


For the Love of God and Myself: Erotic Love in the Pearl Poems

Craig Lackie

Presented to the English Department Faculty
at the University of Michigan – Flint
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
Master of Arts
in English Language and Literature

05/09/2015

First Reader 

Second Reader 

Introduction

The Pearl Poems of Cotton Nero A.x offer four very medieval poems: two homiletic poems on how to please God, a dream-vision poem in a similar vein to *La Commedia*, and an Arthurian poem. The poet's pursuit in understanding divinity and heroism yields very human depictions: again and again the poet designs the characters, whether personal in *Pearl*, famous Arthurian figures, or God and his cohorts throughout, with fallible qualities like jealousy and cowardice. That pursuit of the divine in *Pearl* and the homiletic poems are what make these works about living in a world with God and his laws so compelling: there is great sincerity in the attempt to reach out and define God, but what the audience finds are figures far too human because the divine is reduced to human terms. *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* then complicates the other poems by introducing other powers, the desires of common society: our world. Thus, we are left with blemished mortals and a jealous God: to earn God's love demands certain sexualities in "Cleanness" (703), and Gawain abandons all of his commitments and takes Lady Bertilak's girdle because, as per Bertilak's analysis, "bot for ȝe lufed your lyf" (2368). The characterizations seem more like the antithesis of a heroic warrior or a just and loving deity, or at least less-than-perfect than we may expect.

This thesis uses the philosophies of erotic love to read the poems: reading the scenes through the lens of erotic love brings out the believability and humanity of the characters, including God. God originally enacted human creation by himself: "þe play of paramoreȝ I portrayed my seluen" (700); which, he then demands "by-twene a male and his make" (703), because mimicry woos God and validates his creation and commands. Gawain chooses himself because he needs to satisfy everyone, and because all the

characters put their trust in him, his skillful navigation through the various relationships he encounters satisfies everyone by the poem's end except himself for his selfish decision. Thus, because everyone puts their trust in Gawain, he must look at himself, so, "bot for ȝe lufed your lyf" (2368) becomes Gawain's rationale because he had to reflect what he saw: that he is a desirable person and worth keeping alive, which is then reflected in Arthur, Bertilak, and their courts who consider Gawain's quest a success.

Previous Critical Studies

My work enters the conversation with scholars interested in themes surrounding relationships and issues of identity such as gender, sexuality, and commerce. R.A. Shoaf investigates *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight's* girdle, as well as the exchanges in relationships, as commercial trades. Shoaf invites readers to consider the exchanges made, including Gawain's own worth, and my thesis responds to Shoaf also with careful attention, and both of our works elaborate on a poem that, as Shoaf posits, "...structures a vision of relativity and relationship in human exchange" (2). Shoaf is motivated by the clash of feudalism and commerce, which ought not to relate to my thesis, but our ideas work well in tandem (I think). The ideas bouncing between our analyses create a compelling dynamic for scholarship looking at philosophical concepts in literature, and I believe the exchanges between our analyses are exciting. Jane Gilbert calls attention to gender and sexual transgression in *Pearl*, *SGGK*, and "Cleanness;" and, similar to my thesis's contribution, Gilbert employs "Cleanness" as an introductory text to the ideologies of the other poems, positioning the texts in a system with "a clear depiction of gender and sexual transgression, and an equally clear condemnation of that transgression" (53). Josephine Bloomfield fits between Gilbert's work and my thesis by calling attention

to the charitable love found in *Pearl*. Bloomfield invites introspection from *Pearl*'s audience because the poem cultivates the use of reflection, so both the poem's characters and intended audience are summoned, because: "...the *Pearl* poet seem[s] to feel that we need an endless series of mirrors to bring us out of self-love and into the self-reflection that can carry us to salvation. *Pearl*, in its luminescent, reflective structure and text, with its specular, saint-like intercessorial guide, is intended, I think, to serve as one of those mirrors for the *Pearl* audience" (188). I also look to reflection and self-love, but where Bloomfield invokes 14th century optics, the myth of Narcissus, and Julia Kristeva's weaving of Narcissus with Christology, I use reflection with the groundwork of Freud, Socrates, and the Pearl poet's own use of mimicry found in "Cleanness."

Theoretical Framework

Particular to my thesis, I fashion a working theory of love from philosophy, psychoanalysis, and post-modern theory. Erotic love depends upon an immortal desire to always "own," in a way, the love object (Plato 200d-e). Necessary to erotic love, the lover selfishly desires the love object. Freud contrasts Eros (the character and drive) with Thanatos, in which, Eros the erotic drive attempts to sustain life while the Thanatosian death drive strives for stagnation and death. I fuse these theories with Lauren Berlant's *Desire/Love*, which defines love through shared fantasies that "produces subjects who believe that their love story expresses their true, nuances, and unique feelings..." (109). Here, I find Alan Soble's logical explanation helpful for simplicity and clarity: "x loves y, and x's love for y is reinforced by x's perception that y has the beauty and goodness that x has attributed to y" (xii), or, x may love y because y exhibits some virtue or excellence (xxiii) or other desirable quality. Thus, God, the perfect devoted child in *Pearl*, and

Gawain (among many others) all become subject to analysis by entering relationships because they desire some great immortal acquisition. That is to say: God desires disciples because they legitimize his Godliness, and produce immortal desires that continuously benefit God, and God only needs to give his love objects whatever satisfies their fantasies.

Questions of Authorship

There exists a common practice, necessary to Pearl Poet studies, of debating authorship and whether or not we ought to consider these texts together. Combining the manuscript's poetic works together (or separating them) places scholars in different camps, whether as one author, as a collection by one scribe, or by similar authors; each of these camps yield different strategies to enter a critical reading of the texts. The Early English Text Society (EETS) separates *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* from the other poems, because, though they are "in the same handwriting and dialect... nothing can be affirmed with any certainty concerning the authorship of these most valuable and interesting compositions" (v), but ultimately, the EETS determines that "[t]he dialect of the two works is altogether different" (vii), and so separates the poems due to different authorship. Jane Gilbert's "Gender and Sexual Transgression" uses three of the poems for no particular reason. She states simply that "...anthropologically inspired methods are applied to the study of gender and sexuality in the three Cotton Nero poems: *Cleanness*, *Pearl*, and *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*." Some scholars dedicate essays to theorize authorship: Clifford Peterson writes about letters attained referencing John Massey as a master poet, with Massey's signature matching the styles found in *Saint Erkenwalde*, which Peterson matches to *Pearl* (17). Derek Brewer suggests that though we do not

know if the poems were composed by one poet, "[t]hey have dialect, themes, concepts and attitudes in common" (1), thus, there could be two or three poets from a school, but Brewer consigns with the "majority" of scholars (though the dissenters make strong cases) that the poems were authored by one person but written by a scribe who certainly made some errors (1). Thus, scholars either ignore the significance of authorship, attribute the poems to different authors and separate them, or attribute them to one author or one collective and treat the texts accordingly. I use the four poems together because the homiletic poems serve well to situate the cultural and theological perspective of the narrative poems; so, whether or not the texts are from one author, the narrative poems certainly belong to the same cultural understanding.

Platonic and Freudian Love

Imagine this scene: after ancient Greece's greatest artists, thinkers and politicians give their speeches on the nature of love, a drunken Alcibiades, an Athenian general and statesman, enters the room hoping to dissuade the party of Socrates' "winning" speech to show Socrates knows nothing about love. However, Alcibiades instead performs a charming praise of Socrates' good words and deeds while detailing his own personal wishes and attempts to consummate his love with Socrates. Alcibiades reveals his desires and demands that his version of love, which centers on desires of the body, must resolve in a sexual encounter. Socrates, however, demonstrates that Alcibiades had in fact received everything true love has to offer in their relationship, and Alcibiades ought not trade their relationship for the lesser sexual relationship.

Alcibiades's love of Socrates, rendered logically, follows the formula: "x loves y because [x believes] y has set S of attractive or valuable properties" (Soble 109). For

Socrates, love depends upon an object of desire and for the lover to be eternally devoted to the object. The scene that previously mentioned comes from *The Symposium* of Plato, in which Socrates reveals his understanding of love, which he claims to have learned from from Diotima. Socrates recalls Diotima's explanation:

"All human beings are pregnant, Socrates, both in body and in soul, and when we come of age, we naturally desire to give birth... [Love] is of procreation and giving birth in beauty... Because procreation is eternal and immortal, insofar as anything can be such in a mortal being, and, given what we've agreed, one necessarily desires immortality along with the good, since love is of the good's being one's own forever." (206c, 206e-207a).

Thus, humans have the capability of loving, and our anticipated manner of demonstrating our love ends in some sort of birth. While the Socratic notion of love seems surprisingly heteronormative in its value and cause, Socrates by no means accepts heterosexual desires and biological pregnancy as the pinnacle of human love:

"Now, those who are pregnant in body are more oriented toward women and lovers in that way, providing immortality, remembrance, and happiness for themselves for all time, as they believe, by producing children. Those who are pregnant in soul however—for there are people who are even more pregnant in their souls than in their bodies... these people are pregnant with and give birth to

what is appropriate for the soul. What, then, is it that it is appropriate for the soul to bring forth? Good sense and the rest of virtue, of which all poets are creators, of which all poets are procreators, as well as those artisans who are said to be inventors... Everyone would prefer to bring forth this sort of children rather than human offspring. People are envious of Homer, Hesiod, and the other good poets because of the offspring they left behind, since these are the sort of offspring that, being immortal themselves, provide their procreators with an immortal glory and an immortal remembrance." (208e-209a, 209c-d)

Thus, heterosexual love typically tends toward the lesser of immortality: human children, whereas love between souls tend to make everlasting works of poetry and invention. So, Socrates can still be enamored by gold, clothing, and beautiful boys, but understanding why something is beautiful is why his soul, pregnant with love, yearns to produce works worthy of immortality (211b-d). The readings in my thesis depend upon a culture with a heteronormative understanding of love (which appears in the next section: For the Love of God), so I transfer Socrates's account of love to a wholly different culture: that of medieval England.

