

of worthiness in “The Tales of Two Transactions: The Franklin, the Shipman, Feudalism, and the Medieval Atlantic Maritime World System.” As he does in much of his other scholarship, Bertolet effectively demonstrates how Chaucer’s poetry is deeply engaged with the competing economic theories and practices of his time. The volume concludes with a census of a particular material text: a sixteenth-century edition of *Piers Plowman* significant for its inclusion of *Piers the Plowman’s Crede*, a late fourteenth-century antifraternal satire in alliterative verse. (James M. Dean edited the poem for the TEAMS volume *Six Ecclesiastical Satires*.) Lawrence Warner’s “Owen Rogers and *Piers Plowman’s Crede*, 1561: A Census of STC 19908” investigates the complex relationship between Langland’s poem and this important companion piece.

The volume’s two sections provide a helpful grouping for the essays, but the essays also speak to each other across the edition. For example, John Ganim’s work on everyday medieval anarchy offers a helpful perspective for Scott Lightsey’s discussion of medieval crafts and polity in Lydgate’s poetry and also for Craig Bertolet’s investigation of how Chaucer’s *Canterbury Tales* represents new types of social structures. Kathryn McKinley’s study of pilgrim paraphernalia invites us to return to the travel narratives discussed by Christian Zacher to consider the role of material objects in these texts. Although the volume’s scope is limited to a hundred-year span from 1350–1450 and the most well-known authors of this period – Chaucer, Langland, the *Gawain*-poet, Margery Kempe, Lydgate – the essays develop networks among medieval texts, objects, and cultural practices that can inform a wide range of related scholarship. Brian Gastle and Erick Kelemen have assembled a very useful collection that provides a fresh look at questions that have been of interest to medievalists for a long time.

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APPROACHES TO TEACHING THE MIDDLE ENGLISH PEARL. Edited by Jane Beal and Mark Bradshaw Busbee. *Approaches to Teaching World Literature*, 143. New York: MLA, 2018. Pp. xi + 262; 4 illustrations. \$40.00 (cloth); \$24.00 (paper).

Sir Gawain and the Green Knight is still the likeliest candidate to represent the alliterative revival in medieval literature courses and British Literature surveys, but new editions and anthologizations, plus recent popular translations and magazine coverage, mean that *Pearl* is gaining purchase. Jane Beal and Mark Bradshaw Busbee’s *Approaches to Teaching the Middle English ‘Pearl’* offers new perspectives and techniques to deepen student and instructor engagement with the text. It is a valuable resource for anyone teaching this fascinating poem.

The introduction provides an overview of the poem, its history, and its major critical themes. Most of these, such as the date of the manuscript, are widely accepted by scholars and prove quite useful, especially to teachers coming to the poem for the first time. However, some of the claims (such as the supposed influence of the Orpheus myth on *Pearl*) are hobbyhorses of the editors and do not belong in a general introduction such as this. Nevertheless, the brief summary of key topics is beneficial to those readers who will not dive into all of the specialized essays that follow.

Part One of the volume consists of Beal’s examination of classroom texts, including facsimiles, translations, anthologies, and a fair and weighted examination of dual-language editions (pp. 26–30). The strongest section of Part One is “The

Instructor's Library," which acquaints readers with scholarship on the poem, from introductions and essay collections to monographs, dissertations, and multimedia resources. Beal demonstrates her broad and deep reading of *Pearl* criticism as she makes certain that teachers will have a firm grounding in cultural contexts and critical theory. While her inclusion of some texts (e.g. Tuchman's *Distant Mirror*) is perplexing, the thorough survey of materials and the volume's rich bibliography help to ensure that *Pearl* will indeed "become more widely read and better understood in the future" (p. 49).

