The most powerful structure in *Pearl* may be chiastic. By that I mean that stanza-groups X and XI are interlocked, IX and XII, VIII and XIII, and so on. When the poem is read back and forth in this way, it divides into two halves of ten groups each. Even on a first reading, *Pearl* appears to double back after the tenth group. There, with the dreamer’s verdict against the Parable of the Vineyard, his conflict with the maiden reaches its most intense point. Subsequently, it subsides. When he asks in section XIII, for instance, what kind of person the Lamb might be to marry her over everyone else, he seems genuinely puzzled.

While there is surely development, movement, plot in *Pearl,* the poem also has a simultaneous structure, most obviously the case, perhaps, in the circle described when the last line leads back to the first line, making the poem’s own rhythm an “endeleʒ rounde” metaphoric for the pearl. This structure less resembles a solid sphere, as Ian Bishop points out, than a garland of linked units like a necklace or rosary; and as a possible source in the material culture he suggests the *corona* candelabrum, a gilded, jeweled circle that was taken to represent the heavenly Jerusalem. That the structure of *Pearl*—the disposicio, or the architectural aspect of form—is symmetrical as well as circular has been recognized for a long while also. W. H. Schofield found that a lengthy middle section, didactic in nature, was flanked by two chiefly descriptive parts of some twenty stanzas each. Louis Blenknor divides each of these descriptive sections into “erber” frame (sections I and XX) and visiones (sections II-IV and XVII-XIX), and Bishop separates two issues out of the debate: whether the maiden is a queen in heaven, then whether she is a bride of the Lamb.

Yet it would not be surprising in this “most structurally complex of the great vernacular masterpieces of the later Middle Ages,” this “most elaborately and successfully wrought of the Middle English poems which remain to us,” if the symmetry was somewhat further reaching and more detailed, or if the particularities of the chiasmus, inspired by a very common devotional object from the period, made the poem in its simultaneity a devotional object too.
Chiasmus in *Pearl* takes the particular form of subjecting a stanza-group in the first half to critique by the correlated group in the second.
half. To use very general terms already familiar in discussion of *Pearl*,
the representations to the right (taking the text for the moment as an
open book of two leaves) generally insist anagogically on the sense of
things so far as they signify other things that lie ahead “in aeterna
gloria.”¹¹ Those to the left represent the historical. Further, the link-
words of each group will be seen to have one meaning in *bono* and
the representations to the right
value.¹² The sensus *bonus* of the link-words in sections IX and XII, for
instance, will each signify something important in XI; the sensus
*malus* of the same words will each signify something important in IX.
Nevertheless, the experiences represented in the first ten groups do
not become contemptible in light of the last ten just as Christian
dogmatics does not evade time and history. The sides are related only
as the inferior and the superior.

If there were an influence upon this structure, it may have come
not from a verbal medium at all, but from diptychs. Since time out of
mind, diptychs had been associated with the “boke with leueʒ sware”
that the enthroned Lamb is said by the “Apokalyp35” to be reading
(837).¹³ A visual medium like an ivory diptych likely accounts for the
*Pearl*-Poet’s linking the mercy of the Virgin and St. John the Evangel-
ist to Christ’s own mercy once he had the Judging Christ in mind (405-
06): “Bot Crystes meresy and Mary and Jon, / Pise arn pe grounde of alle
my blisse” (383-84). In sculpture and then in carved ivory, the iconog-
raphy of the Crucifixion had been transferred to the scene of the Last
Judgment.¹⁴

Any “yuore” (178) that the poet had seen,¹⁵ moreover, may well
have been cut into diptychs. In the late thirteenth and the whole of
the fourteenth centuries, these served as private devotional objects, typi-
cally with scenes from the Nativity, the Passion, and the life of
the Virgin across their interior surfaces. When elephant tusks became
available in good supply in western Europe in the middle of the thir-
teenth century for the first time since the fourth century, ivory carving
became, in France at least, what one art historian has called “the most
astounding and important example of trade work.”¹⁶ And diptychs
and tabernacles were the pieces commissioned most frequently.¹⁷
Raymond Koechlin catalogued five hundred eighty such Gothic tab-
lets from France, many of them found in England. While at least one
group of ivory diptychs of English provenance survives despite the
“nearly total ruin” of English ivory in the Reformation,¹⁸ it was the
products of the Parisian workshops that dominated sales throughout
Europe for a century.¹⁹ Their iconography, choice of episodes, disposi-
tion of scenes, decor, and style of execution were decisively influen-
tial.

