CHIASTIC STRUCTURE IN BRITISH LIBRARY MANUSCRIPT

COTTON NERO A.x, Article 3

by

DEBORAH LORENE–CHURCH MILLER

(Under the direction of Dr. Christy Desmet)

ABSTRACT

In this dissertation I argue that the four poems appearing in the Cotton Nero A.x Manuscript have a discernable sequence, structural integrity, and rhetorical purpose: Together, the four poems constitute a Text. Instead of being a randomly bound, miscellaneous anthology of works by, perhaps, the same anonymous fourteenth–century alliterative poet, the Manuscript reveals a coherent discourse, sequenced in an orderly way to achieve a particular rhetorical purpose. The underlying "logic" of this sequence is peculiarly Medieval and, paradoxically, postmodern because it is based on a visually and aurally apprehended rhetorical scheme that relies on apposition. The apposition is materially and rhetorically elaborated by means of balanced numeration of lines, a transitional "hub," and the placement of the poems and their illustrations in the volume itself. In this Manuscript, the sophisticated intertwining of themes, character types, and poetic styles operates within the rhetorical framework of a chiasmus.

The failure to see or trust an integrating mechanism in the Cotton Nero A.x Manuscript can be accounted for in three ways. In Chapter One, I examine the historical neglect of those rhetorical figures classed as schemes, as opposed to tropes, particularly the scheme chiasmus. I conclude that chiasmus offers an excellent and frequently used means of organizing text, acting as visual and aural text marker that functions non–logically and non–hierarchically. In Chapter Two, I demonstrate how the Manuscript's material and editorial histories have tended alternately to undermine or support the perception of the Manuscript as a Text. Chapter Three presents the critical fortunes of the four poems as authorless "orphans" and how the chiastic structure in Cotton Nero A.x, reveals the Text's material and rhetorical boundaries and the poems' collective "identity." The Prologue to the third poem *Patience* acts as the open center of a four–part chiastic structure, a structure that is echoed in thematic and stylistic inversions that appear throughout the four poems. The Manuscript's reliance on numerological strategies, the

"bookending" effect of its illustrations, and the schematic effect of some of these images evince the poems' material boundaries.

INDEX WORDS: Chiasmus, Cotton Nero A.x Manuscript, Medieval literature, *Pearl*–poet, *Gawain*, *Patience*, *Cleanness*, Rhetorical figures, Rhetorical schemes.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

I was introduced to the four untitled poems (now entitled *Pearl*, *Cleanness*,

Patience, and *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*) that are contained in the British

Library's Cotton Nero A.x Manuscript, Article 3[1] during a seminar in 1989. Only vaguely

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[1] Up until 1964, the Cotton Nero A.x Manuscript contained, as will be discussed in

Chapter Two, two "unrelated" works, two Latin theological treatises which book–ended

the four–poem *Pearl*–manuscript. In 1964, the *Pearl*–manuscript was rebound separately,

and the addition of "Art. 3" to the catalogue citation reflects that change (Moorman 10).

The Manuscript is also identified by the British Library code "Cott 60110." However, the

Pearl–manuscript is still often, perhaps usually, referred to as British Library Manuscript

Cotton Nero A.x, but it goes by many other names. When referring to the four poems

collectively, I generally use the name *Pearl*–manuscript or just the Manuscript, and,

occasionally, Nero A.x. Other writers call the collection, the *Gawain*–poems, the *Pearl*–

poems, the *Gawain*–manuscript, the Poems of the *Pearl*–manuscript, or repeat the names

of the four poems with the disclaimer "usually entitled" or "editorially titled." Variations

in spelling of the titles are prevalent (e.g., Green Knight, Grene KnyƷt, Grene Gome) and

sometimes the poem *Cleanness* is entitled *Purity*. You will also see "BM Cotton Nero

A.x MS" and "BL Cotton Nero A.x MS" depending on dates of publication because the

"British Museum library" became the "British Library" in 1973 when the Library was

aware that *Gawain* was part of a manuscript containing other poems, I had only the

haziest of notions about the role of manuscripts, editors, and publishers behind the works

I had been reading — a situation the seminar was designed to remedy. At first, the class

was using Charles Moorman's 1977 edition, *The Works of the Gawain–Poet*, but most of

us bought a copy of Malcolm Andrew and Ronald Waldron's 1982 edition of *The Poems*

of the Pearl Manuscript a few weeks into the course, as we began to work with

photocopied versions of the Early English Text Society's Manuscript facsimile. As we

made our way through two consecutive oral readings of the four poems, I was struck by a

sense of continuity and integrity in and among the poems. That sense of coherence,

however, was constantly undercut by a recurrent and frustrating litany in both editions'

introductions. Apparently, according to our editors, reading the four poems as a "text"

required an uncomfortable reliance on extremely subjective and incomplete evidence

about elements we usually evoke as constituents of "textuality." Aside from debates

about whether or not to include the poem editorially entitled "*St. Erkenwald*" in any

"collected works" edition,[2] these editors had doubts about almost every other facet of the

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made into a separate administrative unit overseeing a library network which incorporated

numerous book housing facilities (Harris 686). The corporate separation of the Library

from the Museum in name was embodied when the Library was moved to a new building,

St. Pancras, in 1998. The removal of the Manuscript collection to the St. Pancras

premises took place in January 1999 (http://molcat.bl.uk/msscat/INDEX.ASP).

[2] Neither Moorman nor Andrew & Waldron include *St. Erkenwald*, but *St. Erkenwald*

was included by translators Margaret Williams and John Gardner in 1971. More recently

four poems' potential integrity. Here is a brief sample of their comments: "there is no external evidence" that the poems have a common author (Andrew and Waldron 16); "efforts, largely unsuccessful, have been made to identify positively the *Gawain*–poet" (Moorman 14); "the history of the manuscript is largely undetermined" (Moorman 11); "the dating of the poems has met with . . . little success," and "the relative chronology of the poems is . . . uncertain" (Moorman 15); [there are] "very apparent differences between them [the poems] in structure and genre" (Andrew and Waldron 16); "the four poems of the *Gawain*–poet involve such differences in literary art and technique that they cannot be discussed in terms of shared devices . . . thus [they are] best presented individually, each in terms of its own particular features" (Moorman 27); the fact that the poems share a hand, a manuscript, and a dialect may "point no farther than to the scribe" (Andrew and Waldron 16); arguments for coherence and unity based on "similarities of expression are rendered unreliable by the common nature of alliterative phraseology; and judgments of similarity of thought and attitude necessarily have a large subjective element" (Andrew and Waldron 16).

In short, as the text of the Nero A.x poems was being presented explicitly and implicitly as a text in these two editions, even the editors (Andrew and Waldron and Moorman) constantly warned readers about the unreliability of this text's integrity. The feeling produced has always been best summed up for me by the schizophrenic pair of statements Moorman offers on a single page in his Introduction to the poems. After a

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editor Casey Finch (1993) has resurrected *St. Erkenwald* once again, including it in his edition.

lengthy discussion of the dilemmas and choices facing an editor in the production of any edition of a medieval manuscript, Moorman sums up his editorial philosophy: "The writer's own feeling, reflected I hope in the following text, is that the editor should wherever possible accept the MS reading and attempt to justify it" (Moorman 5). Nevertheless, a few paragraphs further down the page, Moorman discards his own instructions and, with a stunningly subjective and circular pair of "reasons," adds:

> I have made, however, one rather great change; I have followed what would
> seem to be the chronological order of the poems — *Patience*, *Purity*, *Pearl*,
> and *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* — both in the text and in the various
> discussions in the Introduction. The reasons for this arrangement are that *the*
> *best means of presenting the poems for reading and study is chronological*
> and that, *conversely, no good purpose would seem to be served by following*
> *the apparently arbitrary order of the MS*. (Moorman 5, my emphasis)

Moorman explores his justification for this one "great change" a few pages later in a single paragraph, offering his attempt at dating the composition of the poems based on the shaky foundation of supposed source texts for the individual poems. *Pearl*, he states baldly, "was almost certainly composed after 1360, the date of Boccaccio's *Olympia*, its principal source." *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, he believes, "can be dated only after 1345," based on "the probable date of the founding of the Order of the Garter." "*Purity*," he adds, could only have been composed "after 1356, the probable date of the French version of *Mandeville's Travels*, which the poem may reflect." Finally, *Patience*, Moorman concludes, "seemingly must be placed before 1377, the date of the B–text of *Piers Plowman*, which echoes it" (15). Since Moorman neither develops any scholarly

discussion of his own on these points nor cites other arguments in support of these

"sources," uninformed readers are left to assume that Moorman believes this information

to be general knowledge. In reality, the "sources" Moorman presents as evidence for his

attempts at dating the poems have never been agreed upon, even tentatively, by students

of the poems.[3]

Even if we accept Moorman's account of the poems' sources and the dating that

these sources imply, the dates still fail to justify any particular order of composition; the

range of dates he advances is broad and overlaps at many points. With regard to

Moorman's key re–assignment — placing *Patience* first in the sequence — his own

conjectured dates might just as easily indicate that *Patience* (written "before 1377") was

written last and *Sir Gawain* first (composed "after 1345"). Moorman, perhaps vaguely

cognizant of his logical misstep, concludes apologetically that "thus, the best one can say

is that the poems were probably written during the period 1360–90" (15). Clearly,

Moorman is able to do little, if anything, to provide an objective justification for his

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[3] See William Vantuono's edition of *Pearl* (176–80) for arguments against Boccacio as a

source text for *Pearl* and summaries of thirteen other possible sources (including

Mandeville's Travels, which Moorman uses to sort *Purity* from the other poems). See

Elizabeth Brewer's *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight: Sources and Analogs* for excerpts

from thirty–six potential sources for Gawain. See Vantuono's "Possible Dates and Order

of Poems" in the Introduction to his *Omnibus Edition*, xix–xxii; his discussion reveals

that the poems have been sequenced "chronologically" in almost every possible

combination.

edition's "chronologically" based re–sequencing of the poems or, further, to explain why, even if there were a more concrete dating of the poems, a chronological arrangement would be "the best means of presenting the poems for reading and study."

Before I go too far afield here with what must seem like a rather unnecessary and unkind inventory of Moorman's academic slip–up, I need to clarify why I still find Moorman's mistake important and also interesting. When I first noticed Moorman's textual liberties with the sequencing of the poems, the obvious incongruities and lapses in argument apparent in the statements and assumptions noted above struck me simply as poor scholarship. At that time, I was, as David Matthews describes in the Introduction to *The Making of Middle English*, something of a worshipper of "authoritative editions" (xv) and an authoritative edition required objectivity and a correct representation of the original text. Moorman's clearly was not, so I promptly closed the book on Moorman's *The Works of the* Gawain–*Poet* and turned to Andrew and Waldron's edition, which not only preserved the manuscript order of the poems, but had the more accurate, manuscript–embracing title, *The Poems of the Pearl Manuscript.*

Intervening years of study have considerably softened my philologically positivistic stance. I have come back to Moorman's reconfiguration of the Manuscript with a few observations rather than a summary judgment. Moorman's seeming lapse in academic and logical rigor — surprising in one of the "heroes" of the poems, who furnished the "first 'collected edition' of Cotton Nero A.x since the MS itself" (1) — strikes me now as a curious and interesting disjunction. His editorial choice to re–sequence the poems, as it has turned out, was what first drew me to dwell on the integrity

of the Manuscript's original structure and what later led me to examine closely the way in which editors have not just edited but discovered, written, and fostered this orphan text.

Let me explain further with another brief excerpt from Moorman's introductory remarks, in this case his remarks launching the short paragraph (quoted extensively above) that explores the dating of the four poems. Under the thin veil of a passive voice verb and third person subject, he admits that the manuscript order of the poems just does not make sense to him: "The arrangement of the poems in the manuscript — *Pearl, Purity, Patience, Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* — almost certainly does not represent the order of composition; one hesitates to place the elegantly structured *Pearl* before the comparatively amateurish *Patience*," adding without any trace of self–consciousness that "by metrical, stylistic, and thematic standards, certainly the best arrangement is *Patience, Purity, Pearl*, and *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*" (my emphasis), although he admits that "this order, based wholly upon internal evidence (for "evidence" read Moorman's sense of poetic style, genre, and thematic importance) offers no help in dating the individual poems" (15). Moorman seems to prefer an evolutionary approach — "amateurish" *Patience* must come during a Poet's awkward youth, while the "elegantly structured" *Pearl* must come with age and sophistication. Other editors have discerned other priorities: Bernhard ten Brink put *Patience* in the final position, declaring it to be "the writer's masterpiece" (351). Charles Osgood places *Gawain* as the last of the sequence based on artistic superiority, although he believes *Pearl* shares both some of *Gawain*'s "maturity" and *Cleanness* and also *Patience*'s "immaturity," a judgment he makes based largely on the Poet's overt distinction between the "moral element" and the "sensuous" in these poems (l). Vantuono believes *Pearl* may be the final poem because

of its structural and theological complexity, but he defers to the Manuscript for the editorial sequencing of the poems in his two volume edition (xxii). Apparently, most of these editors operate from the premise that a writer's work improves with age, that is, the best or most mature or most complex poem should be given last "word" in a chronology of the artist's work; but these beliefs are simply the consequence of unexamined assumptions. For instance, what makes "last" place better in a text, worse in a contest? Why does "priority" indicate "earlier" in time, but "higher" in "value?" Why do we visualize chronological schemes as moving from left to right instead of, say, top to bottom?

The point I am attempting to make is simply that personal bias and cultural subjectivity occur in an editor's choices, hardly a startling claim. Given the fact that we are all firmly situated within our cultures, these choices are unavoidable, awareness of and self–consciousness about all our assumptions is probably impossible. However, the Nero A.x Manuscript contains *Pearl* and *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, arguably two of the greatest poetic achievements of the high Middle Ages (Norton 212). We have both these poems in a single, obscure manuscript with only a general "period" context, no identifiable author, and an uncertain or nonexistent audience prior to 1839. These facts, combined with the isolation of the Manuscript, its long disappearance, and its nearly pure anonymity, bring the personal and political agendas of its readers and editors into high relief. More clearly than in the publication and study of almost any other English canonical text, the way in which editors and critics of the Cotton Nero A.x Manuscript "see" this text reveals the prejudices and premises from which their reading or research is derived. Like a psychologist's inkblot, this orphan text offers so little in the way of

specific and definite background that we are forced to produce our own "gist" or "gestalt" of the Manuscript, and it is precisely our premises and prejudices that shape the shape we see.

Part of the purpose of this dissertation is re–e'valu'ate (and reinstate) the material manuscript (form) as part of the study of the text (content). This is a delicate balance, especially in the study of medieval manuscripts. On the one hand, often we drastically undervalue manuscripts. Brilliant, traditional, philologically–based scholar Fred Robinson reminds us that all medieval literary research is grounded in the study and transmission of manuscripts when he cautions us to be aware of "the risks we run when we work, as we must, at one remove from the sources of our study, using printed (i.e., reformatted, reorganized, and edited) editions rather than the manuscripts themselves" ("Address to the Southeastern Medieval Association 1986"). On the other hand, we medievalists can also have a tendency towards over–valuing manuscripts. New Historicist and Foucauldian scholar David Matthews warns of the dangers medievalists face "more so, perhaps than in other areas of the study of English literature" because we place great stock in "authoritative editions," because the manuscript "retains unquestioned status as originary source of a text"; Matthews adds that the manuscript "is thought to put us in contact with an original 'medieval' text to the detriment of later printed editions which are considered 'corrupt'" (xv).

As I pick my way between the apparent rock — the relatively inaccessible and unintelligible authentic text — and the hard place — a text so far "corrupt[ed]" that it no longer intelligibly represents its original, I have tried to treat the manuscript as a kind of archeological "site" due for a re–evaluation or a historical narrative due for a new

9

interpretation. In his recent essay on the four–thousand–line poem in Bodliean Library Manuscript Digby 231, "Was There a Song of Roland?" Andrew Taylor makes a move in the direction I hope to go. Taylor's approach suggests that it can be useful to examine the "corrupted texts" of non–"authoritative" editions, in addition to the "original" manuscript with its accompanying "discovery" narratives, from new perspectives. In Taylor's case, the new perspective is provided by additional information about the performance conditions and conventions of medieval French *jongleurs*. In my case, the new perspective is rhetorical, based on one of the oldest and apparently most common figures, the scheme chiasmus. The word "chiasmus" was, apparently, unknown to medieval rhetoricians, but the form was common, and while the figure chiasmus may have been known as *antimetabole* or *commutatio* during that time, one modern scholar has observed widespread use of chiastic figures, which he dubs the "'*figura crucis*' tradition" (Tate 114), after a phrase used by Isidore.

In this dissertation, I argue that the Cotton Nero A.x Manuscript "should" be viewed from a rhetorical perspective. The four poems work together in a chiastic dialogue and this dialogue has an "open center." In Chapter One, I discuss the chiasmus as a rhetorical form marked by the number four — two pairs — and by repetition and reversal at the center. Importantly, the chiasmus belongs to the largely neglected category of figures, "the schemes," figures that operate on the level of syntax and thus can function as graphic and auditory signals even while they do the work of carrying a semantic "text." Turning to the history of the manuscript and its early publication history in Chapter Two, I examine the "body" of the manuscript, its material integrity, housing, location, and "keepers," as well as its fragmentation as a "text" when it was discovered

and brought to publication in the early nineteenth century. The third chapter deals briefly with the problem of the "author," a missing construct that still frustrates attempts to read the four poems as a text, before turning to a study of the chiastic structure that is implied by both the material substance and syntax of the Manuscript, its "Body," and also by the immaterial semantics of the text, the "Spirit." The chiasmus acts as a rhetorical "binder" that holds the sequence of poems in a meaningful and simple apposition, which nevertheless retains the text's layered complexity. Reading the manuscript as a chiasmus opens up unrecognized and uncelebrated links between the poems, informing them with potential new meanings, and, perhaps more comfortingly, providing the reader with a greater sense of comprehension and closure. I speculate briefly, in conclusion, about parallels, turned up in the course of this argument, between current directions in rhetorical studies and the peculiarities of medieval discourse conventions. I also take a moment to examine my own premises and prejudices, which have no doubt shaped the shape of the text I see.

CHAPTER 1

THE CHIASMUS AS SCHEME AND FIGURE

INTRODUCTION: CHIASMUS AS A MASTER SCHEME

In *Poetry and Crisis in the Age of Chaucer*, Charles Muscatine argues that the *Pearl*–poet's balanced, numerically structured, and archaically styled verse form may have been the formal expression of a psychological retreat, the erection of a poetic fortress that provided stability and safety in a period that Muscatine characterizes as an "age in crisis."[4] When Muscatine declares that "[The Poet] is almost unique among medieval poets in having a passion for unity, for utter discipline of form" (42), he identifies the Poet's use of parallelism, repetition, and balance — all features of chiastic form, although Muscatine does not use the term — as evidence of a passionate desire for "unity" and "discipline." Yet Muscatine concludes his remarks by envisioning the *Pearl*–poet as "a 'cubist' artist, with a *fractionating, variational* vision" (69, my emphasis); Muscatine's final image of discontinuity and partitioning in the work of the *Pearl*–poet seems curiously at odds with the sense of balance, harmony, and unity that he claims to find in *Pearl* and *Gawain*, the poems on which he focuses most directly. In Muscatine's

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[4] See Muscatine's *Introduction*, chapter 1, especially pages 14–35, for his full characterization of the 1300s as an "age in crisis."

description, the *Pearl*–poet inhabits a bipolar world constructed from opposites: "blysse and blunder," in the Poet's words, or "fullness and imperfection . . . variousness and imperfection" (55), in Muscatine's words. The *Pearl*–poet performs a tightrope walk through his material, creating a fragile, perhaps escapist, and certainly idealistic vision that threatens at all times to break down in a way that is made possible by the formal juxtaposition of opposite states.

Chiastic form — repetitive, parallel, and often containing antithetical elements — has been used as a structuring device for texts as brief as two cola and as long as entire epics; the form evokes the same interplay between stabilizing and destabilizing effects that Muscatine perceived in the work of the *Pearl*–poet. Chiasmus describes a world that appears to be made stable by the positing of opposites. In the common chiasmus, "When you drink don't drive, when you drive don't drink," the form is used for amplification and emphasis. The two cola simply reverse and repeat an identical message. But as Richard Lanham recognizes, chiastic form also frustrates the desire for stability:

> Professional football players, for example, use a chiasmus proverb to think about injuries:
>
> If you're sick   you don't play.
>
> X
>
> If you play   you're not sick.
>
> What's going on here? The X [the X–shape] seems to establish two different, mutually exclusive roles. It excludes, by its form, the temptation to stand in the middle — play, but if you don't play well, blame it on being sick. The X– form provides precisely the diagrammatic force a player needs, the force to

13

separate experience into two mutually exclusive camps. (Lanham, *Analyzing*

Prose 127)

Lanham characterizes the chiasmus as an agent of choice and change, forcing decisions

and movement and denying stasis, or the possibility of "standing in the middle."

We can see another example of the same tension between stability and change in

the earliest known "literary" example of chiasmus from the Sumerian epic Gilgamesh

(ca. 3,000 BCE). One version of the Prologue opens with this use of chiasmus:

After heaven and earth had been moved

After earth from heaven had been separated (Smith 1981, 17)

This example illustrates two essential, and somewhat paradoxical, features of chiasmus:

1) *Repetition*. The words "after," "heaven," "earth," and "had been" repeat in

parallel grammatical units. Both the paired past participle verb phrases, "had been

moved" and "had been separated," and the parallel prepositional phrases, "after earth and

heaven" and "after earth from heaven," repeat.

2) *Contrast*. A semantic shift occurs between the verb "moved" and the verb

"separated," specifying how or in what direction the subjects were "moved"; the

positions of the words "earth" and "heaven" are contrasted by reversal, and finally, the

simple compound, "after heaven and earth," is changed to a doubled prepositional phrase,

"after earth from heaven." Each of these changes sets up an implied bipolar opposition

that leads in turn to an open–ended contrast between the positional pairings of the two

cola.

The basic chiasmus appears in the reversal of the positions of the words "heaven"

and "earth," creating the characteristic diagonal cross, the *chi*, of the chiasmus:

```
              A          B
    After  heaven and earth      had been moved

                  X

    After  earth from heaven     had been separated

              B          A
```

Both repetition and contrast heighten awareness of the word reversal and draw attention

to the similarities and differences between the two phrases, without discarding the

semantic meaning of either colon. Both phrases or positions are, in other words,

"conserved." This conservation, a result of the parallels and the repetition, creates a felt

sense of stability or stasis despite the great "movement" described in the semantic content

of the two phrases — and there could hardly be a greater movement than the separation

of the earth and the heavens. Despite the semantic emphasis on separation, the chiasmus

locks "heaven and earth" together. In other words, while the form stabilizes, the semantic

contrasts de–stabilize.

        To understand the rhetorical functioning of chiasmus, the tension between stasis

and movement that Muscatine glimpsed in the *Pearl*–poet but did not recognize

explicitly, a view of the history of chiasmus as a rhetorical figure is useful to show why

the chiasmus has been recognized as an agent of stability, but not of a concomitant

fragmentation. The reason has to do with long–standing distinctions between schemes

and tropes. In traditional rhetorics, chiasmus is classified as a "scheme," which, along

with tropes, formed the two generally recognized categories of rhetorical figures

(Lanham, *Handlist* 116). But this distinction is rarely drawn in current discussions of

figuration; figure and trope have become essentially synonymous. Typically, metaphor,

15

as a trope, is presented as, if not the only figure, at least the more important one, a "master trope." More often than not, schemes are simply ignored. In the few instances where schemes are presented or discussed (often in attempts to rehabilitate classical rhetoric), their importance in modern prose is dismissed. For example, Edward Corbett introduces the discussion of the schemes in his *Classical Rhetoric for the Modern Student* by claiming that they are relatively rare and limited to poetic and archaic contexts: "We shall not dwell very long on schemes of words because while they occur frequently in poetry — especially in the poetry of earlier centuries — they rarely occur in prose" (427).

While tropes depend on semantic transformation, schemes, according to traditional definitions, do not. As a scheme, chiasmus is a figure based on the order of words in phrases or clauses, in this case a figure based on the inverted arrangement of words in phrases or clauses in at least two cola. Thus, while the recognition of a trope such as metaphor depends on prior semantic understanding (denotations and/or connotations, current use and context of the words involved), it is possible to recognize a simple chiasmus in any context, whether we know the meanings of the words involved or not. A chiasmus *chi* (or X) appearing in the reversal of words — even foreign or nonsense words — is easy to detect: we do not *lifde* to *gereordian*, we *gereorde* to *libban.* By contrast, we cannot detect the presence of a metaphor without prior semantic knowledge; for example, the sentence "Henry is a pig" might be a metaphor, but it might simply identify the name of a particular pig.

Another feature of schemes that has caused them to be disregarded and underestimated is their direct appeal to the senses. Unlike tropes, schemes denote spatial and temporal "places," appealing directly to the visual and aural senses. Because of their

16

sensory appeal, some theorists argue, schemes are particularly adapted to the iconic and mnemonic needs of proverbs, epithets, and incantations, all characteristic forms in the language of pre–literate or pre–alphabetic cultures (Havelock 7–8), which recalls Corbett's suggestion that their use seems to be limited to poetic and archaic venues. In other words, chiasmus describes rather than alters reality; it is an agent of stasis rather than change. In this dissertation, however, I argue that chiasmus has always been and continues to be an important and useful formal "device" for all kinds of discourse; not only does its direct sensory appeal help to create the emotional affect of modern advertising and political speeches, but the form also lends itself to the expression of some of the most profound conceptual "arguments" of contemporary science, philosophy, and law. We just do not notice the scheme's ubiquity, and therefore its cultural importance.

A look at the history of rhetoric suggests that attention to schemes such as chiasmus is long overdue. In this history of rhetoric, the schemes have been not only ignored, but also denigrated in relation to the more valued tropes, particularly metaphor. From the fifth century BCE to the twenty–first century CE, metaphor has, almost without interruption, reigned as the quintessential "figure" in rhetorical taxonomies. In *On Rhetoric*, Aristotle never develops a separate category for *figura*, but he devotes nearly half of his discussion of "style" in Book 3 to metaphors. In both the *Poetics* and *On Rhetoric*, Aristotle celebrates the talent for composing metaphors as a sign of "natural ability" and "urbanity" in orators and poets (*On Rhetoric* 3.2.8 and *Poetics* 22.7, for example). In this century, Kenneth Burke identifies metaphor, along with metonymy, synecdoche, and irony, as a "Master Trope" and ignores the "schemes" altogether (*Grammar of Motives*, Appendix A). Paul Ricoeur's 1975 study, *The Rule of Metaphor*,

uses the trope of metaphor as an Ariadne's thread that delineates the evolving interaction of rhetoric, from Aristotle to the present, with science, philosophy, and poetry. Finally, cognitive psychological therapy has followed Aristotle to explore metaphor's generative capability, building on Aristotle's recognition that "all people carry on their conversations in metaphors" (*On Rhetoric* 3.2.6).[5]

The sheer energy expended in the study of metaphor contrasts sharply with the treatment of the schemes, in general, and of chiasmus in particular. When not overlooked entirely, the schemes are regularly shuffled from category to category in rhetorical systems. Chiasmus, despite its simple and readily identifiable shape, seems to be especially difficult to define and categorize and, as will be discussed in this chapter, respected rhetoricians disagree about the determinant characteristics of chiasmus. The generative capacity of schemes such as chiasmus in producing language and thought is just now beginning to be recognized and elucidated in books such as Jeanne Fahnestock's 1999 publication, *Rhetorical Figures in Science*; still, a quick online search with the keyword "chiasmus" currently returns only nine titles.[6]

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[5] A traveling friend of mine, coming through a Greek airport, heard the customs' officers and porters using the word "metafara" which still means "luggage bag" or "carrier" — a concrete metaphor long since lost in English.

[6] A basic search with the keyword "metaphor" in the University of Georgia Libraries' online catalog, GIL, posted 1101 entries, while the same search using "chiasmus" posted nine. 647 of the entries under metaphor were published since 1990; the earliest reached back to the 1500s. Of the nine entries under "chiasmus," five were theological readings,

In this dissertation, I argue not only that schemes are long overdue for attention from rhetorical theorists, but also that the power and function of schemes such as chiasmus have been badly underestimated. Because schemes are syntactic rather than semantic forms, they are assumed to foster stasis and stability; in the common view schemes describe, but do not alter, the world. But I would suggest that schemes such as chiasmus are powerful in ways that are alien to an Aristotelian rhetoric grounded in logos. Since schemes, like images or sounds, depend on shape and rhythm, they can communicate non–logically, non–chronologically, and non–hierarchically. That is, while metaphoric effects depend on semantic "meaning" (e.g., mind *is* body) governed by equivalence and substitution, the chiasmus produces effects primarily by syntactic correspondence held together by a dialectic between difference (contrast) and conservation (repetition). In other words, the chiasmus depends on a ratio independent of semantics (e.g., the mind inhabits the body: the body inhabits the mind). By re–evaluating and re–placing schemes as rhetorical figures and by re–situating the chiasmus as a "master scheme," I argue that the schemes can provide an alternate window on our cognitive structuring of "reality." In much the same way that the trope, metaphor, can occupy (as allegory) a meta–narrative position in medieval literature, the scheme, chiasmus, can occupy a meta–structural position in medieval literature.

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one a chiasmus bibliography edited by Welch, a member of the theological community, one concerned use of chiastic structure in oral literature and ballads, one had an alternate subject heading, "the philosophy of science." The remaining entry concerns Samuel Butler and his "ambilateralism."

In order to move towards the business of Chapter 4 — demonstrating the undergirding chiastic skeleton of the four poems found in the British Library Manuscript Cotton Nero A.x, Article 3 — this chapter defines our current use and understandings of chiasmus, as it is discussed in traditional and popular rhetorics, explores the contributions to the understanding of chiastic structure in ancient texts that has been undertaken by theologians, and examines this figure's curious relationship to the "vertigo" of postmodern theory. It is this relationship to vertigo that, I believe, reveals how chiasmus orders and re–presents information and that reveals the figure's peculiar compatibility with a medieval ethic and with medieval principles of organization.

CURRENT VIEWS OF CHIASMUS: DEFINITIONS, PROBLEMS, PARTIAL SOLUTIONS

1.   Composition Textbooks and Popular Rhetorics

We can derive at least four generalizations about the treatment of schemes in general, and chiasmus in particular, from current studies of rhetoric and literature:

1) *The chiasmus is rarely discussed in relation to _composing_ processes.* Composition texts expend minimal effort teaching any of the figures. When they are included, the brief discussions cover a few tropes, usually metaphor and its close associates, but not schemes.

2) *Contemporary prose _analysts_ (as opposed to composition teachers) regard chiasmus as a notable figure, but one not generally found in contemporary English prose.* They often state or imply, by their choice of examples, that chiasmus's use is limited to poetry, to archaic, highly stylized prose, or to highly embellished forms of contemporary prose such as political speeches or advertising.

3) *There is general confusion about the <u>defining elements</u> of chiasmus.* Writers disagree about which elements the chiasmus inverts and parallels; they variously identify the elements as grammatical units, syntactic units, word forms, and word meanings. They also disagree about whether the chiasmus as a figure is a subcategory of "antithesis" and about which of the numerous available definitions best names the figure.

4) *A trend may be underway towards re–incorporating schemes such as chiasmus into the teaching of the <u>composing process</u>.* This movement may be related to the application of schematic analysis in contemporary electronic venues for literature, which often involve sound ("midi" files) and photographic images ("gif" or "jpg" files). In the section that follows, I trace the fortunes of chiasmus through four rhetorical venues: First–year writing texts, popular rhetorics, literary lexicons and handbooks, and scholarly writing on ancient literatures and the bible.

The first category, first–year writing texts, produces little information about chiasmus. Of the top ten standard college composition texts, none offers a significant discussion of figures. Typically, one to five pages are devoted to the basic tropes, including metaphor and analogy. However, I did find three texts (not among the "top ten") that describe schemes and tropes; one of these teaches chiasmus in composing, using specific exercises designed to help students generate the scheme and to incorporate it in their own compositions.

When the terms and traditions of classical rhetoric appear at all in composition handbooks, elements relevant to arrangement or logic are included, but very little about figuration. Two typical examples include *Writing Arguments: A Rhetoric with Readings* (*Writing Arguments*) and *The New St. Martin's Handbook (St. Martin's). St. Martin's*, a

"top–ten" handbook, has the most extensive coverage of figures, but this still amounts to only a little over three pages out of 870. *St. Martin's* does attend to classical terminology, covering invention, arrangement, and logical fallacies, and providing an overview of *ethos*, *pathos*, and *logos*. Still, all of the figures presented, with the possible exception of African–American "signifying," are tropes. The first page on figuration is devoted to simile, metaphor, and analogy; the next offers cautions about their use (e.g., cliches and mixed metaphors); the final page–and–a–half covers the figures: personification, hyperbole, understatement, irony, allusion (all semantically based, and, therefore, tropes) and the African–American figure "signifying" (328–29).

 Writing Arguments: A Rhetoric with Readings (1990) covers both classical and Toulminian invention, arrangement, and logic as aids to composition, but classical elements of style are, again, neglected. For example, a brief twenty pages on *ethos* and *pathos* follows the first 160, which concern the evaluation of evidence, use of heuristics, and improvement of argumentative "positioning." Only two figures are mentioned in the brief section on pathos: metaphor and extended metaphor, or analogy. Again, the text focuses on tropes rather than schemes (177–80).[7]

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[7] Texts from the 1970s tend to forego discussion of stylistic elements completely, as does the 1974 edition of the *Student's Guide for Writing College Papers*. All three of its indexed entries under "Figures" have to do with numbering pages, while the pages listed under "Style" reference issues of correctness in abbreviation and the use of numeration and hyphenation. This more dated text deals with rhetorical figures in a short section on paragraph development, under the heading of "emphasis, variety, and diction." The

Even Edward Corbett's *Classical Rhetoric for the Modern Student*, a well–known composition text entirely devoted to classical rhetoric, curtails its discussion of figuration, devoting only 38 pages out of 600 to the subject. Corbett lists and defines many classical figures, and he makes a distinction between schemes and tropes, giving clear definitions and generous examples for each. These definitions, however, seem to be provided primarily for identifying instances of *figura* in his text's professional writing samples. Corbett's definition of chiasmus in *Classical Rhetoric* does broach the problematic border between chiasmus and its many near synonyms, attempting to distinguish between the schemes *antimetabole* and *chiasmus*. Chiasmus, according to Corbett, "*reverses the grammatical structures* in successive clauses or phrases" (443, my emphasis), whereas "antimetabole is a *repetition of words, in successive clauses in reverse grammatical order*" (442, my emphasis). This distinction is important and subtle. For now, however, it is enough to observe that Corbett's examples of both chiasmus and antimetabole are drawn from poetry, political speeches, and advertising, and so seem to be specialized and limited forms of figurative language. Under chiasmus, Corbett includes the following examples:

- "By day they frolic, and they dance by night" (Samuel Johnson, "The Vanity of Human Wishes");
- "His time a moment, and a point his space" (Alexander Pope, *Essay on Man*, Epistle 1);

author provides examples of desirable and undesirable effects and comments: "Aim at a style that is simple and direct — and one that is your own" (Turabian 74).