Beyond Socrates's understanding of erotic love, I use Freud's notions of debasement and the binary of Eros and Thanatos to assign direct motives to the characters in relation for their actions to their love objects. Found in "Beyond the Pleasure Principle," Eros consists of "life-sustaining sexual instincts... just as copulation between

two individuals which soon after separate, has a strengthening and rejuvenating effect" (44). Eros becomes a drive which keeps life going, both for an individual and for the species itself. However, Erotic drives only describe those positive forces that guide sexual instincts (31). The Thanatosian drive, however, embodies the contentious theory that "[t]he goal of all life is death" (30). For Freud's purposes, the Thanatosian, or death drive, acts according to the ego's yearnings: "only for the [Thanatosian drive] can we properly claim the conservative—or, better, regressive—character corresponding to a repetition-compulsion. According to our hypothesis, the ego-instincts spring from the vitalising of inanimate matter, and have as their aim the reinstatement of lifelessness" (35). Thus, the binary of these two instincts, completely natural in their occurrences, are to sustain life (Eros) through reproduction: "...they reproduce primitive states of the living being, but the aim they strive for by every means is the union of two germ cells..." (35); and to end life (Thanatos) by means of satisfying the ego, typically demonstrated in repetitious activity yielding lifelessness.

Debasement originates in Freud's "On the Universal Tendency to Debasement in the Sphere of Love," which details how men, having the tendency to take on lovers who embody their mothers, have trouble performing sexually in their relationship due to their conscious objections to having sex with their mother, which is then transferred to their sex/love object as an adult. Debasement, then, is the transferred properties of a psychically allowed sexual partner, such as prostitutes, to the love object in order to have a functioning sexuality (183). I use debasement, as well as Freudian's notions of Thanatosian and Erotic drives in order to investigate how the characters in the Pearl poet's works appear to function in their relationships. Do we need to debase God in order

to love him? Does Gawain's asexuality and failures stem from operating on a hyper-Thanatosian drive? Freud's different definition of Eros and the Erotic drive from Plato provides a dynamic in reading these texts that ought to prove their worth in employing both definitions. I believe the two definitions operate on two immortalities in their design, Freud's concept of immortality focuses on the preservation of the species, while Socrates's immortality operates to preserve the person's character in some regard.

Lauren Berlant fuses Freud's theories with postmodern theory: "it's clear that the subjectivity desire makes is fundamentally incited by *external* stimuli that make a dent on the subject" (75); that is, Soble's notion of x loves y because y has S is a social construction made by the loving subject and projected onto the object. However, for Berlant, desire creates and/or defines the loving subject: we can know and understand the identity of the lover by who/what they love. I use desire as self-reflective love as a key component in understanding literary love: in order to understand certain characters, the task becomes understanding how God (for example) is created and defined through what he loves (such as patience and cleanness). Although Berlant cannot give a concrete definition of love based in reality, she understands love's portrayal in film and literature:

The fantasy, which is at the heart of both popular culture and Lacanian psychoanalysis, is that love is the misrecognition you like, can bear, and will try to keep consenting to. If the Other will accept your fantasy/realism as the condition of their encounter with their own lovability, and if you will agree to accept theirs, the couple (it could be any relation) has a fighting chance not to be destroyed by the aggressive presence of ambivalence" (106).

While Berlant seems radically different from the other theorists, her analysis of fictional love acts as a recapitulation of the couple acting as a loving unit by way of acknowledging an additional reality: knowledge of the fantasy shared between friends, family, and lovers. Thus, Berlant's logical step maintains Soble's logical explanation, but with the additional maxim that x loves y because y has S, and y willingly displays S because y believes x has S₁, a set of attractive traits analogous to x's belief in S for y. The staying power comes from the attractive S and S₁ properties' acceptance by x and y regardless of their truth value. Berlant's definition is Freudian, but with a post-modern twist of self-awareness.

So what is love? Love is a fantasy: a desire for someone who has, or exhibits in the lover's fantasy, likeable characteristics. The desire is selfish, stemming from a drive for one's own immortality. Love desires and creates a desire to always be together: a selfish yearning of ownership over another individual, even if the two share the same sentiment. Therefore, love is a selfish desire for immortality eternally projected towards someone who is believed to have desirable characteristics, and that fantasy is returned and accepted. I will be using this definition throughout the analysis of the poems, along with the previously discussed forms of identifying acts of love in Platonic, Freudian, and Berlantian conceptions of love.

For the Love of God: Theology and Eroticism in "Cleanness" and "Patience"

Throughout the texts in the *Cotton Nero A.x* manuscripts, the poet uses very human terms in order to understand how God's love works in the homiletic poems. Throughout this section, I argue that God's love is written as a selfish quest for

immortality. I use the "Cleanness" and "Patience" texts as foundational texts that help situate the world of *Pearl* and *SGGK*.

In "Cleanness," the poet's portrayal of the first act of love is God acting alone:

“& amed hit in Myn ordenaunce oddely dere,
& dyȝt drwry þer-inne, doole alþer-swettest,
& þe play of paramoreȝ I portrayed my seluen;
& made þer-to a maner myriest of oþer,
When two true togeder had tyȝed hem seluen;
By-twene a male and his make such merþe schulde co[m]e,
Wel nyȝe pure paradys moȝt preue no better” (Cleanness 698-704).

God portrays the roles of two "paramoreȝ" himself. In terms of love, God has the profound capability to love himself in such a manner that it serves as the act of creation and designates, as precedent, how human procreation follows: "By-twene a male and his make," which creates a heteronormative sexuality found throughout the Pearl Poet's works.

I claim that God's "portrayed" play of paramoreȝ means that God fashioned the model for human sex and genesis and first performed it himself through an act of narcissistic selfishness. By first judging the act of love as good (699) and subsequently performing the act (700), God's love for himself self-serves his own immortality, and appropriately following, creates his own immortality by being able to love himself as well as create things *ex nihilo* through this act. The created beings, humans, then copy this act of creation as a means of procreation, and when successful, are rewarded with "a maner myriest of oþer," that when they have sex, "such merþe schulde come, Wel nyȝe

pure paradys mozt preve no better:" they experience bliss comparable to the bliss of heaven. Thus, God's promulgation of procreation, and the subsequent fulfillment of procreative sex, reflects God's love back to himself because his creation mimics his own act of creation. The fantasy of God is both fancied by God and people, which validates God's own love of himself. By extension, the very state of existence itself could very well be because of a fantasy that God has with himself, and we created beings are a thing brought to fruition because of God's premier sexuality. ¹

Beyond God's desire for mimicry, mimicry plays a larger role in how romance and wooing works: "Cleanness" presents a case in which mimicry works as a selfish means to an end. The task of mimicking a love object works to gain the love object's admiration:

“For clopyngnel in þe compas of his clene rose,
þer he expouneþ a speche, to hym þat spede wolde,
Of a lady to be loued, loke to hir sone,
Of wich beryng þat ho be, & wych ho best louyes,
& be ryzt such in vch a borþe of body & of dedes,
& folþ þe fet of þat fere þat þou fre haldes;
& if þou wyrkkes on þis wyse, þaþ ho wyk were,
Hir schal lyke þat layk þat lyknes hir tulle.” (1057-64).

Recalling Berlant's notion that desire shows a self-reflection through defining the lover, "Cleanness" instructs its readers to use mimicry in order to woo a mate. Wooing through mimicry works by understanding what the Other finds desirable: thus, one must "loke to hir sone," and "be ryzt such in vch a borþe of body & of dedes," meaning, one must carry

themselves in a manner that reflects how the Other acts. Wooing through mimicry works by playing a meta game with the Other's desires, and demonstrates selfishness because the wooer must play into the desires of the Other, not because the wooer legitimately enjoys the same desires as the love object, but simply expresses the desirable traits as a means to have the lover for themselves.

In "Patience," the same art of wooing applies to human's love of God through a set of fantasies:

“If we þyse ladyes wolde lof in lyknyng of þewes;
Dame pouert, Dame pitée, Dame penaunce þe þrydde,
Dame Mekenesse, Dame mercy, & Miry clannesse,
& þenne Dame pes, and pacyence put in þer-after.

He were happen þat hade one; alle were þe better” (30-34).

Contextually, if one has trouble with patience or any other virtue, he or she can conjure an image of a lady who exemplifies the virtue he ought to desire. As one might guess, the reader then woos the imaginary ladies by reflecting their virtue in order to be more desirable to God.

The twofold wooing of Ladies and God connotes that the lover attempting to woo both must fantasize God as a Lady of Virtue. Recalling Freud's usage of debasement, the poet advocates for reducing God to something earthly men can understand: wooing women. The transferral of identities allows the reader to operate on a functional level in their new religious quest of loving God. Reducing God to the qualities of wooable women certainly misrecognizes God, but if God accepts the fantasy, the two, God and human, may attempt a chance at eternal love, which could be marked as a success for the

poet-homilist.