If the poet knew of these carvings, there appear to have been
two structural features that he may have borrowed. The most obvious
feature, of course, he did not. From their beginning, Gothic diptychs
were divided into horizontal registers extending across both leaves.
Typically, such a diptych is two or three registers high, with scenes
running from left to right. The episode coming first chronologically
usually appears in the lower left-hand corner, but the arrangement
thereafter is subject to much variation. The Soissons diptych,²⁰ for
example, is read from the lower left all the way across to the lower
right, then up to the middle register and across from right to left, and
finally, in the upper register, from left to right again.

Although art historians seem not to point this out, the designers
of at least a significant minority of diptychs made use of the opportu-
nity for tension between the two leaves. For instance, in a diptych
which has simply an Adoration of the Magi scene on the left panel and
a Crucifixion on the right, a small crowned figure, kneeling, is added
to the latter, as if to give the Adoration an ironic outcome.²¹ In another
placing with just the same two episodes, a king on the left panel points
as usual towards the center, where the star is usually found. Here it
has been omitted, however, and instead, Christ’s right arm, running
along the horizontal beam of the Cross, points back.²² In a French
diptych three registers high from the end of the thirteenth century, the
designer disturbs chronological order evidently to bring the gift of
spices in the Adoration scene (lower register on the left) into ironic
relation with Joseph of Arimathea’s anointment of the body in the En-
tombment (same register on the right).²³

As against any notion, then, that the Gothic diptych is formed
simply to lead the eye from one register to another in continuous
fashion, the designers sometimes must have intended that the two
panels be collated with each other. In a French piece from the later
fourteenth century, in the Ascension scene in the upper band on the
left leaf, the feet of the rising Christ occupy precisely the same position
as the descending dove in the Pentecost on the right leaf. On the left,
all the figures are looking up; on the right they all look down.²⁴ In
another slightly later carving, in a Death of the Virgin at the extreme
lower left, Mary’s rising soul is perched, a miniature female figure, on
the shoulder of Christ, who is present among the mourners; on the
extreme lower right, in a scene of Gethsemane, Christ’s own death is
represented by the little cross that descends to him while he prays.²⁵
Another diptych plays off an Adoration against a Coronation of the
Virgin. An identical treatment of Mary (carved in three-quarter face)
on each side pulls earthly kings into tension with the King of Heaven.²⁶

This tension seems sometimes to have been genuinely chiastic.
The adoption of an unusual order of episodes in a fourteenth-century
French carving²⁷ posits an opposition between the Crucifixion in the
upper right (the upper register on the right leaf) with the Deposition
from the Cross in the lower left. A *Noli me tangere* in the lower right,
meanwhile, appears in ironic opposition to the Flagellation at the upper left. (This is not the only time in the diptychs these two scenes are opposed.) A French carving with four registers from the third quarter of the century, now in the Louvre, places the unction at the En
tombment in the lower left and Christ’s washing his apostles’ feet in the upper right, the raising of Lazarus in the upper left, the Harrowing in the lower right. An unusual Maria lactans appears at the upper right of one four-register diptych (following scenes of the Coronation and of the Trinity) to create a reference back to the Annunciation and the Nativity in the lower left. A three-register carving from the third quarter of the century puts scenes with the Virgin (a Coronation and an Annunciation) in the upper right and lower left, scenes with Christ between two figures (a Resurrection and a Presentation) in the upper left and lower right.

The chiasmus is sometimes relatively simple: the Death of the Virgin and the Death of Christ are upper left and lower right; in the lower left the three kings and in the upper right the Coronation. Or Ecclesia and St. Peter will lie along one axis, Synagongia and St. Paul along the other. Sometimes the chiasmus is more complex. A two-register French diptych of the later 1300s adopts an unusual narrative order so that the Virgin’s offering the baby her breast in the lower left may play off against Stephaton’s extending the gall-soaked sponge in a Crucifixion at the upper right. The election of the Virgin in the Annunciation at the lower right is recalled in her Coronation at the upper left. Another French carving from the second half of the century places the Annunciation/Nativity and the Resurrection along one axis; along the other are Christ’s entry first into the Old Jerusalem and then (with the Ascension) into the New Jerusalem. Early in the fifteenth century, a French diptych with three registers puts the Death of the Virgin and the Crucifixion along one axis of the chiasmus and then—presumably because a message from the Father was delivered or sought in each case—an Annunciation and a Gethsemane scene along the other axis. Perhaps to achieve this effect, the narrator disturbs narrative order.