- "Exalts his enemies, his friends destroys" (John Dryden, "Absalom and Achitophel");

- "It is hard to make money, but to spend it is easy" (student paper);

- "Language changes. So should your dictionary" (caption from ad for *Webster's Seventh New Collegiate Dictionary*). (Corbett 443)

All of these examples of chiasmus demonstrate grammatical reversals (subject, verb, object inversions). They are also dated and poetic (first two examples), rather stilted and artificial (the student example), or somewhat obscured by ellipsis, and in this case, a mood shift (the dictionary ad).

To illustrate antimetabole (defined in the more limited sense as a reversal of word order), Corbett chooses a variation on Quintilian's original example of the figure ("'One should eat to live, not live to eat.' Molière, *L'Avare*" [Corbett 442]), as well as two examples from Samuel Johnson, John F. Kennedy's famous reversal ("Ask not what your country can do for you; ask what you can do for your country," which frequently is cited as an example of chiasmus), and a few more, listed below:

- "Mankind must put an end to war or war will put an end to mankind" (Kennedy 1961);

- "The Negro needs the white man to free him from his fears. The white man needs the Negro to free him from his guilt" (King 1966);

- "You can take Salem out of the country. But you can't take the country out of Salem" (cigarette advertisement);

- "You like it, it likes you" (7Up advertisement).

These examples do, in fact, accurately reflect Corbett's distinction between chiasmus and antimetabole; diction and syntax are both paralleled and inverted. Again, however, the Johnson examples are dated, Kennedy's and King's are from speeches and speakers known for "eloquence," and the two advertising jingles emphasize the seeming artifice of the form.

The exceptional composition text that proves the rule, Dona J. Hickey's *Developing a Written Voice* (1993) defines, discusses, gives examples of, and suggests exercises specifically designed to elicit chiasmus (and other figures) as part of the composing process. Hickey has, in fact, incorporated an entire updated practical rhetoric of the classical *figura* for both tropes and schemes. Her definition and examples from the "lesson" entry on chiasmus follow:

> Chiasmus is repetition in which the order of words in one clause is reversed in the second. For instance:
>
>> Nature forms patterns. Some are orderly in space but disorderly in time, others orderly in time but disorderly in space. (James Gleick, *Chaos*)
>>
>> The press is so powerful in its image–making role, it can make a criminal look like he's the victim and make the victim look like he's the criminal. (Malcolm X)
>>
>> It's not the word made flesh we want in writing, in poetry and fiction, but the flesh made word. (William Gass, *On Being Blue: A Philosophical Inquiry*)
>
> Chiasmus is particularly effective when sentences are built tight [sic], the language compressed. Chiasmus itself can be considered compressed

antithesis. As such, it is a powerful construction, often persuading readers of an author's wit and insight. (Hickey 99–100)

Several features of Hickey's definition and examples are interesting and should be kept in mind in relation to contemporary definitions of the chiasmus. First, and most happily, her examples are drawn from philosophical and scientific essayists, as well as from political writers. Second, and somewhat less happily, she defines chiasmus by the more exclusive definition of reversal in word choice. For Corbett and some others, Hickey defines the more limited scheme of antimetabole. Third, much less happily and more confusingly, she emphasizes the "antithetical" effect chiasmus seems to create, raising antithesis, almost, to a requirement of the form (i.e., "chiasmus itself can be considered compressed antithesis" (100). Finally, (and completely incorrectly, I believe), she attributes particular reader responses to the form: that is, the author's ethos will gain in "wit and insight" by using this "powerful construction" (100). Corbett's student example ("It is hard to make money, but to spend it is easy") would argue otherwise.

Hickey incorporates this lesson on chiasmus into a section that covers all of the "schemes of repetition." In Hickey's configuration, this list includes chiasmus, alliteration, *polyptoton* (the same root with different endings), assonance, *anaphora*, *epistrophe*, *epanalepsis* (same word at beginning and end of a clause), *anadiplosis* (last word becomes a transitional link to the first word), and tricolon. A set of exercises concluding the section suggests that students rewrite sentences to create each of the schemes, locating and naming schemes in one's own and others' compositions and journaling about the relative difficulty or ease of each scheme.

One last comment on Hickey's innovative, but somewhat awkward, approach. In a chapter discussing "voice," she compares Oliver Wendell Holmes's earlier and John Kennedy's later versions of the famous chiasmus, "Ask not what your country can do for you; ask what you can do for your country" to show the increase in "the sound of significance" in Kennedy's more concise version. She writes, "the technique [of composing a chiasmus] is to keep the phrase of the first part of the sentence but invert the meaning in the second." This direction for composing a chiasmus is unique, as far as I know, blending syntactic (two parallel "phrases") and semantic ("invert the meaning") notions of the chiasmus and establishing a distinct semantic antithesis between the AB and BA pairs. Hickey also puts a sharp focus on the scheme's aural and phonological potential, offering an analysis of the pitch and stress changes effected by reversal and concision: "By keeping the construction parallel and reversing the placement of *you* and *country*, the writer ensures a marked rise in pitch and heavy stress on the second *you* and second *country* . . . It's the second part of the sentence that chiasmus is designed to ring loud and forcefully" (Hickey 14). She concludes that chiasmus gives the writer/speaker a great deal of control over intonation patterns (pitch, stress, and duration) that are "crucial to a reader's perception of who you are and what you are saying" (15).

Finally, The University of Georgia's own first–year writing text, the 2001 edition of *Everything's An Argument*, includes "Figurative language and argument," a chapter of ten pages out of nearly 800. However, this text does take note of the classical divide between tropes and schemes, listing eight tropes (metaphor, simile, analogy, hyperbole, understatement, *antonomasia*, and irony) and five schemes: three classical schemes (parallelism, antithesis, *anaphora*); and two new terms, "inverted word order" and

"reversed structures." The phrase "inverted word order" echoes other definitions of

antimetabole and/or chiasmus, but its examples also demonstrate something else:

- "Into this grey lake plopped the thought, 'I know this man, don't I'"?

  (Doris Lessing);

- "One game does not a championship make" (Unattributed);

- "Good looking he was not; wealthy he was not; but brilliant — he

  was" (Unattributed). (Lunsford and Ruskiewicz 246)

In these examples, "inverted word order" clearly does *not* create either chiasmus or

antimetabole; rather, the shifts involve single words or phrases moved out of English's

typical subject, verb, object positioning. Under "Reversed Structures," Kennedy's "Ask

not . . ." chiasmus is offered as a template, followed by these examples:

- "The Democrats won't get elected unless things get worse, and things

  won't get worse until the Democrats get elected" (Jeanne Kirkpatrick);

- "The Negro needs the white man to free him from his fears. The white

  man needs the Negro to free him from his guilt" (Martin Luther King,

  Jr.);

- "When the going gets tough, the tough get going" (Unattributed).

  (248)

"Reversed structures" are clearly chiastic reversals and the mysterious decision to call

chiasmus "reversed structures" rather than using the word "chiasmus" seems especially

odd in light of the choice to use other classical terms, such as *antonomasia* and *anaphora*.

Selecting Jeanne Kirkpatrick's chiasmus as an example shows the tendency to "see"

chiasmus in political venues, but at least draws on a quote from someone other than

Kennedy and King. Thus, even when the composition textbooks attend to chiasmus and the schemes, they limit their range of impact by assigning them to specialized areas of discourse, even as they argue that "everything is an argument."

Popular rhetorics generally show little interest in "teaching" figuration and typically provide no discussion or definition of particular schemes like chiasmus. In *The Art of Readable Writing* (1962 edition), Rudolf Flesch uses a good deal of "rhetoric" to pretend that good writing is "style free." Flesch offers no lists of *figura*, seems uninterested in analyzing passages, and sees no relationship between analysis and the creation of written texts. Chiasmus, of course, is not mentioned specifically.[8] Another modern sophist, Joseph Williams, aims for a more sophisticated audience in *Style: Ten Lessons in Clarity and Grace* (1989) but offers, surprisingly, much the same formula as

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[8] Ironically, as an example, Flesch uses an ascending tricolon of digressive quotes — a philosopher (Schopenhauer), a diplomat (Harold Nicolson), and a mathematician (George Polya) — in an elaborately symmetrical, balanced, amplification that is constructed to emphasize that brevity and clarity and good "content" are the only necessary components of a good style: "The first rule for a good style is to have something to say; in fact, this in itself is almost enough" (Flesch 36). He goes on to observe that the most readable syntax is "short," that the best diction is "simple," and that "Aristotle" (in this case more a metonymic representation of classical rhetoric than a specific person) has very little, if anything, to offer the modern writer. Flesch argues persuasively that characters, action, and "facts" enhance most strongly the attractiveness and impact of one's prose, as shown by his "readability formula" (226).

Flesch does. Williams's "first principle" consists of naming "your characters . . . [and] . . . your crucial actions" to achieve "clarity" (Williams 9). Also like Flesch, Williams neither uses nor describes any of the classical terminology for *figura*, with the single exception of metaphor. Instead, he describes the general goals of prose, including balance, symmetry, emphasis, and rhythm, and provides examples of well–balanced, symmetrical, properly emphasized and rhythmical passages.

2.   Literary Handbooks

Popular composition and rhetorics texts, it is fairly safe to generalize, show only slight interest in specifying figures or discussing their use, apart from mentioning metaphor. Otherwise, the figures seem not to participate in the composing process. A few exceptional texts offer definitions of chiasmus, but I found only one that actively solicits chiastic structures. In contrast, handbooks and glossaries meant for the analysis and study of literature almost always include at least a brief definition of chiasmus. Some of these discussions of chiasmus are relatively extensive.

Of the more typical short entries, C. H. Holman's *A Handbook to Literature* (1960 edition) offers a representative example: "*Chiasmus*: A type of rhetorical balance in which the second part is syntactically balanced against the first but with the parts reversed, as in Coleridge's line, 'Flowers are lovely, love is flowerlike,' or Pope's 'works without show and without pomp presides'" (82). Holman's definition and examples are typical, avoiding confusion about whether chiasmus is defined by an inversion of "word" or an inversion of "grammatical structure" by simply referring to "parts" of the figure. The supporting examples again suggest a limited use of chiasmus. In this case, the first

example from Coleridge is so obvious as to seem contrived, false, or ironic, while the second, taken from Pope, is neither syntactically balanced nor reversed. Is "preside" the opposite of "works"? Does Pope intend his balancing phrases, "without show" and "without pomp," to compare or contrast semantically? Without situating a specific semantic chiasmus in its textual and historical context, diachronic shifts in denotation and synchronic slips in connotation can make a "semantic" chiasmus read like a riddle. Aside from being dated, the authors of these samples are best known to modern readers as poets; thus, the examples reinforce the sense that chiasmus belongs to an antiquated and overwrought poetic style.

M. H. Abrams's 1999 edition of *A Glossary of Literary Terms* groups chiasmus under "rhetorical figures" and defines it as "a sequence of two phrases or clauses which are parallel in syntax but reverse the order of the corresponding words" (272). He includes these examples:

- "Works without show, and without pomp presides" (Pope);

- "A fop their passion, but their prize a sot" (Pope);

- "The years to come seemed waste of breath,

  A waste of breath the years behind" (Yeats).

Abrams follows up with a last example, commenting that,

> as a reminder that all figures of speech are used in prose as well as in verse, here is an instance of chiasmus in the position of the two adjectives in Shelley's *Defence of Poetry* (1821): "Poetry is the record of the best and happiest moments of the happiest and best minds." (272)

Here again, the examples depict the chiasmus as belonging to eighteenth and nineteenth–century poetry. Abrams's definition neatly skirts the problem of whether chiasmus employs semantic or syntactic shifts in its reversal by not specifying the nature of "correspondence" in "the order of the *corresponding* words" (272, my emphasis). His example of a prose chiasmus, given in order to remind us that "all figures of speech are used in prose," is not particularly effective, given the fact that we remember Shelley primarily as a poet.

In *Analyzing Prose* (1983), an analytical guide that rehabilitates terminology from classical rhetoric for modern use, Richard Lanham defines chiasmus briefly in an appendix, under the heading of "Basic Sentence Patterns." Here chiasmus occupies a level of generality parallel to parataxis and hypotaxis, *asyndeton* and *polysyndeton*, periodic sentences, *isocolon*, *anaphora*, and tautology. Lanham defines chiasmus simply as "the basic pattern of antithetical inversion, the AB:BA pattern." By a careful choice of words, Lanham avoids having to choose between inversion of grammatical structures or inversion of words as a criterion for chiasmus and thus he also avoids the problem of including *semantic* antithesis as one of the chiasmus's defining attributes. Like Hickey, Corbett, and others, Lanham offers the chiasmus from Kennedy's inaugural address as his primary example. Lanham emphasizes chiasmus's Greek root, "crossing" or "X" by laying out the pattern schematically:

	A	B	
Ask not	*what your country*	*can do for you*, but	

	B	A	
	what you can do	for *your country*. (Lanham, *Analyzing Prose*	

116)

Lanham's tactic is important here because, by laying the scheme out in an "X," he focuses attention on the figure's visual argument. Lanham also discusses a lengthy periodic sentence structure that uses a chiasmus as verbal stop sign, a reader's cue for "the end." Concluding his discussion, Lanham concedes, however, that "We don't write prose like this anymore," adding, in a rather contradictory aside, that ("advertising copywriters certainly love chiasmus!" [58]), ambiguously suggesting both nostalgia for older, loftier prose forms like chiasmus, as well as some disgust about the degeneration of chiasmus into an advertising "scheme." Lanham only obliquely recommends imitation of these "outdated" prose forms as a piano teacher might recommend playing scales — as an exercise to tune the ear and to strengthen and stretch the fingers, but not a true melody. By including chiasmus in a group of basic sentence patterns, Lanham de–emphasizes its role as a scheme and emphasizes its function as a figure of thought.

A more thorough treatment of chiasmus can be found in Lanham's *Handlist of Rhetorical Terms: A Guide for Students of English Literature* (1968), in which several entries discuss chiasmus. The basic entry, found under the heading "Alphabetical listing of terms," is as follows:

Chiasmus (chi AS mus; G. [Greek] "crossing") — Antimetabole, commutatio

This term is derived from the Greek letter X (*chi*) whose shape, if the two

halves of the construction are rendered in separate verses, it resembles:

A   B

B   A

'Polished in courts, and harden'd in the field

Renown'd for conquest, and in council skill'd'

(Addison, 'The Campaign') (22)

This entry is repeated verbatim in a later section under the heading "Terms Especially

Useful in Literary Criticism" (133, 136). Like Holman's and Abrams's examples,

Lanham's is dated, uses what would quickly be perceived as archaic or poetic forms (the

dropped "e"s, the inverted syntax with verb following object) and themes (aristocratic

and feudal), and fails to show an AB:BA reversal in its grammar. The syntax of the

phrases is A:A:A:B, that is, three past participle verbs followed by "objects"

(prepositional phrases) and a final phrase which reverses the order to "prepositional

phrase–past participle verb." The third phrase is not clearly parallel, since "for conquest"

functions adverbially. Thus, syntactically speaking, this example is a periodic tricolon

with a climactic reversal attached at the end. Instead of a syntactic chiasmus, then,

Lanham must refer to the semantic chiasmus, which relies on the semantic contrast of the

nouns; that is:

A=courts   B=field

X

B=conquest   A=council

34

As a syntactic chiasmus, this one is further undercut by uneven alliteration (three "C"s and one "F"), uneven phrasal syntax (as explained above), and uneven diction (three "ins" and one "for"). The phrases work brilliantly, however, as a semantic chiasmus, since all four elements become metonymic replacements for the seemingly contrasting actions (council and conquest) and locations (fields and courts) of aristocratic achievement — the feudal ideal of "*sapientia et fortitudino*," neatly rephrased.

Lanham's second definition of chiasmus, in a section entitled "Terms by Type: Balance, Antithesis, and Paradox," avoids the choice between syntactic or semantic criteria by simply using the word "order." Chiasmus is defined as follows: "**Chiasmus:** *order* of first phrase or clause reversed in second" (Lanham, *Handlist* 119, my emphasis). The figures mentioned as synonymous alternates for chiasmus, *antimetabole* and *commutatio*, cannot be distinguished from chiasmus on the basis of the examples given, but Lanham does discuss the possible division:

> **Commutatio** (com mu TA ti o; L. [Latin] 'change, interchange') —
> **Chiasmus,** *q.v.*: **Antimetabole.** Order of the first clause is reversed in the
> second: 'We must not live to eat, but eat to live' (25).
>
> **Antimetabole** (an ti me TAB o le; G. [Greek] 'turning about') — **Chiasmus;**
> **Commutatio**; **Permutatio**; **Counterchange**. In English, inverting the order
> of repeated words to sharpen their sense or to contrast the ideas they convey
> or both (AB:BA); chiasmus and commutatio sometimes imply a more
> precise balance and reversal, antimetabole a looser, but they are virtual
> synonyms: 'I pretty, and my saying apt? Or I apt, and my saying pretty?'
> (*Love's Labour's Lost*, I. ii). Latin use of the term was slightly different

from the English and not precisely synonymous with chiasmus. Quintilian, for example, defines it:

> Antithesis may also be effected by employing that figure, known as [antimetabole], by which words are repeated in different cases, tenses, moods, etc., as for instance when we say, '*non ut edam vivo, sed ut vivam, edo*' [I do not live to eat, but eat to live]. (IX.iii.85) (Lanham, *Handlist* 10)

In the case of *commutatio*, the definition and example show that this term is, for all contemporary purposes, a Latin synonym for the Greek–derived term *chiasmus*. *Antimetabole* is also synonymous with *chiasmus*, as Lanham's selection of identical examples for *commutatio* and *antimetabole* shows; however, by including Quintilian's Latin rendering of the example, "*. . . edam vivo . . . vivam edo*," Lanham effectively conveys the different possible formulations of a scheme when used in another language, in this case Latin, that relies on nominal case endings and gendered and numbered conjugations.

Lanham's efforts to resurrect and refresh the terms of classical rhetoric echo many of the problems encountered by all the modern arbiters of written discourse that have been described above. Their terms proliferate and overlap as they adjust to the exigencies of different languages and styles, making distinctions between similar terms such as chiasmus, commutatio, and antimetabole difficult and perhaps superfluous. On the other hand, invented or descriptive alternatives, such as Lunsford and Ruskiewicz's identification of "reversed structures," create new areas of overlap and more synonyms to account for in lexicons. Lanham's entry for "chiasmus" adds, as a synonym, antimetabole. Consulting the entry for antimetabole adds to the mix another synonym,

permutatio, which in turn adds *enallage*, and so on. Invented terms, for whatever reason

(for instance, lack of authority or imprecision), can gain just enough popularity to require

recognition but not enough popularity to become dependable replacements for the

original Greek or Latin. For example, George Puttenham's *The Arte of English Poesie*

(1589) attempted to develop a purely English vocabulary for the figures (e.g., "sarcasm"

becomes "bitter taunt," antimetabole — and thus chiasmus — becomes

"counterchange"), but his terminology never gained wide enough acceptance to replace

the classical terms and has degenerated into yet another group of potential synonyms.

Ostensibly, we retain the classical forms for the study of those languages; nevertheless,

the classical terms continue to be applied to modern English, with the resulting lack of fit

and consistency.

All the contemporary approaches struggle as well with the position of chiasmus

within classificatory hierarchies. Quintilian originally classifies antimetabole, a term we

must now accept, more or less by default, as synonymous with chiasmus, as a figure of

thought in the form of antithesis. If we regard "antithesis" as potentially synonymous

with chiasmus (as Hickey and Lanham both do), we begin to broaden the definition of

chiasmus to the point where the term becomes nearly meaningless as a particular scheme

because it becomes dependent on the semantic value of the words. For example, in one

classification scheme posed by Lanham, derived from a summary account of Geoffrey of

Vinsauf's formulation, we end up with the following categorizations of the

"synonymous" figures: Antimetabole is one of the "ten basic *tropes*" (my emphasis) and

a "difficult ornament"; commutatio is a "figure of words (*schema*)" and an "easy

ornament," while antithesis is listed as a "figure of thought." Chiasmus is not categorized

(Lanham, *Handlist* 130–32). Because classification schemes are meant to sort things, when categories are not mutually exclusive — that is, when synonymous terms occupy different categories — confusion reigns.

While problems of definition and classification have hindered the contemporary study of schemes, the most problematic element has been that schemes are perceived as archaic and poetic, and therefore not especially relevant to the composition or analysis of modern prose. While this perception may be changing, as evidenced by the introduction of schemes in a few recent texts, they are, in general, overlooked and ignored.

3.   The Exegetes

In researching the figure of chiasmus, one eventually runs into the substantial body of work carried out by biblical scholars on chiastic structures in ancient literatures. Nils Wilhelm Lund, working in the 1930s and 1940s and grounding himself in the work of earlier theological scholars, founded what amounts to an entire cottage industry devoted to the identification and interpretation of chiastic structures in ancient literatures. His three highly influential articles, published in the the 1930s, were developed and formalized with the 1942 publication of his magnum opus, the 428 page *Chiasmus in the New Testament: A Study in Formgeschichte.* Lund's work was the main source for all work done on chiasmus by exegetical scholars over the next 40 years, peaking in 1981 with Welch's *Chiasmus in Antiquity: Structures, Analyses, Exegesis*. Despite Welch's roots in exegetical tradition, his 1981 collection included papers that were concerned with the appearance of chiasmus in non Judeo–Christian and even non–religious works. Influenced by developments during the 1960s and 1970s in anthropology and linguistics,

Chiasmus in Antiquity expansively includes a variety of researchers' studies into chiastic structures found in languages and literatures as diverse as Sumero–Akkadian (Smith, source of the Gilgamesh chiasmus in the introduction), Ugaritic literatures (ca.1200 BCE, Syrian), Aramaic contracts and letters, Ancient Greek and Ancient Latin (from Homer through Cicero in all types of writing), Talmudic Aggadic Narrative, and the *Book of Mormon.* By 1995, the study of the chiasmus in ancient literatures had returned to a more limited and exegetical use; in *Chiasmus in the Pauline Letters*, Ian Thomson, the third major figure in this field, apologizes for "excesses [in the study of chiastic structures] that led to the justifiable scepticism of earlier years" (232). By cautious definition and careful delineation, he hopes to return the study of chiasmus to "a legitimate, often underrated, place in the field of New Testament rhetorical analysis" (13).

The exegetical scholarship on chiasmus begins with a clash between Lund and T. W. Manson over the separation of form from content in chiasmus. In an early review of Lund's work by Manson, we can see nearly every issue that will come to bear on later discussions of the rhetorical study of discourse and its forms and figures within exegetical scholarship, particularly with regard to chiasmus. In the introductory remarks from his review of Lund's book, Manson clearly and definitively posits the presence of chiastic structures in biblical and other ancient texts. He accurately represents the exegetical community by agreeing wholeheartedly that "structures of this kind are . . . to be found in both Testaments and . . . they are not the result of accident"; the presence of chiastic structures in ancient literatures is "not in doubt," he acknowledges (82).

While Manson readily concedes the presence of chiasmus in ancient literature, he makes a number of objections to Lund's treatment of both the form and its functioning

within ancient texts. Manson's objections center on Lund's definition of the term

chiasmus: not because Manson disagrees with Lund's designation of chiasmus form (he

agrees that it is AB:BA), and not because Lund's predecessors had called the same

structure "parallelism" or "inverted parallelism," but because, Manson argues, not "all

statements which happen to be in the form abba" are "chiastic" (Manson 82). This

surprisingly tautological statement can only be made from a perspective that totally

separates literary (poetic or fictional) and representational (non–fiction, expository)

language. In addition, Manson finds Lund's "Seven Laws" defining chiasmus to be too

strong a term to support Lund's "observations," mainly because these "Laws" conflate

chiasmus as a form (a scheme) with chiasmus as a way of organizing thought. Because

Manson writes from a rhetorical tradition that originates with the teachings of Ramus and

supports a Cartesian worldview, he specifically separates "rhetorical" structures from

informational ones. As Manson writes:

> For chiasmus is, as Mr. Lund shows, a technical term of ancient rhetoric. That
>
> is to say, chiasmus is an art form and the name should be reserved for literary
>
> structures which are thrown into that form for artistic reasons. Thus
>
> Equilateral triangles are equiangular
>
> Equiangular triangles are equilateral
>
> is not a chiasmus: it is a pair of reciprocal propositions, which drop into the
>
> abba form because there is no other that will do. Again, in narrative it is
>
> possible to claim as chiastic structures that are what they are merely by
>
> following the order of events:
>
> I get out of bed

I put on my clothes

I do my day's work

I take off my clothes

I get into bed.

This obeys all the rules laid down by Jebb and Lund; but it is not chiasmus as

an art form. So, when elaborate chiastic structure is found in the ritual

directions in Lev. 14.10–20, 21–32, the explanation may well be that the order

is not high art but a *simple statement of the actual procedure*. This means that

we must treat with the greatest reserve all cases of chiasmus claimed in

narrative or legal parts of the Bible. (82, my emphases)

Specifically, Manson objects to three of Lund's conclusions, all of which show Lund

allowing for the overlap of form and content: 1) chiasmus is characteristic of a

"primitive" structuring mechanism in ancient texts; 2) chiasmus can be shown to operate

over long passages; and 3) chiasmus exists in nonliterary passages.

Manson's objection to Lund's conclusion that chiastic structure reflects a "sign of

primitiveness" is not based on any politically correct desire to avoid labeling other

cultural practices, but rather on a theological and historical debate about the priority of

Common Source materials for the Gospels. Lund's suggestion that the chiastic structure

is typical of ancient writing and thus "primitive" is discounted since it would reverse the

presumed chronology of the New Testament Gospels: that is, if chiasmus is primitive,

Matthew, which shows the largest amount of chiastic structure, would have been

composed prior to, rather than after, Mark and Luke.

Lund concludes that chiasmus can operate over long passages, and Manson disagrees, entering the conservative side of a debate still current among exegetical scholars. These scholars all, to one degree or another, recognize serious problems for "objectivity" when observing structural chiasmus that operates over long passages, particularly when there are gaps and revisions, translation obscurities and variations. Manson's interrogation of Lund's longest biblical chiastic structure, the Sermon on the Mount, does make the process of demonstrating longer chiastic schemes look arbitrary. However, Manson's own reliance on essentializing phrases such as the "natural place," "obvious and natural division," and "most unnatural" in his counter–reading tends to undermine his argument as well (Manson 83). There seems to be general agreement that the further a researcher departs from the distinct syntactic reversal and parallelism of a short chiasmus, the more the structure can appear to be Procrustean. Lund's "Laws" and later improvements to these laws by Welch and then Thomson, as we shall see, have sought to remedy this weakness in identification by clarifying and tightening definitions for "legitimate" patterns.

Manson's objection that chiasmus is a "literary" form and thus automatically excluded from any "narrative or legal" passage that "happens to be in the form abba," seems naive or self–contradictory to post–structuralist sensibilities. The counter–examples that Manson uses to prove this point, however, raise some interesting issues. As we saw above, Manson argues that chiasmus constitutes the "natural" order of reciprocating propositions ("no other will do") and thus might be expected to occur frequently in legal descriptions and "ritual directions." In fact, the development of laws and legal language and the rules to support them were the original "business" of classical

rhetoric. Most of us have learned to question any assumption of "natural" order; the adversarial approach to law which has been our western, Greco–Roman inheritance may be more closely related to having been cast in chiastic structures than we are able to perceive. Even the "intuitive" rightness of mathematic's simplest "reciprocal propositions," such as the commutative law (m+n = n+m) are, surprisingly, not subject to proof. In Fahnestock's discussion of science's use of rhetorical figures, she cites mathematician Keith Devlin as pondering why the commutative law was adopted as "axiomatic" and not other propositions, which are supported by much better numerical evidence; Devlin concludes that the law's adoption is a "judgment call" based on "believability," "intuition," and "usefulness" (134).

With regard to narrative, which is closely related to a culture's apprehension of the nature and action of time, Manson argues that "chiastic structures . . . are merely following the order of events." Manson demonstrates in his short example that "narratives" take a repetitive and symmetrical shape (I got up, dressed, worked, undressed, went to bed, etc.), within a linear context of forward movement. While we might wonder at Manson's naive assumption that a narrative must follow this pattern of beginning, middle, and end, the cyclical quality of earthly phenomena does inform our rhetoric and beliefs about our own "natural" boundaries. Nevertheless, to create a chiastic structure (at least one of the type Manson describes) by narrating the events of a "normal" day would require a good deal of editing to achieve the balanced shape a chiasmus requires.

I have attended at some length here to Manson because his discussion highlights the problems involved in separating form and content, body and spirit in chiastic form.

His concluding remarks reveal the result of maintaining such a bipolar, exclusionary, and foundational perspective on the relation between schemes and textual substance. After describing Lund's suggestion that the biblical author "Luke" may have used a form of chiastic structuring as an organizational strategy, Manson comments that "The description would suggest that Luke was not quite sane." Manson insists that the alternate "explanation is very much to be preferred, since it allows both Matthew and Luke to behave like rational beings" (Manson 84). In other words, Manson implies that people who use chronological and logical arrangement are "rational" and "sane," whereas someone who acts or writes in an "unnatural" (non–logical or non–chronological) way must be "not quite sane." The "natural, rational, and logical" line up in an unbreakable chain of equivalence for Manson, so that he exemplifies perfectly the pitfalls of analysis dependent on logic and logos.

John Welch, working from a more sophisticated knowledge of linguistics than either Manson or Lund, addresses some of these problems and raises new ones in his introduction to the collected studies of chiasmus in the volume, *Chiasmus in Antiquity* (1981). The linguistic and anthropological base of Welch's collection is hinted at even in Freedman's "Preface" to the volume, which points out that "chiasm occurs to one degree or another in most languages and literatures, though with varying frequencies and effects . . . especially in ancient literatures where it occurs in great abundance." Further, he remarks that "since this cross–over [*chi*] effect is not required in any language, it is an optional and often deliberate practice that serves one of more several different purposes." Of these purposes, Freedman singles out the feature that many exegetical writers seem to

agree on, that is, that chiastic form can be used to focus attention on a central element (7–8).

In his Introduction, Welch quickly takes up the theme of the importance of chiastic structure to the study of ancient literature, passing over the "threshold" question of the existence of chiasmus in these literatures, which now, he believes, can safely be ignored: "Without overstating its importance, it can now be said that one of the most salient developments in the study of ancient literature over the past few decades is the growing awareness of the presence of chiasmus in the *composition* of ancient writings" (Welch 1, my emphasis). Welch makes it clear that this dramatic increase in attention to chiasmus is not limited to theological research, but applies to linguistic and rhetorical studies as well; he points to a "burgeoning" bibliography that contains a "vast number of recent treatises and articles which have employed chiasmus at one stage or another in their analyses of ancient texts" (9).

Welch introduces two simple definitions of the chiasmus. The first is from Hedland L. Yelland's *Handbook of Literary Terms*, which offers a definition typical of the handbooks discussed above. He even includes the examples from Coleridge ("Flowers are lovely, love is flower–like") and Pope ("A wit with dunces, and a dunce with wits"). For the second definition, Welch conflates Lund's definition with the definitions of synonymous terms for chiasmus ("*epanodos*, introverted parallelism, extended introversion, recursion, concentrism, the *chi*–form, *palistrophe*, envelope construction, delta form, . . . simple, compound, and complex chiasmus"). He intends to incorporate all of these subtypes under a single conceptual umbrella (10). Chiasmus, in Welch's definition, is "the appearance of a two–part structure or system in which the

second half is a mirror–image of the first, i.e., where the first term recurs last, and the last first" (10). He specifies that no particular semantic relationship is required, only some form of parallel structure, which may be either comparative or contrastive. Working from the second definition, Welch immediately begins to extend the potential size of chiastic structures, pointing out that

> modern minds, particularly ones which have grown accustomed to pragmatic uses of literature and to languages which depend to a large extent upon syntax rather than on inflected word endings . . . naturally conceive of a device such as chiasmus as one which functions strictly as a poetical novelty. (11)

But once we concede that chiasmus operates in prose, according to Welch, it becomes self–evident that chiasmus is in fact "ordering thoughts as well as sounds . . . and may give structure to the thought pattern and development of entire literary units" that may extend "throughout whole books and extensive poetical units." For this reason, Welch is relatively uninterested in the short grammatical chiasmus, which is abundant and easily pointed out, but often disappears in English translations of ancient texts due to the linguistic barrier of inflectional endings. He makes it clear that the focus of the studies in this volume will be on longer chiasmi that structure whole passages in which "chiasmus achieves the level of ordering the flow of thoughts" (11).

Before he returns to the task of limiting and detailing his definition of the term "chiasmus," Welch articulates seven purposes or features of chiastic form that make it worthy of serious attention from scholars of ancient literature: 1) the use of chiasmus is frequent and precise; 2) chiasmus has vast potential to coordinate rigorous and abrupt juxtapositions; 3) by focusing attention on a "center," chiastic form may give access to

new interpretive possibilities; 4) chiasmus provides fresh insight into the "state of the ancient mind and about the composition of ancient writings";[9] 5) chiasmus has important mnemonic capacities; 6) chiasmus provides internal graphical organization of texts lacking separation of words, much less paragraphs; and 7) chiasmus reveals potential ritual uses for texts, for example, alternate recitations by opposite divisions of the choirs in Jewish worship. In delineating these seven potential chiastic functions, Welch shows the influence of research into oral literatures, citing, among others, Alfred Lord and Milman Parry (Welch 12–13).

When Welch returns to the question of specifying criteria for adequately delimiting the term chiasmus, unlike Lund he offers no "Laws" but remains broad and relatively subjective. Welch discusses the problem of possible subjectivity when dealing with longer chiastic structures, concluding that we may use a chiastic analysis of a passage "in the absence of a more attractive alternative analysis" because it affords "the most coherent and effective perspective on these . . . ancient texts" (Welch 13). The establishment of such a generous boundary proved to be almost fatally explosive in exegetical studies on chiasmus until Thomson, almost a decade later, restored order to "chiastic studies" by imposing once again stricter limits on the definition and by discouraging, at least temporarily, the pursuit of passage and book–length chiasmus.

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[9] Welch says that modern style is "linear and dialectic" or "syllogistic and continuous," but that the ancients were much more likely to use "circuitous, repetitive, redundant, and paralleled" styles that were sometimes carriers of "pedagogic and moral functions and implications" (12).

While Welch wants to broaden the study of the chiastic structures in ancient texts, he also aspires to objectivity and to this end, adds six conditions to the broad definition of chiasmus as a "mirror image" that he offers in his introductory remarks. These conditions for the presence of chiasmus are summarized as follows. A chiasmus must feature:

> 1) Significant repetitions, readily apparent;
>
> 2) An overall system that is well–balanced;
>
> 3) The repetition, in the second half of the system, of the first half in inverted order;
>
> 4) A marked accentuation of the juxtaposition of the two central sections;
>
> 5) In long passages that are identified as chiastic, the presence of a fair amount of short chiasmus and other forms of parallelism;
>
> 6) The distinct presence of key words, echoes, and balancing that serve defined purposes within the structure. (13)

These six added criteria are still clearly subjective and assume a cultural agreement that does not presume to be empirically verifiable. Nevertheless, despite his definition's subjectivity or perhaps because of it, Welch's collection represents a high point in the breadth and depth of chiasmus studies in ancient texts. He takes chiasmus beyond a strictly theological circle, not only by including secular studies of ancient nonliterary texts (like the paper on Aramaic contracts and letters), but also by mining classical and ancient texts for thousands of examples of chiasmus and its alternately named forms in Homer, Cicero, Servius, Donatus, Tertullian, and Aristarchus, to name a few.[10] In this

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[10] There may be a connection between the naming of some of these chiastic structures

way, Welch moves outside, although not far outside, the self–referential theological work on chiasmus and towards both scientific and literary communities.

