Female Agency in *Pearl* and *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*: Strength and Empowerment in Otherworldly Planes

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There are a great many conversations that exist amongst scholars today about the Gawain poet, author of *Pearl, Sir Gawain and the Green Knight (SGGK)*, and other biblically driven poems. One of the plot points that most contemporary readers and critics struggle with about *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, is the seemingly sudden and supposedly unfounded appearance of Morgan la Fay at the end of the text, and the revelation that she was the puppeteer behind the entire situation, with the purpose to scare and dishonor Guinevere. Some critics propose that this ending is preposterous, yet others insist that a medieval audience would have seen clues throughout the play that reveal Morgan's involvement long before that final scene. Most notably, for my purposes, Mother Angela Carson, in her "Morgan La Fée as the Principle of Unity in *Gawain and the Green Knight,*" argues that the entire poem is a power struggle between the female characters that takes place in an 'otherworld.' It is this concept that I will focus on for this essay, I propose that in the land of this otherworld Carson proposes, women possess the balance of power in their relationships with man. I will then attempt to apply this same reasoning to *Pearl* for, I propose, the Gawain poet intentionally empower women, but only as they reside in an otherworld, this effectively 'others,' the women from the men in the text.

Before delving into the expressions of power in *SKKG* and *Pearl* it will behoove my argument to explore where the current discussion of female agency within *SGGK* currently lies. The discussion ranges across vastly contrasting main points, some insist that Morgan is indeed the all powerful mover of the text, whereas others propose that she was a later addition from some nameless scribe, still further, some propose that *SKKG* is purely antifeminist, where as others see the text as empowering to women (especially when one takes into account the choices of the editors who made distinct choices about where and how to edit the text so that the poem
more forcefully, "reduce[s] women's agency and subordinate them to men, even when the poem implies--- or expressly states--- that the opposite is true," (Battles, 324).

Paul Battles' article, "Amended Texts, Emended Ladies: Female Agency and the Textual Editing of Sir Gawain and the Green Knight," suggests three examples of how editing within the poem has contributed to a much stronger chauvinistic reading of the text. Battles uses three main examples to prove his supposition; first, a comment made by the unnamed Lady\(^1\) in Bertilak's castle (324), second, Bertilak's reveal of Morgan as the instigator behind the entire situation (331), and finally, third, the outright removal of the Ladies in King Arthur's court from the Table of the Round (336).

The first correction is the "altering [of] I to ho and changing the second burde to burne," within the text that follows:

\[
\text{Þaþ ho were burde bryȝtest þe burne in mynde hade,} \\
\text{þe lasse luf in his lode for lur þat he soȝt} \\
\text{Boute hone---}^2 \ (\text{The Complete Works of the Pearl Poet, 266})
\]

Effectively, Battles proposes that the alterations made to these lines, destroy the female speaker all together. Sharon M. Rowley posits this same argument in her article, "Textual Studies, Feminism, and Performance in Sir Gawain and the Green Knight," (161). The argument detailed for the change in these lines is based on the typical characterization of the Lady, "She is often characterized as either meekly carrying out her husband's commands or blindly obeying her lust, and the emendations... are rooted in such over simplified interpretations of her character," (Battles, 330). Essentially, editors claimed multiple reasons for the change, syntax of the lines, "mishandling of the plot," and keeping suspense intact for the audience--- meaning, if the Lady

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\(^1\) For the purposes of this discussion, Lady Bertilak will be discussed with the nomenclature of the 'unnamed Lady.' This title is important to some of the texts I am working with; therefore I will continue it within my own text.

\(^2\) ll. 1283-1285
had claimed to say these lines it would have unveiled a sense of distrust in the audience and revealed that there was something more behind her seduction (Battles, 325-327). The mischaracterization of the Lady, as mentioned above, is continued into the second textual amendment with the revelation of Morgan's involvement in the plot.