Besides tension between the two leaves sometimes reaching to chiasmus, there is a second structural feature of the diptychs that seems to me paralleled in Pearl. While there are exceptions, when there is a hierarchical distinction to be made between the subjects represented on a diptych, the superior of the two is depicted on the wing to the viewer’s right. Even when the diptych was in liturgical use, the right wing appears to have been the privileged place: a Fulda diptych lists deceased kings on the left, deceased bishops on the right. This is of course reversed in the case of triptychs, where the preferred position. The presence of Christ seems sometimes to have such a reorienting effect even when there are only two panels.

The beautiful Salting Diptych in the Victoria and Albert repre
tends the convention: Virgin and Child are on the left wing, a standing Christ is to the right. In two other English diptychs, the designer disturbs chronological order so that scenes from the life of the Virgin might be grouped on the left, those from the life of Christ to the right. The Noli me tangere episode, while coming later than the Crucifixion, typically appears on the left wing when the Crucifixion fills the right one. Perhaps to situate weakness and dependency on the left, authority on the right, the designer of an ivory from the later fourteenth century places the Crucifixion and the Nativity in the upper and lower registers on the left panel, the Coronation and the Adoration in the comparable positions on the right. In apparently every carved Madonna, the Christchild is to the viewer’s right; in every Coronation of the Virgin, Christ is to the right.

In sum, what I wish to suggest, then, is that, if the Pearl-Poet actually had the opportunity to see ivory carvings like these, he would have found—in tension with the narrative order that usually moved with the register and tended to guide the eye in a continuous line over the whole surface of the diptych—a chiasmatic form emerging when the eye collated leaf with leaf. Moreover, such collation might have occurred with the expectation, also taught by the ivories, that the right-hand term of an opposition would stand in a superior relation to the left-hand one.

I would like to turn now to Pearl and briefly collate the two “panels” there, starting at what one might call the hinge.

Stanza-group X is part of the Parable of the Vineyard and includes the complaint by senior workers that late arrivals receive as much as they. In answering them in this section and the eleventh, the Lord of the Vineyard denies he has broken a covenant with anyone. Further, no one, the maiden goes on to say, deserves to be paid. Even in the unlikely event a person managed always to avoid mortal sin (579-80, 617-20), all were lost in Adam (637-44). Thus, the maiden does not suspend the notion of equity at this point but rather insists upon it. There is also, however, the fact of pardon, the gift that goes beyond what is due, infinitely costly in its purchase and inexhaustible. Our experience is only of finite quantities. When the complaining workers say, “Vus þynk vus oþe to take more” (552), each of them means he has one such limit in mind and that it has not been reached. “Innoghe”
quantity that has been produced: through baptism the newborn has "innoghe of grace" (625) to enter the living body of Christ immediately. Nevertheless, "innoghe" also means "abundant" in a way that ignores a limit. "Innoghe per wax out of pat welle, / Blod and water of brode wounde" (649-50). "More" has such a meaning too: "le merci of God is much pe more," as that mercy overwhelms the humble efforts of those who arrive late (576). By how much, we do not know, but it is of course only through our experience of finite sums that the negative idea of limitlessness can be achieved.

Sections IX and XII are unified by the topic of degrees or stages. "Limit" is the sensus malus of "date," the link-work of IX, and anticipates one of the meanings of "more" and "innoghe." Limits can mark out a progression—over time, as in IX when the workers come into the vineyard at different hours, or through space, as in XII (literally, the stages of a journey up a hill [678, 692]). Section IX moves from old age backwards, with those entering the vineyard last being the youngest; XII is about two men moving up the holy hill, the "inoscete," who dies before he does "hondelyng3 harme" (681), and the "ry3twys man" (675) who lives to obey the Law at point after point. However, because no one may be able to keep himself within the limits established by the Law (687-88), the odds against righteousness mount with the stages.

Each such "date" is also a point, however, when grace is available through penance (661-62). Penance like every sacrament presupposes a specific historical moment: the "sely stounde" (659) of the Passion, which is nevertheless perpetually accessible. Hence, "date" in bono is any given moment—any date. The sensus bonus of "ry3t," the link-word in XII, is this grace that is always at hand, the satisfaction of the Law available in the Atonement. In malo, it is the Law itself (708), the Old Covenant that becomes more straitening with every step of a person's life. Thus, the innocent is "saf by ry3t" (720) and "not by ry3t" (708): although the baptized infant has not lived long enough to be unrighteous, he is not for that reason saved without grace.