Part Two of the volume, on pedagogical approaches, is divided into four parts: Historical Approaches and Contexts; Literary and Theoretical Approaches; Comparative Approaches; and Specific Classroom Contexts. The first section begins with A.S.G. Edwards' consideration of the question of authorship, which is bound to come up especially with students not used to dealing with medieval texts. Edwards troubles the acceptance of a single author for the Cotton Nero A.x poems, but he spends a baffling amount of space (two of five pages) picking on numerical symbolism as an argument for the shared-author theory—something that strikes me as not particularly helpful for first-time teachers or non-specialists. Next, Laura Howes tackles the difficult issue of teaching the language of *Pearl*. She notes the significant obstacle represented by the Northwest Midlands dialect even for students already familiar with Chaucer's Middle English, but she nonetheless advocates for using the original text whenever possible. By tracing the shifts in meaning and resonance of a single word (*juelen*) through the text, Howes demonstrates how such practice is informative and worthwhile for students. In their essay on the manuscript context, Murray McGillivray and Kenna Olsen walk readers through a series of exercises that compare manuscript images to an edition and to a transcription, followed by another exercise that lets students consider the differences between their print culture and the manuscript culture of the *Pearl*-poet. Further exercises include one based on the four manuscript illustrations and several where students produce their own transcriptions, from simple in-class or take-home selections to term projects producing a full, glossed edition of a fitt of *Pearl*. The section closes with David Coley's formidable "Public *Pearl*." Whether elegy or spiritual allegory, *Pearl* is "decisively introspective" (p. 81), yet Coley convincingly shows the pedagogical advantages of treating *Pearl* as a public poem. Doing so, he argues, allows us to put *Pearl* into dialogue with explicitly social and political poems such as *Piers Plowman* or the Prologue to Gower's *Confessio Amantis*. Such comparison introduces readers to "an increased range of semantic possibilities for [*Pearl*'s] vibrant and polysemous vocabulary" (p. 83).

In the first literary and theoretical approaches essay, Jane Beal and Ann Meyer address how teachers can best aid students in understanding the manifold layers of symbolism in *Pearl*, and they offer a guide for leading students through the four levels of scriptural interpretation. John Fleming then elucidates some aspects of the poem's significant structures, primarily those based on conscious numerical composition. Beal's next chapter, a distillation from her monograph, looks at the relationship between the dreamer and the Pearl-maiden. (She does not accept the modern father-daughter consensus and instead reads the Pearl-maiden as a lost lover.) Beal gives a fair summary of competing views, but gradually an element of combativeness approaching derision creeps in. The second half of Beal's essay addresses the manuscript illustrations and argues insistently for her Pearl-maiden-as-lover reading. This reviewer is somewhat uncomfortable with Beal using this pedagogical venue to trumpet a lone, contrarian view so vehemently.

Seeta Chaganti offers a neo-formalist approach by examining the poetics of enclosure in *Pearl* and in the rest of the poet's corpus. She describes comparative exercises exploring how issues of containment, (formal) constraint, and framing resonate between the texts and open new avenues of inquiry. While she spends ample time examining *Patience*, *Cleanness*, and *Erkenwald*, Chaganti grounds her discussion in *Pearl*, making clear links with each example. In this respect, her essay differs markedly from J.A. Jackson's examination of Christological meditations, which spends most of its time on the non-*Pearl* works of the poet. Readers will certainly benefit from his elucidation of typology and biblical hermeneutics, but those looking for discussion of *Pearl* will be disappointed.

Opening the comparative section, Arthur Bahr's chapter on teaching *Pearl* alongside *Sir Gawain* provides a much better balance, not only between the primary texts but among formalist and theoretical concerns. One suggestion intended for Middle English seminars is to engage deeply with the "linguistic experience" of the poems. I am thoroughly persuaded by Bahr's argument for an "enforced gradualism" by engaging slowly with the difficult language of the poems, and I also agree with the lesson this teaches about the value of slow work (pp. 134–35). Busbee's chapter on sources and analogues opens by acknowledging the challenges of allusion. He offers a helpful exercise for breaking down categories of allusion, one that students of varying levels and background knowledge can all excel at. His catalogue of various sources—biblical, patristic, lapidary, philosophic, and literary—does not offer much ground-breaking material, but it will be a boon to teachers new to *Pearl*. Elizabeth Harper's piece on using *Pearl* as a gateway to other Middle English poetry compares it to Geoffrey Chaucer's *Book of the Duchess*, John Capgrave's *Life of St Katherine*, and the anonymous *Wynnere and Wastoure*. Her novel notion of a writing exercise on grief is fantastically innovative and a great way to get students thinking about the cultures of mourning and the preconceptions that readers bring to the dreamer's sorrow. John Bowers's essay on teaching *Pearl* in courses that combine Tolkien and medieval literature proposes another way to hook students. He raises a number of poignant points for discussion, such as the fabulous link between lost gems and *The Hobbit*'s arkenstone, but the chapter is at times problematic. Bowers makes a bizarre comparison between medievalist Ida Gordon and Galadriel; elsewhere he anachronistically conjectures that Tolkien's omission of *precios* in his translation of *Pearl* is "an unconscious repression" (p. 160).

