding a truth claim to a fictional narrative. This practice is in line with traditional monastic dream visions. As Mary Carruthers notes, the Apocalypse as a subject matter predominates in monastic visions, and the visionaries "take pains to pay their intertextual respects to the master visionary narratives of Ezekiel, Daniel, Isaiah, John, Peter, and Paul, among others." Visions like John's and the *Pearl*-dreamer's would be characterized as "spiritual" *visiones* "because the visionary sees the likeness of bodies, and immaterial things are made knowable by means of images present to the soul."[307] The *Pearl*-dreamer responds to the images he sees as if they were corporeal, even though he experiences them in spirit.

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[307] Mary Carruthers addresses the use of dream vision, or *visiones*, as a precursor for monastic meditation and as aids for composition. Augustine subdivides these into three types: spiritual, which tend to be influenced by imagination and memory; corporeal, which are results of sensory perception; and intellectual, the purest level of understanding. Biblical visions, such as the one recounted in Revelations, "are still 'spiritual' in nature because the visionary sees the likeness of bodies, and immaterial things are made knowable by means of images present

Group XVIII continues this fascination with unearthly light that permeates the City of New Jerusalem, concatenating on the phrase "sunne and mone." The dreamer's penetrating vision begins with the outside, focusing on the external walls, and the twelve gates that serve as entry points (or apertures), three on each side of the perfectly square City. These gates are adorned with the central image of the poem, the perfect pearl, or *margarita* in Latin: "The portales pyked of ryche plates/ And uch gate of a margyrye,/ A parfyt perle that never fates" (ll.1036-1038). The gates remain perpetually open with the sense of welcome, but only the spotless (the special chosen elite) may enter the City (ll.1065-1068). The phosphorescence of these perfect pearls reflects a light that does not originate in either the sun or the moon, transcending earthly understanding of illumination: Such lyght ther lemed in alle the strates,/ Hem nedde nawther sunne ne mone" (ll.1043-1044). The City does not need external illumination like the sun or the moon because it is illuminated by divine light: "lambe-lyght", playing on "lambe" as both the Lamb and the lamp (l.1046), as the subsequent lines clarify, "The Lombe [is] her lantyrne" (l.1047); and "Thurgh Hym blysned the borgh al bright" (l.1048). Moreover, the moon is deemed irrelevant as there is no night-time in the city of perpetual light (ll.1069-1074); and the sun itself and all other planets are dimmer than the light reflected off the water (ll.1075-1077). Shining brighter than the sun, the divine light radiates out of the center of the City and is reflected by every bejeweled, metallic, and watery surface, creating a truly dazzling effect.

The dreamer's privileged sight allows him to penetrate the external walls and gates, and look directly into the heart of the City: "Thurgh wowe and won my lokyng yede,/ For

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to the soul." (Mary Carruthers, *The Craft of Thought*, 172). Carruthers' entire chapter "Dream Vision, Picture, and 'The Mystery of the Bed Chamber'", 171-220, is relevant here.

sotyle cler noght lette no syght" (ll.1049-1050).[308] Unimpeded, the dreamer's gaze is able to pierce through fortifications and buildings, seeing everything so clearly because of their translucent quality. Heather Phillips provides an astute overview of the changes in the glass-making techniques which improved the quality of light in the stained glass windows that decorated medieval English churches:

> In the colour schemes of medieval stained glass a transition can be observed over several centuries. The windows of the thirteenth century have been described as patterns of coloured glass (largely ruby and blue) into which a small amount of white was introduced. Those of the fourteenth century saw the proportion of white glass greatly increased. Red and blue were now distributed against a silvery white ground. The colours themselves were subdued in favour of lower tones. Reds and blues, the preponderant colours of early glass, now made way for greens and yellows. By the fifteenth century many windows were little else but white glass with some dominating spots of coloured glass patterned upon it. While the colours were less varied in hue, the general effect was one of sparkling brilliance, of spacious expanses of silver gleaming with blue and gold.[309]

The thickness of the glass decreased over the course of two centuries, and the new smoothing techniques improved luminosity and transparency, allowing for the type of clarity and translucency the *Pearl*-dreamer describes.

Looking directly into the heart of the City, the dreamer sees God sitting upon His throne, and the rivers of paradise pouring forth from underneath the highly decorated throne (Figure 30). The concatenation phrase "sunne and mone" creates a doubled comparison in the description of the river (ll.1055-1058), which shines brighter than either of the celestial bodies. The River of Life that pours out from beneath God's throne is the

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[308] Manuscript seems to conflate "lyght" and "syght"; Gordon emends the manuscript reading in l.1050 from "lyght" and "syght" as "lyght" has already been used in l.1046.

[309] Heather Phillips, "Mediaeval Glass-Making Techniques and the Imagery of Glass in *Pearl*," *Florilegium* 6 (1984): 195-215, at 196-197.

same river that separates the *Pearl*-dreamer from the City. These shimmering waters engender all life on earth as represented in mystical fruit-bearing trees (ll.1077-1080). The dreamer's emotional response to the aesthetic vision of the New Jerusalem parallels his response to seeing the *Pearl*-maiden:

> Anundre mone so gret merwayle
> No fleschly hert ne myght endeure
> As quen I blusched upon that bayle,
> So ferly therof was the fasure. (ll.1081-1088)

Using the rhetorical trope of *occultatio*, the dreamer expresses his inability to comprehend the Heavenly City. The physical act of seeing proves too much, for the sight is too overwhelming for it to be imprinted on the human heart. The dreamer stands still in amazement, staring at the 'merwayle' of the City and its 'ferly fasure'—its wondrous appearance. Echoing his physical state of immobility upon the sight (and recognition) of the *Pearl*-maiden, the dreamer is once again frozen on the spot and stands "as stylle as dased quayle" (l.1085). As the visual phenomenon enters his spirit, the dreamer is ravished by the pure radiance of the sight: "So was I ravyste wyth glymme pure" (l.1088). The dreamer's gaze penetrates to the heart of the City, witnessing the bleeding Lamb (discussed above) surrounded by the company of the saved (144,000 virgins dressed in white, Figure 26), which includes the *Pearl*-maiden, and the sight of the City penetrates his spirit in a mutual bond of vision.

Just as the sight of the Heavenly Court proves overwhelming for the mortal dreamer, so the 'gret delyt'—the concatenation term for Group XIX—that radiates from the heavenly liturgy appears to be beyond his emotional capacity. As he describes the vision, the music, and the smell of the processional worshipping of the Lamb, he admits that "Delyt that hys

come encroched,/ To much it were of for to melle" (ll.1117-1118). In yet another instance of *occultatio*, the dreamer admits that he cannot speak of the joy that the Lamb's arrival brought on. As the liturgy continues, new songs of adoration and praise are directed toward the Lamb envisioned as a "gay juelle" (l.1124). Although the dreamer is separated from this fair company by city walls and a deep river, he participates in the joy of the procession by laughing with great delight (l.1128). The Lamb is dressed like a prince, clothed in material luxury: "The Lombe byfore con proudly passe/ Wyth hornes seven of red golde cler./ As praysed perles His wedes wasse" (ll.1110-1112). His seven horns are covered in reddish gold, the color of the streets of the New Jerusalem, and His apparel ('wedes,' probably referring again to His white fur) is praised through a simile that connects Him to the central image of the poem, the pearl. The dreamer is taken aback, however, when he notices signs of slaughter on the Lamb:

> Bot a wounde ful wyde and weete con wyse
> Anende Hys hert thurgh hyde torente.
> Of His quyte syde his blod outsprent.
> Alas, thoght I, who did that spyt?
> Ani breste for bale aght haf forbrent
> Er he therto hade had delyt. (ll.1135-140)

The dreamer is having a hard time reconciling the contrast, a wide dripping wound marring the white fleece, which in itself contains the Christian mystery of triumph through death. Worn as a proud marker of victory, the gaping wound inspires delight among the company of the saved, leaving the dreamer to wonder how joy and grief can be contained within the same heart.

Rosalind Field articulates an excellent reading of the contrast between this emphasis on the spotless whiteness of the Lamb's fur and the signs of slaughter present in several Apocalypse illustrations of the Lamb in Triumph:

> As a reminder of human suffering, the flaw in the perfection of the Lamb's pearl-like fleece is directly relevant to the main problem examined by the poem, which opens with a bereaved narrator who cannot accept death and the suffering it inflicts on himself and who is outraged by the associations of decay and mutability it brings. The final part of his vision is of an eternal city in which suffering and death are transmuted into joy.[…] The mark of death is a cause of joy, worn as proudly and joyfully by the Lamb as the maidens each wear the pearl that marks them as his [Brides].[310]

Field identifies twelve Apocalypse manuscripts (out of forty total that she examines) that render adoration of the Lamb with signs of slaughter, and claims that the illustration is unusual.[311] Whitaker adds two more manuscripts to this list as well as a fifteenth-century altar piece by Jan and Hubert van Eyck, which depicts the Lamb with signs of slaughter. Whitaker also counters Field's conclusion, claiming that the image occurs frequently in the thirteenth- and fourteenth-century Anglo-French Apocalypse manuscripts.[312] Both Field and Whitaker use the *Pearl*-poet's representation of the Lamb with signs of slaughter during the procession in Heaven as evidence for the visual influence from the apocalypse tradition.

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[310] Rosalind Field, "The Heavenly Jerusalem in *Pearl*," 15.

[311] "Cambridge, Trinity College MS R. 16.2 c.1250; Paris BN Fr. 403 c.1250; British Library MS Add. 42555 c.1250; the former Dyson Perrins MS 10 c.1250; Gulbenkian (former Yates Thompson 55) c.1260; Bodleian Library MS Douce 180 before 1272; British Library MS Royal 2D xiii c.1300; Oxford, New College MS 65 c.1300; Bodleian Library MS Auct. D.4.14. c.1310-20; British Library MS Add. 18633 c.1320-30; Cambridge, Corpus Christi College MS 20 c.1330-40; and Oxford, Lincoln College MS Lat. 16 c.1340." (Rosalind Field, "The Heavenly Jerusalem in *Pearl*," 12, footnote 22). The former Dyson Perrins MS 10 is now Los Angeles, J. Paul Getty Museum MS Ludwig III 1, also known as The Getty Apocalypse. On fol.5r, the bleeding Lamb in Triumph is adored by the four living creatures and the twenty-four aldermen. Nigel J. Morgan, ed., *Illuminating the End of Time: The Getty Apocalypse Manuscript* (Los Angeles: The J. Paul Getty Museum, 2011).

[312] Whitaker lists several Apocalypse manuscripts that correspond to Field's list. The two not in Field's are Cambridge University Library MS Mm 5.31 fol. 22 and Bodleian Library Can. Bibl. Lat. MS 62 fol. 4. Muriel A. Whitaker, "*Pearl* and Some Illustrated Apocalypse Manuscripts," 189, footnote 11.

Unable to reconcile this contradiction between earthly grief (or 'devely dele' in the extreme) and the 'gret delyt' of Heavenly Jerusalem, the dreamer is cast out of his vision. Deemed unworthy to join the saved elite in their worship of the Lamb, the dreamer awakes as he attempts to cross the river. Seeing his Pearl among the blissful virgins 'byyonde the broke', his longing for her overpowers his senses and decides to dare the forbidden waters:

> Then saw I ther my lyttel quene
> That I wende had standen by me in sclade.
> Lorde, much of mirthe was that ho made
> Among her feres that was so quyt!
> That syght me gart to thenk to wade
> For luf longyng in gret delyt. (ll.1147-1152)

When faced with the joyous courtly ceremony, of which his daughter is a participant while he is *not*, the father suddenly remembers his grief, the 'luf longyng'—the love-longing, that has brought him here. This earthly desire to restore what is lost, a longing for the departed, has no place in Heaven, which is a space of 'gret delyt.' This same 'delyt' of which he cannot fully partake overwhelms his senses: "Delyt me drof in yye and ere/ My manes mynde to maddyng malte" (ll.1153-1154). His mortal eyes, ears, and mind cannot process the scene of Heavenly bliss. Just as the dreamer's experience of 'devely dele' serves as the instigation point of his swoon, the other extreme, 'gret delyt' serves as a marker of its end. The dreamer loses all agency as 'delyt' overtakes him (l.1153) and drives him to cross the river despite an intuitive knowledge that he may perish in those waters.

All four prefatory full-page *Pearl* illustrations in Cotton Nero A.x, Art.3 feature the river as a 'devyse'. On fol.41r (formerly fol.37r), the speaker dressed in a long red robe falls asleep by (or above) what looks like a brook. This feature is not present in the text but was added by the illustrator either as a convention of dream visions or as a visual continuation of

the paradisal landscape.[313] On fol.41v (formerly fol.37v), the speaker rises at the riverbank and explores his surroundings. While the bewildering colors of the paradisal landscape are not rendered here, what we do see is a man engaged in a visual and tactile examination of trees. On fol.42r (formerly fol.38r), a crowned maiden dressed in white appears across the river. The power dynamics shift as the dreamer is demoted to the bottom left corner, looking up at the vertically superior maiden 'Byyonde the broke'. On f.42v (formerly f.38v, Figure 28), in the top right corner, the maiden is shown inside a walled and crenellated city, looking down upon the dreamer from across the stream. The dreamer is now in a supplicant position (still in the bottom left corner), trying to reach up to the maiden from his side of the river.

A. I. Doyle and Kathleen Scott both argue that the writing of Cotton Nero A.x, Art. 3 preceded the illustration by about twenty or so years.[314] The text was copied in the last quarter of the fourteenth century, while the illustrations were added in the first decade of the fifteenth century. There is still little consensus as to whether the prefatory bifolium which now contains the *Pearl* illustrations was part of the original manuscript planning or a later addition; both fol.41r (formerly fol.37r) and fol.43r (formerly fol.39r) exhibit signs of distress consistent with service as the opening page of a well-read manuscript. The full-page miniatures that illustrate other texts in the manuscript were painted on already ruled pages

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[313] Anthony Parker, a Senior Conservation Officer at the British Museum, was able to lift the dark spot using photo-video technology. The process revealed that underneath the bluish green paint is a continuation of the floral motif used to establish the hillside of the 'erber grene'. Maidie Hilmo writes up her observations of Anthony Parker's discovery, arguing that the dark paint was added at a later point, possibly by the same artist. "It is the same streaky paint as that applied roughly to the streams in the other three *Pearl* miniatures [as well as the Jonah scenes later in the manuscript]. Because this blue paint was applied on top of the yellow grass at the center of the hill, consistent with dry spots in August, the wavy spot is of a darker aqua green color than the blue of the streams in the other three miniatures." (Maidie Hilmo, *Medieval Images, Icons, and Illustrated English Literary Texts: From the Ruthwell Cross to the Ellesmere Chaucer* [Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2004], 148).

[314] A. I. Doyle, "The Manuscripts," in David Lawton, ed., *Middle English Alliterative Poetry and Its Literary Background* (Rochester: D. S. Brewer, 1982), 88-100; Kathleen L. Scott, *Later Gothic Manuscripts: 1390-1490*, 2 vols (London: Harvey Miller, 1996), entry 12 in vol.2, pp.66-68.

and appear between the textual entries as well as at the end of *SGGK*, again suggesting a post-production illustration process: two full-page images (one folio front and back) precede *Cleanness*, one half-page and one full-page illustration precede *Patience*, one full-page miniature precedes *SGGK*, and three full-page illustrations close both *SGGK* and the manuscript. Following Scott, Maidie Hilmo argues that the twelve miniatures were added to the manuscript as visual prefaces and epilogues, possibly at the request of the original owner of the manuscript (according to Scott).[315] According to Hilmo, the artist had created a unified visual program for the manuscript, creating a spiritual reading of the texts, particularly making an explicit connection between *Pearl* and *SGGK*, the opening and the closing entries. In her reading, she attaches the apocalyptic nature of *Pearl* to *SGGK*, concluding that:

> By various intervisual references, the miniaturist has transformed the poem's [*SGGK*] romance setting so that the secular court can also be read spiritually with reference to the heavenly one. The ending of the poem hints at such a larger, eschatological framework. It proceeds from secular history to salvation history—from the time of the Passion, when the Lord wore a 'croun of þorne,' to fulfillment in the future when he is asked to 'bryng vus to His blysse.[316]

Pushing Hilmo's observation further, I argue that what we have here is a dual movement of genre cross-borrowing as evidenced in a unified visual program. In *Pearl*, elements of romance attach aristocratic values to a spiritual journey to a very material New Jerusalem; meanwhile, in *SGGK*, the devotional values of confession turn a typical romance quest into an internal penitential journey toward redemption.

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[315] Maidie Hilmo revises some of her earlier findings (published in 2004 in *Medieval Images, Icons, and Illustrated English Literary Texts*) in her 2012 essay. Maidie Hilmo, "The Power of Images in the Auchinleck, Vernon, *Pearl*, and Two *Piers Plowman* Manuscripts," in Kathryn Kerby-Fulton, Maidie Hilmo, and Linda Olson, eds., *Opening Up Middle English Manuscripts: Literary and Visual Approaches* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2012), 153-206, at 173.