The amendment that generally takes place to the text concerning Morgan appears in Bertilak's speech concerning her, the changes made serve to remove her power as the mover behind the plot. The lines concerning this argument are as follows:

Þurȝ myȝt of Margne la Faye, þat in my hous lengesm
And koyntyse of clergye, bi crafts wel lerned---
Þe maystrés of Merlyn mony ho hazt taken,
For ho hazt dalt drwry ful dere sumtyme
With þat conable klerk; þat knowes alle your knyȝtez
At hame.
Morgne þe goddess
Þerfore his is hir name...³ (The Complete Works of the Pearl Poet, 318)

The arising issue with this passage is the typical addition of a period in line 2456. The addition of this period changes the meaning of the lines in that it causes Bertilak to seemingly fall into a digression concerning Morgan, and then continuing his thought a few lines later in the poem; Battles cites one critics reasoning behind this change as, "To omit the period... gives Morgan a power over Bertilak that most readers are not ready to grant her. It makes him her cat's paw throughout the triple testing of Gawain," (335). This reasoning is interesting to say the least, that the chosen reason for changing the syntax within the poem is because it gives Morgan too much power over Bertilak, strange especially considering the audience is supposed to see him as

³ ll. 2446-2453.
Morgan's pawn in the first place as he was sent to test the Arthurian court, yet "Modern editors feel the need to put the man in charge even if the manuscript suggests otherwise," (Battles, 336). The final example follows the same pattern as the first two, with the difference that rather than simply forcing weakness onto female characters, the Ladies in the Arthurian court are removed all together.

When Gawain returns to the Table Round at the end of the poem, his apprehensions are shaken off by the court, who chose rather to adopt the symbol of the green girdle as a sign of honor. However, with the simple change of a word, editors altogether removed women from the presence of the court:

\[ Þat lordes and ledes Þat longes to þe Table, \]
\[ Vche burne of þe broþerhede, a bauderyk shulde haue, \]
\[ A bende abeief hym aboutem of a bryȝt grene, \]
\[ And Þat, for sake of Þat segge, in swete to were. \]

(\cite{PearlPoet} 320)

The word "ledes," above is bolded because that is where the problem resides with this passage. According to Battles, the original was supposed to have read, "Þat lordes and ladis Þat longes to þe Table," (336). However, in 1972, J. A. Burrow questioned whether or not Ladies would have been admitted to participate, his solution then, was to change 'ladis,' into 'ledes,' (Battle, 337). This change altogether eradicated the women of the Table Round from the text, effectively silencing them completely, just as the other examples sought to do. Overall, Battles commentary resides in the realm of the removal SGGK's women, and their power. This viewpoint is in striking contrast with the aforementioned article by Mother Angela Carson, and Geraldine

\footnote{\cite{PearlPoet} ll. 2515-2518.}
Heng's "Feminine Knots and the Other Sir Gawain and the Green Knight," where they focus on the strength and empowerment of the female characters in the text.

Heng's main focus in her article is the idea of feminine desire, characterized in three ways, first, the desire is always plural in nature, second, the accommodation of feminine spaces, and third, signaling its (desire's) presence through a medley of practices, figures and signs (501). She explores the roles of four women in the text, the unnamed Lady, the Virgin Mary, Morgan, and Guinevere, with the supposition that the women are the acting factors within the text and that the men merely act as their pawns in the continuation of the plot. She argues that the women characterize, compete with, and compliment each other in their actions within the plot and "having thus argued that the construction of each woman entails a point of anchoring in another... one might go on to suggest that a... graph of the female relationships in the poem," would be largely interconnected and overlapping, which rings reminiscent of the symbol of the pentangle which serves to characterize Gawain ("Feminine Knots", 503). Her next supposition is the transition from the symbolism of the pentangle, an interconnected and continuous knot, to the symbol of the garter, a knot with a cut in it (foreshadowing the cut Gawain receives from Bertilak) serving as a "vestige of displacement," within the poem, "symbolic of castration," ("Feminine Knots", 505-506). Heng then proposes that the girdle exhibits the "properties of the linguistic signifier... to the accumulation of diverse referents as it moves across the levels of the text, unknotted from within one discursive modality to be remade within another," (508-509).

This idea of the girdle becoming a linguistic signifier harkens an article by Catherine S. Cox, "Genesis and Gender in Sir Gawain and the Green Knight," in which Cox explores the significant of Eve and her naming to the biblical Genesis story of temptation and seduction as it applies to the unnamed Lady within the text. Cox discusses the changes that occurred when the
humans were cast from Eden, "as a corollary to their expulsion... the gender balance is shifted, the man dominates, and this new power is signified by his act of naming;" his wife "Hevvah," or life-bearer, as a nod to her purpose in creation being procreation, until that point, she had only held the moniker of "'isha,' (an extension of 'ish, for man) meaning, she had only been acknowledged as a part of the male, an extension of him, created to be his companion (382-383).