Welch's inclusiveness and his generous boundaries around chiasmus's definition stimulated theological studies, but his effect on the field was not entirely positive. Theologians began to wrangle over the "subjectivity" of some of the more complex chiasmi, and potential chiasmus shapes began to proliferate so rapidly that scholars accused one another of projecting the form indiscriminately onto any textual surface, forcing texts (and sacred texts, in these instances) into Procrustean beds. Thomson's 1995 publication of *Chiasmus in the Pauline Letters*, appearing almost a decade later, restores order to "chiastic studies" by imposing, once again, stricter limits on the definition of chiasmus as a figure and by discouraging, at least temporarily, the pursuit of passage and book–length chiasmi.

Thomson returns the study of chiasmus by Christian exegetical scholars to the narrower theological community. He also sets new, more "objective" limits on the definition of chiasmus in order to correct for "the excesses that led to justifiable scepticism of earlier years' [research]" (Thomson 232). Hoping to increase its effectiveness as a tool for translation and interpretation of the Hellenistic rhetorical

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and their neglect by classical rhetoricians, which could be related to Manson's characterization of non–logical statements as "not sane"; *hysteron* and *hysterologia* would, of course, associate the figure distinctly with hysteria, women, and the feminine, just as *testimony* literally and figuratively was associated with men. (*Hysterologia* is translated literally as "uterus logic" or "uterus saying.")

culture in which his biblical subject of study, Paul, participated, Thomson thoroughly

investigates chiasmus's classical roots, attempting to firmly found the definition of

chiasmus within the parameters of classical tradition. Thomson sets himself three tasks:

to show, exactly, what constitutes a "valid" chiasmus; to develop a procedure for

identifying well–founded examples; and to determine the function of chiasmus in relation

to text and argument in order to facilitate the interpretive tasks of exegesis (13).

According to Thomson, Isocrates uses the word "chiasmus," Cicero and

Quintilian give examples of the figures *commutatio* and *contentio*, but chiasmus's first

use as a technical term of rhetoric occurs in 4 CE with Hermogenes, who limits its use to

a four–clause sentence. At about the same time, Aristarchus uses the term chiasmus,

which he says indicates an inversion of words, while another figure, *hysteron proteron*,

indicates an inversion of ideas. Aristarchus' example for hysteron proteron is a passage

from Homer in which Odysseus, in Hades, converses with Anticleia's shade:

a	How she had died,
b	was it by a long disease,
c	Or by the gentle arrows of Artemis?
d	He asks about his father,
e	And about his son;
f	He asks whether a stranger had assumed royal power,
g	And about his own wife, where does she stay
g	she stays in your halls;
f	no man has taken your royal honors;
e	Telemachus farms the estate,

d   and your father remains in the countryside, longing for your return.

c   Artemis did not slay me with her gentle arrows

b   nor did a sickness,

a   but I died of longing for you. (Thomson 16)

Although identified here as hysteron proteron, this passage would fit one of the more liberal definitions of chiasmus. Thus, as Thomson points out, even the ancient rhetoricians were inconsistent in their use of rhetorical terminology.

Furthermore, Thomson argues, many of the figures described or identified by contemporary classical scholars could be described just as well and more simply as chiasmus. For example, chiastic structure overlaps with classical scholar Cedric Whitman's "ring composition" (which Whitman differentiates as balancing inverted parallels by identity or similarity rather than by contrast); with G. Norwood's description of the Pindaric Ode, which can be seen as a five–element chiasmus; and with J. L. Myres's description of "Pedimental composition" in Herodotus, a kind of bilateral symmetry that imitates a particular type of Greek temple sculpture, in which a center element with pendant side panels exhibits symmetry "down to the directions the figures are pointing" (16).

Curiously, despite Thomson's belief that both simple and elaborate chiastic structures were ubiquitous throughout the classical period, the presence of chiasmus, according to George A. Kennedy, tends to be ignored by classical rhetoricians and modern students of the classics alike. Kennedy himself points out the likelihood that chiastic structuring underlies Aristotle's *On Rhetoric*, both within sections (especially the section on human emotions, 2.2–11) and perhaps the first two books as a whole

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(Kennedy, *On Rhetoric* p. 29, n. 6 and pp. 119, 122). B. Standaert, whose work is discussed by Thomson, hypothesizes that chiasmus was a third and *unacknowledged* compositional technique used in ancient writing along with the "rhetorical model" (introduction, narration, argument, peroration, and conclusion) and the "dramatic model" (beginning to end). Standaert posits that the chiastic model was commonly used but never systematized and taught (cited by Thomson 35, n. 107). Thomson, in turns, suggests a rationale for Standaert's hypothesis; he conjectures that chiasmus may have been such an ingrained habit of thought as to go virtually unnoticed. That is, if we identify rhetoric as the "artifice" of language, the part that makes it strange (or *oeupavas*, as Tzvetan Todorov puts it), then any part of language that seems neither persuasive nor artificial would be overlooked. Thomson outlines a number of practices of ancient classical cultures that may have contributed to chiasmus's paradoxical ubiquity and invisibility. For instance, students memorized alphabets forward and backwards, perhaps internalizing a "chiastic" pattern. A four–step process involved in reading may have reinforced the four–part movement with regard to the "comprehension" of texts;[11] additionally, the students of this period often were multilingual and might be working in Greek, Aramaic, and/or Hebrew, thus forcing students to be adept at reading and writing both left to right and right to left, with additional directional variations sometimes

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[11] The four steps, used well into the medieval period and still used for translating, included a textual critique (uninterrupted text was divided by words, phrases, clauses and scanned in preparation for expressive reading); a literal and then a literary explanation of form and content; and, finally, a moral judgment of the text.

occurring within a single Greek text. Finally, required memorization, along with a certain amount of natural ambilateralism in young children, would also contribute to a facility with chiastic structures. Thomson believes that all these processes encourage "ambilateralism" in thinking (20–1). Thus, Thomson advances our understanding of chiasmus by suggesting not only reasons for its neglect among scholars and rhetoricians, but also an alternative way at looking at the functionality of chiasmus as a cognitive strategy, perhaps below the level of consciousness.

When Thomson turns to the definition of the chiasmus, he seeks a compromise position between the supposed strictness and "verifiablity" of Lund's "Seven Laws" and the scope and subjectivity of Welch's inclusive definition. Thomson's compromise definition can be summarized as follows. Chiasmus involves: 1) balanced elements around a central point; and 2) the inversion of those elements (the requirement of inversion rules out ABA structures and therefore requires a minimum of four elements). In Thomson's more elaborate prose version, chiasmus is

> [b]ilateral symmetry of four or more elements about a central axis, which may itself lie between 2 elements, or be a unique central element, the symmetry consisting of any verbal, grammatical or syntactical elements, or, indeed, of ideas and concepts in a given pattern. (26)

Thomson thus reconfigures Lund's "Seven Laws," eliminating three "Laws" entirely, substantially revising four, and adding two. Thomson instructs that these elements are to be considered only *after* a chiasmus has been identified and are not "diagnostic" for chiasmus:

a) Chiasms frequently exhibit a shift at, or near, their center. This change can be varied in nature: a change of person of the verb, a new or unexpected idea suddenly introduced, and so on. Usually, after the "shift," the original thought is resumed. For this reason, in this study, the phrase "shift and reversion" is preferred. Many passages have "shifts," but are not obviously chiastic; in a chiasmus "shifts" that are not at its center will occur, marking for example, points of development in an argument.

b) Chiasms are sometimes introduced or concluded by a frame passage.

c) Passages which are chiastically patterned sometimes also contain directly parallel elements.

d) Identical ideas may occasionally be distributed in such a fashion that they occur in the extremes and at the center of a given system.

e) Balancing elements are normally of approximately the same length. On the few occasions when this is not the case, some explanation seems to be called for.

f) The center often contains the focus of the author's thought. It will be suggested that this is a particularly powerful feature with obvious implications for exegesis. (27)

Finally, in keeping with his promise to define chiasmus within an inch of its life in order to avoid scholarly chaos, Thomson adds a further set of seven constraints and cautions, which I summarize here:

a) the chiasmus will be present in the text as it stands;

b) the symmetrical elements will be present in precisely inverted order;

c) the chiasmus will begin and end at a reasonable point (Thomson discusses this constraint and ends by suggesting that the reasonable point should be isomorphic with a "rhetorical unit");

d) "chiasmus by headings" will be "discouraged";

e) selective use of a commonly occurring word in a passage to produce a chiasmus is a questionable procedure;

f) the existence of non–balancing elements must be very carefully accounted for;

g) unless the chiasmus is of the simplest possible type, exegetical evidence must be presented to support its presence. (28–32)

Thomson concludes with the hope that these new constraints will not end up "strait jacketing" and hampering the development of "this field of study" and warns scholars "not to discard good chiastic structures because they challenge old, entrenched interpretations" (32).

When Thomson turns finally to the functions of chiasmus, he includes the following primary functions: lending beauty to a passage, acting as a mnemonic aid, and providing divisions (in place of yet–to–be–developed graphical signals) for readers of undifferentiated text. Thomson also includes a brief discussion of Charles Talbert's suggestion that chiastic patterns may act as auditory signals, analogous to repeated themes in a symphony that structure a musical "text" for a listening audience (Talbert 365). I would add that this musical analogy may also suggest that chiasmus was used mnemonically for the author as reciter and used generatively for the author as composer

in much the same way as musical composers use formulas to introduce and reintroduce themes and harmonies (Thomson 37).

Overall, looking back over these biblical scholars' studies of chiasmus, I believe that their biggest contribution to the study of chiasmus is the huge bank of chiasmus examples they compile; there are literally thousands of them. Also very important is the urgency of their interpretation issues, involved as they are with primary beliefs about Providential history, and this urgency forces a continual effort to discipline and define the form of chiasmus in order to increase and sharpen its effectiveness as an interpretive tool. Their explorations into chiasmus benefit the present study in several particular ways. The exegetes expose the way in which cultural differences and similarities may be based in early rhetorical and literacy training; along similar lines, they accurately perceive the linearity of our own cultural forms more clearly as a result of learning to translate and interpret forms that work non–linearly. By working with chiasmus wherever they find it, in laws and legal language and in religious ritual, in mythological and historical narrative and in poetry and prose, they innocently breached the wall separating "writing" and literature much earlier than did some of their literary counterparts.

While the examples and definitions they provide help to clarify the chiastic figure and its heritage, their most important contribution is the role that they assign to the "center" in the chiasmus structure. When we turn to the theoreticians, we will see that this distinction is at least as crucial to the way chiasmus functions as the distinction between semantic and syntactic chiasmus is to the figure's formal appearance. Because Lund, Welch, and Thomson are working from a foundational Judeo–Christian construction of deity, the "center" of the chiasmus holds special importance. Some

exegetical critics insist that only figures containing a "pivotal theme" should be called chiasmus, that four–part schemes without a central element are simply "inverted parallelism" (Breck, cited in Thomson 26, n. 73). However, as Thomson formulates it, the center of the chiasmus "often contains the focus of the author's thought . . . a particularly powerful feature with obvious implications for exegesis" (27). In other words, the center of a chiasmus <u>may</u> locate a premise or foundational belief within sacred text. Currently, Thomson's more cautious position prevails in his community of scholars.

Jeanne Fahnestock abandons the term "chiasmus" in favor of "antimetabole" precisely because of the theological implications that cluster around "chiasmus." She asserts — incorrectly, I believe — that the theological chiastic structure <u>requires</u> a central element (126–27). Both Welch's and Thomson's definitions, however, also allow for an empty center: Welch defines chiasmus as a two–part "mirror image," and Thomson specifies a minimum of four elements, thus softening, to some degree, the potential imbalance created by a fifth element, if one is present. Furthermore, and revealing the almost unavoidable inconsistencies when one puts too fine a point on a figure's definition, Fahnestock herself frequently allows for framing elements, ellipses, and stylistic encroachments in her examples of antimetabole when they are required by the exigencies of the language (24–6, 122–31). As we turn to the theoreticians, we must keep in mind the importance of the chiasmus's center (or lack of it) as a distinctive element in any chiastic system.

CONCLUSION: CHIASMUS IN THEORY

What does a chiasmus do? Here is an allegory of chiasmus, as suggested by the well–known riddle about the elephant:

> Four blind men are standing next to an animal and asked to say what it is they touch.
>
> The first man, touching the tail, says it is a whip.
>
> The second man, touching the leg, says it is a tree.
>
> The third man, touching the middle, says it is a wall.
>
> The fourth man, touching its ear, says it is a banana tree leaf.
>
> How do we know what the animal is?

We can place the narrative possibilities for the potential solutions to this mystery in a chiastic paradigm:

> A = different words describe same reality
>
> B = *different* words describe *different* reality
>
> B' = *same* reality described by *same* words
>
> A' = same reality described by different words

We can translate the first, second, and fourth elements into narratives of these "worldviews" with relative ease, as follows: In the first instance (A = different words describe same reality), we focus on universal truth and language's incapacity, its part–iality. The big thing is standing there, and the men are foolishly failing to recognize the whole — they call it a whip, a wall, and so on. They are "wrong." In the second instance, (B = different words describe different reality), we focus on individual reality and language's accuracy. The men accurately describe their little portion of reality; they are "right" as far as they know, as far as anyone <u>can</u> know. In the fourth instance (A' = same

reality described by different words) we can, again, easily create a narrative that retains

universal truth. We can still have a big elephant, but we can recollect language's

metonymic (trope–ic) quality or what Paul de Man describes as "the necessary subversion

of the truth by rhetoric as the distinctive feature of all language" (de Man 110). In this

position, we participate in the "unmediated sense of existential pathos" that de Man

attributes to Nietzsche (106), a pathos grounded in the illusory nature of communication.

There does not exist nor will there ever exist, in this version of the story, a universal

interpreter or a <u>coherent description in words</u> of the bigger reality. The men do not really

ever communicate because their pieces of reality are not connect–able; they just

mistakenly believe that a tail is a whip or a stomach is a wall, and it does not matter

anyway because both of them are really something else entirely — maybe an elephant,

maybe not.

But in the third instance, (B' = same reality described by the same words), we are

forced into a metaphysical leap that results apparently in a nonsense statement. Forced by

the form itself to create a narrative in which we retain both individual reality and

individual words, we find that both the elephant and the blindness must disappear: It was

the ideas of the elephant and of blindness that were mistaken. In other words, "reality" is

described perfectly well. The first man <u>is</u> holding something snakelike, the second man <u>is</u>

touching something treelike, the fourth man <u>is</u> holding something like a banana leaf, and

so on. All realities are respected: they are re–*spectar*–ed, that is, looked back at. The men

knew/saw that they were not holding whips, trees, banana leaves, and walls, but

something "like" them. The men have a common language for all of those items. They

also know that they have reached the limits of knowledge and communication. So, they

decided to invent an "elephant" for a while because it gave them a sense of pleasure and togetherness, but that was an entirely arbitrary decision, and later they decided to call it a "rowboat." Some of them invited each other over to feel how something whiplike, treelike, and so on felt, and they had long interesting conversations describing to each other how different parts of this or that felt, finding words that they could agree on.

This is a longer version of the story than the first three for a very good reason. At the initial moment of transition, it is very hard to <u>lose</u> the "reality" of the elephant and the blindness. Thomas Kuhn's description of how paradigm shifts produce metaphors — "rowboats" succeeding "elephants" — is by now common coinage, but the chiastic version of this paradigm shift, is different, and, I think, more valuable because it retains the validity of the prior metaphor (the "elephant") and because it gives us a form for making the mental leap from "elephant" to "rowboat" over and over again. More importantly, because the "elephant" is retained rather than supplanted, there is no "revolution," in Kuhn's terms. Hierarchy is neither overthrown nor destroyed; it simply ceases to exist as hierarchy, and there is no prior–ity.

De Man, in his discussion of language's endless troping as an "<u>exchange</u> of attributes involving the categories of truth and appearance" (my emphasis) finds that language creates vertigo by depriving "the two poles" in chiasmus "of their authority" (118). But de Man's sense of chiastic structuring is limited because it reduces chiasmus, as so often happens, to a trope that substitutes one meaning or name for another. But as the elephant parable suggests, a chiasmus distributes authority equally because the structure has not two, but <u>four</u> poles.

To date, scholars of chiasmus and other schemes remain trapped in the binary logic that de Man sought unsuccessfully to escape. In considering the range of approaches to rhetorical figures, and particularly to chiasmus and other schemes, I have discovered that, for the most part, we still seem to be left with two choices: positive or negative, text or gap. I have chosen to illustrate the persistence of this underlying and disabling binary logic — a logic alien to chiasmus itself, as I have suggested — by examining a pair of unlikely bedfellows in the House of Rhetoric, Paul de Man and Peter Elbow, who represent metonymically these opposed attitudes toward rhetorical vertigo. De Man — literary philosopher, critic, and analyst — stands for those theorists who dwell in pathos on the "gap," and Elbow — composition pedagogue and fellow medievalist — stands for those who cheerfully venerate the "text."

De Man's life and his scholarly career mirror the apparent focus of his essays, the gaps in language's ability to communicate and the resultant "vertigo" and despair. As a multilingual European, de Man's linguistic skill gave him access to German and French philosophers (Nietzsche and Derrida among others) whose ideas he developed, along with colleagues at Yale, into a "distinctly American brand of deconstructive literary criticism" (Schleifer and Con Davis 249). Near the peak of his influential career, the discovery of de Man's long–hidden past as a Nazi propagandist who had abandoned a wife and children, along with his prior life, embodies in the most negative way possible rhetoric's ability to "radically suspend logic" and to open up the "vertiginous possibilities of referential aberration" that de Man describes in his first essay on "Semiology and Rhetoric" from *Allegories of Reading* (10). Additionally, the knowledge of his years of duplicity lends a particular urgency or poignancy to his summation of Nietzsche's essay,

On Truth and Lie in an Extra Moral Sense, in which de Man concludes with Nietzsche that the "necessary subversion of truth by rhetoric [is] the distinctive feature of all language" (110).

Postmodern "vertigo" and its resultant suicidal despair is blamed on the discovery or the invention of the gap between word and referent by deconstructionist critics such as de Man. Yet while de Man focuses on chiasmus, deconstructive criticism is actually more a subtle linguistic and rhetorical reformulation of the modernist trope *irony.* Irony was or is generally perceived as a gap between denotative and connotative meaning or intent.[12] Ostensibly, a "correct" reading of the author, the reader, the text, or the context could supply the "difference"; the gap could be filled. The deconstructive gap, on the other hand, represents the unintentional and uncontrollable blind spot in any declaration, lying in the open but simultaneously revealing the declaration's contradictory message.[13] By this means, deconstruction radically disrupts the authority of "reason" and places positivist, objective, and logical argument not only in danger, but in certainty, of subversion.[14]

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[12]   See Gerard Genette, in "Rhetoric Restrained," on the reduction of rhetoric to figure, figure to trope, and trope to metaphor (103–26, especially 118).

[13]   The blind spot is really just an unrecognized, perhaps unconscious, premise rooted deeply in a culture's linguistic assumptions, produced by the impossibility of a "perfectly" referential language — an opening noted first in Saussure's distinction between *langue* and *parole* and his recognition of diachronic and synchronic shifts.

[14]   A medievalist's counterpoint view, from a completely authoritative foundation, might

Two responses to this opening up of the seams between sign and referent generally occur. De Man approaches the task of communication as an interpreter — a receiver — and seems to see reading as an endless and repetitive deconstruction motivated by the desire to "get to the bottom of things," to achieve a philosophical truth that is desired but ever remote because of the rhetoricity of language. Our desire for truth, in other words, forces us into continual error (to become "the artist who always again falls into the same trap"), and this continual falling into error, according to de Man, is precisely the work of both the artist and philosopher (118).

In contrast, Elbow approaches the task of communication as a sender/writer and sees writing as an endlessly renewable construction of additional messages. Elbow simply concedes the impossibility of reaching a foundational truth: "You can never win an argument against an English teacher or a psychiatrist [because] there are no rules for showing that an assertion of meaning is false" (*Writing Without Teachers* 161). Instead, Elbow writes a prescription for the vertigo caused by rhetoric's endless aberrations. First, he polarizes the world into believers and doubters: "The activity of doubting is for scientist and positivists — the doubting game seeks truth by indirection — by seeking

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find its best representative in Augustine; he presents a rather extensive argument in the early chapters of *The City of God* in which he considers the advisability of suicide as a first "logical" action to take after baptism and one's concomitant acknowledgment of complete dependence on grace, suicide being logically preferable to life in the face of the inevitability of sin and one's possible death in a moment of sin (1.19–29 especially 27, pp. 53–61).

error . . . Doubting an assertion is the best way to find an error in it . . . 'Non credo ut intelligam': in order to understand what's wrong I must doubt" (148).

As an antidote to the vertigo and despair caused by too much of the doubting game, Elbow recommends the "believing game," which proceeds according to the premise that "there is a definite truth about the meaning of words," a truth that the believing game helps us know or see (151). Elbow suggests that we simply stop trying to "disprove horse" and, instead, focus on trying to prove or "affirm dog" (162). When dealing with universals, Elbow says, we can only try to disprove, but in particulars we must affirm, so ignoring universals seems to be the project, which is fine as long as you happen to occupy space as a privileged member within a privileged community (165), but not otherwise.

Thinking back to the opening paradigm offered in the conclusion to this chapter, we see that Elbow and de Man both end up validating the same elephant. This is because both of their theories approach the story armed with the figure of metaphor. And metaphor gives us these choices: 1) affirm "elephant" even though you personally can not "see" it but do not affirm your own part because it is "wrong"; 2) affirm the parts that you can "see" as parts of the "elephant"; or 3) affirm the parts that you can see as parts, but do not affirm the "elephant." De Man, as a theorist, occupies and validates positions 1A (different words describe same reality) and 4A (same reality described by different words). In position 1A, words are foolishly inadequate, the men are blind, and they do not see the elephant. In position 4A, words are sadly inadequate, men see poorly, and pathetically, they name in error; they will never see the elephant even though it's in plain sight. But curiously, Elbow also retains the elephant. Like de Man, he occupies position

1A, insisting that words simply reflect men's blindness (we can not affirm universals because we really can not "see" them); but unlike de Man, Elbow's antidote is to move to Position 2B (different words describe different reality), which still retains the elephant. In this view, we can overcome the "handicap" of imperfect communication by persistent effort; just keep describing our portion of reality and eventually a picture of the universal reality will emerge and we will be able to see the elephant. As Elbow would describe it: "We use our words to play the sound track of a movie in the hopes that the other person will see the movie" (151). Elbow and de Man therefore fail to achieve the position of 3B (same reality described by same words) that chiasmus offers, in which we just lose the elephant and the blindness that metaphor creates. I would attribute this particular "blindness" in de Man and Elbow's thinking to their reduction of the figurative to tropes, and specifically to metaphor.

This reduction can be most clearly seen in de Man's comment on metaphor and chiasmus:

> The original pairing of rhetoric with error . . . was based on the cross–shaped reversal of properties that rhetoricians call chiasmus. And it turns out that the very process of deconstruction . . . is one more such reversal that repeats the selfsame rhetorical structure. All rhetorical structures, whether we call them metaphor, metonymy, chiasmus, metalepsis, hypallage, or whatever, are based on substitutive reversals, and it seems unlikely that one more such reversal over and above the ones that have already taken place would suffice to restore things to their proper order. One more "turn" or trope added to a series of earlier reversals will not stop the turn towards error. (13)

De Man first equates chiasmus with the tropes and then states that "all rhetorical structures" are based on "substitutive reversals" (113). Substitution, as de Man describes it here, means "replacement." This substitution can itself be expressed as a bipolar relationship, that is, A versus B; the tension between these two "poles" is found in the potential "replacement" over time of A by B. Thus, to use an earlier example, *metafara* eventually loses its concrete referent, a carrying bag, and becomes *metaphor*, a word performing a particular connotation–carrying function. The "prior" meaning is lost and "replaced" by the new meaning. De Man therefore subscribes to what Ricoeur describes as the "substitution theory" for rhetorical figures, most particularly the trope metaphor.

The chiasmus as a scheme, however, is a "medium" rather than an entity that can be replaced; more like a greeting card sitting open on a table, chiasmus is a container or a surface — a "place" waiting to be filled. While capable of expressing either or both semantic or syntactic "reversals," the form itself (empty of logical/semantic "meaning") is "fixed." If any of the elements are replaced (i.e., ABDA) the structure is no longer chiastic.

The conflict between "replacement" and "conservation" in trope–ic logic is clarified by the biblical scholars. They have debated whether a three–element chiasmus ("BA with AB" acting, more or less, as the ratio sign) is, in fact, a chiasmus. Thomson argues that the form is unidentifiable in translated text because the boundaries are impossible to predict from the pattern: Compare with the four–element chiasmus an extension of the three element "chiasmus," ABA→ABABABAB… (where "A" can represent any number of elements), which demonstrates a characteristic forward motion that makes the figure repeatable or subject to being discarded at any point. However,

66

when the four–element chiasmus is extended (AB:BA→AB:BAAB:BAAB:BAAB:BA,
etc.) once we make the "turn" (at each repeating "B"), the pattern emerges and we can
predict the end points.

However, if the "center" of the chiasmus is "filled," we return to the AB(C)BA
pattern. The singularity of the central element (C) turns that element into a peak or a
valley about which the other elements can revolve, as they do in the simple AB
configuration. In other words, the center of the chiasmus is the "pole" (we might even
call it the premise, or foundation) in the middle that actually creates bipolarity, producing
the effect of substitution and reversal that de Man believes creates the impossibility of
communication. When one of the two "poles" accrues too much value or weight, the
system starts flopping like a washing machine with a shifted load. The center holds, but is
always already about to implode upon itself. Vertigo constantly threatens, but never quite
arrives.

Chiasmus and other schemes, as opposed to more familiar and more highly valued
tropes, depend on syntactic and graphical form, a rhetorical feature that will prove useful
in analyzing the chiastic relations among poems in the *Pearl*–manuscript. Chiasmus
accounts for the simultaneous presence of stability and fragmentation that Muscatine had
originally perceived. In taking his analysis further, the distinction between schemes and
tropes becomes important because the privileging of semantic content over syntactic form
that characterizes tropes re–inscribes a false hierarchy of content and meaning over form,
of spirit over flesh, and of rules over the ruled. Chiasmus, by contrast, embodies the post–
Cartesian — and paradoxically, also the medieval — idea that two contradictory or
comparable thoughts can be held in an equivalent, non–contradictory, simultaneous

67

relationship. It stanches the bleeding of "the vertiginous possibilities of referential

aberration" that begins when we open up the gap between referent and sign, without

forcing us into an unacceptable affirmation (the affirmation of "dog").

Seeing the chiastic structure in the four poems of the Cotton Nero Manuscript

then associates the text with a non–logical, non–hierarchial system of rhetoric and

metaphysics that conserves opposition, but also equalizes opposites without

"replacement." Its form–al logic is one not readily accessible to us; we tend not to "think"

that way, at least not consciously. After first going to some trouble to show the

Manuscript's material integrity and showing how that integrity was lost through

generations of editing, publishing, and critical practices in chapters two and three, we will

return to the history of chiasmus and the failures of its historians to explore the structural

and spiritual sophistication of the Cotton Nero Manuscript and its poems.

CHAPTER 2

BRITISH LIBRARY MANUSCRIPT COTTON NERO A.x, ARTICLE 3:

HABEAS CORPUS

In *Fictions of Feminine Desire: Disclosures of Heloise*, Peggy Kamuf investigates

the relationship between the fictional and historical "romance" of Abelard and Heloise.

She argues that their medieval relationship (ca. 1100) was substantially recreated when

their letters were published for the first time in 1616. Seventeenth–century constructions

of the "romance" brought about a series of six exhumations and re–dispositions of their

bodily "remains." The first exhuming and re–burying occurred soon after the letters' first

publication; six more followed over the next 200 years, with the seventh and final

entombment occurring in 1817. Each new "burial" reflected cultural shifts in the

understanding and valuation of romantic love. Kamuf concludes that what is really "at

stake in this definition of the limits of the book are the structures which keep . . . readers

[and their bodies]–in their place" (xviii). In this chapter, I hope to elucidate the "limits,"

or rather the physical boundaries of the Cotton Nero A.x Manuscript. Kamuf's claim that

definitions of the book serve to keep readers' "bodies" in their place reinforces an

important premise of this dissertation's argument: A book or "text," like a human being,

is delimited both by <u>material</u> boundaries and by <u>rhetorical </u>boundaries; these boundaries

vary in response to, among other things, cultural expectations and assumptions. In the

case of the four *Pearl*–poems, I maintain that the material boundaries around the Cotton

Nero A.x Manuscript's four poems have, for the most part, remained intact since the

Manuscript's compilation sometime close to 1400. In contrast, the rhetorical boundaries

that have been drawn around these poems since their "discovery" in the early 1800s

obscure the poems' textual integrity because they overvalue content in relation to form

and author in relation to text. An initial mis–taking or mis–application of the

Manuscript's textual or rhetorical boundaries — due largely to the benign, largely

unconscious, but pre–determined cultural agendas and textual assumptions of its handlers

or "foster families" — in turn controlled what were perceived to be the rhetorical and

material boundaries of Cotton Nero A.x as a <u>text.</u> Their mid–nineteenth–century

assumptions became instantiated in published texts of the individual poems for the next

150 years, allowing or forcing the individual poems to take on "lives" of their own.

In order to re–establish the poems' material boundaries (and thus their potential

boundaries as a Text), this chapter reexamines the physical history of these ninety vellum

leaves, from the time they were written and illustrated near 1400 until their "discovery"

and publication in the early nineteenth century. In tracing this history, I examine the lives

of the Manuscript's first owners and editors and their "discovery narratives," looking for

accounts of the Manuscript's whereabouts and "housing" over the years. Most important,

I look for potential gaps in the narrative that might indicate if and/or when the

Manuscript was substantially reconfigured after its initial composition and collation.

Boundaries or limits, both material and rhetorical, are of particular importance to

the poems of Cotton Nero A.x. The Manuscript containing these poems is not only an

orphan (i.e., anonymous), it is also a completely unique text. Beyond its singularity as a

handmade physical artifact, from the time of its creation (ca. 1400) until a few lines from

the first and second poems (*Pearl* and *Cleanness*) were mentioned in a footnote to

Thomas Warton's 1781 *History of English Poetry*, no edition of the poems nor any

commentary on them had existed. For medievalists, this situation is not uncommon; a

number of important "unique" medieval literary texts exist, *Beowulf* (British Library

Manuscript Cotton Vitellius A.xv) being perhaps the most significant. Still, without an

author and without contemporary medieval commentary or other editions ("siblings"), the

text of the four *Pearl*–poems is its own and only authority. While I would never claim

that the "originary source of the text" automatically communicates a "truer" reading, one

must acknowledge, I think, that without an "originary" text, we have no text at all. The

"original" text, whatever it consists of, must also be the ur–text, a historical event and

material icon that makes all later iterations and interpretations possible (Matthews xv–

xvi).[15] Cotton Nero A.x is an (un)authorized text and, at the same time, a self–authorizing

text.

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[15] In the Introduction to *The Making of Middle English* (1999), David Matthews argues

that the particularly medievalist goal of "authoritative" editions tends to "efface the prior

critical history of a text" (xv). I am in complete accord with Matthews on this point.

When he argues that we give too much "status" to "the manuscript as originary source of

a text," however, he seems to be suggesting that we *over*value original manuscripts —

which I do not believe could be his intent. Rather, he is asking that we focus our critical

attentions on other editions in comparison (with each other and with the original

manuscript) as focal points for the collection of cultural attitudes and assumptions.

In recent years, a good deal more information has become available about the Cotton Collection, the manuscript catalogues, the Learned Societies, and the collectors and librarians who kept track of and provided sanctuary for the "homeless and wandering" manuscripts (James 3); some of it bears directly or indirectly on the life of the Cotton Nero A.x Manuscript.[16] This part of the discussion, then, is a literary *habeas corpus*, of sorts, for the Cotton Nero A.x document, now bound and separately catalogued as Article 3.

1.   The Manuscript's Debut: Sir Frederic Madden

The story of the four poems making up the Manuscript Cotton Nero A.x can only properly begin *in media res*, with the unique Manuscript as it was first "discovered," described, transcribed, edited, and published in nineteenth–century England. While we may never know the "birth parents" of this Manuscript, we can certainly say a good deal about its adoptive and foster parents. On August 29, 1836, the Edinburgh–based Bannatyne Club's book–selection committee recommended that its members agree to underwrite the first publication of a part of Cotton Nero A.x "for the use of the

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[16] M. R. James entitled his slim volume in the *Helps for Students of History Series* (1919) "The Wanderings and Homes of Manuscripts." He maintains this personification throughout his text and the figure occurs repeatedly with all the bibliophiles introduced here, especially when they describe particular manuscripts.

Members." In a meeting held at Edinburgh in the Hall of the Antiquarian Society, the

Committee resolved

> that a Volume entitled *Syr Gawayne, A Collection of Ancient Romance–*
>
> *Poems by Scotish* [sic] *and English Authors, Relating to that Celebrated*
>
> *Knight of the Round Table* be printed at London, for the use of the Members
>
> under the Superintendence of Sir Frederic Madden, K.H. (Madden 2)

As the title describes, Sir Frederic Madden, while still Assistant Keeper of the

Manuscripts in the British Museum Library, had proposed to bring together a collection

of Gawain poems with the stated goal of gathering the "ancient" English and Scottish

remnants of the Arthurian saga. When *Gawayne* was published in 1839, the Bannatyne's

one hundred members, listed alphabetically after the title page, included (by my count)

four dukes, eight earls, seventeen lords, two marquis, a count, and nine knights, along

with token representatives from each of the respectable professions — a major general,

two men of the cloth, two solicitors, and an academic dean. Madden's Introduction (ix–

xlvi) makes explicit his fulfillment of the volume's proposal and offers his audience of

wealthy, aristocratic Scots a flattering portrait of Gawain as the "first" and most chivalric

among Arthur's knights: loyal to the King, courageous, courteous to a fault — especially

in speech — but known more for sexual "intrigues" than for "constancy" (xxxiii), and

finally, standing as a chivalric representative of "Scotland," his "native country" (xxv). In

other words, Madden's Gawain was much like a Bannatyne Club member, or perhaps as

members of the club imagined themselves.

As he relates in his Introduction, Madden had hoped to separate the two strands of

Arthurian legend: the French and the English. By rehabilitating Gawain, whose role in

the romances had been "traduced" and "misrepresented" (xxix) — causing Gawain to be outstripped by the French hero, Lancelot, and "completely eclipse[d]" (xxvii) by the Mediterranean hero, Tristan — Madden hoped to restore the reputation of this purely British Knight. He repeatedly refers to Gawain as "our Hero, Syr Gawayne," sometimes inscribing the name in an oversized, bold gothic font (xi). On behalf of his patrons, Madden aimed to uncover for them a national heritage and myth that were linked to the Scots and Celts, that were both distinct from and prior to the French romances, and that were derived from an oral tradition that had been recorded "<u>first</u> by native bards, and afterwards by the Anglo–Norman minstrels" (ix, my emphasis). While Madden serves his select audience well in the front matter of his edition, his Notes (299–326) and manuscript descriptions (xlvii–lxviii) also include hints about Madden's own story, about his "discovery" of the Nero A.x Manuscript and his long efforts to support its publication.