Sections VIII and XIII both take up the question of whether the elevation of the maiden excludes or devalues anyone else. With position as one of the categories of what Kant called the Verstand, our experience is that only one substance can occupy any given position at one time. The revelation that a very large number of queens or brides somehow do not supplant each other (440, 785-86) can only frustrate the dreamer. Somehow, no queen or bride is "makele3," this being the member in molo of the maskelle3/makele3 link-word in XIII. Where the notion of matchlessness bulks larger in VIII than in XIII, spotlessness is more prominent in XIII. Cleanness is anticipated in VIII, however, with the maiden's warning that members of Christ's body should take care not to affix any "hate" or "gawle" to "hys body" (460). While "cortaysye," the link-word in VIII, names the generosity of all who enter the kingdom (450), finally it is God's love for the world that is the pearl of great price: the spotlessness of XIII is provided at God's own cost ("In hys blod he wesch my wede . . ." [766]). The poor shadow of this—"cortaysye" in malo—is simply an absence of objection, as when an eldest son takes one of his father's titles during the latter's lifetime. Hence, "kyng by cortayse" (480).

The link-word in VII comes as part of a phrase, "grounde of alle my blisse." Sections VII and XIV are both concerned with grounds, though of different kinds. Ground as metaphor has as its evil sense the maiden herself when the dreamer makes her earthly life the founda-

tion of his happiness. Her death has made him voluble in grief (363, 374). In its good sense "grounde" figures the Lamb, on whom the maiden's happiness is built (407-08), whose injuries and crucifixion are displayed for a full stanza and a half on the right "panel" (799-816). In contrast to the rash "spelle" regretted in VII, the Lamb "closed . . . hys mouth fro vch query, / Quen Jue3 hym igged . . ." (803-04), dying without "playnt" (815). The link-word of the later section, "Jerusa-

lem," names ground of another sort, the kind that is the vehicle of the metaphor. There are two Jerusalems also: the one "in Judy londe" (937), the other—the referent anagogically—where the author of the Apocalypse, whom the poet calls the "apostel John" (named in VII for the only time on the left "leaf"), saw the Lamb throne in glory (835-86). The historical Jerusalem, although far away "in Judee" (922), is continuous with the "grounde" that swallowed up the historical child (10). She was the wrong ground of the dreamer's happiness exactly because she could lose her place in this way. ("Blisse" in malo can alternate with "bale" [373]). As geography, then, Jerusalem harks back to the left side of the poem.

In section VI, the dreamer blames the maiden for his grief ("My precios perle dot3 me gret pyne" [330]). She responds that he is actually accusing God ("Deme Drytyn, euer hym adyte" [349]), when it is not his place to argue. "Deme now pyself if pou con dayly / As man to God wordey" (313-14). She claims he is braying (346), chiding (353), making a "dyne" (339). To argue—promote a judgment—is one sense of "demen," the link-word in VI. Judgment in one sense cannot get beyond experience: you believe nothing, says the maiden, "bot 3e hit sy3e" (308). The correlated stanza-group, XV, returns to the dreamer's ability to "renen for raup wythouten reste" (858). In contrast to him, however, the 144,000 brides never think "of mote," 'dispute' (855), because they do not depend upon experience; they "Pur3outly hauen cnavyng" (859), and consequently they sing. The left "leaf" insists on historical
knowledge and the need to tame it, the right on anagogical. In XV, the
"hue from heuen" (873), before it is followed by a "nwe songe" (882),
recalls the dreamer's frenzied disapproval in VI. Such disagreement
is captured by the link-word in XV, "neuerpeles," which in its sensus
malus of "however" signals a retort. In bono it means the absence of
diminution: "Lasse of blyssse may non vus bryng ...," "neuer one3
honour [is] yet neuer pe les" (853, 864). Because in the flesh no one can
experience this stability, knowledge of it comes only at God's initiative
(893). God's ordaining in this fashion, which combines judgment and
will and has, in the eternal present, no need of inference, is the second
meaning of "deme" back in VII. In this sensus bonus, "Al lys in hym to
dy3t and deme" (360).46