Praxis of Theological Love: Pearl's Devotion, a Father's Eroticism, and an Aloof God

In what manner can a human's love for God act as a means to achieve immortality? Concerning "Cleanness," I discussed God's selfish desire for a person's love to validate his own existence, but in what way does a mortal's desire for God serve to grant the lovers immortality in the Platonic sense? In *Pearl*, a bride of Christ and a recent religious convert become an analyzable love object and lover who demonstrate the facets of desire belonging to the poet's cultural attitude toward God. Thus, we find in *Pearl* the narrator/father in the poem acts erotically towards his recently deceased daughter, God appears dismissive of his followers, and the devoted Christians cling to their fantasies of God in heaven.

The narrator's interactions with Pearl display a desire for power in the narrator. The narrator encounters Pearl in a dream-vision of heaven, where he mistakes her for someone of higher regality:

Art þou þuene of heueneȝ blwe,
þat al þys worlde schal do honour?
We leuen on marye þat grace of grewe,
þat ber a barne of vyrgyn flour,
þe croune fro hyr quo moȝt remwe,
Bot ho hir passed in sum fauour? (423-428)

The narrator understands Mary to be queen of heaven and "quen of cotaysye" (433), which demonstrates some knowledge of Christian Mariology, but mistakes his lost Pearl as a usurper: someone who *hir passed in sum fauour*. The misrecognition stems from a

desire for power and a misunderstanding of the conventions of the kingdom of heaven, which continues well into the narrative:

“For kryst han lyued in much stryf,
& þou con alle þo dere out-dryf,
& fro þat maryag al oþer depres,
Al only þyself so stout & styf,
A makeleȝ may & maskelleȝ” (776-780).

In another misunderstanding of *kryst's* marriages in heaven, the narrator believes the *precios perle wythouten spotte* before him became the singular bride of Christ, which Pearl corrects:

“Maskelles,” quod þat myry quene,
“Vnblemyst I am wyth-outen blot,
& þat may I with mensk menteene;
Bot makeleȝ quene þenne sade I not,
Þe lambes vyueȝ in blysse we bene,
A hondred & forty þowsande flot (781-86)

Pearl reveals that the narrator correctly guesses at Pearl's *unblemyst* soul, but wrong in understanding her place in heaven. The narrator esteems Pearl's status as *quene*, which shows his eagerness for social gain. Later in my analysis, I revisit the narrator's desire for power when he begins to desire things greater than what Pearl can offer him. Pearl cannot ascend to the title of *quene*, but for the narrator's desires, she succeeds in becoming a bride of kryst: one of 140,000.

As for Jesus, Jesus's marriages seem farfetched in terms of what God deems appropriate in "Cleanness." For example, compare Jesus's 140,00 brides with the poet's retelling of the tale of Belshazzar:

“In lust & in lecherye, & lopelych werkkes;
& hade a wyf forto welde, a worthlych quene,
& mony a lemman, neuer þe later, þat ladis wer called” (“Cleanness”

1350-52)

The reconciliation between Jesus's good standing in his marriages and Belshazzar's sexuality must tend to Jesus's lack of *lust* and *lecherye*, and Belshazzar having *mony a lemman* outside the bonds of marriage. However, Jesus remains aloof to the needs of his brides, and his innocence in his marriages fails to address his lack of desire toward them. Thus, it must be the case that God's view of marriage is the fulfillment of desires and fantasies, which does not necessitate a participatory love. Jesus fulfills his lovers' fantasies (and vice versa), so their marriages remain intact.

The visions of Jesus's marriages in heaven show that the marriages rely on fantasies of status:

“Þise alder men quen he aproched,
Grouelyng to his fete þay felle;
Legyounes of aungeleȝ togeder uoched,
Þer kesten ensens of swete smelle,
Þen glory & gle watȝ nwe abroched.
Al songe to loue þat gay Iuelle” (1119-24).

The marriages work because of the fantasies between the participants. Jesus, perhaps having finished his business long ago, now enjoys the *grouelyng* of elders, legions of angels, and his brides who come to him. The powerful and spotless beings inhabiting heaven do so because they accept Jesus as someone worthy of their love and deserving of such *grouelyng* and glory. However, the scene depicts Jesus as appearing before his lovers and worshippers, listens to the songs of praise and groveling of the elders, and leaves. His entire capacity in his marital duties is simply to be present. Along with the heavenly host, the narrator accepts Jesus's presence into his own fantasy of idyllic relationships and power, and Jesus's presence then becomes the lone gift the narrator seeks. At the conclusion of the poem, the narrator discovers that Jesus's gift of presence in heaven can be supplied to those on earth, without the attachment of marriage:

“For pyty of my perle encyclin,
& syþen to got I hit by-taʒte,
In krysteʒ dere blessing & myn
Þat in þe forme of bred & wyn
Þe preste scheweʒ vch a daye;
He gef vus to be his homly hyne,
Ande precious perleʒ vnto his pay. Amen. Amen” (1207-12).

In the *forme of bred & wyn*, Jesus gives himself to all on earth if we choose to accept him on earth, and those who accept Jesus's fantasy may enjoy the bliss of heaven on earth. The narrator accepts the fantasy of Jesus and desires the presence of Jesus just as the wives in heaven. Due to Pearl's vision of heaven given to the narrator, the narrator need not debase Jesus into a maiden of virtue, but finds him *in þe forme of bred & wyn*.

For Josephine Bloomfield, *Pearl* offers the reader a system of mirrors for reflecting Godliness, and it is through optics that Pearl attempts, but ultimately fails, to convince the narrator of what is offered (165). According to Bloomfield, the original audience for *Pearl* relied on the optics of Aristotle, Bernard of Clairveux, Thomas Aquinas, among others, with 14th century beliefs of the eye operating as the "negotiator between body and mind, between exterior and interior worlds, between seeing and loving God" (166). Bloomfield employs Dante's *Commedia* and Jean de Meun's *Roman de la Rose* to help guide her analysis in situating both the audience and writer's understanding of mirrors. Bloomfield's usage of De Meun is consistent with my earlier usage during "Cleanness," in which De Meun instructs readers how to woo someone.

Bloomfield places Pearl as the literary mirror according to the optics of 14th century thought. Pearl performs the mimicry described earlier in the wooing in "Cleanness," and acts as God's "incarnation of aspects of Christian theology" (176); that is, Pearl typifies virtues of Saints, especially Saint Margaret, called Saint Pearl. Pearl's ability to reflect Christian virtues culminates in understanding her political context. Here, Bloomfield takes issue with the relationship between gender and authority, especially how a "female authority figure... in a world whose theology is dominated by a trinity of male beings and in which the only important female figure is merciful and intercessory but never authoritative and dogmatic" (179). Bloomfield's answer rests, and wrests, in Julia Kristeva's understanding of the myth of Narcissus, in which Narcissus fails to understand his reflection, when he "forgets [he] is the reflection of the Other (the Lord)" (180). By way of Kristeva's understanding of reflections in the myth of Narcissus, Bloomfield places narcissism (or narcissian ideology) with Christian love, that is, with

agape. For Bloomfield, *agape* is "self-sufficient love that radiates in itself and for itself..." (180). Thus, Pearl can act as an intercessor and guide because she reflects godliness, so she acts authoritatively towards the narrator.

Though we took different approaches, my thesis agrees with Bloomfield's; however, once Bloomfield uses agape, my analysis (based on eros) cannot reconcile with Bloomfield's. Bloomfield uses the 13th century *agape feast* to situate the historical background to "Pearl" (184-5), noting how the narrator turns to the Host after the vision to experience God and literally come into communion with God through absorption of the Eucharist. While the focus on agape certainly helps Bloomfield's analysis in reflecting God, my analysis turns to the more pessimistic, perhaps, as I placed ulterior motives behind the narrator's and God's decisions, which are made not strictly out of generosity or *caritas*.

Bloomfield uses Bernard of Clairvaux's three steps of movement towards God to situate the theology and love of God in *Pearl*. For Bernard of Clairvaux: "1) we first love ourselves; then, 2) we love God, but for our own advantage; then, 3) we love God not for our advantage but for the sake of God" (185). Bloomfield appropriates the stages of love as systems of reflections in loving oneself (185). Thus, Bloomfield believes that self-love, i.e. narcissism through employing devotion to self-reflection, acts as a work for salvation; and spiritual reflection, found in "two of the greatest medieval poems," (186) Dante's *Commedia* and de Meun's *Roman de la Rose* influence *Pearl* in not only optics and mirrors but also how "they confront or ironically engage with human behavior in the spiritual/material universe" (186). Thus, Bloomfield concludes that the Pearl poet recapitulates the theology of Bernard and Thomas of Aquinas, but "appears to be

skeptical about fallen human nature and the likelihood for the ordinary human to be able to treat self-love as merely the first stage in a reflective journey toward God" (188).

Pearl, then, acts as an intercessory guide for the reader just as the characters Pearl and Beatrice in their respective poems act as guides for their narrator-protagonists.

To conclude Bloomfield's work, our analyses work well together in understanding how the poet employs the trope of mirroring characters. Bloomfield more literally looks at the optical implications to guide her analysis, while my discussion refers to mirrors figuratively through mimicry. However, in my analysis, the two concepts can work hand-in-hand as the literal mirror serves as yet another manifestation of mimicry. Thus, the optical eye, with the ability of the lustful/desiring gaze, serves as the prime mover of love and desire. However, our analyses disagree at the point of human's ability to love God, perhaps because I invoke the other Cotton Nero A.x poems and use the Ladies of Virtue depicted in "Patience" as well as the act of creation in "Cleanness" in which God creates through sex, whereas Bloomfield treats *Pearl* as a standalone text. Thus, love through mimicry is perfectly acceptable in going through the different Barnardian stages described by Bloomfield, but Bloomfield seems hesitant in allowing love of God through abstract thoughts such as the Ladies of Virtue.