Cox then goes on to compare the unnamed Lady with Hevvah (or hereafter, Eve, for familiarity) in that they are both typically portrayed as a seductress, bringing about temptation. Yet there is a problem with that simple comparison, there is more than one Eve, "her depiction is always haunted by her implicit contrast to that icon of unattainable feminine virtue, the Virgin Mary, and her worth accordingly diminished," (Cox, 380). Therefore, the unnamed Lady is not only paralleled with the Virgin in Cox's explanation, but within the text she would have been compared across the board to the other women within the text, Morgan and Guinevere, yet still typically appears as a seductress.

A different take on the unnamed Lady's seduction of Gawain is presented in another article by Geraldine Heng, "A Woman Wants: The Lady, Gawain, and the Forms of Seduction." In this article, Heng defines sexual desire for the unnamed Lady as a performance of language in which the discourse, within the bedroom scenes, takes the place of sex, meaning, the discourse becomes the sexual act and brings gratification with it (102). She proposes "both a pleasurable unpleasure and an unpleasurable pleasure--- is typically experienced as the modulation of tension in the sexual-verbal excitation of the seduction episodes," meaning, the Lady receives and gives pleasure during the conversational intercourse, however, Gawain halts the interactions before there can be a completion of the act, a metaphorical orgasm in discourse (Heng, 105). Heng then goes on to identify the gender shifts that happen within the conversation itself; she proposes that
the Lady takes on the masculine qualities the a knight would usually exhibit while trying to romantically woo a Lady with courtly love such as:

Persistent demonstration of passionate devotion... the eager seeking-out of affective tokens, such as kisses, from the beloved; ardent admiration of he beloved's beauty and many graces; hyperbolic gallantry in the preferment of compliments, even a ritual offer of service... (Heng, 118)

She supports this claim by demonstrating Gawain's feminine cowardice at accepting the girdle from the Lady and then trying to justify himself to the Green Knight when he is found out (Heng, 381). In this instance, the Lady takes on masculinity, and the man takes on femininity, effectively switching their gender roles along with the power dynamic of their relationship and intercourse.

The last article I will examine is Mother Angela Carson's "Morgan La Fée as the Principle of Unity in Gawain and the Green Knight," it is being examined last, although mentioned first because it is the article that has most influenced the analysis of the poetic texts and the writings of this paper. Carson's first supposition in her article is the Morgan appears in two ways within the text, as both the unnamed Lady and as her accompanying hag, this becomes difficult to grasp however, since the women appeared together:

Ànoþer lady hir lad bu þe lyft honde
Þat watz alder þen ho, an auncian hit semed,
And heȝly honowred with haþelez aboute.
...
Riche red on þat on rayled ayquere,
However, barring that one issue I have with her hypothesis, she raises highly interesting arguments stemming from her claim that Morgan and the unnamed Lady are one and the same. She initially addresses that to a medieval audience, "it would have been clear that [Morgan] has by far the most important role in the poem, both with regard to her initiating the plot and her exercise of direct influence upon other characters in the poem," (Carson, 5). She supports her claim by pointing out the evidences tied to Morgan that the Lady proposes to Gawain, being surrounded by accompanying maidens, the offering of a ring, and the attempted detainment of her desired lover (Carson, 6). Carson draws parallels between SGGK and Welsh folklore which goes to support Morgan being Bertilak's wife, it also denotes why Bertilak is green, and demonstrates Morgan's power within the poem as being more encompassing than generally assumed (8).

She begins her discussion of Morgan's connection with Bertilak by examining the Welsh folklore of Modron and Urien. Modron and Urien were connected in Arthurian tales, typically as husband and wife or as lover and fairy mistress, they were said to have born a son, Urien; the couple ruled in Annwn, also known as the Otherworld, or the land of the faery (Carson, 8-9). Carson proposes that by Morgan and Bertilak's connection with this folklore couple, is further encouraged because of the existence of an otherworld within the poem (9). The otherworlds exist as the castle Bertilak and as the Green Chapel; the entry into the otherworld is marked in the poem through a difficult journey and finally a transition over a body of water:

In his search for the Green Chapel, Gawain rode through the wilderness until he approached North Wales and went through the wilderness of Wirral, where he not

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5 ll. 946-947...952-953
only struggled against bears, wolves, and giants, but also suffered from sleep and
cold in the wasteland where many a night she slept on naked rocks. (Carson, 10)