Clearly, Madden knew of the Nero A.x Manuscript at least a decade before his contract with the Bannatyne Club and his tenure as Keeper of the Manuscripts for the British Museum (1837–66). Madden's first glimpses of the Nero A.x Manuscript probably occurred between 1824 and 1828, while he was employed by the Commission of Historical Record, but it would not have been impossible for him to have seen the volume during an earlier trip to London, while he was still a student at Oxford. The Manuscript Collection had been installed in the British Museum, formerly the Montague home on Great Russell Street, shortly after it had opened in 1757. At first, the 384 linear feet of Cotton Manuscripts, the smallest of the Foundation Collections, were stored in wire presses on the third floor in Room "K" and a year later re–disposed into Room "E." Essentially, this shelving put the Cotton Manuscripts at the furthest possible remove from

the Reading Salons, well–protected, but out of sight for the time being. Other huge

collections (e.g., Harley MSS., 1700 shelf–feet; Sloane MSS., 4600 shelf–feet) were

newly arrived and also demanding attention (Harris 4, 7). A few of the early "Keepers"

had initiated efforts to sort, record, and restore the manuscript volumes, which had not

been attended to thoroughly since their storage after the catastrophic Ashburnham fire,

and by the late 1760s the manuscript volumes available in the Library's Reading Salons

were beginning to be used and excerpted in printed texts. Thomas Percy published his

Reliques of Ancient English Poetry in 1765 and Thomas Warton's massive *History of*

English Poetry quickly went through two editions (1778 and 1781). Warton's 1781

edition also contained a footnote with samples from Nero A.x. As Madden describes in

his Notes to the 1839 Bannatyne *Gawayne*:

> The volume had undoubtedly been seen by Warton, since he quotes some
>
> other pieces (*Pearl* ll.1093–1102, 1106, and 1115 and from *Cleanness* ll.601–
>
> 4) contained in it, and it is singular he should not have noticed the poem in
>
> question, which he seems to have confounded with a preceding one, on a
>
> totally different subject . . . Accident however, threw it in the way of Mr.
>
> Price, the able editor of Warton, who extracted a passage in illustration of his
>
> argument against the Scotish [sic] authorship of Sir Tristem [sic], and
>
> announced his intention of publishing the entire Romance, under the
>
> designation of 'Aunter of Sir Gawaine,' in an octavo volume, to be intitled
>
> [sic] *Illustrations of Warton's History of English Poetry;* but which he
>
> relinquished some time previous to his decease. (299)

Here is my explanation of Madden's cryptic narrative, filling in some of the details he left out in addressing an audience of "insiders": Thomas Warton's "quarto," that is, the quarto–sized (9" x 12" – 4" x 6") edition of his *History of English Poetry* that came out in 1781, mentions the Nero A.x Manuscript's first two poems, *Pearl* and *Cleanness*, without assigning a title to either one. Warton's footnote compares the "versification" of these two poems with that of *Piers Plowman* (Warton iii, 107–8, note "u"). Probably while working on the 1824 revision of Warton's *History*, Richard Price had noticed the *Gawain*–poem that followed the others cited by Warton. Price was apparently ready to publish a version of *Gawain*, having made announcements to that effect in the Preface and End Notes of the 1824 *History*. Whether or not Price actually "relinquished" his plans to publish it "some time previous to his decease" or just relinquished the plans because of his decease is not especially clear, given Madden's tendency toward understatement, but Madden concluded by pointing out rather heatedly that "Price, however, omitted all reference to the manuscript containing the poem," which was an egregious oversight, in Madden's view (299).

Madden's frustration with the lack of clear manuscript references and content descriptions by other writers was to be a lifelong problem. Madden points out that both of the available Cotton Manuscript catalogues, those by Thomas Smith and Joseph Planta, noted only the presence of the first poem, quoting in their catalogue descriptions, according to typical practice, only the opening words of the first item; in this case, the opening description referred to *Pearl*, supplemented by a few words about other identifying details (299). Short of browsing through several rooms full of manuscripts, readers who wanted to know what existed in any particular manuscript had to rely on

these catalogues. Still, during Madden's Oxford years and, in fact, from the time the

Museum Library opened in 1757, anyone could have had access to the Nero A.x, at least

hypothetically. Before the Manuscripts Students' Room opened in 1885, a citizen with a

Reading Room card could request any item in the British Library, including rare and

unique manuscripts, some of which survived only as loose folios in "pasteboard boxes"

or as charred lumps from the 1731 Ashburnham house fire (Prescott 406–10). But one

had to know where to look. Without a specific manuscript number, a scholar could spend

years trying to relocate an excerpted passage. In the end, Madden attributes "the oblivion

in which for so long a period such a remarkable composition should have remained"

(299) to poor cataloguing; creating good catalogues, at least for his own use, would be

one of several battles he waged from the time of his appointment to Keeper of the

Manuscripts in 1838.

Madden came to the British Museum via his early interest in antiquarianism, his

Oxford connections, and his superior transcription skills. During his second year,

Madden's Oxford education ended abruptly due to the financial constraints of his

decidedly middle class family, but he had majored in "antiquarianism" and his skill as a

transcriber was well–developed; he used both his transcribing skill and his Oxford

connections to obtain work with the Commission on Historical Records in 1824, where

he transcribed documents from manuscript collections and libraries around London and

Oxford; if he had not already done so, he certainly located and began transcribing Nero

A.x in these years. During this time, he also came across in the Bodleian Library the

posited, but until then undiscovered, manuscript containing *Havelock.* In 1828, eighty

copies of Madden's *Havelock* were published under the patronage of Earl George

Spenser, president, and the thirty–one members of Britain's oldest, most exclusive, and perhaps most decadent book club, the London–based Roxburghe Club (founded in 1812, Matthews 118–25 and Hume 219–27). Madden's acquaintance with Earl Spenser, a trustee of the British Museum, and the attention and praise given to his edition by Sir Walter Scott (an early member of the London Club and the period's most famous antiquarian), led directly to his appointment as the British Museum's Assistant Keeper of the Manuscripts in 1828. Madden recounts that it was in 1829 — a decade before its publication in 1839 — that he first proposed publication of the *Gawain*–poem in Nero A.x to Sir Walter Scott. As Madden writes in his End Notes to *Gawayne*: "A transcript was made by me shortly after the discovery, and the subject of the romance communicated in October, 1829, to Sir Walter Scott, who with his well–known courtesy, and zeal in the cause of ancient Scottish literature at once proposed to have it edited, together with similar poems [about Gawain], by subscription" (300). Mysteriously, Madden never accounts for the actual moment of discovery, saying only that "the same chance which had brought" the Nero A.x Manuscript to Price's "notice subsequently made it known to myself and to Mr. Stevenson," a philologist working on "Boucher's Glossary," which by 1932 had made it through "B" (299–300).

Madden's tenure as Assistant Keeper and then Keeper of the British Museum's Manuscripts (1828–37 and 1837–66) was important to our Manuscript in several ways. His lengthy employment began almost one hundred years after the catastrophic great fire at the Ashburnham House in 1731, which had destroyed perhaps as many as 200 volumes. The amount of work Madden had done to reconstruct many of these volumes — by arranging for physical restorations, by identifying and recollating loose leaves and

fragments, and by producing daily work records so finely detailed that they amounted to private catalogues, only became clear upon the release of his papers after 1981 (Prescott 391–454). Madden also opposed changing the classified shelving (Cotton, Royal, Harley, Arundel, and so on) of the manuscript collections, which his predecessor Josiah Forshall had wanted to reorganize along more "scientific" (subject/author) lines, especially when the Collection was moved from the upper floor of the Montague house to the "new building" and new presses in 1827. Madden resisted these changes successfully, and the manuscripts were kept in the 1827 arrangement.

Keeping the manuscripts together in their original collections proved fortunate for later scholars who tried to reconstruct their provenance histories. Furthermore, the British Library's egalitarian public–use policy, which was demanded by both the Trustees and the public, made the lack of better "organization" in the Library fortunate. Had the manuscript volumes been catalogued and organized by subject during the years of public use, any dilettante with an interest in Arthurian Romance would have had access to Cotton Nero Manuscript A.x, and we might have lost the Manuscript completely, either through wear and tear, carelessness, or outright theft.[17] While Madden fought for time and resources to develop better cataloguing, he also proposed that the manuscripts be reserved for people holding specially assigned "tickets." In the meantime, the fact that the

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[17] Thorkelin was the first to demonstrate the "disappearance" of the *Beowulf*–manuscript through wear and tear and exposure to light and Tite, Prescott, Matthews and many others give accounts of all of these depredations. See especially Tite's "Lost, Stolen, or Strayed" for an account of the Cotton Manuscripts.

Nero A.x Manuscript's contents had been poorly described provided the volume with a measure of safety from the range of catastrophes that might have befallen it.

In 1828, at the time of Madden's appointment to the British Museum Library, the volume that held, among other things, the *Pearl*–poems, was marked simply "Nero A.x" on the binding (according to Madden's description of the Manuscript, xlvii–lxviii) and was shelved within the Museum's Manuscript Collection in the upper floor area devoted to the Cotton Collection. Madden had continual access to these collections, and we know that he planned to transcribe the volume or perhaps had already transcribed it. However, the Cotton Collection was just one of Madden's charges and, although debate on the subject has recently resurfaced, the Cotton Collection alone probably included, at a minimum, 948 volumes. These bound volumes contained perhaps as many as 26,000 distinct "articles," according to Planta's catalogue (see especially Prescott and Tite). In addition to overseeing and shepherding these volumes, Madden was actively producing "transcriptions," as he thought of them, for publication.

Almost immediately after Madden was appointed to his position at the Library, he began work on an edition of Layamon's *Brut* for the Society of Antiquaries and of *William the Werwolf* (William of Palerne) for the Roxburghe Club. The *Brut* was an enormous task, and Madden would not bring it to publication until 1847. Madden's version of *William*, though, came out in 1832. Like the *Gawayne* edition to come, the *Werwolf* volume was a small "anthology" with introduction, notes, other versions of the material, and a glossary. His Roxburghe patrons were pleased at the critical reception of Madden's edition, a fact that may have influenced his acquisition of a knighthood in 1933.

But, despite Madden's debt to their patronage, the Roxburghe Club was not a group with whom he could — literally or figuratively — afford to spend much time. Still viable in 1929, the Club was the oldest and most famous of the British book clubs. Harold Williams's 1929 guide to the *Book Clubs and Printing Societies of Great Britain* maintains that the Club had "never developed into an open and general printing society. Its membership list is still narrowly closed, and is more definitely aristocratic in personnel to–day than in its earlier years" (27). Williams, Hume, Matthews, and others depict the Club's activities as indolently aristocratic:

> Earl Spencer [presided over] a Club which for a number of years cultivated overpowering and interminable dinners as its pronounced activity . . . The spectacle of heavy gourmandizing, drinking drawn far into the hours of the morning, in association with exclusive, even aristocratic, bookishness, excited ridicule of which the Club was not unconscious . . . [I]ndiscreet chronicles of [being] forced to retire owing to a 'severe attack of sickness' contributed not a little to the advantage of the scoffer (i.e., critics of the Club which were legion). (Williams 22)

Williams characterizes the period during which Madden produced *Havelock* for the Club as more or less an anomalous high point, atypical of the Club's "predilection" for "curious and antiquarian literature, especially stray pamphlets" (22). In 1837, the editor of the *Athanaeum* "attacked the Club acrimoniously" and "characterized the publications of the Club as 'prints and reprints of neglected and deservedly–forgotten trash'" (23). Williams softens this earlier opinion, but, by my count, the Club published only sixty–three volumes between 1812 and 1845, whereas the Bannatyne produced

eighty–six between 1823 and its demise in 1852. Madden ended his association with the Roxburghe Club after *Havelock* and returned to his first and most important reviewer, Sir Walter Scott, for the publication of *Gawayne.* Scott, who had established the Bannatyne Club, perhaps in disgust with the Roxburghe group, had acted as its first president, although he took his name off the roster when the Club tried to shed its exclusivity by admitting up to one hundred members in 1828 (Hume 228–35).[18] Named for a famous collector of Scottish verse, the Bannatyne's founding intention was "for the purpose of printing works illustrative of the history, antiquities, and literature of Scotland" (Williams 29). With a clear awareness of the Roxburghe's enviable yet scandalous reputation, the members focused steadily on a more gentlemanly and "scholarly" agenda, adopting Scott's public persona of chivalry, modesty, and seriousness (Williams 29–31). Madden's introductory portrait of Gawain, in line with the Club's interests, emphasizes Gawain's courtesy, obedience, and modesty, but two of Madden's most egregious "mistakes" are also in line with the Bannatyne goals: He claims that the Poet's Northern dialect is of Scottish origin and names a probable author — the Scotsman "Huchowne of the Awle Ryale" (Madden 301–4).

Despite the detours in his Notes and Introduction that address Gawain's heritage, the Arthurian cycle in general, and the supposedly Scottish origin of the poems and their author, Madden's actual transcription of the *Gawain*–poem is still one of the most

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[18] Scott was "elected" to the Roxburghe Club in 1823, but probably attended only one "dinner." His one recorded presentation to the Club, in 1828, had been insulted as "'among the least interesting and valuable in our garland'" (Williams 29).

accurate: "The text was an announcement of editorial rigor" (Matthews 121). His Notes on the Manuscript itself were an innovation for the time; he explains that he "added to the present Introduction, according to the excellent plan adopted by recent French writers, a description of the Manuscripts used by me, which may not be altogether devoid of interest" (xiv). Far from being "devoid of interest," Madden's description of the Nero A.x Manuscript is undoubtedly the most important contribution made by his edition, since his is the first description that includes all four poems as they appear *in situ* as the second manuscript bound in the volume marked Cotton Nero A.x; this is the first time that we receive more than a cataloguer's brief mention of *Pearl*'s opening lines.

In Madden's manuscript description, probably written sometime between 1836–39 but potentially as early as 1822–28, the four *Pearl*–poems make up the second of three individual articles bound in the volume, shelf–marked simply "Nero A.x." Madden clearly states that the "small quarto volume" (Nero A.x) *consist[s] of three different MSS. bound together*, which originally had no connection with each other" (xlvii, my emphasis). Madden does not give a description of the entire volume's or the three individual items' binding construction (quires, sewing, loose folios, "Russian leather," etc.) and is probably using the term *quarto* loosely, indicating that the volume was smaller than the typical 9" x 12" quarto — certainly not a "Folio" or oversized text — but he does not give exact measurements. However, he had no doubt at all that the four poems in the second item constituted a separate Text, relating further that "Prefixed is an imperfect list of contents, in the hand–writing of James, the Bodley Librarian," [which had been adopted in both Smith's and Planta's catalogues, all of these librarians having] "confounded together" . . . "no less than four distinct poems" (xlvii).

Madden describes the first item in the volume, immediately preceding the *Pearl*–

poems, as a "panegyrical oration in Latin by Justus de Justis, on John Chedworth,

archdeacon of Lincoln, dated at Verona, 16 July, 1468. It occupies the first thirty–six

folios, written on vellum, and is the original copy presented by the author" (xlvii). The

third item, Madden explains, directly following the *Pearl*–poems and extending from

"folios numbered 127 to 140[b] inclusive" (Madden's editors use *b* rather than *v* to indicate

folio verso), consists of "theological excerpts, in Latin, written in a hand of the end of the

thirteenth century." Madden adds that "at the conclusion is added *Epitaphium de Ranulfo,*

abbate Ramesiensi" (l).[19] Madden also includes an explanatory detail dating this item,

pointing out that Ranulfo was abbot from 1231 to 1253. Madden also notes, off–

handedly, that "Ranulfo" was "erroneously called *Ralph* in the *Monasticon*, vol.ii.p.548,

new ed" (l). Details like this bit of minutiae are characteristic of Madden and give some

indication of his fragmented and selective, but nearly photographic, memory of library

materials.

Madden's description of the second item is more detailed than were his

descriptions of its volume–mates, the panegyric and epitaph. The description runs to

several pages (xlvii–l), as compared with the brief paragraph that Madden had devoted to

each of the other two. Aside from the middle item's sheer length, in comparison both to

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[19] I assume he means by "at the conclusion," "on the bottom of the concluding folio of

this particular [third] manuscript," since he uses the same phrase to describe the

concluding inscription, "Hony Soyt Qui Mal Pence" on the last text folio — 124[b] — of

Sir Gawain.

the panegyric or epitaph and to the ten other, less important manuscripts containing the comparative Gawain–items in Madden's collection, the four–poem item containing the *Gawain*–poem was of special importance. Its age, its obscure northern dialect, and its archaic alliterative verse form all added to the item's patina as an "ancient" example of Gawain's "true" status in the Arthurian court. More importantly, the content of the *Gawain*–poem appeared to support Madden's — or more importantly, the Bannatyne Club's — regional and social agenda. To Madden, the Manuscript presented an unalloyed celebration of Gawain as the most perfect of Arthur's knights. Even better, the poem fails to celebrate the competition (Lancelot is mentioned only once and Tristan not at all) and makes a clear connection, through the Green Knight and the location of the narrative, to an ancient British or Celtic heritage that predates the Norman invasion.

Without a doubt, Madden's assertion is true that the panegyric, the Latin theological excerpts, and the poems were bound together, but had "originally . . . no connection with each other" (xlviii). He bases this "obvious" assumption, however, on several cultural expectations of a "text." These expectations can be observed when Madden points out differences among the texts in this group: They are in different languages, the scribal style is radically different, and only the two orations are named, identified, and dated (or datable); most obviously, the two manuscripts bookending the *Pearl*–manuscript belong to different genres, a fact that Madden notes by calling one a "panegyric" and the other "theological excerpts" (xlviii, l). Cultural expectations of texts differ. Madden's expectations include, at the least: consistency of language, script style, genre, authors, and dates of composition.

Madden's brief accounts of the theological manuscripts do not provide for a full comparison of details since, unfortunately, he chooses different details to describe for each manuscript. For example, Madden mentions that the first manuscript, the panegyric, is written on vellum, but there is no description of the hand used. In the case of the third manuscript, the epitaph, the scribal hand is described briefly, but Madden includes no mention of the writing surface, which could be either vellum or paper (xlvii).

Madden's description of the four poems in the *Pearl*–manuscript within the volume views them as an integral Text and includes brief accounts of the following categories of manuscript detail:

a) <u>Script Style and Inks</u>: Madden writes that these portions of the Manuscript were "written by one and the same hand, in a small, sharp, irregular character, which is often, from the paleness of the ink, and the contractions used, difficult to read";

b) <u>Decoration</u>: There are "no titles or rubrics, . . . divisions marked by large initial letters of blue, florished with red";

c) <u>Illuminations</u> (or illustrations): Madden notes "several illuminations, coarsely executed, . . . each of which occupies a page." He describes each of the illustrations briefly, noting the folio position of each, and the four colors (red, green, blue, yellow) used for each. He also notes the position and attitude (i.e., "standing by a stream," "hands raised," etc.) of some the figures and gives particular attention (without, unfortunately, being especially descriptive) to details of costume and style (e.g., "The costume of Richard the Second's and Henry the Fourth's time, buttoned tight up to the neck, with long hanging sleeves," "hair plaited on each side," "the helmet worn by the knight is here worthy of notice," etc.).

d) <u>Content and Samples</u>: Madden gives brief accounts of each of the first three poems' plots and sample lines from each (the opening twenty lines from *Pearl*, four opening lines each from *Cleanness* and *Patience*) and notes the beginning and ending folios for each, leaving all untitled. His account of the *Gawain*–folios is actually briefer than are the others, probably because he includes a hand–drawn facsimile of the first page and of the first illustration, referring the reader to those samples for clarification, and because he renders the *Gawain*–poem, which follows, in a facsimile–like presentation (Matthews calls it a "typed facsimile," 128). Importantly, he does give this one untitled poem a title: *Syr Gawayne and the Grene Kny Ꝥt*. This title will cling persistently to the poem, creating an initial impression of a marked division between this poem and the three others. The editorially imposed titles, not introduced until Morris's edition in 1864, of the other three poems simply state the poem's first word. However, the words "cleanness" and "patience" also call attention to the poems' presumed homiletic qualities. The word "pearl" has distinctly scriptural overtones (e.g., the pearl of great price), but otherwise would promote few narrative expectations. In contrast, the title *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* serves to emphasize the chivalric ("Sir," "Knight") and fantastic ("Green") aspects of the work, as well as placing protagonist and antagonist in narrative apposition, leading the reader to expect conflict, violence, or some sort of adversarial relationship. Madden's reasoning for the title was probably more pragmatic; he certainly intended to emphasize Gawain's role in the poem for his patrons, but the title also simply serves to distinguish this poem from the others in the collection (e.g., *Golagrus and Gawain*, *Sir Gawain and the Carl of Carlile*, *The Green Knight*, *The Turk and Gawain*).

e) <u>Genre and Style</u>: *Pearl* is described stylistically, rather than generically, as "one hundred twelve–line stanzas, every five of which conclude with the same line, and are connected by the iteration of a leading expression." *Cleanness* is also described by its style rather than genre: Madden notes in this poem the presence of three major scriptural accounts: 1) the wedding feast; 2) the fall of the angels, Sodom, and the birth of Christ; 3) and the history of the biblical Daniel. The "metre" of *Patience*, Madden notes, "is the same [i.e., alliterative] as the last [*Cleanness*]" and is "wholly occupied with the story of Jonas" (xlix). Madden calls the final poem "The Romance . . ." (xlix), thus clearly assigning to this poem a genre, but giving no additional information about its style or structure.

f) <u>Marginalia</u>: These occur on the last text folio of *Gawayne* (Madden's transcription is "Hony Soyt Qui Mal Pence"); above the bedroom scene illustration ("Mi mind is mukul on pt wil me noꝰ amende / Sum time was trewe as ston, & fro schame coupe hir defende"), and the phrase "Hugo de" written on *Gawayne*'s initial folio, which Madden mentions later in his notes (302).

Comparing Madden's description of the Nero A.x volumes' second article to its first and third, we note that he clearly distinguishes the three separate items. Madden distinguishes the second article (the *Pearl*–poems) from the other two based on three principle observations: 1) the regularity of its script, "written by one and the same hand, in a small, sharp, irregular character"; 2) the bookend positions of the initial four and the following three illustrations, as well as by the clear similarity of the other five illustrations that appear at regular intervals through the item; and finally, 3) by James's introductory catalogue note, which, because it references only the first lines of *Pearl*,

Madden believes has certainly "confounded" the four poems contained within the *Pearl*–group. Thus, of the textual markers identified earlier (language, script style, genre, authors, and dates), Madden uses only two to distinguish the *Pearl*–group from its volume–mates: <u>language</u>, which is part of his general introductory discussion and his glossary, and <u>script style</u>, which he accounts for both by his facsimile–style presentation and in his manuscript description.

Overall, Madden, as the initial foster–father of the Nero A.x Manuscript, made for a rather schizophrenic parent. On the one hand, he had a deep commitment to publishing the poems in this Manuscript. When his initial discussions with Scott (1828–29) had stalled, he recounts the long years spent trying to find another patron; potential patrons appeared and disappeared, or did not even reply "with courtesy" to his proposals before Scott, and the Bannatyne Club, finally committed to the project (Madden 299–300). Madden not only wanted the poems published, but he wanted them to be represented accurately; his "fanatical" (Matthews 127) desire for accuracy in the transmission of manuscripts and his highly developed skill in transcription led Madden to produce a facsimile–like presentation of *Gawayne*, which included unexpanded scribal abbreviations and "bob and wheel" stanza–tags printed to the right in the poem's text. In addition, Madden's description of the four *Pearl*–poems, as they appeared — wedged between the two other texts in Nero A.x — was the first to include more than the opening words of *Pearl*. His description was also the first to reveal the presence and sequence of all four poems and to show their similarity in style, language, script, and illustration. The inaccuracies in Madden's opinions about *Gawain* — its "Scottish" dialect, its link to a more ancient and British origin for the Arthurian tales, its "author" Huchowne, and so on

— are made less troubling by the overall accuracy of his textual transmission and his awareness of the "whole"–ness of the Manuscript. Despite the fact that he published only *Gawayne*, Madden saw the four poems as distinct from one another, but clearly part of the same Text. He concludes his Introduction with the "hope" that "the time may arrive, when the <u>whole</u> of these poems still remaining in manuscript will be published" (xlv, my emphasis).

Perhaps because of a self–conscious arrogance produced by defensiveness about his middle–class roots or his incomplete education, as Matthews argues, or because he was attempting to please his aristocratic audience/patrons (as I think), Madden produced a volume that separated *Gawain* from its Text and made it almost completely inaccessible to all but an <u>extremely</u> select audience. Few among even the Bannatyne members would have possessed the linguistic skill to pick through Madden's *Gawayne.* If Nero A.x had been a medieval princess and Madden her father and King, he would have wanted the Princess–manuscript to be appreciated, admired, and sought after, but only from the Rapunzel–like safety of a high, guarded tower.

2.   Henry Savile of Banke (1568–1617)

Until 1913, none of the Cotton Nero A.x editors or readers had traced the Manuscript's provenance beyond Sir Robert Cotton (1586–1631). All speculation about the Manuscript's origins had been based on internal evidence: dialect mapping involving diction anomalies and dating based on details in the illustrations and descriptive passages. Sir Israel Gollancz first positively identified Henry Savile of Banke as a prior owner of the *Pearl*–poems in the Cotton Nero A.x Manuscript in the introduction to his 1913

edition of *Patience.* In order to make this identification, Gollancz had discovered and corrected a mistaken editorial expansion in J. P. Gilson's transcriptions of two handwritten, but unidentified and undated manuscript "catalogues" in the British Museum Library's collection (British Library Add. MS 35213, folios 5–32 and Harl. MS 1879, folios 1–10r). Gilson's ten years of detective work into the contents of the two lists led to a paper that presented his findings to the (London) Bibliographical Society on November 18, 1907 and that later was published in its 1909 *Transactions.* Savile's possible ownership of the *Pearl*–poems in the Nero A.x Manuscript thus was first noted and confirmed some seventy years after Madden's initial "discovery" of the four *Pearl*–poems in Cotton Nero A.x in the British Museum Library's collection and subsequent to numerous editions of the poems. The most interesting possibility the discovery of Henry Savile's ownership of the Manuscript raises is that his family might have owned the poems for nearly 200 years, back to the time of the Manuscript's composition.

What little is known about Henry Savile of Banke is collected in the Introduction to Andrew Watson's slim 1969 volume, *The Manuscripts of Henry Savile of Banke.* The major portion of Watson's monograph is devoted to a re–edition of Gilson's 1907 catalogue; Watson adds fourteen manuscripts to Gilson's original catalogue of 285 entries and eliminates, definitively, one. Watson also updates Gilson's catalogue commentary on the manuscripts themselves, noting current locations, providing new provenance information, correcting Gilson's transcription and commentary errors, and expanding manuscript descriptions when necessary and possible.

Watson's brief outline of Savile's life and heritage suggests some interesting connections to the early circumstances of the *Pearl*–poem Manuscript. Savile's childhood

was spent at "Blaithroyd" in Southowram, a township of the parish of Halifax in

Yorkshire that was also known as "Banke," or "Southowram Banke," and no longer

exists. Thus, their branch of the Savile's was known as Savile of Blaithroyd "alias the

Banke" (Watson 2). The family was residing at Banke for at least two generations prior to

Savile's grandfather: There was a Thomas of Banke, Henry's great–grandfather, who

died in 1539 and a Nicholas of Banke, who was Henry's great–great–grandfather, which

places our Saviles at Banke, at the latest, by 1500 and perhaps as early as 1450. One or

perhaps two generations are missing prior to Nicholas, but the pedigree picks up again at

a Henry Savile of "Copley" who "flourished" around 1400 (Watson 1, 85). Copley is

about five to ten miles east and a little south of Southowram. The Banke/Copley area and

the fifty to sixty miles south and east towards Chester encompass the heart of the region

Ralph Elliott portrays as the "Landscape and Geography" of Gawain's adventures, that is,

from the western edge of the Peak District over to the Wirral Forest just north and west of

Chester (Brewer and Gilson 105–17). The Saviles' steady presence in this landscape for

at least 200 years indicates at least a possibility that Savile's ownership of the manuscript

was part of a family inheritance, perhaps a gift from a lord or a salvage from one of the

northern abbeys.

Although later in life his family's fortunes waned, Savile grew up during a period

when it enjoyed local influence and prestige. At the time of Savile's birth in 1568, just a

year after his older brother Thomas, three generations of Saviles were living at Banke:

Henry's grandfather Thomas, his father Henry (the Elder), and Savile himself.[20] Thomas

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[20] In 1578, when Henry would have been ten, Henry's father paid the second highest

the Elder died in 1570, shortly after his two grandsons were born, but the family remained well–connected throughout the Northwest Midlands area and south to London. Henry Savile's mother, Frances Moyser, had been previously married and brought with her into the family two older half–brothers. Savile was apparently close to both of them — he bequeathed Leonard, "sword–bearer" for the City of York, three large chests "full of bookes and other stuffe" and made him one of the three executors of his will (Watson 11). His other half–brother, William, brought a relationship through marriage to the influential Puritan, William Crashaw. Crashaw supported Savile by writing a letter to his friend, Isaac Casaubon, a French classical scholar under the protection of James I (Drabble 173), which urged him to consider purchasing Savile's library and recommended the collection, through Casaubon, to "His Gracious Majesty" (Watson 6).

The family was also connected, although more distantly, to <u>Sir</u> Henry Savile, provost of Eton, Warden of Merton College, Oxford, and often considered to be a co–founder of the Bodliean library. Through a fifteenth–century connection with the Henry Savile of <u>Copley</u>, the Saviles of Banke were also related to the petty aristocratic family of Sir John Savile of Tankersley and Thornhill; Sir John's family carried the Tankersley and Thornhill knighthood continuously, from the late 1300s through at least 1555. A sister of Sir Henry Savile of Tankersley and Thornhill married Thomas Wortley of Wortley Hall

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subsidy tax in his district and, eight years later, he paid the highest. As early as 1536, Henry Savile's grandfather had been entrusted with the "Tithe Composition Deed" by the landowners of Halifax that would have given him some acquaintance with the Lords of Halifax (Watson 3).

and became the grandmother of William Wortley, born the same year as our Henry Savile. That the relationship between these two branches of the family was still viable is attested to by the fact that Henry bequeathed "To my cozen William Wartley [sic], gentleman, twenty poundes and all my manuscript bookes of Alcemy with such note bookes as are of my hand writinge and are now at my lodginge [sic]" (Watson 10).[21]

A famous family scandal implicitly reveals additional Savile connections to the world of antiquaries, book collecting, libraries, and scholarly pursuits. The scandal became infamous as the "Asser interpolation." Savile's father (Savile the Elder, also known as "Long Harry") was, supposedly, the source of a copy of Asser's *Life of King Alfred* that William Camden used as a basis for a selection in *Britannia*, a "clearly spurious passage designed to establish the pre–Alfredian origins of the University of Oxford" (Watson 6). An unsupported claim such as this not only constituted a serious breach of academic rigor and ethics, but also fueled an ongoing intra–university competition, making the claim a sure target for other academics. Camden (then seventy–two and quite ill) could not produce a source, but said he thought he had borrowed it from

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[21] When Savile was in his early teens, shortly after his older brother died, the family moved down the road to another Tolkien–esque location, "Shay hill in Skircoat," also known as "Shawhill" (Watson 3). As has been recently pointed out to me, the family names all begin to sound like a collection of hobbits, and it is likely that these names came across Tolkien's desk at some point — he would have been just entering the universities at about age 18, when the discovery of Savile's ownership was made.

Savile; Savile the Elder could not produce a copy, although he agreed that he had loaned it to Camden; the matter was never resolved (6, 83–4).[22]

Crashaw's letter, mentioned above, may exaggerate to some degree the extent and value of Savile's collection, given that Crashaw had a family interest and might have stood to profit from the sale. Nevertheless, his letter is one of the few narrative accounts of the collection that exists and closely matches the portrait of it that Watson's other evidence suggests; that is, Crashaw's letter indicates that some of Henry Savile's collection came through his family and that Savile had added to the collection. Crashaw states that Savile,

> a native of Yorkshire, has in his possession about 500 manuscript volumes:
> amongst them are some thousand texts or various books[23] of Holy Writ,
> Councils, Fathers, Theologians, Historians, Poets and Philosophers. Some of
> them are in Greek [Casaubon's specialty], others in French, more in English
> and Scottish,[24] but the majority in the Latin language; many in a very ancient
> hand (some even in Saxon), which is a warrant of their respectable antiquity.
> They were acquired by this gentleman's grandfather out of the plunder of the

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[22] As recounted in Appendix III (Watson 83–85); see also his notes on 91 for details concerning earlier confusion between Henry Savile the Elder, Sir Henry Savile, and our Henry Savile.

[23] Notice the instance here of the denotative distinction between the words *manuscript*, *text*, *volume*, and *book*.

[24] The Northwest Midlands' dialect was often confused with Scottish.

monasteries (chiefly northern), and were bequeathed to Savill [sic] by his

father. (Watson 6)

Crashaw's fears that the books would go "overseas to the highest bidder" or "fall

into the hands of the Jesuits," or that Savile would succumb to the pressure of "certain

dealers abroad" who were trying to persuade him to take a thousand pounds for the

books, plus Crashaw's descriptions of many "Greek" and "Latin" volumes in other parts

of the letter, are probably meant to appeal to Casaubon's academic interests and social

biases and to intimate a suitable price range for the collection (Watson 6). However, in

many respects Crashaw's description of Savile's collection fits well with Watson's

evidence. Savile's collection was substantial for a man of fairly modest means. He did

own manuscripts in various languages. At least some of his collection had come to him

through his Southowram family, and many of the volumes were later shown to have been

owned by monasteries and abbeys. Despite Watson's cautious reminder that Savile's

father had died intestate, leaving no record of a manuscript collection (7, note 1), Savile's

predecessors certainly had sufficient longevity, stability, heritage, location, and

connections to have put together a collection of this type.

What we know of Savile's life, outside of his collection of manuscripts, fills up

only a few sentences. No record remains of a marriage or medical practice or of any

scholarly publications or society affiliations. His closest full brother, Thomas, died in his

teens and his three other full siblings, all older, are not mentioned in his will. Although

now it is recognized that he was an important collector, few of his contemporary

collectors mention him or have records of Savile's active exchanges, borrowings, or

acquisitions; Watson notes Savile's name in the papers of other collectors only three

times; four other references probably refer to Henry Savile the Elder (Watson 5–6).[25] We have only one of Henry Savile's letters;[26] it is to Camden (with thanks for sending condolences on the death of his father, Henry the Elder) and describes some antiquities he had seen. Watson dates the letter around 1607, the year of Henry the Elder's death (5).