In "*Pearl* and the Contingencies of Love and Piety," Medievalist Lynn Staley attributes Pearl to the historical Isabel, the daughter of Thomas of Woodstock, and names the Minoresses in London and the founder of the Poor Clares/Minoresses, Clare of Assisi, as having heavily influenced the *Pearl* (84). Staley examines three areas to analyze the poem: the piety of Thomas of Woodstock, how the poem serves the poet and/or its patron, and whether or not the poem's background depends upon a literal death

in our world to maintain its allegorical function. Pertinent to my analysis are points one and three. Staley's examination of the poem's language refers to how the Pearl child's body presented itself in the narrator's land but not in another, which, Staley asserts as perfectly functional in a poem that honors the transition of someone from the secular world to the monastic life (104). Staley points towards the garden setting of the poem and both the pastoral landscape of a monastery and the garden of paradise (104-105); namely, "the garden setting that served as the landscape of earthly love and death and the pastoral language of erotic love were as frequently used by monastic writers to describe the Virgin's sealed purity, the delights of the garden of paradise, or the hide-and-seek of spiritual love and desire (105). Staley's argument complements my analysis of the erotic love between god and human, but furthers implicates eroticism to say that it exists even in the monastic setting, which means the poem presents the idea that monastic settings serve for people to enter marriage (union) with God.

For Staley, Isabel's, or the child's "death" in the poem employs the language of virginity (105): what makes the feat of pious virginity impressive is saved for those who have lived a reasonably full life, and a small child dying a virgin has not overcome any ordeal if they happen to die before sexual maturity. Thus, the child's virginity upon her dying to a certain way of life is commensurate with the dedication of a novice at the monastery, and is not superfluously attached to a child who physically died before engaging in intercourse. Likewise, Staley suggests Thomas of Woodstock's piety by considering him as the narrator of the poem. The narrator argues against the Parable of the Vineyard, stating that heaven cannot operate like that, and that a just reward would be to give people their pay based on seniority (590-615). However, the parable works so

well for Thomas of Woodstock because of the wisdom of understanding the donation of a child to the monastery as a certain payment towards salvation, and perhaps, as the closing lines of the poem demand: "& precious perles unto his paye" (1214, Staley 107). In erotic language, the price is worthy of Jesus's attention, and such a child belongs as a bride of Christ, and the consecrated life guarantees a gateway to the celestial marriage.

Finally, the poem serves its patron by "remarking upon his gift and his place in a community of career virgins... [and] also remarked his piety and his interest in and ability to follow arguments about the nature of grace" (108). The poem, then, acts as an intercessory reminder of Thomas of Woodstock's piety, his devotion to the religious communities, and his abilities as an amateur theologian. Thus, *Pearl* serves not as an artistic monument to Isabel, but serves as a testament to Thomas of Woodstock himself *because* of "his" gift of his daughter to the London Minoreesses, and, as Staley argues, his potential reasoning of donating innocence, "does he reap its rewards?" (107).

Scholar Jane Gilbert examines sexuality and gender more deeply in "Cleanness," *Pearl*, and *SGGK*. Identical to this essay, Gilbert considers "Cleanness" as a foundational poem and likewise discovers strict heteronormative mores, and the breaking of them: "Cleanness" and its example of the men of Sodom committing the sexual taboos of treating other men, sexually, as women, and desiring angels for their sexuality "operates a powerfully authorized enforcement of a particular brand of sexuality, and a corresponding condemnation of other versions, represented here by... extreme endogamy and exogamy" (58). Gilbert's notion of extreme endogamy and exogamy in relationships and desires received from "Cleanness" operates as the driving force of transgressions in

her analysis for *Pearl* and *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, thus solidifying her treatment of the texts in the manuscript together.

Gilbert contrasts the sexuality and desires found in *Pearl* to that of the ideals of the era: "*Cleanness* is wedded to the idea of compulsory heterosexuality, in a way which is quite foreign to the courtly and mystical discourses used by both *Pearl* and *Gawain*. In the heavenly context depicted by *Pearl*... all-human heterosexuality is shown to be as inappropriate as are extreme endogamy and exogamy" (58-59). Furthermore, much of the poem consists of the narrator using explicitly courtly/erotic language with an individual who is extremely endogamous and taboo. However, in the dream-vision section of the poem, Gilbert notes the shifts in focus and power: the focus on the narrator, at once the creator and subject loving the object Pearl, shifts to the way how Pearl gains the power by way of being the lover of Jesus (60-61). With little (if any) effect on the narrator's desires for Pearl, Pearl's active love gives her the language of power and feminizes the narrator by swapping the roles of power. Due to Pearl's discourse on heaven, the roles of the narrator and Pearl level at the end of the poem: the narrator is convinced to direct his desires toward Jesus, though the desire seems to be as transgressive as the narrator's desire for Pearl in terms of endogamy/exogamy (61). Ultimately, when *Pearl* moves to the scene of the New Jerusalem, *Pearl* "moves into mysticism: a genre in which normative, bridal and conjugal imagery is commonly combined with polymorphous sexuality and fluid gender. This combination is ideal—so long as the object of desire is Christ" (61). For Gilbert, the compulsory heterosexuality found in "*Cleanness*" finds itself broadened to include those once considered endogamous and exogamous: union with God becomes an acceptable practice and treating others with a sexuality regardless

of their sex or gender becomes permissible for both brides of Christ and Jesus showing his feminine wounds (61-62). Thus, *Pearl* reconciles its groundwork found in the earlier poems by providing the reader with an alternative: the rules of heaven allow for more ambiguous sexuality when the desire is aimed at God.

For my own use, Gilbert's analysis thus far explicates the relationship of Pearl, God, and the narrator through understanding the cultural taboos normatively given to two different cultures: the culture of people on earth, and those in heaven. Normative deontological ethics, especially under the guise of divine command theory, often escapes analysis without criticism, but *Pearl* offers a chance at a comparative analysis which helps understand why the rules fluctuate between the different worlds (so to speak). Thus, there exists a loophole in *Pearl* that allows humans to circumvent the laws given to them from God, and that is to subscribe to the only other choice, though perhaps superfluous: love Jesus.

The alternate form of acceptable desire cannot solve the problems inherent with a compulsory heterosexual mandate, but it may serve to mitigate any transgressions done by those who cannot comply with the mandate. For example: Pearl, through an act of piety, chooses God as her love object and source of desire over the earthly desires of both men and women. In the code of ethics Pearl navigates, any homosexual desires are forbidden to her. In the secular world, Pearl can live a life of heterosexual desires and have no repercussions if she acts according to proper laws (recall in "Cleanness" the heteronormative sexuality performed in marriage "Wel nyȝe pure paradys moȝt preue no better" [704]). Sex itself is not the problem, but as Gilbert notes, sexualities outside the bounds of a naturally reproductive sexuality deontologically provided by God acts

against him. I find it proper to return to the earlier argument: for God, sex is an act that reflects his own creation of humans found in "Cleanness," and when the two parts of the creation, man and woman, perform the act, God himself understands the act as mimicry of his own creation, and deems it to be good and just because it is godlike. However, a homosexual encounter only provides pleasure for those in the act, and God cannot be satisfied by the non-creative act. Thus, if humans copulate for pleasure in themselves and for each other, it is sinful and selfish on the humans behalf. But for heterosexual couples joined together, procreative sex simultaneously serves God's creation and pleases God, so he deems it good and just. Thus, one can circumvent human sexuality and solely desire God, which also pleases God's ego and he deems it a good a just act; so, the only allowable desires are ones towards God or those that reflect God's own action, and this mimicry or direct flirtation means that we must accept that God can only accept love that involves himself in the equation, which makes him selfish to the point of Narcissism: God can only see himself as a viable lover when others copy his own act of creation. The implication that follows God's logical structure for positive sexuality can then be applied to those who do not follow the procreative sexualities or those which direct desire solely to God are wrong: these alternatives [endogamous love which can include homosexual, incest, and Narcissism, as well as exogamous love towards far too distant of creatures that cannot yield procreative children, and perhaps even too high or too low of social status] are taboo and fail to include God in some way. *Pearl's* God desires both of Plato's creations, children and works, because all reflect back to himself, and regardless of the status as lesser and greater children, they are all under God's ownership, and continue his immortality.

