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Williams, G. (2013) Glossing over the Lamb: Phonaesthetic GL- in Middle English and Aural Scepticism in Pearl. The Review of English Studies, 65 (271). pp. 596-618. ISSN 1471-6968

https://doi.org/10.1093/res/hgt116

Glossing over the Lamb: Phonaesthetic *Gl-* in Middle English and Aural Scepticism in *Pearl*

Abstract: This article brings together linguistic and literary approaches in order to illuminate aspects of the fourteenth-century *Pearl* poem that might otherwise go unnoticed by a modern reader. In particular, it investigates the sound-semantic (i.e. phonaesthetic) significance incurred by polysemous Middle English *gl-* words. The essay begins by using the *Middle English Dictionary* to locate the interrelated semantic fields for words beginning with *gl-* in Middle English: 'light/vision', 'joy/gladness', 'vitreousness/viscosity', 'quick/smooth movement', and 'deceptiveness'. Then, in the second half of the essay, I describe how sound-salient collocations of *gl-* words occur at significant moments in *Pearl* and exploit a phonaesthetic network, particularly in relation to the now diminished 'deceptiveness' category, in ways that add to the aural stylistics of the poem and augment themes to do with the limitations of human perception in the context of spiritual consolation (i.e. ocular/aural scepticism). In turn, it is suggested that *Pearl* subtly registers questions to do with the limitations of alliterative poetry and the aural 'glossing' it entails.

Introduction

The term *phonaestheme*, coined by British linguist J.R. Firth in 1930, is defined by the OED as ‘a phoneme or group of phonemes having recognizable semantic associations, as a result of appearing in a number of words of similar meaning’.[1] And while phonaesthesia may have slipped between categories of investigation until quite recently, current trends in the ‘new formalism’ of literary criticism should welcome the opportunity presented by phonaesthetic analysis in that it reveals not only cognitive-semantic associations reflected in the lexicon of earlier Englishes, but in turn suggests systematic connections between sound and meaning in verse that might otherwise go unnoticed.[2] This is especially significant for our understanding of Middle English (ME) alliterative poetry, which as a whole contains a great number of word-initial phonaesthetic consonant clusters.[3] Previous studies of *sl-* and *gr-* in *Sir Gawain*

and the Green Knight, for example, which have successfully linked linguistically-orientated phonaesthetic categorization with close readings of the poem, strongly suggest the importance of studying the many other phonaesthemes present in alliterative verse that have yet to be described.[4]

In this vein, the present study augments a nascent body of research on phonaesthesia as an object and method of investigation by focusing specifically on the *gl-* phonaestheme, which for Present-day English (PDE) speakers is most immediately associable with the semantic field 'light' (e.g. in *glint* and *glare*), but had further, now diminished associations in ME. The objective of this study is twofold: 1) to identify the semantic fields of the *gl-* phonaestheme by describing its distribution in the lexicon as recorded in the *Middle English Dictionary* (MED); and then, 2) to determine to what extent the semantic significance of *gl-* may be related to aural stylistic effects in verse - specifically its conspicuous appearance in the lines of the fourteenth-century *Pearl*. In particular, I will examine how themes central to *Pearl* to do with the limitations of human senses in processes of spiritual consolation, described by Sarah Stanbury in relation to vision as 'ocular skepticism',[5] are in fact formalized in the sound-salience of the ME *gl-* phonaestheme, which promotes an ambivalent, *aurally sceptical* reading/hearing of the poem that runs congruently with period thought, based on the language as it would have been understood by the poem's medieval audience. But first, a word on phonaesthesia.

Phonaesthesia in English

Phonaesthesia is not intrinsic sound symbolism (i.e. the sign is still arbitrary); but has to do with the conventionalization of meanings that historically come to be associated with particular sounds/phonemes through their use and application to new words in the lexicon. Nor is phonaesthesia entirely productive for any one sound (cf. PDE *gl-* 'light' words with non-phonaesthetic *glove*); and in fact there appears to be a systemic regulation keeping phonaesthetic pressures in check. This view is supported by Reay, who, using the OED and a

prototype of the *Historical Thesaurus of English*, performed a diachronic study of English phonaesthemes *st-* and *sw-*; and for *sw-*, found that the ratio of 2:1 consistently describes the number of phonaesthetic (e.g. the 'movement' suggested by earlier reflexes for *swoon*, *swash, sway*) to non-phonaesthetic words c.1300-1800.[6]

The motivating pressure for phonaesthesia (now and then) is partially explained by Bergen, who found that PDE phonaesthetically-related words elicited significantly faster target recognition time than with those related strictly semantically or phonologically, which lead him to conclude that 'phonaesthemes have a status in the mental language processing system that is similar to that of canonical morphemes'.[7] From a cognitive perspective, understanding phonaesthemes as a 'psychological reality' (as Bergen does) means conceptualising them as a shortcut to lexico-semantic meaning.[8] Yet while the categorization of linguistic information may simplify things for cognitive processes, the actual structure of this information is unlikely to be immediately transparent to the conscious mind of the researcher. Meaning is oftentimes indirect and senses for words are subject to processes of change via (for example) polysemy, metonymy and metaphor. Interestingly, phonaesthemes are also susceptible to these processes.

The polysemous potential of phonaesthetic meaning has been explored by Piotr Sadowski with reference to ME *gr-* words:

> The ME *gr-* words thus group themselves into six clearly distinguished main clusters of meaning, but it is evident from a close analysis of the content of these clusters that they are all interrelated by means of polysemantic link words, and, moreover, when combined together they form a homogenous and logical semantic whole, especially on the figurative level of meaning, so important to poetry.[9]

For example, Sadowski goes on to examine how ME *grene/gras/graffe* - referring to 'the processes of natural life occurring above the ground' - interact with associations for words such as *greven/gred/grunten* in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* to complete a poetic theme, the 'eternal cyclicity of life, death, and renewal'.[10] Also with reference to *Gawain*, Jeremy

Smith applied a semantic categorization of *sl-* words, such *slide* and *sly*, to systematically show how phonaesthesia is 'central to the developing thought of the poem; [and] the alliteration therefore relates directly to meaning.'[11] Similarly, the lexico-semantic study of *gl-* here reveals that in addition to PDE associations with 'light', ME *gl-* was also present in several other semantic fields, all of which were cognitively bound together (as evidenced by polysemous link words) in ways significant for understanding the interpretations available to *Pearl*'s original audience.

Gl- in Middle English

More than half a century ago, Bolinger estimated that half of the 'popular words' beginning with *gl-* in modern English (i.e. omitting technical, learned and dialectal forms) were related to the semantic field 'light/vision'.[12] This fairly intuitive observation is further validated by the more recent *Historical Thesaurus of English* (http://www.oed.com/thesaurus), in which *gl-* appears repeatedly under the 'light emitted in particular manner' heading, in words such as *gleam, glimmer, glitter, glint,* and *glow*. According to the MED listings for 'headwords', there are 235 words that begin with *gl-* in ME (inclusive of grammatical variants of a single lexeme, but excluding *engl-, agl-, ungl-* forms); all of which are tabulated in Table 1. Upon close examination, 151 of these forms are clearly phonaesthetic, thirty-three are vaguely or questionably phonaesthetic, and fifty-one not phonaesthetic. Considered as a whole, the ratio of phonaesthetic to questionably/not phonaesthetic *gl-* word-forms in ME, i.e. 151:84, falls almost precisely in-line with the ratio of 2:1 given by Reay for *sw-* words. The ratio evens at 47:41 if we compare lexemes (some of which include multiple word-forms); however, it should be noted that many of the words/lexemes from the latter category are only attested in a single source and are often semantically narrow (e.g. several non-phonaesthetic words = names for specific types of plants), whereas most of the phonaesthetic words/lexemes are widely attested and applicable to much larger fields of experience. For the purposes of Table 1, I have categorized each word according to its primary, earliest sense in medieval English

(using definitions from the MED and OED); however, categorizing each word as belonging to only one of the five semantic fields associated with ME *gl-* is necessarily non-absolute and many words have senses in multiple categories. Although there are only eleven words with their primary sense in 'deceptiveness', there are in fact many words from other fields that have clear additional senses to do with 'deceptiveness'. So while 'light/vision' and 'joy/gladness' were the most lexically productive fields, qualitative analysis in this section will describe how the other three fields from c.1350-1500 - i.e. 'vitreousness/viscosity', 'quick/smooth movement' and 'deceptiveness' - reveal the interconnected 'phonaesthetic penumbra' (as Reay termed it) that would have been associated with *gl-* in ME.