Stanza-groups V and XVI are unified by the topos of enclosures.
To the fatherly worry in the later section that the child should have to
sleep out of doors (925-34), the maiden responds that the Lamb has
brought her to the New Jerusalem. In bono, "mote," the link-word,
names this city. The brides are not "moteles" or "wythouten mote,"
then, in the sense of having no place to go. Home to "a pakke of joly
juelle" (929), this city is metaphorically a jewel box. In the earlier
section, denying the dreamer's statement that she had simply van-
ished (his "out of dawes" [282] perhaps anticipating already the out-
of-doors), the maiden refers repeatedly to jewel boxes. She tells him
she is "in cofer ... comly clente," a proper "forser" for the dreamer
himself. The "kynde" of this "kyste" is the body of Christ (259, 263,
271). (The Lamb, that is, is a cofer within a cofer.) She takes her
metaphor here from the "pele" her father called her (241), confessing
himself a "joylle3 jueler" (252). Sub specie aeternitatis, the father had
set his heart upon something bound to "flower and fail" (270), and the
child's metaphor construes this as cupidity. "It is to be noted," Pamela
Gradon has written, "that the refrain of this section with its play on the
word 'jueler' underlines the theme, for the jeweller possesses his jewel"
(p. 208). Cupidity, the stain that makes the "joyfol jueler" inadmis-
sible to the Kingdom (299), is "mote" in malo, the brides being "clene
wythouten mote" (972).

"Jueler" has its sensus bonus, however. While the earthly jeweler
is a collector, the good jeweler makes his gems to be what they are.47
Through his own "kynde" Christ turns the failing rose into "a perle of
prys" (272). In fact, he has made the jeweler himself (274). Where
the earthly collector caters to his own satisfaction ("prynces paye" [1]), the
Lamb suffers "for manes sake" (940). The maiden became a pearl,
matching in her spotlessness the New Jerusalem ("mote wythouten
moote" [948]), because the Lamb chose to suffer in the earthly Jeru-
salem, making "oure pes ... at ene" (953).

Sections IV and XVII are both preoccupied with gems. In IV these
are pearls, and, with the exception of the "wonder perle" (221) set in
the middle of the maiden's breast, they do not beggar the imagination.
Although the maiden no longer exists as an object of experience, the
description of the glowing, richly adorned child does not subvert itself
as a representation. (It will be the maiden who declares that the
dreamer's senses are deceiving him.) By contrast, the New Jerusalem
is derealized. To describe a single diamond as big enough to support
a city, for instance, is simultaneously to deny that the stone or the city
exists in time.

While the vast jewels on the right wing principally uplift and
sustain, the pearls in section IV bind the maiden's linen (198-99, 203-
04, 217) and enclose her hair.48 They suggest confinement—the
father's unwillingness to let the daughter go—in a section studded with
the imagery of openings, openings that have been closed up, waist-
bands, and hems. ("Hemme" occurs in IV and XVII, and nowhere else
in the poem.) Because the dreamer is happy that he has now found the
maiden (283), it is the child herself, rather than simply her kirtle, that
the dreamer would have "al vmbepyste," a "precios pyece in perle3
py3t." (192). Setting something within boundaries is the sensus malus
called by "py3t." Yet when the dreamer, first spotting the maiden,
says that "Perle3 py3t of ryal prys / Perle m0st mon by grace haf
sene" (193-94), "py3te" very likely means "chosen" (rather than "set" or
"adorned"); and the sensus bonus that turns py3t into pyked (1036)
means that the child, among the many who have been called, is one of
the "fewe" who are "myke3" (572). "Apostel John," the link-word in
XVII, has its opposing senses also. In malo it names the narrator
himself,49 whose "gostly dreem" for the space of this section and the
next coincides with John's; yet he will become again part of the church
militant, still to struggle with his sins.

Sections III and XVIII are connected by rivers. For the first three
stanzas of the earlier group, the dreamer follows the stream—in
the direction of its source, as matters turn out. Although the bed of the
stream is lit with jewels, the many-colored glow does not in itself
confound human vision. The section ends with several lines reporting
astonishment, but the paralysis comes with the dreamer's sight of the
shining child. The source of this stream is given in XVIII, where the
dreamer sees God enthroned: "A reuer of pe trone pe ran outtryste / Wats bry3te pen bope pe sunne and mone." (1055-56). The river—
not only the source but the anagogical meaning of the finite stream—
swirls through the streets and out of the city, where its incomparable
light illumines its banks (1057-60, 1072-76). Now it is the light itself,
bright enough to destroy the bodily senses, that ravishes the dreamer
(1081-92).50

As section III began, pleasure was building in the dreamer as he
followed the valley. He had the good "fortune" (129), he said, to be
increasingly happy: "Pe wy3 to whom her [that is, Fortune's] wyle ho
The knight's equipment in *Pearl* is the highly vulnerable hide of the Lamb, the human nature of Christ, as in *Piers Plowman* Jesus will joust in "pers armes, In his helm and in his haberion, *humana natura*." On the other hand, all the hardness that would make such equipment conventionally serviceable seems to have been displaced backwards to the largely inorganic garden in section II.