Similar to the previous two scholars, María Bullón-Fernández, in her essay "'Byȝonde þe water': Courtly and Religious Desire in *Pearl*," applies courtly desire to *Pearl*. For Bullón-Fernández, the courtly and religious components of the poem cannot be divorced from each other in *Pearl* (37), especially in how the poem fuses courtly vision, religious vision, and contemplative vision. Bullón-Fernández compares *Pearl* to other poems that influenced its genre-bending design, such as *Romance of the Rose* and Dante's *Divine Comedy*: in which, "secular and religious love become one" (37). Bullón-Fernández points to how the narrator understands Pearl in secular terms, so when Pearl tells the narrator that Jesus is "My ioy, my blys, my lemman fre" (796), the courtly language means nothing to Pearl as it has only spiritual connotations: "as a blessed creature, she can disregard any sexual and secular connotations in her words; to her, the courtly sense of her words does not blur the spiritual sense" (42). My analysis disagrees with Bullón-Fernández's determination of Pearl's innocence. Recalling the only other usage of "lemman" in the Pearl Poet's work happens on line 1352 in "Cleanness" when describing Belshazzar's multiple concubines. The word *lemman*, to Bullón-Fernández's point, refers to both lovers (including concubines and spouses) as well as referring to love objects of spiritual desire, especially Jesus and the Virgin Mary. The duplicity of *lemman* reifies Bullón-Fernández's point that the two worlds of the courtly and religious sectors cannot be divorced from each other in these writings. The difference in my analysis and Bullón-Fernández's analysis tends towards attitudes of the characters: Bullón-Fernández treats the characters in *Pearl* with serious connections to real world counterparts, thus, it becomes difficult to doubt the piety of Pearl *and* God, whereas I disengage the poetry from the real world because the poetic representations of God and the Pearl appear

imperfect in their design, but also: they are artistic renderings, and so subject to criticism.²

For Bullón-Fernández, the narrator understands only secular meanings to the poem's metaphysical content (42). The narrator directs his desires as per Pearl's wishes, but when he desires God, he truly thinks of Pearl (43). Thus, for the binary of Pearl and the narrator: Pearl is an ambiguous figure, especially for leading the narrator in his vision of the Christian afterlife, which succeeds in literally showing him heaven, but leads to the narrator's downfall for desiring what he saw (44), and so, Pearl acts more as a tempter than a benevolent guide. The narrator, then, offers little repentance and accepts the will of God despite not being satisfied by the vision, perhaps because of his over-eager ambitions (44-45), like an Adam and Eve character, trying to get more than God grants.

Compared to Bullón-Fernández's analysis, I give the narrator a little more credit for his desires for God by linking his desires to his daughter and to God separately. Recalling Freud's notion of debasement, one can understand the narrator's compulsion towards Pearl and later God. For the narrator, his desires for his daughter become socially acceptable by imagining her in an adult form. The narrator's desire for his daughter eerily reminds us of a Madonna complex, but the narrator ultimately fails in producing an effective love object in Pearl because she disregards any advance by him and directs his desires to God. However, what really converts the narrator to desire God are visions of the power Jesus commands. One of the most striking scenes shows all the denizens of heaven in reverence at the sight of Jesus:

Delyt that hys come encroched,
To much it were of for to melle.

Thise aldermen, quen he aproched,
Grovelyng to his fete thay felle.
Legyounes of aungeles, togeder voched,
Ther kesten ensens of swete smelle.
Then glory and gle was nwe abroched;
Al songe to love that gay juelle (1117-24).

The narrator sees elders and angels grovel at the feet of Jesus, and sing songs of glory, while Jesus *only* has to appear to have this effect: no further commands or directions are necessary, just doing his duty to appear. In the next section (section 20, beginning line 1153), the narrator desires to join the group of *aldermen* and *aungels* in their allegiance to God, and by the end of the poem tries to convince readers that, "in the forme of bred and wyn" (1209), the people on earth can get all their desires of God fulfilled by participating in the Eucharistic celebration. Thus, the narrator shows that he wants the power of God so much that he is willing to ingest God's flesh and blood, and in some way have God be a part of his own body. For the narrator, desire for power comes first, and immortality, another power, becomes a benefit of fulfilling those desires. The narrator debases God by reducing God to the earthly substance: the *bred and wyn*, and so he discovers in the church the easy alternative union with God compared to the lengthy labors of a virgin wife that Pearl must endure.

For Pearl's desires, she properly wards off endogamous courtesans (her father the narrator) and favors to opt into desiring Jesus, which, as described above, is an allowed desire that circumvents all-human sexuality because choosing to make God the object of desire instead of reflecting God's act of creation still has God in the equation of love.

Pearl opting for the marriage in heaven demonstrates that she qualifies herself to something higher than that which earthly delights offer her. Thus, she must esteem herself worthy of marrying only Jesus, and *Pearl* makes no attempt at how one becomes a bride of Christ other than joining a monastery and maintaining a state of virginity. So for Pearl, it must be the case that either she chooses Jesus to escape an otherwise oppressive heteronormative sexuality and have some (but not complete) autonomy, or she chooses Jesus freely because she believes that she deserves (and earns) a marriage with God and refuses a lesser marriage with a man. Because of Pearl's language throughout the poem, it seems that she indeed accepts the fantasy God provides her, and gives God what he desires in return for that very fantasy of a heavenly marriage. In turn, Pearl's and God's desire for each other produces a Socratic offspring; their marriage convinces the narrator of the fantasy of God and heavenly bliss and "wins" the soul through conversion: an immortal contribution to society. Like the erotic hierarchy found in *The Symposium*, the offspring of God and Pearl resembles a ladder of increasingly spiritual desire that inspires the narrator and audience, which we see realized in the conversion of the narrator.

Thus, for the poet's God, we see that all his work in controlling sexualities reflects directly back to himself, and God's love is indeed erotic in nature: the actions in line with God's commandments reward God with more followers, and those who act desiring God's approval, get rewarded with entrance to heaven. When the fantasy between God and a human becomes fulfilled, people gain entrance to heaven as denizens or brides of Christ, and it matters not how Jesus's aloofness seems to the casual observer: those who have entered into the union already have their fantasies realized, and the reader can gain nothing more than a glimpse of heaven showing how God's end of the bargain, allowing

marriages with Jesus, has been fulfilled. Jesus only has to make his rounds before those who he has won for himself. As Socrates understood, all love strives for immortality, and for these characters, Pearl and the narrator gain a certain literal immortality by choosing to love God, while God's immortality remains stable as he keeps gaining followers to legitimize his existence. The more followers God gains, the love towards him compounds to greater proportions, which ultimately shows God's necessarily selfish depiction in *Pearl*.

In conclusion of *Pearl*, I have demonstrated how the narrator, Pearl, and God interact with each other in *Pearl* through a philosophical investigation that employs the poems "Patience" and "Cleanness" as groundwork for "Pearl" and use them as the identified theology of the Cotton Nero A.x manuscript. God, namely Jesus, acts purely as a receiver of love in *Pearl*, while Pearl deprives herself of earthly bliss in favor of courting Jesus, and the narrator has a complicated duality of trying to impress his daughter through trying to impress God by following his commands, which were taught to him by Pearl. Understanding these relationships in Socratic terms, I argue for the selfishness of all three characters in *Pearl*, noting Pearl's inability to desire anyone less than God, the narrator's desire for powerful beings, and God needing to be a part of all love equations, thus, what *Pearl* offers the reader in its vision of heaven cannot be the egalitarian agape, but individuals desiring status in a heaven that otherwise has equal immortality, only different states of closeness (which can mean status) to God.

Sir Gawain and the (K)Nights without Love: Courtly Obligations and Religious Devotion with no God

In *SGGK*, elucidating Gawain's love uncovers a complicated character enwrapped in a plethora of social bonds, but by poem's end, only loves himself. The decisions Gawain makes throughout the entirety of the poem only temporarily grant him immunity from future situations and gain reputation with his admirers as a good knight in Arthur's court. Of course, selfishness is rooted in self-love, so for the sake of *SGGK*, I will examine Gawain's use of *luf-talkyng*, notions of his worth, and the final determination by the characters as well as the implications of the motto closing the poem. Gawain tragically only appears to love himself, while other characters misrecognize or reject his fantasies, and thus, Gawain ends up without loving anyone while slipping through games testing his honor and worthiness.

Because Gawain must navigate the social bonds of Camelot, Bertilak's court, Christian duties, and chivalric ideals, *luf-talkyng* becomes Gawain's method of accommodating his allegiances and delay his responsibilities or allay any impact from scorned obligations. When Gawain arrives at Bertilak's castle, another game begins in which everything Bertilak wins in his hunts for the day, Gawain receives, and everything Gawain wins in Bertilak's court, Bertilak receives. The problem for Gawain is the clash between his Christian duties and his courtly responsibilities: if Gawain performs amicably in court, he may transgress Christian mores. By so doing, not only would Gawain risk premarital/extramarital affairs, but he would then have to submit the deeds to Bertilak, which would certainly transgress the heteronormative sexuality so ingrained in the Pearl Poet's works. On the other hand, if Gawain succeeds in maintaining a clerical level of celibacy, his courtly duties to the women at Bertilak's castle would remain unfulfilled, and his renown (and Arthur's court) would decrease for ignoring the desires

of courtly subjects. The tool Gawain must use, then, is *luf-talkyng*, a style of courtly talk that, if skilled enough, Gawain can talk his way through situations while still appearing desirable at court.

