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A study in Medieval grief: a modern reader's interpretation of the Pearl

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A Study in Medieval Grief: A Modern Reader's Interpretation of the *Pearl*

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Death is an integral part of the life cycle and is perhaps the most dreaded and avoided issue in modern society. While our technologically advanced society has been able to delay death, it has not been able to avoid it. Death strikes indiscriminately and often without warning. Persons in medieval society also faced the inevitability of death, which despite the high mortality rate due to poor medical care and the recurrence of the plague, was not any easier to confront and understand. Throughout the centuries, individuals who lose friends and loved ones experience denial, rage and depression, which are all psychological symptoms of grief. Grief has been acknowledged as a byproduct of personal loss throughout the centuries by the medieval Catholic church and in the 20th century by modern psychoanalysis. Neither institution has been adequate in assisting the bereaved through this period simply because grief is a personal issue and cannot be explained sufficiently to help that person cope with their loss. Grief had always been acknowledged by the church and modern psychology, but more as a natural reaction to the death of a loved one and not as a estranged state of mind. The first recognition of grief symptoms as a psychological and medical condition came from Dr. Elisabeth Kubler-Ross in her 1969 ground-breaking work *On Death and Dying*. In this book, she describes the stages of grief reaction—shock/denial, searching/yearning, disorganization and reorganization and recognizes that grief is a progressive state that can lead to new spiritual growth for the bereaved.

In the late fourteenth century poem *Pearl*, the narrator's grief, which results from the death of his two year old daughter, is the poet's attempt to describe his recovery from prolonged grief through rediscovering his faith in Christ. The poem is an elegy concerning the loss of a loved one and how recovery from that loss can be attempted

through spiritual redemption. Examining the poem through the lens of modern psychology and the stages of grief reaction described by Kubler-Ross in her books *On Death and Dying*, *Death: The Final Stages of Growth* and *On Children and Death*, an argument can be made that the poem is a lesson in reconciliation and contemplation which leads to a renewal of faith. From a psychological standpoint, the poem also describes the bereaves desire to be reunited with his or her deceased loved ones and find a way to move beyond the grief. In this sense, the poem's success comes from the reconciliation with faith, which brings happiness that the poet claims is possible for grief-stricken persons.

Centuries later, Kubler-Ross would make a similar assertion in her books on death and bereavement. She states that bereavement is a byproduct of grief in which the bereaved fails to comprehend his or her loss and thereby loses faith in his or her lifestyle. Kubler-Ross then goes on to state that a spiritual renewal or awakening can be the end result of grief. Although an evolution in religious belief, technology and medical systems can make medieval and modern societies seem worlds apart, the human need to understand and reconcile loss has remained universal. The *Pearl* and the Kubler-Ross texts on grief cannot only be compared, the texts can also explore and explain how the Catholic Church and the modern medical community have addressed grief. Before psychoanalysis of the text can be performed, it is important to note the political, social and economic conditions of medieval and modern society, which would affect a reader's interpretation of the text.

Medieval Society and Grief

As T.S.R. Boase argues in his book *Death in the Middle Ages*, "death was a grim business in the Middle Ages. With no alleviation of pain, no dulling of the horrors of surgery, the *acerbitas mortis*, the bitterness of death, was very real" (9). Boase goes on to state that long life spans were for the very robust and that death in battle, lack of medical care, unhygenic food and "the heavy toll of infant mortality exercised a natural selection for the survival of the fittest" (11). Faced with a low life expectancy, it is no wonder that medieval men and women sought the comfort of religion to try and answer the question of why were they incurring such loss even as they expected life after death. Medieval Christian theologians argued that grief was a spiritual affliction. According to Saint Thomas Aquinas, in his book *Summa Theologica*, grief is a "universal blight on mankind" (Tristam 274) because this emotion demonstrates a human lack of rational thought and as such, sorrow is contrary to the act of contemplation. Aquinas argues that death is a transition to another state of being for both the bereaved and their deceased loved ones, a place where a greater understanding of faith can be found. The death of a loved one, according to Aquinas, should be viewed as a precept to faith. As St. Paul states in *Corinthians*, "The sorrow is according to God, worketh penance steadfast unto salvation" (7:10).

What medieval Christianity was attempting to come to terms with was the complexity of man in different social conditions. Christian men and women not only had to live within their own bodies, according to Pope Gregory the Great, they also had to live by the teaching of the church. Jacques Le Goff states in his book *The Medieval World,*

> The makeup of medieval man cannot be restricted to the paired body and soul—*corpus* and *anima*. There was also the spirit (*spiritus*), which introduced the breath of life and brought with it a broad range of meanings from the highest forms of classical and Christian philosophy to the almost material senses that the term assumed in the vernacular tongues, all of which, however, connected man with the third person of the Trinity. There was also *cor*, the heat, lying somewhere between the soul and the spirit, which took over inner feelings and attached itself to love and to an ever increasing range of sentiments. The heart was also opposed to the head, and it grew in prestige with the spread of the symbolism of the blood, for which it was the motor force (9).

While Christian theology may have attempted to figure out why man was so ruled by complex emotions, the answers it provided to men and women when faced with difficult emotional situations such as the death of a loved one, gave them little reconciliation for their loss.

Even more than his political and economic restrictions, medieval man's spiritual beliefs were based on his comprehension that the spiritual world and his reality coincided on the same world plane. As Le Goff states, "there was no dividing line, no barrier, between this world and the next" (29). Preceptors, which could be anyone from a demon to a family member and which provided some evidence of the existence of all facets of Christian belief, surrounded the medieval mind. For men and women of the Middle Ages, the existence of heaven, hell and purgatory were undeniable and without question, the very basis of his or her faith. Although the Last Judgment may have been a frightening prospect for medieval man, he could always rely upon God's frequent direct or indirect intervention in areas where medieval man was most at risk of death. Le Goff argues that the areas where medieval men and women needed intervention include "the domain of the body, with innumerable miracles of healing; and the domain of woman and childbirth and children, victims of choice, given the miserable standards of physiology and medicine in the Middle Ages" (30). The Virgin Mary was considered to be the most

powerful intercessor between God and man because "she could obtain any miracle from God" (29). In *Pearl*, the narrator comes to view his daughter as a preceptor who assumes the form of a spiritual personage to directly intervene on her father's behalf to allow him to come to terms with his grief.

In addition to divine miracles, the medieval man also had dream-visions and a symbolic mentality that allowed him to reconcile his faith. According to Le Goff, "dreams and their interpretation were a matter of particular perplexity and anxiety for Christians" (193). While the *Bible* is not clear about what should or should not constitute a Christian dream, Le Goff argues that medieval Christian theologians and theorists believed that "dreams and visions were also a means of access to God, an opportunity for direct contact with the deity" (203). By the fourth century, dreams gained church recognition because of the close parallels between the dream world with important aspects of medieval Christian life: conversion to Christianity, contact with God, and martyrdom (204). For the medieval dreamer, dreams represented a way to grasp Christian faith or reconcile himself with God. Conversion to God from dreams occurs when a non-believer rediscovers his or her faith. For the medieval dreamer, dreaming was a way of discovering "clear and multifaceted truths, the divine teaching of Jesus" (202).

Such teachings were delivered to the medieval men and women in dreams and visions where God was thought to be a permanent and powerful presence. For Medieval Christians, the supreme form of the dream-vision was called ecstasy (204). According to Saint Cyprian, a medieval mystic reflecting on the value of dreams "By day the Holy Spirit fills us in ecstasy with the innocence of children and makes us see with our eyes, hear and speak the admonitions and instruction that God makes us worthy to receive"

(204). Accordingly, the Christian martyr possesses the right to "demand a vision and converse with God" (205) and the Church became the official interpreter of dreams because of their religious significance. Usually Christian martyrs asked for deliverance from a trial or asked for a family member to be spared any pain. In *Pearl*, the narrator's dream-vision allows him to reconcile his daughter's loss and regain his faith. The active participation of his daughter in this process demonstrates that her stature allows her to act as his intercessor during this time of personal crisis.

Medieval Christians believed that the last moments of life were the most critical, for demons lurked close to the deathbed, ready to seize the unprepared soul as it emerged with its last breath (Bendann 18). While this belief has an impact on all dying men, women and children, young children, between the ages of 1-7, were immune from this issue because of their age and innocence (18). According to the Roman Catholic Church, the baptism of infants had become customary practice by the 1st century; however, the confirmation or conferring of the Gifts of the Holy Ghost, which included strength, grace and courage, did not occur until the individual was at least seven years old (27). A Christian soul would be ensured salvation through a proper burial. As a consequence of this doctrinal belief, the medieval Catholic Church developed funeral rites. According to E. Bendann in his book *Death Customs: An Analytical Study of Burial Rites*, the Catholic Church took great care to make sure that an individual had a "good death" (29). The dying person makes a confession to a priest and is consecrated by or with oil. The consecration is called today the anointing of the sick or historically extreme unction. The mourners wore black, used candles of unbleached wax and the funeral procession was accompanied by tolling of a church bell. Despite the presence of a

written liturgy, it would have been impossible for a majority of medieval men and women to understand such complexity for a funeral. For parents of deceased children, the concern was not damnation of their children's souls, but a feeling that religious doctrine concerning death and bereavement did not answer all of their questions. The narrator in *Pearl*, although knowledgeable in scripture, did not find spiritual reconciliation in his doctrinal learning to help him cope with his loss. It takes a family reunion with his deceased daughter for the narrator to come to an understanding of her death.

The need to comprehend death and express grief was an obsession for medieval man since "eternity was two steps away" (Le Goff 29) due to constant plagues, terrible work conditions and inadequate medical care. Understanding why death occurred became a preoccupation for many religious groups during these times and for these groups, the only understanding could be found in written text. *Lamentations of Jeremiah* from the Old Testament was written not only to express grief, but to also find renewed faith. Biblical lamentations evolved into consolation writings by the fourteenth century. The bubonic and pneumonic plagues dominated this century, and most parents lost children to disease and malnutrition at a young age. Bereaved families had to rely upon the church and consolation writings of Christian writers to help them understand their own grief. Christian writers often adopt the ancient *solacium* that death is a part of the cycle of salvation. The most common *solacium* adopted by writers of this era: "death is a common lot of man; the necessity of submitting to Fate or in Christian times to the will of God; nothing is gained by immoderate grief" (Bishop 18). Indeed, medieval Christian writers adopted the point-of-view that early death frees man from sin. These writers

often urged their readers to imitate the virtues of the deceased and that death, at an early age, was advantageous to those who died, especially if the dead were children. Consolation writer Gregory of Nyssa argues in his treatise, *On the Early Death of Infants*, that an infant's death was beneficial for his or her salvation. He states, "death is not a calamity; but an act of providence, because these children are saved from lives of evil" (19). While these types of writings may console parents concerned with the salvation of their child's life, these writings do not lend themselves to assisting parents in dealing with all the emotional issues that follow the death of a child, such as adjusting to loss and reorganization of a person's thinking to cope with loss.

