ENOUGH (SECTION XI)

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The linking word "enough" occupies a pivotal place in the structure of *Pearl*, in the thematic strand of linking words that denote quantities, measures, deadlines ("more and more," "date" "never the less"). It marks the juncture between desire and copious fulfillment, between want and surplus, but, perhaps most crucially, between the Dreamer's quantitative, earthly reasoning and the Pearl's transcendent vision of limitless abundance.

Enough is semantically ambivalent to the point of paradox. In *Pearl*, the word marks several paradoxes, not easy to pry apart since they are all interconnected. At the most fundamental thematic level, Sandra Pierson Prior notes that the word plays up the ambiguous relationship between the Dreamer's necessary desire for heaven and his equally necessary resignation to his earthly loss, his contentment (*paye)* with what he can have here: a tension that is crucial to the poem's ethos, indeed arguably its central conflict.[1]

Secondly, Section XI takes advantage of the built-in semantic complexity of the word *enough*. It sits on the dividing line between "too little" and "too much," want and excess, a lack to be remedied and a generous excess, inopia and copia; it remedies a lack and piles on overabundant riches, fills and overfills a gap. There is a world of difference between worrying whether there is "enough to go around," "enough to make ends meet" (as in the Dreamer's anxious questions) and a generous invitation to a plentiful feast, where there is "enough for everybody," "enough and to spare," which is what Pearl seems to have in mind.

In Middle English usage, this contrast between superfluity and mere adequacy seems particularly evident, because the use of *enough* meaning "abundant"/"abundantly" is more amply represented than

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[1] Sandra Pierson Prior, *The Pearl Poet Revisited* (New York: Twayne, 1994), 38.

in other historical periods. In the Oxford English Dictionary (OED), with its longer diachronic reach, that semantic paradox is muted. In the Middle English Dictionary (MED) the entire entry is structured around it –justly, given the wealth of citations:

> *inough*, n: a. Abundance; a great deal; b. a sufficiency, enough.
> *inough,* adj.: a. Plentiful, generous, abundant, great, plenty of. . . .; b. sufficient, adequate, satisfactory.
> *inough*, adv. a. very much, extremely, a great deal; b. enough, sufficiently.[2]

Of course, *Pearl* is one of the sources mined for citations, and occurrences of the word from Section XI are evenly sprinkled across the abundant/adequate divide–a little arbitrarily, for the distinction is not always clear, and some instances might fit equally well under "abundant" and "adequate."

This uncertainty points to another feature of *enough* as a quantifier: it is not simply the middle point of a sliding scale, halfway between "too little" and "too much"; it is not simply Goldilock's "just right." It partakes of both sides, the want and the excess. It takes on the coloring, the connotations of one or the other, or both.[3] It brings together, glancingly and uncertainly, two measurements that are not on the same linear scale. It functions a bit like a "Kippbild," those squinting ("multistable") images such as the celebrated rabbit/duck or "My Wife/My Mother-in-Law," that can be seen as one integrated image or another, but not both simultaneously.[4]

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[2] *The Electronic Middle English Dictionary*, Middle English Compendium (MEC), University of Michigan. Last updated 24 April 2013. <http://www.quod.lib.umich.edu>. Accessed November 20, 2014. *The Oxford English Dictionary Online*, Oxford University Press, updated Sept. 2014. <http://www.oed.com>. Accessed November 20, 2014.

[3] See my essay "Sufficientia: A Horatian Topos and the Boundaries of the Self in Three Twelfth-Century Poems," *Anglo-Norman Studies* 35 (2012): 247; and William J. Asbell, Jr., "The Philosophical Background of Sufficientia in Boethius's Consolation, Book 3," in *New Directions in Boethian Studies*, ed. Noel Howard Kaylor, Jr., and Philip Edward Phillips, Studies in Medieval Culture 45 (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute, 2007), 3-16.

[4] I am grateful to Manuele Gragnolati for pointing out the Kippbild connection. See the website of the Multistable Images project at the Institute of Cultural Inquiry, Berlin (<https://www.ici-berlin.org/past-core-

Illuminating recent discussions of "enoughness" and "sufficiency" can be found in environmental studies, where they relate to the concept of sustainability. Sarah Darby lays out a working definition:

> Sufficiency can be broadly defined in two ways: one is qualitative, implying wealth and plenty; sufficiency means that a purpose is achieved, a need is satisfied, and some sort of optimal state has been reached: 'enough is as good as a feast'. By implication, 'enough' is something to be celebrated and relished. It is subjective in nature and so is normally used in relation to an individual....
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> The second type of definition is quantitative, implying a clear *threshold* of acceptability: do we have enough food for the day? Is the rainfall this spring sufficient to allow the crops to grow to harvest? .... Is 450 ppm of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere sufficiently low to prevent runaway global warming from occurring? Quantitative sufficiency thus implies 'floors' (enough for a necessary purpose) and 'ceilings' (too much for safety or welfare, in the short or long term). It is more objective in nature, using absolute points of reference.[5]