Table 1. Semantic categories for all (235) *gl-* words in the MED

'light/vision': 22 lexemes; 53 words	GLAD: glāde (n.(1)); glāden (n.); gladlī (adj.) GLARE: glāre (n.); glāren (v.) GLAZE: glāsenand (ppl.); glāser (v.) GLASTER: glasteren (v.) GLITTER: glateren (v.); gliteren (v.); gletering (ger.) GLEED: glēd(e (n.(2)); glēdī (adj.) GLEEM: glēm (n.); glēmen (v.); glēming(e (ger.) GLENG: glenğ (n.) GLENT: glenting (ger.); glide worm (n.) GLIFF: gliffen (v.); gliften (v.); glifting (ger.); glīng(e (ger.) GLIMMER: glimer (n.) glimeren (v.); glimering(e (ger.); glimishing (ppl.); GLIM: glimme (n.); glimsen (v.); glimsing(e (ger.) GLISE: glisen (v.) GLISTEN: glishining (ppl.); glisnen (v.); glisninge (ger.) GLISTER: glisteren (v.); glistering (ger.) GLITTEN: glitenen (v.) GLOAM: glōmen (v.); glomer (n.) GLORE: glōren (v.) GLOW: glou (n.); glou-berd (n.); glouen (v.(1)); glouen (v.(2)); glouere (n.); glouinge (ger.); glou-worm (n.) GLOOM: gloumen (v.); glouming(e (ger.) GLOUT: glŏuten (v.); glŏutinge (ger.(2)) GLUSK: glusker (n.); gluskinge (ger.)
'joy/gladness': 5 lexemes; 37 words	GLAD: glād (n.); glād (adj.); glād (adv.); glāden (v.); gladenen (v.); glader(e (n.); gladful (adj.); gladfullī (adv.); gladhēde (n.); glading(e (ger.); gladlī (adv.); gladnes(se (n.); gladshipe (n.); gladsŏm (adj.); gladsŏmlī (adv.); gladsŏmnesse (n.) GLAM: glam (n.) GLATH: glāth (adv.); glāth(e (n.); glāth(e (adj.); glāthen (v.) GLEE: glē (n.(1)); glē-man (n.); gleuen (v.(1)); gleuinge (ger.(1)) GLORY: glōrīe (n.); glōrīen (v.(1)); glōrificāciŏun (n.); glōrificāte (adj.); glōrifīe (n.); glōrifīen (v.); glōrifīer (n.); glōrifīing(e (ger.); glōrīing(e (ger.); glōriŏus (adj.); glōriŏuslī (adv.); glōriŏusnesse (n.)

‘deceptiveness’: 3 lexemes; 11 words	GLAVER: glāberer (n.); glāveren (v.); glāveringe (ger.) GLOZE: glōse (n.); glōsen (v.); glōser (n.); glōsing(e (ger.); glōsinglī (adv.) GLOTHER: glōtheren (v.); glōtherer (n.); glōthering (ger.)
‘vitreousness/viscosity’: 8 lexemes; 31 words	GLAIRE: glaire (n.) GLASS: glas (n.); glāsen (adj.); glāsen (v.); glāsī (adj.); glāsier (n.); glāsīnesse (n.); glāsing(e (ger.) GLANCE: glaunce-ōre (n.) GLEIM: gleim (n.); gleimen (v.); gleimī (adj.); gleimīhēde (n.); gleimīnesse (n.); gleiming(e (ger.); gleimingnesse (n.); gleimŏus (adj.); gleimŏusnesse (n.) GLEET: glet (n.); glet (adj.); glettī (adj.); glettŏus (adj.) GLUE: gleu (n.); gleuen (v.(2)); gleuer (n.); gleuī (adj.); gleuing(e (ger.(2)); gleuish (adj.) GLAZE: glōsing-nail (n.) GLUTINATE: glūtinōsitē (n.); glūtinŏus (adj.)
‘quick/smooth movement’: 9 lexemes; 19 words	GLACE: glāce (n.(2)); glācen (v.); glācing(e (ger.) GLADE: glāde (n.(2)) GLANCE: glaunsing (ger.); glenchen (v.) GLIDE(R): glēde (n.(1)); glīden (v.); glīder (n.); glīding(e (ger.) GLEG: gleg (adj.) GLEAN: glēninge (ger.) GLENT: glent (n.); glenten (v.); glint (adj.) GLIDDER: glethurlī (adv.); glidder (adj.) GLEY: glīen (v.); glīere (n.)
vaguely/questionably phonaesthetic: 16 lexemes; 33 words	GLACE: glāce (n.(1)) GLAIVE: glaive (n.) GLASS: glasful (n.) GLAUK: glauk (adj.); glaukinum (n.) GLAVER: glāver (n.) GLEE: glē (n.(2)); glei-glōf (n.) GLEN: glen (n.) GLEAN: glēnen (v.); glēner (n.) GLEW: gleu (adj.); gleulīche (adv.) GLUB: glŏbbe (n.); globōse (adj.) GLOP: glōpe (n.); glōpen (v.); glopnedlī (adv.); glopnen (v.); glopning (ger.) GLORY: glōria (n.); glōriāciŏun (n.); glōrien (v.(2)); glōriūstē (n.) GLOZE: glōsātŏur (n.); glōzaunt (adj.) GLUG: glug (n.) GLUTINATE: glūtināciŏun (n.); glūtināte (adj.); glūtināten (v.); glūtinātīf (adj. & n.); glūtinen (v.) GLOT: glutten (v.)
not phonaesthetic; 25 lexemes; 51 words	GLADENE: gladen(e (n.) GLADIATOR: gladiātōr (n.) GLADIOL: gladiol (n.) GLAND: glandele (n. and adj.); glandelŏus (adj.); glandes (n.pl.) GLAREOUS: glāreŏus (adj.) GLARIA: glaria (n.) GLASS: glasse (n.) GLATIR: glatissaunt (adj.); glatissing (ppl.) GLAUNDE: glaunde (n.) GLANDER: glaundres (n.) GLEBE: glēbe (n.)

	GLEGEL: glegel (n.) GLEAN: glēne (n.) GLICIRIDE: gliciride (n.) GLINDE: glīnd(e (n.); glīnder (n.) GLIRE: glīre (n.) GLOBBE glŏbber (n.); glŏbben (v.) GLOBE: globe (n.); glŏffare (n.); glŏffing (ger.) GLOCKEN: glocken (v.) GLODIER: glodier (n.) GLOY: gloi (n.) GLONDEN: glōnden (v.) GLOSS: glōsarīe (n.) GLOT: glŏt (n.) GLUTTON: glŏtenish; glŏterī(e (n.); glŏterŏus (adj.); glŏtien (v.); glŏtonī(e (n.); glŏtonlī (adv.); glŏtonŏus (adj.); glŏtŏun (n.); glŏtŏun (adj.); glŏutinge (ger.(1)); glŏutlīche (adv.); glut (n.); glutenerīe (n.); glūternesse (n.); glutterī (adj.) GLOVE: glōve (n.); glōven (v.); glōver (n.); glōveres (n.); glūferī (n.)

'Light', 'Joy' and 'Deceptiveness'

Many of the primary senses for ME *gl-* words associated with 'light/vision' and/or 'gladness' will be familiar to a modern reader. However, polysemous ME adjectival *glad* could mean 'joyful; happy' as well as 'bright; shining'. *Glee* too could mean 'amusement, merriment; joy, bliss; pleasure' and 'shining brightness'; but also links to the 'deceptiveness' field through its senses 'mockery' or 'scheming, intrigue'. From a cognitive-experiential perspective, this is perhaps reflective of the fuzzy line between merry-making and entertainment (on the one hand) and scornful jesting or secret, factional desire (on the other), which would have been a fact of life pertinent to late medieval court and literary culture:[13] cf. *gleeman*, 'one who entertains professionally with singing, playing instrumental music, story-telling, etc.', alongside *glotherer*, 'a flatterer, cajoler', *glaberer*, 'a loud or deceitful talker', and the verb *glaveren*, 'to speak deceitfully about, or deceive (somebody)'.