[316] Maidie Hilmo, "The Power of Images in the Auchinleck, Vernon, *Pearl*, and Two *Piers Plowman* Manuscripts," 189.

The final stanza of *Pearl* spoken by the father reattributes the language of aristocratic luxury to the Heavenly sphere:

> To pay the Prince other sete saghte,
> Hit is ful ethe to the god Krystyin.
> For I haf founden Hym, bothe day and naghte,
> A God, a Lorde, a frende ful fyin.
> Over this hyul this lote I laghte
> For pyty of my perle enclyin;
> And sythen to God I hit bytaghte
> In Krystes dere blessyng and myn,
> That in the forme of bred and wyn
> The preste uus schewes uch a daye.
> He gef uus to be His homly hyne
> And precious perles unto His pay. (ll.1201-1212)

The "Prince" of the first line of the poem is now an aristocratic title for Christ the Lord, whose pardon can be achieved through penance. The bereaved father has accepted that his daughter's soul now belongs to Christ, whose presence on earth he sees in the Eucharistic Sacrament: in the bread and wine as the body and blood of Christ, physically displayed for the parishioners during the celebration of Mass.[317] As Sarah Stanbury reminds us, in the context of late medieval devotion, "Seeing has the extraordinary and transformative power of witnessing: to look on the beloved, to look on the grail, to see the elevation of the host, to stand face to face with God."[318] This visual experience of the Sacrament is the ultimate metaphor for understanding invisible grace through visible signs. Finally, the speaker invites all his readers into the community of the saved; in this inclusive system of Salvation, all

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[317] See Miri Rubin, *Corpus Christi: The Eucharist in Late Medieval Culture* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

[318] Sarah Stanbury, *The Visual Object of Desire in Late Medieval England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008), 6.

penitent Christians, however humble, have a chance to become precious pearls who serve at the pleasure of their Lord in the Court of Heaven.

Emphasis on material luxury pervades both the form and the content of *Pearl*. As a religious poem, however, its use of luxury to explain the drama of Salvation is perhaps paradoxical. On the one hand, as the Pearl-maiden rightly notes, the Book of Revelation (better known to the aristocratic reader via richly illustrated Apocalypse manuscripts) explains heavenly bliss using the visual vocabulary of luxury. On the other hand, medieval penitential treatises caution against the sin of *Luxuria*, warning the laity that indulging in earthly pleasures that will lead them astray. When we compare *Pearl* to a radically non-materialistic text like the *Parson's Tale*, we can see how both texts participate in the project of teaching the efficacy of penance. The two extremes also tell us something about audience expectations and the status of narrative enjoyment. Although Langland's *PPl* employs poetic adornment like alliteration in a more rigorous way than *Pearl*, the discontinuous structure of the poem resists narrative closure. When we further contextualize these literary texts within non-literary structures of penitential learning like the diagrams, we begin to appreciate the role of narrative closure as a conduit for pedagogical content. Quite tellingly, the Vernon *Pater Noster* diagram constitutes the highest level of ornamentation in the Vernon manuscript, using visual aspects of luxury for didactic purposes. The combination of narrative closure through emotional and material adornment and the idealizing functions of luxury in *Pearl* brings the poem into the realm of romance aesthetics. *Pearl* as a romance-adjacent text becomes a luxury object that pleases princes.

CHAPTER 4
'ROMANZ REDING ON THE BOK':
THE AESTHETICS OF A ROMANCE ENCOUNTER

Readerly encounter with fiction, particularly with romance, and the types of aesthetic pleasures the encounter engenders is the subject of this chapter. Its title comes from *Havelok the Dane*, a late thirteenth-century romance, the Middle English instantiation of which occurs in a single fourteenth-century manuscript, Oxford, Bodleian MS Laud Misc. 108.[319] After numerous trials and tribulations, the titular hero is restored to his kingly status. At his coronation, his royal body is clothed in the proper garments, and the royal court rejoices and celebrates by engaging in aristocratic pastimes. Among these are traditional sporting and jousting events, elaborate feasts that last for several days with food and wine generously flowing, music, singing, and the reading of romance:

> Hwan he was king, ther mouthe men se
> The moste joye that mouhte be -
> Buttinge with sharpe speres,
> Skirming with talevaces that men beres,
> Wrastling with laddes, putting of ston,
> Harping and piping, ful god won,
> Leyk of mine, of hasard ok,
> Romanz reding on the bok.
> Ther mouthe men here the gestes singe,
> The glewmen on the tabour dinge. (ll.2320-2329)

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[319] Ronald B. Herzman, Graham Drake, Eve Salisbury, eds., *Four Romances of England: King Horn, Havelok the Dane, Bevis of Hampton, Athelston* TEAMS Middle English Text Series (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 1997). Electronic TEAMS edition of *Havelok the Dane* is available at <http://d.lib.rochester.edu/teams/text/salisbury-four-romances-of-england-havelok-the-dane>.

While most of these activities can be found in other romances that detail courtly celebrations, 'Romanz reding on the bok' appears to be this poet's original addition. This line is fraught with generic, linguistic, and codicological assumptions. 'Romanz' as a genre is presented as a readerly form, distinct from 'gestes' that are sung by court performers to musical accompaniment. It may have been read out loud, constituting a form of public aurality that Joyce Coleman explores,[320] but the emphasis is on textual transmission through a written form: a romance is read from a book. 'Romanz' as a linguistic designation, particularly in reference to courtly reading material, generally signals French or Anglo-Norman texts. As a feature of a Middle English romance, 'romanz' points to alternate literacies with which the Anglophone reader would have varying degrees of familiarity. Included in this long list of pleasurable aristocratic pastimes, the reading of romance becomes a marker of happiness and a celebration of status at the same time. Having changed his clothes and his station, Havelok is ready to engage with and display all things courtly, including reading (or listening to) books of romance. And his book, like his armor, may be imagined as a luxury object.

In a self-deprecating disavowal of his past scholarship on Middle English popular romance, Derek Pearsall seeks value in these texts beyond 'literariness.' Responding directly to criticism from those he recognizes as the next generation of scholars, Pearsall provides an extended meditation on why he keeps turning and returning to romance:

> The truth is that whenever I find myself reading one of these romances, usually to remind myself what it is about, I always seem to enjoy myself and—the most telling evidence of absorption—stop watching the line-numbers. It is possible to detect this realisation of the pleasure to be taken in

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[320] Joyce Coleman, *Public Reading and the Reading Public in Late Medieval England and France* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

romance—its liveliness and brisk pace and sheer appetite for narrative. […] The reasons for this enjoyment are the 'wrong' reasons, according to the usual critical canons. Where I should be demanding originality, sharpness of detail and striking language, I am delighting in the repetition of old plots, repetition of conventional descriptions, repetition of conventional phrases and images. …Repetition of motifs, a common stock of language and metaphor and incident, fast pace, predictable outcome, are what is to be enjoyed in medieval popular romance—anathema to any form of post-medieval aesthetic. The romances do not require the reader (or listener) to dwell on words or images or narrative singularities, where language crystallises into the thing in itself and achieves that magic of non-transparency that is called 'literariness'. Romance is transparent and has no design on us but that we should be absorbed and take pleasure in the stories.[321]

In his delineation of the pleasures of romance, Pearsall admits to enjoying romance literature despite its lack of 'literariness'. All the narrative features that he once eviscerated with hefty doses of opprobrium he now describes as the 'delight' of romance, as the constitutive parts of narrative pleasure. There is a certain undercurrent of seduction in Pearsall's reversal and sudden embrace of romance. It is as if he has succumbed to its spell. Romance, like a medieval temptress, has lured the literary critic into abandoning his quest for 'literariness' and indulging in the familiar pleasures of conventional plots.

Immensely popular and highly derided, both by medieval and modern critics, romance as a genre has captivated audiences for centuries. Romance enchants, seduces, and ensnares its audience with narratives that envision a world that is at once fantastical and familiar, distant and immediate, impossible and yet full of endless possibilities. In the last twenty years, we have seen a turning of the tide in the scholarship on romance from

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[321] Derek Pearsall, "The Pleasure of Popular Romance: A Prefatory Essay," in Rhiannon Purdie and Michael Cichon, eds., *Medieval Romance, Medieval Contexts* (Rochester, NY: D. S. Brewer, 2011), 9-18, at 11.

criticism,[322] to polemical defense,[323] to sustained engagements with romance in its many forms.[324] Romance scholars have attempted to rehabilitate the reputation of romance, exploring specific romance conventions—such as the quest and venturing out into the unknown, love and desire, learning and chivalry—that persist from the medieval period to the present day,[325] attempting to identify what exactly makes romance so appealing. Romance is notoriously slippery and difficult to define, and its appeal is even harder still to isolate and identify. What follows is not by any means a definitive statement on romance's popularity or its attractions; it is more of an exploration of romance aesthetics—the surfaces, ornaments, and plots—and the types of pleasure they may offer.

As Mary Carruthers suggests, medieval aesthetic experience is both holistic and multifarious, deriving pleasure simultaneously from multiple bodily senses.[326] Reading involves multiple senses: whether the ear processes an oral recitation, or the eye follows

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[322] For examples of older criticism on Middle English romance, particularly the type of criticism Pearsall is now disavowing, see Derek Pearsall, "The Development of Middle English Romance," *Medieval Studies* 27 (1965): 91-116. For comparative studies in which Middle English romances come out as inferior to Anglo-Norman examples, see Susan Crane, *Insular Romance: Politics, Faith, and Culture in Anglo-Norman and Middle English Literature* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986); W. R. J. Barron, *English Medieval Romance* (New York: Longman, 1987).

[323] Ad Putter and Jane Gilbert, eds., *The Spirit of Medieval English Popular Romance* (New York: Longman, 2000), introduction by the editors, 1–38; Nicola McDonald, ed., *Pulp Fictions of Medieval England: Essays in Popular Romance* (New York: Manchester University Press, 2004), Nicola McDonald, "A Polemical Introduction," 1-21; Raluca L. Radulescu and Cory James Rushton, eds., *A Companion to Medieval Popular Romance* (Rochester, NY: D. S. Brewer, 2009), Cory Rushton, "Modern and Academic Reception of the Popular Romance," 165-180.

[324] Geraldine Heng, *Empire of Magic: Medieval Romance and the Politics of Cultural Fantasy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003); Robert Allen Rouse, *The Idea of Anglo-Saxon England in Middle English Romance* (Rochester, NY: D. S. Brewer, 2005); Rhiannon Purdie, *Anglicising Romance: Tail-Rhyme and Genre in Medieval English Literature* (Rochester, NY: D. S. Brewer, 2008); Melissa M. Furrow, *Expectations of Romance: the Reception of a Genre in Medieval England* (Rochester, NY: D.S. Brewer, 2009); Corinne J. Saunders, *Magic and the Supernatural in Medieval English Romance* (Rochester, NY: D. S. Brewer, 2010); Linda Marie Zaerr, *Performance and the Middle English Romance* (Rochester, NY: D. S. Brewer, 2012); Dominique Battles, *Cultural Difference and Material Culture in Middle English Romance: Normans and Saxons* (New York : Routledge, 2013); Raluca Radulescu, *Romance and its Contexts in Fifteenth-Century England: Politics, Piety and Penitence* (Rochester, NY: D. S. Brewer, 2013); Michael Johnston, *Romance and the Gentry in Late Medieval England* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014); Megan G. Leitch, *Romancing Treason: The Literature of the Wars of the Roses* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015); Jamie McKinstry, *Middle English Romance and the Craft of Memory* (Rochester, NY: D.S. Brewer, 2015).

[325] Helen Cooper, *The English Romance in Time: Transforming Motifs from Geoffrey of Monmouth to the Death of Shakespeare* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004).

[326] Mary Carruthers, *The Experience of Beauty in the Middle Ages* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 47.

marks on the page, or the finger touches the reading surface, the physical act of reading romance is multi-sensual. Moreover, the internal temporality of romance as 'still time' combined with the external expectation of 'leisure time,' or *otium*, required for secular pleasure reading contribute to the perceived decadence in romance enjoyment, turning literary pleasure into a luxury experience. Romance pleasure is also cumulative. Through a self-conscious repetition of plot elements and devices, or what Cooper calls narrative memes, romance envisions a reader steeped in the genre's conventions.[327] The experience of reading romance, therefore, hinges on the associative pleasure of simultaneously engaging with multiple stories. The more we read romance, the more familiar we become with the conventions of the genre, the more pleasure we derive from knowing how certain tropes—like the exiled and returned king, or the calumniated wife set adrift in a rudderless boat—play out, not just in the current text, but in other texts previously read. This cumulative knowledge governs affective responses, creating emotional communities that share particular values (here, specifically romance values), and like any genre manages expectations. Romance as a genre delights in its ability to both meet and subvert expectations, offering both similarity and difference as sites (and often sights) of narrative pleasure. To read romance is to read intertextually, to share in its 'appetite for narrative,' to seek out more stories. This pleasure is in no way transparent to a novice, for it presupposes one's membership in the emotional community of romance readers and achieves 'literariness' as an aesthetic value in the aggregate.

In Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde*, Pandarus and Troilus engage in the emotional community of romance; yet, they ultimately cannot dwell within it. Pandarus in particular

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[327] This cultural knowledge of romance is a crucial component of Susan Wittig's argument as well in *Stylistic and Narrative Structures in Middle English Romances* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1978).

comes across as a connoisseur of romance, able to script and rework romance tropes to gratify his own vicarious pleasures, staging and interrupting scenes of romance and romance reading to his own ends. Troilus starts out as a detractor of all things amatory, whose punishment from the god of love is to be thrust into a courtly romance. As a novice to this emotional community, Troilus over-indulges in the aesthetic pleasures of love, its pleasurable pains, and its ecstatic delights. The two men endeavor to play at courtly love, casting—and eventually discarding—Criseyde as the romance heroine. Neither Troilus nor Criseyde are fit to be romance protagonists but, mediated by Pandarus and his sexual schemes, they indulge in an ill-fated courtship—a play at romance. This intra-diegetic staging of love and courtship in the faulty guise of forbidden romance proves untenable and devolves into tragedy. On the level of form, Chaucer is experimenting with the capabilities of romance as a genre. Ultimately finding it wanting, he pushes beyond the boundaries of the genre, collapsing it upon itself.

In this chapter, I lay out the expectations of medieval imaginative fiction as explained in arts of poetry and the medieval commentary tradition, positioning their apprehension towards the delight of surfaces—literary ornaments and plots—in direct contradiction with the claims medieval romancers make regarding the purpose of their work. I recognize that my reading of the medieval texts, both the imaginative and the scholarly, is by necessity informed by modern understanding of aesthetics. However, what I elucidate in the slippage between prescription, criticism, and literary practice is the idea of the aesthetic—a preoccupation with surfaces, conventions, and the boundaries of the perceivable and the experiential. To that end, I contrast the collapsing and self-consciously artful Chaucerian romance of Troilus and Criseyde with the Middle English *Emaré*, in which romance reading

is thematized as a corrective to the corrupt and unreliable nature of textual transmission. In the anonymous fifteenth-century Breton lay, a papal bull proves to be a political ploy rather than a testament of moral authority, as it legitimizes a father's incestuous feelings toward his daughter; and, subsequently, two written letters are easily replaced with false missives from an evil mother-in-law. These two forms of legible textual authority attempt to subvert justice and imperil the eponymous heroine. Standing in direct opposition to this textual tradition, and wearing a dazzling robe, decorated with precious stones and embroidered with emblematic lovers of romance, Emaré becomes a hermeneutic puzzle, whose identity is hidden beneath the *involucrum*, or the 'veil', of romance. The aesthetic encounter with Emaré, clad in a robe of romance, astonishes onlookers as her garment refuses sight through its multiple reflective surfaces, while simultaneously teaching others the lessons of fidelity and proper love. At the same time, the revelations of identity are staged as a literalization of hermeneutic practice—the process of stripping away surface layers of romance, of *integumentum*, to reveal the noble body beneath the clothing.

By bringing in to productive conversation a highbrow 'literary' text and a Breton lay (of a story-type most certainly familiar to Chaucer), I assess the aesthetic encounter both within and with romance, its pleasures and its disavowals, all of which are predicated on an intertextual familiarity with the corpus of romance. The aesthetic encounter is not coterminous with luxury or pleasure, although all three terms are key concepts at play here. The aesthetic encounter is a border touching, a confrontation with a work of art that is first apprehended through the senses. Neither is the aesthetic coterminous with the beautiful, although the human experience of both involves an aesthetic judgment. It is a state of apprehension and recognition followed by an emotive response. Within romance, the

aesthetic encounter often inspires a sense of wonder, while the aesthetic encounter with romance elicits certain kinds of pleasures, including the delights of surfaces, of viewing romance as an art object, and the vicarious pleasures of narrative. As a feature of both its internal worlds and its physical media, luxury gives us a sense of how romance mediates the aesthetic encounter, while constructing aristocratic ideals and celebrating earthly pleasures. Modern critics like Rosalind Field identify narrative pleasure as a definitive feature of romance: "The lure of romance is primarily the lure of the story and secondarily of the exotic setting or enviable achievement it describes. It is entertainment for an audience."[328] Medieval commentators, however, approached the topic of aesthetic enjoyment derived from fiction with hesitation.