This in-depth, difficult journey through physical trials and tribulations acts as a test through
which the protagonist has to transition before he is worth of entry into the guarded otherworld.
Since there are two otherworld locations in this text, there are two tests, the physical journey to
the castle, and then the multiple bouts of temptation by the unnamed Lady in Bertilak's castle;
therefore, the Gawain must conquer physical and moral trials before he can reach his final
destination. The water crossing is typically accepted as an entry or transition into another plane
of existence, in this case, into a fairy realm; Gawain must make this transition twice, first when
he reaches Bertilak's castle:

\[
\text{Er he watz was in ðe wod of a won in a mote}
\]

\[
\text{...}
\]

\[
\text{ðe walle wod in ðe water wonderly depe}^6 \text{ (The Complete Works of the Pearl Poet, 244)}
\]

Gawain's second transition occurs when he is approaching the Green Chapel. In that instance,
rather than Gawain crossing the water, Bertilak crosses the threshold from the otherworld into
the human world:

\[
\text{Saue þat fayre on his fote he foundez on þe erþe,}
\]

\[
\text{Sette þe stele to þe stone and stalked bysyde.}
\]

\[
\text{When he wan to þe watterm þer he made nolde,}
\]

\[
\text{He hypped ouer on hys ax and orpedly strydez}^7 \text{ (The Complete Works of the Pearl Poet, 308)}
\]

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^6 ll. 764...787.
^7 ll. 2229-2231
These breaches into the otherworld, or the land of the fairy, set up the requirement that Bertilak and Morgan are tied together as a couple, "Whether he is an Other World king or a mortal lover, he fits easily and gracefully into the context of the poem," (Carson, 9). This connection with Morgan and the otherworld also helps to explain why exactly Bertilak is covered with green.

It can generally be discussed that Bertilak's greenness is an association with purely a natural element in that he represents nature invading the world of man. This theme can be seen in many medieval texts such as Beowulf, for example, in the character of Grindle. When Grindle invades the mead hall in Beowulf it signifies the fears of ancient man in the unknown of the natural world surrounding them and the dangers that were encompassed by that natural world.

However, in SGGK:

There is considerable evidence that green is the color traditionally associated with the inhabitants of the Other World, [this association] explains Bertilak's greenness; in the poem his color serves to indicate... that behind the Christmas jest there was preternatural power--- in that sense only is his color an identification.

(Carson, 13)

Therefore, in this instance, Bertilak's green garb is an indicator of his connection to the otherworld, not simply his connection to nature. Along with this connection to the otherworld, as discussed above, Bertilak is tied to Morgan, in Carson's article, as her husband or lover, and, of course, her pawn.

Unlike in some of the other articles that have been discussed thus far, Carson has no qualms about allowing Morgan to be main mover within the text. In identifying Morgan's actions and motivations Carson actually demonstrates that Morgan is one of the most powerful women in the text. She identifies Morgan as, "The link between the two groups of characters, the Arthur
group, and the Green Knight group, "as such, without this connection the tests within the text would have never taken place, nor would they have made sense (Carson, 13). She also identifies Morgan's motivation behind the testing of Gawain; there is dissent among scholars about how Guinevere was not really scared or even really impacted by the appearance of the Green Knight, yet Carson contradicts this issue with the introduction of the horn test and its purpose, proposing that the Green Knight's test was purposed in the same way. Carson explains that the horn test is, "A chastity test; the tests in [SGGK]--- the beheading test and the temptations--- are two aspects of the same test... Arthur, picking up the axe, not only threatened blows, but actually gave great blows that were ineffectual," (14). These "ineffectual," blows were to represent Guinevere’s lack of chastity; the horn test consisted of men drinking from a horn, however, the man whose wife was unchaste could not drink from the horn without spilling (Carson, 14). Carson proposes that Arthur's ineffectual blows would have embarrassed, if not devastated Guinevere, because it would have shows her transgressions, requiring Gawain to redeem the honor of the Table Round, then he had to go through the temptations of Morgan (or the nameless lady), in order to prove his own worth (14). Through her testing of Gawain, her use of Bertilak as a pawn, and her pursuit of the embarrassment of Guinevere, Morgan is given great agency within the poem.