Modern Society

Modern society, during the twentieth century, has also faced as much social, political and religious upheaval as their medieval counterparts. Two world wars and intense conflict marked this past century, the advent of technology, which markedly changed the faith that modern man had in God and the church. In the ensuing centuries between the thirteenth and the twentieth centuries, there was a secularization of culture, politics, economics and social life. According to twentieth century religious scholars, "autonomy, freedom and responsibility are defended not against God, but against the undue interference of the church as a socioreligious institution" (Haring 30). This secularization of religion is not an invention of the 20th century, but began in the 18th century when scholars acknowledged that "history evolves along the lines of the laws established by the Creator" (32), as political parties of the era sought to limit religious influence. As modern theologians point out, this secularization is not attempting to deny

the impact of religion on the lives of the individual, but find new modes of religious expressions as it adapts "to new social and cultural situations" (33).

Modern man's spiritual beliefs have been secularized to a certain degree and are based on his understanding that the spiritual world and his reality do not exist on the same world plane. With the development of psychology by Sigmund Freud in the twentieth century, modern man had often turned to psychologists, the secular-priests of the new millennium, to assist him in figuring out his life problems. Psychology and theology have come into conflict in the twentieth century with both social science and religion take different approaches to man's crucial questions about death and bereavement and how these approaches can provide possible answers. According to Don S. Browning, in his book *Religious Thought and the Modern Psychologies*, "the clinical psychologies try to interpret individual lives; theology tries to interpret life-life as a whole, in its entirety" (7). Modern psychologists argue that science cannot take the place of faith because science is based upon the interpretation of data, while theological beliefs are based upon "an expression of self-commitment, ethical dedication and existential life-orientation" (6). Although both the church and modern psychology have vied for the attention of modern man, the advent of psychology has allowed him access to his inner thoughts and feelings in a similar manner to medieval man's reliance on the church's interpretation of his dreams and visions. Both modern man and medieval man used interpreters to access the meanings of their dreams and gain a deeper understanding of his unconscious thoughts and dreams.

Unlike his medieval counterpart, modern man does not always look to interpret dreams to rediscover faith in God or understand a vision from God. In modern

psychology, dreams play a role in the psychoanalysis of a patient-the patient's dream is the result of a subconscious desire or need. While dreams are acknowledged to exist, the idea that a dream has meaning to an individual's life is up to debate among modern psychologists. In his book *Dreaming Souls: Sleep, Dreams and the Evolution of the Conscious Mind*, Owen Flanagan addresses the issue of dreams in both medieval and modern times. Flanagan argues that during the medieval era, dreams were an expression of the individual's desire to be moral or immoral (16). The author states that the approach to dream interpretation has evolved from the medieval to the modern era as men and women's roles have evolved. He maintains that in the modern era, dreams are an issue of function—what is its role in modern man's life and how can it unlock the meaning within the dream (17). For example, a modern man may dream about college. A modern psychologist could interpret this dream as the individual's desire to move forward and gain an education that would allow him to have a better life. Dreams may, in fact, derive from man's conscious thoughts and desires, which he may not be able to fulfill in waking reality. Modern man's need to understand these dreams are crucial to his well-being, not his faith.

Crucial to the well-being of the bereaved is the burial of their deceased loved ones. For them, the burial of a deceased relative is usually made in accordance with family beliefs. Since the medieval era, Christianity has broadened to include different denominations, such as Protestantism, Catholicism, Mormonism among others. The burial rites for the dead, which may vary from one denomination to another, have always included a visit from a priest or member of the church council, and for some denominations, the anointing of oil to the sick and dying. Funeral rites have also

remained the same with a service at a church of that person's faith. What the modern era has introduced is the role of the mortician, who serves as both a caretaker for the body and a grief therapist for the family. According to Jessica Mitford, in her book *The American Way of Death Revisited*, the modern mortician or funeral director assumes a

> dramaturgic role, in which the undertaker becomes a stage manager to create an appropriate atmosphere and to move the funeral party through a drama in which social relationships are stressed and an emotional catharsis or release is provided through the ceremony" (Mitford 17).

In their book, *Dying: Facing the Facts*, Hannelore Wass, Felix M. Berardo and Robert A. Neimeyer suggest that there is heavy clerical criticism toward the modern mortician, who is accused of ignoring spiritual matters and taking unfair advantage of the bereaved in order to turn a profit (262). The authors argue that clerics from both the Protestant faiths and Catholicism believe that the funeral director has secularized the funeral ceremony by allowing his service to be available to persons of all faiths (262). By doing so, clerics claim, the funeral of a loved one takes on no religious significance and that it would be difficult for any person of faith to reconcile their loss without proper spiritual guidance (263). Wass, Berardo and Neimeyer maintain that it is the job of the funeral director to act as a grief counselor and make the funeral as painless as possible for the bereaved (265). For the narrator in the *Pearl*, the funeral service for his daughter has failed to eradicate the grief he was experiencing. The rituals of the service did not bring him any relief from the remorseful feelings he is experiencing.

Like their medieval counterparts, modern man has turned to the written text to find an understanding concerning his grief. Self-help books have also become aides to understanding grief in the modern era. Psychologist Dr. Elisabeth Kubler-Ross first identified grief reactions in 1969 in her book *On Death and Dying*. In this book and

subsequent texts that followed, Kubler-Ross encouraged the bereaved to accept that death is part of the life process and can lead to a spiritual awakening on the part of the bereaved. Psychologists, while agreeing with Kubler-Ross' studies on grief reaction and death and dying, find the spiritual aspects of her studies to be disturbing because no relevant scientific data can be collected on this aspect of dying. Kubler-Ross, talking about herself in third person, discusses her colleagues' dislike of her acknowledgement of the spiritual aspects of death in her book *On Children and Death* by stating "Colleagues say that Kubler-Ross is crazy for talking about spiritual visions of the dead. It must come from being around the dying too much" (25).

While psychologists may feel that spirituality is irrelevant to the study of death and dying, Wass, Berardo and Neimeyer state that the study of the spiritual aspects of death and dying are exactly what a thanatologist is suppose to examine. In their book *Dying: Facing the Facts*, the authors state that the public anxiety surrounding death and what lies beyond it in a physical and spiritual sense is what concerns thanatologists whose main interest is to relieve public anxiety about death. Wass, Berardo and Neimeyer claim that by alleviating the public fear of death, thanatologists make it is easier for both the dying and the bereaved to come to terms with the inevitability of death and find a way to accept the consequences of this factor of life (138). The authors argue that Kubler-Ross' stages of grief reaction "did a great deal to direct attention to the emotional needs of dying patients and their families" (140). However, modern psychologists, thanatologists and even Kubler-Ross herself acknowledge that grief reaction does not follow a set pattern and that a bereaved person's "philosophy of life" (140) must be taken into consideration when helping them cope with grief. This is not to

say that Kubler-Ross' work on grief reaction is not valid or not accepted by the scientific community. Kubler-Ross' work has long been considered a pioneering effort to push medical professionals, funeral directors, family and friends to acknowledge the emotional depth of dying and grief (145). What psychologists and thanatologists find difficult to accept is that spirituality connected with death and dying is valid since it cannot be readily measured or collected as data (145).

Modern Understanding of Death and Bereavement

According to medieval religious text and modern psychological theories on death and bereavement, quiet meditation to find emotional acceptance from grief maladjustment may be the best way for a bereaved person to come to terms with his or her grief. However, despite our technological advancements, modern society's refusal to accept death makes the transition for the dying patient and their families that much more difficult. As Kubler-Ross states in her book *Death: The Final Stage of Growth*, "it is difficult to accept death in this society because it is unfamiliar. In spite of the fact it happens all the time, we never see it" (5). Modern society protects the bereaved from experiencing the uncomfortable context of death. Physicians, nurses, morticians and priests assume a professional manner when dealing with bereaved families and their autonomy allows them to limit the amount of time that bereaved families spend with their dying loved ones or with the body of the deceased.

An integral part of the grieving process is the acceptance of loss. The lack of support that the bereaved often receive from health care professionals, other family members and friends causes them to deny or refuse to accept their loss. In working with her patients, Kubler-Ross that each person must grieve according to his or her own

emotional maturity. Two of her patients, Roy and Jane Nichols, wrote an essay concerning the loss of their daughter and how parents should grieve. In "Funerals: A Time for Grief and Growth" the Nichols state that

> emotional acceptance takes time and work and pain and hurt. . .people [should] find their own level of involvement and should do so voluntarily...If he [or she] needs denial and withdrawal, it should be permitted, but he [or she] must also be aware of the consequences in terms of maladjustment and delayed grief reactions (Kubler-Ross 91-93).

In Kubler-Ross' research, she has found that parents who lose a child often have a difficult time accepting loss. She states that "guilt is perhaps the most painful companion of death" (142) and that bereaved parents often blame themselves for not preventing the death of their child. In some cases, they also blame God for their loss or blame their lack of faith in God for the death of their child. Kubler-Ross discovered that terminally-ill children or children who are victims of sudden death often visualize their own death and in doing so, they attempt to prepare their parents for their passing. For these children, dream-visions often include talking to Jesus Christ or visualizing angels singing in heaven. These children are often the instigators in returning their parents to Christianity and assisting them in moving beyond grief. As Kubler-Ross states in her book *On Children and Death*, "A part of the grieving process is the need to get a sign of life from our dead children. We want to touch them once more, see their smiles, hear their voices, but most of all, we need to know that they are alright and not lonesome, as we are" (176). Kubler-Ross recommends that parents participate in preparing the body of their child for burial to allow them to express their grief and say good-bye. Kubler-Ross points out that funeral directors and their staff, who, in fact, are usually strangers to the family, today handle most funerals.

Psychologists, such as Kubler-Ross, have criticized such depersonalization of this aspect of the grieving process by stating that removal of the body from the family's care does not allow the bereaved to fully accept their loss. She believes that the handling of the body is important for closure and allows families to say good-bye to their loved ones for the last time. She asserts,

> It needs to be understood that funerals are for the family. Although we try to remember the desires and wishes of the deceased, we need to do what is right for those who are left behind. Cultural, religious and local customs need to be respected even if they seem alien to those who ask to help in the preparation or completion of the ritual (196).

With regards to *Pearl*, it is difficult to surmise whether or not the father participated in the funeral rites of his daughter. It can be assumed that he did play a role in her funeral and that his participation did not help him to alleviate his grief nor did he find any comfort from the grief counseling that may have been given to him by his priest. For the father, the only comfort would be to see his daughter again and the result is the reunion seen in the poem.

Thesis Statement

While the exact nature of medieval man may be a mystery to twenty-first century scholars, their environment created the emotional nature of medieval men and women much in the same way that modern men and women are affected by the world around them. Although the ideological and cultural system of medieval man may not be as technologically advanced as modern society, the content of cultural and psychological attitudes have remained the same. As Le Goff states "western man has kept some of these habits of mind and patterns of behavior, weakened to some extent and refashioned into new syndromes" (28). As the comparative examination of medieval and modern

societies demonstrates, the need to understand grief and accept death has not dramatically changed in 700 years.

In examining the poem through Kubler-Ross's modern psychological theories on death and bereavement, this thesis will determine how psychoanalysis of the poem through Kubler-Ross symptoms of grief reaction can bring a greater understanding of the poet's intentions. It will also identify the progression of the narrator's relationship with the pearl-maiden and how such a relationship ultimately affects his recovery. *Pearl* is divided into 20 sections. Section I will be examined as it relates to the first grief reaction: shock/denial. Sections II to XVII will be examined as they relate to the second grief reaction: searching/yearning. Sections XVIII to XIX will be examined as they relate to the third grief reaction: disorganization. Section XX will be examined as they relate to the final grief reaction: reorganization. It is this author's hope that this text will bring a greater emotional understanding of the poem and its psychological depth concerning death and bereavement.