Sections I and XIX correlate, of course, as the entrance into the dream and the exit from it. The narrator enters by virtue of "a sleyping-slayste" (59). His own sudden movement (1169-70) terminates the vision. Where stanza-groups II and XIX focus on either the suspension of the will or the enjoyment in eternity of the object finally adequate to it, the groups at the extremities of the two "panels" take up a will that is not only active but limited in its objects to those of daily experience. The narrator's "wylle" is thus "wreched" (56). The first group lacks a moral context; the last, however, describes the essential question of whether the narrator will prefer another's good to his own. At the end it is enough for him that his child is "to pat Prynse3 paye" (1188); and he tries, with less difficulty over the course of time, or so he reports (1201-04), to conform his own will to the divine will.

As his vision ends, the narrator's own "paye" is, for the moment at least, disappointed: "Me payed ful ille to be outfleme ..." (1177). This dissatisfaction metonymic for a human appetite unconformed to "pat Prynse3 paye" is "paye" in *malo*. Thus he identifies himself with the welfare of the pearl (1189-200). If his self-criticism does not clear itself of resentment comes to be "wythouen spotte" only in *malo* : her "color" (22) had been flawless, and now it is nowhere. Where the poem opens with the wheat harvest and the feast that celebrates the bodily assumption of the Virgin into heaven, it closes with bread and the consecration of it into the body of Christ. The dreamer's accusation of another ("O moul ... " (23)) comes to be balanced by self-accusation, criticism that he takes into himself when he identifies himself with the welfare of the pearl (1189-200). If his self-criticism does not clear itself of resentment altogether, that is because...
he remains, as he must, the "homly hyne" (1210), not yet "wythouten spot" in the Church Triumphant. And the end for him may hardly be in sight (585-88). For the time being, he must make do with a knowledge far short of vision. Where the poem begins with a bauble from the East, it ends with a certain flatness, like the wafer itself, that appears "Oute of oryent" for the congregation in a much homelier sense, as the priest raises it above the altar.

The round wafer has long been recognized in Pearl's own concatenated form. The poem in its simultaneity, that is, becomes something to be seen. This one sort of architecture may not exclude another—a form nearly as significant thematically, for it offers a sort of figure for the opposition between time and eternity. As diptych, Pearl uses form to reorganize its content and thus at points, perhaps, to reilluminate it. And in the tensions between its "panels," the poem may have served as something concrete in its own way, on which an uncertain faith might fix and that devotion might surround.

Notes


5. Pearl will be quoted throughout from the edition of E. V. Gordon (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1953).


9. Work on chiastic structure (ring composition or emboitement) in classical epic and medieval literature has been conveniently reviewed by Lee Patterson, "For the Wyves love of Bathe': Feminine Rhetoric and Poetic Resolution in the Roman de la Rose and the Canterbury Tales," Speculum 58 (1983): 670-71.


13. Diptychs—hinged pieces of wood covered with wax on the inner surfaces—were familiar in the later Middle Ages as the piece of equipment on which authors often composed first drafts: See Wilhelm Wattenbach, *Das Schriftzeichen im Mittelalter*, 3rd ed. (Leipzig: S. Hirzel, 1896), pp. 51-69. From at least the third century, an intercessory prayer, a form of litany, occupied part of the mass. Who precisely was included, where and how the prayer was spoken and by whom, differed from one rite to another and from the Western Church to the Eastern. The diptych, the material object widely connected with this prayer, lent itself to litany because of its earlier use as a notebook, perhaps, or because of the custom, in the case of consular diptychs, of listing on the inner surface in chronological order the names of all the consuls of Rome. Since it followed the recitation of names from diptychs, the prayer that survives to this day was called the *super nomina* or the *super diptycha*. And even after Charlemagne suppressed the Gallican practice of reading aloud from the diptychs the names of those living and dead in the faith, the diptychs survived in closely related, if not always liturgical, forms as lists now referred to in memory by a priest, as altarpieces for the edification of the faithful (with the carvings, most frequently in ivory, that had decorated the exteriors now transferred to the inner surfaces of the panels), as devotional objects imitating such altarpieces for private use, or as monastic necrologies and obituaries. On the liturgical use of diptychs, see Fernand Cabrol, “Diptyques (Liturgie),” *Dictionnaire d'archéologie chrétienne et liturgie* (Paris: Letourneux et Ané, 1907-1, 4:1046-94. While liturgical use of the diptychs apparently ended ca. 1100 in the West, their connection with the *liber vitae* of the Apocalypse was remembered until at least the seventeenth century in England (see the *OED*, s.v.).