While the classical and medieval arts of poetry elucidate readerly pleasures from the point of view of advice to writers, twentieth-century reader-response criticism circumvents the author and directly addresses reader expectations and experience. In *The Pleasure of the Text*, Roland Barthes explores this narratological concept of pleasure in fiction, claiming that a reader derives pleasure from the narrative by assuming control over the way the text is consumed. As Barthes claims, "it is the very rhythm of what is read and what is not read that creates the pleasure of the great narratives."[329] The very ability to turn pages, skip forward or backward—in other words, the open-endedness of the reading process—all contribute to the pleasure of engaging with a work of fiction. Joyce Coleman applies this concept of readerly autonomy to her analysis of romance reading as a recreational public activity and a courtly pastime. Coleman suggests that "Romances seem […] to attract some private but

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[328] Rosalind Field, "Romance in England, 1066-1400," in David Wallace, ed., *The Cambridge History of Medieval English Literature* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 152-176, at 152-153.

[329] Roland Barthes, *The Pleasure of the Text*, trans. Richard Miller (New York: Hill and Wang, 1975), 10.

mostly public readings…Romance seems to go with an atmosphere of relaxation; it offered interesting narrative relieved of the intensity of the love poem or the truth claims of history."[330] Although I disagree with Coleman on the last claim—I find that many romances excel at building intensity of feeling, while many more have been derided by moralists for their often-outrageous truth claims[331]—I agree that the episodic structure of romance lends itself to discontinuous reading, which can be shared with a group of listeners over a period of time. The episodic structure invites the kinds of readerly pleasures invoked by Barthes in that a reader may skip around from one set piece to the next; conversely, the paratactic structure of the episodes offers brief orientation in temporal progression within an otherwise atemporal romance text with conjunctive adverbs that indicate a relational sequence of events (eg., 'then', 'meanwhile', 'after'). Coleman further posits that nightly readings of romances must have been an especially enjoyable activity if, for example, Gaston de Foix was happy to spend every evening for ten weeks listening to Froissart's reading of *Meliador*.[332]

The Pleasure in Surfaces: the Delight of Medieval Imaginative Poetry

In his *Ars poetica* Horace addresses the dual aims of poetry: to instruct (*prodesse*) and to please (*delectare*). Horace writes:

> Aut prodesse volunt aut delectare poetae
> aut simul et iucunda et idonea dicere vitae.
> quidquid praecipies, esto brevis, ut cito dicta
> percipiant animi dociles teneant que fideles.

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[330] Joyce Coleman, *Public Reading and the Reading Public*, 112.
[331] Romancers build an air of authenticity by claiming that they found other such accounts in oral or written form. This cumulative knowledge of romance—other people know this story—serves as corroborative evidence for any given instantiation of the story.
[332] Joyce Coleman, *Public Reading and the Reading Public*, 112-13.

omne supervacuum pleno de pectore manat.

ficta voluptatis causa sint proxima veris:

ne quodcumque velit poscat sibi fabula credi,

neu pransae Lamiae vivum puerum extrahat alvo.

centuriae seniorum agitant expertia frugis,

celsi praetereunt austera poemata Ramnes.

omne tulit punctum qui miscuit utile dulci,

lectorem delectando pariter que monendo. (ll.333-44)[333]

[Poets aim either to benefit, or to amuse, or to utter words at once both pleasing and helpful to life. Whenever you instruct, be brief, so that what is quickly said the mind may readily grasp and faithfully hold: every word in excess flows away from the full mind. Fictions meant to please should be close to the real, so that your play must not ask for belief in anything it chooses, nor from the Ogress's belly, after dinner, draw forth a living child. The centuries of the elders chase from the stage what is profitless; the proud Ramnes disdain poems devoid of charms. He has won every vote who has blended profit and pleasure, at once delighting and instructing the reader.] (ll.333-344)[334]

Horace praises both instruction and delight as a site of literary pleasure, urging a balance between the two impulses of fiction. Too much instruction runs the risk of boring the reader, while too much emphasis on the truly fantastical would stretch the limits of imagination. He recommends that fiction, in order to be believable, provide access points of real world experience, a dose of what we would call verisimilitude today. While medieval romance relishes in enumerating marvels and encounters with wonders, the genre's commitment to these fantastical elements has domesticated them, creating new horizons of expectations for what is believable.[335] At the same time, romance wonders are connected to the world because they are mediated through a human character who encounters them, and

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[333] Q. Horatius Flaccus - De arte poetica (epistula ad Pisones) (LLA 234) versus: 333 (pag.: 323), The Library of Latin Texts - Series A, available online at <http://www.brepolis.net>.

[334] Horace, *Ars poetica*, in H. Rushton Fairclough, ed. and trans., *Horace, Satires, Epistles, The Art of Poetry*, LOEB Classical Library Vol 194 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1966), 442-490, at 479.

[335] Romance conventions allow for a human knight to defeat a giant or a dragon with nothing more than a sword and a steadfast belief that the hero stands on the side of right.

are thus knowable to the limits of human knowledge.[336] The fantastical luxury objects introduced into romance via literary ekphrasis—such as Erec's robe or Gawain's shield—cause amazement in readers; but their status as usable physical objects, often explained through the technique of literal ekphrasis that describes in detail the making process, returns them safely to the realm of the perceptible and the experiential.[337]

Rather than focusing on striking a balance between the two, as Horace urges his readers, medieval commentators attempted to separate the two aims of poetry/fiction, relegating pleasure (*delectatio*) to the surface level of the plot and literary ornament and praising a work's deeper spiritual meaning as the profit (*prodesse*) of fiction. For example, in his twelfth-century commentary on the *Aeneid*, Bernardus Silvestris praises Virgil's superb command of rhetorical ornaments in the construction of the fictional world, but focuses his attentions on elucidating the philosophical meaning of the epic. The latter comes as a result of the hermeneutic process, which reveals the hidden layer beneath the *integumentum* of fiction. As Rita Copeland explains, "By reading the narrative as an *integumentum*, as a 'veil' or 'wrapping' for a philosophical truth, the interpreter supplies an ulterior structure of meaning which can be exposed or discovered through a rehearsal of all the narrative particulars."[338] And that is precisely where Bernardus locates his authority as a commentator. Thus, Virgil's *Aeneid*, according to Bernardus, manages to achieve both goals: to please (*delectare*) through masterful use of surface ornaments and superb ordering of plot, and to instruct (*prodesse*). As such, the *Aeneid* provides the best example for poets, for the pleasure it provides is multi-fold: it delights through surface ornaments, it encourages hermeneutic reading practices,

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[336] Caroline Walker Bynum, "Wonder," in *Metamorphosis and Identity* (New York: Zone Books, 2005), 37-75.

[337] See chapter one on medieval ekphrasis for a more detailed discussion.

[338] Rita Copeland, *Rhetoric, Hermeneutics, and Translation in the Middle Ages: Academic Traditions and Vernacular Texts* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 81.

which are pleasurable in the way puzzle-solving is pleasurable, and it teaches moral lessons, which are pleasurable to the soul.

Going beyond these critical commonplaces, Glending Olson provides literary and medical evidence to argue that "literature for pleasure [*cause delectandi*] rather than profit [*prodesse, edificare*] was acknowledged, if not venerated, in the Middle Ages."[339] Olson outlines medieval defenses of literary pleasure as contributing "to physical or mental well-being and hence to one's capacity for activities more directly related to one's final end."[340] Thus, even literature that served no other purpose than enjoyment could be deployed toward a spiritual benefit. Literature could be used to improve one's spirits, or to restore humoral balance, and as a result help orient a person toward thoughts and actions that matter to one's spiritual well-being.

Gottfried von Strassburg provides us with a perfect example of how these dual aims of *delectare* and *prodesse* operate within vernacular romance. In his prologue to *Tristan*, Gottfried claims he has set out to do both, to please and to instruct, but most importantly to provide solace to those in emotional distress due to love:

> Thus I have undertaken a labour to please the polite world and solace noble hearts—those hearts which I hold in affection, that world which lies open to my heart. I do not mean the world of the many who (as I hear) are unable to endure sorrow and wish only to revel in bliss. (Please God to let them live in their bliss!) What I have to say does not concern that world and such a way of life; their way and mine diverge sharply. I have another world in mind which together in one heart bears its bitter-sweet, its dear sorrow, its heart's joy, its love's pain, its dear life, its sorrowful death, its dear death, its sorrowful life. To this life let my life be given, of this world let me be part, to be damned or saved with it. I have kept with it so far and with it have spent the days that were to bring me counsel and guidance through a life which has

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[339] Glending Olson, *Literature as Recreation in the Later Middle Ages* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1982), 31.
[340] Glending Olson, *Literature as Recreation in the Later Middle Ages*, 38.

moved me profoundly. I have offered the fruits of my labour to this world as a pastime, so that with my story its denizens can bring their keen sorrow half-way to alleviation and thus abate their anguish. For if we have something before us to occupy our thoughts it frees our unquiet soul and eases our hearts of its cares.[341]

Gottfried envisions specifically romance-related definitions of pleasure and sorrow as they are related to love. He addresses his romance to an audience fully knowledgeable of the intricacies of love and its attendant emotions. He purposefully dismisses those who only know happiness, for his tale can only describe pleasure together with its polar opposite, sorrow. The two are intricately linked in his tale, as well as in the hearts and minds of his target emotional community. The emotional extremes of joy and pain form the core of his romance, and those unwilling (or unprepared) to read about (and vicariously experience) both at the same time are explicitly excluded from his imagined audience. Only those initiated in the pains and pleasures of love will find delight in his poem (or will be pleased by it). He then offers one of his many truisms: that a sad heart with too much leisure will brood upon the sadness. To ease such heartache, he proffers his romance as a distraction, the reading of which will fill the hours of leisure time and serve as a much needed balm to the soul. Notably, the colophon to the surviving fragments of Thomas of Britain's *Tristran* provides a similar explanation of poetic intent: "Here I have recounted the story in rhyme, and have done this to hold up an example, and to make this story more beautiful, so that it may please lovers, and that, here and there, they may find some things to take to heart. May they derive great comfort from it, in the face of fickleness and injury, in the face of hardship

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[341] Gottfried von Strassburg, *Tristan*, in A. T. Hatto, trans., *Gottfried von Strassburg Tristan Translated Entire for the First Time with the Surviving Fragments of the Tristran of Thomas* (New York: Penguin Books, 2004), 40-297, at 42. All translations are cited by page number from this edition. For the Middle High German text, see Herausgegeben von Walter Haug und Manfred Günter Scholz, eds., Gottfried von Strassburg, *Tristan und Isold*, Band I, Bibliothek des Mittelalters (Berlin: Deutcher Klassiker Verlag, 2011), ll.45-80.

and grief, in the face of all the wiles of Love."[342] Presented in this way, both Thomas' and Gottfried's romances endeavor to do both—to please its audience of lovers (and lovers of romance) and to be useful to them as a pleasurable pastime that distracts them from personal heartaches.

Medieval texts achieve *delectatio* through formal features—such as rhyme, meter, and use of rhetorical devices—as well as through carefully crafted plot. Matthew of Vendôme compares verbal ornament with material objects, claiming that both lead to a more welcoming reception from a 'pleased audience':

> Ex superficiali ornatu est elegantia in versibus, quando ex verborum festivitate contrahit versus solemnitatem vel venustatem etsibi amicat audientiam […] Et sicut in constitutione rei materialis ex appositione alicujus margarite totum materiatum elegantius elucescit, sic sunt quedam dictiones que sunt.

> [Elegance in verses is derived from the surface of ornament of words when the verse draws its beauty from the charm of its words and makes friend for itself of a more pleased audience. […] Indeed, as in the forming of a material object the whole material shines more beautifully because of the close positioning of some pearl or inlay; similarly, there are some expressions

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[342] Thomas of Britain, *Tristran*, in A. T. Hatto, trans., *Gottfried von Strassburg Tristan Translated Entire for the First Time with the Surviving Fragments of the Tristran of Thomas* (New York: Penguin Books, 2004), 301-353, at 353. All translations are cited by page number from this edition.
E diz e vers i ai retrait:
Pur essamplë issi ai fait
Pur l'estorië embelir
Quë as amanz deive plaisir,
E que par lieus poissent troveir
Chose u se puissent recorder.
Aveir em poissent grant confort
Encuntre change, encontre tort,
Encuntre painë e dolur,
Encuntre taiz engins d'amur! (ll.3134-3143)
Stewart Gregory, ed. and trans., Thomas [of Britain], *Tristran*, in Norris J. Lacy, ed., *Early French Tristan Poems*, vol. 2 (Rochester, NY: D. S. Brewer, 1998), 14-145. All references to the Anglo-Norman text of Thomas of Britain are cited by line number from this edition.

which are, as it were, substitutes for jewels; from skillful positioning of these the whole meter will seem to be celebrating.][343]

Such treatises on poetry address the surface level as something that requires craft rather than something that needs discarding as we previously saw with commentators like Bernardus. Elegance comes from balance and clever use of ornaments, while measured use of figures and tropes creates an additional polish to the poetic composition. The overall pacing of the narrative, the unfolding of the plot, and the fictive elements of the story, provide pleasure to the audience.

Aesthetic Pleasures of Romance: Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde*

Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde* resists external generic categorizations, while simultaneously thematizing genre encounters.[344] In the famous envoi, the Chaucerian narrator categorizes his work as a tragedy—"Go, litel book, go, litel myn tragedye" (V.1786)—and situates himself within a literary genealogy of classical epic poets—"Virgile, Ovide, Omer, Lucan, and Stace" (V.1792).[345] These epic poets also figure as writers of history, a genre with which the Chaucerian narrator struggles as he purportedly translates an ancient story by Lollius with a special focus on love rather than war. The opening lines of *Troilus and Criseyde* adhere

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[343] Matthew of Vendôme, *Ars Versificatoria*, in Edmond Faral, ed., *Les Arts poétiques du XIIe et du XIIIe siècle: recherches et documents sur la technique littéraire du Moyen Âge* (Paris: Champion, 1924, 1958), 109-193; Matthew of Vendôme, *Ars Versificatoria*, trans. Roger P. Parr (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1981), 64.

[344] Much has been written concerning genre in *Troilus and Criseyde*, and my reading of it is not going to rehash those debates. Most recently, David Wallace has observed that "popular romance elements remain in his [Chaucer's] *Troilus and Criseyde*: there are tags such as 'eyen tweyne' (IV.129, 314, 748) and 'armes two' (IV.911, 1219); and his heroine's name conveniently rhymes with *seyde*." (David Wallace, "Changing Emotions in *Troilus*: the Crucial Year," in Andrew James Johnston, Russell West-Pavlov, and Elisabeth Kempf, eds., *Love, History and Emotion in Chaucer and Shakespeare:* Troilus and Criseyde *and* Troilus and Cressida [New York: Manchester University Press, 2016], 157-171, at 158).

[345] All quotations from *Troilus and Criseyde* are taken from *The Riverside Chaucer*, ed. Larry D. Benson, 3rd edn., (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1987), 473-585.

to the amatory focus of its narrator/translator in stressing distinctly romance values, emphasizing the hero's emotional experience, "The double sorwe of Troilus to tellen" (I.1), and mapping the hero's plight onto a distinctly romance trajectory of love and adventure, "In lovyinge, how his aventures fellen/ Fro wo to wele, and after out of joie" (I.3-4). Self-consciously invoking these contradictory generic categories of tragedy, history, and romance while also pitting them against each other, Chaucer constructs a doomed romance against a pseudo-historical backdrop of the Trojan War. Taking up the Chaucerian narrator's invitation to read the poem as a tale of doomed love, I read it as a romance by reading it associatively with another medieval tale of woe, the romance of *Tristan and Isolde*.[346] This is in no way a definitive reading of either Chaucer or *Tristan*; neither is it an argument for *Tristan* as a source, the way Boccaccio's *Il Filostrato* is a source. Instead, my reading of *Troilus and Criseyde* alongside *Tristan and Isolde* serves as an example of the types of narrative pleasures offered through cumulative reading of romance texts, predicated on an amalgamated knowledge of the romance corpus.

Romance reading with its multiple intertexts is expressly staged in Book II of *Troilus and Criseyde*. When Pandarus first approaches Criseyde, she is in a circle of ladies, gathered together to listen to a romance being read aloud:

> Whan he was come unto his neces place,
> 'Wher is my lady?' to hire folk quod he;
> And they hym tolde, and he forth in gan pace,
> And fond two othere ladys sete, and she,
> Withinne a paved parlour, and they thre
> Herden a mayden reden hem the geste
> Of the siege of Thebes, while hem leste. (II.78-84)

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[346] Following critical convention, I turn to Gottfried von Strassburg's Middle High German *Tristan* as an approximation of the version that circulated in England by Thomas of Britain, which survives in fragmentary form.