But even though Darby stresses a "qualitative" component to *enough*ness, and even while the environmentalists stress the complexity of the concept, their considerations still remain firmly on a quantitative plane. In *The Logic of Sufficiency*, Thomas Princen suggests that sufficiency is a matter of "management," or finding an ideal quantity that would do justice to a number of competing claims, from environmental sustainability to provision of goods and services and a level that is not merely adequate or "second best" but truly satisfactory. He speaks of managing, maximizing, planning,

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projects/multistable-figures-and-complementarity/>); and E. H. Gombrich, *Art and Illusion: A Study in the Psychology of Pictorial Representation,* Bollingen Series XXXV.5, 11th ed. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), 5.
[5] Sarah Darby, "Enough is as Good as a Feast–Sufficiency as Policy," *Proceedings, European Council for an Energy-Efficient Environment, Summer Study, 4-9 June 2007.* 111. <http://www.eceee.org/library/conference_proceedings/eceee_Summer_Studies/2007/Panel_1/1.255/paper>. See also Thomas Princen, *The Logic of Sufficiency* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2005), 6-10.

efficiency[6] – all terms concerned with the finding of an optimal *quantity*.

Pearl, by contrast, challenges her father and her readers to think beyond a quantitative, measured, finite world; in fact, she seems oblivious to the fundamental misunderstanding between her and her father, who struggles to wrap his finite mind around the infinite enoughness that defines heaven. This disagreement, in turn, strains the poet's power of expression, his *copia dicendi*, since he, too, has only the language of finite quantities to express it; he can, strictly speaking, represent only the Dreamer's part of the dialogue and must fall short of representing Pearl's. His strategy is, first, to exploit the duality of a quantitative *enough* that the MED illustrates so plentifully, playing up abundance against fear of shortfall; and, secondly, paradoxically, by reinscribing a finite idea, of commensurateness and proportionality, in this section and the next, with the linking phrase "by ryȝte," just as we thought we had left the ideas of justice and the measurements of the finite world behind.[7]

Stanza li (lines 601-612) must, by the rules of this poetic game, take up the last line of the previous segment. So we begin by reprising the Section X idea of "more or less," and the Dreamer's concerns about commensurability. He conceives of fair pay as a proportional recompense directly predicated on a measured length of working time−or, expanded metaphorically, of lifetime: the concern is that a child who died young has not "labored in the vineyard" long enough to merit the same reward as someone who has struggled through a full life span. The "more and lasse," "lyttel oþer much" (line 604), is instantly negated by pointing out that we are now talking about another realm altogether, "Godez ryche" (line 601). The dichotomy

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[6] Princen, *Logic of Sufficiency*, 18.

[7] The edition I am using primarily is "Pearl," in *The Poems of the Pearl Manuscript*, eds Malcolm Andrew and Ronald Waldron, 5th ed. (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2007), 53-110. I am also consulting "Pearl," in *Middle English Literature*, eds. Charles W. Dunn and Edward T. Byrnes (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1973), 339-75; and to a lesser extent A. C. Cawley and J. J. Anderson, ed., *Pearl, Cleanness, Patience, Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* (London: Everyman, 1978). I am retaining, for convenience, Dunn and Byrnes's continuous numbering of the stanzas throughout the poem (so that Section XI comprises Stanzas li-lv); but I am also giving the line numbers for each stanza, since Andrew and Waldron, as well as many other editions, do not have this feature.

is softened and bridged by two devices: first, an appeal to human categories of generosity (*fraunchyse, large*) as opposed to stinginess. Bliss is not withheld ("reparde," line 611); the *cheuentayn* is "no chyche" (line 606), and perhaps the folksy character of that word, with its onomatopeic-sounding repeated consonant clusters, reinforces how human the concept of "stinginess" is. Secondly, the stanza begins a chain of water images that continues throughout the section. Water is an obvious and immediately visualizable metaphor for overflowing plenty, and also, in its uncountable fluidity, an antidote to the Dreamer's urge towards the countable and discrete (this many pennies for this many hours of work). The stanza ends by introducing the refrain of the last line, more stable in Section XI, as has been noted, than it is in most of the sections.[8] Where other segments delight in greater or smaller variations of the final line, here the refrain "For þe grace of God is gret inoghe" is varied only once in the five stanzas.