The Classroom Contexts section is hit-or-miss. Two chapters, those by William Quinn and Eugene Green, read like snowy articles of yesteryear and make only faint gestures toward the classroom; those interested in pedagogy can easily pass over these essays. Jane Chance's account of teaching *Pearl* is the only chapter to deal explicitly with graduate education, but it surveys many resources on genre, mode, and gender that could be adapted to upper-division undergraduate courses as well. Heather Maring's chapter on in-class performance reminds instructors of the value of hearing the poem aloud, whether in translation or (ideally) the original language. She also stresses the importance of the verisimilitude of experiential context, where students can approximate the courtly audience. Nancy Ciccone's and Elizabeth Allen's chapters demonstrate what I believe the editors were going for: both provide clear, specific methods for approaching the text without being prescriptive, and they ground their discussion in classroom experience. Allen's essay on landscape presents a series of stages to move through with students, bringing in parallel texts and contrasting spaces. Ciccone's treatment of the bleeding Lamb is, like Coley's essay, a highlight of the volume, one that scholars

may want to consider from a critical vantage. It introduces the concept of the Five Wounds in relation to *Pearl* (especially the significance of the side wound) and the importance of the sacrificial Lamb at the climax of the vision. As with each of the specific context essays—indeed as with all the essays in Part Two—instructors cannot hope (and should not aim) to recreate precisely the masterful discussions Allen and Ciccone sketch. Rather, these anecdotes are vehicles for many rich ideas that can be selectively gleaned and deployed in one's own courses.

The volume could perhaps have benefited from one more round of editing. There are a number of errors, ranging from misplaced punctuation, omitted citations, and typos (e.g. 500 for 5—or 500 for 50, twice?—on p. 132), to errors of fact. For instance, the stanzas in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* are not each 25 lines long (Fleming; p. 98); and the reign of Richard II lasted until 1399, not 1400 (Beal and Busbee; p. 2), no matter what the Brothers Holland may have wished. In a collection devoted to a single poem there is bound to be some repetition, but readers may find some concepts and even certain simple facts are reintroduced too often. These tend to be local flaws, however, and do not sink the venture.

Pearl is a notoriously difficult poem, and yet I believe its difficulty captivates readers and keeps us coming back, students and critics alike. The essays in Beal and Busbee's volume offer a wealth of useful material for those teaching this challenging poem, medievalist or not, whether for the first time or returning to it for the fifth, twelfth, or hundred-and-first.

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THE SIGNIFYING POWER OF *PEARL*: MEDIEVAL LITERARY AND CULTURAL CONTEXTS FOR THE TRANSFORMATION OF GENRE. By Jane Beal. Routledge Studies in Medieval Literature and Culture, 5. New York and London: Routledge, 2017. Pp. xv + 179; 4 illustrations. \$150.00.

In her conclusion to *The Signifying Power of Pearl: Medieval Literary and Cultural Contexts for the Transformation of Genre*, Jane Beal argues that at the heart of the poem lies “the Dreamer’s memory of trauma” (p. 137). *Pearl* is about the gradual transformation of this memory—from individual, devastating loss to collective, redemptive hope—through a recognition of shared suffering and love.

The poem’s final lines, recalling the loss of the pearl within the context of communion, show us how “past sacrifice” and “Christ’s future return” come together (p. 152). In this way “the Dreamer’s memory of trauma is illuminated, redeemed, and restored” through a healing process that is made available to all (Christian) readers “as they journey with whole-hearted humility deeper into Christ’s redemptive suffering and God’s redeeming love” (p. 152). Beal’s evident dedication to *Pearl* is rooted in scholarly and educational commitments (she has recently published a co-edited volume on *Approaches to Teaching the Middle English Pearl*) as well as in her own faith. The latter is evident not only in the conclusion of *The Signifying Power of Pearl*, but on the very first page of its introduction. Here Beal explains that her sense of the poem as “an almost inexhaustible source of beauty, wisdom, and strength in times of loss or sorrow” is linked to her perception of it “as an intrinsically Christian work of art”: “I admire it for the way that it makes me, a woman of faith, see truth again from new angles” (p. 1).

The structure and overarching argument of the volume are based on the model of fourfold interpretation of scripture. The aim of this volume is “to see a