Expounding *luf-talkyng* defines one's understanding of Gawain because *luf-talkyng* is critical to his quest, and, critical to interpretation, defining how Gawain uses it differs between scholars drastically. Conor McCarthy offers a genealogy of the scholarly understanding of the term, and argues that understanding *luf-talkyng* helps understand the poem (in total, not just the character Gawain), but scholars often brush it off as a form of talking about love: one of the most popular subjects of the time. Briefly, McCarthy notes that D.S. Brewer's understanding of *luf-talkyng* as a means of polite conversation about love and Jonathan Nicholls's definition as a means of courting someone *by* talking about love are certainly possibilities (156), but McCarthy asks to take it a step further: *luf-talkyng* is amorous conversation, the language of courting, or the prescribed manner (thus courteous) in which a lover may talk to her/his love object (157). The difference between Gawain's superior ability and his failure in the exchange hinges upon Gawain using *luf-talkyng* as a means to get out of Lady Bertilak's traps, but Lady Bertilak speaks the less clean version of *luf-talkyng*, the sort that leads to adultery, and Gawain plays along because of his courtesy. Lady Bertilak's *luf-talkyng* beats Gawain's naivete, but Gawain ultimately gets out of his predicament by taking his *luf-talkyng* to Bertilak at the Green Chapel, in which Gawain shows his love of himself through *cowardice* and *couevtyse*. Another scholar, Myra Stokes, argues that Lady Bertilak uses Gawain's clean *luf-talkyng* against him in the third fitt of the poem (158). For McCarthy, Stokes' argument falls short in arguing the fit of *luf* to the qualities of knighthood, namely courtesy and truth: the core

values of Gawain (158). But for McCarthy, Gawain's *luf-talkyng* also includes the trade of the girdle, later called a *luf-lace* and *drurye* (1874, 2033), in which, the acceptance by Gawain does not necessarily mean Gawain accepts Lady Bertilak's vocabulary, but believes in the *trawþe* of the Lady's love for him. McCarthy specifically points out Jane Gilbert's argument from "Gender and Sexual Transgression," in which the concealment of the girdle refers to sexual sin and aiding infidelity. McCarthy ends his analysis by again mentioning that readers must keep an open mind about the possibilities of *luf-talkyng* could mean for Gawain and the poem (161).

My thesis understands *luf-talkyng* in similar terms as McCarthy, namely his definition that allows *luf-talkyng* to be the actual dialogue in courtship, that is, *luf-talkyng* describes the speech Gawain (and whoever) use, not the subject of the conversation. *Luf-talkyng* becomes a tool in Gawain's repertoire: he understands that part of his fame depends upon his ability in *luf-talkyng*. If *luf-talkyng* refers to talking about love, like some scholars McCarthy points out assume, then Gawain's speeches would reflect those like one would read in Plato's *The Symposium*, and Gawain clearly has no speeches in the realm of philosophy or introspection, but uses his culture's rhetorical device of *luf-talkyng* as a means to an end: *luf-talkyng* charms the listener to make himself a desirable person. Instead of philosophy, Gawain speaks in a pleasing manner to move through erotic conversations in order to reduce both sin and cultural expectations to the lowest commitments possible. Because Gawain does not enter into a fully sexual encounter with Lady Bertilak, and because Gawain fulfills the courtesy required in pleasing Lady Bertilak, his *luf-talkyng* thus succeeds as a rhetorical device to get him the least amount of sin while fulfilling social obligations, which is why Bertilak estimates him as the most

worthy of knights: "þe fautlest freke þat euer on fote ȝede... so is gawayn in god fayth bi oþer gay knyȝtez" (2363-65). In another example of Gawain's *luf-talkyng*, Gawain's guide warns him of the notoriety of the Green Chapel and Bertilak's love of exchanging blows, and his constant success, so much that the guide guarantees Gawain's death if he enters the Green Chapel (2110-11). The servant is from Bertilak's own castle, but Gawain had won him over as well, since the servant warns Gawain solely because Gawain is "a lede vpon lyue þat I wel louy" (2095). Gawain's popularity through *luf-talkyng* at Bertilak's court works in his favor to gain people who love him enough to benefit his quest.

Beyond using *luf-talkyng* to carefully navigate social occasions, Gawain tends to selfish decisions through eroticism. After Gawain's welcome and dinner at Bertilak's castle, Bertilak introduces Gawain to Lady Bertilak, 'ho watz þe fayrest in felle of fleshe and of lyre / and of compas and colour and costes of alle oþer / and wener þen wenore as þe wyȝe þoȝt" (943-45). Lady Bertilak's beauty surpassing Guinevere's suggests a higher ranking in courtly desire through Gawain's eyes. Specifically, referring to the queen's beauty in the text and providing an example of someone who exceeds her beauty begins to show Gawain's faltering allegiance to Camelot. Lady Bertilak's description then turns to the juxtaposed old lady, who readers know as Morgan le fey, described as "schort & þik" (966), with the writer pointing out unflattering basic forms, such as two eyes, a nose, and naked lips (962). Gawain accompanies Lady Bertilak (naturally), and without provocation or other clear commands, "þe loueloker" Gawain chooses, "he lappez a lyttel in armez / he kysses hir comlyly and knyȝtly he melez / þay kallen hym of aquoyntaunce and he hit quyk askez / to be her seruant sothly if hemselyked" (973-6). Based on looks alone, a sign of lust and eros, Gawain chooses a lady and kisses her, wraps her up in his

arms, and asks if he can assist her as a true servant. In response, Lady Bertilak and her retinue of ladies take Gawain to his bed chamber. The next day, Gawain's love of power continues to shake his allegiance for Camelot by seeing the ancient lady Morgan seated above Bertilak (1001), and by sitting together with Lady Bertilak (1003), who dazzles Gawain "þurȝ her dere dalyaunce of her derne wordez / wyth clene cortays carp closed fro fylþe" (1012-13). The dalliance connotes a proper amount of flirtation between the two for courtly talking, but the difference in Lady Bertilak's *luf-talkyng* hinges upon *wyth clene cortays carp closed fro fylþe*, meaning, the speech is clean and courteous and free of any sinfulness. Knowing Gawain's piety, Lady Bertilak can mimic Gawain's desires for piety in order to develop a greater attachment between them and make Gawain fall for the trap Bertilak has in store. For the Bertilaks, they had the operation planned in order to test Gawain: "& þe wowyng of my wyf I wroȝt hit myseluen / I sende hir to asay þe and sothly me þykkez / on þe fautlest freke þat euer on fote ȝede / as perle bi þe quite pese is of prys more / so is gawayn in god fayth bi oþer gay knyȝtez" (2361-5). Thus, Bertilak assays Gawain's goodness between testing Gawain for Camelot's *surquidre*. Thus far, Gawain's thoughts and decisions lean towards *Pearl's* narrator and his eye to power akin to Gawain's lustful gazes.

Gawain's desire for power becomes problematic for R.A. Shoaf, who charges Gawain's missteps to Gawain's understanding of chivalric order and unawareness to the newer commercial aspect of relative values, or, as Shoaf states, *SGGK* is "[a] poem of comparisons and measurements, of doublings and tests, of games and covenants, *Sir Gawain* structures a vision of relativity and relationship in human exchange" (2). For Shoaf, *SGGK* immerses in feudalism, which determines both the economics and the

relationships, thus, there is room in our theories for interstices involving the relationships in the poem. Shoaf's version of *SGGK* make chivalry and feudalism compete and fail against commercialism in the 14th century, which *SGGK* tries to reconcile together through its "vision of media and mediation in human affairs... that is somewhere between personal loyalties and abstract market forces" (3). So, Shoaf assigns market categories as Gawain's operating materials and failures, where I focus on who he (and the others) love, but interestingly for our analyses, Shoaf brings Gawain's worth to the conversation of market relationships

Gawain's worth then becomes the focus for his relationships and impact, usually to Gawain's detriment, whether he wins or loses the games he plays with Bertilak. Shoaf's notions of relativity and relationships and the "exchange rate of Gawain," so to speak, make Gawain "the human experience of measurement and comparison, despite the constant temptation to succumb to pride. He must live with (and know he lives with) verbal, economic, and chivalric systems of *value* which, because they *are* systems of value, are intrinsically relative, comparative, and measured" (7). Because the relative systems and relationships exist both in commerce and chivalry, Gawain must juggle between different judgments of value in different situations: handling his chivalric duties to Lady Bertilak causes a problem in his commercial ability to exchange rewards with Bertilak. Despite the troubles juggling his personas, Bertilak measures Gawain for his deeds, which are then directly attributed to the "*nurture* of Arthurian civilization" (7). Thus, in erosian terms, Gawain juggles between different fantasies based on what he believes are the expectations he ought to display.

Thus, our analyses collaboratively agree that Gawain runs into trouble in understanding what other people's fantasies are due to the new ideas of worth in a commercial system. For the tests, Gawain knows his values and judgments based on his own experiences, and the tests Bertilak runs on Gawain measures those measurements (31-32). In an uncanny point of interaction between our analyses, Shoaf attributes Augustinian theology directly to Gawain to understand the framework of love and measuring: "For [Gawain], then, the value of every good is relative to, ultimately, its greater or lesser manifestation of the Creator: it refers to the Creator. Because of this reference, any construction of the value of a created good must begin in love of the Creator" (33).³ Shoaf continues his exposition on created goods: "One may not know the value of some good, for whatever reason, but if one loves the creator of that good, one will not misuse it. Moreover, by loving the creator of that good, one will be naturally disposed to loving others with whom one must decide on its value" (33). Thus, the commercial values of different traits and materials, such as *surquidre* or a crafted item like a girdle, may not be determinable based on one person's ideas alone, but people who share an interest in them assign a value to the created good, and, important to Shoaf, if the user loves the creator of the good, they will never misuse the good, and thus keep the item in higher value. Thus, the fantasies shared by Gawain and the other characters determine the value of the creator of fantasized objects or ideas. Accordingly, when Gawain survives at the end of the poem only nicked by Bertilak's axe, it is because Bertilak loves Gawain, who creates the fantasies Gawain and Bertilak share: a love for Gawain's life. Lady Bertilak and Bertilak also share a love for Gawain's life, so Lady

Bertilak, who shares in the value of the girdle, gives the girdle to Gawain as a sign known to Bertilak, and thus shares between all three: the girdle is worth Gawain's life.