This feminine space is punctured by masculine incursions. Firstly, Pandarus demands entry through a claim of kinship, with the space being labeled as belonging to his niece. However, he must ask for directions and ascertain identities as he navigates this palace with its parlors and gardens set up for and occupied by ladies. Secondly, we have a tale of masculine prowess, 'the geste/ Of the siege of Thebes,' being read out loud. Modern scholars have not reached a consensus on whether this reading material is Statius' *Thebaid* or a vernacular treatment of it like *Roman de Thebes*, or whether Criseyde and her ladies ever had the chance to finish their reading.[347] Yet, the exact nature of the text being read aloud is not as important as its presentation within the narrative. The narrator labels their reading material a 'geste'—a genre closer to epic than romance. Criseyde's first words in the poem, however, contradict this generic label: "This romaunce is of Thebes that we rede" (II.100). Criseyde categorizes the text as a romance and then provides Pandarus with a brief overview of the parts that they have already heard: about the deaths of King Laius, his son Oedipus, and Amphiaurus. So while the generic marker may have shifted, the content remains unequivocally masculine: it recounts the violent deeds of men during the siege and battle of Thebes.

And yet Criseyde and her ladies find the subject pleasurable. The narrator insists on their choice of reading matter: 'while hem leste' implies that if they do not like it, or if they

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[347] Most recently, Andrew James Johnston has argued that recursive reading practices invited by romance as literature of entertainment does not preclude Criseyde's having read or heard the text on previous occasions, "Gendered Books: Reading, Space and Intimacy in Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde*," in *Love, History and Emotion in Chaucer and Shakespeare* (New York: Manchester University Press, 2016), 172-188; Marilynn Desmond, "History and Fiction: the Narrativity and Historiography of the Matter of Troy," in William Burgwinkle, Nicholas Hammond, and Emma Wilson, eds., *The Cambridge History of French Literature* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 139-44; Sylvia Federico, *New Troy: Fantasies of Empire in the Late Middle Ages* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003); Catherine Sanok, "Criseyde, Cassandre, and the *Thebaid*: Women and the Theban Subtext of Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde*," *Studies in the Age of Chaucer* 20 (1998): 41–71; Barbara Nolan, *Chaucer and the Tradition of the 'Roman Antique'* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992); Carolyn Dinshaw, *Chaucer's Sexual Poetics* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1989); Paul Strohm, "Storie, spelle, geste, romaunce, tragedie: Generic Distinctions in the Middle English Troy Narratives," *Speculum* 46 (1971): 348–59.

get bored with it, they are free to stop and change the text or the activity altogether. Coleman reads this scene as a miniature court performing aristocratic pastimes, which includes prelection, or reading out loud for a group of engaged listeners: "the entire scene breathes elegance and refinement; this is a court (a small one) *being* a court—sharing a pleasurable activity in a way that unites the members while it entertains them."[348] This shared reading experience is one of many courtly activities in which Criseyde's ladies are engaged. They are not quite as rambunctious as the sporting events included in the *Havelok* list above, which also points toward a gendered activity and space.

Pandarus intrudes upon their shared experience to redirect Criseyde's attention to another romance, one that he has scripted for her. But in order to do so, he must extricate Criseyde not only from her reading activity, but also from the groups of ladies that surround her. He takes her summary of the book as an invitation to join her in a circle where she is in charge—it is her parlor, after all—and declines, claiming preexisting knowledge of all twelve books: "Quod Pandarus, 'Al this knowe I myselve,/ And al th'assege of Thebes and the care;/ For herof ben ther maked bookes twelve" (II.106-108). Critics have taken these lines as demonstrative of Pandarus' varying degrees of literacy; he either takes umbrage and claims knowledge of the Latin *Thebaid*, which he considers to be a better authority on the subject, or he is threatened by the literate ladies and only refers to the physical form of Statius' text, which remains closed to him. Carolyn Dinshaw presents this interaction as a perfect example of Pandarus reading like a man, with little to no regard for detail but with an eye to a hegemonic master narrative, in direct opposition to Criseyde reading like a woman, attending to every word and detail. Dinshaw argues, "To 'read like a man' in this poem is to impose a

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[348] Joyce Coleman, *Public Reading and the Reading Public*, 165.

structure that resolves or occludes contradictions and disorder, fulfills the need for wholeness. It is to constrain, control, or eliminate outright the feminine—carnal love, the letter of the text—in order to provide a single, solid, univalent meaning firmly fixed in a hierarchical moral structure."[349] Pandarus' insistence on the complete set of twelve books betrays this need for order, for narrative control.[350]

Pandarus' unceremonious dismissal of the ladies' choice of pastime is followed by several requests that would privilege his pleasure over theirs:

> But lat be this, and telle me how ye fare.
> Do wey your barbe, and shewe your face bare;
> Do wey your book, rys up, and lat us daunce,
> And lat us don to May som observaunce. (II.109-112)

His multiple requests, hidden under the guise of May observance, involve not only a change of activity from reading to dancing, but also a change of attire and physical configuration of the scene. While sitting down and reading, the ladies constitute an integral whole; in fact, the narrator is having trouble counting all the women in the room because of their joined activity. A dismissal of the book is a dismissal of the ladies other than Criseyde, creating a new grouping that includes Pandarus and his niece dancing together. He also asks her to put away her widow's 'barbe,' a veil or a wimple that covers her face.

The request startles Criseyde. She responds with an insistence on her social position as a widow and the types of behaviors that would be more appropriate: "It sate me wel bet

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[349] Carolyn Dinshaw, *Chaucer's Sexual Poetics*, 51.

[350] To this reading, I would add a distinctly modern view of gendered discourse: Pandarus 'mansplains' Criseyde's reading material to her, usurping control over its interpretation, and effectively foreclosing her further engagement with the text. Rebecca Solnit, "Men Explain Things to Me" *Los Angeles Times* (13 April 2008), available online at <http://articles.latimes.com/2008/apr/13/opinion/op-solnit13>; Rebecca Solnit, *Men Explain Things to Me* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2015, updated edition); Lily Rothman, "A Cultural History of Mansplaining" *The Atlantic* (1 November 2012), available online at < http://www.theatlantic.com/sexes/archive/2012/11/a-cultural-history-of-mansplaining/264380/>.

ay in a cave/ To bidde and rede on holy seyntes lyves;/ Lat maydens gon to daunce, and yonge wyves" (II.117-19). Criseyde recognizes that as a widow, she really should not be dancing—an activity that she relegates to maidens and newly married women. But at the same time, her reading choice and the way she chooses to engage in it creates a type of courtly sociality that is not entirely appropriate to a widow either. Instead of reading romances with other ladies, she should be reading and meditating upon saints' lives, which encourage a solitary environment and a morality that is more explicitly conducive to mourning. Thus, even before she enters Pandarus' elaborate scheme, Criseyde is already trapped between social expectations and the types of entertainment and sociality she prefers.

The invitation to dance is a clever ploy to change the tone of the scene as well. Whether in epic or romance form, the story of Thebes is not an amorous fiction that leads to thoughts of love and love's pleasures the way a shared reading of Lancelot and Guinevere had led to an adulterous affair between Paulo and Francesca.[351] 'The Siege of Thebes' is a story of war and death, which reminds Criseyde of the war outside the walls of Troy, thus failing in its purpose as escapist fiction. Without recourse to dancing to effect a change in the mood, Pandarus engages Criseyde in pleasurable conversation instead:

> So after this, with many wordes glade,
> And frendly tales, and with merie chiere,
> Of this and that they pleide, and gonnen wade
> In many an uncouth glad and dep matere,
> As frendes doon whan thei ben mette yfere. (II.148-52)

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[351] Dante, *Inferno*, Canto V, ll.127-138: "leggiavamo…per diletto" (V.127)—'pleasure reading' that led them to enact the kiss they were reading about; the book and its author are blamed as go-betweens (V.137), who enabled the adultery. Dante Alighieri, *The Divine Comedy*, trans. with commentary by Charles S. Singleton, *Inferno*, Vol.1 Italian Text and Translation, Bollingen Series 80 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989).

Their conversation takes the shape of narrative exchange, which induces pleasure in the teller and the listener. This sharing of stories constitutes entertainment but also serves as a marker of friendship. The phrase 'they pleide' carries connotations of emotional as well as sexual intimacy, and all the innuendoes of the Middle English verb apply here, for Pandarus takes extreme pleasure in the telling of tales, inclusive of sexual pleasures in the sharing of text—a textual intercourse, if you will. Thus, before he praises Troilus to Criseyde, before he broaches the subject of an amorous liaison between them, Pandarus ensures that Criseyde is in a good mood by immersing her in stories, in 'frendly tales', whose sole purpose is *delectare*.

Carolyn Dinshaw inverts Barthes' theoretical formulations in *Pleasure of the Text* to connect it to Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde*, implicating authorship as a kind of readerly pleasure. She observes that both the narrator and Pandarus find enormous amounts of pleasure not only in reading romance, but also in orchestrating it. Dinshaw focuses on the terminology of poetry-making, such as 'matere,' 'purpos,' and 'werk,' as equally applicable to the narrator figured as romancer and Pandarus as the architect of the central courtship: "Pandarus, in creating his 'werk', is much like a poet creating a text, inventing scenes, planning dialogue, 'shaping'…the plot."[352] For the two romancers, the surface level of the plot, its twists and turns, its expectations and reversals is the thing: "The garb itself—the unfolding of the narrative—is the site of bliss."[353] Carefully conflating Criseyde's widow's garb with the *involucrum* of the fiction, Dinshaw implicates the narrator and Pandarus in an indulgence of surfaces. She argues that the narrator derives pleasure not only from the story he is purportedly translating for us, but also from his own authorial act of translation.[354]

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[352] Carolyn Dinshaw, *Chaucer's Sexual Poetics*, 49.
[353] Carolyn Dinshaw, *Chaucer's Sexual Poetics*, 41.
[354] Carolyn Dinshaw, *Chaucer's Sexual Poetics*, 41.

The narrator is thus both a reader and a writer: he is reading an ancient text by Lollius[355] while writing an English translation. Like Barthes' imagined reader, Dinshaw sees the narrator as taking control over Lollius' text and deriving particular pleasure "in what he doesn't read: with delight he draws attention to what his *auctor* doesn't say."[356] The narrator finds these gaps in knowledge to be both generative and titillating. Although he claims to have no experience in love (much like the narrator/dreamer in *House of Fame* and, indeed, Pandarus), he manages to isolate and put forward an artful love story by privileging the courtship over war, effectively relegating the Trojan War to the status of a historical anchor (or mere backdrop). In fact, in Book I, he briefly mentions historical texts by Homer, Dares, and Dictys (I.146), before dismissing them as irrelevant to his story. The war is kept at bay outside the walls of Troy, while inside his main character Troilus finds time—leisure time, or *otium* to be precise—to indulge in the pleasurable pains of love. War, *geste*, history, and historical time are outside this narrator's purview, while in Books I through III time stretches to allow his characters to play—pleasurably—at romance.

Both the narrator and Troilus find pleasure in indulging in extreme emotions. The narrator opens the poem with notes of sadness:

> The double sorwe of Troilus to tellen,
> That was the kyng Priamus sone of Troye,
> In lovynge, how his aventures fellen
> Fro wo to wele, and after out of joie,
> My purpos is, er that I parte fro ye.
> Thesiphone, thow help me for t'endite
> Thise woful vers, that wepen as I write. (I, 1-7)

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[355] 'Lollius' here is a stand-in for the fourteenth-century Italian text by Boccaccio. Chaucer and his narrator are both readers and translators.

[356] Carolyn Dinshaw, *Chaucer's Sexual Poetics*, 41.

For its fourteenth-century audience, well-versed in romance literature, these emotional extremes of 'wo', 'wele', and 'joie' were familiar tropes. The hyperbole may read as cliché for a modern reader, but it has become so after centuries of indoctrinating audiences into the conventions of a romance community. As we have seen in Gottfried's prologue, romance writers are expecting a certain degree of familiarity with these emotional polarities as parameters within which romance narratives operate and generate pleasure for their readers. Audiences learn how to respond to these emotions through iterative interactions with romance narratives which reinforce these values: the best heroes, such as Tristan and Lancelot, are capable of the finest of emotions (love, love-sickness, sadness, and joy); while the worst villains, such as King Mark and Mordred, are only capable of the base emotions like jealousy and hatred. Playing the romance hero, Troilus spends the majority of Book I relishing the agonies of love. He seeks solitude, beats his heart, writes a love song, pleads with higher powers—in short does everything except talk to Criseyde about his feelings.

Pandarus intrudes upon Troilus' private displays of this pleasurable pain and offers to find a remedy. What we have here is a testing of Ovid's theories in the arts and remedies of love, a common motif in medieval romance, which would resonate with romance enthusiasts: Pandarus promises a lovesick Troilus that a sexual conquest will cure love's afflictions. At the same time, Pandarus administers a psycho-sexual treatment to Troilus via a play at romance. By recreating the pleasures of literary enjoyment, that is, by structuring Troilus' love life along the lines of a forbidden romance, Pandarus endeavors to produce 'gaudium' in his friend, thus bringing him from 'woe' to 'wele'. This production of 'gaudium' is one of the therapeutic benefits of literary pleasures examined by Olson, who concludes that even as medieval moralists condemned fiction for "its moral triviality, they

acknowledge[d] its recreational benefits," for "Fictions bring delight, alleviate tedium and anxiety, and induce joy."[357] By orchestrating a pleasurable diversion for Troilus based on romance rules and conventions, Pandarus is enacting the therapeutic utility of fiction, improving his friend's spirits and saving his soul from the depths of despair.

Just as Chaucer builds up Troilus into a romance hero using tropes of love-sickness, his description of Criseyde is a clever play on traditional romance *effictio*. She is introduced as the daughter of the traitor Calkas, who has fled the city of Troy. Yes, she is beautiful, angelic even. But like a star come down from heaven, she is a stranger among them, who needs Hector's royal protection if she is to remain in Troy. Her father's treason clings to her like clothing, the two descriptors linked together via end rhyme: "Hire fadres shame, his falsnesse and tresoun" echoes the description of Criseyde's attire "In widewes habit large of samyt broun" (I.107, 109). Her simple black garment is a sign of mourning that should preclude her from Troilus' amorous attentions. Hector responds properly to Criseyde's pleas and physical appearance by showing pity to the widow and granting her freedom of the city.

It is almost as if Criseyde becomes the object of Troilus' desire not because of her appearance, as is generally true of romance, but in spite of it ('but natheles' I.170); and, the traditional interior qualities are ascribed to Criseyde despite the non-traditional *effictio*. Hector's brother Troilus searches the crowds with licentious eyes and instead of seeing a widow in need of protection, he sees an object of lust:

> Among thise othere folk was Criseyda,
> In widewes habit blak; but natheles,
> Right as our first lettre is now an A,
> In beaute first so stood she, makeles.
> Hir goodly lokyng gladed al the prees.

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[357] Glending Olson, *Literature as Recreation in the Later Middle Ages*, 151.

> Nas nevere yet seyn thyng to ben preysed derre,
> Nor under cloude blak so bright a sterre
>
> As was Criseyde, as folk seyde everichone
> That hir beholden in hir blake wede.
> […]
> Simple of atir and debonaire of chere,
> With ful assured lokyng and manere. (I.169-77, 181-82)

Medieval romancers often use the *effictio* trope to conflate the noble body with its luxurious clothing, insisting that the costly garments serve as the outer layer of aristocratic identity. Occasionally, as in the case of Chrétien's Enide, the woman's plain dress is emphasized as a marker of her humility. Enide, however, receives costly garments from Guinevere in recognition of her noble lineage and as an affirmation of her suitability for her new social position as Erec's bride and future queen. But Criseyde keeps her widow's weeds throughout the poem. Laura Hodges assesses the particularities of Criseyde's costume and the ways in which it distinguishes her from typical romance heroines, who are either dressed in eye-catching luxurious robes or, like Enide, in humble clothes of poverty.[358] Hodges notes 'black' and 'brown' as interchangeable markers for costumes of mourning, but brings attention to the cloth itself as "samyt" or samite. This luxurious silk fabric was imported into England via the Mediterranean trade routes and constituted one of the highest quality textiles.[359] Where Hodges insists that Chaucer delimits the silky sheen of Criseyde's dress by referring to her character as "Simple of atir" (I.181), I read the disjunction between the expected external presentation of a widow as wearing a simple monotone dress and the reality of Criseyde

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[358] Laura F. Hodges, *Chaucer and Array: Patterns of Costume and Fabric Rhetoric in* The Canterbury Tales, Troilus and Criseyde *and Other Works* (Rochester, NY: D. S. Brewer, 2014), 56-62.

[359] Elisabeth Crowfoot, Frances Pritchard, and Kay Staniland, *Textiles and Clothing c.1150-1450*, Museum of London, Medieval Finds from Excavations in London 4 (Rochester, NY: Boydell Press, 2001); E. Jane Burns, *Sea of Silk: A Textile Geography of Women's Work in Medieval French Literature* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009).

wanting to appear fashionable in the best fabrics available to her as consistent with her character; she knows what the social expectations are and finds ways to manipulate them to her own pleasure, just like she prefers to read romances over saints' lives.

