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*The Poems of the Pearl Manuscript: Pearl, Cleanness,
Patience, Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, Fully Revised
Fifth Edition with New Introduction and Incorporating Prose
Translation on CD-ROM (review)*

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contributors are anxious that future work is not moulded by the political exigencies of the ruling parties in the present day states of Europe. One may look forward to the updating of this survey in another ten years time.

*Sybil M. Jack
Sydney, N.S.W.*

Andrew, Malcolm and Ronald **Waldron**, eds., *The Poems of the Pearl Manuscript: Pearl, Cleanness, Patience, Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, Fully Revised Fifth Edition with New Introduction and Incorporating Prose Translation on CD-ROM*, Exeter, University of Exeter Press, 2007; paperback; pp. 380; R.R.P. £12.99; ISBN 9780859897914.

Since the mid-nineteenth century, when the *Gawain*-poet's works first appeared in print, readers have delighted in their inspired yet intricately crafted poetry. Evocations of civilisation's elaborate hoaxes and of nature's beauty and power contextualize the poet's subtle explorations of the inner life, ethics, and spirituality. The poems' West Midland dialect and expansive alliterating vocabulary account in part for their survival in only a single undistinguished manuscript, of the late fourteenth century. These same features have exacerbated difficulties faced by the poems' modern editors and translators. The publication of the present complete edition, following its first appearance in 1978, through revised versions in 1987, 1996, 2002 and now again in 2007, is a tribute to its editors' success in engaging with these difficulties. The editors' aim: 'to facilitate and enhance the reader's enjoyment of these splendid poems' has been achieved (p. 26).

Research into background has continued now for nearly two centuries, but the poems' manuscript, British Library MS Cotton Nero A. x, remains the most important external source for deductions about authorship and composition. The non-correspondence of the manuscript's gatherings with the beginnings and ends of the texts indicates that the scribe copied them as a collection. A congruence of themes, including an extended investigation of patience, *trawþe*, *cortaysye*, and *clannesse* as richly meaningful virtues; shared structural features; humour, excitement and high comedy; similarities of clerical and chivalric reading and experience; and above all a unique excellence further support common authorship.

Despite many hours spent discussing *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* with colleagues and students, I found that reading the poems in manuscript

sequence, as reproduced here, suggested many fresh insights. By emphasising the poems' intertextual solidarity and the conditions of their first production, this reading also highlighted the exotic nature of recent approaches to *Sir Gawain* under the aegis, for example, of Foucault, queer theory, pulp fiction and the cinema. If such approaches are to be validated, cross-checking of arguments against the values and concerns of *Sir Gawain's* companion poems would seem to be desirable.

Malcolm Andrew and Ronald Waldron's implicit promotion of the integrity of the *corpus* counterbalances the poems' printing in single or selective editions and translations, in a tradition that began with Sir Frederic Madden's 1839 publication of *Sir Gawain* in a collection of Gawain romances. Among other early printings, Sir Israel Gollancz's separate editions of all four poems; J. R. R. Tolkien and E. V. Gordon's *Sir Gawain*, revised by Norman Davis; and E. V. Gordon's *Pearl* are works of enduring scholarship. Andrew and Waldron have placed comprehensive textual and literary notes and etymological glossaries in separate sections after the texts, in a presentation that assumes specialist readers. They are thus at the opposite pole from the many modern English translations of the *Gawain*-poet's works that cater for popular Arthurian interests.

The present edition is a compendium that bridges these polarized scholarly and popular spheres. Explanatory notes, including translations of difficult passages, accompany the text at the foot of each page, and a new translation, 'into plain and unadorned prose, staying as close to the original as modern English idiom will allow', accompanies the volume on CD as a printable PDF file. Allusions in the notes to etymology and to other medieval works confine themselves to manuscript cruxes, errors, omissions, and the texts' numerous interpretative puzzles. The solutions proposed engage with decisions by earlier editors, thereby empowering the reader to choose among options. This method also encourages readers to explore independently the poems' multiplying dimensions of meaning, which usually stem from the evolution of chosen words or images.

The Poems of the Pearl Manuscript is a doorway into the debates that have enlivened modern commentary on the *Gawain*-poet's works. Of the major revisions, the rewritten introduction lengthens discussion of the manuscript, summarizes speculations about the author's identity, and outlines the genre, narrative, structure, sources, themes, images, and key vocabulary of each poem in manuscript order. It is therefore systematic and comprehensive rather than

individualistic. The ‘practical’ Glossary, listing unfamiliar words and words whose meaning has shifted over time, the Note on Language and Metre, and the Note to the Text are unchanged from earlier issues. Like the explanatory textual notes, the Select Bibliography has been updated to include recent scholarship and criticism.

In sum, I recommend to readers this revision of an edition that several generations of students and teachers have preceded me in endorsing. In a book of manageable size, the editors have succeeded in reconciling reliable scholarship with modern accessibility, and in balancing attention to individual poems with encouragement to explore the *Gawain*-corpus as a whole. Their edition provides a setting that can only deepen twenty-first-century appreciation for these luminous Middle English poems.

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Barr, Helen and Ann M. Hutchison (eds), *Text and Controversy from Wyclif to Bale: Essays in Honour of Anne Hudson* (Medieval Church Studies 4), Turnhout, Brepols, 2005; hardback; pp. xxii, 448; R.R.P. €90.00; ISBN 9782503522098.

Through her work and inspiration, Anne Hudson has not only transformed our understanding of important aspects of late medieval English religion and culture, but has also created one of the most productive fields of cross-disciplinary collaboration. In bringing together scholars from a range of disciplines, and presenting a series of papers whose scholarship transcends their disciplinary roots, this volume is itself a considerable tribute to her achievement. It begins with George Rigg’s affectionate *encomium* to the honorand in Latin verse (with English translation!) and the editors’ useful introduction to the collection. It closes with a list of Hudson’s books and articles preceded by a sketch of her work in progress on ‘texts and religious sensibilities in the late medieval and early modern periods’.

The book comprises twenty papers, grouped under the headings of ‘The Question of Sources’, ‘Wyclif’s Influence and Reputation’, ‘Controversies and Reform’ and ‘Contexts of Vernacular Wycliffitism’. Though the papers are more for specialists than students, they all engage in the larger enterprise of reframing and reconceptualising aspects of the religious culture of late