Section I: Shock/Denial

Kubler-Ross first began working with children and death after the liberation of concentration camps in Europe after World War II. What she discovered, in the course of her research, is that dying children experience spiritual awareness. In her book *On Children and Death*, Kubler-Ross identifies the three stages of awareness that a dying child experiences. First, a dying child perceives his or her death, but is not aware that death is the end of his or her physical life. Second, a dying child tries to comfort his or her family members by assuring them that the child is going to a better place. Last, a dying child becomes aware of a loving presence to take him or her to another place once

the child has died. While Kubler-Ross has identified that their dying child often comforts parents, she has also written that each parent must go through the stages of grief reaction before they are able to emotionally accept their child's death. In her first book *Death: The Final Stage of Growth*, Kubler-Ross has identified four stages of grief reaction: shock/denial, searching/yearning, disorganization and reorganization. Each stage allows the bereaved to find new coping skills that enables them to survive with the loss. In the first and second sections of *Pearl*, the narrator identifies himself as a grief-stricken merchant and father whose lost pearl/daughter has plunged him into depression. The anger over his loss has left him in denial and isolated from his peers.

> þat dot$_3$ bot þrych my hert[e] þrange,
> My breste in bale bot bolne & bele;
> **3**et þo$_3$t me neu*er* so sweete a sange,
> As stylle stou*n*de let to me stele.
> For-soþe þ*er* fleten to me fele,
> To þenke hir color so clad i*n* clot.
> (*Pearl* 17-22)

According to the text, it is August, the month of the cutting of the harvest, and the pearl-narrator is still mourning his lost pearl, who had died some months before. In the proceeding months since the child's death, he has been unable to cope with his loss and constantly revisits the spot where she is buried. Although the poem does not make it clear about the child's relationship with her father, the tone of the poem suggests a close relationship developed between the two during the child's short life. According to medieval burial rites, the father probably did participate in the burial of his child; however, his inability to accept her death demonstrates that a personal handling of the body does not always lead to acceptance of death. However, the poem does not make it

clear whether or not the father participated in her burial and it would be difficult to assess whether such participation would have had an impact on his grieving.

While the narrator may have understood the entire liturgical text that accompanied his daughter's burial, he does not find the answers to the question of why his daughter died at such a young age. For him, his will rejects what his church counsels. Even with revisiting her burial site, the narrator is unable to find any peace in her memory.

> Bifore þat spot my honde I spe*nn*[e]d,
> For care ful colde þat to me ca$_3$t;
> A deuely dele in my hert[e] de*nn*ed
> þaz resoun sette myseluen sa$_3$t.
> I playned my perle þat þer wat$_3$ pe*nn*ed,
> Wyth fyrte skylle$_3$ þat faste fat$_3$;
> þa$_3$ kynde of Kryst me comfort ke*nn*ed,
> My wretched wylle i*n* wo ay wra$_3$te.
> (*Pearl* 49-56)

In the Kubler-Ross model of the stages of grief reaction, the narrator's feelings could be identified as shock/denial. Shock/denial is "a feeling of numbness that can last hours to weeks. Reactions include disorganized thoughts and feelings, thoughts of suicide, feelings of numbness, being euphoric or hysterical and feeling outside of one's body" (Kubler-Ross 40). What is the most recognizable symptom of this stage of grief reaction is the denial of loss. According to Dr. Kubler-Ross, this is a typical reaction when the bereaved learn that a family member has died or will die from a terminal illness. As she states in her book *On Death and Dying*, "denial is important and necessary (15) because it is a temporary defense and will soon be replaced by partial acceptance" (17). For the narrator, denial is an important coping mechanism that allows him to come to terms with her death.

In the case of the *Pearl*-narrator, his denial of loss and continued grieving could be considered an act of rebellion because he has refused to accept liturgy on death and bereavement. It can be assumed that the narrator was well acquainted with Christian theology of his day. While he many not have been able to read the text, the narrator, like most medieval men, had an excellent memory and probably remembered most of the liturgical text he heard in church. Although he was expected to obey and accept religious justification for his daughter's death, the narrator was exercising his time-honored liberty and questioned his loss. For the narrator, his rebellion came with the death of his toddler and the rejection of Christian values, which has not assuaged his grief. Such rebellion has continued in the modern era as Kubler-Ross states that fantasies or daydreams are necessary for the patient and his or her family to understand and accept death. The narrator visits his daughter's grave with the fantasy that he will see her again. Kubler-Ross states "the need for denial exists...and the sensitive and perceptive listener will acknowledge this and allow the patient his defenses without making him aware of the contradictions" (37). The narrator's child is already dead in the opening of the poem and the narrator has not made it clear whether he has shared his grief with anyone else. It is obvious that her death has sent him into an abyss, unable to cope with his loss. His resolve to find his lost daughter indicates a denial of loss. Since the child is dead, it would be impossible for the narrator to see her in the living flesh again. Medieval man was well aware that death was imminent for him. However, the loss of a child would be difficult for any parent to accept even in a society where death was often imminent.

In the opening stanzas of *Pearl*, the narrator's unrelieved grief for his lost daughter demonstrates a dual reaction: he accepts that she is dead; however, the narrator

cannot accept that he will never see his daughter again. As the narrator states in the opening stanzas, he is "languish[ing] alone, my heart grows cold" (*Ford*, trans. 11). The narrator considers the loss of his daughter unacceptable because his love for her should have protected the child from harm. As he states in the text, she is a perfect being without a peer that can match her beauty, and as such, she should not have died.

> Ne proued I neu*er* her precios pere.
> So rou*n*de, so reken in vche araye,
> So smal, so smoþe her syde$_3$ were;
> Quere-so-eu*er* I jugged ge*m*me$_3$ gaye,
> I sette hyr sengley i*n* synglure.
> (*Pearl* 4-8)

Since his daughter's beauty is special to him, the narrator is unable to conceive that God would take her away from him. Since her death, the narrator is unable to communicate with anyone because of the burden of his grief. While it is unlikely that his daughter was the sole source of the narrator's companionship, it is clear from the text that the loss has affected him deeply.

> Ofte haf I wayted wyschande þat wele,
> þat wont wat$_3$ whyle deuoyde my wrange,
> & heuen my happe & al my hele.
> (*Pearl* 14-16)

What can be assumed is that the poet is clearly grieving when he thinks of his daughter's death "to þenke hir color so clad i*n* clot" (*Pearl* 21). This anger causes a distortion of the narrator's thoughts, and as a result, he is unable to come to terms with his loss. He consistently returns to his daughter's burial site hoping to find some semblance of her spirit within the area. According to the narrator's text, "þat spot of spyse$_3$ [mo]t nede$_3$ sprede,/þer such ryche$_3$ to rot is ru*n*ne" (*Pearl* 25-26). He has difficulty believing that his

daughter's death could not produce something good in the area where she is buried. The narrator's belief could come from Christ's promise in the Gospel according to St. John.

> Verily, Verily I say unto you
> Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die,
> It abideth alone, but if it die. It bringeth forth much fruit.
>
> He that loveth his life
> Shall lose it and he that needeth his life in this world
> Shall keep in unto life eternal
> (12:24-25).

Here Christ attempts to explain to his disciples why his crucifixion is necessary for the good of man's salvation. Perhaps the narrator is visiting his daughter's gravesite hoping to find salvation from his own grief. As the narrator states in the text, "so semly a sede mo3t fayly not,/ þat spryg ande spyce3 vp ne spo*n*ne" (*Pearl* 34-35). The narrator's denial and isolation causes a deep mental conflict, which remains unresolved. His inability to find comfort from home or from the Bible leads to his collapse upon his daughter's gravesite.

> I felle vpon þat flo*ur*y fla3t,
> Suche odo*ur* to my hernez schot,
> I slode vpon a slepy*n*g-sla3te,
> (*Pearl* 57-59)

In his book *The Pearl: An Interpretation*, P.M. Kean states that the narrator's sleep can be associated with the dream-vision parables found in the Bible. As Kean states in the text, "...miraculous sleep [in the bible is] associated with revelation or great events" (27). Kean further supports the poet's use of this genre by stating that "dreams are a common human experience...and that the purpose of dream-visions is that the Dreamer has trouble understanding what he sees and part of the pleasure for the reader is to appreciate what is being taught before the Dreamer himself does" (201).

By the thirteenth century, dreams became an essential part of the medieval man's spirituality since they allowed him to gain an understanding of God's plan. While the narrator's mental conflict demonstrates the limitations of the human need or ability to understand the divine plan, his falling into a dream state would make him more susceptible to listen to reason about his prolonged grief. The narrator would have understood that he was having this spiritual vision in order to receive admonitions and instructions from God. This spiritual ecstasy is what the narrator needs to experience in order to reemerge from prolonged mourning and regain his faith. However, the poem makes it clear that the narrator does not expect his daughter to be the person to act as his spiritual intercessor and deliver the message. The narrator's deep grief over the loss of his daughter renders him unable to understand the new spiritual gifts she can provide to him while he is conscious, so that he must be rendered into an unconscious state, which will allow her to easily bring him back to Christ. According to Le Goff in his book *The Medieval Imagination*, the Catholic Church became interested in dream interpretation because "conversion to Christianity was often associated with dreaming" (203). Dreaming allowed the dreamer to gain an understanding of the teachings of Christ that he would not listen to in an awakened state.

Sections II to XVII: Searching/Yearning

Searching and Yearning is the second stage of the grief reaction and Kubler-Ross has identified that grieving individuals during this stage "are preoccupied with thoughts of the deceased or dreams. Feelings include intense pining, sadness, fear, guilt and yearning. [Anger directed at someone else]. People may also experience physical illness" (Kubler-Ross 15). She also calls this stage "bargaining." Kubler-Ross states that

"bargaining is really an attempt to postpone; it has to include a prize offered for good behavior if the wish is granted. Most bargains are made with God" (95). In this sense, his collapse is the pearl-narrator's bargain with God. He realizes that his daughter is dead, yet the narrator is not able to accept her death, nor is he willing to accept consolation regarding her death. The narrator's desire to see his daughter, plus his anger at losing so young a child caused his physical illness. For the narrator, seeing his daughter's physical presence and hearing her voice would allow him to come to terms with his grief. Since the reader must assume that the narrator has been difficult to deal with at home since he is in a state of prolonged mourning, it seems fitting that a family member, his daughter, serves as an intercessor between God and her father.

In her research, Kubler-Ross has found that individuals in the second stage of this grief process are very difficult to deal with. As she states, "this stage is very difficult to cope with from the point-of-view of family and [hospital] staff. The reason for this is the fact that the anger is displaced in all directions and projected into the environment at times almost at random" (44). In the poem, the narrator wanders alone into the garden where his daughter is buried, demonstrating his anger at his loss, "a deuely dele in my hert[e] de*n*ned/þa$_3$ resou*n* sette myseluen sa$_3$t/I playned my perle þ*a*t þ*e*r wat$_3$ pe*r*ned" (*Pearl* 51-53). The anger that the narrator displays in this passage is typical of bereaved parents who question what they have done wrong to deserve their child to be taken from them according to Kubler-Ross. She also states that "grief cannot be hurried, but eventually an emotional person will realize this is not healthy. You cannot bring back your loved one, but eventually you will have to face reality" (101). She states that parents have the most difficult time letting go of their dead child, especially if the child was

young. The narrator's inability to let go of his daughter, who was so young at the time of her death, are feelings that the modern reader can understand given the complex emotional bond that exists between parent and child. Kubler-Ross states that most children between the ages of 1-6 begin to develop complex emotional feelings, primarily by imitating and reacting to their primary teachers: their parents. Although the pearl-maiden was only two when she died, she and her father may have already formed an emotional relationship.