Other polysemous links between 'light' and 'deceptiveness' are evident. *Glem*, literally 'a beam or radiance of emitted light', had a figurative sense of 'spiritual light', but could also refer to 'a type of what is evanescent or fleeting'; and the ME phrase *maken a glem* meant 'to make a deceptive show'. *Gliteren* could mean 'to have a false or misleading glitter'.

And in terms of language, *glisen* figuratively meant ‘of words: to have rhetorical brilliance but no real substance’. The concept of deceptive brilliance is perhaps most widely epitomized in PDE in the proverbial ‘All that glitters is not gold’; which is first recorded in English in Chaucer’s *The House of Fame* (c.1379), when in describing ‘what harm doth apperance, / Whan hit is fals in existence’ (specifically in reference to deceptive speech), it is added that, ‘Hyt is not al gold that glareth’ (265-6 and 272, respectively).[14] Contemporaneously, and also in reference to deceptive speech, this expression appears in Usk’s *The Testament of Love* (c.1385): ‘For every glyttryng / thyng is nat golde, and under colour of fayre speche many vices may be hyd and / conseled’ (II.235-7).[15] Such an association provides an analogue via a common process of metaphoric abstraction from concrete objects in the physical world to the idea of deception more generally in other areas of human experience (especially language).[16] In both Chaucer and Usk, the metaphor has to do with dissimulation between lovers; but again, there are clear connections with courtly culture (e.g. via ‘courtly love’), which also figures importantly in contextualizing *Pearl*.

Glazing and Glozing

Along with precious stones and ‘gold that glareth’, glass was one of the most lustrous and expensive decorative substances in fourteenth-century England,[17] but it was to some extent viewed as 'inherently untrustworthy, fragile, and garish’: a sense evident in the *Book of Vices and Virtues* when worldly knowledge is described as 'bruteler and febler þan is þe glas'.[18] Also salient in MED citations is the way in which looking glasses (sense 2c of *glass*, n.) are associated with deceptive distortion, as in the *Dialogue Between the Clerk and the Husbandman*: 'Hyt ys nat all tru þat perythe in glasse!'

The earliest senses for *glasen* (adj.) were simply ‘made of glass’ or ‘resembling glass’, but eventually a pejorative sense developed associating ‘glass-like’ with ‘deceptiveness’. This is clear from several ME phraseologies, such as the widely evidenced *yeven a glasen houve*; which meant ‘to delude’, literally ‘to give someone a glass

[glossy/glazed?] cap'.[19] ME *glasen* (v.), in addition to the sense 'to fit with glass', meant 'to polish the surface of' or 'to make shine with a lustrous coating'. To *glasen his houve* similarly meant 'to delude or mock' but more literally probably 'glaze or polish his cap'. Such hoodwinking occurs in *Piers Plowman*, when 'Lif fleigh for feere to Phisik after helpe [. . .] And gaf hym gold good woon that gladede his hertes; / And thei *gyven hym ageyn a glazene howve*.' (XX.169-172).[20] The precise logic of this phrase is somewhat opaque and its origins unknown; but perhaps of some relevance were the major advances, both artistic and socio-symbolic, in fourteenth-century glazing.[21] In particular, stained glass was viewed as a way of self-memorialization, 'typically donated to churches by wealthy patrons anxious to secure their status in this life and the next';[22] however, 'several medieval authorities [e.g Langland and Wycliffe] had expressed their antipathy to expensive and distracting glazing', which expressed self-love instead of love for God.[23]

Also very productive in the field of 'deceptiveness' was *glozing/glossing* (v.) - sometimes punned with *glazing*.[24] A *glasen glose* meant 'a deluding or sophistical interpretation'. And while *glozing* in the sense of 'to discourse upon, expound, interpret' was an occupation central to the intellectual life of medieval England, the earliest examples of this lexeme (as both a verb and a noun in ME) are used in the pejorated sense 'to flatter, deceive with smooth talk; to coax, wheedle'. In this way, *glozen* (v.) was somewhat synonymous with *glaveren*, the occupation of *glotherers* and *glaberers* – typically sycophantic courtiers, wily inconstant lovers, or corrupt religious figures (especially friars).[25] Therefore, while the *gloze* group of words maintained a sense derived from Latin, 'to explain', the common denotations were to provide 'deceitful commentary'; 'the pursuit of favor by adulation, deceit, etc.'; or 'of words, a sentence: falsely embellished'. 'Glossing' was therefore a religious and artistic occupation heavily criticized throughout ME literature (e.g. in *Piers Plowman* when Coveitise 'With *glosynges* and with gabbynges he giled the peple' [XX.125]). The expression 'glossing over something' still has some currency in PDE, but the association with deception is less pronounced than in the idiom of ME, and the complete disappearance of many other words

and expressions incorporating *gl-* + 'deceptiveness' now makes the earlier phonaesthetic correlation opaque.

Glue and Glaire

Similarly associated with both *glass* and 'deceptiveness', and no longer salient in present-day usage was the 'vitreousness/viscousness' category of ME *gl-*. In this vein, *glasen* (adj.), via its sense 'resembling [molten] glass', was also used to describe phlegm. Therefore, the adjectival form *glasi*, could mean 'of phlegm: thick, viscid, and glass-colored'. French is the largest contributor to the 'viscousness' category of ME *gl-*; and the many *glet-* based words in ME are all derived from Old French *glette*, 'slime, filth, purulent matter, "frothe of an egge"'.[26] Especially pertinent to glossy, glittering surfaces, it is significant to note that *glaire*, 'the white of an egg', was used in the tempering of pigments for paints and as adhesive in applying gold leaf for manuscript illumination.[27] It could also be brushed on pastries and pies to create an attractive shiny coating (as in modern baking techniques), and even seems to have been used as an early cosmetic device, as suggested in Lydgate's *Fall of Princes*: 'Women . . . han strictories ["plasters"] to make ther skyn to shyne, Wrouht subtili off gommes & of glaire' (1.6554).[28] Also from French, ME *glue* (n.) was used to refer to several binding, glue-like substances, but for the most part maintained its French meaning, 'bird-lime' (used to snare birds on branches), which eventually extended into the figurative sense 'a snare'. The verb *gleuen* also shows instances of this extension, in the meaning 'to snare or implicate (oneself); entangle (persons)'. *Gleimen* (v.), 'to captivate, ensnare; infect with heresy', incorporates the physical and abstract senses of deception, in a way similar to those words to do with flattery/glossing.

Gliding and Glenting

Finally, the ‘quick/smooth movement’ field associated with ME *gl-* shares links most explicitly with ‘light’ and adds significant semantic content to the phonaesthetic penumbra as a whole. The MED’s *gliden* (v.) is probably the word most prototypical of this category, particularly its sense ‘to pass through the air, sky, etc.; glide smoothly and uninterruptedly’. It is also a polysemous link word with the ‘light/vision’ field in its sense, ‘of light: to come, shine’. In addition, there are several figurative uses recorded in the MED. One of these, ‘of the tongue: to glide in speech’, resonates strongly with the concept of verbal deception that is found elsewhere in the *gl-* lexicon; evident in the ME *The Holy Book Gratia Dei* (a Christian conduct book for members of the laity), in which the dangerous vicissitudes of language are attributed to the ‘tongue’, which ‘*glyddes* lyghtly furthe fra faa [‘few’] wordes to many, fra gud to sume ille, fra sothe to lese ["lies"]’. Similarly, *glenten* (v.) could mean ‘to move or turn quickly to one side’ or ‘to shine, gleam; flash, glitter; glisten, glint’; but *glenten from* meant ‘to conceal (something) from (someone's knowledge)’. It could also mean ‘to deviate’, especially from a path of righteousness; as in the *Life of Saint Erkenwald*: 'None gete me fro þe heghe gate to *glent* out of ryȝt' (241). In the following sections, it will become clear how recalling these connections in ME is significant for understanding *Pearl*, particularly the sense of ‘deviant movement’ *vis-à-vis* ‘deceptive show’.