The narrator's descriptions of Criseyde are not very consistent, and change to suit his emotional investment in the heroine. These shifts betray the gendered relation of the narratorial gaze, the way it constructs voyeuristic pleasure by granting us access to a woman, who is reduced to an aesthetic object. First the narrator describes Criseyde as a woman of unearthly perfection:

> So aungelik was hir natif beaute,
> That lik a thing inmortal semed she,
> As doth an hevenyssh perfit creature,
> That down were sent in scornynge of nature. (I.102-105)

This beauty is neither of heaven or of earth, for it only approximates one while exceeding the measure of the other. "Out of measure" is never a good thing, for medieval beauty is rooted in proportionality. There is something arrogant in the excess of beauty. Following Troilus' penetrating gaze, and trying to read her body beneath the clothing, the narrator describes Criseyde not as a typical paragon of female beauty but as not manly: "that creature/ Was nevere lasse mannyssh in semynge" (I.284). Her movements suggest not sexual availability but rather "Honour, estat, and wommanly noblesse" (I.287). In Book V, however, her portrait becomes more concrete, and the reader is allowed to notice flaws in Criseyde's features. (V.806-826) Her brows are joined together in a severe visage that undermines the narrator's previous claims to lofty heights of beauty. He also admits to not knowing her age, allowing for the heroine to become matronly in the readers' eyes. The now infamous descriptor "slydynge of corage" (V.825), implying inconstancy in love, can be

equally turned onto the narrator, who changes his physical portrayal of Criseyde at his pleasure.

Peggy Knapp argues for a different context of measuring Criseyde's beauty, one not dependent on either Troilus or the narrator looking at her. The two portraits of Criseyde that I have addressed so far attempt to ascertain her inner beauty based on external self-presentation, which follow the standard *effictio* trope. Knapp suggests that Chaucer circumvents the need for *effictio* by granting his reader special access to the heroine's internal life. In Book II, after finally dismissing Pandarus, Criseyde spends hundreds of lines assessing her position, her options, the possibilities and the hazards that love would introduce into her life. This inner-Criseyde is fully human, not a villain or a victim, not a seducer of men (the sight of whom leads men to perdition) or a mirror in which they see their better selves. Knapp calls this inner-dialogue a 'self-fashioning' (borrowing the term from Greenblatt) or a 'devising' (using the more appropriate Chaucerian term), and posits that regular confession has encouraged medieval people to contemplate the inner workings of their desires, intentions, and actions. To this Christian confessional impulse, I would add the confession of love and desire as a particular expectation of romance, in which both male and female characters meditate (sometimes internally, sometimes out loud) on their complex emotional lives. For example, in *Roman d'Eneas* Lavinia assesses her feelings for Eneas and the ramifications of acting upon those feelings before sending him a letter that delineates them; similarly, in Chrétien's *Cligès* Soredamors wrestles with her love for Alexander before professing her feelings by weaving them into his shirt. This thoughtful articulation of a rich inner emotional life in romance predates the Fourth Lateran Council (1215), but in later Middle English instantiations of the genre the two impulses work together to present a more

complete account of human behavior. For Knapp, perhaps in a critical move that betrays modern aesthetic sensibility, Criseyde's interiority is what makes both her and the poem beautiful: "beautiful in representing a particular woman as readers could and can imagine her to be, producing her through complex, and ultimately coherent, details, and situating her story in a past detailed enough to suggest new knowledge and provide release from the 'crude interpellations' of ideology."[360] In a way, Knapp is conflating an aesthetic encounter with Criseyde, a woman whose beauty has been 'devised' by all three men (Troilus, Pandarus, and the narrator), with the overall effect of the poem itself, a poem that particularizes female beauty without reducing her to a literary placeholder. I believe that this aesthetic encounter is made possible by the expectations and subversions of romance convention.

Of all the characters, Pandarus derives the most pleasure from reading, observing, and interacting with romance. Pandarus orchestrates the lovers' sexual union and then retreats to observe his handiwork:

> Quod Pandarus, "Now wol ye wel bigynne.
> Now doth hym sitte, goode nece deere,
> Upon youre beddes syde al ther withinne,
> That ech of yow the bet may other heere."
> And with that word he drow hym to the feere,
> And took a light, and fond his contenaunce,
> As for to looke upon an old romaunce. (III.974-80)

Pandarus has arranged everything, from the venue to the seating. Having positioned the lovers upon the bed, he sits down by the fire with an excuse of perusing, or looking at, an old romance. As Dinshaw has observed, both the narrator and Pandarus remain in the room as readers of this "thoroughly eroticized text"[361]; the narrator is a willing and voyeuristic

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[360] Peggy A. Knapp, *Chaucerian Aesthetics* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 124.
[361] Carolyn Dinshaw, *Chaucer's Sexual Poetics*, 49.

witness to the consummation in his capacity as the translator, while Pandarus regards the moment as the culmination of his amorous plot. As the architect of the scene, "Pandarus withdraws from the lovers, sits himself down near the fire, and reads the lovers' persons as characters in a script he has himself written—reads them as if they constituted 'an old romaunce.'"[362] In a way, Chaucer implicates his readers as additional witnesses to the extramarital affair, for we experience the illicit love act through the same metaphors as the narrator and Pandarus, taking pleasure in unveiling the text through the act of reading.

This ill-fated courtship between Troilus and Criseyde can be read alongside several well-known forbidden romances. Stephen Guthrie has already suggested *La Chastelaine de Vergy* as a possible intertext for the consummation scene, with the Duke watching the lovers with approval.[363] Like Guthrie, I am not interested in putting forth a source study. What I am suggesting is a possibility of romance intertexts, which would resonate with the emotional community of avid romance readers. To read *Troilus and Criseyde* as a romance text, or as a text self-consciously engaging with romance tropes, is to read it associatively and cumulatively with an awareness of other romance texts. What follows is a reading of the consummation scene alongside the opening episode of Gottfried's *Tristan*, the love affair between Tristan's parents, as well as the Orchard Rendezvous scene as a visual intertext.[364]

The Ovidian power play in the consummation scene reduces Troilus to the feminized position of passivity. Overcome with extreme emotions, either from sorrow or from fear, Troilus falls down in a swoon (III.1086-2), leaving Criseyde to administer the

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[362] Carolyn Dinshaw, *Chaucer's Sexual Poetics*, 50.

[363] Steven R. Guthrie, "Chivalry and Privacy in *Troilus and Criseyde* and *La Chastelaine de Vergy*," *The Chaucer Review* 34.2 (1999): 150-173.

[364] In *The Parliament of Fowls*, Chaucer introduces the *Romance of Tristan and Isolde* in a list of other famous lovers via a brief ekphrasis, assuming that the reader would be able to recall the tale with minimal cues: "Alle these were peynted on that other syde,/ And al here love, and in what plyt they dyde" (ll.288-294).

remedy. Pandarus instructs his niece in these ministrations, urging her to provide Troilus with an assurance of her love.[365] She does so with both words and deeds, plighting her troth to him (III.1111) and kissing him until he regains consciousness. Pandarus then repositions Troilus in bed, advising him not to swoon again (III.1188-1190). Now recovered, Troilus assumes the sexually dominant position, grabbing Criseyde in his arms, leaving her the only available role of submission. Love as a physical cure figures prominently in Ovidian romances that stage female sexual agency as a remedy to lovesickness:

> O, sooth is seyd, that heled for to be
> As of a fever, or other gret siknesse,
> Men moste drynke, as men may ofte se,
> Ful bitter drynke; and for to han gladnesse,
> Men drynken often peyne and gret distresse;
> I mene it here, as for this aventure,
> That thorugh a peyne hath founden al his cure. (III.1212-1218)

The narrator interjects an explicitly Ovidian moralization, in case the intertext was not clear enough. This need to tell as well as show betrays the narrator's vicarious need for sexual fulfillment via textual production ("it joye was to seene" III.1228).

Reading intertextually with the Chaucerian narrator as our model, we find a similar (if less contrived) sexual remedy in Gottfried's *Tristan*. Blancheflor disguises herself as a medicine woman to gain access to Rivalin's chamber, where her love and concern for the wounded and dying Rivalin bring him back to life, and the two conceive Tristan that night. The scene prefigures and eroticizes actual episodes of healing, in which Isolde physically

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[365] For Pandarus' ambiguous sexuality, including sexual voyeurism, incestuous feelings toward his niece, and possible queer feelings toward Troilus, see Sarah Stanbury, "The Voyeur and the Private Life in *Troilus and Criseyde*," *Studies in the Age of Chaucer* 13 (1991): 141–58; Tison Pugh, "Queer Pandarus? Silence and Sexual Ambiguity in Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde*," *Philological Quarterly* 80.1 (2001): 17-35; Gretchen Mieszkowski, "Choreographing Lust and Love: Chaucer's Pandarus," in *Medieval Go-betweens and Chaucer's Pandarus* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 137-184.

nurses the wounded Tristan back to health. Another *Tristan* reference, this time to the lai by Marie de France, can be found in the metaphorical language used for the sexual union of Troilus and Criseyde: "And as aboute a tree, with many a twiste,/ Bytrent and writh the swote wodebynde,/ Gan eche of hem in armes other wynde" (III.1230-1233). In "Chevrefoil," Marie envisions the love of Tristan and Isolde as an image of the hazel and the honeysuckle, forever intertwined.[366]

This powerful visual image of the lovers as entwined trees brings us to a previously discussed visual icon of the *Tristan* legend. The physical composition of the Tryst beneath the Tree visual episode in ivory (see chapter 2) helps us think through the complicated questions of power in the consummation scene in Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde*. In the Tryst, the lovers meet secretly at night by a fountain underneath a tree. King Mark is stationed in the tree, ready to entrap them. Unfortunately for the king, the lovers notice his presence and convince him of their innocence through dissembling speech and modest behavior. The reflection at the bottom of the frame undermines the vertical advantage of the figure in the tree, allowing the lovers in the Tryst to manipulate the scene, asserting control over interpretation from the center of the frame upward, and thereby denying Mark visual access

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[366] D'euls deus fu il tut autresi
Cume del chievrefoil esteit
Ki a la codre se perneit:
Quant il s'i est laciez e pris
E tut entur le fust s'est mis,
Ensemble poent bien durer,
Mes ki puis les voelt deserver,
Li codres muert hastivement
E li chievrefoilz ensement. (ll.68-76)
Marie de France, "Chievrefoil," in Jean Rychner, ed., *Les lais de Marie de France* (Paris: Librairie honore champion, 1966), 151-154.
"The two of them resembled the honeysuckle which clings to the hazel branch: when it has wound itself round and attached itself to the hazel, the two can survive together: but if anyone should attempt to separate them, the hazel quickly dies, as does the honeysuckle." Marie de France, "Chevrefoil" in Glyn S. Burgess and Keith Busby, trans. and eds., *The Lays of Marie de France* (New York: Penguin Books, 1999), 109-110, at 110.

to truth. In Chaucer's poem, Pandarus remains in control of the scene as its architect and observer. From his position by the fire, hidden behind the ruse of reading an old romance, Pandarus participates vicariously in the lovers' decidedly immodest behavior. And, as Rosenwein reminds us, "Who suffers, who delights, has a great deal to do with who is in power."[367] Unlike King Mark, Pandarus remains in control of the scene, and in so doing rewrites the oldest of forbidden romances. Gone is the semblance of chastity, for it is now replaced with a semblance of reading. 'As for to looke upon an old romaunce' becomes a simile for rewriting *Tristan* and a validation for talking pleasure in witnessing a love act.

This staging of forbidden romance in Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde* is ultimately a critique of the genre and its limitations. So thoroughly invested in delineating pleasures, romance fictions, particularly adultery romances, delight the reader without necessarily providing moral instruction. Disappointment in love leads to disappointment with romance in general, with the narrative returning to epic time before zooming out farther to cosmic Boethian time. In the poem's last vision, with Troilus looking down from the eighth sphere, the disavowal of *delectatio* seems to be complete, thus providing the reader with a perfect excuse for having indulged in the aesthetic pleasure of a vernacular work of fiction.

Middle English *Emaré*: Tactility, Textiles, and Reading the Body beneath Clothing

With its uneasy relation to medieval and modern notions of genre, the relatively short 1,035-line Middle English poem *Emaré* has confounded modern readers, presenting them with an extended 100-line ekphrasis of an expensive and beautifully wrought cloth without providing

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[367] Barbara H. Rosenwein, *Emotional Communities in the Early Middle Ages*, 22.

a clear moralization or allegorization for the garment. In its colophon, the poem reveals two generic markers: "Thys ys on of Brytayne layes/ That was used by olde dayes,/Men callys 'Playn d'Egarye" (ll.1030-1032).[368] In calling itself an old Breton lay, the poem locates its narrative origins in a lyrical tradition, perhaps best exemplified for a modern reader by the twelfth-century poems of Marie de France. It also alludes to being a story-type, one of many on a certain subject, and as such *Emaré* belongs to the Constance-saga group, most familiar to us from Chaucer's *Man of Law's Tale*.[369] The alternate title that it provides refers to the heroine by the name she assumes after being expelled from her homeland. Further, the title provided in the colophon emphasizes the emotional tenor of the piece. A complaint as an epistolary genre, popularized by Ovid's *Heroides*, contradicts the generally oral or performative assumptions that underlie the Breton lay tradition. But *Emaré* is neither a lay nor a complaint. The extended ekphrasis reveals the distinctly textual preoccupations of its poet, while the patient forbearance of the heroine precludes her from bemoaning her lot. Shortly after introducing the eponymous heroine, the poem brings attention to its own textuality in a refrain "In romans as we rede" (l.216) that also suggests the influence of romance. The opening stanza of the poem, a twelve-line prayer to Jesus and Mary, has earned *Emaré* various post-medieval generic designations of a didactic or devotional nature,

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[368] All quotations from Anne Laskaya and Eve Salisbury, eds., *The Middle English Breton Lays*, TEAMS Middle English Text Series (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 2001), critical edition of *Emaré*, pp.145-199. Electronic TEAMS edition of *Emaré* is available at < http://d.lib.rochester.edu/teams/text/laskaya-and-salisbury-middle-english-breton-lays-emare>.

[369] Other tales belonging to the Constance-saga group circulated in England, including *Vitae Offae Primi* (twelfth-century Latin text written in England), Nicholas Trivet's *Anglo-Norman Chronicle* (c.1335), *Gesta Romanorum* (c.1350), and John Gower's *Confessio Amantis* (before 1390). On the continent we find the Constance-saga in Old French *La Belle Helene de Constantinople*, Phillipe de Beaumanoir's *La Manekine*, and Middle High German *Mai und Beaflor*. Anne Laskaya and Eve Salisbury, eds., *The Middle English Breton Lays*, 145-146.

including the moniker of "homiletic romance."[370] The moral lessons of *Emaré* make the utility of the poem (*prodesse*) fairly clear, but its preoccupation with surfaces, particularly with the luxury cloth, situate its *delictatio* within the sphere of romance.

The anonymous Middle English *Emaré* survives in a single fifteenth-century manuscript, London, British Library MS Cotton Caligula A.ii, which consists of two sections, both written on handmade paper, folded in quarto. The first section contains *Emaré*, on ff.71-76v, along with several other Middle English verse and prose texts, including seven romances, which themselves are a mix of Breton lays, family sagas, and penitential narratives: *Sir Eglamour*, *Octavian Imperator*, *Sir Launfal*, *Lybeaus Desconus*, *Sege of Jerusalem*, *Chevalier Assigne*, and *Sir Isumbras*. The section opens with an imperfect copy of a biblical narrative of a calumniated wife, the alliterative Middle English poem "The Pistill of Susan," ff.3-5, with which *Emaré* shares thematic parallels. Both women defy illicit sexual advances from powerful men, both endure punishment for thwarting men's carnal desires, and both rely on providence to exonerate them. The second section of the manuscript contains fifteenth-century statutes of the Carthusian order.[371] Reading *Emaré* in its manuscript context safeguards the aesthetic experience of encountering the rich cloth with all its luxurious elements, including figural embroidery of romance lovers. The devotional core of the manuscript inscribes biblical connotations onto the precious stones, like the stones in the foundations of the New Jerusalem (discussed at length in chapter 3), the glimmering nature

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[370] Dieter Mehl, *Middle English Romances of the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries* (New York: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1968), 95-99. Mehl groups *Emaré* together with other texts he deems as homiletic romances, including *The King of Tars*, *Robert of Sicily*, *Sir Gowther*, *Sir Ysumbras*, *Le Bone Florence of Rome*, *Athelston*, *The Sege off Melayne*, *Cheuelere Assigne*.

[371] Manuscript observations from archival research conducted at the British Library in September, 2013.

of which adds to the heroine's appearance as "non erthely wommon" (l.245).[372] Both the cloth and the poem participate in the sacred and the secular luxury systems, creating a moral ambiguity that is in constant need of interpretation.