These aforementioned aspects of feminine agency within SGGK appear too in Pearl, albeit in a more subtle way. Through the analysis of both of these poems, one could make the supposition that the Gawain poet provides female agency within his poems, under the stipulation that it occurs only in an otherworldly setting. Using the analysis of the above writers and other critical resources, the Pearl Maiden is given agency in the otherworld of the Pearl poem through the honors bestowed upon her by God and Christ, her impressive biblical knowledge, and her reeducation of the male protagonist in the poem in the importance of purity.
In order to make the claim that the Pearl Maiden attains agency in an otherworldly setting, it must first be demonstrated that she is indeed in an otherworld comparable to the otherworlds in SGGK. A. C. Spalding in his book *The Gawain Poet: A Critical Study* outright uses the term otherworld when discussing the locale of *Pearl*:

> It is set in the other world of Christian eschatology, a world of harsh glittering light containing trees with blue trunks and leaves burnished in silver... a city made of precious stones and a bleeding lamb worshipped by virgins adorned with petals. (97)

'Christian eschatology,' is a term used to describe the part of religious mythology that has to do with death, judgment and the final destiny of mankind. In *Pearl* it is referring to the Maiden's existence in the plane of the afterlife, or the otherworld that she is existing in when she is encountered by the Dreamer.

One of the main indicators of entry into an otherworld discussed is a transition over water. In *Pearl* the Pearl Maiden is separated from the world of man by a glittering river:

> And rawez and randez and rych reuerez,
> As fyldor fyn her bonkes brent.\(^8\) *(The Complete Works of the Pearl Poet, 48)*

This river is made even more mythical by the fact that the male protagonist is unable to cross the river to get to the Pearl Maiden:

> Ÿou wylnez ouer Ÿys water to weue;
> Er moste Ÿou ceuer to Ÿer counsayl.
> Ÿy corse in clot mot calder keue\(^9\) *(The Complete Works of the Pearl Poet, 58)*

\(^8\) ll. 105-106

\(^9\) ll. 318-320.
In *SGGK*, Gawain went through many physical and moral trials and tests before he could be admitted into the otherworld, however in *Pearl* the male protagonist never reaches the otherworld location. Although he has been spiritually transported to just outside of the location of this otherworld realm he is unable to enter and to be in the presence of the Pearl Maiden. In this instance, the Pearl Maiden has gone through the trials that permit her into the otherworld, i.e. death, while the protagonist must suffer emotionally in the world of men because he has not yet made the same sacrifice, or gone through the same trials as the Maiden, in other words, he is still living and therefore is unworthy of the entrance into this otherworld.

Although the protagonist has been brought to this location, it is not because of anything special about him, rather the Pearl Maiden is reeducating him. This is the site of the Pearl Maiden's agency; whereas Morgan in *SGGK* grasped her agency in the land of the fairy through the use of illusion and seduction, the Pearl Maiden's agency lies in the honors bestowed upon her by God and Christ, her chastity and innocence, and the biblical knowledge she has obtained in this transition.

It is a difficult concept for the male protagonist to grasp throughout the poem that the Pearl Maiden has had the amount of honors bestowed upon her that she tells him of. Her main task in the plot is to "Prove to the Dreamer that innocent children, even though they have no knowledge of God or of good and evil, have the right to the kingdom of Heaven... they have the right to be kings and queens there," (Spearing, 99). This concept is difficult for the Dreamer because he is unable to understand how a child, who has done no good works during their lifetime, in fact, a child that indeed has no knowledge of the Word of God could be so rewarded in Heaven, while adults have been told by the church that in order to win their place in the kingdom of Heaven they must repent, do good words and overall work incredibly hard. Yet,
there she stands, the Pearl Maiden, and queen and one of the wives of Christ, fully honored in Heaven after a short life of only two years. He cannot grasp this, and so he argues with her:

Art þou þe quene of heuenez blwe,
Þat al þys worlde schal do honour?
We leuen of Marye þat grace of grewe
Þat her a barne of vyrgyn flour.¹⁰ (The Complete Works of the Gawain Poet, 64)

The Dreamer is also trapped in terrestrial thought. He cannot comprehend that the Pearl Maiden is one of many queens in heaven, and that rather than it being a position of power and dominion, it is a position of honor for her purity. This honor is bestowed upon her as a reward for "mundo corde, of which the Pearl Maiden is an extreme case," or of being pure at heart, and also pure in body, in this case (Spalding, 100). The Pearl Maiden is an extreme case of innocence that led to her reward in heaven.