Phonaesthetic *Gl-* and *Pearl*

Pearl has been described as 'the finest of all the rhymed alliterative works, and the one that most clearly demonstrates the way in which external form is interwoven with theme and content';[29] and central to its thematic agenda is the way the poem ‘dramatizes the conflicts of human perception even more poignantly than it illustrates mystical transport and consolation’.[30] But while a number of interpretative analyses have discussed the significance of what is *seen* by the Dreamer by focusing on the socio-cultural and artistic context, how this relates to what may be *heard* in the soundscape of the poetry itself has received little more than impressionistic mention. Wimsatt, for example, notes the ‘occasional nonsystematic uses

of sound for local effect in many medieval poems, including *Pearl*', quoting lines containing *sw*- collocations that he refers to as 'patently onomatopoetic'.[31] Spearing describes how in *Pearl* the 'painfully bright . . . jewelled landscape is present in the very sound of the verse',[32] but does not recognize why this is so or, more importantly, the way in which the sound relates more profoundly to thematic issues - which, as we shall see, it does.

When scholars do discuss the aural aspects of late medieval alliterative verse in a systematic way, they tend to focus on metre.[33] And while metre is of central importance to poetry, formal analysis should not be limited to metre per se. Informed by the semantic mapping accomplished in the previous section, we are now able to qualify impressions of sound-meaning correlation by observing how these effects are in large part accomplished in *Pearl* through phonaesthetics.

Distribution of Consonant Clusters in Pearl

All twenty fits in *Pearl* are comprised of five twelve-lined stanzas, with four stresses per line. The alliteration is not regular, but instead is used selectively for stylistic effect. In order to get an idea of how the 'doubly alliterative' sound qualities of potentially phonaesthetic, word-initial consonant clusters are distributed throughout the poem (including, but for the moment not limited to *gl*-), I have tallied the lines that have collocations of two or more matching beginning consonant clusters in each of the twenty fits that make up *Pearl*. I have distinguished between lines with two, three and four collocations (four being the most found in any one line):

Table 2. Distribution of all Word-initial Consonant Clusters in Individual Lines of *Pearl.*

Fit	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
Set of Two	11	6	8	7	2	5	3	4	1	2	6	2	5	1	5	4	4	5	5	4

Set of Three	9	6	2	2	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	1	0	1	1
Set of Four	0	3	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	20	15	10	9	2	6	4	4	1	2	6	3	5	1	5	5	5	5	6	5

Taken as a whole, the distribution of consonant clusters is inconstant from fit to fit, with predominance in the opening fits quickly diminishing into a relatively sparse, albeit fairly consistent, incorporation of clusters in Fit V (where the conversation with the Maiden begins) to the end of the poem in Fit XX. But rather than discuss any statistical significance, what I want to emphasize here is that the collocations are irregular aspects of the verse. For even in the first fit (where they are most apparent), the collocations occur in only twenty of sixty lines, and are therefore in no way characteristic of a typical line in *Pearl*. Such irregularity is almost always meaningful: 'Rhythm participates in the greater semantic density of poetic language . . . but deviation in an established rhythm thrusts itself into the reader's attention in a way that is impossible in prose'.[34] It is important to recall the oral/aural context and the sound salience, or 'deviation' inherent in word-initial consonant clusters that becomes apparent when one reads the poem out-loud. For what Borroff has observed in relation to *Sir Gawain an the Green Knight* may also be said of *Pearl*: the poem 'was literally made to be performed, and any [oral] rendition, whether fully accurate philologically or not, gives it the life of the voice and moves its aural designs from the visible into the domain of audible reality'.[35] Elsewhere, Borroff has described how 'nonhomorganic consonant combinations' such as *gl-* become 'conspicuous' in patterns of stress in medieval alliterative verse and are therefore difficult to place in intermediate (i.e. unstressed) positions within the line.[36] In this way, *gl-* words, as well as other words beginning with pronounced consonant clusters, are always superordinate in terms of word-initial stress in the lines in which they appear. Sound salience is especially strong when these words collocate together within a line, which in turn

would draw attention to, or 'thrust into the reader's attention' the semantic and cognitive associations, or network of meanings implicated by a particular phonaestheme. Looking at the overall numbers in Table 2, it is perhaps tempting to interpret along the lines of 'consonant clusters (containing more phonetic stress) = extra materiality' (e.g. in aurally texturing the physicality of the landscape) and therefore the overall drop in potentially phonaesthetic collocations might have something to do with a progression from the earthy erber, to the paradisal garden, and then to the more abstract spiritual plane (once the Dreamer encounters the Maiden's corrective). Overall this may be true, but for the purposes of the current analysis, the distribution of *gl-* differs from the overall figures for all alliterating consonant clusters in Table 2: *gl-* collocations occur nowhere in Fit I, several times in fits II and III, and then again in fits XVII and XIX (see below). In the remainder of this paper I will draw parallels between themes crucial to appreciating *Pearl* and the 'audible reality' of phonaesthetic *gl-* words as they are (not) found at specific points in the poem; especially in the paradisal garden, during the dialogue between the Dreamer and Maiden, and finally in the vision of the New Jerusalem and the Lamb.

Gl- in Pearl

Words beginning with *gl-* appear a total of forty-seven times in *Pearl*. All of these are phonaesthetic, save *glayuve* for the 'lance' (654), which I have categorized as 'vaguely phonaesthetic'. Of these forty-seven words (including those not found in a collocation), thirty-five occur within four out of the twenty fits that comprise the entire poem: eleven in the second fit, six in the third, eight in the seventeenth and ten in the nineteenth. Twenty-eight of the forty-seven appear in collocations within the stressed alliterative word-sets of individual lines:[37]

a) Þe lyȝt of hem myȝt no mon leuen,
Þe *glemande glory* þat of hem *glent*
(II. 68-70)

b) Quen *glem* of *glodez* agaynz hem *glydez*,

Wyth schymeryng schene ful schrylle þay schynde.

(II. 79-80)

c) In þe founce þer stonden stonez stepe,

As *glente* þurȝ *glas* þat *glowed* and *glyȝt*,

(II. 113-114)

d) For vrþely herte myȝt not suffyse

To þe tenþe dole of þo *gladnez glade*.

(III. 135-136)

e) Her fygure fyn quen I had fonte,

Suche *gladande glory* con to me *glace*

(III. 170-171)

f) Þe borȝ watz al of brende golde bryȝt,

As *glemande glas* burnist broun,

(XVII. 989-990)

g) Þe wal abof þe bantels bent

O jasporye, as *glas* þat *glysnande* schon.

(XVII. 1017-1018)

h) Þe stretez of golde as *glasse* al bare,

Þe wal of jasper þat *glent* as *glayre*.

(XVII. 1025-1026)

i) Wyth gret delyt þay *glod* in fere

On golden gatez þat *glent* as *glasse*;

(XIX. 1105-1109)

j) Þer kesten ensens of swete smelle;

Þen *glory* and *gle* watz nwe abroched;

(XIX. 1121-1123)

k) In His sembelaunt watz neuer sene,

So wern His *glentez gloryous glade*.