The narrator's collapse and subsequent dream-vision opens section two of the poem, which introduces the reader to the dream world of the pearl-maiden. In the medieval world, reality and spirituality coincided on the same world plane, so the appearance of the narrator's daughter as an apparition would not be a shock to him. Medieval men and women were more open to otherworldly situations because for them spirituality and reality existed on the same world plane. It is possible that the narrator was looking for an intercessor to help him with his grief. In his essay "An Approach to the *Pearl*," Milton Stearns states that the narrator's collapse is not the result of his being overpowered physically and mentally by grief, but his being "overpower[ed] [by] his faith in the ideal" (77). Throughout the New Testament, there are stories about dreams revealing information to a dreamer where he is addressed both through sight and sound and granted the privilege of gaining spiritual knowledge through God's intervention. An excellent example, which could have been an inspiration to the *Pearl*-poet, can be found in the *Book of Acts*, Chapter Ten, where the apostle Peter collapses during prayer and is afforded a vision where he is invited by the Lord to eat from four-legged beasts. Peter refuses because he will not eat anything unclean, but the Lord assures him that it is all

right. When Peter awakes, he is unsure of the meaning of the dream but is willing to accept God's decree on the subject. What is clear from this example is that the dreamer must be propelled into unconsciousness through stress or hunger before he is able to receive any messages. It is also clear that the dreamer must accept what he or she has seen and heard as truth. In the case of the *Pearl*-narrator, his collapse is caused by his grief and inability to overcome it. Such a collapse allows the dreamer to become more receptive to the revelation that he is about to receive. At this point, the narrator sees himself transported to this otherworldly place.

> Fro spot my spryt þer sprang i*n* space.
> My body on balke þer bod i*n* sweuen;
> My goste in gon in Gode$_3$ grace
> In auenture þ*er* meruayle$_3$ meuen. (*Pearl* 61-64).

The narrator's mental state at the time of his collapse renders him unable to recognize ". . . in þis worlde quere þ*a*t hit wace" (*Pearl* 65) that he was at and subsequently the description of the scene is reminiscent of the biblical description of the garden of Eden. The narrator recognizes that he has been transported to an Eden-like place. The narrator describes the area as "a foreste" (*Pearl* 67) with "crystal klyffe$_3$" (*Pearl* 74), "bollez as blwe as ble of ynde;" (*Pearl* 76). Within this part of the dream-cycle are hints of the pearl-maiden's presence although she is not yet seen. The narrator finds hints of her presence in "þe graueyl þat [I] on grou*n*de con grynde/wern p*recio*us perle$_3$of Oryente;" (*Pearl* 81-82). The lush images that the narrator is presented with in his dream of heaven were commonplace in medieval times when the Catholic church commonly used images and color to "form and inform" (Goff 32) medieval man as to his fate. By the thirteenth century, these images began to find a basis in nature and gave

realism to the medieval man's perspective. This world is a creation of the narrator's imagination, and it is here that he is reunited with his dead daughter as part of the bargain he made with God. The narrator desired to be reunited with his daughter and this natural setting assured him that something good would arise from his presence in the garden. It is here that the narrator finally allows him to experience and reconcile his grief since he was unable to find any real salvation by visiting her barren gravesite. The garden is the perfect place for the narrator to experience the quiet meditation that both modern psychology and medieval religious text suggests are so important for coming to terms with grief. He finds peace in a lush garden that appears to have benefited from his daughter's presence.

> The adubbements of þo downe$_3$ dere
> Garten my goste al greffe for$_3$ete;
> So frech flauore$_3$ of frytez were,
> As fode hit con me fayre refete;
> Fowle$_3$ þ*er* flowen i*n* fryth i*n* fere
> (*Pearl* 85-88)

The narrator believes that it was no accident that he found this place as "þat fryth þer fortwne forth me fere$_3$" (*Pearl* 100). Guided by an unseen force, "I welke ay forth i*n* wely wyse" (*Pearl* 101). The narrator finds a waterway, which will lead him to his sought after reunion with his daughter—the pearl-maiden. What the poet is setting up in this scene is the beginning of the process that Kubler-Ross refers to in her studies as a safety net (27). No longer lashing out at the world in anger for his loss, the narrator begins the process of finding his lost faith and healing himself from prolonged grief. What the poet provides to the narrator within sections two and three of the poem is a cushion that helps soften the blow of his loss. That cushion is a garden paradise that the narrator awakens to in his dream-vision. As A.C. Spearing states in his essay "Religious

Visions," "Dreaming, in this poem, does not indicate an abdication of responsibility on the poet's part, an escape into a world less demanding and less serious than that of everyday waking life" (113). This cushion is a safe place and demonstrates the parental protectiveness that a father would feel for his infant daughter. The setting makes clear the narrator's love for his daughter. He wants to see her again, but only if it is in a safe setting, such as a garden. It is here that the narrator finds happiness for the first time since the death of his daughter.

> The dubbement dere of doun & dale$_3$,
> Of wod & water & wlonk playne$_3$,
> Blyde in me blys, abated my bale$_3$,
> For-bidden my stresse, dystryed my payne$_3$
> (*Pearl* 121-124)

Despite his happiness in the garden, the narrator recognizes his own internal dissatisfaction with the loss of his daughter and his own inability to deal with the blow that fate has dealt to him. Furthermore, he recognizes that there is still more fallout for him to deal with regarding her death. The narrator is beginning to realize that his transportation to this garden setting is in regards to his daughter's death and that he will receive solace here or find even more trials to bear.

> As fortune fares þer as ho frayne$_3$,
> Wheþer solace ho sende oþer elle$_3$ sore,
> þe wy$_3$ to wham her wylle ho wayne$_3$
> Hytte$_3$ to haue ay more & more.
> (*Pearl* 129-132)

In other words, the narrator is not certain whether the pearl-maiden is with him to provide solace or rebuke him for his behavior. Although he recognizes his dream-state, the narrator does not realize that he does not have any power in this new world. He is still

mourning and searching for his daughter in the garden and his desire to cross the river into the spiritual world demonstrates that his prolonged mourning has left him unable to comprehend that he is only a visitor in this world.

> More of wele wat$_3$ in þat wyse
> þe*n* I cowþe telle þa$_3$ I tom hade;
> For vrþely herte my$_3$t not suffyse
> To þe tenþe dole of þo Gladne$_3$ glade;
> (*Pearl* 133-136)

Kubler-Ross describes this state of mind as searching because the parent or parents had no opportunity to hold their child or properly say good-bye after the child's death. As she states in her studies, "Bereaved parents whose children were taken away from them and were not allowed to hold or touch them have a much longer grief period and often stay in partial denial for years" (Kubler-Ross 24). While it is unknown what the circumstances were of the child's death and funeral or the length of time since her death, it is clear from the first section of the poem that the narrator is unwilling to say good-bye. Although the personal handling of a body is a part of the medieval burial rites, the narrator's grief has gone beyond the physical, and his emotional closeness to his daughter has not died with her body. The *Pearl*-narrator is still searching for an answer as to why she died and refuses to believe that a bad turn of fate is the only acceptable answer for his loss. It is possible that without a plausible answer to his understanding of her death that the narrator could fall into the prolonged grief that Kubler-Ross discusses. At this point, the narrator's inability to accept his loss after a long period of time, indicates his need to discuss his daughter's death, which he has not been willing to do with anyone since the funeral. His desire to find a way to cope with his loss leads him to the garden where he will attempt to cross into a divine world.

More & more, & ȝet wel mare
Me lyste to se þe broke byȝonde;
For, if hit watȝ fayr þer I con fare,
Wel loueloker watȝ þe fyrre londe.
(*Pearl* 145-148)

As the narrator gazes across the river, what he sees becomes a revelation in itself. Standing at the riverbank, dressed in white, is his beloved daughter. As he states in the poem,

At þe fote þ*er*of þ*er* sete a fau*n*t,
A mayden of menske, ful debonere;
Blysnande whyt watȝ hyr bleau*n*t;
I knew hyr wel, I hade sen hyr ere.
(*Pearl* 161-164)

The sight of his daughter in his own dream-vision puts the narrator in a state of shock.

To calle hyr lyste con me enchace,
Bot baysme*n*t gef myn hert a bru*n*t;
(*Pearl* 173-174)

What is perhaps unexpected for the narrator is not only the sight of his child, but the growth that she experienced since her death. As this thesis has stated previously, Kubler-Ross has identified children between the ages of 1-6 as learning complex emotional reactions by imitating their parents. The physical and emotional growth of the child confounds her parent who recalls her as a toddler. What the narrator fails to note is that the new appearance of his daughter has been spiritually that persons in heaven will shed their corporeal bodies and attain spiritual perfection. The reason that the narrator may feel this way is that he has not shed his role as a parent yet. He still desires to see his daughter as his little girl and not a spiritual personage. The narrator is unable to recognize that death does not have the dominion over his daughter as he first supposed in the beginning of the poem. Now that she is alive in a new spiritual state, the narrator must

come to terms with her death and find reconciliation in Christian principles. As the apostle in *Romans* states,

> Now if we be dead with Christ
> We believe that we shall also live with him
>
> Knowing that Christ being raised
> from the dead dieth no more
> death hath no more dominion
> over him
>
> for in that he died, he died unto sin
> Once, but in that he liveth,
> He liveth unto God
>
> Likewise reckon ye also yourselves
> To be dead indeed unto sin
> But alive unto God through Jesus Christ
> (6:8-11)

As this passage demonstrates, those who live in Christ will rid themselves of corporeal bodies and achieve perfection. While the narrator understands this idea, he does not apply it to his daughter. He cannot accept that his daughter has achieved spiritual perfection without earning it through good works or living a spiritual life. His reaction is surprising considering his knowledge of scripture.

> It is sown a natural body
> It is raised a spiritual body
> There is a natural body and
> There is a spiritual body
> (*I Corinthians* 15:44)

He cannot believe that his child has achieved such perfection since she died at such a young age. At first, the narrator sees the maiden and finds her to be familiar to him, but he does not recognize her as his own daughter because of her new spiritual perfection.

> þe*n* I, quen ho on bry*m*me wore;
> Ho wat$_3$ me nerre þen au*n*te or nece;

My joy for-þy wat$_3$ much þe more
(*Pearl* 232-234)

When the narrator realizes the pearl-maiden is his dead child, her new physical appearance both frightens and saddens him because he realizes that she is not the same little person he remembers.