14. See, e.g., Koechlin, *Les ivoires gothiques français* (Paris: Picard, 1924) for French diptychs from the end of the 13th century (Koechlin No. 37) and the first quarter of the 14th (Koechlin No. 234).

15. The dreamer describes the maiden’s “vyssayge” as “why they playn vouere.” “Playn” here, as in *Cleaness* 1531, where the detached hand comes to write “wpon pe playn wove” [ed. J. 1. Anderson (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1977)], evidently means “unembellished” [*Middle English Dictionary* s.v., 3(a)]. In fact, carved ivory was usually painted rather than left plain.


20. French, end of the 13th century [Victoria and Albert (V & A) 211-1865].

21. French, 14th century [British Library (BL) M&LA 56, 6-23, 86]. In a diptych from Cologne (1330-40), Mary holds a small cross in a Madonna scene on the left panel as if in anticipation of the Crucifixion on the right (V&A A.55-1910).

22. Cologne, ca. 1340 (V&A 235-1867). In a French diptych from the end of the 14th century (Koechlin No. 823), an Entry into Jerusalem occupies the lower register on the left panel. The usual gates of the city have been omitted. These seem to be supplied by the prominent hillside in the Harrowing that fills the lower register on the right. As the eye moves from left to right, one entry by Christ is evidently to be understood retrospectively as the type of another one.

23. Koechlin No. 37. The sequence runs from the top down on the left panel, then from the top down on the right. But within this sequence, the Adoration is placed after the Flight into Egypt.

24. BL M&LA 55, 12-1, 34. Instances of mere balance are very numerous. For example, in this same diptych, the Virgin is made the center of both the Ascension on the left and the Pentecost on the right. In another carving, a kneeling Longinus in a Crucifixion balances the kneeling king in an Adoration (French 14th century; Dalton No. 298). In an English (?) carving from the first half of the 14th century, the pole used in the Flagellation on the left panel occupies the same position as the vertical beam of the Cross on the right (V&A, 300-1866). In a French piece from midcentury, two angels in the recesses of the archedon on the left panel bring a crown to the Madonna; two angels symmetrically placed on the right in a Crucifixion carry discs representing the sun and the moon (BL M&LA 56, 6-23, 67; cf. Dalton No. 269 and V&A 234-1867—both fourteenth century French). Elsewhere, a disc with the Agnus Dei held by John the Baptist is the mirror image of the wheel held on the opposite leaf by St. Catherine (French, 14th century, V&A A.39-1923). In a Northern Italian ivory from late in the 14th or early in the 15th century (V&A A.566-1910), the great crush of people present in a Death of the Virgin scene on the left panel is...
balanced on the right by no fewer than ten angels playing instruments crowded into the top of a Coronation of the Virgin.

25. V&A A.553-1910. Similar tensions appear to run up and down all the registers of this carving. In the middle band, for example, an Escape into Egypt just to the left of center plays off against a Resurrection (Christ's stepping out of the tomb) carved just to the right of center.

26. Cologne, about 1310-20 (V&A 6824-1858). In another diptych (French, first half of the 14th century, V&A 237 C-1867), the posture of the Christ child facing the three kings at the extreme lower left is symmetrical with his posture as he is turned towards Simeon in a Presentation on the right panel. This may bring secular power into tension with spiritual.

27. BL 56 6-23 58. The upper register carries the Flagellation, Christ's carrying the cross, and the Crucifixion. The middle register, also from left to right, carries four scenes with Judas and then the Arrest. The lower register includes the Deposition, the Entombment, and the Noli.