(XIX. 1141-1144)

In the following sections, I will provide an in-depth analysis of the phonaesthetic *gl-* clusters in these fits, and discuss how their placement in these particular sections is thematically significant. Generally, what I will argue is that themes previously used to discuss *Pearl* by present-day scholars are in fact formalized and aurally transmitted through the sound-salient *gl-* phonaestheme in subtle, however (once one recognizes the semantic mapping of ME *gl-* outlined in the previous section) clearly significant ways. The specific interpretative frameworks I take as points of departure will be familiar, and are essentially two: 1) 'ocular skepticism' as described by Stanbury; and, in relation to the former, 2) the 'climax', or 'process' of failure that figures in many of the major readings of the poem.[38] Put simply, these interpretations describe the Dreamer's inability to ultimately move beyond the glittering surface of what he sees in the paradisal garden and his movement, or deviation from 'glymme pure' (1088) towards the 'glory and gle' (1123) of earthly desire, which results in his expulsion from the vision of the New Jerusalem. Stanbury in particular has argued that the Dreamer's failure must be understood in relation to an ambivalence towards art/artifice in the Middle Ages, particularly religiously-orientated images in an aristocratic context of patronage and reception; wherein 'The crisis of fusion and separation that is created in *Pearl* by the vision of the New Jerusalem involves not only the dreamer but also the reader in a complex visual hermeneutic'.[39] Here I will argue that consideration of the *gl-* network of associations in the poem formalizes the same ambivalence and/or paradox both in terms of material analogues, such as *glazed glass* and the *glaire* used in manuscript illumination, and (crucially for the poem's audience) aurally in ways that also raise questions to do with the spiritual limitations of vernacular Christian poetry made to entertain the courtly ears of a secular laity. What will become apparent is that the 'deception' field of experience and aural scepticism are perhaps more prominent in the scenes of *Pearl* than previously recognized; and, in conjunction, *gl-* collocations contribute significantly to the sense of movement - again, both ocular and aural - throughout the poem: a movement that diverges at the New Jerusalem and

ultimately results in the Dreamer fatally glossing over the Lamb in preference for the Maiden. In turn, distinguishing between ocular and aural scepticism reveals a dialectic between the Dreamer's failure and the audience's experience of the poem, wherein the limitations of conjoining artifice/entertainment with spiritual education/consolation is brought to the forefront.

The Paradisal Garden 'þat glowed and glyȝt'

The first *gl-* collocation occurs in the first stanza of Fit II. Here the Dreamer falls asleep from mournful exhaustion, leaving his body behind and then entering the lustrous dreamscape: 'Fro spot my spyryt þer sprang in space [. . .] Where rych rokkez wer to dyscreuen. / Þe lyȝt of hem myȝt no mon leuen, / Þe *glemande glory* þat of hem *glent*' (61; 68-70). Especially when read aloud, the most salient sounds in this stanza are the alliterating collocations of beginning consonant-clusters: *sp-* in line 61, and *gl-* in line 70. The Dreamer's sudden, metaphorically upward transport to the paradisal garden is clearly reflected in the horizontal movement phonaesthetics of *sp-* in the first line (61) of Fit II, 'Fro *spot* my *spyryt* þer *sprang* in *space*', whereby his senses are swept from the mournful, somnolent erber to the 'gladnez glade' (136) of a fantastic *gl-*filled dreamscape. In an instant, the previous 'stylle stounde' (20)[40] of enclosed stasis is overwhelmed by glimmering light, gliding movement and gladdened, almost frenetic sensory ecstasy.

Spiritually, this moment signals a 'sensory awakening' that would have been understood in the Middle Ages as a transitional stage in Christian consolation; not the immediate transport to heaven the Dreamer initially takes it for.[41] The three collocating *gl-* words chosen by the poet in line 70, for example, all have their most central, literal phonaesthetic senses in the 'light/vision' field, but their thematic relevance comes from metaphorical senses such as that in the root noun *glem*, 'a source of spiritual radiance', and in *glory*, 'the splendor of God or Christ'. However, dreams in the Middle Ages, like the *hortus conclusus* (Garden of Eden/Love *qua* enclosed garden), were overdetermined spaces; and 'one

of the commonest medieval sayings about dreams is *somnia ne cures*, or, as Pertelote translates it, "Ne do no fors of dremes" (*Nun's Priest's Tale* 2941)'.[42] Even more specifically, the deceptive nature of dream-visions is directly associated with *gl-* in Robert Mannyng's *Handlyng Synne*, a manuscript reproduced throughout the fourteenth century and almost certainly known to the *Pearl*-poet and much of his audience: 'Beleuë nouȝt moche yn no dremys, For many be nat but *gleteryng glemys*' (379-80).[43] Equally relevant then is the sense for *glem* 'a type of ["light" or "spiritual radiance"] what is evanescent or fleeting'; and *to maken a glem* was to 'make a deceptive show'. *Glory* too is ambivalent and could be used synonymously with *vainglory*, according to the MED, 'meaningless honor, praise, or renown; adulation, empty flattery; also, empty ceremony, display, or pomp; *pl.* excessive celebration'. In this way, the full polysemous character of *gl-* is implicated from the beginning of *Pearl* by the very nature of its setting; and vice-versa, an interpretation of that setting is problematized for the audience by the fact that it is characterized by an aural preponderance of *gl-*. The semantic ambiguity being exploited here is stylistically similar to 'the serious interest in puns and word-play shown by medieval writers such as the *Gawain*-poet',[44] and from the first instance phonaesthetic *gl-* helps suggest to the aural audience that all is not as it seems.

The idea that glamour was close to godliness in an overdetermined dreamscape is of course further complicated in the poem by the fact that it is seen through the eyes of the Dreamer, or, as it were, the *ears* of a reader/hearer. As a general point, this would have resonated strongly with the poem's audience in connection to the iconoclasm controversy, often associated with Lollard hostility towards images.[45] Such scepticism towards art and the human senses was a perennial concern; strongly reminiscent of the writings of St. Augustine, who, for example, in ruminating on light in his *Confessions* writes, 'A delight to my eyes are beautiful and varied forms, glowing and pleasant colours. May these get no hold upon my soul; May God hold it!'[46] And while the contradiction inherent in conjoining an 'imaginative fiction operating within a world of sensible objects with a profound inner spirituality which sought to transcend the corporeal world' may seem problematic by modern standards,[47] Stanbury argues that 'willingness to embrace this contradiction' is of key contextual

significance for interpreting all those ‘glittering’ scenes in *Pearl*.[48] What the consideration of *gl-* reveals is the way in which this hermeneutic contradiction is artfully presented to the audience directly in ‘beautiful and varied forms’ of sound-semantics, which in this case relate phonaesthetically to other materials used in Christian art, such as *glass*.

Glass is explicitly mentioned in relation to the paradisal garden in line 114 of Fit II, ‘As *glente* þurȝ *glas* þat *glowed* and *glyȝt*’, but is implied in the descriptions of light and colour, as well as the many other *gl-* words used to describe these effects throughout Fits II and III. In particular, Phillips has argued that the poet drew from newly developed techniques in glazing - the supreme art of light in fourteenth-century England - as an experiential source in constructing the dreamscape.[49] As was discussed earlier, the socio-symbolic significance of glazing registers both a ‘deceptive’, untrustworthy brittleness (e.g. in ‘glasen houve’), as well as aristocratic patronage; in *Pearl* to some extent reiterating the transitoriness of the vitreous dreamscape and, by extension, the poem itself (made for an aristocratic audience). Equally important in formalizing the Dreamer's way of seeing and, most importantly, what the audience hears is the materiality of glass surfaces and the related 'quick, smooth movement' phonaestetics of *gl-*. The phonaesthetics add to the sense of movement as the Dreamer’s gaze carries the verse, gliding swiftly over the glossy surface of glinting rock-faces and stones glowing like glass in the stream as his frenetic ‘gladness’ increases climactically ‘more and more’ (which is the five-times repeated concatenation phrase for Fit III). Simultaneously, *gl-* helps style a glazed aural landscape signaling movement; one which is further amplified with other light-related phonaesthemes that were also active in the semantic field of 'quick movement' such as *br-* (e.g. 'beryl *bryȝt*' [110]) and *sh/sch* (e.g. *schymeryng schene* ful *schrylle* þay *schynde* [80]) vis-à-vis verbs like *brŏnten*, 'to move suddenly; rush' and *shēten*, 'move swiftly, rush'. For a reader/hearer, the effect is that at this point it is almost impossible not to feel as if one is gliding swiftly alongside the Dreamer, albeit towards an impending moment of crisis.