We know that Henry Savile attended Merton College at Oxford (where Sir Henry was Warden), earned his B.A. in 1592, an M.A. in 1595, and a license to "practice physic" six years later (*Athenae Oxonienses* 1815, ii, column 201). He traveled in Europe and, later in life, kept a room in London, where he lived with a carpenter and his wife in a rental in Charing Cross. He died at age fifty–one in 1617. Savile may have been an invalid in his last years since he left money and unsold books to the carpenter's wife "Anne" for acting as his nurse (Watson 4). We also have a few catalogues of his books, one written in his own hand and the other containing some marginal notes. Henry Savile's will reveals him to be a private man; he donates books to people who had been kind to him (Anne) or were close family or friends (Leonard, his half brother; William Wortley, his cousin; a friend who played the organ at Magdalen College; an old friend from Halifax who had stored some of his books and other items). Unlike other collectors, he rarely made public donations. His only known public donation was four royal pedigrees, which were donated to a public library. Upon Savile's death, according to his

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[25] This is in sharp contrast to the lively and active exchanges going on in London. There are hundreds of letters and documents exchanged between other major collectors of the time.

[26] British Library Manuscript Cotton Julius F.vi, folio 316.

will, books that remained after the simple bequests above had been fulfilled were to be sold and the money used to pay off debts and expenditures (Watson 10–11).

While Savile's life seems short, and the lack of detail depicts him as rather inactive either from ill health or some other problem, we can get an overall sense of his collection. According to Gilson, an inventory of Savile's catalogue shows that his collection contained an unusually high percentage of theological texts and an unusually large number of English works (Gilson 134–38). In support of Crashaw's claim that the books were from northern monasteries, Watson has firmly traced the lineage of at least sixty of Savile's volumes back to monastic libraries, representing at least fifteen different houses, all but two in the north. But Watson also concludes that Savile made little use of the books, basing this conclusion on three pieces of evidence: First, his name (or his father's) appears in only fifty–nine manuscripts; second, only about sixteen of the manuscripts contain Savile's short or longhand notes; and third, only two of his bindings and one bookplate survive (Watson 7–9). It would seem that Savile's manuscripts spent the better part of their lives in trunks, stored at a friend's home, stacked in an apartment while Savile traveled, or unattended while he was ill. Whether Henry Savile ever noticed the poems following *Pearl* in the *Pearl*–manuscript or not, the most important possibility Watson's evidence raises is that the Savile family was certainly in a position to have been the only holders of the *Pearl*–poems' manuscript since it was written and compiled. Combined with the fact that Savile's catalogue note — in his own hand — represents the earliest record acknowledging the manuscript's existence, the possibility that the Savile family possessed the manuscript from the beginning constitutes an important clue to the material condition of the *Pearl*–manuscript in its earliest known form.

By attempting to retrace the way in which Gollancz, via Gilson, concluded that the Manuscript came to Cotton via book collector Henry Savile, a position repeated in contemporary editions, we can get a quick lesson in what a close–knit and self–referential group these early twentieth–century bibliophiles were, as well as a close look at the kind of data they worked with. Much of the reporting in Gilson's article and in other sources from this period has a tone of clubbish familiarity. "Insider" names, elliptical, and suggestive explanations, unretrievable assumptions lying behind odd leaps in logic, combined with a rhetorical preference for understatement, formal courtesy, and multitudes of qualifications and negations make what would seem to be an easy retracing of a prior researcher's steps quite a challenge.

Gilson's paper, entitled "The Library of Henry Savile, of Banke," was his contribution to what he perceived as a national (and therefore patriotic) effort to account for manuscripts lost during the dissolution of the monastic libraries under Henry VIII, thus salvaging an important part of British history. Specifically, he was trying to bridge the obscure period in the history of the monastic manuscripts during the sixty or seventy years after the Dissolution — or in Gilson's aptly metaphorical description, "the time when so many of [the manuscripts] lost their medieval homes by the suppression of the monasteries" (127). Another possible motive for Gilson's paper lies in the acquisition of the Additional Manuscript catalogue.

As one contribution to the narrative of the homeless manuscripts, Gilson presents the details of his ten years' research into a manuscript that the British Museum had purchased from Sir Thomas Phillipps at a sale in 1898; it had been represented and sold as a Cotton Catalogue, that is, as one of the handwritten lists Sir Robert Cotton had kept

of his extensive and famous book collection. These catalogues, often no more than scribbled "grocery lists," were essential documents in the attempt to trace and identify the provenances of various manuscripts and to verify the contents of the massive manuscript collection in the British Museum collection. As Assistant Keeper (1909–11) and Keeper of the Museum's (1911–29) manuscript collection soon after the purchase, Gilson would have assumed personal responsibility for all acquisitions and manuscript holdings; he quickly judged that this list, now bearing the British Library shelf–mark "ADD. MS 35213" (Additional Manuscript 35213), was not, after all, a catalogue of Cotton's books (Harris 756). In his paper, Gilson notes courteously that many of the volumes listed in the catalogue were, in fact, part of Cotton's collection, but then adds, with a peculiarly British circuitous edge, that "to discover that it could not be a Cotton catalogue . . . was a simple matter; that is to say, if one were not to assume that Sir Robert was in the habit of exchanging books with other collectors to an extent greater than there was any reason to believe" (131). Gilson seems to be saying that the fact was somehow obvious that this catalogue (Add. 35213) did not describe the manuscripts that were known to be in Cotton's collection at that time. Since this is not a "simple" assumption for most of us, we have to consider what Gilson's remark might actually mean in terms of "evidence." Is Gilson pointing out that the list indicated many volumes that were part of other collections very well–known to nineteenth–century bibliophiles — perhaps that of Sir Simons D'Ewes? Does "exchanging books" mean buying and/or selling them or simply borrowing them? Many of the short– and longhand notes in these types of "catalogues" refer to lendings, bequeathings, and *desiderata;* few of them were "official" documents in the way that we think of catalogues today. In any case, what did Gilson and his audience

know or assume about "Sir Robert['s]" "exchange" habits, and what are the "reasons" we would or would not believe these assumptions? Offhand remarks and unexplained assumptions like these often appear at key points in these bibliophiles' research narratives, making the re–tracing challenging detective work that often leads to dead ends and guesses.

Moving, then, from the newly and perhaps mistakenly purchased Additional Catalogue to the other central document in this narrative, the Harley Catalogue (Harley MS 1879), we find another small mystery. Rather than elliptical suggestions as in the case above, we have the problem of determining how Gilson happened to come upon the Harley Catalogue in a collection of over 8,000 volumes, each of which held one to fifty separate items (Harris 2). The British Museum already owned the Harley catalogue at the time of the Additional Catalogue purchase, and Gilson simply refers to it as "a neglected volume of the Harley collection" (Gilson 131). Unfortunately, Gilson neglects to explain how *he* came to know of the Harley's existence and contents or how he happened to perceive instantly the connection between the Harley and Additional lists. Gilson states simply that, "To ascertain that [Savile's] library was substantially the same as that catalogued in Harl. Manuscript 1879 was also not difficult . . ." (Gilson 131). There are a couple of possibilities here. This offhand reference suggests, perhaps, that Gilson was intimately familiar with the contents of all the Harley Manuscripts in the British Museum at that time. The number of manuscripts involved makes this hard to imagine, but not impossible. The fact that Gilson calls the volume "neglected" is somewhat odd because the catalogue contains a clear reference to a manuscript of *Pearl*. Does "neglected" mean that the list had never been published? Or never requested? Never catalogued? At this

time, *Pearl* was considered to be the most important of the four poems in Cotton Nero A.x; any manuscript bearing a reference to the poems would have been of great interest to an active scholarly community. Without suggesting any dark motives, for me Gilson's mysterious knowledge highlights the gaps in scholarship that occur in a self–referential and tightly knit scholarly circle.

Gilson *does* explain how he linked the two lists to both Sir Robert Cotton and John Dee, both well–known collectors, and how he concluded that the two lists represented a library belonging to an unidentified third party. The link to Cotton in the Harley Manuscript 1879 was obvious once this list was consulted and if one were familiar with the Cotton holdings. Along with several lists of Cotton's books, the Harley booklist has marginal notations in Cotton's hand, a well–known hand that would be readily identifiable to Cotton scholars. Cotton had marked "A" or "AA" beside numerous items to indicate "Books I want" (the AA volumes being the most desirable; the A volumes, less so; unmarked, even less. The *Pearl*–manuscript, curiously, was not marked as a desired volume). In any case, it was clear that Cotton had seen and handled the list of manuscripts on the folios which were to become British Library Manuscript Harley1879. The Harley Manuscript also contains a catalogue of John Dee's books known from other descriptions and catalogues in the library of Dee's holdings (Watson 1958). But the Harley catalogue's entries were in an unknown hand and were not part of Dee's collection. As for the Additional manuscript's link to the two collectors, it contains a book list in John Dee's hand and several lists of books known to belong to Cotton at that time, but notations were made in a curious shorthand that neither Dee or Cotton was known to have used. The connections to both Cotton and Dee were apparent after an

initial comparison of the documents. But it was also clear that, although both the Additional and Harley catalogues named roughly the same items with minor differences in sequence and manuscript description, both of the lists referred primarily to a collection that belonged to neither Cotton nor Dee. It remained for Gilson to identify the third "hand" in the lists.

Gilson was able to identify this third party by locating and examining as many of the identifiable manuscripts on the two lists as possible, taking careful note of all identifying marks and marginalia (e.g., owners' marks, press marks, *ex libris*, shorthand and longhand signatures, autographs, and marginal commentaries). With a sufficient number of extra–textual handwriting samples and ownership markings for comparison, Gilson was able to demonstrate that the entire Harley list was, in fact, written in Savile's hand. Furthermore, throughout the more extensive Additional Manuscript list, Savile had made shorthand notes (which Gilson was able, for the most part, to decipher and which proved characteristic and unique to Savile), and made a few identifiable longhand comments. Gilson's evidence showed that the two lists were representative catalogues of Savile's collection around 1615, two years before his death.

After carefully identifying the two lists, decoding the shorthand, and confirming ownership, Gilson took another unaccounted for and curious step. Despite the fact that the Harley list had proven to be in Savile's own hand, Gilson, without explanation, chose to use the Additional Manuscript (in Cotton's hand) as the basic catalogue for the transcription of his research into a composite of Savile's manuscript holdings.

In his 1969 extension of Gilson's work, Watson conjectures about Gilson's motive for the peculiar decision to work from the Additional Manuscript catalogue.

Watson speculates that Gilson had chosen the Additional Manuscript because it could be positively identified as the later of the two lists and because, due to the many shorthand remarks, it seemed to be the list Savile actively consulted when inventorying his collection. Watson overlooks three other possible motives for Gilson's choice of the Additional catalogue over the Harley. First, Add 35213 is more legible than the Harley. The example (folio 31) from the Additional Manuscript that Watson includes with his text is in a larger, clearer hand than the example from the Harley (folio l2). Second, the Additional Manuscript contains more total entries than the Harley, thus making cross–referencing of transcriptions somewhat less onerous. Third, and finally, the Additional Catalogue was the British Museum's "mistake"; as a misrepresented purchase, it was in need of some justification. For whatever reason, Gilson followed the Additional as the manuscript from which to transcribe and print his inventory of Savile's collection. He did, however, use the Harley Manuscript to provide supplemental information and titles for thirty–three items not appearing in the Additional catalogue. Among these appended entries from the Harley catalogue, we find the reference to Savile's ownership of the *Pearl*–manuscript.

By combining the items on the two lists as a composite catalogue, Gilson was able to posit confidently nearly 300 titles from Savile's Manuscript "library." Gilson transcribed the first 251 entries directly from Manuscript Add 35213, in the same order as they appear there. In the second group, items 252 through 298, which are all items unique to the Harley Manuscript, we find the first "modern" record of the physical location of the *Pearl*–manuscript since its posited composition in the late fourteenth century and its appearance among Cotton's holdings.

Item #274, in Gilson's composite of Savile's Manuscript library, is his transcription of Savile's Harley catalogue entry (folio 8ᵛ):

> 274-[Ha.187.] An owld booke in English verse beginning Perle pleasant to princes. Paper in 4ᵒ. limned. (Gilson 209)

Gilson, working as a paleographer and thus focused on the idiosyncracies of script style, bindings, paper, marginalia, and other details of manuscript presentation, hesitated to identify this entry with the only known manuscript of *Pearl* in the Cotton Collection. Although many of his transcriptions are often followed immediately by brief remarks regarding the entry, such as "Not in Ha." (#185, page 197) or "Marked AA. Cotton Manuscript Nero DIII. Shorthand inscription" (#280, page 209), he transcribes entry #274, for *Pearl*, without comment. However, he does mention the item briefly in his overview of the contents of Savile's library (135), wherein an important category of items is the "30 some Manuscripts in English," of which he had only located "six or seven." He lists this *Pearl* as one of the items he had "not yet succeeded in tracking" (135) and writes that it is "described as written on paper, and if so of importance, as there is, I believe, only one Manuscript known, which is on vellum" and might have added that the item, which was already owned by the British Museum, was well on its way to becoming one of the most important documents in its literary holdings. Given the relative importance of *Pearl*, and its companion poems in the Cotton Nero A.x, to the scholarly world of the time, Gilson's tentative "belief" that entry #274 referenced another surviving copy can only be taken as an extraordinary example of understatement. Gilson's hope or suggestion that the entry might represent another manuscript was relatively short–lived, however.

Sir Israel Gollancz was intimate with both the Manuscript and the text of Cotton

Nero A.x. One of the earliest of the Manuscript editors and scholars; having published an

edition of *Pearl* in 1891 and, at the time of Gilson's publication, in the process of

preparing his 1913 edition of *Patience*, Gollancz was immediately convinced that item

#274 almost certainly referred to the known Cotton Nero A.x Manuscript. He explains

Gilson's mistake in the Introduction to his 1913 *Patience*. There, he notes deferentially

that Gilson had simply misread the word "pay" at the end of the line, taking it for a

contraction of the word "paper." Gollancz explains that the editorial contraction for "per"

(as in "pa *per*") is "p" and that Gilson had surely mistaken the "y" in "pay" for a "p."

Gollancz, by cross–checking the original entry written by Savile in Manuscript Harley

1879, notes that the same mistake had been made by "another" reader of the catalogue

who had penciled "4 paper" in the margin. (Again, this is probably an extension of

courtesy to Gilson; having pointed out that the Harley catalogue manuscript was

"neglected," Gilson, by his own account, was very likely the only reader of Manuscript

Harley 1879.) The hope that another manuscript of the poem might still exist could have

added to the desire to read the entry as Gilson had, but it is just as likely that the mistake

was the ordinary type a cataloguer might make. With this small anomaly accounted for,

the description otherwise matches, more or less accurately, Cotton Nero A.x, our volume.

In modern phrasing, the item correctly expanded from Savile's Harley Manuscript

catalogue entry (#274 in Gilson's list, #187 in the Harley list, but unnumbered on the

original folios) would read:

An old book in English verse, beginning with the words, 'Perle pleasant to

princes pay,' in quarto size, illustrated.[27] (BLHarl MS 1879 folio 8v or Gilson

209 or Watson 68)

Because this is the earliest reference to the poems of the *Pearl*–manuscript, I want to

examine this entry in detail. Certainly the item described is about the right size. The

numeral "4" designates a quarto–sized manuscript, which is accurate for Cotton Nero

A.x, although it is a very small quarto, measuring only 6 3/4" x 4 7/8" (ca. 170 x 125

mm), about the size of a dimestore paperback novel and about half the size of a lectern–

sized quarto volume such as the Nunnaminster *Smaragdus* (MS Bodley 451, 290 x 185

mm, 217 x 126 text area. The largest *Smaragdus* quarto is 382 x 265 mm, MS Cambridge

CCC 57, Robinson 76.) There is some indication that the leaves *were* at one time larger,

as numerous flourishes appear to have been trimmed off with page margins (Scott 66–

68); if so, the trimming must have been done after the poems were collected and collated

because the pages throughout all four poems are uniform, equivalently lined, and

centered. It is possible that the trimming occurred after the volume had been obtained by

Cotton, since the volume's size, extrapolated out to account for trimming, would still fall

easily into the quarto–size range. In fact, Savile makes no mention of this quarto being

especially small, a feature he often notes in his comments on other entries (e.g., # 278, "A

bible in a little 8°" or # 264, ". . . A little folio").

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[27] A "quarto" is more or less the size of an 8" x 11" sheet of notebook paper. "Limned"

is an archaism and, in the 1600s, meant either "illuminated" and/or "illustrated."

The description also tells us that Savile's volume is illustrated ("Limned"), although the possibility remains that the word "limned" only refers to the cursory illumination of capitals, which are, in the Cotton Nero A.x, quite modest by comparison with manuscripts of the time (Scott 63–68). The illustrations, on the other hand, are quite noticeable and exceptional; there are a dozen full–page, colored, illustrations of events that occur in the text of the Manuscript. While it is surprising that no catalogued entry of the Cotton Nero A.x before Madden ever describes the illustrations in detail (or, in fact, notes the importance of these illustrations as physical features of the Manuscript), it is still unlikely that "limned" refers to the limited illuminations and enlarged capitals in the text of the Cotton Nero A.x, for these occur in almost all manuscripts, both as chapter markers and place keepers, and would not be considered worthy of special comment unless they were gilded or particularly sumptuous. The rather rudimentary or amateurish quality of the illustrations would not have increased the value of the item and thus their appearance would not have been of special interest to collectors, who rarely failed to note sumptuous bindings, copper casings, illustrations with gilding, etc.[28] According to James, collecting for artistry in manuscript craft of any kind only began to occur in the 1800s, long after Cotton and Savile were active collectors (89–90).

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[28] Compare the descriptions of the following items in the same catalogue: "240: Carolu Soillet, de [blank] Gallice cum picturis illuminatis et coloratis. Fo"; "262 A pedegre from Alfed to Richard the 3 in a copper casse"; "264 The Apocalips lymned and gilded in Latin & french. A little folio"; "268 A bible in two lardge volumes in English faire written & lymned which is thought to be translatted befor Wiclifts time. Folio."

The fact that the Manuscript in Gilson's entry begins with the first four words of

the Cotton Nero A.x Manuscript, "Pearl pleasant to princes *pay . . .*," certainly indicates

that the original cataloguer, in this case Savile himself, had a copy of at least *Pearl* in

hand. Unfortunately, the fact that entry #274 only can be directly linked to *Pearl* raises

the possibility that the poems were first collated by Cotton. Additionally, Savile describes

the Manuscript as "old," but doesn't clarify this judgement — is it based on binding?

language? illustrations?

Perhaps most important, if Gilson's transcription is accurate, Savile lists the

Pearl–manuscript entry as a single item in the Harley Catalogue; that is, the item appears

separately on the catalogue folio. A separate listing actually reveals more about the item

in question than the fact that the item is called a "book," at least in both the Additional

and Harley Catalogues. As Crashaw's letter to Casaubon shows, one way in which

collectors could refer to books was as items within manuscript volumes; Crashaw notes

"500 *manuscript volumes*: amongst them are some thousand *texts* or various *books*"

(Watson 6). In this statement, Crashaw describes "manuscript volumes" as being

constituted of "texts" or "books." In the Harley Catalogue, Savile refers to numerous

items as "books," sometimes indicating a pamphlet or booklet within a composite

volume, that is, bound between covers with other books or items. In other cases, the word

"book," particularly if it appears as a single listing, would suggest a distinct sewn or

folded unit, probably without a heavy outer binding, as appears to be the case with *Pearl*.

Below is a typed facsimile of Gilson's transcription of the items (aside from the *Pearl*

entry) that use the word "book":

255-[Ha.52] (a.) A _booke_ beginning Hoc ornamentum decus est et fama

ferentum.

(b.) The same in French upon the other side of the page.

(c.) Item prophecies in French de Angliterra.

(d.) Item Moult sont sovent a venir de ses qui vint en desir. 4$^{\text{o}}$

261-[Ha.105] (a.) A _booke_ in verse beginning Intravit clausum quicunque

paludibus urbem suspectios timido conterat ore cibos.

(b.) De Milne episcopo Belvacensi, in verse; with many fine verses of

diverse subjects. 4$^{\text{o}}$

Cotton Manuscript. Vesp. D V, ff.151 to end. Shorthand inscription,

NETLTON-HNRY SAVIL.

267-[Ha.148] (a.) A _booke_ beginning Egiptis rem magis jocundam mihique

facilem.

(b.) L. Annaie Senecae Cordubensis ad Lucilium.

(c.) M. Fabius quintiliianus Victorio s.

(d.) Another beginning Vetus opinio est iam usque ad [sic] heroicis

ducta temporibus. In paper. Folio.

271-[Ha.166] (a.) Of the seven gifts of the Holie Ghost.

(b.) Item of the commandments; with diverse other tracts in the same

booke in English prose. Folio. (Gilson 208–9, my emphasis)

In each of these cases, the word "book" only appears once within a numbered listing and

seems to refer to the entire unit. In the first three entries (255, 261, 267), the word "book"

is used in a formula similar to that of the _Pearl_–manuscript's entry, that is, "An old _book_

in English verse, beginning with the words, 'Perle pleasant to princes pay'" (my emphasis on the formulaic words). In the final entry, the word "book" is also used to refer to the entire entry, contrasting with the use of the word "tracts," with which Savile indicates the presence of additional items without naming them. At least in this small sample, Savile seems to use the word "book" to refer to a discrete item and suggests the possibility that before the four–poem *Pearl*–manuscript went to Robert Cotton it was a separate item.

Working with Gilson's research and Gollancz's correction, then, we can make some initial observations and a few speculations about Savile's ownership of the *Pearl*–manuscript. First, the description comes from the Harley Manuscript and, thus, is in Savile's own hand; we can assume he was looking at the book and copying the opening words. He recognizes the language as English, but it is impossible to say whether the epithet "old" indicates the look of the binding, the text, or the illustrations, or, perhaps, refers to the obscurity of the dialect. That Savile calls the item "a booke" is probably less indicative of the actual physical form of the Manuscript than we might hope or expect. However, the fact that the *Pearl*–item is listed separately and that other items in the list apparently use the word "book" to refer to all items in the group suggests strongly that, in this case, Savile is describing a separate volume.

When Saville lists separate items within a volume, generally this separation seems to reflect distinct changes in:

       1) medium: The writing surface changes from parchment to paper as in #260;

       2) content or "genre": The description differentiates, for example, between a chronicle list of bishops and a chronicle of monasteries — as in "#275 a

chronicle, a listing of English bishops, a listing of monasteries under

construction";

3) <u>author</u>: The items have different authors, for example, "#156, a.)

'Meditationes Bonaventurae de vita et passione Jesu Christi.'" And "156 b.)

Hugo de s. Victore de laude charitatis."

In other cases, we can only infer that a distinct division occurs due to an unmentioned

change in binding, script styles, or some other form of un–noted editorial guidance such

as capitals, headings, titles, blank pages, etc.

Savile's catalogue entry describing the *Pearl*–manuscript is important not only

because it provides the first evidence of the Manuscript's existence before its appearance

in the British Museum, but also because the description fits easily within the parameters

of the Manuscript we know and suggests strongly that the British Museum manuscript

and this item are one and the same. If Savile's manuscript is the one now residing in the

British Library under the identity of "Cotton Nero A.x, Article 3," then it is relatively

certain that the text has remained unchanged in sequence and content from the time of its

first collation in about 1400. And the text would have remained unchanged in spite of

depredations inflicted by Sir Robert Cotton, who was the Manuscript's best–known

owner and to whom we turn next.

3.   Sir Robert Cotton (1571–1631)

In the hands of Sir Robert Bruce Cotton, the *Pearl*–manuscript was still a

neglected waif, but the neglect stemmed from Cotton's frenzied political activity and

ambition rather than from the Manuscript's relegation to lonely storage. While Henry

Savile's ownership of the Manuscript and even his existence were not discovered until 1907, when the paleographers Gilson and Gollancz made the identification, Cotton's name and the reputation of his Collection are well known and have been since the time of the Cotton Collection's development during the time of the first Stuart Court. Cotton's library, including the volume either soon–to–be or already shelf–marked as Nero A.x, arrived at the British Museum's new library in 1757, becoming the smallest, but perhaps the most unusual and precious of the Museum's Foundation Collections (Harris 4). Cotton had purchased the volume from Savile's estate, but Savile's bequests to friends were numerous, his books were stored in various places, and a number of collectors were haggling over the remnants. Cotton probably took possession of the volume after 1619 and perhaps not until after 1621.[29] The quarto was not a volume that Cotton specifically wanted, as indicated by his shorthand notes on lists of "books I want" (Harley Manuscript 1879), and probably came to him with a mixed lot of books. One of Cotton's 1621 Catalogue lists (another "personal reminder" loan list, Harley Manuscript 6018 folio 148–50) mentions other volumes from Savile that he had been promised and not yet received. Exactly when the volume came to his library is unknown.

If Savile's quarto was stored briefly at Cotton's ancestral estate, Conington in Huntingdonshire, or in one of his London homes, first "Blackfriars" or perhaps the "Strand" (Tite 10 and Sharp 74), the Manuscript was probably first shelved in the home

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[29] A 1621 catalogue of Cotton's holdings, Harley 6018 folio 112v, does not mention the *Pearl*–manuscript, although it does mention the two other items with which it was eventually bound when it was discovered by Madden (Watson 68).

he purchased in 1622, "Cotton House," which was a townhouse located far inside the Westminster complex and just outside the parliamentary chambers — a key location for an aspiring politician. Cotton was deeply involved in Court politics, serving in the Parliament in 1624, 1625, and 1628 under James I and acting as an advisor to many of the principal figures of the period: Ben Jonson, Henry Montague, Thomas Howard, William Burton, James Ussher, Henry Howard, and William Camden, to name a few (Sharpe 30–41).

In 1622, when Cotton bought "Cotton House," he was one of the most powerful men in England, if for no other reason than the fact that he controlled the information in his library. As he grew older, Cotton's interest in his books appears to have become increasingly self–serving. The Society of Antiquaries, which Cotton had founded with William Camden when Cotton was only fifteen, was closely tied to Cotton's early interest in relics and old manuscripts but seems to have developed into more than a purely academic pursuit. The group met at Cotton House and made heavy use of the collection but was dissolved and restarted a number of times, each time becoming more "overtly political," as nearly all of its members were employed in some capacity at Whitehall (Sharpe 28). By the time Cotton turned forty, he wielded control over certain types of information as a formidable court weapon. His main collecting interests revolved around court and parliamentary documents, charters, chronicles, and other records which he "coningly [sic] scraped together," much to the irritation of the Keepers of State Papers (Tite 14).

Kevin Sharpe, Cotton's primary biographer, points out that Cotton's library was a working, private collection with public intentions. The volumes were heavily used by

many borrowers, and Cotton bound them in composite volumes — perhaps, in part to protect them — but he also arranged the composites to suit his own informational needs and ease of access, binding miscellaneous items "together if he consulted them together," often with a personal, and to later readers, unintelligible "logic" (Sharpe 69). Both Sharpe and Colin Tite (another important Cotton biographer) attempt to contextualize Cotton's seemingly abusive treatment of his library. Sharpe, for example, believes Cotton's information–gathering was politically motivated, a way to encourage the government to rely on precedents, a form of decision–making to which Elizabeth I had been strongly opposed (Sharpe 28–9). Tite, in a similar vein, posits that Cotton's library may have been a conduit for the "intelligentsia of early Stuart England" (285). But the picture of Cotton as an ambitious, opportunistic, and unethical collector is hard to shake off; the fact remains that the list of Cotton's manuscript "abuses" is a long one. His Cotton House librarian from 1625–38, Richard James, had a reputation for "borrowing" important and valuable books; one "borrowing" involved slicing out leaves from a St. Johns College, Oxford manuscript and then refusing to return the missing pages. James also failed to return books from the Jesus and Corpus Christi libraries at Oxford; Cotton usually claimed ignorance of James's activities, but it was openly suspected that James was simply following orders (Sharpe 63–8). Sharpe admits that Cotton "fragmented as well as rescued manuscripts" (68). Tite points out as well that other collectors worried about his "depredations" (14), and about his "casualness in safeguarding the integrity of the collection" (285). Even M. R. James, after a long accolade on the books preserved in Cotton's Collection, accuses him (regretfully) with "one touch of blame": "He had a vicious habit of breaking up MSS. and binding together sections from different volumes"

(82). Andrew Watson took on the unenviable task of reconstructing several collections subject to Cotton's methods, and he complains about the problems resulting from "the activities of collectors like Cotton who split up manuscripts and obliterated the names of previous owners," which has caused "our great collections . . . full of manuscripts which bear no clue to their origin or history" (2). Tite's article "Lost, Stolen, or Strayed" reports on at least six specific "dismemberments," and Sharpe notes several more (Sharpe 68). Tite notes further, in his Panizzi Lectures, that "barely half of his books are in the order and the arrangement that they exhibited before they came into his hands" (45). Tite also mentions at least two manuscripts obtained from Savile that had been reformulated by Cotton into new volumes: Cleopatra B.vi and TCD (Trinity College Dublin) 215 (B.5.4) (Tite 269).

Little more needs to be said about Cotton's life. He was imprisoned briefly for sedition in 1629, was excluded from his library, and died not long after in 1631. His most important impact on our Manuscript derives from the fact that his family's wealth and prestige successfully preserved many Cotton manuscripts, including ours, for the next seventy years, from Cotton's death in 1631 until the time his grandson, John Cotton, donated the collection to the government in 1702. Another important impact that Cotton had on our Manuscript is that almost certainly Cotton (or Thomas or Richard James, his librarians) arranged to have the *Pearl*–manuscript cut down from a normal–sized quarto to its present size as a "little"one and to have it bound between two Latin treatises. We may never know Cotton's motive for having done so. Tite might argue that Cotton's motive was to hide the manuscript from government intrusions; Sharpe might suggest an appropriate rationale for Cotton's desire to consult those three manuscripts together;

another theorist might speculate that Cotton was either hiding volumes he had come by irregularly or was secreting volumes he considered liable to the light fingers of other unethical collectors. In whichever case, Cotton clearly wanted to be in control of his library, to have the power of being the only one who knew what his library actually held. Perhaps the best evidence for this is the simple fact that Cotton never produced a complete catalogue of his holdings, even under numerous court orders to do so (1616, 1622, and 1629 in Sharpe 80, 145, 180). In 1696, sixty–five years after Cotton's death, Thomas Smith completed the first thorough inventory of the collection; Smith's Catalogue, in fact, is still considered the best guide to Cotton's holdings.[30]

The probable fortunes of Cotton Nero A.x after Cotton's death are now being documented more fully; much of the information concerning his library during the Civil War, the Restoration, and forward, through and after the 1731 Ashburnham fire became available in the 1980s. Cotton's well–known system of shelving and cataloguing volumes by "Emperor" was started before Cotton's death, but, as with all cataloguing and organization done under Cotton, evolved slowly. After Cotton died, Richard James remained on as librarian and by the time James left in 1638, the press arrangement was complete. In his excellent series of lectures, presented in *The Manuscript Library of Sir Robert Cotton*, Tite diagrams a convincing new theory concerning the arrangement of the twelve presses, each named for a Roman emporer (or an Imperial Lady, Cleopatra or Faustina). He shows their location in a long narrow room, 6' x 38', just outside the

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[30] Smith's catalogue was recently edited and revised by Tite (1984).

parliament chambers, the presses being ranged flat against the wall;[31] probably the presses were designed to fit the allotted space, a chamber in Westminster earlier known as the Chapel of Our Lady of the Pewe (Tite 85). In Tite's configuration, our Manuscript's press, Nero, would have been the first press on the right as a visitor entered at one end of the hallway–like room. Here, the volume sat on Row A (the top row), as the tenth volume from the left (x), with its spine to the wall and folios exposed, in "sixteenth century fashion" (97). Perhaps this is only a bit of historical trivia, but nevertheless, it is well–attested that in 1649, Charles I awaited the outcome of his trial in the Cotton House library. I like to imagine him thumbing through *Pearl* or *Patience* in Cotton Nero A.x., oblivious to the sound of the debate a few dozen yards away.

To sum up the material fortunes of the Cotton Nero A.x Manuscript[32] before the early 1800s, when Madden discovered the volume, the chronology runs something like this. The Savile family at Copley or Banke obtained the Manuscript sometime between 1400 and 1450 and kept it in their family library. Savile died in 1617, and the *Pearl*–manuscript was sold to Cotton with a group of other Savile manuscripts. Cotton's papers show no further use of or exchanges concerning our Manuscript, but it is likely that the *Pearl*–manuscript was cut down and bound with two Latin treatises during Cotton's

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[31] Flat rather than perpendicular to the walls as was more typical, e.g., the Duke Humphreys Manuscript Room in the Bodley.

[32] Please see Appendix A, a summary listing the locations and owners of the Manuscript back to Henry Savile.

ownership.[33] If Cotton received the volume prior to the purchase of Cotton house, he probably stored the *Pearl*–manuscript in a trunk until the move to Cotton House in 1622. After Sir Robert's death in 1631, his son Thomas inherited the library, retained his father's librarian, Richard James, and finished the "Emperor" shelving–system, so that Nero A.x found its place on its particular shelf sometime between 1621 and 1638; it would remain there until around 1700.

John Cotton, Robert's grandson took over the Collection in 1662 and continued adding to it until his death in 1701; his will required the library to be given to the "publick" (Tite 33). However, the family still owned "Cotton House" and an awkward period followed. In 1714, parts of the Royal Library were combined with the Cotton Collection, and, although the records are not clear, apparently the family was squabbling and London was very unsettled during much of this period. Some books may have been taken to Conington (Tite 235). In 1722, the Collection was moved to Essex House, and warehoused. Because of the threat of fire, the collection was then moved to Dr. Richard Bentley's house (Ashburnham House), which itself burned in 1731. Our manuscript was on the opposite wall and relatively unscathed, perhaps sustaining some water damage. There was general mayhem for about twenty–four hours, while the books were taken to rooms in the Westminster school and then removed to the "new dormitory" the next day,

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[33] It would be interesting to trace out the connection between Cotton's interest in heraldry, social and chivalric orders, and court intrigues, which are reflected in his collection and would connect to potential references to the Order of the Garter in *Gawain*. This was an important subject to Cotton in terms of rules and precedents.

where some manuscripts were broken and rebound in order to facilitate drying. For the next twenty years the manuscripts were stored at the Old Dormitory at Westminster; some losses may have occurred there due to neglect and mismanagement. Finally, inspections began in 1753 in preparation for a report on the collection's condition, and preparations were then made to move the volumes into the Montague House on Great Russell Street, the new British Museum (Prescott 391–98); after another thirty years, Thomas Warton would note the presence of some samples of old alliterative poetry in a long untouched manuscript. Frederic Madden, following the trail of Price's note concerning a Gawain poem in his revision of Warton' History, finally traced the manuscript's shelf mark, Cotton Nero A.x., then located and transcribed the *Gawain*–poem. After a long quest for a publisher, Madden found support in Walter Scott and the Scottish Bannatyne Club, and finally, after almost 500 years of silence, gave a voice to part of the Nero A.x manuscript by bringing to publication the first edition of a complete poem from Cotton Nero A.x Manuscript, *Syr Gawayne and the Grene Kny₃t*.

4.   After Madden: *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, *Pearl*, and "the two lesser–known poems"[34]

It would be another 25 years before Richard Morris brought to press his edition of the first three poems of the *Pearl*–manuscript in a volume entitled *Early English Alliterative Poems in the West–Midland Dialect of the Fourteenth Century*, followed the same year by Morris's edition of *Sir Gawayne and the Green Knight: An Alliterative*

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[34] They are often still called this; see Reichardt 151.