The heroine Emaré, dressed in her robe of romance, both invites and resists hermeneutic gazes as onlookers attempt to ascertain her identity. At the same time, *Emaré* the poem subsumes the images on the cloth into its own ethical framework that valorizes proper heterosexual desire. The style of manuscript production in *Emare's* unicum, hand-written on cloth-based paper, marks a transition period in book-making technology, when cloth slowly begins to replace animal skin as a writing surface in manuscript and print. Made of recycled and treated linen fibers, handmade paper was not nearly as durable as parchment, but it served as a cost-effective alternative to animal skin. In this transition period, books were written and printed on both forms of substrates, and hybrid volumes bound together print and manuscript as well as parchment and paper.[373] As paper and parchment became alternatives for each other, often treated interchangeably, cloth became a new type of skin, upon which text is inscribed, ready for reading and interpretation. Moreover, the recycled fibers of this cloth-based paper often came from clothing items that intimately touched the readers (linen undergarments served as the most common base material for cloth-based paper) now in a new form, creating a new kind of tactile and textile intimacy. Handmade

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[372] Emaré is referred to as otherworldly on several other occasions: "She semed non erthly thyng" (l.396), "thys ys a fende" (l.446), "she was non erthyly wyght" (l.701).

[373] R. J. Lyall, "Materials: The Paper Revolution," in Jeremy Griffiths and Derek Pearsall, eds., *Book Production and Publishing in Britain, 1375–1475* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 11–29; Christine Sciacca, "Raising the Curtain on the Use of Textiles in Manuscripts," in Kathryn M. Rudy and Barbara Baert, eds., *Weaving, Veiling, and Dressing: Textiles and Their Metaphors in the Late Middle Ages* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2007), 161-90; Timothy Barrett, "Parchment, Paper, and Artisanal Research Techniques," in Joshua Wilcox, ed., *Scraped, Stroked, and Bound: Materially Engaged Readings of Medieval Manuscripts* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2013), 115-127; Orietta da Rold, "Materials," in Alexandra Gillespie and Daniel Wakelin, eds., *The Production of Books in England 1350–1500* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 12-33.

paper invites a new type of reading experience, in which human skin touches cloth as part of scrutinizing visual markers upon the page. Entering into this conversation on tactility,[374] I add a potential conflation between skin and clothing by exploring their function in the narrative context of *Emaré*.[375]

The basic storyline is a narrative meme that Helen Cooper labels as the calumniated wife,[376] who is cast adrift in a rudderless boat, leaving the judgment on whether the woman deserves to live or die to Divine Providence. Emaré is cast adrift twice, and she survives both times. First her lecherous father exiles her for refusing to give in to his incestuous desires, and later her wicked mother-in-law tricks her husband's servants into banishing Emaré together with her newborn child while her husband is away at war. Both expulsions come as direct responses to textual authority of written missives. In the first case, Emaré's father, a powerful emperor, secures a papal bull to absolve himself of the sin of incest in his proposed marriage to his daughter (ll.232-240). Thus, Emaré's refusal to marry her father is not only an affront to his secular power but also a direct defiance of the pope's sacred

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[374] Sarah Kay, "Legible Skins: Animals and the Ethics of Medieval Reading," *Postmedieval: A Journal of Medieval Cultural Studies* 2.1 (2011): 13-32; Sarah Kay, "Original Skin: Flaying, Reading, and Thinking in the *Legend of Saint Bartholomew* and Other Works," *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 36 (2006): 35-73; Bruce Holsinger, "Of Pigs and Parchment: Medieval Studies and the Coming of the Animal," *PMLA* 124.2 (2009): 616-23; Jennifer Borland, "Unruly Reading: The Consuming Role of Touch in the Experience of a Medieval Manuscript," in *Scraped, Stroked, and Bound*, 97-114; Jacqueline E. Jung, "The Tactile and the Visionary: Notes on the Place of Sculpture in Medieval Religious Imagination," in Colum Hourihane, ed., *Looking Beyond: Visions, Dreams, and Insights in Medieval Art and History* (University Park, PA: Princeton University and Pennsylvania State University Press, 2010), 203-240; E. Jane Burns, *Courtly Love Undressed: Reading through Clothes in Medieval French Culture* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002); E. Jane Burns, ed., *Medieval Fabrications: Dress, Textiles, Cloth Work, and Other Cultural Imaginings* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004); E. Jane Burns, *Sea of Silk: A Textile Geography of Women's Work*; Monica Wright, *Weaving Narrative: Clothing in Twelfth-Century French Romance* (University Park, PA: Penn State Press, 2009).

[375] In reading *Emaré* in its unique manuscript context, I build upon Katie L. Walter's work on the role of skin as "both the material basis and figure for forming a sense of self, for understanding the relations of self to the world and to God." (Katie L. Walter, "Introduction," in Katie L. Walter, ed., *Reading Skin in Medieval Literature and Culture* [New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013], 1-10, at 2). Paraphrasing Karl Steel, Walter observes, skin "defines a border touching—the closest you can get to someone or something else—while remaining separate, individuated. Skin allows touches between the human, the divine and the animal, the dead and the living— makes them contiguous—without necessarily ending or changing one or the other." (Katie L. Walter, 4).

[376] Helen Cooper, "Providence and the Sea: 'No tackle, sail, nor mast,'" in *The English Romance in Time*, 106-136.

authority on earth as manifest in sealed parchment form. Her second expulsion is a direct result of forged documents. Her wicked mother-in-law substitutes two messages, subverting the political authority and Christian mercy of her son, the King of Galys: in the first she falsely accuses Emaré of bestiality, announcing to her husband that she had given birth to a three-headed fiend—a child with heads of a lion, a dragon, and a bear (l.535-540); in the second she replaces the King's instruction to keep his wife safe with a false directive to cast both Emaré and her child adrift (ll.566-597). Against this unreliable documentary evidence, most likely inscribed on parchment and sealed with wax seals, Emaré's piety and moral rectitude offer proof positive of her chastity, safely concealed beneath luxurious cloth. This tension between skin and cloth, the writing and the body, performs the latent anxieties inherent in the shift from oral messages, the veracity of which were attested by the person delivering them, to the impersonal written mode of transmission, safeguarded by wax seals as signs of the sender.[377]

Although we do not know her exact point of origin, Emaré traverses the seas in her little boat, landing first on the shores of Galys, and second time in Rome. If Galys is Middle English for Galicia, which is located on the north-eastern tip of the Spanish Peninsula, then it is possible that her father is an Emperor either in England or France, situating her first journey in the Atlantic Ocean. Her second journey is a little more difficult, as it would require her boat to pass through the Straits of Gibraltar into the Mediterranean, which is the traditional sea-scape for the Constance-saga narratives. As Sharon Kinoshita points out, this journey reverses the traditional *translatio studii et imperii*, which starts out in Greece, then

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[377] Yin Liu gave a fascinating talk on the subject of unreliability of letters, appropriately titled, "Information Insecurity in Some Middle English Romances" at *The 15th Biennial Romance in Britain Conference* in Vancouver, 17 August 2016; M. T. Clanchy, "Trusting Writing," in *From Memory to Written Record: England 1066-1307*, 3rd edn., (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013), 295-328.

moves to Rome, and from Rome disperses into various European states.[378] Throughout her journeys, Emaré wears her magnificent robe, the brightness of which aids in her multiple discoveries on strange shores but also marks her as potentially "unearthly" and unreadable: she is nothing but a surface, the essence of ekphrasis and *delectatio*.

In contrast to Emaré's geographical peregrinations, the cloth from which this robe is made follows the more traditional *translatio* journey across the Mediterranean, moving from East to West. Although the cloth is not explicitly described as silk or samite, its luxurious construction is emphasized through a literal ekphrasis: the cloth itself is of "ryche golde and asowr" (l.113), it is "wordylye wroght" (l.83), rychyly dyght (l.88), and "Full of stones ther hyt was pyght" (l.89). Birds and flowers create a unifying decorative background for figural embroidery and precious stones. Moving from East to West, from Babylon to Sicily, and eventually to a Christian court in Western Europe, the cloth follows the traditional mercantile route along which highly prized fabrics were brought to European markets. The Emir's daughter first embroidered and decorated the cloth for her lover, the son of the Babylonian Sultan. The father of the King of Sicily then took the cloth from the Sultan by force (possibly through crusading activity) and gave it to his son, Sir Tergaunte, who brought it to the Emperor's court as a special gift. It has taken the Emir's daughter seven years to finish this highly involved decorative cloth, the description of which takes up 100 lines of verse, and it takes Emaré's father two lines to order the cloth to be refashioned into a robe for Emaré. A woman's love and time-consuming labor are thus nearly eclipsed by the political, mercantile, and military actions of men. This confusing history of sons and fathers,

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[378] Sharon Kinoshita, "'In the Beginning Was the Road': *Floire et Blancheflor* in the Medieval Mediterranean," in *Medieval Boundaries: Rethinking Difference in Old French Literature* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006), 77-104.

rivals and allies, ends with the transfer of the cloth from the Emperor to his daughter, connecting the Emir's daughter to the Emperor's daughter through the cloth—the second skin upon which the Emir's daughter's love story is inscribed.

The precious stones used in decorating the cloth have their own uncertain geography, "Sowghte they wer full wyde" (l.117). Over the course of seven years, the Emir's daughter wove the fabric, collected the stones, arranged them, and embroidered the cloth:

> The Emerayle dowghter of hethenes
> Made thys cloth wythouten lees,
>   And wrowghte hyt all wyth pryde;
> And purtreyed hyt wyth gret honour,
> Wyth ryche golde and asowr
>   And stones on ylke a syde.
> And, as the story telles in honde,
> The stones that yn thys cloth stonde,
>   Sowghte they wer full wyde.
> Seven wynter hyt was yn makynge,
> Or hyt was browght to endynge,
>   In herte ys not to hyde. (ll.109-120)

The stones themselves are enumerated with some care. There are fourteen individual gems in addition to the collective references, like the one above. Like any gem-encrusted fabric, the stones are used for their combination of colors as well as symbolic meaning. The most repeated combinations in the 100-line description of this cloth involve topaz and rubies, and crapowtes[379] (toadstones) and agates. The first pairing is expressly biblical, with the ruby occasionally replacing 'sardonyx,' a rare stone of a similar color, in the lists of the foundations of the New Jerusalem (see *Pearl* l.107). The second pairing comes from secular gemstone lore, and interestingly enough creates a similar color combination, yellow and red,

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[379] "crapōdīn" (n.) Also crapadoune, carpadon(i)e, crapendien, (a) A toadstone; (b) a toad, MED entry, University of Michigan, 2014, <http://quod.lib.umich.edu/cgi/m/mec/med-idx?type=id&id=MED10210>.

though somewhat less translucent. The rest of the list is an analogous combination of sacred and secular stones, creating a sense of luxury that operates on both the spiritual and the earthly planes. Sapphire, chalcedony, emerald, and perydote[380] (a form of chrysolite), together with topaz and ruby (sardonyx), constitute half of the foundation stones from Revelations. Carbuncle, onyx, diamond, coral, crystal, and garnet, together with crapowte (toadstone) and agate, are frequently found in romance descriptions of luxury objects, where they emphasize preciousness, costliness, and rarity.

In the longest descriptive passage, the romance details the figural embroidery on the cloth. In the four corners, the Emir's daughter weaves her love story into a tapestry of true lovers, making her love for the Sultan's son worthy of comparison with Amadas and Ydoine, Tristan and Isolde, and Floris and Blancheflour, some of the oldest Francophone romances, often bound together both in England and on the continent. The three romance couples are praised as examples of true and honorable loving, glossing over the extramarital nature of their relationships with an emphasis on steadfastness. Although their portraits are not described with any identifiable detail, they are all accompanied by gems and stones of various colors, set against a gold background of the cloth itself. This color scheme is evocative of late Gothic manuscript illuminations, particularly with burnished gold backgrounds, that bring the figures closer to the reader/viewer. Much critical attention has been accorded to this ekphrastic passage.[381] The only seemingly unique iconography is reserved for the Emir's daughter, who appears in a posture of the maiden with the unicorn:

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[380] "peridot" (n.) A gem stone of a green color; peridot, a form of chrysolite, MED entry, University of Michigan, 2014, <http://quod.lib.umich.edu/cgi/m/mec/med-idx?type=id&id=MED32976>.

[381] For most recent work on the cloth in Emaré, see Nicholas Perkins, "Ekphrasis and Narrative in *Emaré* and *Sir Eglamour of Artois*," in *Medieval Romance, Medieval Contexts*, 47-60; Elizabeth Sklar, "'Stuffed wyth Ymagerye': *Emaré's* Robe and the Construction of Desire," *Medieval Perspectives* 22 (2007): 145-159; Elizabeth Scala, "The Texture of *Emaré*," *Philological Quarterly* 85 (2006): 223-246.

> In the fowrthe korner was oon,
> Of Babylone the Sowdan sonne,
>   The Amerayles dowghtyr hym by.
> For hys sake the cloth was wrowght;
> She loved hym in hert and thowght,
>   As testymoyeth thys storye.
> The fayr mayden her byforn
> Was portrayed an unykorn,
>   Wyth hys horn so hye;
> Flowres and bryddes on ylke a syde,
> Wyth stones that wer sowght wyde,
>   Stuffed wyth ymagerye. (ll.157-68)

This combination of maiden and unicorn in visual conjunction with *Tristan and Isolde* appears on several fourteenth-century Parisian ivory caskets, which served as courtship gifts for aristocratic women. As I discuss in chapter 2, the secular configuration of the Lady with the Unicorn generally allegorizes the process of falling in love and attests to the virtue of the maiden. Thus, the Emir's daughter is making a double claim as to the nature of her love: it is both chaste and true. Both of these qualities can be read into Emaré as well. As a model of chastity and fidelity to her husband, despite unwarranted expulsion and separation, Emaré is an exemplary lover par excellence.

In a scholarly example of associative romance reading, Elizabeth Sklar focuses on the joining together in the cloth of Eastern and Western examples of love, reading into (or onto) the *Floris and Blancheflour* reference other romances of the East like *The Sultan of Babylon* and travel narratives like Mandeville and Marco Polo. For Sklar, the cloth is part of the romance penchant for the exotic, "inscrib[ing] a semiotic of excess, transgression, and desire. The 'ymagerye' of the four pictorial representations of famous lovers that adorn its corners

simultaneously illuminate, gloss, and complicate this subtext."[382] Nicholas Perkins similarly stresses the exotic origins of the cloth in his discussion of the passage as both *mise en abyme* and a "specular moment," asking the cloth to represent the entire romance in miniature while also inspiring a thoughtful reflection upon the larger story. According to Perkins, "the rhetorical act of bringing the cloth before the audience's eyes might evoke their own knowledge of luxury fabrics 'stuffed wyth ymagerye' (that is, a contemporary material context for the poem), but also arouse their imaginative notions of exoticism, the marvellous, and the complex origins of romance narrative itself."[383]

While I agree that the intertextual connections with marvels of the East are very much present in *Emaré*, I read the ekphrastic passage as an expressly Western poetic mode. By introducing other romance narratives in the mode of ekphrasis, including a scene of amatory autobiography for the story of the Emir's daughter and the Sultan's son, the poem creates a romance genealogy, comparable to the classicizing medieval ekphrases I discuss in Chapter 1. Emaré's cloth functions as a literary ekphrasis, the very sheen of which renders it impossible as an object of ocular perception. Its unreadability as a textual object for the intradiegetic audience—the Emperor claims that he cannot see it (ll.98-101)—directs its referentiality to the extradiegetic reader. For even the men who respond with charity and proper love to the sight of Emaré in her robe describe the encounter as overpowering with light: Sir Kadore describes her as a "glysteryng thyng" (l.350), the King of Galys (her eventual husband) responds to the light rather than the woman "The cloth upon her shone so bryghth/ When she was theryn ydyghth,/ She semed non erthly thing" (ll.394-6), and the merchant Jurdan sees her as a "non erthly wyght" because of the "glysteryng of that wede"

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[382] Elizabeth Sklar, "'Stuffed wyth Ymagerye,'" 152.
[383] Nicholas Perkins, "Ekphrasis and Narrative in *Emaré* and *Sir Eglamour of Artois*," 57.

(ll.701, 699). In fact, no one is able to read the cloth except for the King of Sicily, who brings it to the Emperor's court and recounts its beauty. For everyone else, the cloth is a thing, an aesthetic encounter that both invites and resists interpretation. As an object introduced into the narrative via literary ekphrasis, it cannot function as a legible garment.

From the moment Emaré dons the robe, this intricate figural cloth becomes a replacement for her skin, the outer extremity of her body, which others around her attempt to decipher. The glistening quality of the robe, however, hinders any attempts to read Emaré's actual body beneath the clothing. Poetic construction of identity for knightly heroes and aristocratic heroines often hinges on material externalization of nobility. In Marie de France's *Le Fresne* and its Middle English version *Lay le Freine*, another example of the Breton lay genre, the titular heroine is abandoned at birth near an abbey wrapped in a rich cloth, so that whoever finds her rightly interprets her social status; that same cloth later leads to identification and social reintegration. Similarly, in the Middle English popular romance *Havelok the Dane*, a symbolic restoration of order occurs when a royal body takes its rightful place in the hierarchy, clad in its proper clothes of privilege. In her reading of clothing in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, Suzanne Craymer contextualizes the romance in a "late fourteenth-century social debate over whether the body's appearance could constitute social identity, particularly status" in light of the rising middle class' accumulation and display of wealth.[384] (50). Craymer points to the "English sartorial legislation promulgated from 1336 to 1603[, which] attempted to restrict the types of fabrics and furs worn by the 'middle strata' in order to prohibit them from competing with or surpassing noble groups in the magnificence

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[384] Suzanne Craymer, "Signifying Chivalric Identities: Armor and Clothing in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*," *Medieval Perspectives* 14.1 (1999): 50-60, at 50.

of display."[385] Felicity Riddy, however, addresses the limitations of such legislation, noting in particular that the sumptuary laws of 1363 were repealed in 1364.[386] But late fourteenth-century imaginative fiction, and particularly romance, continues to conflate the body and its clothing, insisting that the costly garments serve as the outer layer of the aristocratic body. In doing so, medieval romance attempts to reify the social boundaries despite the changing economic landscape and the politics of wealth.