'he to gyle þat neuer glente': The Maiden's Admonishments

The final *gl-* collocation in the first half of the poem, 'Such *gladande glory* con to me *glace*' (171), occurs tellingly just as the Dreamer begins to recognize the Maiden as the pearl-daughter that 'me *aglyȝte*' (245). In fact, it signals his own movement, *glacing* towards an errant interpretation of his surroundings; for from the same moment that *gl-* collocations cease (picking up again from Fit XVII at the New Jerusalem), so too does the sense of movement; at which point the Dreamer concludes, 'Now haf I fonde hyt [my perle], I schal ma feste / And wony with yt in schyr wod-schawez' (283-284). This assumption, based on the Dreamer's credulous 'gladande glory' and lack of ocular scepticism towards the glittering dreamscape, is immediately rebuked by the Maiden. After describing him as raving mad ('So madde ȝe be!' [290]), she verbalizes the thematic crux of the poem, 'I halde þat jueler lyttel to prayse / Þat leuez wel þat he sez wyth yȝe' (301-2). The poem's audience is then set in opposition to the Dreamer when the Maiden asks him, 'Wy borde ȝe men?', i.e. 'Why do you make a mockery of/deceive men [them; mankind?]?' (290). At this point, the ‘deception’ field of significance, clearly embedded in the phonaesthetic penumbra of ME *gl-* earlier via those points described above, becomes verbally explicit; and in the dialogue that follows, the Maiden continues to redress the line between perception and understanding. This is a significant turning point in the poem; for even if a reader/hearer is meant to sympathize with sensory seduction induced by the glittering gloss that overwhelms the Dreamer, their spiritual consolation - and that of the poem's patron, whose own loss of a daughter may well have inspired the poem - must be achieved independently of the former's way of seeing.

The discussion section of *Pearl* (fits VI-XVI) contains no *gl-* collocations; which supports the aurally thematic links *gl-* has with the sense of movement, and by contrast the dialogue between the Dreamer and the Maiden serves as a stationary, focused intellectual intervention. Yet, although there are no *gl-* collocations again until Fit XVII, there are two specific occurrences of *gl-* in the dialogue that further encourage aural scepticism in preparation for the vision of the New Jerusalem. The first comes in the first stanza of Fit XII: ‘Bot he to gyle þat neuer *glente* / As inoscente is sef and ryȝte’ (671-672). Here, ‘glente’ may

be translated as ‘deviate’, incorporating both the ‘movement’ and ‘deception’ fields of *gl-*; wherein a relationship between the *borden* (v.) of the Maiden's previous, seemingly rhetorical question and her admonition against ‘glenting to guile’ sceptically recalls the Dream's perceptions as expressed in the sound-semantics of the verse: ‘Þe *glemande glory* þat of hem *glent*’ (70), ‘*glente* þurȝ *glas* þat *glowed* and *glyȝt*’ (114), and so on.

Furthermore, a *gl-* word with its primary sense in the ‘deceptiveness’ field occurs in one of the two rules of 'the ryȝtwys man', who, as stipulated by the Maiden, 'Ne *glauerez* her nieȝbor wyth no gyle' (688). At this point, the oral/aural connotations of *glavering*, 'to speak loudly or deceitfully; deceive', seem to implicate the performance of poetry itself in a way very similar to the 'glavering glossators' from *Piers Plowman*; as Walling has argued: 'Fictions, including those of *Piers Plowman* itself, are liable to corruption by self-regarding interpretations and flattering rhetoric, practices that undermine fiction's potential to communicate any meaningful truths'.[50] In a similar vein, Chaucer's Parson (arguably the only clerical pilgrim represented as genuinely godly in *The Canterbury Tales*)[51] explicitly associates the entertainment value of alliterative verse with the risky practices of glossing: 'I kan nat geeste "rum, ram, ruf," by lettre . . . therefore, if yow list - I wol nat *glose* -' ('Parson's Prologue', 43-5). Not only are concerns to do with the seductive power of sound in verse registered in *Pearl*, but the listening audience is encouraged (largely via ME *gl*-associations) to be sceptical of their reactions to a fiction at once meant to address death and Christian revelation, but commissioned to entertain the ear and the mind's eye. That this instruction precedes the vision of the New Jerusalem serves to remind the audience how the attractive ‘glossing’ that follows (much of it incorporating *gl-*) - i.e. both in terms of the Dreamer's interpretation and the sound of the verse itself used to reformalize the originally biblical experience - is intended to be received not just as an end in itself (i.e. as aural entertainment), but as part of a consolatory process: 'in the final state of mystical transport we abandon the senses and "ascend to the superessential gleam of the divine darkness by an incommensurable and absolute transport of pure mind"' (here quoting Bonaventure's influential *Itinerarium* [7.5,

100-101], a treatise that described the stages of spiritual ascent and would have been available to the *Pearl*-poet);[52] or, as it is described in *Pearl*, being 'rauyste wyth glymme pure' (1088).

'glymme pure' vs. *'glaire'*: Alternative ways of perceiving the New Jerusalem

After the Maiden condescends to allow the Dreamer ‘a syȝt’ of the New Jerusalem - also making it clear that he may not ‘enter withinne’ - light effects once again become the focus of attention from Fit XVII. At line 990, the analogy with glass reappears: 'as *glemande glas* burnist broun'; and then again at 1018, where the wall 'O jasporye, as *glas* þat *glysnande* schon'. Also prominent in the Dreamer's gaze are the many types of jewels that feature in the description of the same city in the Book of Revelation. But in contrast to the paradisal garden, light in this new setting comes directly from an inner spiritual source, specifically the Lamb: ‘Of sunne . . . Þe Self God watz her lombe-lyȝt’ (1045-1046). It has been argued that in fits XVII and XVIII there is some indication that the Dreamer 'sees' beyond himself after hearing the Maiden's words of wisdom; which 'on one level testifies to his enhanced intellectual understanding of death and redemption'.[53] And in this sense, it is significant that the ‘light’ of *gl-* is specified here as ‘glymme pure’, or true spiritual radiance; which draws a comparison with impure interpretations of *gleaming* related elsewhere in the poem. The emotional reaction, or movement is therefore more promising in that it leads to peace, 'nawþer reste ne trauayle' (1087), as opposed to the almost sexual gladness ‘more and more' exhibited earlier. Thus, the central point is reiterated: it is not *what* one sees or hears in Christian art but *how* they perceive it. Nonetheless, in a way prophetic of his own failure, the Dreamer also reiterates the paradox of perception in that ‘. . . so gret merwayle / No fleschly hert ne myȝt endeure’ (1081-2).

That the Dreamer focuses on, and in some cases elaborates the lustrous and courtly materials from the Book of Revelation - embellishing the pleasurable details, while altogether omitting anything to do with the wrath of the Lamb (*ira Agni*, e.g. at Revelation 7:16) - is reflective of late medieval aristocratic culture, which to some extent associated Christian

spirituality with physical adornment, including fine clothing, gold and jewels (especially pearls).[54] Indeed, the poem itself is analogous to a pearl, wherein '"juel" meant not only a precious stone but also, more commonly, a highly wrought art-object'.[55] But (despite any references to the parable of the Pearl of Price in Matthew 13:44-6) jewels and 'glorious' adornment are highly ambivalent in *Pearl*; and here we might note the *gl-* collocation found in a description of 'þe feloun' Satan from *Cleanness* (or *Purity*, also thought to have been written by the *Pearl*-poet and found in the same manuscript), who 'were so fers for his fayre wedez / And his *glorious glem* þat *glent* so bryȝt' (217-18). What is more, similar attitudes towards such 'glory' are clear in Revelation itself, wherein the ruinous Babylon shares many superficial qualities with the New Jerusalem; and merchant jewelers in particular are singled out as suppliers to the vainglorious Whore of Babylon (18:7-12):

> *Quantum glorificavit se et in deliciis fuit, tantum date illi tormetum et luctum . . . Et negotiatores terrae flebunt et lugebunt super illam, quoniam merces eorum nemo emet amplius, merces auri et argenti et lapidis pretiosi et margaritarum*
>
> [As much as she hath glorified herself and hath been in delicacies, so much torment and sorrow give ye to her . . . And the merchants of the earth shall weep and mourn over her, for no man shall buy their merchandise any more, merchandise of gold and of silver and of precious stones and of pearls][56]