Romance Poem. Both were published in 1864 under the auspices of the newly organized

Early English Text Society (EETS), as the first and fourth volumes in the series,

respectively. Madden, still two years away from retirement as Keeper of the Manuscripts

at the British Museum, consented to the EETS's use of his Bannatyne Club text, glossary,

and manuscript descriptions for the *Gawayne* edition because he believed the "motives"

of the Society were worthy, although he thought Morris's transcriptions of Nero A.x

"disgusting" and "worthless" and the Society's founder and promoter Frederick Furnivall

a "jackanapes" (Matthews 151, 155).

While Morris is believed to be one of the stronger EETS editors, if he appreciated

or enjoyed the poems he edited, he keeps the appreciation well hidden. Furnivall's dutiful

attitude towards the Series perhaps created a certain amount of reticence among his

editors. Furnivall recruited editors by challenging them to be one of the men who "do not

think the right way to get through their work is to be afraid of it or let their stomachs turn

at it; but men who know they have a work to do, and mean to do it; men who can look

270 MSS and books in the face, and say quietly, 'Well, at 9 a year, we shall clear you off

in 30 years'" (Matthews 148).

The EETS editions again set *Gawain* off from the other three poems by presenting

it as a separate volume. The motives for publishing the poems of the Nero A.x

Manuscript separately are not recorded, but given Madden's attitude about Morris's

abilities it seems unlikely he would have wanted to be associated with Morris's work on

the *Alliterative Poems*; then too, he was nearing retirement. On the other hand, by

adopting Madden's *Gawayne* and refurbishing it in EETS style, the Society could quickly

bring another volume of this important dialect within its philological frame. As Matthews

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points out, Furnivall was actively against the idea of facsimile versions, which he thought of as "quasi–imitation[s] of the original . . . repellant to the true antiquarian" (150). Furnivall would simply have seen no good reason to put the poems back together in a single volume, since their contributions to the study of English grammar and vocabulary were served in whatever format they were presented, as long as it was relatively uniform and readable. The high degree of standardization of the EETS volumes — with simple fonts, expansions of abbreviations, marginal glossing — and the overall simplicity of presentation in sturdy, brown–jacketed volumes served the Society's utilitarian intent to trace out consistently the evolution of British English. Any particular text's literary coherence was subsidiary to that goal. Even so, the similarity of presentation in Morris's two newly published volumes might have linked them if they had not soon been lost in a flood of similar volumes.

Despite the separate publication of *Gawayne*, which both Morris and Madden brought to press to meet the needs of their publishers, Morris, like Madden, certainly saw the four poems as connected, a unit physically integrated by a common manuscript and the product of a common imagination. In his Preface to *Gawayne*, Morris refers readers to the manuscript description provided in *Alliterative Poems* for descriptions of the entire Manuscript and its contents; likewise, in his Preface to *Alliterative Poems*, Morris devotes the first ten pages to a discussion of *Gawayne* and to the identity of the author of all four poems — who, as Morris politely but firmly assures us, was not Scottish, but certainly English and from the Northwest Midlands. The amount of cross–referencing shows that Morris counted on the two volumes being read together and was thinking ahead to *Gawain* as he introduced the *Alliterative Poems*. He was also thinking back to

the religious themes of the *Alliterative Poems* as he prepared *Gawayne*'s Preface, in which he explains that the "author of the present story, who, as we know from his religious poems, had an utter horror of moral impurity" therefore presents Gawain as the most virtuous of knights (vii). In other words, Morris sees the same consciousness and value system as informing all four poems. Morris's push to see the four poems published within the same year, signing off his Preface to *Gawayne* on December 22, 1864, allowed subscribers to receive both volumes in Manuscript sequence with only a few months' delay.

But without the Manuscript's physical substance — its sensory, implicit statement of the four poems' integrity, evidenced by continuity of illustrations, script, media, capitals, and so on — the neutral EETS presentations, making the poems almost identical to the EETS's many other "Early English" texts, shifted the focus to their presumed generic differences. The *Gawain*–poem's title prominently advertises its Arthurian content and identifies its genre as "Alliterative Romance Poem." The title *Early English Alliterative Poems*, however, gives no immediate indication that the poems within are specially related in any way to the *Gawain*–poem or even to each other, except as "Early," "English," and "Alliterative" poetry, commonalities that bind the poems to a host of other works. The title suggests an unspecified number of poems, perhaps randomly selected and bearing only a linguistic relationship to one another because they involve similarities of style (alliterative poetry), dialect (West–Midlands), and date of composition (fourteenth century).

Announced modestly in a guide to contractions in his glossary, Morris's simple titles for the three "religious" poems — the first word of each poem's text — gives only a

hint of their content, and his Preface does little to add to the poems' potential literary appeal. Morris launches into his account of the three poems with this daunting description:

> The poems in the present volume, three in number, seem to have been written
> for the purpose of enforcing, by line upon line and precept upon precept,
> Resignation to the will of God: Purity of life as manifested in thought, word,
> and deed; Obedience to the Divine command; and Patience under affliction.
> (xi)

Morris outlines briefly the contents of each poem, making two small but significant distinctions between the *Pearl* poem and the other two. First, Morris adds a definite article to the *Pearl* poem's title, calling it *The Pearl*. This small addition underscores the specificity of the title's reference, which Morris believes is to the "two year old" girl, "the Pearl" about whom the "grieving father" is dreaming. Second, Morris summarizes the entire *Pearl* poem in modern English prose, much in the same way that he paraphrases the *Gawain* poem in his *Gawayne*, although the *Pearl* summary is not nearly as extensive. In his summary, Morris focuses on the narrative and descriptive elements of the poem, placing the grieving "father" at the center of the poem and opening up the potential for an allegorical reading. In this summary, Morris only quotes twenty–four lines from the poem itself; more than two thirds is his own account of the poem.

Morris's treatment of the *Pearl* poem contrasts with his introductory remarks on the poems he titles *Cleanness* and *Patience*. For these two poems, Morris forgoes his own analysis or summary of the works and, instead, simply excerpts long illustrative passages

with a sentence or two of explanation before and after the excerpts. For example, in introducing *Patience*, Morris writes,

> The third poem, entitled '*Patience*,' is a paraphrase of the book of Jonah. The
> writer prefaces it with a few remarks of his own in order to show that
> "patience is a noble point though it displease oft." The following extract
> contains a description of the sea–storm which overtook Jonah. (xviii)

Morris follows these sentences with thirty–nine lines of the Middle English text, one more sentence of his own, and concludes by excerpting the final four lines of the poem (xix). In describing *Cleanness*, Morris's own words fill fewer than ten short sentences, and he includes nearly 150 lines of the poem. His own comments are more or less section headings. For example, Morris writes, "The invasion of Babylon by the Medes" and follows with a twelve–line excerpt from *Cleanness*; in another case, he writes, "The destruction of mankind by the Flood when all were safely stowed in the ark," which is followed by a hefty forty–line excerpt. The redundancy of these long quoted passages in the Preface and the lack of any substantive commentary perhaps reflect Morris's lack of engagement with these two poems.

Before he begins twenty pages of "Remarks upon the Dialect and Grammar," Morris concludes his introduction to the poems by passing along to Madden the responsibility for claiming any literary merit for the three religious poems, letting "Sir Frederic Madden's opinion of their literary merit suffice. That distinguished editor says . . . the author's 'poetical talent' [in the longer descriptive passages is] . . . equal to any similar passages in Douglas or Spenser" (xx). It is hard to tell whether Morris's deferral is meant as a courtesy to Madden or if he defers because of his own puzzlement about

whether the poems actually have any value apart from making a "very large addition to the vocabulary of our Early Language" (xx). Morris's concluding comment presents a fairly unappetizing picture of the three "religious" poems, remarking that, "This brief outline of the poems, will, it is hoped, give the reader stomach to digest the whole. It is true that they contain many 'uncouth' terms; but this will be their highest merit with the student of language" (xix).

Morris's sense of the continuity and inter–relations among the four poems, as evidenced especially by his cross–referencing between the separately published monographs, *Alliterative Poems* and *Sir Gawayne*, and his own sense of the Poet's religious values permeating all <u>four</u> poems were no doubt influenced by his familiarity with the works in manuscript. Seeing the poems together as a "body," clearly distinct from the other two manuscripts in the volume Nero A.x, not only by their shared dialect, but also by the framing illustrations, the continuity of script and hand, the vellum folios, and the consistent folio ruling would have been part of both Morris and Madden's experience of the poems. The manuscript experience would have been shared by many among of the select group of scholars reached by the early EETS editions, who either would have already known these poems by way of the Manuscript or, having worked with other manuscripts, been able to visualize the text from the descriptions included in both Madden's and Morris's editions.[35] In any case, the textuality of the group of four poems was not a major consideration or concern at the time; most of the scholars working with manuscripts during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were primarily

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[35] See Matthews 149–52. Matthews reports 145 subscribers in the Series' first year.

interested in accruing examples for the *New English Dictionary*, later known as the

Oxford English Dictionary.[36]

Morris included a sample of *Cleanness* in his *Specimens of Early English* (1867,

volume 2) and his *Alliterative Poems* came out in a second edition in 1869, but it would

be another twenty–five years before the *Pearl*–manuscript found its next editor. Israel

Gollancz initiated his series of editions from the *Pearl*–manuscript, beginning with *Pearl*

in 1891. Gollancz's treatment of the poems, I believe, profoundly affected later critical

and editorial apprehension of the poems' texts for several reasons. First, Gollancz, with

the blessings of both W. W. Skeat and Richard Morris, was considered the primary editor

and scholar of the *Pearl*–manuscript for nearly half a century. Having earned the praise

and encouragement of his mentor and "beloved master," W. W. Skeat (*Pearl* 1921 x),

with his initial translation of *Pearl* in 1891 and, thereby, as Gollancz himself puts it, been

the initiator of the "revived interest in these poems, and in the school of poetry to which

they belong" (Preface to *Patience*), Gollancz turned his "attention to the other poems," as

the late Morris had "generously expressed the hope" that he would do (Preface to

Patience). His editorial effect on the poems extended for ten years after his death with the

posthumous publication of Gollancz's revised and "completed" edition of *Gawayn* in

1940.[37]

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[36] See Gollancz, Preface to *Patience*, note 2.

[37] Gollancz spent the five years before his death in 1930 developing this new edition

despite Tolkein and Gordon's triumphant edition of *Gawain* in 1925.

In many ways, Gollancz must have felt that the poems had been placed by his mentors directly under his judicious and loving care, and his introductory and prefatory comments indicate limited tolerance towards editors encroaching on his poetic territory or presenting editions without his blessing. In a footnote to his edition of *Patience*, his understated censure of Henry Bateson's *Patience*, an edition published a year before his, refers readers to Gollancz's most recent paper on *Patience*, wherein he deals with the "many errors and misinterpretations in a recent edition by Mr. H. Bateson" (Preface to *Patience*). Gollancz proved similarly dismissive when Yale's Robert Menner published an edition of *Cleanness* (titled *Purity*) in 1920, a year before Gollancz's 1921 publication of the first part of *Cleanness*. Gollancz was particularly annoyed with Menner's resistance to his evidence of "quatrains" in the two religious poems (Reichardt 152) and with various translators' attempts to imitate the poetic style of the poems.[38]

The second major factor in Gollancz's impact on the poems in Nero A.x was his choice to publish each poem separately. While Morris and Madden had produced

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[38] See Gollancz's withering comments on various translations and editions in the bibliography that he includes in his Introduction to the 1921 *Pearl*, especially his remarks on Princeton's Charles Osgood's 1906 edition of *Pearl* and a translation of the same by a "Mr. Coulton," about which Gollancz comments, "the very attempt to reproduce the highly elaborate rhyming system of the Middle English must, in my opinion, unless carried through by a gifted poet, prove detrimental to the simple grace of the original; rhyme and meaning become almost necessarily crude and forced. Mr. Coulton's version exemplified these and other dangers" (li).

separate volumes of *Gawayne* in response to their publishers' requirements, Gollancz's

separate volumes, one for each poem over a period of nearly thirty years, allowed for

painstaking care and thorough consultations before each publication. Each poem's edition

was meant to be "definitive" (Preface to *Patience*). Gollancz preceded each publication

with a series of papers, usually presented through the Philological Society, submitting

various problems with the texts for general scrutiny and revision.[39] Paul Reichardt claims

that Gollancz's intent from the first was to publish all four poems from the Manuscript

and to be only one of two editors to have done so (150), but his first editions of the

individual poems appeared six to thirteen years apart: *Pearl* in 1891, a substantially

revised edition of Morris's *Sir Gawayn* in 1897, *Patience* in 1913, the first part of

Cleanness in 1921, and, finally, in 1933, three years after his death, the second part of

Cleanness, completed under the editorial direction of his long–time assistant, Dr. Mable

Day.

But Gollancz's most important impact on the publication history of the *Pearl*–

manuscript poems comes about through his editions of *Pearl*, which, for the first time,

clearly distinguished this poem as a literary work of the first rank, and in doing so,

severed *Pearl* from its original text, much as *Gawain* had been severed by its Bannatyne

publication sixty years before. Whether because of the "belletristic mood of the age"

(Reichardt 146), or because Gollancz's facing page, unrhymed translation made the

difficult dialect accessible to a broad audience that was already receptive to its elegiac

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[39] Footnote 2 in Preface to *Patience* reports that sixty–six passages from *Alliterative*

Poems were submitted for review and input.

theme, or because of Gollancz's unabashed rhapsodizing over the poem's literary quality in his introductory remarks, *Pearl* suddenly found a wide and admiring audience (*Pearl* 1921 x) and began to receive serious discussion and study in a number of new, specifically literary venues.[40] Gollancz's clear pleasure in the language and imagery of the poems rings through all his introductions, but his overwhelming enthusiasm for *Pearl* first distinguishes it from the other "religious poems."

Clearly, Gollancz sees many connections among the poems in Cotton Nero A.x, and he comments on these links extensively in all his editions, repeatedly emphasizing that "for a right understanding of the poet and his work the four poems must be treated together" (*Pearl* 1921 xxxvi). However, his cautions to treat the poems together must have been outweighed by the strikingly self–contained appearance of each carefully wrought publication, as well as by the questions Gollancz opens up for critical review. For example, Gollancz is the first editor to speculate about separate dates and different sequences of composition for the four poems, placing them in a tentative evolutionary and narrative spectrum, at first proposing the Manuscript order, then reversing this order in his 1913 *Patience*, and identifying *Gawain* as the earliest composition. He produces *St. Erkenwald* as a potential addition to the Poet's canon, thereby complicating the potential "text." Gollancz also opens the way to psychological readings — and differing critical potential — by creating an "Imaginary Biography" for the Poet, complete with imaginary

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[40] Such as: W. H. Scholfield "The Nature and Fabric of the Pearl" MLA v. 19; "Symbolism, Allegory, and Autobiography in the Pearl" MLA v. 24; Garrett *The Pearl: an Interpretation.* U of WA IV, No. 1 Seattle 1918.

Wordsworthian contemplations on the West Midland hills of the Poet's youth, an

unfaithful wife (which he stoically and tragically endures, allowing Gawain to voice his

disappointment), the loss of his only consolation, his young daughter, "Marguerite," and

his subsequent devastation, which he eases by writing *Pearl*, his later travels, and an

imaginary encounter with Chaucer in London while the poet was employed as a town

official who spends his spare time writing *St. Erkenwald* (*Pearl* 1921 xl–xlvi).

Furthermore, by positing an as yet unclaimed poet, Chaucer's "philosophical Strode," as

the likeliest author of the poems, Gollancz also enters the conversation about authorship,

bestowing on the *Pearl*–poet the reflected glory of Chaucer and retrieving the Poet from

the wilderness of barbarity outside London and North of the Tweed. By delving into

sources and analogues for each of the poems, including ones not even Gollancz himself

considered particularly credible, he makes room for a wide range of comparative studies

and allegorical and mythical readings, while at the same time reinforcing or perhaps

creating perceived differences in genre among the poems. By opening up these critical

territories, Gollancz also softens the rhetorical boundaries or "limits" of this text, making

the old Manuscript and philological boundaries open to question and re–placement.

In his 1921 edition of Pearl, Gollancz consolidates the flexibility he had begun to

open up with his 1891 edition of Pearl. In the 1921 edition Gollancz adds a modern and

"realistic" rendering of the "Pearl maiden" by illustrator W. Holman Hunt, photographs

of all four of its illustration folios and two text folio facsimiles (none in manuscript

order), an epigraph contributed by Alfred Tennyson,[41] an edition–plus–translation of

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[41] Tennyson's epigraph reads: "We lost you — for how long a time — true Pearl of our

Bocaccio's *Olympia*, and a short poem of Gollancz's own composition in tribute to the two eulogized children (Pearl and "Olympia"), as well as the usual notes and glossary. Bound in pearl white with red leather corners and spine, its title and editor, flower–bordered and in gold calligraphy, embossed on the cover, Gollancz's 1921 edition of *Pearl* radically distances itself from the plain brown wrapper of the *Alliterative Poems* edition and announces the poem as a self–contained and complete literary work, fully capable of speaking to the present culture, the full equal to if not the superior of *Gawain*. Unfortunately, this becomes the moment when the "other two poems" seem to lose their manuscript identity, of interest only for their almost incidental appearance in the same manuscript. As Gollancz concludes in the 1921 edition's introduction, "All recent histories of English literature recognize the importance of the poet of *Pearl* and *Gawain*, and treat of these and the *other two alliterative poems*" (lii, my emphasis).

Overall, I believe, Gollancz's editions, along with his personal prestige, enthusiasm, and commitment to the poems in Nero A.x, were responsible for the rapid absorption of *Pearl* and *Gawain* (and perhaps, by default, "the other two poems") into the English literary canon. On the other hand, Morris's two volumes, both published in 1864, would be the closest the four poems would come to joint publication for the next century. Gollancz's single–poem editions seemed to set the standard for publication, except for a smattering of two–poem publications (of *Pearl* and *Gawain* or of *Pearl* or *Gawain* with one of the "other poems") until well into the 1970s, as evidenced by my own review of

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poetic prime! We found you, and you gleam re–set in Britain's lyric coronet."

the poems' publications.[42] His valorization of *Pearl* and *Gawain* sets these two poems

apart from their manuscript position in a then unrecognized rhetorical sequence, which

Gollancz could only apprehend as a vague thematic and stylistic link related to the

poems' common authorship. But if Gollancz's single editions were the impetus for the

poems' long separation, Gollancz also provided the basis for their eventual reunion by

overseeing the publication of the Nero A.x Manuscript facsimile in 1923. Although the

Facsimile's text is only marginally legible and would provide, at most, a temporary

crutch to an editor wanting to publish an accurate four–poem text,[43] the mere presence of

the Manuscript facsimile continued to attest to the physical reality of an integrated

Manuscript and allowed students of the poems to "see" them in at least a likeness of their

medieval context, no matter how remote from the British Museum's Manuscripts

Students Room. We can be grateful for Gollancz's attention to graphic detail in

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[42] See Appendix A.

[43] My position is contrary to that of Reichardt, who suggests that the editors of the three

composite volumes published in the 1970s may have forgotten to acknowledge their

reliance on the EETS facsimile (161). Reichardt's article provides an interesting

perspective on and insight into editors such as Bateson, Osgood, and Menner, whose

editions competed with Gollancz's. In his support of Gollancz's good intentions,

however, I think he may be missing a note of irony in the fact that the facsimile series

was proposed by Skeat as "the most appropriate tribute" to the EETS's founding father F.

J. Furnivall (154). As pointed out above, Furnivall was decidedly opposed to facsimile

versions (Matthews 150).

producing the Facsimile, attention evident not only in the photographic images of the text leaves and illustrations, but also in the careful imitation of Manuscript quiring, sequencing, and folio dimensions. As Reichardt suggests, it may be more than coincidence which brought about the publication of three complete manuscript editions just after the EETS's re–issuance of the Facsimile in 1971 (161).

In this chapter's introduction, I noted Peggy Kamuf's example of the shifting of the remains of Abelard and Heloise from tomb to tomb to meet the changing textual requirements and perceptions of their twelfth–century love affair, as that romance was understood centuries later by editors of their letters and other writers. In other words, their "material" boundaries shifted in response to the rhetorical boundaries set by later "texts" of the lovers' lives. Ironically, as Kamuf notes, at the last re–entombment very little "remained" of their "remains." For the manuscript containing the *Pearl*–poems, a chiastic reversal of this set of circumstances has occurred. If my assessments are accurate, this "body" or manuscript was shuttled from tomb to tomb, that is, from a variety of trunks and forgotten shelves and empty warehouses where its "remains" were kept intact, but rarely, if ever, read and thus never "textualized." The Manuscript came to rest, still intact, on a far flung shelf in a back room of the British Museum and eventually arrived at its "final" resting place, a glass display case in the British Library Manuscript Salon, just as its text began to find its reading public, that is to become con–"textualized." The Nero A.x's life, cast in a chiastic paradigm, then looks something like this: Instead of material boundaries (bodies) shifting in response to rhetorical boundaries set by the writers of its texts, in the case of the *Pearl*–manuscript, rhetorical boundaries have shifted in response to the "texts" of its readers while its material boundaries have remained

unchanged. In the next chapter, we turn to an examination of the rhetorical boundaries inherent and embedded in the *Pearl*–manuscript's unique design and echoed in its text, and to an exploration of the possibility that a text's a–logical rhetorical signals may allow this text to speak for itself and to delimit its own boundaries, that is as long as we still "have the body."

CHAPTER 3

READING BRITISH LIBRARY COTTON NERO A.x, ARTICLE 3 AS A TEXT:

THE IMPORTANCE OF "PATIENCE"

SETTING THE AUTHOR ASIDE

As discussed in Chapter Two, the material history of the British Library

Manuscript Cotton Nero A.x, Art.3 reveals that the volume containing all four poems

arrived at the British Library in essentially the same form as it had been since 1400. The

Manuscript's earliest editors, Gollancz, Madden, and Morris, who were all working

directly with the Cotton Nero Manuscript and were familiar with many other

manuscripts, each believed that these four poems somehow belonged together — that

they constituted a "text." While they each eventually produced the Manuscript's poems in

separate volumes, these separate publications resulted from their publishers' limited

specifications and needs, not from a belief that the poems were random collocations. As

time went on, however, the four–poem Manuscript disappeared further and further into

the poems' background as a dead metaphor. The real, tangible Manuscript became

mentally (and physically) inaccessible to most readers. The four–poem Manuscript's

status as a source "text" seemed more or less irrelevant, perhaps equivalent to the modern

medieval anthologies in which the poems have often been scattered. As the Manuscript

receded from view, the interrelationship of the poems as a text came to depend more and more on their having a common author.

The anonymity of Cotton Nero Ax's author and the fact that no one has been able to show conclusively that the Cotton Nero poems have a common author have been a source of anxiety for critics trying to work on these poems as a text. The lack of an author has also been blamed for the figurative "disintegration" of what has always been, materially at least, a coherent and integrated Manuscript text. Since I will argue that a coherent physical and rhetorical structure binds together Cotton Nero A.x,'s four poems, the "author" problem, which I believe is a red herring, needs to be laid to rest. Discomfort about who the author of Cotton Nero's poems was and whether this author composed all four poems has been a persistent, but unnecessary, obstacle to seeing this Manuscript as a text.

Since the Renaissance, at least in Western cultures, an identifiable and singular "author" has been one of the most important limits defining a literary text. Authors were not an important limit in medieval texts — at least not in the same way they are today. In any case, the author limit can only be applied imaginatively to most medieval texts, literary or otherwise, since they are often anonymous; "identifying" a medieval author may provide little more than a name. Certainly a designated author — medieval or modern — and his or her "biography" can help clarify potential "meanings" in texts.[44] Less helpfully, scholars and critics often use an "author" as a mask, or spokesperson for

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[44] For example, the relationship of Chaucer's *The Book of the Duchess* is informed by its connection to the historical Duchess, Blanche, wife of John of Gaunt.

their personal assumptions about a text; that is, in psychological terms, they project themselves onto the "author." As discussed in Chapter Two, this kind of "projection" of reader onto text has clearly been the case for the Cotton Nero A.x's "Poet"; his "biography" varied considerably depending on the motives of the poems' early editors, Madden, Morris, and Gollancz.

Because the Cotton Nero A.x Manuscript has become less accessible, both figuratively and literally, we no longer depend on it to set the limits to the text. Instead we have come to depend on limits which rely on a common "author" — the *Pearl* or *Gawain*–poet. When an imaginary author sets the limits of a text, its boundaries keep shifting and we ask anxiously: Should we read all four poems together, in what sequence? Should we include *St. Erkenwald*? Should we eliminate the "lesser" poems, group or pair the poems in some way? Is it legitimate to read the poems as if they informed and complemented each other?

Postmodern critical theories offer medievalists a comfortable way around the dilemma created by the "*Pearl*–poet's" anonymity. By setting aside the "author" as the principal and necessary "cause" of a literary work — the creator who sets the permanent or ideal boundaries around a "text" — postmodern theories reinstate a degree of freedom, allowing us to discern other potential textual boundaries, boundaries that medieval artists certainly employed. In his 1968 essay "The Death of the Author," Roland Barthes brought the premises of New Criticism and Formalism to their logical conclusion with regard to the author's role in text. In the essay, Barthes demonstrates convincingly that "it is language which speaks, not the author" (143), concluding that, as an active participant in a text, the "author" is dead; he/she plays no objectively discernible part after

composition ends. For readers of modern texts, Barthes makes a subtle point. Often, when reading contemporary texts, readers are too close to the text, making it easy to confuse an adopted persona with the author's person (e.g., Prufrock with Eliot). Medievalists tend to have the opposite problem — the text and/or author are distant. Because even edited Old and Middle English texts must be translated (more or less), medievalists confront this distant author daily — all we have is a persona. Linguistic, empirical, and ethical dilemmas, to say nothing of cross cultural misapprehensions, are constant reminders that we might be misreading, getting it wrong. We fall into the mistaken belief or hope that by finding a "real" author we might better comprehend or delineate a text; Barthes's conclusions, however, remind us that a "real" author does not completely (or even partially) clarify the "true" meaning of a text.

Building on Barthes's conclusion, Michel Foucault re–invents the "author" by redefining the "author"'s role. Foucault's clarification of what the "dead" author signifies in "What is an Author?" reveals the necessary separation of the "real" author and the "functional" author. Foucault demonstrates that, once the text reaches the reader, the author is no longer the person behind or prior to a text, but exists as a role that operates simultaneously with the text as a "function." Foucault describes the author function as one which "does not pass from the interior of a discourse to the real and exterior individual who produced it." Nevertheless, Foucault notes, "the name seems always to be present, marking off the edges of the text, revealing, or at least characterizing, its mode of being" (Schleifer and Con Davis 267). In other words, the author role acts as a marker, indicating and defining a particular type of text or discourse and providing the "authority" for that discourse. What this means is that "in a civilization like our own

[only] . . . a certain number of discourses are endowed with the 'author function," and, Foucault concludes, from the end of the eighteenth to the beginning of the nineteenth centuries (just when Cotton Nero Ax was first being published) the author function's primary job has been to define or distinguish a <u>literary</u> discourse (Schleifer and Con Davis 267). What Foucault demonstrates is that the presence of an integrated human spirit is the "necessary" cause which permits Western literary critics to treat a text as "literary," or, that is, which permits us to analyze the text. Foucault states that an individual author is what allows us to "to [discern] . . . a 'deep' motive, a 'creative' power, or a 'design,' . . . " (269). Note that the corollary of Foucault's observation — that our perception that a "literary" works requires an "author" — is also readily observable: <u>Non</u>–literary works from the eighteenth century through most of the twentieth do not require an author's "voice." In any prose claiming the objectivity of science or fact, the author is, ideally, stylistically absent and unnecessary.

To fill the "authorial" void left by the anonymity of the Pearl Poet and, more importantly, to certify the Cotton Nero A.x text as "literary" (i.e., qualified for analysis) students of the Nero A.x Manuscript have proposed a wide variety of contradictory personae. These contradictions appear to validate Foucault's prediction that the "author function" is no more than a scholar's projection — marking out the reader's boundary around the "edges of the text" (Schleifer and Con Davis 269).

Since 1904, when Madden's proposed Scottish author, "Huchowne of the Awyl Ryal," and Gollancz's claim that "philosophical Strode" authored the *Pearl*–poems were

effectively disposed of[45] and Morris's identification of the "Poet's" dialect as fourteenth century Northwest Midlands' English was deemed correct, essentially nothing more has been "proved" about the author, authors, scribes, or illustrators of this Manuscript. As the following descriptions of the imaginary "Poet" — which are so self–contradictory as to cancel one another out — indicate, the research reveals a good deal more about the interests of the scholars than about the putative identity of our imaginary "Poet."

The Poet was perhaps born in, grew up in, or lived out his life in the Northwest Midlands region of England. Some scholars place the Poet farther east near York (Chapman), some nearer Wales and Chester (Savage 701, Nolan 297–300, Peterson 15–23), and some nearer Manchester (Greenwood 3–16, Vantuono 1975, 537–42). Kathleen Scott's recent compendium of Gothic illustrators places at least the illustrator in Cheshire (66, pt#2). The Poet perhaps belonged to a somewhat isolated and rural, although not at all backward, baronial court society (Fox 5). Or he may have traveled enough on the Continent to have picked up the latest stanza forms for *Pearl* (Burrow 2001, 57) or lived a significant part of his later years in London, honoring his boyhood home by using its "rustic" dialect and style as Dante had so honored Tuscany (Gollancz 1921 xx, Gerould 32–33).

He may have been a cleric, educated through the church but not holding a permanent ecclesiastical position (Vantuono xix), or he may have retreated to a monastery after the death of his young child (Madeleva); perhaps he was a monastic who

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[45] Morris, McNeil, Neilson, and Mackenzie argued against Huchowne; Brown and Medcalf disposed of Strode.

had happened to "adopt" unofficially a friendly nearby child (Vantuono), or perhaps a

parish priest or a friar advising other preachers or using parts of the sermon tradition in

his poetry (Chapman, Savage 9). On the other hand, he may have been a well–educated

aristocrat, courtier, soldier, or sailor, as indicated by his knowledge of courtly chivalric

customs, hunting parties, holiday feasts, and shipyard jargon; he was, perhaps, a retainer

in the court of John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster (Oakden v.1, 258); or Enguerrand de

Coucy, Earl of Bedford (Savage 11); or John Hastings, Earl of Pembroke (Cargill and

Schlauch 105). The imaginary Poet's religious beliefs have been read as covertly relaying

his involvement with Lollardy (Aers 98). In direct contrast, the Poet has also been

considered an extremely traditional and conservative Catholic, to the point of dogmatism

(Johnson x, Greene 820). He may have been a political "conservative," a staunch Royalist

and patriotic nationalist, or he may have been part of a group of rebellious outsiders. He

may have been preserving an aristocratic and Anglo–Saxon sense of stoicism,

understatement, and self–irony while distancing himself from French romanticism and

sterile Latinate "translations" (Moorman 1968, 22).

Our Poet may have deliberately chosen the archaic form of alliterative poetry as a

nationalistic political statement, part of a patriotic Anglo–Saxon "alliterative revival"

(Moorman 1981). But, he may have been simply isolated in a Northern rural barony, and

therefore not fully acquainted with or competent in Continental rhyming stanzaic forms;

Morris suggests this isolation when he comments on the Poet's "uncouth" language,

although he also protests (perhaps too much) that the poems were the work of "a man of

birth and education" (viii). The Poet may or may not have known of Chaucer or Langland

or Gower or even Dante — certainly they were all living and writing during part or all of

each other's lives. Although a faint possibility exists that Chaucer's Parson's comment that he is a Southern man and thus cannot rhyme in "'rum, ram, ruf' by letter" (CT X.ll42–43) may have been an oblique reference to this Poet's work (Andrew and Waldron 1982, 15), nothing that clearly references the Nero A.x poems has turned up in contemporary medieval writers' commentaries.[46]

Scholars fail to agree not only on the Poet's biography, but even on the works attributed to him. *St. Erkenwald*, a saint's life was proposed rather off–handedly as potential part of the Poet's oeuvre by Sir Israel Gollancz.[47] *St. Erkenwald*, found in British Museum Harley Manuscript 2250 and dated about a century after the Cotton Nero Ax. Manuscript, continues to create problems for readers of the Cotton Nero poems because it erratically appears in volumes of the Poet's "Complete Works," tacitly encouraging the view of a five poem oeuvre rather than a four–poem text.

St. Erkenwald has been politely, but firmly, jettisoned by most of Cotton Nero's editors and critics in the past three decades — including Andrew and Waldron, Burrow,

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[46] See Derek Pearsall in Levy and Szarmach's *Alliterative Tradition in the Fourteenth Century*, which is considered the standard text on the subject, or Turville-Petre's 1977 *The Alliterative Revival*; Oakden's 1930 two volume work, *Alliterative Poetry in Middle English,* is still viable.

[47] As noted in chapter two, the addition of *St. Erkenwald* featured importantly in Gollancz's "Imaginary Biography" for the Poet, providing him, in his "later years," with an opportunity to meet Chaucer in London. Even Gollancz found the poem radically different from the four poems in Cotton Nero.

Vantuono, Moorman, Spearing, Anderson and Cawley, Johnson, Stanbury, Stainsby, Prior, Davenport, Benson, Blanche and Wasserman, and Wilson. Nevertheless, in his 1993 edition and translation of *The Complete Works of the Pearl Poet*, Casey Finch quietly re–introduces *St. Erkenwald* alongside the Cotton Nero poems, basing the re–inclusion blithely on Savage's 1928 argument and an undocumented nod from Marie Borroff (2).[48]

Trying to honor the kind of psychological integrity that is demanded by our beliefs about "real" authors keeps us from finally disposing of *St. Erkenwald* when producing an edition of a Pearl Poet "works of" volume as long as there's a chance the same "author" really did write both *Erkenwald* and the Pearl–poems. Unfortunately that same desire for a coherent authorial foundation also makes us uncomfortable with the apparent lack of stylistic, generic, and thematic unity between the four poems that belong to the Nero Ax Manuscript. Each of the *Pearl*–manuscript's poems has come under editorial suspicion at some point. Which of these four very different poems belong together, which ones did the Pearl–poet write? The results of metrical and diction studies attempting to include or exclude one or more of the poems tend to cancel each other out since they have been used to "eliminate" every one of the poems from the group. Even Burrow, who attempted one of the statistical studies himself, holds out only the very

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[48] Ironically, Finch must use two different editors to produce the Middle English facing page text — Andrew and Waldron's for the Nero A.x portions of the volume and Clifford Peterson's for *Erkenwald*. The existence of *Erkenwald* is completely ignored in Andrew and Waldron's edition of the Cotton Nero poems.

slightest hope that better computer–assisted work will resolve the common authorship question (2001, 55).[49] I tend to agree with Davenport, who makes the common–sense observation that T. S. Eliot was able to write both *Cats* and *The Wasteland* — and I might add Tolkien wrote both *The Lord of the Rings* and "The Monsters and the Critics" — and argues that differences or similarities in style and diction would never be enough to confirm or deny, conclusively, common authorship.

In the end, all we know for sure about the writer or writers of the *Pearl*–poems is that he or she was, or some of them were, literate and working in a literate milieu. Certainly the writer(s) knew the Vulgate Bible because the first three poems contain long paraphrases. A direct reference to Jean de Meung's *Roman de la Rose* appears in *Cleanness,* where the narrator uses Meung's surname 'Clopinel' (CL 1057). Of the more than thirty–five possible literary sources (by my count) which have been proposed as sources for our Poet's work, most would have been generally available as well in the oral and iconographic culture. While the Cotton Nero poems are not transcriptions of oral compositions, according to David Henderson,[50] they do represent the "limit case link" to

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[49] See Kjellmer, McColly and Weier, Cooper and Pearsall, Derolez, and Hinton for arguments using statistics and computer analysis.