I se$_3$ hyr in so strange a place,
Such a burre my$_3$t make my*n* herte blu*n*t.
þe*n*ne vere$_3$ ho vp her fayre frou*n*t,
Hyr vysayge whyt as play*n* yuore,
þat stonge my*n* hert, ful stray a[s]tou*n*t,
& eu*er* þe lenger, þe more & more.
(*Pearl* 175-180)

The narrator's dread at the pearl-maiden's appearance is a surprising emotion considering that his desire to see her again causes his collapse. As the narrator states in the text, "more þen me lyste my drede aros" (*Pearl* 181). His reaction could be caused by the fact he recognized her in such a place since medieval dreamers usually suffered from anxiety about their dreams and their meanings. The narrator's anxiety may be derived from his uncertainty about the true meaning of his reconciliation with his daughter in such a divine place. His fear that she will ultimately vanish again may have caused his misunderstanding about her new spiritual form. As the narrator states in the text,

I hope[d] þat gostly wat$_3$ þ*a*t porpose;
I dred on-ende quat schulde byfalle,
Lest ho me eschaped þat I þ*er* chos,
Er I at steuen hir mo$_3$t stalle.
(*Pearl* 185-188)

It is not only the narrator's diminished mental capacity that causes his strange reaction to the appearance of the pearl-maiden, but her new wealthy attire causes him to view her status in material rather than religious terms. As A.C. Spearing states in his

essay "Discourse and Drama," ". . . the naïve Dreamer . . . can see the grandeur into which his pearl entered on the other side of death only in grossly material terms, as a higher social status" (156). Indeed, the narrator's description of the pearl-maiden's attire includes "Her cortel of self sute schene,/W*yth* p*re*cios perle$_3$ al vmbepy$_3$te." (*Pearl* 203-204). The narrator believes that the pearl-maiden's attire does not symbolize that she has taken on a heavenly role, but that she has become a wealthy young woman whose royal air entices him and makes him happy. The narrator appears to be seduced by the setting and his daughter's new appearance that he does not immediately realize the spiritual importance of their reunion.

> Bot a wonder perle, w*yth*-outen we*m*me,
> In mydde$_3$ hyr breste wat$_3$ sette so sure;
> A ma*n*nez dom mo$_3$t dry$_3$ly de*m*me,
> Er mynde mo$_3$t malte i*n* hit mesure.
> (*Pearl* 221-224).

For the narrator, the idea that his young daughter has now gained a social stature delights him because social ambition is not something that the narrator could have achieved on earth. His extensive description of her physical perfection demonstrates a father's pride in his daughter; however, he fails to recognize that her achievement is the result of the inclusiveness of heaven. The narrator's desire to see his daughter again causes him to embrace her appearance. According to Theodore Bogdanos in his essay "*Pearl*: An Interpretation," the pearl-maiden comes to her father at a time when he needs her the most. She assumes a spiritual form to help him understand the importance of her death, but allows him to recognize her as his deceased daughter to assure him that she is well taken care of in her new home. Bogadanos argues that the narrator wanted such a confrontation because it was the only way he was assured that the pearl-maiden would

appear before him and he would be able to speak with her. Bogadanos states, "What adds, nevertheless, to the figure's internal dimension is the inevitability with which she reacts to the hero's internal state, materializing at a moment of desperate self-confrontation—as if invoked by it" (66). Kubler-Ross states that a parent's search for his or her dead child comes from a need to know whether or not the child has been absolved of any pain and is safe from harm. She also suggests that the reasons can be motivated by selfishness—a parent wanting to see the one person who will love them unconditionally. Kubler-Ross believes that this type of guilt attached to grief is caused by family members feeling left behind and that the thought of their loved one receiving a heavenly reward cannot make up for the fact that they are no longer physically alive. The grief reactions of the narrator not only demonstrate the emotional maladjustment that every bereaved person experiences, but the limitations of the human perspective in understanding God's plan.

The narrator's emotional reunion with the pearl-maiden is fraught with anger and guilt. It appears as the duo begins to speak. The narrator's anger at losing his daughter causes him to express his own anger upon the pearl-maiden and God for causing him pain. As the narrator informs the maiden,

> Syþen into gresse þou me aglyȝte;
> Pensyf, payred, I am forpayned,
> & þou *in* a lyf of lyky*n*g lyȝte
> In Paradys erde, of stryf vnstrayned.
> (*Pearl* 245-248)

The narrator's guilt and anger have little effect on the maiden perhaps demonstrating how the grief-stricken narrator has been unable to gain any emotional or spiritual growth since the maiden's death. Kubler-Ross states that most grieving parents yearn to see their children again; however, if they were emotionally maladjusted before the child's death

then they "give up investing in life entirely by developing a life of psychotic separation" (150). As the narrator tells the maiden,

> What wyrde hat$_3$ hyder my iuel vayned,
> & don me in þys del & gret dau*n*ger?
> Fro we i*n* twy*n*ne wern towen & twayned,
> I haf ben a joyle$_3$ juelere.
> (*Pearl* 249-252)

The pearl-maiden recognizes her father, and in lucid poetry, she informs him that her death was not "al awaye" (*Pearl* 259) by fate. Kubler-Ross states that a dying child perceives death, but he or she is not aware of physical death (35). The pearl-maiden understood that her death affected her father and his faith; however, she realizes that she has been sent to help him understand that she is not lost, but is safe in her new home. In fact, she informs him that the pearl is safe in a very fine jewelry box, perhaps giving him a metaphor that she is now safe in heaven and that he must accept her current spiritual state. It is his own inability to accept her death that has led to his spiritual downfall.

> Bot, jueler genete, if þou schal lose
> þy ioy for a ge*m*me þat þe wat$_3$ lef . . .
> & þou hat$_3$ called þy wyrde a þef
> þat o$_3$t of no$_3$t hat$_3$ mad þe cler;
> þou blame$_3$ þe bote of þy meschef,
> þou art no kynde jueler.
> (*Pearl* 265-266, 273-276)

At this point, the narrator begins to project his own desire to reunite with the pearl-maiden in these garden surroundings. As he tells her in the text,

> I trawed my perle don out of dawe$_3$;
> Now haf I fonde hyt, I schal ma feste
> & wony w*yth* hyt i*n* schyr wod-schawe$_3$
> & loue my Lorde & al his lawe$_3$
> (*Pearl* 282-284)

According to Kubler-Ross, this act of projection by a grieving parent[s] is often a bargaining tool, which allows them to continue the fantasy of reconciliation with their dead child. This is the narrator's second bargaining attempt as his first attempt led to his dream-vision. Kubler-Ross states that extensive bargaining is used to generate time with the ill person, but rarely works since that person pulls away from his or her family or friends to die peacefully. In the case of the pearl-maiden, she has come to help her father regain his faith and then return to her new family. By declaring that he will not leave, the narrator forces the pearl-maiden to adopt a parental tone and continue the reconciliation, which would allow him to remain in her presence. Bogadanos believes that "the visionary landscape is the macrocosm touched and transformed by the hero's wish for permanence. The maiden may be seen as the hero's wishful projection of himself into potential ideality, subject to similar transformation" (67). Since the narrator is exhibiting signs of instability, it becomes the job of the pearl-maiden to provide a rational voice for the text. "þou ne woste in world quat on dot$_3$ mene,/ þy word by-fore þy wyette con fle" (*Pearl* 293-294).

The pearl-maiden's maturity is not only a product of her faith, but a necessary component of the narrator's reemergence into faith. The pearl-maiden has become her father's intercessor—an indirect intervention from God to bring the narrator back to Christ. According to medieval theology, the pearl-maiden may have requested to appear before her father to help him find his way back to faith. She admits this to him later on in their lessons: "Bot of þe lombe I haue þe aquylde/For a sy$_3$t þerof þur$_3$ gret fauor" (*Pearl* 967-968). Kubler-Ross argues that it is a common trait among dying children to act as a preceptor to their parents to assist them with loss. Her theory states that the pearl-maiden

is attempting to console her father about his loss. In effect, she is assuming the role of a grief therapist. It is ironic that the pearl-maiden becomes an authority figure to her parent since she died at an age when children are generally learning complex emotions by imitating their parents. It is here that Kubler-Ross' theory that children know and understand their own death and attempt to help their parents accept their passing becomes a focus of interpreting the heart of the text: the narrator's emergence from his spiritual coma into an acceptance of Christian instruction concerning the death of his daughter.

The spiritual debate between the narrator and the pearl-maiden comprises the consolation issue in the poem. Here, the pearl-maiden forces the narrator to examine how his own prolonged mourning has kept him from seeing the benefits of her death. In other words, the grief experienced by the Pearl's narrator is a spiritual affliction that must be alleviated through doctrinal instruction supplied by a Christian consolatory. According to Richard Tristam in his essay "Some Consolatory Strategies in *Pearl*," "The Christian *consolatio* must have two abstract purposes: first, to soothe the mere humanity and—ideally by virtue of the first—second, to awaken the spirituality of the afflicted" (274). In the narrator's case, the consolatory is his deceased daughter, who will attempt to instruct him that loss is a catalyst for growth and understanding. Kubler-Ross has found that children have an "inner spiritual quadrant" (134) that gives them "a preconscious awareness" (136) of their own death. Before a child dies, according to Kubler-Ross, he or she will attempt to prepare his or her parent(s) for this event. Kubler-Ross believes that children have an awareness that death is an inevitable transition to another life. By coincidence, these children cannot understand their parent[s'] selfish desire to keep them

alive when death allows them to transition to a new spiritual state. This is the pearl-maiden's attitude when she begins to instruct her father on his attitude toward her death.

> I halde þat iueler lyttel to prayse,
> þat l[e]ue$_3$ wel þ*a*t he se$_3$ wyth y$_3$e,
> & much to blame & vn-cort[a]yse,
> þat l[e]ue$_3$ oure Lorde wolde make a ly$_3$e,
> þat lelly hy$_3$te yo*ur* lyf to rayse,
> (*Pearl* 301-305)

Here begins the pearl-maiden's first lesson where she asserts that the narrator must give value to God's decision to bring the pearl-maiden to heaven and her father back to faith. His attitude has prevented the narrator from understanding the meaning behind his loss. At this point, it seems that the narrator believes he is dead and will be able to join his daughter in her new home. Bewildered by her aggressive attitude, the narrator attempts to reason with the maiden about his desire to cross the river and join her. As he replies to her statement that death is a transition into heaven,

> Deme$_3$ þ*o*u me, q*uo*þ I, my swete,
> To dol agayn, þe*n*ne I dowyne.
> Now haf I fonte þat I forlete,
> Schal I efte for-go hit, er eu*er* I fyne?
> (*Pearl* 325-328)

The narrator's misunderstanding demonstrates the lack of rational thought, which accompanies the grief as Aquinas and Kubler-Ross speak of in their respective works. In medieval theology and modern psychology, spiritual consolation is a necessary aspect of grief counseling. At this time, the narrator's grief has consumed him to a point where he does not realize his own spiritual afflictions. The pearl-maiden attempts to begin her father's spiritual redemption by explaining to him that her death is not as important as his acceptance of God's plan of salvation.