With this in mind, it seems especially significant that Helen Barr argues for a socio-historically informed view of the Dreamer as belonging to 'a newly emergent social group' in fourteenth-century England, the jewelers, 'either goldsmiths or merchants trading in luxury goods for their social superiors'.[57] Understanding the Dreamer in this way more firmly places his gaze in relation to a dangerous fascination with courtly adornment; the court being 'the place which is always assumed to be present in the audience's mind as a point of contrast and comparison'.[58] It is also significant in relation to the poem's connections with illuminated Apocalypse manuscripts so popular with wealthy members of late medieval society and

clearly used at least in part by the poet in his construction of the New Jerusalem.[59] For amongst other details that suggest reference to such manuscripts, we find the 'Þe wal of jasper þat *glent* as *glayre*' (1026; an analogy not in Revelation). It is no doubt cognitive connections between *glaire*, lustrous appearances (including feminine medieval cosmetics) and its use in applying gold-leaf (also supplied by merchant jewelers) to illuminated manuscripts that led the *Pearl*-poet to use it here; and despite it being in one of the more spiritually-promising moments for the Dreamer (Fit XVII), it continues to suggest artistic analogues - in addition to glazed windows and other 'jewels' - commissioned by an aristocratic laity and materialized by the Dreamer's social group. In this sense, the Dreamer may be skilled in literally judging that 'hyt is not al gold that glareth', but is disadvantaged in the more pertinent spiritual sense as one destined (not only a mortal man, but a jeweler), indeed trained to perceive in a particular way, which proves problematic when gazing upon that which he deems singularly without peer ('Ne proued I neuer her precios pere' [4]).

'Þen glory and gle watz nwe abroched': Gliding Virgins and the Glossing of the Lamb

Regardless of any ambiguity to do with the Dreamer's spiritual progression in fits XVII and XVIII, in Fit XIX it is clear that credulous sensory lust (for which the Dreamer was chided in lines 301-2) has returned. He is no longer being carried beyond himself, 'rauyste wyth glymme pure', but driven to earthly 'luf-longyng in gret delty' (1152; 'delight' a telling thematic concatenation word for Fit XIX). When he sees the virgins, who 'with gret delyt þay *glod* in fere / On golden gatez þat *glent* as *glasse*' (1105-1106), so attractive are they all that it is 'Tor to knaw þe *gladdest* chere' (1109). Following this comes a sensory inundation, filled with 'ensens of swete smelle' (1122) and song 'to loue þat gay Juelle' (1124); and so 'Þen *glory* and *gle* watz nwe abroched' (1123). The 'deceptive movement' in this fit, 'abroached anew', is aurally formalized by a renewed preponderence of *gl-*: Fit XIX contains more *gl-* collocations than any other fit except Fit II where it also helped formalize the Dreamer's deviant *glenting* in the wrong direction. The Lamb itself/himself is described in terms of

worldly, superficial virtues, such as ‘lokez symple, Hymself so gent’ (1134), and, suggestive of the aural dimension again, ‘Best watz He, blyþest, and moste to pryse, / Þat euer I herde of speche spent’ (1131-1132). The Dreamer notices the wound in the Lamb's side, but his response is exclamatory surprise, for so quickly has he forgotten the Maiden's description of the hateful ‘*glayue* so grymly grounde’ (654) that pierced Christ's side, opening the well of grace from which blood, analogous to ‘glymme pure’, runs forth.[60] In the final verse line spent on the Lamb one finds three *gl-* words: 'So wern His *glentez gloryous glade*' (1144); and as with his original recognition of the Maiden in Fit II, this signals a regressive transition for the Dreamer. For the eye contact with the Lamb (notably an ocular engagement not found in Revelation) triggers a dangerously human response and return to self-indulgence that causes him to *glent* in the direction of the Maiden. In this way, the 'glentez gloryous glade' seen by the Dreamer in the face of the Lamb more poignantly register his own gaze, as if peering self-obsessively into a deceptive looking glass. This movement contains further parallels in illuminated renditions, in which one finds eroticized scenes depicting the ideal of medieval feminine beauty in blushing blonde virgins, or examples where the visionary becomes enamoured with an angel guide and the latter needs to physically redirect the gaze back towards God.[61] Again, the jeweler following his lost jewel here figuratively reflects on the audience and their relationship to *Pearl* in that the poem was 'designed for socially and sexually active laypeople' most likely expected to need some redirection in their interpretation of the poem.[62] Here the seductive body is dual: Maiden and poem, both glossy, but transient jewels.

In the end, sensory stimulation inspiring earthly love/lust proves too much for the Dreamer, who 'drof by eye and ere' (1153) attempts to ford the river that symbolizes his separation from the divine. The 'ear' in particular here re-implicates the poem's audience and their participation in the aural movement of the verse, phonaesthetically in large part driven by *gl-*. For the Dreamer, his inability to move beyond worldly gleaming and glee (at least for long) means that eventually his madness returns, ‘my manez mynde to maddyng malte’ (1154), and

he attempts to follow the Maiden with his body, which leads to his being ‘outfleme’ (1176). In this way, not only do the ‘glentez gloryous glade’ of the Lamb formalize the errant way in which the Dreamer perceives the Lamb, but they also recall the ‘deception + movement’ field(s) of the *gl-* phonaestheme and the sense of *glenten*, ‘to deviate’, found earlier in the Maiden's warning at line 671. But what the Dreamer does not see, the audience may hear: ‘recipients respond to prompts in a text, which leads them to inference certain values or even ‘messages,’ most importantly where these values or issues are not explicit’;[63] and ‘we could see *Pearl*'s portrayal of the jeweller as invoking such a view only to work against it by holding it up to his lay audience's scrutiny’.[64] So while a fictive jeweler does not overcome his human desires, there is an implicit hope (perhaps even expectation) that the reader/hearer (and perhaps patron) of the poem will not have been 'glavered' (688) with poetic guile, 'mocked' (290) by the Dreamer's way of seeing things; but will grasp that the glozing of poetry and the sensory awakening it promotes are only an initial step towards true Christian consolation. As the banished Dreamer realizes afterwards, he should have *listened* more carefully: if only he had ‘halden me þer in trwe entent / As þe perle me prayed þat watz so þryuen . . . To mo of His mystarys I hade ben dryuen’ (1190-4).

Conclusion

As Andrew and Waldron have observed, ‘form is closely related to meaning’ in *Pearl*;[65] and it should come as no surprise that the poem includes (what we now refer to as) phonaesthemes in significant ways. In the aural context of ME alliterative poetry, these forms communicate semantic-thematic congruencies, not just in texturing the dreamscape in ME, but also by nuancing its more profound, ambivalent significance. In this respect, the central theme of ‘ocular skepticism’ in *Pearl* is extended to an aural scepticism, which is actually built into the formal structures of its lines and would have been available, indeed salient to the ME-speakers who encountered the poem. In turn this suggests a poem that contains perhaps more self-reflective, critical elements to do with its own artistic power than has previously

been recognized. For it is not just the material aspects of aristocratic life depicted in the poem susceptible to scrutiny here, but the poem itself. What is implied is of course not a complete refusal of poetic artifice, but a spiritually-minded approach to the unresolved complexities that arise through its performance and reception as both *glossy* aural entertainment and *glossed* Christian text.

[1] J. R. Firth, *The Tongues of Men & Speech*, Reprinted (London, 1964), 184.

[2] Marjorie Levinson, 'What Is New Formalism?', *PMLA*, 122 (2007), 558-69.

[3] I will be focusing on word-initial examples, but phonaesthemes can appear anywhere within a word; as in the 'slow, tired or tedious action' suggested by the word-final *-ag* phonaestheme in PDE *drag, flag, lag, nag,* and *sag*; see Michael L. Samuels, *Linguistic Evolution, with Special Reference to English* (London, 1972), 48.

[4] Jeremy J. Smith, 'Semantics and Metrical Form in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*' in S. Powell and J. J. Smith (eds), *New Perspectives on Middle English Texts: A Festschrift for R. A. Waldron* (Woodbridge, Suffolk, 2000), 87-103; Piotr Sadowski, 'The Sound-Symbolic Quality of Word-Initial *gr-* Cluster in Middle English Alliterative Verse', *Bulletin of the Modern Language Society*, 102 (2001), 37-47.