[50] See David Henderson, "Tradition and Heroism in the Middle English Romances," in *Oral Poetics in Middle English Poetry* (1994) for a discussion of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* as a primarily literate work by a "self–conscious literary artist" (103). Henderson cites the moral ambiguities of Gawain in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* as the best evidence for its literary provenance.

an oral past. Thus, the one trait that everyone seems able to agree on is that the writer (or writers) of the *Pearl*–manuscript poems was (or were) . . . a writer who also read.

Finding an identifiable (and singular) author of the *Pearl*–poems is highly unlikely[51] as Burrows concludes, "I doubt whether historians will ever succeed in tracking this particular author down" (2001, 58). While the author search is of historical interest and an intriguing project (like locating the "real" Green Chapel or tracing the "real" path of Gawain's journey to Bertilak's castle), a "real" author is not needed to circumscribe the limits of this text. The name of a poet would provide us with a convenient handle for discussing the Manuscript's poems; it is certainly true, as Burrows complains, that "The *Gawain*–poet is a cumbersome expression, and it would be a relief to set, say, 'John Massey' beside Geoffrey Chaucer, . . ." (58, 2001), but the name of the "real" poet or poets would still not give us the boundaries of this text.

Surprisingly, thirty years after Barthes and Foucault's arguments had relocated and redefined the author's role, and despite the general advances in our theories about authorship, as well as the abundant evidence of the *Pearl*–poet's extraordinarily plastic identity, the lack of an identifiable historical author continues to handicap joint literary analyses of the Cotton Nero A.x Manuscript poems. Robert Blanche believes that the missing author and resulting anxiety have undermined integrated thematic and topical

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[51] Especially given the recent furor about the identity of a much more thoroughly "known" author, Shakespeare (NY Times.com Article: "A Scholar Recants on His 'Shakespeare'."

studies of the four Cotton Nero poems. In the Introduction to his recent reference guide to the *Gawain*–poems (2001), he argues that

> . . . this tendency to treat the four poems as disconnected, autonomous units comes from an unstated anxiety that some bright graduate student is waiting to disprove common authorship, hence reducing the shelf life of studies which have not prudently separated discussion of the four poems into distinct chapters . . . Perhaps such a reluctance to interpret the *Pearl*–poems in light of the principle of common authorship stems from our sense of the artificiality of our construct of the "*Pearl*–poet," although we should be aware that the "*Pearl*–poet" is no less a construct than "Malory." Whatever the reason, despite the fact that critics give almost universal lip service to the single authorship theory, the surprising lack of studies organized by themes or topics rather than by individual poems demonstrates what would seem an almost irresistible urge to, in the words of *Pearl*'s Jeweler/Dreamer, set each poem "sengeley in synglure," placing the part over the whole. (Blanche, 2000 15–16)

Blanche argues here that, while, in the last few decades attempts to read the Cotton Nero Manuscript poems as a text have increased, continued reliance on the author–boundary persistently undercuts these attempts. He tries to alleviate this "author dependence" in two contradictory ways. First, using the terminology of Foucault and Barthes, Blanche blames separate critical treatments on readers who forget that the author is just a "construct." However, in an almost circular reversal, Blanche appears to fall back into that same dependency on the author when he blames the scarcity of integrated treatments

on the lack of a convincing "single authorship theory." Blanche's diagnosis is certainly correct; as I reviewed recent attempts to study the four poems together, it was clear that the anonymous author continues to be the presenting stumbling block.

We can observe Blanche's conjectures about "author anxiety" as they are borne out in numerous recent studies of the four Cotton Nero A.x poems. Critics still lean heavily on common authorship as a justification for working with the four poems as a text, but find ways to protect their readings with disclaimers and defensive maneuvers. For example, to justify her joint consideration of the four Cotton Nero poems and for hearing in them the "voice" of a singular poet in the 1984 monograph *The Voice of the* Gawain–*Poet*, Lynn Johnson chooses a quote from senior scholar Charles Moorman encouraging studies of the poems' "organic unity," which Moorman believes represents "the poet's vision of life"(ix). In addition to shifting theoretical responsibility towards Moorman, Johnson further protects her study by treating each poem in a separate chapter, adding that the poems "stand on their own" (ix–x).

Seven years later, Sarah Stanbury, in *Seeing the* Gawain–*Poet* (1991), ducks the author problem by stating that her *Gawain*–poet is a "convenient fiction," but then devotes her entire Introduction to demonstrating "similarities in imagery, theme and style" which "[argue] in favor of <u>single</u> rather than <u>multiple authorship</u> . . . a sense of <u>a writer confronting and working</u> through difficult issues" (1, my emphasis). Stanbury has her cake and eats it, too. She adopts the safe stance first: her Poet is only a "convenient fiction," but goes on to use this conveniently fictional author as the site of thematic and tonal unity — an active persona who is capable of "confronting and working through difficult issues."

Even more recently (1996), Sandra Prior, in *The Fayre Formez of the* Pearl *Poet,* adopts much the same strategy as Stanbury, offering first a conveniently fictional poet: "the 'poet' I am writing about is not the historical person who composed those texts, but the poetic consciousness that lies behind the corpus" (4). Then, like Stanbury, she introduces a unique, singular, and creative psychology that, as Foucault's theory shows, seems so necessary to a literary work in our culture. Prior appears to equate the "poet" with the persona of the jeweler in *Pearl,* suggesting that "…There are places in his poetry where we get some sense of an identity and a personality . . . this poetic personality is strongest in *Pearl* . . ." [because] ". . . *Pearl* has a more direct and specific connection to him as a poet than *Gawain* does" (5, my emphasis). These references to "identity and personality" and the man "as a poet" are baffling unless they serve to connect an historical person to the poetic persona –exactly what Prior is trying to avoid.

However, while Prior uses Stanbury's protective strategy — to call the "author" a fiction, but then to assign this fictional author active control over the work itself[52] — she does directly confront the challenge presented by Barthes's "dead" author. Prior tries to resuscitate the "author" by rehabilitating him as A. J. Minnis's *auctor:*

> . . . the role of the author poses interesting problems when applied to medieval literature. The issue is surely more complicated than some would have it. While Barthes, for example, traces the concern with the "person" of the author to post–medieval culture, Minnis claims that the idea of a named author was

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[52] This is a strategy quite similar to, but less straightforward than, Gollancz's naïve "imaginary" biography for the imaginary poet described in his 1921 edition of *Pearl.*

important to the medieval reader. 'To be "authentic," in the Middle Ages,
Minnis claims "a saying or a piece of writing had to be the genuine production
of a named *auctor*." (5)

Her first counter, that a "named author was important" to a medieval audience, is
unsatisfactory because, as Prior admits in her own footnote "auctores were texts, not
people" [they were] "embodied voices like Vergil in the Divine Comedy" (5, n.7). In
other words, she stretches Minnis's use of the term *auctor* to the breaking point. In fact,
for Minnis the *auctor* is rarely the text's writer or composer, but is more typically the
ethical "source" or the expert witness, if you will, that stands behind the text — usually
perceived as a text that speaks, not a human. In rhetorical terms, Minnis's *auctor* is a
form of *prosopopoeia*. *Auctores* were names like "St. Matthew," "Cicero" — the "giants"
on whose shoulders medieval writers stood. Individual authorship was certainly not a
necessary criterion for textual "unity." Medieval artists, either from fear or modesty,
avoided the "authority" of individual originality, usually remaining anonymous and often
making a point of gesturing towards the authority of an earlier source, as our Poet
frequently does.[53, 54]

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[53] For each poem, a prior authority is cited, such as the "apostel Johan. / . . . / As Johan
þe apostel hit syȝ wyth syȝt" [as John the Apostle, it said with sight"] (Pe ll.984-85, a
linking phrase repeated in variations throughout Sections 17 and 18, ll.973-1033); "Kryst
kydde hit himself in a carp oneȝ, / Þeras he heuened aȝt happenz and hyȝt hem her medez.
/ Me mynez on one amonge oþer, as Maþew recordez" (Cl ll.23-5); "I herde on a
halyday, at a hyȝe masse, / How Mathew melede þat his Mayster His meyny con teche."

Also unsatisfactory is Prior's second claim that the existence of named authors such as Marie de France, Chrétien de Troyes, and Geoffrey Chaucer show that medieval authors "maintain a possessiveness towards their own poems that belies the often–held view that medieval poets were anonymous and their identities not a matter of concern for them or their readers" (5). Chaucer and the others are not at all typical medieval authors; they are the exceptions that prove the rule of the more typical medieval anonymity. The *Pearl*–poet may "lag behind his age," as Prior says, but it is equally true that Chaucer was ahead of his and even then he takes pains to put his original observations into the mouths of others. Few of his works are "original" in the sense we apply to that word today. All in all, she devotes a little over a quarter of her introduction to wrestling with the author problem without reaching any new resolution. Instead she chooses, pragmatically, to stop "worrying about who (and if) the *Pearl*–poet was" and "concentrate on these four brilliant poems . . . as a body of poetry" (7).

Prior's pragmatic conclusion is similar to, if more conscious than, Blanche's hazy and half–conscious reliance on common authorship in his argument promoting integrated thematic studies. Both Blanche and Prior seem to conclude that we should just ignore the author problem and forge ahead — a "whistling in the dark" strategy that simply tries not to worry about that "bright graduate student." In other words, in order to read the Cotton

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(*Pa* 9-10); or "If ȝe wyl listen þis laye bot on little quile, / I schal telle hit astit, as I in toun herde, with tonge" (*G* 30-31).

[54] All citations to the poems of the Cotton Nero A.x manuscript are taken from Andrew and Waldron (1982).

Nero A.x. Manuscript as a text, Prior urges us not to think about the author and remain focused on the text and Blanche counsels us to simply "act as if" we believe in common authorship (as we say we do); neither writer finds a way to dispense with the need to account for the "real" author as a basis for integrated studies.

The foundation for treating this Manuscript as a text does not rest on locating an author. As Barthes and Foucault have shown, an "author" does not demarcate a "text" in all cultures and at all times. A medieval "author" was the original source of a work, which is why the Oxford English Dictionary's first definition of author is "Creator." The writer's function could be equated to that of primary scribe — an instrument of the Creator. Just as importantly, in the past decades the *belle lettres* boundary between literary texts and non–literary texts has collapsed, resituating postmodern scholarship within a peculiarly medieval framework, a framework in which all written texts, or as Augustine might have described it, all locution — that is, all language, as part of a system of "conventional signs" — holds potential for analysis (*On Christian Doctrine* II.ii). The identification of Nero A.x's author would neither delineate the "text," nor stamp it as "literary." We do have a physical "corpus" — the Cotton Nero A.x Manuscript itself, and the Manuscript's material integrity is solid. An "authorless" text reverts to the authority of the document itself and to our ability to see, in the signs of the text, the text's inherent structure. We need to imagine a medieval text as something more akin to a material art, like a medieval cathedral — a collaborative cultural effort and expression. As with most tasks, stripping back the old layers and preparing the surface — in this case the layers of expectation, literary culture–centric assumptions, conventions, and hidden premises that have papered over Cotton Nero A.x — takes the most work. The author–layer has been

particularly stubborn, but with the author set aside, we can without that anxiety, take on the challenge of looking at the document in new ways.

Few readers these days, even graduate students in English Literature, have a concrete physical image of the medieval manuscripts that are mentioned or described in modern edition's footnotes and introductions. Without having had an authentic manuscript in hand (the customary situation of the Cotton Nero A.x's early editors, Madden, Morris, and Gollancz), we may be only vaguely aware of how much our perceptions of Cotton Nero A.x's four–poem text are being influenced by its modern presentations. Appended titles, tables of contents, headings, and page numbers, along with omitted illustrations, capitals, and flourishes can considerably change our apprehension of a text. As Fred Robinson warned in a speech to the Southeastern Medieval Association, there is a need to "call attention to some of the risks we run when we work, as we must, at one remove from the sources of our study, using printed editions of texts rather than the manuscripts themselves" (7). From a rhetorical perspective, medieval texts are founded in an iconographic and largely oral culture; few textual conventions existed, especially for the works we now consider to be "literary." Idiosyncratic compositional arrangements abounded (Murphy 1974, 288–89). In his preface to *Medieval Theory of Authorship,* Alastair Minnis opens his discussion of the rhetorical form of medieval texts by admitting that "there is no skeleton key [to the form of medieval texts]. What is offered are bunches of specific keys which fit specific locks; to refuse to use them would be surely perverse . . . [we must] . . . go back to the texts and

their contexts with the desire to listen and learn . . ." (xvii). In other words, each medieval work, each text, seems to have its own particular structure and "logic."

1.   The Physical Text

Robinson issued a general warning about overlooking editorial changes in medieval manuscripts' modern editions, but few scholars seem to have recognized the impact separate publications have had on the way the Cotton Nero A.x's poems are perceived.[55] Many scholars have focused on the anonymity of the author — the absence of a single poetic consciousness — as the source of the poems' separate critical treatments. However, it seems much more likely that the four poems are treated as separate works, quite simply, because the poems have nearly always been published as separate works. From the time of Madden's first publication of *Gawayne* in 1839, until well into the 1970s, the four poems could only be read in separate volumes.[56] For the first one hundred and fifty years after their discovery, the poems were physically represented as individual entities. Occasional pairings — typically, *Pearl* with *Gawain* — or individual selections from the Manuscript, grouped by genre, date, or subject matter with

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[55] One of the "few" is Burrow's *The* Gawain–*Poet* 2001, 1-5. Burrow observes that separate publications have reinforced the notion of the poems' individuality.

[56] Except of course for the facsimile — which, as pointed out in the last chapter, is not a "readable" work — that is, it has to be laboriously transcribed from the unevenly legible fourteenth–century script, a process which includes expanding abbreviations, correcting scribal mistakes, and guessing at idiosyncratic spellings.

other medieval works in textbook anthologies, have reinforced the perceived autonomy of the four individual poems.[57]

In the 1970s, however, three complete editions of the four poems of Cotton Nero A.x appeared in rapid succession (Cawley and Anderson, 1976; Moorman, 1977; and Andrew and Waldron, 1978). Since that time, scholarship attempting to incorporate a vision of all four poems has steadily increased. Several more complete editions and translations have become available in the last decades — most importantly, William Vantuono's two–volume edition in 1983 and Casey Finch's facing page edition in 1993. Still, these editors' variations in assignments of titles for the poems (e.g., *Cleanness* in Andrew and Waldron, and Finch, or *Purity* in Moorman and Vantuono), mixed sequencing of the poems (Manuscript sequence in Andrew and Waldron, Vantuono, and Finch, but realigned in Moorman), separate introductory treatments (all editions), and inclusions or exclusions of *St. Erkenwald* (Finch includes *St.Erkenwald,* as do Margaret William's and John Gardner's translations, the others do not) tend to reinforce the perception of the *Pearl*–manuscript as a loosely collated anthology, having in common only a dialect and, possibly, an author. All of these recent four–poem (some five–poem) editions, as well as earlier ones, mention the poems' common Manuscript and some describe it in detail (Tolkien's single–poem edition of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* and Gollancz's *Patience* are particularly complete and fill in details Madden failed to mention). Despite the manuscript references and descriptions available in modern editions, given the average twentieth–century reader's lack of familiarity with

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[57] See Appendix A for an overview of the poems' publication histories.

manuscripts, the concrete images of the modern volumes in hand have had, by comparison, a great deal more impact.

Using manuscript cues or descriptions of manuscript cues as a guide to a text's boundaries forces most of us into unfamiliar territory. We are uncomfortable claiming that these poems represent a coherent text because we rarely read them presented as such and because we are at least vaguely aware that, even when they are, the poems' modern graphical representations are layered with editorial changes. We should be uncomfortable, but probably not for the reasons we are. The real cause for anxiety is the possibility that the poems in the original Cotton Nero A.x are randomly collocated, related only by their common dialect and metrical scheme. As one writer enthused, they are "the only known <u>manuscript collection</u> exclusively of alliterative poems" (Doyle 92, my emphasis); this is hardly a description of a coherent text. Many more "composite" volumes of medieval texts were bound together than single texts were bound individually, and the four poems in the *Pearl*–manuscript, from the time of Robert Cotton's ownership, shared a "composite" volume with several other works. The bound volume, "Manuscript Cotton Nero A.x," as it was first thoroughly described by Frederic Madden, was recognized as "three different manuscripts": first a "panegyrical oration in Latin," then the four poems of the *Pearl*–text, which were followed by a group of "theological excerpts in Latin" (Madden 1971, xlvii and l). Prior to the Nero A.x volume's rebinding in 1964, which moved the four *Pearl*–poems into a separate binding, the volume shelf–marked "Nero A.x" may indeed have been a type of "accidental"

anthology.[58] The online catalog listing for the British Library still uses the entry

describing the old arrangement. (See Figure 1.)

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Nero, A. X.

Codex membran. in 8vo. constans ex foliis 140.

1.  Oratio Justi de Justis, de laudibus Johannis Chedevortensis: in qua
 Britanniam ejus patriam quoque laudat.  Sec. XVI. 1.

2.  Epistola ejusdem ad eundem J. Chedworth archidiac. Lincoln. qui tun
c erat Paduae: data ex Verona, 16 Julii 1468. 34. b.

3.  A poem in old English on religious and moral subjects; with some pa
intings rudely executed.  Sec. XVI
[I crossed through]. A. D. 1468.  Art. 3. Four distinct poems.
1. A curious romantic poem.  fol. 39.  2.  Religious poem.  fol. 37.  3
.  Jonas &c. fol. 83.  4.  Garvayse & the Grene Knygt.  fol. 91.  pr. b
y Sir Fredk Madden.]

Begins, "Perle plesaunte to prynces paye

  To claulx clos in gode foeter

  Oute se wyent I hardely saye

  Ne proved I never her precios pere." 37.

[3*  Romance Poem of Sir Garvaise and the Green Knight. f. 90  ed. by M
adden for Roxburgh Club 4to 1839]

4.  Tractatulus miscellaneus, ubi inter alia, de afflictione Dei, h. e.
 quibus de causis Deus nos affligit; de eruditione Christi, h. e.quomod
o Christus nos erudit; de gaudio, de contritione, de confessione, aliis
que capitulis theologicis. 127.

5.  Meditationes quaedem  piae S. Bernardi.  Incip. "Multi multa sciunt
, et semetipsos nesciunt." 130.

6.  Epitaphium Ranulphi abbatis de Ramesey.  140.
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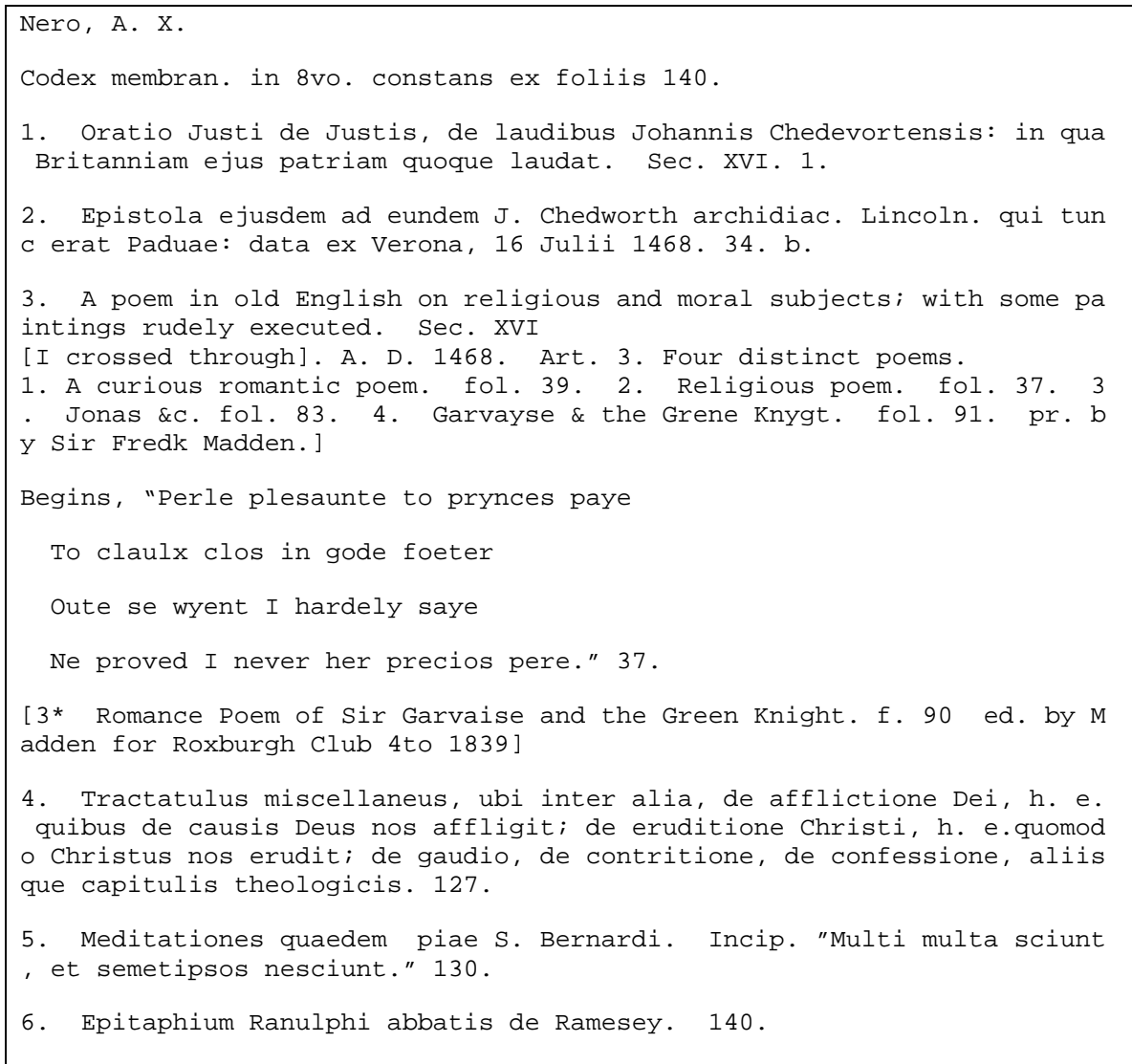Figure 1: British Library Online Catalogue, Description of Cotton Nero A.x Manuscript[59]

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[58] Whether or not the composite volume Nero A. x had a logic of its own remains to be

seen. Certainly, Robert Cotton had some intention in binding the three manuscripts

together even if it was simply gathering comparably–sized leaves.

[59] The URL for this catalogue entry is http://molcat.bl.uk/msscat/HITS0001.ASP?Vpath

The British Library's catalogue entry, above, also testifies to an important difference between medieval "texts" and our own. There seems to be no particular standard size, shape, or name for these texts. A single "text" can be as small as a parchment fragment, or run to several bound volumes, thus making the "texts" in medieval manuscript culture difficult to name and adding to the confusion about a particular text's boundaries. The designation, "Article 3," which sometimes (but not always) accompanies the designation of the *Pearl*–poems (e.g., Cotton Nero A.x, <u>Art.3</u>) is a holdover from when these four poems were bound between the Latin panegyric and the Latin theological excerpts. The *Pearl*–poems' dual folio numberings, the old and new systems — both applied before the volume was split and rebound in 1964 — are another remnant of its life as a composite volume; the modern foliation, in pencil, includes folios numbered 41–130, whereas the old foliation in ink names the same folios 37–126. Beginning with the higher numbers suggests that we are reading the middle portion of a larger text, reinforcing again a sense that the *Pearl*–poems are loosely connected parts of a larger work.

Because Madden first reports that the four *Pearl*–poems were situated between what he had identified as <u>two</u> other manuscripts in the same binding labeled "Nero A.x," I had often wondered why the four–poem *Pearl* portion of the volume had not been designated "Article 2," rather than "Article 3." After querying the British Library, I received the following reply from a manuscripts' curator that refers to the same "text" in at least eight different ways.

=d!\dataload\msscat\html\65316.htm&Search=Cott+60110&Highlight=F.

Cotton MS Nero A X was rebound in 1964, but our records appear incomplete. There is a copy of a binding order for arts. 1, 3 and 4, dated 18 Sept. 1964, that specifies the repair, rebinding and lettering (Justi de Justis Oratio Panegyrica) in its present form, and the stamp inside the back cover records its return on 26 November. As a matter of interest, work had been previously carried out on the manuscript between 9 Feb. and 20 March 1893, when the instruction read 'H.M. interleave.'

The assumption therefore must be that the manuscript was split into two parts at this time, though I cannot explain why there are no separate instructions for art. 2 (the Pearl MS), though it was bound uniformly with the other and the stamp records its return on 13 November. In addition, there is a handwritten note by the Deputy Keeper in charge of binding at that time, surviving on a front flyleaf of Pearl and dated 16 November; it explains the presence at the beginning of the manuscript of a vellum fragment formerly used to repair two natural holes in a later leaf.

Finally, though I haven't his edition to hand, it seems to me that despite the listing of six separately numbered items in the published Cotton Catalogue, Nero A X was treated by Madden as - what in fact it is - three distinct physical, though not textual, entities, comprising (1) arts. 1 and 2; (2) art. 3 (Pearl) and (3) arts. 4-6. This makes his description of Pearl as the 'middle' item understandable. (See Appendix B. My emphasis).

Clearly, the references to Cotton Nero A.x overlap in confusing ways, especially the terms "it," "art[icle]," "item," and "the manuscript," which are each used in reference to two or more types of texts. I sort them out as follows:

1) Cotton Nero A.x — pre–1964, composite volume, compiled by Robert Cotton: "Cotton MS Nero AX," "arts.1, 3, and 4,"[60] "the manuscript," "the manuscript (second instance)," "six separately numbered items," "Nero AX," "it," "three distinct physical, though not textual, entities."

2) The Extracted Nero A.x Volume: (i.e., "articles" 1, 2, 4, 5, and 6): "Justis de Justis Oratorio Panagyrica" (shelfmark on the binding of the second volume?), "its," "the other," one of "two parts."

3) The *Pearl*–poems or Cotton Nero A.x, Art.3,: "Pearl," "the manuscript (third instance)," "art.2," "art.3," "it," "the Pearl MS," "Pearl," "its," "the middle item," one of "two parts."

4) Publications from Cotton Nero A.x: "edition" (for Madden's 1839 Bannatyne *Gawayne* — the last part of "article 3").

Despite the apparent confusion and overlap in the terminology, both the curator and cataloguer clearly perceive the four poems of "Art.3" as a "distinct physical entity." The catalogue entry shows no division of "articles" in Article 3 (the *Pearl*–poems) comparable to those made for the much smaller "physical entities" comprising folios

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[60] Here the designation "art." works inclusively, that is, "art.1" indicates articles 1 and 2, while "art. 4" indicates articles 4, 5, and 6.

1–36 (articles 1 and 2) and 126–40 (articles 4, 5, and 6) although the entry does note the separate poems.[61]

When last queried, the British Library's online manuscripts' catalogue search, using the designation "Cotton Nero AX," returned everything <u>but</u> the *Pearl*–manuscript poems. (See Figures 2 and 3.) In the first entry, under "Manuscript Descriptions," "Cotton Nero AX" appears to be an octavo ("8vo" — it is usually described as a small quarto) of 140 folios, containing two items: an Oration by Justi de Justis and a letter to J. Chedworth. The word "extract," indicating that these items are an extract of the Nero A.x volume, is the only clue that this entry describes only Articles 1 and 2 from Cotton Nero A.x. Another search, using "Cotton Nero AX," in "Manuscript Entries" returns only seven references to the "companion" items — none to the *Pearl*–poems. (See Figure 3.)

Manuscripts: Descriptions

1. **Cott Nero A X**
   Extract: Nero, A. X. Codex membran. in 8vo. constans ex foliis 140. 1. Oratio Justi de Justis, de laudibus Johannis Chedevortensis: in qua Britanniam ejus patriam quoque laudat. Sec. XVI. 1. 2. Epistola ejusdem ad eundem J. Chedworth archidiac. Lincoln. qui tunc erat Paduae: data ex Verona, 16 Julii 1468. 34
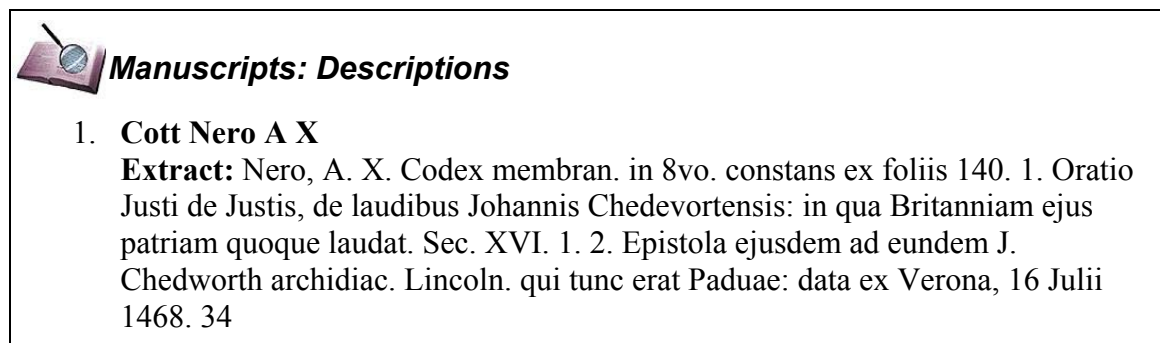
Figure 2: British Library's online manuscripts' catalogue search for "Cotton Nero AX"

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[61] The numerous typographical errors and spelling anomalies in the catalogue entry are consistent with the published catalogue. The figure was copied directly from the website. The only significant error shows *Cleanness* beginning on fol. <u>37</u> — which should read <u>57</u>. The folio numeration in the catalogue entry does not count the illustrations as the beginning of the poems.

> **Manuscripts: Index Entries**
>
> Search for:
>
> 1. **Bernardus, (Scus.), Abbas Clarevallensis.** . **Meditationes,** Cott. Nero, A. x. 130. Cott. Vesp. E. i, 196 b. 202, 239. Cott. Cleop. B. ii. 37 b.
>
> 2. **Carmina** . **Anglice,** Cott. Jul. A. V. 126 b. 175. Cott. Jul. A. viii. 3. Cott. Jul. D. viii. 27. Cott. Tib. E. vii. Cott. Cal. B. V. 265. Cott. Cal. C. i. 10, 17, 270. Cott. Claud. A. ii. 127. Cott. Nero, A. vi. 193b. Cott. Nero. A. x. 37. Cott. Vitel. C. ix. 60 b. Cott. Vitel. C. xiii. Cott. Vitel. E. x. 184, 200. Cott. Vesp. A. xxv. passim. Cott. Vesp. B xvi. 1, 4. Cott. Vesp. D. ix. 201. Cott. Vesp. D. xiii. 181 b. Cott. Tit. A. xxiv. 79, 90 b. Cott. Cleop. C. iv. 69, 71. Cott. Cleop. D. ix. 113, 144. b. 150 b. 153 b. Cott. Append. xxvii. 131 Cott. Append. xlv. 5
>
> 3. **Chedworth, (Jo.)** . **vita,** Cott. Nero, A.x. 1.
>
> 4. **Justis, (Justus de)** . **Epist.** Cott. Nero, A. x. 34 b.
>
> 5. **Justis, (Justus de)** . **de laudib. Jo. Chedevortens.** Cott. Nero, A. x, 1.
>
> 6. **Ranulphus, (Abbas de Ramesey)** . **Epitaph,** Cott. Nero, A. x. 140.
>
> 7. **Theologica.** . **Miscell.** Cott. Jul. A. vii. 76 b. 91, 92 b. 93, 121. Cott. Jul. D. vii. 131 b. Cott. Tib. A. iii, 41, 42, 53, 85, 92 b. 100. Cott. Tib. E. viii. 2 b. 3. Cott. Cal. A. iii. 211. Cott. Nero, A. i. 122 b. 124 b. Cott. Nero. A. iii. 84b. Cott. Nero. A. vii. 132. Cott. Nero. A. x. 127. Cott. Nero. A. xi. 109, 123. Cott. Nero. B. vi. 366. Cott. Vitel. C. xiv. 7, 8, 12. Cott. Vesp. A. xxv. 56. Cott. Vesp. D. v. 137. Cott. Vesp. D. xiii. 123, 199 b. Cott. Vesp. D. xviii. 108, 129. Cott. Vesp. E. iv. 203, 203 b. Cott. Tit. A. xix. 43 b. Cott. Tit. D. xviii. 127. Cott. Dom. ix. 85. Cott. Cleop. B. ii. 31. Cott. Faust. B. iv. 188. Number of hits: 7

Figure 3: British Library's online manuscripts' catalogue search for "Cotton Nero AX"

The evidence from the curator's letter and from the catalogue entries above indicates at least two things. First, the four poems in Cotton Nero A.x, Article 3 have always been readily identifiable as a distinctive "text" of <u>some</u> sort — they <u>are</u> *Article 3*. And second, Article 3's group of four poems has had its share of the general difficulty faced when attempting to name and describe particular medieval "texts." However, without a comprehensive title of its own, with no obvious editorial composite name to apply (like

those attached to the poems: *Pearl*, *Cleanness*, etc.), and with its only accurate title the unwieldy "Cotton Nero A.x, Article 3" — a title which it shares, in part, with many other Cotton documents — it is easy to see why the named poems might seem to be interchangeable, autonomous units. Unless we resort to using descriptive titles, such as the "*Pearl or Gawain*–poems" or "*Gawain or Pearl*–manuscript," titles which again draw the reader's focus towards particular poems, discussing the four–poem group as a single text is difficult indeed.

The *Pearl*–poem text may be hard to name and even more difficult to envision, but as eyewitnesses of the Manuscript, from Madden to the modern curator above, attest even when it is bound with other texts, the four–poem text is easily distinguished as a separate document. Article 3's illustrations and decorations, script format, poem sequence, and other physical details form part of a coherent and integrated structural design. The design, perhaps, was that of a single poet, or, as is much more likely, it evolved from the work of a group — the artists and artisans who "collaborated" (and I use the term very broadly) in writing, inscribing, decorating, illustrating, and producing these ninety vellum leaves. There are at least a dozen features in the physical layout and composition of the four–poem "article" that indicate a coherent, integrated structural plan.[62]

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[62] The descriptions of the *Pearl*–manuscript included here are, for the most part, from my own first–hand observations of the volume in the British Library's Students Manuscripts room in May of 1995. I have also been able to glean a good deal of basic information from the Gollancz EETS Cotton Nero A.x, Facsimile. Tolkien's *Sir Gawain*

First, and most importantly, the written text of the four poems runs through the middles of the quires or gatherings. That is, at no point is there a written text break at the same place as the end of a gathering — the poems' text runs continuously over all seven gatherings of twelve leaves and one gathering of four leaves, indicating that the poems were intended to fit together in the quiring — they were not separate "pamphlets" when Cotton's librarian bound them together in Nero A.x.[63] Each new poem starts in the middle of a gathering, except for *Pearl*, which begins on the first folio of the first complete gathering of twelve leaves, following a loose bifolium. All of this is most easily seen in a table format, and I have included one below showing the layout of the leaves in their respective gatherings (Figure 4). Note that the text of *Pearl* (ff 39r–55v) ends in the middle of the second gathering, the text of *Cleanness* (ff. 57r–82r) ends in the middle of the fourth gathering, and *Patience* ends part way through the fifth (ff. 83r–90r). Providing even clearer evidence as to the design's intentionality, the "catchwords" in the same ink as the rest of the script, appear at the bottom of each of the seven main gatherings' final leaves (50v, 62v, 74v, 86v, 98v, 110v, and 122v).[64] The catchwords and overlapping

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and the Green Knight, Madden's *Gawayne*, and Scott's *Later Gothic Manuscripts II* are my sources when more exact or expert testimony is needed.