In the pearl-maiden's view, the narrator is not suffering from a loss of Fortune, but the loss of his possession. According to Tristam, the pearl-maiden is obligated by the *consolatio* to remind the narrator that he is only considering her as a personal possession and that way of thinking is hindering his understanding of salvation. She accuses the narrator of attempting to transcend his earthly position to share in the her life in heave rather than gain a spiritual understanding of her death and what death means to his faith. In her first lesson, the pearl-maiden asks the narrator to put away his grief and find grace in the Lord. She tells him,

> Sty*n*t of þy strot & fyne to flyte,
> & sech hys blyþe ful swefte & swyþe;
> þy prayer may hys pyte byte,
> þat Mercy schal hyr crafte$_3$ kyþe.
> (*Pear*l 352-356)

The projection of bitterness and guilt is common in grieving parents because they are unable to comprehend their loss. According to Kubler-Ross, these parents often thrust their grieving anger onto their dead child feeling that they intentionally abandoned them or that God is spiritually punishing them for allowing their child to die (i.e. the bad parent syndrome). The narrator expresses his grief as a search for the child that has been stolen from him. He tells the maiden,

> My blysse, my bale, ȝe han ben bope;
> Bot much þe bygger ȝet wat$_3$ my mon;
> Fro þ*o*u wat$_3$ wroken fro vch a woþe,
> I wyste neu*er* quere my perle wat$_3$ gon.
> (*Pearl* 373-376)

In her attempt to teach her father about salvation, the pearl-maiden disdains his "headstrong and arrogant pride" (Borroff, trans. 350). In fact, the harsh tone she adopts during their conversation is surprising considering that this is a father-daughter reunion.

However, the narrator's unwillingness to listen to his daughter's lessons and the limited time she has with him may be the reason for her tone. The narrator's pride does not allow him to understand the importance of her death to his salvation, which mirrors the fact that the narrator also does not understand the importance of Christ's death to mankind's salvation. In fact, the pearl-maiden's death and her innocence at the time of her death can be paralleled to Christ's own death. As she states in the text,

> þow wost wel when þy Perle con schede,
> I wat$_3$ ful $_3$ong & tender of age;
> Bot my Lorde þe Lombe, þur$_3$ hys God-hede,
> He toke my self to hys maryage,
> Coroun*n*de me quene i*n* blysse to brede,
> (*Pearl* 411-415)

At the age of 33, Christ sacrificed himself to bring salvation to man. In his resurrection, he requests that his disciples not lose hope, but make his life and death the basis for the creation of the church and teachings to bring people to the Christian faith. While the pearl-maiden was only two-years old when she died, a comparison between the pearl-maiden and Christ could be made since both individuals are willing to bring others to salvation. Her death and her resurrection in his dream-vision allows her father to understand that his selfishness has kept him from receiving the salvation for which Christ has sacrificed his life. His vision, where she acts as his intercessor, was a common dream-vision during the fourteenth century, which the faithful are consoled by loved ones in dreams. Kubler-Ross believes that children, who die at a young age, ultimately teach their parents important life lessons. She states that children between the ages of 1-6 are emotionally open to spiritual experiences and therefore are able to help their parents understand that death is merely a transition to a more peaceful spiritual state. In her first lesson to the narrator, the pearl-maiden is attempting to make him understand that despite

his knowledge of scripture, he has made no effort to understand what he is reading and what it means to him. This is why he cannot fathom his daughter's new spiritual state.

The narrator's misunderstanding leads to the pearl-maiden's second lesson: what is courtesy? The narrator does not believe that his daughter could be a queen in heaven since that is a role reserved for Mary, the Virgin mother of Jesus. Again, the narrator displays his ignorance of scripture by telling the pearl-maiden that she cannot take Mary's place. As he argues with the pearl-maiden in the text,

> Art þou þe quene of heuene$_3$ blwe,
> þ*a*t al þys worlde schal do hono*ur*?
> We leuen on Marye þat grace of grewe,
> þat ber a barne of vyrgynflo*r*;
> þe croune fro hyr quo mo$_3$t remwe,
> Bot ho hir passed i*n* su*m* fauo*ur*?
> (*Pearl* 422-427)

The pearl-maiden corrects his assumption by stating that Mary is the Queen of Courtesy and according to medieval theology, she is the bringer of miracles to the faithful by acting as a direct intercessor between man and God.

> þat Emp*er*ise al heun[e]$_3$ hat$_3$,
> & vrpe & helle i*n* her bayly;
> Of erytage $_3$et non wyle ho chace,
> (*Pearl* 441-443)

However, she points out to the narrator that all who gain admittance to heaven are treated equally and "of alle þe reme is quen oþ*er* ky*n*g" (*Pearl* 448). The pearl-maiden goes onto describe heaven as a place where everyone is willing to sacrifice to help one another. What is implied in this lesson is the pearl-maiden's return to help her father through this difficult time in his life. According to medieval theology the Virgin Mary usually acts as a direct intercessor between God and man; however, the pearl-maiden's close relationship to her father and her intercession on his behalf allowed her to be

reunited with him. It is a belief in Christian theology that martyrs are able to work as intercessors on the behalf of loved ones left behind. Not only are the maidens able to work as intercessors for those they have left behind, but they are also able to prove themselves as role models by their own behavior. The pearl-maiden informs the narrator that she and the other maidens are in fact acting with courtesy toward one another and that there is no jealousy or envy between them. As she states in the text,

> & neuer oper ȝet schal depryue;
> Bot vchon fayne of operes hafyng,
> & wolde her corounes wern worþe þo fyue,
> If possyble were her mendyng
> (*Pearl* 449-452)

By demonstrating that even in heaven, courtesy must be applied to all, the pearl-maiden is attempting to instruct the narrator that courtesy is, in fact, a way of living in Christ, according to St. Paul in *I Corinthians*.

> For as the body is one and hath
> Many members and all the members
> Of that body, being many, are one body:
> So also is Christ
> For by one spirit are we all baptised
> Into one body,
> Whether we be Jews or Gentiles
> Whether we be bond or free
> And have been all made
> To drink into one Spirit
> (12:12-13).

In her lesson about courtesy, the pearl-maiden instructs the narrator that if he would live in courtesy, his grief about her death would be easier to bear and then he would gain understanding of the importance of salvation. In other words, the narrator needs to share in his grief with others and find joy in his daughter's new life as well as the life that awaits him when he dies. As she tells him in the text,

Consider then, whether all hate or gall
Is fixed or fast in thy company
(*Ford,* trans. 463-464)

Again, the narrator disputes the pearl-maiden's lesson, probably still viewing her as his young mortal daughter rather than a spiritual personage. As he refutes her,

þyself in heuen ou*er* hy3 þ*o*u heue,
To make þe quen þat wat3 so 3onge.
What more hono*ur* mo3te he acheue
þat hade endured i*n* worlde stronge,
(*Pearl* 473-476).

The narrator's refutation of the pearl-maiden clearly indicates not only his misunderstanding of scripture, but also his state of mind during the conversation. The narrator is still grieving over his loss, and now that he has found his daughter again, he cannot imagine that she has become a spiritual personage, who is, in fact, a bride of Christ.

While the narrator continues his denial of the pearl-maiden's spiritual status,

That cortayse is to fre of dede,
3yf hyt be soth þat þou cone3 saye;
þou lyfed not two 3er in oure þede;
þou cowþe3 neu*er* God nauþ*er* plese ne pray,
Ne neu*er* nawþ*er* Pater ne Crede;
& quen mad on þe fyrst day!
I may not traw, so God me spede
þat God wolde wryþe so wrange away.
(*Pearl* 481-488).

The pearl-maiden instructs him in her third lesson: God's mercy is given to every person according to his or her work. To instruct the narrator in this lesson, the pearl-maiden uses the parable of the vineyard from the *Gospel of Matthew*, chapter 20, verses 1-16, as an example. It must be noted that the pearl-maiden, in order to properly instruct her father, has returned to the written text of the Bible, something that he would have knowledge of,

in order to strengthen her consolation. It is probable that the narrator was familiar with the parable of the vineyard and that such a reminder would allow the narrator to reflect upon what his loss means to him in terms of the biblical teaching familiar to him.

Jesus Christ tells the parable in the vineyard to his disciples in the *Gospel of Matthew,* where he explains how salvation is obtainable for man. In the owner's vineyard, laborers are hired throughout the day, and at the end of the day, they are paid the same wage as those who did not complete the same amount of work. When the laborers protest, the vineyard owner points out that any type of work is good work and can function as a way out of faithlessness to God's plan of salvation. The owner is very blunt concerning his feelings about the reward.

> More, weþer l[o]uyly is me my gyfte,
> To do wyth myn quat so me lyke$_3$,
> Oþ*er* elle$_3$ þyn y$_3$e to lyþ*er* is lyfte,
> For I am goude & no*n* byswke$_3$?
> (*Pearl* 565-568).

The vineyard itself is a metaphor for God's mercy. The vineyard owner is God and the wage is eternal life. Christ states that it is he who decides whether or not someone will receive salvation according to his or her works.

> For mony ben calle, pa$_3$ fewe be myke$_3$.
> þus pore men her part ay pyke$_3$,
> þa$_3$ þay com late & lyttel wore;
> & þa$_3$ her sweng wyth lyttel atslyke$_3$
> þe merci of God is much þe more.
> (*Pearl* 572-576).

The pearl-maiden uses this parable to point out that she is able to achieve God's mercy despite the fact that she has not worked for it. The pearl-maiden states that because she

was an innocent at the time of her death, unlike adults, she has not had the chance to commit sin.

> Wheber welnygh now I con bygy*n*ne
> In euentyde in-to þe vyne I come,
> Fyrst of my hyre my Lorde con my*n*ne
> I wat$_3$ payed anon of al & sum
> (*Pearl* 581-584)

It is at this point that the narrator begins to listen to the pearl-maiden "Then more I meled & sayde apert:/ Me þynk þy tale vnresou*n*able" (*Pearl* 589-590). Her lesson causes him to recall a long forgotten *Psalm of David, number 42.* It is at this point that the narrator begins to understand that he must work through his grief and find consolation in the spiritual gifts that his daughter is presenting to him.

> Also unto thee, O Lord,
> Belongeth mercy: for thou
> Renderest to every man
> According to his work
> (62:12).

Sections XVII to XIX: Disorganization

By this time, the narrator has begun to make considerable progress toward spiritual regrowth as he begins to understand why loss is so important for spiritual gain. He also begins to understand that perhaps the reappearance of the pearl-maiden is the indirect intervention of God to help him acknowledge his faith. At this point in the conversation, the narrator begins to enter the third phase of grief reaction: disorganization. According to Kubler-Ross, disorganization occurs when a grieving person "begins to live his or her own life without that person. The bereaved reevaluate different ways of living" (124). Kubler-Ross is quick to point out that this certain acceptance of loss doesn't mean that the bereaved are happy. As she states, "It is almost

void of feelings. It is almost as if the pain is over and the struggle is over" (124). Kubler-Ross states disorganization results from the dying person separating themselves from their loved ones to prepare for death. While this separation is painful for those left behind, Kubler-Ross believes that this gradual separation is almost a necessity for both the dying person and the bereaved to come to terms with death. Kubler-Ross states that a dying person may exhibit angry or even psychotic behavior in trying to get their loved ones to understand their wishes to die and let them go.