For Gawain's *prys*, we must consider the determined value of Gawain from all who encounter him. The first people outside of Arthur's court to see Gawain hail him as a hero and celebrity at Hautdesert: "& alle þe men in þat mote maden much ioye / To apere in his presense prestly þat tyme / Þat alle prys and prowes and pured þewes... Byfore alle men vpon molde his mensk is þe most" (910-12, 914). As such, Gawain must "sell" himself as the top of the line in chivalry, *prowes*, and as per demand, *luf-talkyng*. Thus, for Shoaf, Gawain can succeed if he markets himself to his advantages in chivalric manners, but fails when Lady Bertilak succeeds in bringing Gawain to her in secret, and when negotiating a purely private value, Gawain fails to undertake the *costez* of Lady Bertilak's companionship (35). Lady Bertilak's first seduction attempt traps Gawain in a system where she knows that Gawain has superior conscientiousness, but Gawain falters and replies to Lady Bertilak suggesting "...I be not now he þat ʒe of spoken" (1242). For Shoaf, that means that Gawain is not his own, and he cannot control his identity "in a world of relative values" (36). Thus, the commercial understanding of "Gawain" shifts, and Gawain actually chooses a lesser version of himself. I claim that Lady Bertilak offers Gawain a fantasy in which the two could share and experience a reasonable courtly relationship. However, Gawain rejects the fantasy outright, and the chance at an open committal between the two must set aside their shared fantasy until another attempt by Lady Bertilak. Gawain's choice strongly resembles Alcibiades's love for Socrates I recalled in the beginning of my theory section, in which Socrates suggests Alcibiades's desires would trade for a lesser relationship.

In determining Gawain's *prys*, Gawain's character is entrenched in transgressive desires according to market drives, and Gawain's transgressions continue into the realm of gender and sexuality. Returning to Jane Gilbert, transgressive sexualities and desires in *SGGK* further complicates the framework found in "Cleanness" by adding the presence of adultery to human sexuality (62). Gawain already commits the taboo of kissing Bertilak in the style of Lady Bertilak, which recalls the earlier images of the sin at Sodom: that homosexual acts are wrong because the men are treating other men like women, so transitively, Gawain's feminine action in his reproduction of Lady Bertilak's kisses transgresses one of the sexual norms given in "Cleanness." Gilbert labels the kisses as extremely endogamous due to Gawain's replication, or mimicry, of Lady Bertilak; so, though Gawain remains anatomically male, he plays the role of Bertilak's wife while they kiss. Regardless, the relationship between Gawain and Bertilak plays against Gawain's relationship with the Virgin Mary, whose icon he carries along through his adventure. For Gilbert, Mary plays the role of what Gawain's court lady ought to fulfill: the image inside the shield should be the lady Gawain devotes himself to (63), but instead, having none, he chooses Mary.

Gawain's alternative desire of the Virgin, or, "the more abstract" (64) results in a failed love object for Gawain. For my analysis, the abstract lady recalls the text Gilbert leaves untouched: "Patience," with its abstract ladies invoked for heteronormative males to act in alignment with Christian norms. Thus, Mary becomes Gawain's imaginative alternate desire so he can replicate her holiness. However, Mary symbolizes virginity, so wooing the virgin figure transgresses Gawain's normative sexuality: if he were to choose virginity, then he must desire Jesus. For Gilbert, the Virgin "replaces the flesh and blood

lady" (64), but becomes a transgressively exogamous relationship just as Pearl is an extremely exogamous love object for the narrator in *Pearl*. The only opportunities for all-human sexuality in the poem for Gawain are adulterous, so Gawain's petition for Mary's aid in his protection and enforce the approved sexuality between Bertilak and Lady Bertilak (65). The problem revolves around Gawain reliance on one extreme, exogamy, to help the new problem of adultery in *SGGK*, and Gilbert suggests that though Gawain prefers Bertilak's company over Lady Bertilak, the relationship between them suggests a homosocial relationship rather than homosexual, because Gawain's intentions towards Bertilak stem from the game they play and not from sincere desires projected from Gawain to Bertilak (65), so their shared fantasies do not convince others of any honest love between the two. Of Gawain's homosocial relations: "In the process of establishing this inter-male solidarity, Gawain ironically shows a disregard for gender, feminizing himself by his mimicry of the Lady" (65). While Gilbert focuses on gender, the connection between the same scenes apply to my analysis of love: Gawain manages to use the homiletic poems' tactics, such as mimicry for wooing, and so encounters Bertilak with a non-sexual attitude in the kissing game, only returning what is owed to him. Gawain, then, believes the only transgressive sexuality as adultery, which only refuses a form of all-human heterosexuality. Ultimately, Gawain presents a problematic asexual virtue in which he misbelieves himself to have sinned, and Gawain endorses all-human heterosexuality while maintaining gynophobia to explain/blame the adultery.

Thus far I have investigated Gawain from his acts and responses during his quest, but what do the final scenes reveal about Gawain and his quest? Returning to the text, the ending scene provides Gawain's and Arthur's different insights, as well as that of the

writer. Gawain regains the green girdle as a "...token / of þe chaunce of þe grene chapel at cheualrous knyȝtez" (2398-99), to show to the world that Gawain is a worthy knight because of his chastity, but also as penance for his failure in loyalty. Gawain returns, and relays the story of his "chaunce of þe chapel" (2496), "þe luf of þe ladi þe lace at þe last" (2497), and the nick on the neck he received, and groans at his failures (2502). Gawain expresses grief with the lace, especially shame for his failures through *couardise* and *couetyse* (2508), and hands Arthur the girdle. Arthur responds thusly:

þe kyng comfortez þe knyȝt and alle þe court als
la₃en loude þerat and luflyly acorden
þat lordes and ladis þat longed to þe table
vche burne of þe broþerhede a bauderyk schulde haue
a bende abelef hym aboute of a bryȝt grene
and þat for sake of þat segge in swete to were
for þat watz acorded þe renoun of þe rounde table (2513-19).

Arthur determines Gawain's quest a success, and the court laughs at Gawain's story, though Gawain feels shame. Each of the members at court wears a similar girdle as a sign and source of *broþerhede* (2516), and as a sign of renown: Gawain, one of their own, survived the Green Chapel. The writer returns to the opening comparison to the fall of Troy, and the motto of The Order of the Garter: "hony soyt qui mal pence" (2531), which, for Shoaf, the girdle signifies as a symbol of victory, not of shame (76), since it must mean that shame comes to those who think ill of Gawain's quest.⁴ However, Gawain never accepts the attitude of the court: Gawain still feels shame over what the girdle represents, which is not a victory, *couardise* and *couetyse*. In yet another failure to share

fantasies with others, Gawain offers to the court (and reader) shame, but the court (and perhaps the scribe who wrote the ending motto) offer praise to Gawain.

Thus, one can glean two meanings from the ending motto: the motto remains true for the characters, because Gawain feels shame and thinks ill of the girdle, while the rest of the court understands the symbol differently and feel no shame; or, the motto refers to the reader as a prescriptive warning against judging Gawain: shame to the reader if they think ill of Gawain's girdle and his misdeeds, for he was the best knight as judged by Bertilak, and given the girdle as a sign of coming out of the Green Chapel alive. Of the two gleanings from the motto, most important to my thesis is how the motto refers to Gawain. Choosing his religion, king and court, and Bertilak or Lady Bertilak over himself and his life would have made him the perfect knight, to live and die in favor of a chivalric ideal. However, Gawain chooses himself, and attributes his choice to *couardise* and *couetyse*. From the standpoint of love, Gawain's choice comes from pride, and he oversteps his boundaries of heteronormative sexuality by choosing himself: a choice only given to God in "Cleanness." Gawain's choice is far too endogamous for his allowed sexuality, thus, the motto remains true in Gawain's case: he feels shame because he understands (and values) his quest differently than those who praise it as a success.

In Freudian terms, Gawain's choice of himself surprisingly belongs to the erotic drive rather than the Thanatosian, because Gawain's goal is sustaining life. Gawain stands against death and the Thanatosian related satisfaction of the ego through repetition because Gawain's quest always shifts dynamics and ventures to new territories: his adventure to and from Hautdesert gleam heroic tales and slayings glossed over by the author, and his quest fleshes out with games, crowds of fans, and navigating relationships

at Bertilak's castle and chapel all point to a dynamic hero willing and able to perform all the deeds befitting a knight. The Thanatosian drive appears to remain at Camelot, where all the heroic knights have become lethargic to the point of not accepting the Green Knight's challenge at the party. Thus, though Gawain's decision seems Thanatosian, his rational is truly out of love for himself.

Freudian analysis also pinpoints several problems in Gawain's sexuality and drives. Gawain ends the poem unable (or unwilling) to take on other desires other than himself, but only for the sake of public reward. Concerning his asexuality, Freud may attribute to Gawain a Madonna complex given the various female figures throughout his quest and his reliance on the pentangle, in which he exhibits the Virgin. In that case, Gawain succeeds in chastity in trying to emulate Mary. However, the prescriptive heteronormative sexuality central to the ideology of the Pearl Poet, and asexuality (especially with a focus on the self, as God encapsulates) not considered an alternative for these poems, Gawain's asexuality is untrustworthy and pathological, and leads to his selfish choice. Thus, it must be the case that a champion of Mary as Virgin cannot embody that virtue, because trying to woo the Virgin is taboo (not to mention that it makes no sense to woo the perpetual virgin figure) because she is far too exogamous, thus, Mary is not a good shield escort to remind Gawain of the inspiration for his quest. However, the fault is not Mary, but Gawain in considering an unsuitable partner, just like the narrator in *Pearl*, who wants to be as Mary and his Pearl: a bride of Christ, when they are inaccessible through their celestial marriage. Guinevere and Lady Bertilak, the only other desirable ladies mentioned in the poem, are also unsuitable for Gawain due to marriage, so Gawain must search beyond the scope of this quest to find a suitable partner

that reflects the mores of the Pearl Poet corpus. Bertilak also invites Gawain to stay at his castle, in which, Gawain may have a better chance at finding a suitable partner considering the lack of reliable love objects depicted in Camelot, since Gawain has nobody to believe his quest failed, as the rest of the court misinterprets his quest as a success.