Through the trope of *effictio*, *Emaré* continues this imaginative social fiction by ascribing the costliness of a special garment to the nobility and goodness of its titular heroine. At the same time, the romance explicitly asks the reader to keep in mind the noble body beneath the clothing. From the moment Emaré is introduced, she is described for us through the physical attributes of her complexion. Like a traditional romance heroine, Emaré is "a lady fayr and fre" (l.22). At a later point, her skin is described using a vegetative simile: she is "whyte as lylye flour" (l.205). Her mother's beauty is articulated in comparison with bone ivory, joining whiteness and fairness in an animal simile: "a lady/ That was both fayr and seemly/ Whyte as whales bone" (ll.31-33). This conflation between mother and daughter continues, hinging on the repetition of "fair" as a standard of beauty:

> He hadde but on chyld in hys lyve
> Begeten on hys weddedde wyfe,
>   And that was fayr and bryght;
> For sothe, as y may telle the,
> They called that chyld Emaré,
>   That semely was of syght. (ll.43-48)

[385] Suzanne Craymer, "Signifying Chivalric Identities," 53.
[386] Felicity Riddy, "Jewels in *Pearl*," in Derek Brewer and Jonathan Gibson, eds., *A Companion to the* Gawain-*poet* (Rochester, NY: D. S. Brewer, 2007), 143-155, at 144.

In this ambiguous Middle English construction, the relative pronoun "that" may refer to either the mother or the daughter. This conflation between the mother and the daughter may have been deliberate, considering the emperor's misplaced erotic attention directed toward his child rather than a spouse. While the adjective "fayr" is not all that specific on its own—a fair maiden has become a romance cliché for a reason—the familial association between multiple generations along the axis of "fairness" becomes significant when these physical attributes resurface in the third generation, this time in a male child: "ther was of her body/ A fayr chyld borne and a godele;/ Hadde a dowbyll kyngus marke" (ll.502-504). In describing the birth of Emaré's son, the poem insists on the baby's "fair" and beautiful appearance, compounded with his royal identity in the form of a double birthmark, inscribing upon his very skin his social destiny as future king and emperor. A newborn baby who has not received any clothes reveals to the world his vulnerable skin, which bears socially decipherable marks of royal identity. We find this type of birthmark in *Havelock* as well; a king's mark shines outward from within despite the youth's poor clothing and lack of genealogical knowledge.

After Emaré puts on the robe, the physical beauty of the garment becomes a membrane that encloses the beautiful body beneath it. In a romance of 1,035 lines, there are ten references to the noble body underneath the cloth. Seven of these refer to Emaré's female body, including her pregnant body, and three of them refer to the young male body of her seven-year-old son Segramour:

> Was godely unthur gare. (198) Emaré
> Then sayde that wordy unthur wede (250) Emaré
> For that comely unthur kelle. (303) Emaré
> That worthy unthur wede. (366) Emaré
> That semely unthur serke (501) Emaré

> For that worthy unthur wede. (612) Emaré
> He was worthy unthur wede (736) Segramour
> That lufsumme wer unthur lyne. (864) Segramour
> Of that lady, goodly unthur gore (938) Emaré
> The chyld was worthy unthur wede (988) Segramour

While these references can be read as romance tropes that help fill in rhyming positions, their systematic repetition throughout the poem, and their interchangeable referents of male or female aristocratic bodies, both shield and reveal the human body beneath the clothing. The narrative reiteration of just how magnificent Emaré's robe, made of organic and mineral materials, truly is, together with the references to what may lie beneath it, conflate clothing and skin, forcing the reader to imagine a noble interiority beneath the outer layer. This interiority is thoroughly corporeal, especially in relation to her pregnant body, as well as in relation to her son Segramour's body. When the boy reaches the age of seven, his child's body enters the public sphere as he performs the duties of a cup-bearer to his unsuspecting father. His young body is described as shapely underneath his clothing: Segramour is "wele made of flesh and bone;/ He was worthy unthur wede" (ll.734-5). His clothes constitute a social and readable skin that encloses his noble and well-formed body.

Yet for all its bedazzling properties, the quality of the cloth that makes up Emare's magnificent robe, its rich decoration of jewels and stones, refuses penetrating stares. When her father first lays eyes on the cloth, he is unable to actually see it:

> The cloth was dysplayed sone;
> The Emperour lokede therupone
>   And myght hyt not se,
> For glysteryng of the ryche ston;
> Redy syght had he non (ll.97-101).

The Emperor is literally unable to see the cloth because of its multiple reflective surfaces. This inability to see the cloth hinders his understanding of the lessons of rightful love, modeled by exemplary couples. Similarly, Emaré causes amazement and astonishment as various people are both drawn to and are repelled by the glistening robe. This robe that attracts visual attention and yet simultaneously refuses sight becomes the site of interaction between Emaré's self and the people she meets as she journeys from place to place. The shine of the cloth establishes her first interactions with residents of Galys and Rome, and her ability "to sewe and marke/ All maner of sylkyn werke" (ll.376-7) becomes her contribution to her new communities and her route to acceptance. In teaching others how to sew and embroider, Emaré perpetuates the identification of luxurious cloth with her aristocratic persona, while weaving herself into a new female genealogy of guild-like skill-based transnational community that begins with the Emir's daughter, who originally makes the magnificent cloth, and continues with Emaré's female apprentices. In this interaction between self and the world, the cloth functions almost like skin, negotiating border touching and border crossing, both inviting and refusing interpretation.

Reading *Emaré* within its manuscript context, in MS Cotton Caligula A.ii, in what Michael Johnston has categorized as a gentry household anthology, we observe that these preoccupations with courtly ideals persist; the emphasis on courtliness and aristocratic privilege makes the transition from parchment to cloth paper, as well as from exclusive circles of powerful nobility to the smaller provincial households of the gentry. Johnston explicitly connects this transition to romance as a genre, even though these household anthologies generally compile multiple genres together: "Romance has long been a primary vehicle for aristocratic self-conception. As the gentry slowly gained a foothold within the

aristocracy, it should not be a surprise that romance was one key resource for working out their new position. Securing a place within the genre of romance was a key move towards a secure class identity for the gentry, helping them solidify their aristocratic credentials."[387] Reading *Emaré* associatively with other romance texts, we find that the older romance notions of aristocratic identity as legible social surfaces persist. Perhaps more explicitly than in *Troilus and Criseyde*, the *Tristan* intertext looms large over the stories of both Emaré and her son. Like Emaré's expelled body, Tristan's wounded and dying body is cast adrift on the sea in a rudderless boat. This providential journey is what brings him to his first contact with Isolde, his lady across the sea. Like Segramour's true aristocratic identity revealing itself through courtliness and winsome good looks, the young Tristan's nobility manifests itself through courtly accomplishments—hunting, playing musical instruments, singing, and display of learning through practice of foreign languages—and inexplicable magnetism. King Mark and his courtiers are drawn to this beautiful youth, forming an emotional attachment to him before the revelation of familial relation.

In medieval romances, the secular system of luxury subsumes the East-West divide to the point that Saracen silks become second skin for western aristocratic bodies. The knowledge of silk-work connects Emaré with the Emir's daughter, not as West touching East, but as two aristocratic women performing aristocratic women's work. What I have not explored here, and what is still worth considering, is the racialized dynamic of this cultural exchange in *Emaré*. So much critical and textual emphasis has been placed on the golden, bejeweled, and embroidered cloth (100 lines out of 1,035 line poem) that Emaré wears throughout her peregrinations to the point of conflation of the heroine with the cloth. What

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[387] Michael Johnston, *Romance and the Gentry in Late Medieval England* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 89.

seems to be missing in this scholarly discourse is a discussion of the conflation between the two women, the Emir's daughter who wove and embroidered the cloth and the daughter of a Christian Emperor who wears it. If the cloth really constitutes a kind of skin, externally available for social interpretation, what productive cross-cultural dynamic can be found in reading closely the relationship between the two women? In other words, does Emaré subsume the Emir's daughter by wearing her story inscribed onto the cloth, or does she act as a narrative receptacle for it while traversing the medieval Mediterranean (the way stories and luxury fabrics did)?

The aesthetic encounter with and within romance is never simple or transparent. The encounter engenders a physical as well as an emotional response. In Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde*, after an extended engagement with romance and its conventions through the artful staging and 'play' at romance, the ultimate response is disappointment followed by a disavowal of romance pleasures. In *Emaré*, the marvelous robe encourages proper love and weaves stories, people, and empires together, despite the initial astonishment caused by its multiple reflective surfaces. Neither *Troilus and Criseyde* nor *Emaré* are straightforward romances, but both texts invite the associative reading of romance fostered by the emotional community of romance aficionados of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. By attending to the surfaces and the surface pleasures of romance within these disparate texts, this chapter has endeavored to locate the genre and its multi-valent appeal by attending to its borders and reader reception.

AFTERWORD
A FEAST FOR THE SENSES:
TOWARD A ROMANCE AESTHETIC

The garden of earthly delights is featured as an emblem for *A Feast for the Senses: Art and Experience in Medieval Europe*, an international loan exhibition at the Walters Art Museum in Baltimore, MD.[388] The sight of verdant nature, the smell of flowers, the sound of birds, the feel of the breeze, the taste of the fruit indulge all five senses in a pleasing harmony. The sensual aesthetic of a walled garden perfectly blends artifice and nature to enhance aristocratic pleasure. Bookending the exhibition on the medieval sense experience, the image of the garden bridges sacred and secular spheres.

The exhibition opens with a luxurious late fifteenth-century French tapestry of Narcissus at the Fountain. Reproduced on the wall outside the gallery and on various promotional materials, the visual romance scene invites a vicarious experience of courtly extravagance. Narcissus appears as a fashionable courtier, dressed in form-fitting and stylish clothes. He is captured in that fateful moment between falling in love and drowning. The traditional millefleurs ground frames the elaborate fountain in which Narcissus sees his reflection (sight), filling the scene with flowers and berries, with birds and rabbits, adding associations of sweetness of taste, smell, and sound. While the tapestry is a tactile object, its various textures created by interweaving wool, silk, and metallic threads (such as gold and

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[388] The exhibition is at the Walters Art Museum from October 16, 2016 until January 8, 2017. Organized in partnership with the John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art, the exhibition will be in Sarasota, Florida from February 4 until April 30, 2017.

silver), touch is the one sensation denied to Narcissus (and the modern museum viewer). Falling in love with an insubstantial image, a mere reflection of his own beauty, Narcissus is doomed to die without the fulfillment of his desire—without the multi-sensory, full-body experience of the desired object. The exhibition closes with a large-screen video montage of a reconstructed medieval garden, a multi-sensual marvel of twenty-first century audio-visual technology.

The deluxe volume of essays that accompanies the exhibition and catalogs the objects on display likewise opens with the image of Narcissus, reproduced in sumptuous color on the cover. Martina Bagnoli, the architect of the event, begins her introduction with a quotation from Chrétien's prologue to *Le Chevalier de la Charrette* (*The Knight of the Cart*), in which the romancer compares his patroness, Marie de Champagne, to the spring wind. The simile invokes tactile and audible sensations—the rush of the wind felt on the skin and heard with the ear. Stretching the vehicle of the simile with a focus on springtime, we may imagine the fresh smells and the sweet tastes of waking nature. The figure of the Countess, the tenor of the simile, forms the visual component of this multi-sensory image. Her personal attributes—her beauty, her nobility, her virtue—are so harmoniously combined that she surpasses all other ladies. Like a romance heroine, Marie de Champagne stands peerless.

The two romance images, one visual and one textual, are used to explain the aims of the exhibition: "designed with the intent to bring the body, and its desires, back into the realm of art," *A Feast for the Senses* examines "the sensorial roots of medieval aesthetics."[389] While the objects on display and the essays in the volume cross the sacred/secular divide, the conceptual thread that connects them is the experience of harmony in the world through

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[389] Martina Bagnoli, "Introduction: Sensual Awakening," in Martina Bagnoli, ed., *A Feast for the Senses: Art and Experience in Medieval Europe* (Baltimore: The Walters Art Museum, 2016), 13-16, at 14.

the bodily senses. And it is this exuberance in the experiential and the corporeal that we find best exemplified in romance.

Medieval romance engages all five senses and glories in the corporeal experience. Immensely popular and highly derided, both by medieval and modern critics, romance as a genre has captivated audiences for centuries. Romance enchants, seduces, and ensnares its audience with narratives that envision a world that is at once fantastical and familiar, distant and immediate, impossible and yet full of endless possibilities. Reading romance involves multiple senses. Whether the ear processes an oral recitation, or the eye follows marks on the page, or the finger touches the reading surface, the physical act of reading romance is multi-sensual. Moreover, the internal temporality of romance as 'still time' combined with the external expectation of 'leisure time,' or *otium*, required for secular pleasure reading contribute to the perceived decadence in romance enjoyment, turning literary pleasure into a luxury experience. Romance pleasure is also cumulative. Through a self-conscious repetition of plot elements and devices, romance envisions a reader steeped in the genre's conventions. The experience of reading romance, therefore, hinges on the associative pleasure of simultaneously engaging with multiple stories. The more we read romance, the more familiar we become with the conventions of the genre, the more pleasure we derive from knowing how certain tropes—like the exiled and returned king, or the calumniated wife set adrift in a rudderless boat—play out, not just in the current text, but in other texts previously read. This cumulative knowledge governs affective responses, creating communities that share particular values (here, specifically romance values), and like any genre manages expectations. Romance relishes its ability to both meet and subvert expectations, offering both similarity and difference as sites (and often sights) of narrative pleasure. To read romance is to read

intextually, to share in its 'appetite for narrative,' to seek out more stories. This pleasure is in no way transparent to a novice, for it presupposes one's membership in the community of romance readers and achieves its aesthetic value in the aggregate.

Over the course of four chapters, I have addressed the various types of sensual pleasures offered by romance. Chapter One delineates ways that descriptive practices replicate sensorial experience in language. The synesthetic poetics of literal ekphrasis involves all five senses to help the reader/listener visualize the sensual objects, places, landscapes, and actions of the text. Conversely, the radically non-mimetic poetics of literary ekphrasis delight the reader with artful play, luxuriating in the capabilities of language. Chapter Two examines fourteenth-century Parisian ivory caskets, including the Walters multi-romance casket displayed in the exhibition (Figures 10-12), and elucidates how both the medium and the visual program teach aristocratic women about the intricacies of heterosexual desire through a negotiation of sight and touch. In Chapter Three, the sights, sounds, and smells of Paradise and the New Jerusalem in *Pearl* form a devotional aesthetic thoroughly grounded in romance vocabulary of aristocratic luxury. Like Narcissus at the fountain, the father/dreamer is denied a fully-corporeal experience of the beloved object: he may not touch the *Pearl*-maiden or partake in the joyful celebrations of the Heavenly Court. Chapter Four addresses the multi-modal sensuality of experiencing romance, engaging all five senses in the construction of readerly pleasure.

Romance delights in surfaces and surface-pleasures, and as such it relishes the experiential. In a religious environment that overwhelms the senses—the sound of the bells, the smell of the incense, the sight of the stained glass windows, the touch of the rosary beads, the taste of the Eucharistic wafer—while simultaneously teaching temperance and

moderation, romance embraces the sensorial and the sensual and unabashedly celebrates earthly pleasures.

APPENDIX: IMAGES, CHARTS, DIAGRAMS

Figure 1. Multi-romance casket at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Tryst beneath the Tree, and Capture of the Unicorn, c.1330–1350, Paris. Ivory. www.metmuseum.org OASC.

Figure 2. The Battle with the Sagittary and the Conference at Achilles' Tent (from Scenes from the Story of the Trojan War). Metropolitan Museum of Art, c.1470–1490, South Netherlands. Wool and silk. www.metmuseum.org OASC.