Although the pearl-maiden is already dead at the beginning of the poem, it is clear that the narrator has not separated himself from her memory. As his daughter is moving forward in her new home, the narrator's prolonged mourning has stunted his spiritual growth, causing her to return in a vision to help him regain his focus and return to life. In the harshness of the pearl-maiden's lessons to the narrator, she is simply trying to get him to let go of her memory and accept God's plan of salvation. According to Theodore Bogdanos in his book *Pearl: Image of the Ineffable*, "by withdrawing his choice and by pointing to his total impotence, the Maiden annihilates the dreamer's human dignity, rendering him pathetic and even comic" (86-87). Bogadanos points out that the pearl-maiden's attitude is "theologically correct" (87) and that her strict adherence to the biblical law is not a "mockery of human infirmity and sorrow" (87), but establishes the relevance of divine law to all aspects of human life including bereavement and death.

While he is beginning to understand the pearl-maiden's instruction and partially accept her death, the narrator is still unprepared to let her go. As he was unable to let go of her memory in life, perhaps the narrator dreads letting go of this vision, which may leave him in a deeper depression. The pearl-maiden is forced to reiterate her position as a

queen in the kingdom of heaven, which should demonstrate to the narrator that his daughter is now in a safe environment.

> Of more & lasse in Gode$_3$ ryche,
> þat gentyl sayde, "lys no joparde,
> For þer is vch mon payed inlyche
> Wheþer lyttel oþ*er* much be hys rewarde.
> For þe grace of God is gret I-nogh*e*.
> (*Pearl* 601-604, 612).

Here the pearl-maiden begins her fourth lesson: why everyone is able to seek God's mercy because of Christ's crucifixion. The maiden tells the narrator that her position in heaven is due to Christ's sacrifice and her willingness to accept his decision to place her as a queen in heaven. The pearl-maiden informs the narrator that submission to Christ allowed her to gain spiritual perfection. According to Tristam, "once we are persuaded that all jewels attain their value and significance by their subordination to the *dere juelle* who is Christ, we are in a position to recognize the formal importance in the poem of the narrator's vision of the heavenly Jerusalem" (283). The pearl-maiden proves this point by her discussion of the Christ's crucifixion and how baptism led to God's mercy. At this point, the pearl-maiden is asking the narrator to accept God's decision to bring her to heaven and let go of his grief. She feels that his bargaining to keep her in his memory will only prolong his pain and that accepting Christ will help him move on. As she tells the narrator,

> In-nogh*e* þer wax out of þat welle,
> Blod & water of brode wou*n*de;
> þe blod v*us* bo$_3$t fro bale of helle,
> & delyu*e*red v*us* of þe deth secou*n*de
> þe water is baptem, þe soþe to telle
> þat fol$_3$ed þe glayue so gry*m*ly grou*n*de
> þat wasche$_3$ away þe gylte$_3$ felle
> þat Adam wyth in deth v*us* drou*n*de

Now is þ*er* no$_3$t i*n* þe worlde rou*n*de
By-twene v*us* & blysse bot þat he w*yth*-dro$_3$
& þat is restored i*n* sely stou*n*de
& þe grace of God is gret i*n*-nogh
(*Pearl* 649-660)

According to the pearl-maiden, it is God's mercy and the strength of baptism that allows individuals to avoid eternal damnation in hell and dispel original sin, which could bar mankind from eternal salvation. Since medieval man believed that the Last Judgment was inevitable and the pearl-maiden's intercession is designed to bring her father to a new state of being, it is, at this point, that the narrator begins to pay attention to the pearl-maiden's lessons. The pearl-maiden's reference to the *Book of Revelation* describes the last judgment and how it impacts the individual's desire for salvation.

And I saw the dead, small and great
Stand before God and the books were opened
And another book was opened, which is the
Book of life and the dead were judged
Out of those things which were written
In the books according to their works.

And the seas gave up the dead
Which were in it and death and hell
Delivered up the dead which were in them
And they were judged every man
According to their works.
And death and hell were cast
Into the lake of fire. This is
The second death.
And whosoever was not found
Written in the book of life were
Cast into the lake of fire.
(20:12-15)

Despite the gloomy overcast projected by the *Book of Revelation*, the pearl-maiden assures the narrator that "þe gyltyf may contryssyou*n* hente/ & be þur$_3$ mercy to grace þry$_3$t" (*Pearl* 669-670). At this point in the text, it is easy to recognize that the pearl-

maiden is a loving daughter leading her father to grace. According to the pearl-maiden's fourth lesson, understanding Christ's crucifixion will lead to a greater gain of spiritual wisdom. She encourages the narrator to turn to his *Bible* to gain a greater understanding of God's plan of salvation. As she states in the text,

> Of þys ry3t-wys sa3 Salamon playn
> How kyntly oure [Koyntyse hym] con aquyle;
> By waye3 ful stret3t he con hym strayn,
> (*Pearl* 689-690)

Still, the pearl-maiden points out that each man and woman must stand before God in judgment for their actions and that it is Christ's sacrifice that has made it easier for them to stand in judgment. The pearl-maiden encourages the narrator to seek God's salvation as a child. Here the pearl-maiden is asking her father to become the child he once was and receive salvation from Christ. This role reversal, which has been occurring throughout the lessons, has shown a progression in the relationship, which must lead to the narrator's acceptance of his daughter's new life. To support her point, the pearl-maiden tells the narrator of Christ's and his apostles at Galilee and Christ's interaction with children.

> And they brought young children to him
> That he should touch them and his disciples
> Rebuked those that brought them.
> But when Jesus saw it, he was much displeased
> And said unto them, Suffer the little children
> To come unto me and forbid them not
> For of such is the kingdom of God.
> (*Mark* 10:13-14).

The pearl-maiden tells the narrator that he must accept God's wisdom as a child would accept such wisdom from a parent. She quotes Christ as saying that salvation must be obtained by an individual willing to seek it with humility and innocence found in a child.

> Harmle$_3$, trwe, & vndefylde,
> W*yth*outen mote o*per* mascle of sulpande sy*nn*e
> Quen such þer cnoken on þe bylde,
> Tyt schal hem men þe $_3$ate vnpy*nn*e
> (*Pearl* 725-728)

Along with humility, the pearl-maiden tells the narrator that, like the jeweler, he must sacrifice his riches in order to obtain the kingdom of heaven. The implication that she is making here is that the narrator allowed himself to lose his faith for the wrong reasons. The purpose of her visit is to ensure that his return to faith and recommitment to God's plan of salvation. Kubler-Ross states in her studies that children, who have a precognition of their own death, will attempt to assure their parents that they will be taken care of in heaven. She states that in this role, the child becomes a teacher to the parent by asking him or her to accept their death as God's plan. Kubler-Ross believes that children are more intuitive to their "inner spiritual quadrant" (134) than adults because they are not encapsulated by the same fears as their parents.

In the case of the pearl-maiden, her death at the age of two may preclude a true emotional understanding of what her loss meant to her father since she was still learning emotions at the time of her death. However, the acceptance of her youth and inexperience in heaven may have led to her emotional and spiritual maturity, which would allow her to assist her father in recommitting to Christ. Yet, it is unclear whether the pearl-maiden's father recognizes or accepts her as a spiritual personage. However, despite his daughter's assertions that he should reembrace his faith, the narrator again shows his mental disorganization by doubting her role as the messenger. It is ironic that the narrator embraces his daughter's return and even her message; however, he cannot accept her new role in the procession of queens in heaven. Kubler-Ross states that most parents often

refuse to view their children in a spiritual state where they are accepted in the same level as adults. Most parents, she reports, do not believe that their children could be more spiritually attuned than they are because the parents did not teach their children religious issues. The narrator refuses to accept his daughter's high status in heaven and reminds her that she still has not rightfully earned her place. Perhaps his inability to understand the inclusive nature of heaven leads him to misjudge his daughter's spiritual state.

It must be remembered that medieval society was narrowly restricted due to an economic and social caste system. Given his experience in this environment, the narrator was unable to recognize the equality found in heaven. In fact, he accuses her of selfishness in her relationship with Christ. As the narrator states in the text,

> So mony a comly onv*n*der cambe
> For Kryst had lyued i*n* much stryf;
> & þou can alle þo dere outdryf,
> & fro þat maryag al oþ*er* depres,
> Al only þyself so stout &styf,
> A makele$_3$ may & maskelle$_3$!
> (*Pearl* 775-780).

Again, this act of selfishness demonstrates the narrator's own projection of guilt upon the pearl-maiden. Marie Borroff, in her introduction to her *Pearl* translation, believes that the narrator is caught between the past and the present. She feels the narrator's memories of the pearl-maiden when she was alive and his daughter make it difficult for him to accept that she is now another person. Borroff believes that the narrator cannot accept that he will lose his daughter again once the vision is over and that his refusal to end the dream-vision is the result of him trying to become her parent again. She states that the pearl-maiden's value to the narrator's past makes him fail to see how she can now enrich his life since she is in another mode of existence. Borroff states that

"all that was truly precious in her is now forever merged in the transcendent values of the heavenly kingdom" (intro 7).

What the narrator fails to realize is that the values he held so dearly in his beloved daughter are the very "transcendent values" (intro 7) that made her so valuable in heaven. As Wendell Johnson states in his essay "Imagery and Diction of the *Pearl*" "Obviously this purity, perfection, innocence and whatever else the quality can be called is available to a grown man as well as to an innocent child, although it seems to be equated since the pearl herself seems to be a child, with the spotlessness of childhood" (43). The pearl-maiden points out that it is her purity that made her chosen to be the Bride of Christ.

> Maskelles, q*uo*þ þat myry quene,
> Vnblemyst I am, wythouten blot
> & þat may I w*yth* mensk me*n*teene
> (*Pearl* 781-783)

However, she is also quick to note that she is one of 140,000 virgins who make up the procession of the brides of Christ. The pearl-maiden informs the narrator that she is not supplanting the Virgin Mary, but is merely working on behalf of Christ. In this sense, she is serving as an intercessor between the narrator and Christ. By pointing out that the brides of Christ were among the most faithful of God's procession, the pearl-maiden is allowing the narrator to understand why she was given such a high position and how he can hope to attain the same position upon his own death. She urges him to follow Isaiah's prediction that martyred prophets would become an example for Christians to emulate.

þat gloryo*us* gy[l]tle$_3$ þat mon con quelle
W*yth*-outen any sake of felon[e]
As a schep to þe sla$_3$t þer lad wat$_3$ he;
(*Pearl* 799-801).

and Christ who was killed without striking back at his oppressors. It was their non-violent acceptance of their fate and their refusal to condemn God that made them examples for Christians to live and accept their roles in heaven. The pearl-maiden further points out that Christ's crucifixion made him the maiden's true parent and it is he that she will now follow and look to as a guide.

Hy*m* self ne wrot$_3$[e] neu*er* $_3$et non,
Wheþ*er* on hym self he con al clem.
Hys generacyou*n* quo recen con,
þat dy$_3$ed for v*us* in Jeru*sale*m
(*Pearl* 825-828)

What the pearl-maiden presents here is an apocalyptic vision of Judgment Day taken from the fourteenth chapter of the *Book of Revelation* from the *Bible*. The pearl-maiden tells the narrator that there is room in heaven for everyone not just a chosen few who have lived clean lives such as herself.

þe mo þe myryer, so God me blesse!
I*n* compayny gret our luf con þryf,
In hono*ur* more & neu*er* þe lesse.
(*Pearl* 850-852)

From there, the pearl-maiden goes on to explain to the narrator that the pearl she wears upon her breast is a mark of her acceptance of God's plan of salvation rather than a mark of her youth or innocence. Again she reminds the narrator that his continued grieving over her death has caused him to misunderstand the importance of not only her death to bring him back to God, but of Christ's sacrifice for humanity.