28. Koechlin No. 819
29. The Cloisters 1970:324.8a,b.
31. Second third of the 14th century (Koechlin No. 295).
32. Fourteenth century (Koechlin No. 52).
34. Koechlin No. 370.
35. V&A A.553-1910. From left to right, the upper register includes the Annunciation, Nativity, Christ's carrying his cross, and the Crucifixion. The middle register comprises the Presentation, Flight into Egypt, and the appearance to the Marys. The lower register includes the Death of the Virgin, Coronation, Flagellation, and Agony in the Garden.

36. Among the exceptions are a mid-14th-century French diptych with a Madonna and child on the left, St. Catherine trampling on the Emperor Maxentius on the right (V&A 4-1872), another from earlier in the century with a Coronation on the left and a scene of St. Lawrence being blessed by a bishop on the right (Koechlin No. 526), another of about the same period with a Crucifixion on the left, St. Margaret issuing from the back of a monster on the right (Dalton No. 279), and another with the Virgin, the Magdalene, and St. Catherine on the left, and St. Barbara (?), St. Agnes, and St. Margaret on the right (BL 56 6-23 83). Perhaps the chronological disparity between the subjects, drawn from different Christian ages, overwhelmed the convention of the superiority of the right-hand panel. However, in the Wilton Diptych (not ivory, of course), Madonna and Child are on the right panel, Richard II is on the left.


38. See Margaret H. Longhurst, English Ivories (London: Putnam's, 1926); Plates 49, 50. Longhurst assigns both to the middle of the 15th century. The latter carving does include an Adoration among the scenes on the left leaf and an Annunciation among the scenes on the right.

39. See, e.g., BL 56, 6-23 84, and BL 56, 6-23 82.
40. V&A A.554-1910. On the other hand, leaving the question of the selection of episodes out of account, the order here is simply chronological.
44. "Blysse" appears to be univocal. Its sense, good or evil, depends upon the object of happiness.

45. Section XV, of course, includes one stanza more than the usual five. For recent discussion, see Fleming, "Centuple Structure," pp. 81-89, and D. M. Finkelstein, "The Pearl-Poet As Bezalel," Mediaeval Studies 35 (1973): 427-32.
46. Gradon, Form and Style, describes the poet's use of deme as "a play on the ideas of man's judgement and God's ordaining" (p. 209).
47. Outside the correlated sections, there is another and probably closer sensus bonus for "jueler"—the merchant who is ready to sell everything to buy the Pearl of Great Price (729-32).

48. Mabel Day, however, took line 210 to mean, 'Her hair floated loosely round her': "Two Notes on Pearl," Medium Aevum 3 (1934): 242. Schofield (p. 183) compared lines 210-14 with several lines in the Roman de la Rose. Yet there is evidently nothing comparable in the earlier description to the imagery of binding or confinement.

49. "... Being merely human, ... [the dreamer] cannot be anything but inadequate to the role he is called on to play. He is no John the Divine ...": Spearing, Gawain-Poet, p. 105. An opposition between two Johns—John the Baptist announcing the historical Christ, John the Divine envisioning Christ in glory—is common in the diptychs: see, e.g., Dalton No. 246 (English, mid-14th-century) and V&A A.555-1910 (French, same period). Cf. Pearl 817-40.

50. The dreamer's metaphor for this is his standing "as stylle as dased quayle" (1085). There is a comparable figure back on the left panel, with the dreamer's stillness (182) making him "as hende as hawk in halle" (184). But this phrase occurs a few lines into section IV.

51. In bino "more and more" names ever increasing fruition, an impossibility on earth. The maiden refers in XVI to bliss that "schal euer encres" (939).
52. In the same lines the poet also makes the moon metaphoric for moral filth, perhaps the more important part of its sensus malus. For further discussion of the two senses of "mone," see Marie Borroff, "Pearl's 'Maynful Mone': Crux, Simile, and Structure," in Acts of Interpretation: The Text in Its Context 700-1600: Essays on Medieval and Renaissance Literature in Honor of E. Talbot Donaldson, ed. Mary J. Carruthers and Elizabeth D. Kirk (Norman, Oklahoma: Pilgrim Books, 1982), p. 169. See also Macrae-Gibson, "Link Words," for a sensitive discussion of the poet's use of "mone" to hint that the vision is approaching its close (p. 62).

53. Blenkner rightly remarks that it is only after this section that there is a "revival of will" ("Theological Structure," p. 245).


57. Middle English Dictionary, s.v.