Figure 3. Diptych with Scenes from the Passion of Christ. Paris, c.1350-1365, ivory. The Walters Art Museum, CC0. Reading from left to right starting at the top: Christ's Entry into Jerusalem, the Washing of the Feet, the Last Supper, the Garden of Gethsemane, the Arrest of Christ, the Hanging of Judas, the Flagellation of Christ, Christ bearing the Cross to Calvary, the Crucifixion, the Deposition, Entombment, Christ appearing to Mary and Christ's Descent into Limbo.
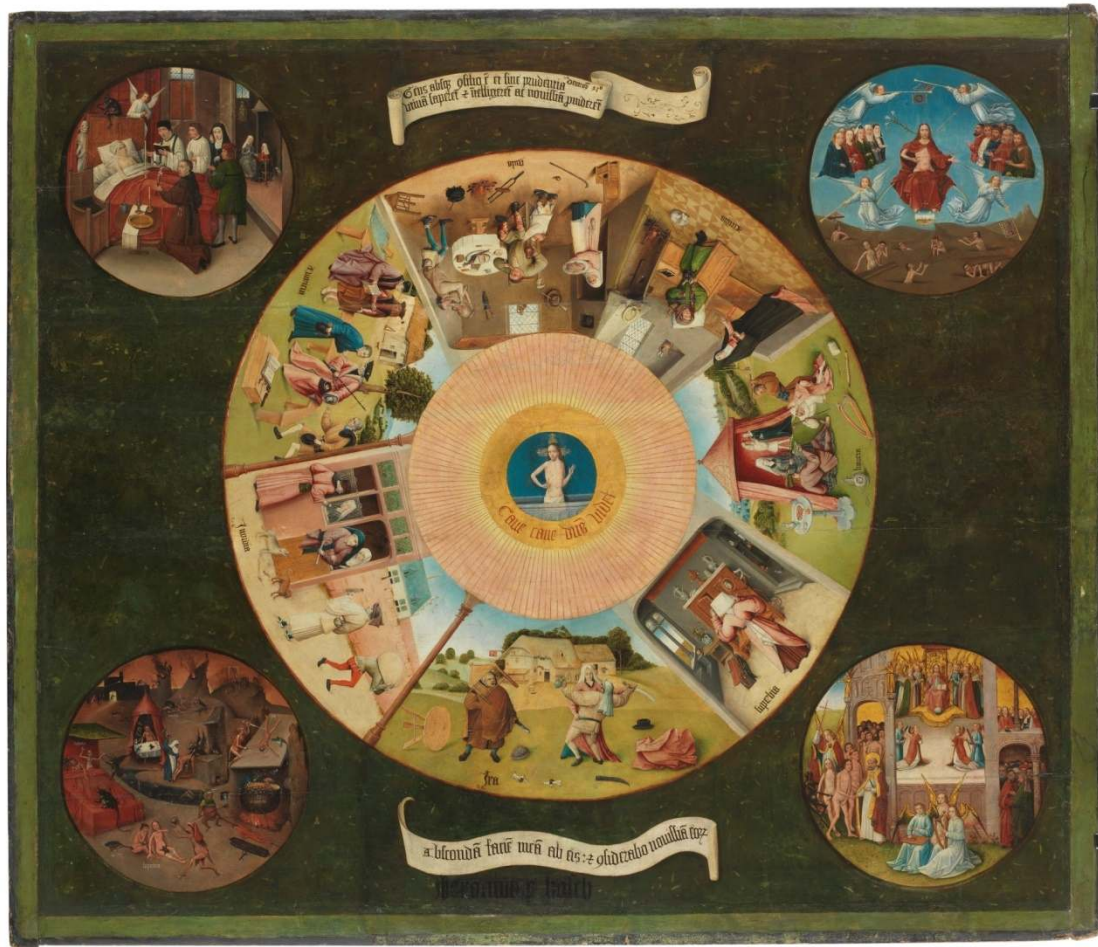
Figure 4a (above). Hieronymus Bosch, The Seven Deadly Sins and the Four Last Things, Museo del Prado, c.1500, painted wood. Copyright © Museo Nacional del Prado

Figure 4b. Detail of Luxuria.

Figures 5. De Lisle Psalter, London, British Library, Arundel MS 83 II. England c. 1310, The Tree of Vices, fol.128v. Made available under a Public Domain Mark.
http://www.bl.uk/catalogues/illuminatedmanuscripts/record.asp?MSID=6458
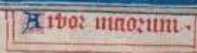
Figures 6. De Lisle Psalter, London, British Library, Arundel MS 83 II. England c. 1310, The Tree of Virtues, fol.129. Made available under a Public Domain Mark.
http://www.bl.uk/catalogues/illuminatedmanuscripts/record.asp?MSID=6458

Figure 7. De Lisle Psalter, London, British Library, Arundel MS 83 II. The Wheel of Sevens, fol.129v. Made available under a Public Domain Mark.
http://www.bl.uk/catalogues/illuminatedmanuscripts/record.asp?MSID=6458

Figures 8 and 9. Forrer Casket (c.1180–1200), single-romance ivory casket with images from the legend of Tristan and Isolde. Cologne, Germany. 143mm × 95mm × 93mm. Reproduced by permission of the British Museum, London. © Trustees of the British Museum.

Figure 10. Multi-romance casket at The Walters Art Museum, view from the front, c.1330–1350, Paris. 114–117mm × 246–252mm × 124mm. Reproduced by permission of The Walters Art Museum, Baltimore. CC0.

Figure 11. Multi-romance casket at The Walters Art Museum, back panel: Lancelot Crosses the Sword Bridge, c.1330–1350, Paris. 114–117mm × 246–252mm × 124mm. Reproduced by permission of The Walters Art Museum, Baltimore. CC0.

Figure 12. Multi-romance casket at The Walters Art Museum, side panel: Tryst beneath the Tree, and Capture of the Unicorn, c.1330–1350, Paris. 114–117mm × 246–252mm × 124mm. Reproduced by permission of The Walters Art Museum, Baltimore. CC0.

Figure 13. Multi-romance casket at the British Museum, London, side panel: Tryst beneath the Tree, and Capture of the Unicorn. c.1325–1350, Paris. 80mm × 210mm × 130mm. Reproduced by permission of the British Museum, London. © Trustees of the British Museum.

Figure 14. Richard de Fournival's *Bestaire d'Amour*, Capture of the Unicorn. Paris, Bibliothèque nationale MS fr. 15213, fol. 74v c.1300–1350. Reproduced by permission of Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris via Gallica public domain collections.

Figure 15 (above). *Roman de la rose*, Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France MS fr. 1569, fol. 11v. Narcissus at Fountain. c.1225–1430.

Figure 16 (below). *Roman de la rose*, Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France MS fr. 1569, fol. 13r. Amors shoots Amant with arrow through the eye. c.1225–1430.

Reproduced by permission of Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris via Gallica public domain collections.

Figure 17 (above). *Roman de la rose*, Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France MS fr. 1575, fol.10v Narcissus at Fountain. c.1225–1300.

Figure 18. (below). *Roman de la rose*, Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France MS fr. 1575, fol.12r Amant at Fountain. c.1225–1300.

Reproduced by permission Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris via Gallica public domain collections.

Figure 19. Prose Tristan, Tryst beneath the Tree, Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France MS fr. 340, fol. 128. c.1375–1425. Reproduced by permission of Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris via Gallica public domain collections.

Figure 20. Gottfried von Strassburg, *Tristran*, Tryst beneath the Tree, Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Cgm. 51, fol. 76. c.1225–1275. Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0. Digitalisierung mittelalterlicher Handschriften: Digitalisierung deutschsprachiger Pergamenthandschriften aus der BSB.
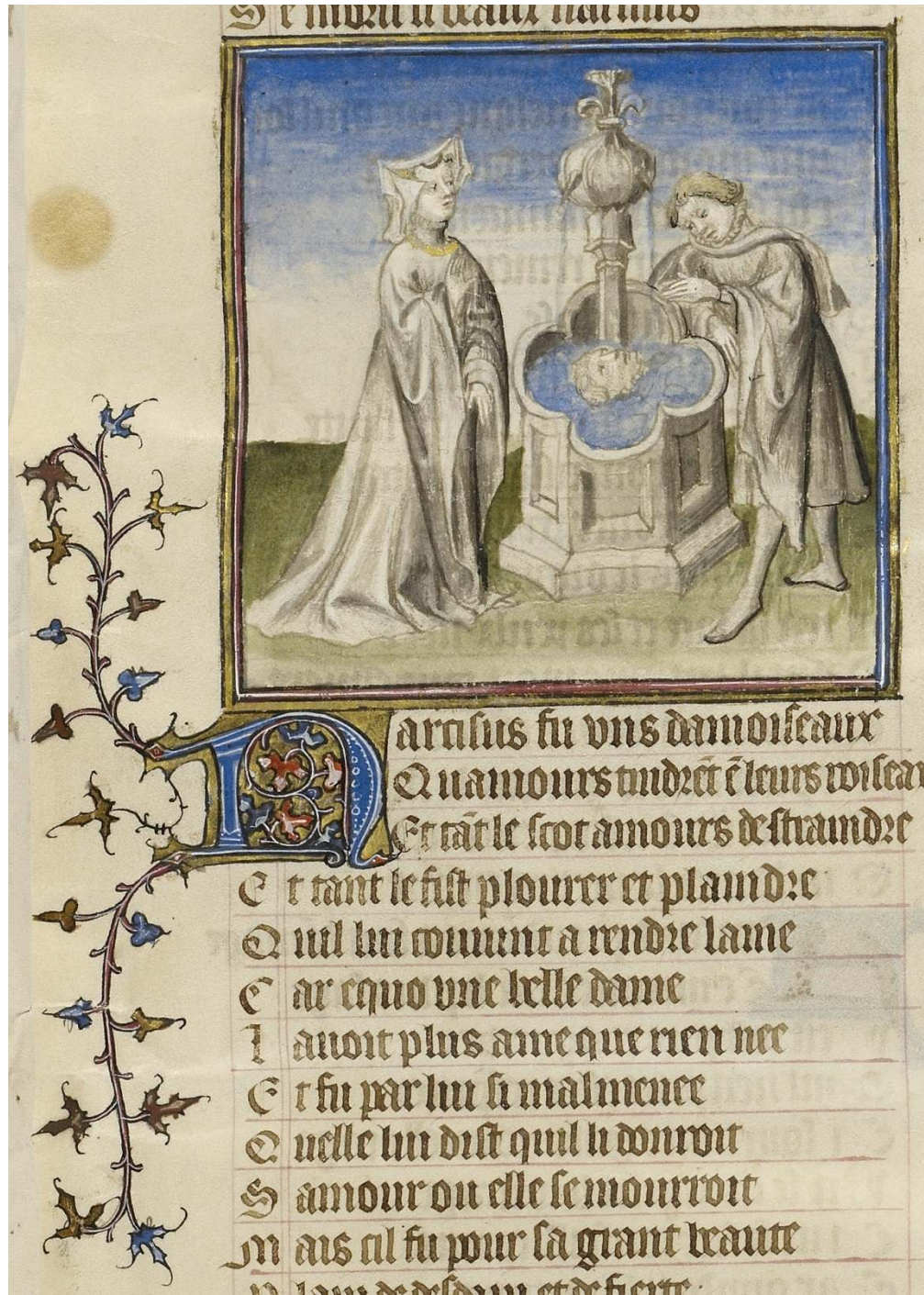
Figure 21. *Roman de la Rose*, Echo and Narcissus, Los Angeles, The J. Paul Getty Museum, Ms Ludwig XV. 7, fol. 11 c.1405. Digital image courtesy of the Getty's Open Content Program.
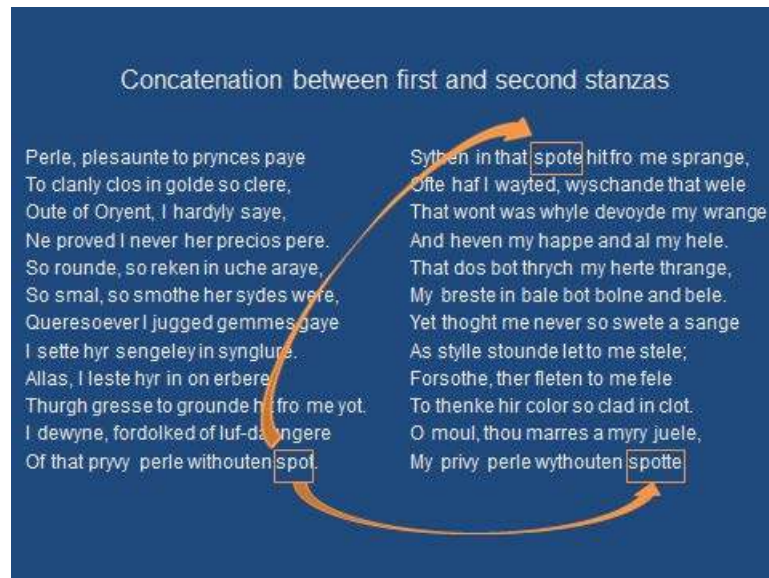
Figure 22 (above). Concatenation between first and second stanzas in *Pearl*.

Figure 23 (below). Concatenation between the last and the first line of *Pearl*.

Figure 24. Concatenation Chart

Group	Concatenation	Notes	Terminal rhyme, last line of stanza	Mid-line, first line of stanza
I	spotte/ withouten spot	earthly spot, spiritually	ll.12, 24, 36, 48, 60	ll.13, 25, 37, 49, 61
II	adubbemente/ dubbed	adornment or adorned	ll.72, 84, 96, 108, 120	ll.73, 85, 97, 109, 121
III	more and more	quantifying and	ll.132, 144, 156, 168, 180	ll.133, 145, 157, 169, 181
IV	pyght	adorned in pearls	ll.192, 204, 216, 228, 240	ll.193, 205, 217, 229, 241
V	juelere/ juel	jeweler, jewel	ll.252, 264, 276, 288, 300	ll.253, 265, 277, 289, 301
VI	deme	earthly and divine judgement, to judge	ll.312, 324, 336, 348, 360	ll.313, 325, 337, 349, 361
VII	blysse	happiness	ll.372, 384, 396, 408, 420	ll.373, 385, 397, 409, 421
VIII	cortaysye	courtesy, courtliness	ll.432, 444, 456, 468, 480	ll.433, 445, 457, 469, 481
IX	date	time or end	ll.492, 504, 516, 528, 540	ll.493, 505, 517, 529, 541
X	more	increase; moreover, forever	ll.552, 564, 576, 588, 600	ll.553, 565, 577, 589, 601
XI	innoghe	spiritual fulfillment	ll.612, 624, 636, 648, 660	ll.613, 625, 637, 649, 661
XII	by ryght	'right' is missing from l.721	ll. 672, 684, 696, 708, 720	ll.673, 685, 697, 709
XIII	maskelles	matchless or spotless	ll.732, 744, 756, 768, 780	ll.733, 745, 757, 769, 781
XIV	Jerusalem	earthly and heavenly	ll.792, 804, 816, 828, 840	ll.793, 805, 817, 829, 841
XV	neverthelesse/ less	abundance; one extra stanza	ll.856, 864, 876, 888, 900, 912	ll.857, 865, 877, 889, 901, 913
XVI	mote/ moteles/ wythouten mote	'His City' and 'without stain'	ll.924, 936, 948, 960, 972	ll.925, 937, 949, 961, 973
XVII	John/ apostel John	Apocalypse and Gospel author	ll.984, 996, 1008, 1020, 1032	ll.985, 997, 1009, 1021, 1033
XVIII	sunne and mone	sun and moon	ll.1044, 1056, 1068, 1080, 1092	ll.1045, 1057, 1069, 1081, 1093
XIX	gret delyt	bliss of Heaven	ll.1104, 1116, 1128, 1140, 1152	ll.1105, 1117, 1129, 1141, 1153
XX	Prynces paye / His pay	aristocratic and divine pleasure	ll.1164, 1176, 1188, 1200, 1212	ll.1165, 1177, 1189, 1201, 1

Figure 25. Cambridge, Trinity College Cambridge, MS R.16.2, f.22r. The Triumph in Heaven, and the Marriage of the Lamb. England, c.1250. Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 http://trin-sites-pub.trin.cam.ac.uk/james/viewpage.php?index=1199

Figure 26. London, British Library, MS Additional 22493, f.2v. Worship of the Lamb by the Saved Elite. France, c.1275-1300. Made available under a Public Domain Mark https://www.bl.uk/catalogues/illuminatedmanuscripts/ILLUMIN.ASP?Size=mid&IllID=60240

Figure 27. New York, The Cloisters, Metropolitan Museum of Art, fol.36r, St. John's vision of the New Jerusalem Descending. 'The Cloisters Apocalypse', c.1330, Normandy. Accession Number 68.174. OASC.

Figure 28. London, British Library Cotton Nero A.x, f.42v (formerly f.38v). Pearl-maiden shows the jeweler a vision of New Jerusalem. England, c.1400. Made available under a Public Domain Mark.

Figure 29 (above). Cambridge, Trinity College Cambridge, MS R.16.2, f.25v. Floor plan of the New Jerusalem. England, c.1250.

Figure 30 (below). Detail of the New Jerusalem. Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 http://trin-sites-pub.trin.cam.ac.uk/james/viewpage.php?index=1199

Figure 31. London, British Library, MS Additional 11695, fol.208v. The New Jerusalem. Beatus of Liébana, Commentary on the Apocalypse known as The Silos Apocalypse of Silos Beatus. Northern Spain, c.1091-1109. Made available under a Public Domain Mark.

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