Alþaz oure corses in clottez clynge
& ze remem for rauþe wythouten reste

We pur$_3$outly hauen cnawyng
Of O[n] dethe ful oure hope is drest
(*Pearl* 857-860)

What the pearl-maiden is telling the narrator here is that her willingness to "Bot þat meyny þe Lombe þa[t] swe" (*Pearl* 892) has allowed her to be "For þay arn bo$_3$t, fro þe vrþe aloynte" (*Pearl* 893) and "& to þe gentyl Lombe hit arn anioy*n*t" (*Pearl* 895). At this point, the pearl-maiden has repeated her lesson to the narrator: give yourself to God's plan of salvation and you will find happiness and understanding in my death. It is ironic then that the narrator tells the pearl-maiden that he admires her "wyt so wlonc" (*Pearl* 903) and admires her as "so ryche a reken rose," (*Pearl* 906) that he asks her to again demonstrate her power and knowledge and show him the city she dwells in.

Bry*n*g me to þat bygly bylde
& let me se þy blysful bor.
(*Pearl* 963-964).

This demand demonstrates the narrator's disorganization. Despite the evidence that she has provided to him, the narrator refuses to accept her assertion, while admiring her perfection and knowledge. His resentment also may come from the fact that the pearl-maiden has supplanted him and accepted Christ as her true parent and teacher. The narrator is unwilling to relinquish his position. It is clear that he still views her as his daughter, while admiring her knowledge of biblical doctrine, which seems to be closely reconciled with his own.

Kubler-Ross states that during the disorganization stage it is common for parents to accept one facet of their child's death, while refusing to accept that death has revealed something about their character that the parent was unaware of. For example, Kubler-Ross cites a case, where a young mother, who was not a religious woman, discussed her

daughter's death. The mother stated that her daughter told her that she had a dream about Jesus and the little girl began to talk in detail citing biblical doctrine that she could not have possibly known about. The mother was stunned and put it off to nothing more than a dream. The little girl was found dead several hours later. She had been murdered by an unknown assailant. Kubler-Ross stated that the mother still refused to accept that her daughter had any preconceived notions about her own death because the mother was not a religious woman and had not taught her daughter about religious doctrine. The mother could not accept the idea that her daughter's spiritual beliefs were taught to her through a dream-vision. The narrator in the poem is suffering from the same type of disorganization and denial.

The pearl-maiden responds to the narrator's demands to see the city with the same answer she has given his other requests: refusal. She tells him that he is allowed to see it from afar in order to gain the understanding of the reward that would await him after death if he would be willing to submit to God's plan of salvation.

> þat schene sayde, þat God wyl schylde;
> þou may not enter w*ythinn*e hys tor;
> Bot of þe Lombe I haue þe aquylde
> For a sy$_3$t þer-of þur$_3$ gret fauor.
> Vtwyth to se þat clene cloystor
> þou may, bot *in*wyth not a fote
> To strech in þ*e* strete þ*o*u hat$_3$ no vygo*ur,*
> Bot þ*o*u wer clene w*yth*outen mote.
> (*Pearl* 965-972)

As the one of the brides of Christ, the pearl-maiden was able to show her father a vision of heaven.. As her father's spiritual intercessor, the pearl-maiden shows him this vision hoping to alleviate his grief. The beauty of the city with its streets of gold and decorative gems on the sides of buildings reminds the narrator of the description of the city as it was

written in the *Book of Revelation*. What this part of the poem demonstrates is the narrator's knowledge of the *Bible*. He understands and accepts Christian doctrine, but was unable to reconcile his faith after the death of his daughter. This vision is meant to show him what he will be missing unless he accepts her death and reconfirms his faith. Here the narrator enters the final stage of the Kubler-Ross' stages of grief reaction: reorganization.

Section XX: Reorganization

Kubler-Ross maintains that in this last stage, a person learns new coping skills that will allow him or her to survive their loss. However, she warns that "acceptance should not be mistaken for a happy stage. It is almost void of feelings" (124). While the bereaved are still unhappy about the loss of a loved one, Kubler-Ross states that he or she has learned to accept such a loss and find consolation within the memory of the deceased loved one. Although there is little difference between the disorganization and reorganization, the reorganization stage is crucial in the continuing progression toward acceptance. She states that this is a time that most bereaved become non-communicative about the deceased and find acceptance of their loss in silence. This is the fate of the narrator now that the pearl-maiden has finished her lessons and joined the processions of the Virgins on the Mount. She has turned her back on the narrator, for now, hoping that he will find acceptance in her death. Despite the grandeur of the vision that he is shown, the narrator cannot hide his feelings of envy that he is not allowed, at this point, to join his daughter and live in such a place.

I stod as stylle as dased quayle,
For ferly of þat freuch fygure,

þat felde I nawþ*er* reste ne tr*a*uayle,
So wat$_3$ I rauyste wyth gly*m*me pure.
(*Pearl* 1085-1088)

As he watches the procession of Virgins approach Christ, he is filled with "for luf-longy*n*g i*n* gret delyt" (*Pearl* 1152) and rushes towards the river and throws himself in. At this point, the narrator is determined to join his daughter and throws himself into the stream separating him from the heavenly vision in a self-administered baptism that will not please his heavenly hosts.

Delyt me drof i*n* y$_3$e & ere;
My mane$_3$ mynde to maddy*n*g malte
Quen I se$_3$ my frely, I wolde be þere
Hit wat$_3$ not at my Prynce$_3$ paye
(*Pearl* 1153-1155, 1164)

His determination to be reunited with his daughter is against the divine mandate that only a deceased spirit who has embraced God will be allowed into heaven. The narrator's defiance demonstrates his unwillingness to accept the role that he is now placed in. The narrator wakes from his dream to the realization that the only road into heaven is through devotion to Christ. Charles Moorman states in his essay "The Role of the Narrator in the *Pearl*" that "he has realized his own unworthiness to enter as yet into the heavenly life, his own incapacity to know finally the mysteries of the universe" (120-121). It is significant that the narrator's first words when he emerges from his dream are "Now al be to þat Prynce$_3$ paye" (*Pearl* 1176). At this point, the narrator has learned a coping skill that will allow him to accept that he will not be reunited with his daughter at this time. Despite his acceptance, the narrator is not content that his daughter will enjoy the company of Christ, while he is left on earth to fend for himself.

The primary lesson that the narrator has learned is acceptance. He now understands his role as an individual who must accept God's plan even if he does not always understand the reasons behind it. The poem ends with the narrator urging readers to commit themselves to Christ as he will now do. In the medieval church, a man, who kept his word, was highly esteemed. The pearl-narrator realizes that he must keep his word, if he wants to enter the kingdom of heaven. While the narrator continues to feel the loss of his daughter, he is consoled by his desire to serve God, so that he may get the chance to see her again.

> He gef v*us* to be his homly hyne
> Ande precio*us* perle$_3$ vnto his pay!
> (*Pearl* 1211-1212)

Conclusion

> For his anger endureth but a moment;
> In his favour in his life: weeping may endure
> For a night, but joy cometh in the morning.
> (*Psalm* 30:5)

The *Pearl* is a poem of consolation as well as a work of educating its reader in accepting the teachings of Christ as a way of working through grief. Written during a time of political, economic and religious upheaval, the *Pearl* allowed the poet to work through his grief over the death of his two-year-old daughter. Using medieval theology on death and bereavement and the dream-vision as a literary device, the poet demonstrates that stages of grief reaction are necessary for a person to come to terms with his or her loss. The role of the poet's dead daughter as a spiritual intercessor aids in his recovery and helps him understand that Christ's salvation is necessary in understanding the spiritual gifts that accompany death. The poem ends on a positive note with the narrator vowing to keep his word and renew his faith. While the medieval

reader would recognize the dream-vision as a spiritual guide, the modern reader would have difficulty understanding the religious implications in the text.

Despite a shared history of political, social and religious upheaval, modern man's secularization of religion and the advent of psychoanalysis would make it difficult for him to understand that faith would be a way for reconciling grief. For modern man, the need to understand grief as a function of the loss of a loved one allows him to come to terms with his own feelings and not in a world context on grief. In examining this poem, the modern reader would have to recognize the poet's personal grief as a function of his individual feelings: denial of loss, desire for reconciliation, desire to keep his daughter once they are reunited and his desire to join her in heaven. By making the poet's narrator a persona rather than a symbol, the modern reader should be able to identify with the poet's grief. The loss of his child and the inability of the church to recognize the poet's paralyzing grief led to a state of disorientation that modern psychology would recognize as a grief reaction. Dr. Elisabeth Kubler-Ross's groundbreaking research into death and dying has identified four stages of grief reaction: shock/denial, searching/yearning, disorganization and reorganization. The poem is written in these stages of grief as the poet/narrator falls into a dream-vision that allows him to come to terms with his daughter's death. By identifying the poet/narrator's emotional state as grief rather than a loss of faith, the modern reader is able to identify with the poet/narrator's need to come to terms with the death of his child rather than accepting Christian dogma that it is part of God's plan for his spiritual growth. Although it is difficult to know whether or not individual priests were actually helpful in assisting bereaved parents, it must be noted that it is up to the individual parent to find consolation and acceptance wherever possible.

In the *Pearl*, the poet/narrator comes to a state of acceptance that his daughter is dead, but his acceptance does not only come as a result of renewed faith, but at the contentment that his daughter is taken care of and safe. According to Kubler-Ross, parents, who experience the loss of a child, must learn that their child is okay and her studies demonstrate that children often experience a spiritual awakening before their death even if they are not from religious families. In a sense, according to modern psychology, these dead children serve as spiritual advocates for their parents much the same way that the Virgin Mary or the Saints did for Christians in Medieval Christianity. As a result of their child's death, these parents often return to their lost faith, or at the very least, find consolation in their faith. However, in both medieval and modern times, parents seeking an emotional reconciliation with their dead children often find themselves having to attain a state of spiritual readiness before they are able to reunite with their child. In a sense, the poem reiterates the biblical idea found in the Gospel of *St. Matthew* where Christ implores his disciples to understand that children are the essential part bringing families to Christian reconciliation.

> Then were there brought unto him
> Little children that he should put his hands
> On them and pray and the disciples rebuked them
>
> But Jesus said, suffer little children
> And forbid them not to come unto me
> For of such is the kingdom of heaven
> (19:13-14)

Since the parent is in a state of grief, such perfection is nearly impossible to attain. What the *Pearl* points out to its readers is that reconciliation is possible if the bereaved is willing to work through their grief and come to terms with their loss. The suggestions

made by both the *Pearl* and modern psychology is that it is the lost child that will lead the bereaved parent back to a state of spirituality. From the loss of his or her child, a bereaved parent will gain an understanding of God's mercy and be reunited with his or her child upon the parent's own death. While such a reunion may only be used to reassure the parent of his or her child's safety and satiate the parent's need to be with his or her child, both religious text and modern psychology have never been able to disprove this type of faith. The *Pearl* suggests that a temporary reunion is possible for a bereaved parent to understand what has happened to their child. It may also allow the parent to rediscover their spirituality. As it is stated in the *Psalm of David*:

> Thou shalt guide me with thy Counsel
> And afterward receive me to glory.
> (74:24).

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