[63] "A gathering is a grouping of bifolia, usually of three, four, or five, nested to form, when folded vertically in half, six, eight, or ten, folios; sewed together with other gatherings to form a book" (Scott II 372). A twelve–leaf gathering is a bit unusual.

[64] "Catchwords," a few letters, words or short phrase appearing on the bottom right of the last folio of a quire or gathering, provided the initial words of the next gathering to

quires demonstrate that the sequencing and design of the poems was planned along with the writing surface.

Even more interestingly, Article 3's ninety leaves fall into two neat halves: folio 82r, the first side of the forty–sixth leaf, bears the last eleven lines of *Cleanness* and the first illustration of *Patience*. There are forty–five and one–sixth leaves for *Pearl* and *Cleanness* in the first half of the text and forty–four and five–sixths leaves in the other, for *Patience* and *Gawain*. Thus, the center of the four–poem text is almost exactly reflected by the foliation — that is, forty–five folios on each side. I will have more to say about this shortly, but the folio balance seems remarkable. The even distribution of text onto forty–five folios for each pair of poems must have been difficult to achieve, especially given the slight, but cumulative, variations in line numbers per page. For example, there are thirty–six lines for most full pages, but, just twenty–five lines on the first page of *Gawain* (91r), thirty on the first page of *Patience* (83r) and just eleven lines of *Cleanness* on 82r. The manuscript's designer also had to make allowances for an initial bi–folium and a final four–leaf gathering, the variations in the lengths of the poems themselves, and the unusual stanza form of the "bob and wheel" lines of *Gawain*, in which the "bob" lines are inscribed up and to the right of the long lines. These indicators of the text's cohesiveness and balanced distribution into two equivalent halves are particularly important because they reveal that the sequence of the poems was clearly part of the design.

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guide collation when gatherings were sewn together.

Although not as important as the quiring and balanced foliation — which together reveal the balanced and integrated structure of the physical text's surface — the most obvious physical indicators that the poems comprise a single text are the continuous, matched vellum surface, and the distinctive "small, sharp," and regular fourteenth century scribal hand of the entire written text (Tolkien 1).[65] Except for the few marginal words (e.g., "Hugo de," 91r; the "caption" above the illustration of Gawain's bedchamber, 125r; and the inscription "*Hony soyt qui mal pence,*"124v), the text's ink color is the same sienna-brown thoughout all four poems and without noticeable variation — variations we would expect if the ink had come from different locations or had been applied during different time periods. This is true, also, of the colors used to decorate the capitals and flourishes. They are done in distinctive shades of blue and red, noticeably different from the shades of blue and red used in the illustrations, and consistent throughout the text.

The initials of the poems also share the same general design and pattern. Both *Cleanness* and *Patience* have eight–line initial capitals which are nearly square (35 high x 30 mm. wide). *Gawain*'s is nine lines high, but appears to be much larger, perhaps because its narrow form (38 x 15 mm.) is emphasized by a deeper top margin, or possibly because the top of the "S" reaches two lines above the first line of text. *Pearl*'s initial capital is a full sixteen lines, rising just slightly above the first line of text near the top margin of the page (60 x 28 mm.). All the capitals are decorated in the same brilliant

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[65] Very early arguments, that suggested as many as seven scribal hands could be identified in the text, have long been abandoned. There are a few corrections and a few places where the writing has been retraced, but overall the written text is very consistent.

shades of a dark red–orange and teal blue. The red–orange is also used for flourishes. The capitals share the same decorative style: a single, lobed, leaf–shape filling each of the spaces inside the letters, vines and patterns forming the letters themselves, as well as the adding to the flourishes. All four initial letters have a doubled vertical flourish running from the initial capital down the entire lefthand margin of the page; in *Pearl* and *Gawain* these are decorated; in *Cleanness* and *Patience*, they are simple. The margins, borders, and ruling are consistent throughout the text. Flourishes often disappear and reappear at the edges of the leaves (especially at the bottom margin), but the interrupted flourishes are consistent with the entire text having been cropped — probably reducing the original normal–sized quarto to the very small (and thick) one we have today (171 x 123 mm., or about 6 3/4" x 4 5/8").

The illustrations accompanying the four poems are of particular importance in identifying the poems as a coherent text, but the evidence they provide is somewhat mixed. For now, it is enough to make two observations. First, like the ink and script– decoration colors, the shades of the illustration colors are distinctive and found only in the illustrations. The same shades are used in all twelve illustrations. In my spring 1995 notes, I observed that the colors were still clear and bright in all but one illustration, that the colors in the rubrications and decorations were definitely not the same as those in the illustrations, and that I could clearly see at least eleven distinct color variations: two shades of blue, two of red (orange–red and primary red), mauve/purple, dark and light greens, yellow, white, peach tones (for faces and hands), and golden–brown. Most of these colors were used in each picture.

Figure four shows the overall plan of the gatherings, the position of the illustrations, the folio numbers (old system), the beginning and end of each poem; the diagram demonstrates that the four–poem manuscript has integrity and balance.

2.   The Rhetorical Text

Cotton Nero A.x, Art.3's poems form a balanced structure within an integrated and complete manuscript text. The task now is to name and describe the structure and apply it to the rhetorical goals of the poems; that is, the task now is to identify any existing relationship between form and meaning in this text — to find its skeleton key.

As is well known, our superimposed modern distinctions between medieval "genres" tend to blur and our simplest bipolar categories — "fiction" and "non–fiction," literary and non–literary, didactic and non–didactic works — fail altogether when applied to medieval works.[66] As James Murphy points out, "Modern students of medieval rhetoric and literature are constantly struck by the fact that medieval theorists do not worry about what we would today call 'composition,' that is, a concern for the whole or unified nature of the speech or written document being prepared. It is a commonplace to

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[66] Both Judson Allen's *The Ethical Poetic of the Later Middle Ages* and Catherine Brown's *Contrary Things: Exegesis, Dialectic, and the Poetics of Didacticism* provide relevant discussions.

Figure 4: Folio Layout of Cotton Nero A.x Art.3. <u>Size</u>: 171x 123 mm, deeply cropped, on vellum. <u>Numbering</u>: Shown here — old foliation, in ink, ff.37–126 (modern foliation in pencil, ff.41–130). <u>Collation</u>: one Bifolium, plus seven Gatherings (quires) of twelve leaves (with catchwords), plus one Gathering of four leaves. Gatherings stitched to guards. PE = *Pearl*, ff.37r–55v. CL = *Cleanness*, ff.56r–82r. PA = *Patience*, ff.82r–90r. GA = *Gawain*, ff. 90v–126r. ■ = illustrated folio. ♥ = center of text.

note that medieval grammarians and rhetoricians concern themselves more with the bits and pieces . . . (1981, 288–89). Murphy's observation, as he says, is a "commonplace," but I would argue that the compositional techniques employed by medieval text writers, compilers, and designers are unexpected and, therefore, unrecognized. In fact, the "theory" that medieval rhetoric rested on, according to Murphy, was what could be more appropriately called St. Augustine's non–"theory." Augustine's foundational rhetorical and theoretical premise is belief in the providential grace of God. While Augustine was instrumental in preserving the teachings of classical rhetoric, his belief in providential Grace made the practice of rhetoric pointless. Aristotle and Cicero had seen rhetoric as a source of power within a community. They taught and believed that by using "all the available means of persuasion," and by using them effectively, a skilled rhetor could "persuade" and, thus, control his listeners. Augustine believed and taught that no one could persuade anyone of anything, unless Grace intervened. As Murphy puts it, and here I agree, Augustine's theory "states flatly that rhetors do not persuade, but that hearers move themselves; that teachers do not teach, but instead that learners learn. Ultimately this is a denial of the preceptive theories implicit in Roman education; its corollary is increased reliance on imitation as a learning process, encouraging individual activity by a student or reader" (289). The absence of a "logical" medieval rhetorical theory based on rationality[67] may have left us struggling to follow the Augustinian grace–founded "logic" of medieval compositions, but it permitted medieval writers unlimited freedom to invent or imitate the compositional structures that suited their work or their fancy.

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[67] The feudal system would preclude thedemocratic *polis* in which to make it effective.

Many medieval textual arrangements seem to reflect the freedom Murphy describes. For instance, medieval texts might imitate the architecture of cathedrals (Marti); many medieval texts, including *Pearl* and *Gawain*, have been shown to follow or incorporate complex numerological schemes; a medieval text may contain embedded riddles or use a riddle or pun as the basis for an overall structure; John Alford identified a verbal concordance technique which links together the Latin intervals in *Piers Plowman*; a medieval story may trace out a liturgical path, following the seven deadly sins, for example, or the parts of the Apostles' Creed, or the Lord's Prayer; some medieval works are patterned after musical scores. At their most basic level, medieval texts tend to be structured appositionally — that is, parts are simply juxtaposed. They rarely use the logical, hierarchical, or chronological patterns that underlie the levels of generality — the hierarchical "coherence" — of modern academic texts. Nor do they typically rely on the past, present, future chronology of modern narratives. Medieval texts ignore the unwritten modern "rule of non–contradiction" that seems to operate in most twentieth–century narration and exposition. In fact, the un–resolvable juxtaposition of contraries, popularized by medieval scholastics, may have been one of the more popular medieval textual arrangements. Consider the many debate poems or the figurative embrace of contraries implied by an allegorical work like *Roman de la Rose*.

The rhetorical figures provided yet another source for the structural framework of medieval composition.[68] Modern readers tend to "see" "figures" only when they inhabit

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[68] See, in particular Catherine Brown's discussion in the *Introduction to Contrary Things*, 1–11.

the diction and syntax of poetry and "literary" prose; for us, figures create "opaque" text and are "flourishes" to an otherwise complete thought. When figures appear elsewhere, either incidentally in scientific or legal prose, when used as organizational devices, or as topics to structure whole discourses, we tend to overlook them. In contrast, medieval poets and writers drew on the classical figures — available in Donatus's widely taught grammar — specifically to provide discourse structure, drawing "Allegory" from metaphor, for instance. A medieval rhetoric would view all the figures as argumentatively (i.e., structurally) generative.[69]

Seeing the four poems in Cotton Nero A.x, Art.3 as an interlocking chiasmus readily suits the medieval rhetorical "theory" outlined above. First, although probably recognized and taught as *commutatio*, *antimetabole*, or a type of antithesis, chiasmus would have been a basic figure to be identified, memorized with its examples, and imitated in all three parts of the medieval trivium. Second, the chiastic figure is constructed in the absence of a logical hierarchy, requiring only the simple juxtaposition of reversed and paralleled forms. Third, biblical language, a primary object of medieval study and training, is filled with chiastic patterns throughout both Old and New Testaments, and these texts would have been studied, memorized, and recited.

Briefly, as you will recall from the first chapter, the chiastic pattern requires a minimum of four elements: an initial set of two elements, which are then reversed and repeated. These four elements (the two sets of two) are typically balanced and distributed

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[69] See Fahnestock's discussion of "The figures in early modern treatments" (11–15) and "Reasons for the figure/topic separation" (31–32).

in pairs; the first recorded, and still most typical, example of chiasmus is "I do not live to eat, but I eat to live." In this short chiasmus (sometimes attributed to Quintilian), the words "live" and "eat" in the first cola, reverse and repeat in the second cola. This simple formula of repetition and reversal can be extended over hundreds of pages, as long as the basic formula A B : B A is carried through.

As a graphic image, the four–poem text of Cotton Nero A.x, Art.3, meets the requirements for chiastic form in several ways. First, the four poems provide four distinct, but clearly uninterrupted and obviously related elements, the minimum and most commonly noted number of elements that must be present to form any chiastic structure. *Pearl* (*Pe*) and *Cleanness* (*Cl*) form the first pair (AB); *Patience* (*Pa*) and *Gawain* (*Ga*) form the second, reversed pair (BA). The poems are untitled in the Manuscript and, thus, are presented with their accompanying illustrations to form a continuous, uninterrupted text; that is, from the first folio (37r) to the last (126r) there are no blank pages and only one page (the first page of *Ga*, 91r) with any notable gap, amounting to about eleven lines (or less than a third of the page). The extra space allows for a deep top margin which accommodates the initial capital and flourishes. Otherwise, the text runs consistently for thirty–six ruled lines per page with illustrations filling all gaps in the written text. For a strong chiastic structure, continuity is vital. Every break or intrusion in the four–element sequence increases the risk that the chiasmus will be obscured or obliterated; that is, the overall structure will not be apprehended as a coherent figure, but as separate and unrelated entities. Nevertheless, the poems are clearly distinct elements, both because of the separating illustrations and the large colorful initial capitals. Distinct separation of the elements is also vital to chiastic structure because taut parallels and distinct reversals

173

make the figure sharper and easier to notice and are the real source of the chiasmus's rhetorical energy.

Second, the four poems meet two other requirements of chiastic structure: the complementary requirements of balance and parallelism. Each of the two pairs, with their accompanying illustrations, cover almost exactly forty–five folios (see Figure 4), giving the four–poem text a tactile as well as visual equivalence and balance. Adding to the visual balance of the pairs, the two outer "A" poems (*Pe* and *Ga*) are each accompanied by four illustrations, while the two inner "B" poems (*Cl* and *Pa*) are each accompanied by two illustrations, creating the first distinct reverse — 4 + 2 : 2 + 4.

Also adding to the appearance of reversed and paralleled balance are the visual signatures created by the four poems' two distinct metrical styles: stanzas that both rhyme and alliterate in the "A" pair (*Pe* and *Ga*) and alliterative lines in the "B" pair (Cl and Pa). *Pearl*'s stanzas are linked with concatenating words and *Gawain*'s have the unusual "bob and wheel" tags, both visually distinctive. The two poems of the "B" pair are composed of continuous epic alliterative long lines without any distinctive visual markers. The visual effect created by the balanced and inverted chiastic structure in this case would be stanzaic + alliterative : alliterative + stanzaic.

When a chiasmus occurs in sentences the reversal is usually signaled by a punctuation mark, setting off the second clause or phrase. The more balanced the two halves of the chiasmus are, the more distinct the reversal becomes. In the four–poem *Pearl*–text, the reversal occurs at the beginning of the third poem, *Patience.* The reversal is marked by the illustrated folio that shows Jonah being thrown (really almost delivered like a package) overboard into the open mouth of the whale. In the Manuscript, this folio is

unique in that it is the only one with both part of the a poem's text and an illustration, as well as being the only folio that has material concerning two different poems on the same folio — in this case, eleven lines of text from *Cleanness* and an illustration from the story of *Patience.* In some ways, the overlap of two poems and two media on the same page could be said to lessen the sharpness of the reversal, but, perhaps the distinct shift in media as well as the singularity of the two–media folio has an offsetting effect. More importantly, this is the only illustration of the twelve which has a strong downward movement Jonah is, literally, up–side–down in this picture. The illustration "reverses" the usual position of humans, as well as the great majority of the human figures in the illustrations, who are standing up, looking up, pointing up, or holding things up (cups, spears, staffs, axes, swords, heads). In addition to Jonah's downward pointing shape, emphasized by the drape of his clothing, he seems to be almost diving into the whale's mouth with his arms up near his head, one finger pointing down the whale's throat. The first sailor, holding Jonah's legs through the bottom edges of his long tunic, has large hands with long fingers, all pointing down. The second sailor is sweeping a long oar down through the water behind Jonah's head and both sailors are looking down. (See Figure 5.)

The Cotton Nero Poet's fascination with numerology is well known, and *Pearl*'s complex numerological strategies woven into the equally complex numerological designs of its main biblical text, *Revelation*, have long been recognized. Several recent works explore potential number systems in two other poems in the Cotton Nero MS: Janet Gilligan's 1989 article "Numerical Composition in the Middle English *Patience*, William Vantuono's "A Triple-Three Structure for *Cleanness,*" and Edward Condren's

Figure 5: Jonah f.82r

"Numerical Proportions as Aesthetic Strategy in the *Pearl* Manuscript." Condren's paper suggests specifically that the two halves of the text seem to be "linked in a chiasmic pattern" (290) which he likens to the caesura in the older, Anglo–Saxon alliterative poetic forms. His proposed structure for the entire manuscript is based on "a complicated ratio known as the Golden Section" (293) and is related to the line counts between the many small decorated capitals found seemingly at random throughout the four-poem text. The scheme is ingenious, if somewhat complicated, and will be difficult to fully test since the complete mathematical exposition would depend heavily on extremely accurate line counts. Nevertheless, Condren's affirmation of a comprehensive chiastic structure layered over his more complex scheme is happily compatible with my observations.

As shown in Figure 4, not only is the entire four–poem text integrated and coherent, but the two sides of the chiastic structure are balanced in the numbers of folios between the two pairs — forty–five on each side. The written text of the four poems is also balanced chiastically between the two halves of the manuscript with close to three thousand lines in each half; *Pearl* and *Cleanness* together total slightly over three thousand lines and *Patience* and *Gawain* total three thousand sixty–three. Nevertheless, considering the differing lengths of the poems, the lines of text in each half are virtually the same. Finally, the long recognized matching stanza numbers in *Pearl* and *Gawain* are another indication of the purposeful balance of this chiastic pairing; both poems (the "A" to "A" pair) have one hundred and one stanzas. (See Figure 6.)

A (f.38v & 39r)
Pearl

B (f.56v & 57r)
Cleanness

X (f.82r)
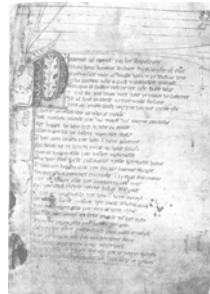
B (f.82v & 83r)
Patience

A (f.90v & 91r)
Gawain

Figure 6: Portrait of Chiasmus

Thematically, theologically, and stylistically, the Cotton Nero A.x Manuscript

falls into chiasmatic pairs (AB BA.) *Pearl* and *Cleanness* are concerned with positive and

negative exempla of innocence (or purity) and filth (or impurity) respectively, while

Patience and *Gawain* present of heroic action and obedience first the negative and then

the positive exemplum. From a theological perspective, *Pearl* presents us with New

Testament eschatology in a contemporary time frame, *Cleanness* with Old Testament

eschatology in an historically ancient time frame; *Patience* and *Gawain* deal with Old

Testament and New Testament "heroes" and times respectively, and in addition, this

second pair contrasts the Anglo–Saxon ideals of Jonah with the chivalric ones of Gawain.

Stylistically contrasted as well, the *Pearl/Cleanness* pairing contrasts *Pearl'*s elaborate

alliterating, Continental rime scheme, with *Cleanness'*s straightforward, epic alliterative

line; *Patience* and *Gawain* simply reverse the same contrast (e.g., epic alliterative

followed by Continental stanzaic). These are only the broadest of contrasts, but similar

parallel reversals can be found occurring in seemingly minor details, and this is true for

both the chiasmus's overall AB to BA pairing as well as the separate A to B pairings. For

example (a B to A contrast), Jonah's old age (an unexplained oddity in this poet's

portrayal of Jonah) opposing the emphatic youthfulness of Arthur's court. In the case of

Pearl and *Cleanness* (an A to B contrast), there is a small but interesting contrasting

parallel of the Pearl maiden's shining bridal raiment as she enters the Heavenly mansion

at the end of *Pearl* in contrast to the filthy and inappropriate dress of the guest tossed out

of the Feast in the opening parable of *Cleanness*. I have outlined these contrasted pairings

and the balance of the line numbers between the sections in Figure 7, below.

> *Pearl* (A)
> New Testament Theology
> Positive Exemplum
> Contemporary Time
> Continental Rime and Alliteration
> (1212 lines)
>
> *Cleanness* (B)
> Old Testament Theology
> Negative Exempla
> Biblical History Time
> Epic Alliterative Line
> (1812 lines)
>
> Prologue to *Patience*
> (60 lines total: 45 Beatitudes, 11 complaint, 4 introduction to Jonah)
>
> *Patience* (B)
> Old Testament
> Negative Exemplum
> Anglo–Saxon Ethic
> Epic Alliterative Line
> (531 lines, including Prologue)
>
> *Sir Gawain* (A)
> New Testament
> Positive Exemplum
> Chivalric Ethic
> Stanza and Alliteration
> (2532 lines)

Figure 7: Thematic and numerical view of the chiasmus, Cotton Nero A.x, Art. 3.

The Prologue to *Patience* falls at the center of the four part chiasmus (e.g., 3,024 lines in the first pair of poems, the sixty–line Prologue, followed by 2,958 lines making up the narrative portion of *Jonah* and all of *Gawain*.) I hesitate to place too much emphasis on exact line counts. Still, considering the precedents for numerical patterns in the individual poems and the apparent symmetrical balancing of the two "halves" of the chiasmus, the Prologue's central positioning in terms of line numbers helps suggest a chiastic form. Condren's argument, mentioned above, makes the balance tighter, counting 3,000 lines on each side of the chiasmus with the 60-line Prologue to *Patience* falling dead center.

Seeing the Prologue to *Patience* as a transitional hub at the center of a chiasmus solves a number of critical dilemmas that have plagued students of this poem. Critics generally either ignore the Prologue, or ignore the poem which follows. I have yet to find

an article that successfully integrates the two. The Prologue is much too long for the simple scripture that introduces a typical homily and, since it recounts all eight Beatitudes twice, it is too theologically complex and open–ended to provide a straightforward moral lesson, as a homily should. By way of comparison, *Cleanness*, over three times the length of *Patience,* uses only a single text from the Beatitudes to initiate its homiletic amplifications. As David Williams points out, the word "patience" is never used in the narrative of Jonah, and while homiletic literature generally keeps a fairly narrow moral focus, the Prologue to *Patience* tends to "universalize and generalize the meaning of Jonah...[it] never streamlines to simple moral lesson" (133). In addition, the choice of Jonah as an exemplum, negative or positive, for the virtue of patience is apparently idiosyncratic and virtually exclusive to this poet. Diekstra takes up the challenge of finding a precedent for Jonah's appearance as an exemplum for patience, but the obscurity of his sources only suggests further the oddity of the choice of text. Clearly, Jonah is offered as a negative example of something, but his tie to the specific virtue of patience is vague.

Besides resolving some of the critical problems associated with *Patience's* Prologue, the Prologue's function as a transition is suggested by a number of poetic and stylistic features. First, there seems to be an inordinate emphasis on pairing; the Prologue contains numerous references, punning and otherwise, to doubling, coupling, laying in "teme", "play[ing] with bothe" etc. In addition, there is a distinct tonal shift after the first recounting of the Beatitudes. Until that point, the Prologue takes a serious, moral tone, closely rendering the Vulgate text of the Beatitudes, and echoing the serious theology of *Pearl* and the equally serious blood and thunder of *Cleanness*. However, mid-point in the

Prologue, in the linking lines leading to a second rendering of the Beatitudes, the Poet begins a lengthy, humorous, courtly conceit. He personifies the Beatitude virtues as ladies of the court, two of which (Dame's Poverty and Patience) the poet seems ironically resigned to "play"ing with. In this second half of the Prologue, the Poet's complaints set the tone for Jonah's "grychchyng," while the courtly motif, complete with unwanted pursuing ladies, surely lays the groundwork for *Gawain*. The double recounting of what could be considered the central tenets of the Christian belief system, the eight Beatitudes, would indicate a broader scope for the Prologue than the simple thematic introduction to the story of Jonah. I would suggest that it functions as the center of the chiastic structure. The Prologue's doubled form, two recitations of the Beatitudes, keeps the center of the chiasmus from becoming a dominant center; instead, the center of the chiastic structure remains open. As was discussed in the first chapter, an open-centered chiasmus retains the tension between polarities without collapsing both sides into the center or letting the weight fall to one side of the pair. In other words, a balanced and open-centered chiasmus refuses to "take sides." At the same time, metaphysically speaking, while the doubling of the center refuses to "take sides" (e.g., heroic values over chivalric values; grace over justice), the fact that both "sides" of this "center" carry a form of the Beatitudes—styled in seemingly contradictory ways—allows this central statement of Christian values to carry the center of the manuscript text as a whole.

Finally, the first picture accompanying the text of the poem *Patience* is the illustration of Jonah sliding into the whale's mouth. Falling exactly midway in the physical text, on the 45th folio, this illustration seems an especially appropriate image of reversal, tension, and interlocking relationship, as described above. The illustration not

only reverses the normal position of upright humanity, it reverses a standare iconic image of Christ's removal from the cross—the familiar depiction of Christ lifted down from the cross with his head and body supported by followers, his body supple and head up. In folio 82v we see Jonah, stiff as a board, head down being delivered into the whale. Of all the traditional typological associations, Jonah as a type of Christ has the greatest authority since Christ himself named the relationship. Viewed from a slight distance the effect of the boat (the bow and stern) in opposition to the direction of the lines picturing the water creates the likeness of a cross—an "X" shape, the center "chi" of the material text's chiasmus. Jonah, fully human and mistaken, is revealed as the chiastic partner—the mirror image of Christ.

APPENDIX A: DATES OF PUBLICATIONS OF EDITIONS AND SELECTED

CRITICAL MATERIAL

Year	Author/Editor	Title	Antho–logy	Criti–cism	Edi–tion	Trans–lation
2001	J. A. Burrow	The Gawain Poet				
2000						
1999						
1998						
1997						
1996	S. P. Prior	'Fayre Formez' of the Pearl Poet		X		
1995	Wasserman & Blanche	From Pearl to Gawain		X		
1994	S. P. Prior	Pearl Poet Revisited		X		
1993	C. Finch	Title			X	
1992	M. Stainsby	Sir Gawain and the Green Knight: Annotated Bibliography (1978–1989)				
1991	Blanche, Miller, & Wasserman	Text and Matter		X		
	K. Marti	Body, Heart, and Text		X		
	S. Stanbury	Seeing the Pearl Poet		X		
1990	C. Dunn & E. Byrnes	Middle English Literature (chrono Pearl, Sir Gawain and the Green Knight)	X			
	R. H. Osbery	Sir Gawain and the Green Knight			X	X
1989						
1988						
1987	W. Vantuono	Pearl			X	X
1986						
1985	A. Haskell	A Middle English Anthology (Sir Gawain and the Green Knight – 1 other Pearl 278)	X			
	J. W. Nicholls	A Matter of Courtesy		X		

Year	Author/Editor	Title	Antho–logy	Criti–cism	Edi–tion	Trans–lation
1984	L. S. Johnson	The Voice of the Gawain Poet		X		
	W. Vantuono	Omnibus (four poems, facing page 2 volumes)			X	X
1983	Eller	Pearl Ed. (calligraphy volume)			X	X
1982						
1981						
1980						
1979	M. Andrew	Gawain Poet?? Bibliography 1839–1977				
1978	Andrew and Waldron	Peoms of the Pearl Manuscript			X	
	Davenport	The Art of the Gawain Poet		X		
1977	J. J. Anderson	Cleanness, ed.			X	
	Borroff	Pearl, A New Verse Translation Tr. Ed.			X	X
	J. Burrow	English Verse 1300–1500 (anth. Extracts from Patience, Pearl, Sir Gawain and the Green Knight)	X			
	Moorman	The Works of the Gawain–Poet Ed. (Four)			X	
	C. Peterson	St. Erkenwald, ed.			X	
1976	Cawley and Anderson	Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, Pearl, Cleanness, Patience, Ed.			X	
	T. K. Wilson	The Gawain Poet		X		
1975	Kjellmer	Did the Pearl Poet Write 'Pearl'?		X		
1974	Ac and J. E. Spearing	Poetry of the Age of Chaucer (Sir Gawain and the Green Knight and Patience)	X			
	W. R. J. Barron	Sir Gawain and the Green Knight			X	X
	T. Silverstein	Sir Gawain and the Green Knight critical edition and comedy edition/translation		X	X	X
1973	J. A. Burrow	Sir Gawain and the Green Knight				
1972	Andrew and Waldron	Poems of the Pearl Manuscript, ed.			X	

Year	Author/Editor	Title	Antho–logy	Criti–cism	Edi–tion	Trans–lation
1971	Sir F. Madden	Sir Gawayne Pub Ban 2nd Ed			X	
	B. Stone	Medieval English Verse (Patience and Pearl)	X			
1970	Spearing	The Gawain Poet: A Critical Study		X		
	Waldron	Sir Gawain and the Green Knight			X	
1969	J. J. Anderson	Patience			X	
1968	Mooreman	The Pearl Poet		X		
1967	Borroff	Sir Gawain and the Green Knight			X	X
	Tolkien and Gordon (1925) revised by Davis	Sir Gawain and the Green Knight			X	
	Williams	P. P., ed?				X
1966	Blanch	Critical Essays		X		
	Godron and Tolkien	Erkenwald, 2nd ed				
		Concordance				
1965	J. Gardner	Complete works translated, St. E.			X	X
1964						
1963						
1962	A. C. Cawley	Pearl and Sir Gawain and the Green Knight			X	
	R. T. Jones	Sir Gawain and the Grene Gorne "Regularized"			X	
1961	Sister M. V. Hillman	Pearl			X	X
1960						
1959	Stone	Sir Gawain and the Green Knight			X	X
1958						
1957						
1956	Greenwood	Sir Gawain and the Green Knight			X	X
	Savage	The Gawain Poet		X		
1955						
1954						
1953	E. V. Gordon	Pearl			X	
1952						

Year	Author/Editor	Title	Antho–logy	Criti–cism	Edi–tion	Trans–lation
1951						
1950						
1949						
1948						
1947						
1946						
1945						
1944						
1943						
1942						
1941						
1940	Sr. I. Gollancz (2nd ed. with Day and Serjeantson)	Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, EETS			X	X
1939						
1938						
1937						
1936						
1935	Oakden	Alliterative Poetry in Middle English volume 2 (excerpts all four as "Poems of the Alliterative Revival"; Sir Gawain and the Green Knight in "Romances," other in "Religious Poetry"	X			
1934						
1933	Sir I. Gollancz	Cleanness Part 2			X	X
1932	S. Chase	Pearl			X	
1931						
1930	Oakden	Alliterative Poetry in Middle English volume 1 (includes appendices on scribe, author, location of Green Kngiht castle and chapel)	X			
1929	Banks	Sir Gawain and the Green Knight			X	X
1928						
1927						
1926	Savage	St. Erkenwald			X	

Year	Author/Editor	Title	Antho–logy	Criti–cism	Edi–tion	Trans–lation
1925	Madeleva	Pearl: A Study			X??	
	Tolkien and Gordon	Sir Gawain and the Green Knight			X	
1924						
1923	Early English Text Society	Facsimile			X	
1922	Gollancz	St. Erkenwald			X	X
1921	Gollancz	Cleanness			X	X
		Pearl & Olympia			X	
		Purity			X	
1920	R. Menner	Purity/Cleanness			X	
1919						
1918						
1917						
1916						
1915						
1914						
1913	Gollancz	Patience – Select Early English Poems EETS Ox. UP			X	
1912	Bateson	Patience			X	
1911						
1910						
1909						
1908	S. Jewert	The Pearl				X
1907						
1906	S. W. Mitchell, MD, LLD	Pearl				X
	Osgood	Pearl			X	
1905						
1904	Brown	Ralph Strode Pearl Poet?		X		
1903						
1902	G. Neilson	Huchown of the Awle Tyale, the Alliterative Poet		X		
1901						
1900						
1899						
1898						
1897	Gollancz	Revises Morris's Sir Gawain and the Green Knight 1864			X	
		Patience			X	

Year	Author/Editor	Title	Antho–logy	Criti–cism	Edi–tion	Trans–lation
1896						
1895						
1894						
1893						
1892						
1891	Gollancz	Pearl			X	
1890						
1889						
1888						
1887						
1886						
1885						
1884						
1883						
1882						
1881						
1880						
1879						
1878						
1877						
1876						
1875						
1874						
1873						
1872						
1871						
1870						
1869	Sir R. Morris	Early English Alliterative Poems (2nd Ed.)			X	
1868						
1867	Sir R. Morris	Specimens of Early English * and II (Volume 2 has part of Cleanness Sodom/Deluge)	X		X	
1866						
1865						
1864	Sir R. Morris	Early English Alliterative Poems (Pearl, Cleanness, Patience) EETS no. 1			X	
1863						
1862						
1861						
1860						

Year	Author/Editor	Title	Antho–logy	Criti–cism	Edi–tion	Trans–lation
1859						
1858						
1857						
1856						
1855						
1854						
1853						
1852						
1851						
1850						
1849						
1848						
1847						
1846						
1845						
1844						
1843						
1842						
1841						
1840						
1839	Sir F. Madden	Sir Gawayne (Bannatyne Club)			X	
1838						
1837						
1836		Gawayne commissioned by Bannatyne Club				
1835						
1834						
1833						
1832						
1831						
1830						

APPENDIX B: PERSONAL COMMUNICATION FROM BRETT DOLMAN,

BRITISH LIBRARY

From: Dolman, Brett
To: dlchurchmiller@earthlink.net
Date: 8/7/2002 11:46:46 AM
Subject: FW: Query regarding Cotton Nero A.x Art.3

Dear Ms Miller

Please find below a reply to your enquiry from the Curator of Early Literary Manuscripts;
I hope this proves helpful.

Yours sincerely

Brett Dolman
Reading Room Manager
Manuscript Collections
British Library
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     Cotton MS Nero A X was rebound in 1964, but our records appear incomplete. There is a copy of a binding order for arts. 1, 3 and 4, dated 18 Sept. 1964, that specifies the repair, rebinding and lettering (Justi de Justis Oratio Panegyrica) in its present form, and the stamp inside the back cover records its return on 26 November. As a matter of interest, work had been previously carried out on the manuscript between 9 Feb. and 20 March 1893, when the instruction read 'H.M. interleave'.

    The assumption, therefore, must be that the manuscript was split into two parts at this time, though I cannot explain why there are no separate instructions for art. 2 (the Pearl MS), though it was bound uniformly with the other and the stamp records its return on 13 November. In addition, there is a handwritten note by the Deputy Keeper in charge of binding at that time, surviving on a front flyleaf of Pearl and dated 16 November; it

explains the presence at the beginning of the manuscript of a vellum fragment formerly used to repair two natural holes in a later leaf.

Finally, though I haven't his edition to hand, it seems to me that despite the listing of six separately numbered items in the published Cotton Catalogue,[70] Nero A X was treated by Madden as – what in fact it is – three distinct physical, though not textual, entities, comprising (1) arts. 1 and 2; (2) art. 3 (Pearl) and (3) arts. 4–6. This makes his description of Pearl as the 'middle' item understandable.

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[70] Dolman does not identify which 'published catalogue,' but upon checking the Manuscript's Web site Catalogue entry — I was surprised to see Joseph Planta's 1802 Catalogue, which apparently continues to be the public catalogue (on the Web) despite the fact that it differs substantially from the Cotton Catalogue in the Manuscripts Students' Room (according to Tite and Prescott); Planta's catalogue is almost infamously extensive (identifying over 26,000 "articles" in only 900 volumes) and the transcriptions are difficult to read. In Prescott's account of Madden, Madden complains frequently about this catalogue.

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193

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