However, Gawain's failure in producing a love object or sharing a fantasy with others decides his fate: his erotic drive fails to secure love in others. In Socratic terms, Gawain's gains no immortal offspring, because Gawain shares no love with others. Thus, the court believes Gawain's quest a success, and wear the similar girdles as a prize of honor. The desire produced are not immortal because there is no shared fantasy (or acceptance) between Gawain and those who desire him. Though Gawain toys with the fantasies of himself, he fails at producing anything immortal, only a contingent prolonged life because he clung to his life and Bertilak spared him. The children for Gawain and his love for his life are regret and shame, and he bears no physical children or great works that gain him great renown because of loving his own body or soul. Gawain only accepts a fantasy with himself in which he lives through the beheading game, and he cannot exude love to others because he is stuck on his own failure. Furthermore, none of the other characters presented in *SGGK* show any of the children Socratic eroticism produces: the poem mentions no children from both Arthur and Guinevere as well as Bertilak and the Lady, nor are there any great works of creation, but only an allusion to Brutus's foundation of Rome briefly mentioned in comparison to Gawain's quest in the beginning and end of the poem. Thus, if the poet seems convinced of Gawain's tale as inspiring, none of the characters or actions *in the poem* refer to such inspiring love, only

caution. Thus, the poem remains with us today to act as a cautionary tale of selfish or masturbatory decisions made, and accepting self-love may win some glory, but the "hero" performing the deed cannot accept the extolling crowd's praises, because the hero has only learned to love his or her own self.

To conclude Gawain, I assay the acts and speeches demonstrated in *SGGK* by using the erosian analysis I have been using throughout, alongside using the cultural beliefs and theology used in the three other Cotton Nero A.x poems. The relationships between Gawain, Bertilak, Lady Bertilak, and Gawain's devotion to Arthur and Mary result in Gawain rejecting all of them in favor of himself. Overall, Gawain seems to suffer from an asexuality not found to exist in the other Pearl Poet works, and would need to debase those who he meets, because he never mistreats anybody unless out of *cowardyse* for his life. Gawain's lack of affection for people results in his choice for Mary to emblazon his inner shield, which becomes a terrible decision because desiring a perpetual virgin for the choice in courtship fails both in theology and in courting. Bertilak considers Gawain to be the perfect knight, save for Gawain's choice of his life over all of his other values. Ultimately, Gawain has no desires save for his own gain and survival, and he feels the shame of his choices at the end of the poem, while all the others rejoice in his success in returning alive. Thus, Gawain is a perfect representative of Arthur's court, which values questing and gaining status throughout the world. However, the values of Arthur's court do not reflect Gawain's own values, as his higher status did not give him satisfaction from his journey, but guilt for choosing himself over the ones who he owed gratitude, allegiance, and love, for the love that they had shown Gawain.

Conclusion

My analysis consists of taking theories of erotic love and applying the theories to the works of the Pearl Poet, namely, taking the Socratic notions of erotic love combined with Freudian terminology on Erosian and Thanatosian drives as well as debasement. I determine that the theological works, "Cleanness" and "Patience," create a framework of love that characteristically appear in *Pearl* and *SGGK*: God selfishly requires love and attention; to do so, the key feature in the art of wooing a lover (*luf-talkyng*) is mimicking the traits the love object expresses, and God, with the previous two characteristics in mind, created the manner of human procreation in his own act of creating humans, in which, replicating the act of sex in a heteronormative relationship (and in the guise of marriage) gives God pleasure. *Pearl* uses the framework provided, but complicates it by introducing the option of loving Jesus, and entering into a state of virginity for the sake of a celestial marriage with Jesus. Finally, *SGGK* offers a world in the absence of God, but still filled with churches, powerful magic from the pagan Morgan the Fey, strange relationships between Gawain, Arthur, Bertilak and Lady Bertilak, Mary, and Gawain's allegiances to the institutions guiding the characters and principles in *SGGK*: courts, chivalry, and religion. Ultimately, Gawain chooses himself through *cowardyse*, which pleases Arthur, displeases Bertilak (though Bertilak accepts the act as a form of love of life: the love of his own life), and shames Gawain. The love of self becomes interpreted differently for each of the different characters, but never reaches a definite conclusion. The poem's end motto: *hony soyt qui mal pence* is one possible interpretation given for the symbol of the girdle, and accepted by scholars such as RA Shoaf. The homiletic and visionary poems agree with Gawain's guilt, as love of God would trump all other loves, and leads not to despair, but to a literal form of immortality. An Erotic interpretation

relies on sharing fantasies, which means the choice of self can only yield the ambiguity and ambivalence that the different characters and scholars have interpreted the Girdle to signify.

End Notes

1. Philosopher/Bishop George Berkeley famously asserted in *A Treatise Concerning the Principles of Human Knowledge* that God was the all perceiving perceiver (a tree that falls and nobody hears it makes a sound because God perceived it, or similarly, things stay where they are when nobody is around because God constantly perceives them, so they stay in existence; because according to Berkeley, to exist is to be perceived). While this does not have a significant effect on my thesis, it is an interesting occurrence that my reading of *Cotton Nero A.x* and George Berkeley's controversial idealism both rely on God's mind for existence.

2. This is not a critique of the poem's inability to mimic reality, but rather an attempt to understand the poet and the poet's culture's and how they prefer to understand God. Ultimately, I believe it is good art to represent God in accordance with the poet's culture as with the use of *lemman*.

3. Shoaf clings to several misinterpretations of Christian and Jewish rites and sacraments. On page 25, Shoaf claims that the Tolkien/Gordon/Davis translation makes an error in understanding the Middle English word *farfet* as "transgress," because that would mean Gawain's absolution means "as though you had never transgressed or sinned from the time of your birth," and Shoaf argues "[n]o Christian sacrament has this effect" (25), despite talking about baptism, which, for many churches, includes all sins. For example, the Catechism of the Catholic Church point 978 states, "When we made our first profession of faith while receiving the holy Baptism that cleansed us, the forgiveness we received then was so full and complete that there remained in us absolutely nothing left to efface, neither original sin nor offenses committed by our own will, nor was there left any

penalty to suffer in order to expiate them" (255). Shoaf desires circumcision for the sacrament to confer absolution, which fits his thesis, but has no historicity.

4. The line number references the motto at the end of the poem, which would be line 2531 if it were given a designation.

Works Cited

- Berlant, Lauren. *Desire/Love*. Brooklyn, NY: Punctum Books, 2012. Print.
- Bloomfield, Josephine. "Aristotelian Luminescence, Thomistic Charity: Vision, Reflection, and Self-Love in *Pearl*." *Studies in Philology* 108.2 (Spring 2011). 165-188. Web.
- Brewer, Derek. "Introduction." *A Companion to the Gawain-Poet*. Suffolk, UK: Boydell & Brewer, 1997. Print.
- Bullón-Fernández, María. "Byzonde þe Water": Courtly and Religious Desire in *Pearl*." *Studies in Philology*, 91:1 (1994: Winter). 35-49. Web.
- Catholic Church. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. 2nd ed. Vatican: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2000. Print.
- Freud, Sigmund. *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*. Ed. Ernest Jones. Trans. C.J.M. Hubback. London: The International Psycho-Analytical Press, 1922. Print.
- Gilbert, Jane. "Gender and Sexual Transgression." *A Companion to the Gawain-Poet*. Suffolk, UK: Boydell & Brewer, 1997. Print.
- McCarthy, Conor. "Luf-talkyng in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*." *Neophilologus*, 92 (2008). 155-162. Web.
- Staley, Lynn. "Pearl and the Contingencies of Love and Piety." *Medieval Literature and Historical Inquiry: Essays in Honor of Derek Pearsall*. Ed. David Aers. Cambridge, UK: D.S. Brewer, 2000. Print.
- The Pearl Poet. *Early English Alliterative Poems*. Ed. Richard Morris. London: Oxford UP, 1864. Print.

- The Pearl Poet. *The Gawain Poet: Complete Works: Patience, Cleanness, Pearl, St. Erkenwalde, Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*. Trans. Marie Borroff. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2011. Print.
- The Pearl Poet. *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*. Ed. Israel Gollancz. London: Oxford UP, 1940. Print.
- Peterson, Clifford J. "The *Pearl*-Poet and John Massey of Cotton, Cheshire." *The Review of English Studies*. New Series: 25.99 (1974). 257-66. London, Oxford UP. JSTOR. Web.
- Plato. "The Symposium." Trans. William Cobb. *The Symposium and The Phaedrus: Plato's Erotic Dialogues*. 15-59. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993. Print.
- Shoaf, R.A. "The Poem as Green Girdle: *Commercium* in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*." Gainesville: University Presses of Florida, 1984. Print.
- Soble, Alan. *Eros, Agape and Philia: Readings in the Philosophy of Love*. "Introduction: Contemporary Analysis." 189-197. New York: Paragon House, 1989. Print.