Innocence, purity and chastity were incredibly significant to religious teachings. Especially when it came to monks and nuns virginity was one of the main aspects of existence to strive for, but this idea bled over into the common people too, influencing their day to day lives, "There were two careers [women] could have: the biologically active one of the wife or of the professionally chaste one of the nun... the virgin's opposite is as much the housewife, as the whore," (Wogan-Browne, 165). Since virginity was highly valued there was almost a sense of shame for women who were unchaste, even women who were unchaste because they were fulfilling their marital duties. Even with the nuns, women were thought to have a much harder time remaining chaste, this concept more than likely arose because of the stain of Eve on the character of women in general, she was portrayed as a seductress and temptress in religious

¹⁰ ll. 423-426
teachings\textsuperscript{11}, which was them transfigured onto the personality of every woman. This inability to remain fully chaste, since one could be considered unchaste due to unclean thoughts (which apparently ran rampant in women alone), is what heightens the honor of the Pearl Maiden in her chastity. Not only would she have died chaste but also, seeing as how she died as a child of only two years old, it is highly unlikely that she would have even had the capability to have an impure thought, much less to act on or indulge in it. This concept again leads to why the Pearl Maiden was made a bride to Christ, holy men of the church denoted, "virginity as the choice of the bride who has opted for the best groom of all," meaning, rather than seeking marriage among men, virgins chose to be married to God and as such, to remain chaste for their lifetime (Wogan-Browne, 166). The final attribute of the Pearl Maiden that gained her agency within the poem is the biblical knowledge she inherited in her transition into the otherworld.

During the Pearl Maiden's reeducation of the Dreamer, the audience is privy to her immense biblical knowledge that she uses to make her points in relation to the Dreamer. She quotes two biblical references:

\begin{quote}
Debe sauter hyt satz þus in a pace:

"Lorde, quo schal klymbe þy hyȝ hylle,

Oþer rest withinne þy holy place?"

... 

Jesus þenne hem swetely sayde:

"Do way, let chylder vnto Me tyȝt;"

To suche is heuenryche arayed"\textsuperscript{12} (The Complete Works of the Gawain Poet, 76)
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{11} See above analysis, page 6, concerning the unnamed Lady and Eve in \textit{Sir Gawain and the Green Knight}.

\textsuperscript{12} ll. 686-689...717-719
Usually, women, and especially common women (which is more than likely what the Pearl Maiden was before her death) did not have the access or tutorage necessary to be adept and theological thinking or biblical reference. If they did possess biblical knowledge, it was typically untrained and self-taught, as can be seen in Geoffrey Chaucer's Alison (also known as the Wife of Bath). Alison's knowledge was purely self-taught and experience based even though she could cite the Bible and philosophical teachings as her reference. However, the Pearl Maiden's knowledge base is entirely different. She was taught (or one could say uploaded) with this knowledge in her transfiguration from the human world to the otherworld of heaven. With her increase in knowledge, she becomes the acting authority on biblical teachings within the setting of the poem. As such, she corrects, condemns, and reeducates the Dreamer into the correct way of processing grief over the loss of a child the proper way according to Christian teachings. This provides her authority over the Dreamer, the man who used to be her father and as such had complete dominion over her, which in turn granted her agency and freedom within the realm of the poem.

The otherworld and its implication have been studied broadly when it comes to *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*. Conflicting theories and discussions abound when it comes to Morgan la Fay's role in the plot and the motivations behind the tests Gawain must go through. However, some things are somewhat clear in the text, a transition into an otherworld where the male protagonist has his honor tested, temptations of chastity, and female agency. Female agency is increased in *SGGK* by Morgan's motivations in her testing of Gawain and pursuit of Guinevere, the transition of Bertilak from an independent agent into her pawn, and in the presence of an otherworldly state in which her power reigns. In the poem *Pearl* the Pearl Maiden is gifted with agency through her innocence and purity, her biblical knowledge and her existence
in an otherworldly state. Her innocence grants her dominion and gifts in the afterlife and her theological knowledge enables her to reeducate the male protagonist in the text, and finally her rewards were gifted to her through her transition and transfiguration into the otherworldly plane and into the Pearl Maiden. The link between these two poems lies in the otherworldly locations. In both of these locations the men in the poem lose their agency and fall under the command of the women in the text, while the women are empowered and granted agency.
Works Cited