[5] Sarah Stanbury, *Seeing the Gawain-Poet: Description and the Act of Perception* (Philadelphia, 1991), 16.

[6] I. E. Reay, 'A Lexical Analysis of Metaphor and Phonaestheme' (Unpublished University of Glasgow D. Phil. Thesis, 1994), 400. Of course, this 'regulatory' force is crucial in preventing phonaesthemes from otherwise over-determining the meaning associated with a specific sound and therefore undermining the important conventionality of phonemic systems; see also Samuels, *Evolution*, 45-8.

[7] Benjamin K. Bergen, 'The Psychological Reality of Phonaesthemes', *Language*, 80 (2004), 290-311 (302).

[8] For an overview of cognitive approaches to linguistic phenomena, see John R. Taylor, *Linguistic Categorization*, 3rd edn (Oxford and New York, 2003).

[9] Sadowski, 'Sound-Symbolic', 42.

[10] Sadowski, 'Sound-Symbolic', 45.

[11] Smith, 'Semantics,' 97-8.

[12] Dwight Bolinger, *Forms of English: Accent, Morpheme, Order*, ed. I. Abe and T. Kanekiyo (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1965), 221-222.

[13] Amanda Walling, 'Vicious Praise: Flattery in Late Medieval English Politics and Poetry' (Unpublished Stanford University D. Phil. Thesis, 2007).

[14] Unless otherwise noted, all Chaucer quotes are taken from *The Riverside Chaucer*, ed. L. D. Benson (Oxford, 1987).

[15] Thomas Usk, *The Testament of Love*, ed. R. A. Shoaf (Kalamazoo, 1998).

[16] Elizabeth C. Traugott and Richard B. Dasher, *Regularity in Semantic Change* (Cambridge, 2005), 75.

[17] Richard Marks, *Stained Glass in England During the Middle Ages* (Toronto, 1993), 47.

[18] David. K. Coley, '"Withyn a temple ymad of glas": Glazing, Glossing, and Patronage in Chaucer's House of Fame', *The Chaucer Review* 45 (2010), 59-84 (60).

[19] Also, MED 'houve' (n.) (c) ~ of glas, glasen ~, delusive protection; maken a ~ of glas, yeven a glasen ~, to delude (sb.); glasen ~, deceive (sb.); clouten (cutten) ~, get the better (of sb.); maken a ~ aboven a calle, deceive (sb.) by false appearances, hoodwink (sb.); setten ~, make a fool (of sb.).

[20] Here and throughout, the version of *Piers* quoted is: William Langland, *The Vision of Piers Plowman: A Critical Edition of the B-Text*, ed. A. V. C. Schmidt (London, 1995).

[21] Heather Phillips, 'Medieval Glass-Making Techniques and the Imagery of Glass in Pearl', *Florilegium* 6 (1984), 195-215.

[22] Coley, 'Glazing', 78.

[23] Marks, 'Stained Glass', 215.

[24] Coley, 'Glazing', 72.

[25] Amanda Walling, 'Friar Flatterer: Glossing and the Hermeneutics of Flattery in *Piers Plowman*', *The Yearbook of Langland Studies* 21 (2007), 57-76.

[26] 'gleet, n.', OED Online (Oxford, June 2013) <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/78873?rskey=aTAxvd&result=1&isAdvanced=false> accessed 23 July 2013.

[27] Michelle P. Brown, *Understanding Illuminated Manuscripts: A Guide to Technical Terms* (London, 1994), 22.

[28] Henry Bergen (ed.), *Lydgate's Fall of Princes*, 4 vols (London, 1924-1927).

[29] Thorlac Turville-Petre, *The Alliterative Revival* (Cambridge, 1977), 68.

[30] Stanbury, *Seeing*, 16.

[31] James I. Wimsatt, 'Rhyme, the Icons of Sound, and the Middle English "Pearl"', *Style* 30 (1996), 189-220 (207).

[32] A. C. Spearing, *Medieval Dream-Poetry* (Cambridge, 1976), 114.

[33] For example, in Turville-Petre, *Alliterative Revival*; Ad Putter, *An Introduction to the Gawain-poet* (London, 1996); H. N. Duggan, 'Meter, Stanza, Vocabulary, Dialect', in D. Brewer and J. Gibson (eds), *A Companion to the Gawain-Poet* (Woodbridge, 1997), 221-242.

[34] Derek Attridge, *The Rhythms of English Poetry* (London, 1982), 303; see also Smith, 'Semantics', 93.

[35] Marie Borroff, *Traditions and Renewals: Chaucer, the Gawain-Poet, & Beyond* (New Haven and London, 2003), 177.

[36] Marie Borroff, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight: A Stylistic and Metrical Study* (New Haven and London, 1962), 68.

[37] Throughout this essay I have used Malcolm Andrew and Ronald Waldron (eds), *The Poems of the Pearl Manuscript*, 4th edn (Exeter, 2002). I prefer this edition to others due to its detailed annotations and (to my mind) superior layout.

[38] Theodore Bogdanos, *Pearl: Image of the Ineffable* (London, 1983), 24; P. M. Kean, *The Pearl: An Interpretation* (London, 1967), 210; A. C. Spearing, *The Gawain-Poet* (Cambridge, 1970), 170; Stanbury, *Seeing*, 35.

[39] Stanbury, *Seeing*, 33.

[40] See Reay, 'Phonaestheme', for a historical mapping of *st-*.

[41] Stanbury, *Seeing*, 21.

[42] Spearing, *Dream-Poetry*, 62.

[43] Frederick James Furnivall (ed.), *Robert of Brunne's 'Handlyng synne'* (London, 1901); 'Mannyng, Robert (*d.* in or after 1338)', Raymond G. Biggar in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, online ed., ed. Lawrence Goldman (Oxford) <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/17986> accessed 23 July 2013.

[44] Putter, *An Introduction*, 149.

[45] Margaret Aston, *Lollards and Reformers: Images and Literacy in Late Medieval Religion* (London, 1984); John Bowers, 'The Politics of *Pearl*', *Exemplaria* 7 (1995), 419-441 (420).

[46] Saint Augustine, *Confessions*, tr. H. Chadwick (Oxford and New York, 1991), 209.

[47] John V. Fleming, *An Introduction to the Franciscan Literature of the Middle Ages* (Chicago, 1977), 248.

[48] Stanbury, *Seeing*, 129.

[49] Phillips, 'Glass-Making', 210.

[50] Walling, 'Flatterer', 58.

[51] Jill Mann, *Chaucer and Medieval Estates Satire* (Cambridge, 1973), 55-60.

[52] Stanbury, *Seeing*, 16.

[53] Stanbury, *Seeing*, 21.

[54] Felicity Riddy, 'Jewels in *Pearl*,' in D. Brewer and J. Gibson (eds), *A Companion to the Gawain-Poet* (Woodbridge, 1997), 143-55.

[55] Riddy, 'Jewels', 147.

[56] Angela M. Kinney (ed.), *The Vulgate Bible*, vol. 6: *The New Testament, Douay-Rheims Translation* (Cambridge, Mass. and London, 2013), 1385.

[57] Helen Barr, '*Pearl* – or "The Jeweller's Tale"', *Medium Aevum* 69 (2000), 59-60.

[58] Putter, *An Introduction*, 19.

[59] Muriel A. Whitaker, '"Pearl" and Some Illustrated Apocalypse Manuscripts", *Viator* 12 (1981), 183-96.

[60] See the note for line 654 in Andrew and Waldrom, *The Poems*, 84.

[61] Whitaker, 'Illustrated Apocalypse', 186; Stanbury, *Seeing*, 28.

[62] Nicholas Watson, 'The *Gawain*-Poet as a Vernacular Theologian', in D. Brewer and J. Gibson (eds), *A Companion to the Gawain-Poet*, (Woodbridge, 1997), 293-314 (297 and 300).

[63] Helen Barr, 'Religious Practice in Chaucer's *Prioress's Tale*: Rabbit and/or Duck?', *Studies in the Age of Chaucer* 32 (2010), 39-65 (41).

[64] Watson, 'Theologian', 300.

[65] Andrew and Waldron, *The Poems*, 34.