Stanza lii (lines 613-24). Exceptionally, the first line of this stanza does not reprise the key word. Whether that is a deliberate variation of the pattern is hard to say, but other instances of such violations (such as the supernumerary stanza in the "never the less" segment, XV) are more overtly meaningful. The word "now," a similar sound but no doubt a weaker echo than the word "enough" would be, takes on the task of concatenating the stanzas. Whether that maneuver is meant to carry a punning meaning analogous to the supernumerary "never the less" stanza is not clear.[9] But it puts much emphasis on the word *now*, as a turn to a different sort of reasoning. Pearl now takes on her father's argument point by point, like a professional debater ("þou motez," "þou sayz"), and accuses him of intentionally confusing ("mate," line 613) the issue.[10] As the temporal nature of "now" perhaps signals, we are also back to a finite mode of reckoning: Pearl begins by restating her father's question (or implied argument) about [?] whether Pearl's pay has been excessive: "þat I my peny haf wrang tan here," since she came "to late" (lines 614-15). The first line of her rebuttal (617) leaves us momentarily in a

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[8] Prior, 38.

[9] Andrew and Waldron, note to lines 613-14.

[10] Gloss in Dunn and Byrnes; alternatively, "defeat" (as in "check-mate") or "shame" (as Andrew and Waldron gloss it). All are supported by clear instances in the MED, s.v. *maten.*

semantic suspension, before we can decide whether the *bourne* she asks about is the word for "man" (s.v. *bern* in the MED), or for "water course, stream" (s.v. *bourn* in the MED), reminding us of the water theme, before the ambiguity is resolved in the next line: we are talking about a hypothetical man, "have you ever met a man who...." (The French-derived *bourn* = "boundary" is, according to the OED, not attested until the sixteenth century, but since the river in *Pearl*'s landscape *is* an absolute boundary, one would not be far off if one heard that meaning vibrating in the background also.) Temporal terms abound in this stanza (*abate* [remain, last], *sumtyme, ofte, alder*), further reinforcing the finite, measured way of thinking–only to reassert the superabundance of grace in the refrain of the final line.

Stanza liii (lines 625-36). Surprisingly, the next stanza turns the *enough* back to a meaning of mere adequacy or sufficiency, rather than abundance: "But innoghe of grace hatz innocent," the innocent (who died in infancy) has "enough grace." This inaugurates the argument that continues into Section XII: everyone deserves full "pay," and pay is not proportional to working time; is a free gift of abundant grace rather than the claiming of a right acquired by having put in "enough" time. Nonetheless the Innocent deserve it more, "by right." In parallel with this return to proportionality and relative measures, the semantic element of finite time is again strongly asserted in this stanza: "as sone as," "by lyne" (in due course, in order, line 626); end of day and end of life: the day already "carries dark within it" ("with derk endente" line 629); death descending (line 630). As in the previous section, especially stanza xlviii, Pearl stresses the vineyard owner's right to do what he wants with his money ("why schulde he not...," line 634). Her emphatic "yis" in line 635 signals a surprising turn of argument: she goes so far as to assert that the last-arrived should be paid first–"for þe grace of God is gret innoghe" for such an apparent reversal of due process. This twist in the argument is deliberately counter-intuitive. It would have been relatively easy to grasp a simple negation of proportionality, an absence of finite quantities, as the crucial feature that sets heaven apart from earth. But, in true Pseudo-Dionysian fashion, Pearl proceeds to unsettle and deconstruct the understanding we thought we had arrived at. Pseudo-Dionysius, whose thought, whether directly or indirectly, is a strong presence in the poem, insists on saying *and* unsaying, on asserting *and* negating, on radically disrupting earthly ideas of hierarchy even as

he constructs the most hierarchical heaven imaginable (in his *Celestial Hierarchy*). Pearl has already taken her father through this paradoxical mode of reasoning in Section VIII: all the elect are queens in heaven, but that does not make them "supplantorez" of *the* Queen of Cortaysye (line 440). Here in Section XI she repeats the process with regard to quantity, enoughness, and abundance, with regard to grace and right. Heaven is the realm in which, incomprehensibly and ineffably for us, grace is limitless, but justice, merit, "right" and other quantifiable notions of equability, are equally contained in it, without contradiction.

Stanza liv (lines 637-48). The "innoghe" that heads up this stanza is semantically relatively weak, simply asserting that the matter is sufficiently well known. What we and the Dreamer are reminded of is the genesis of the conceptual separation in the preceding stanza: like so much else, it is a result of the Fall, in which Adam forfeited "blysse parfyt" (line 638). We all were repaid for that decision: "al wer we dampned for that mete." While all editors gloss *mete* as "food" (i.e., Adam eating the apple), the homophones meaning "boundary," "suitable, fitting," "appropriately" or "copiously" (MED) also resonate in that rhyme word, and all are relevant to the context. (Andrew and Waldron's index lists all three, with interesting citations from the other Nero A.x poems: so all meanings were clearly available to this particular audience and writer.) The only thing that is limitless or copious here is the eternity of the punishment ("withoute respyt," line 644). Line 645 emphatically turns this idea around with the repeated "bot": it is the conjunction "but," but also the near-homophonic and homographic *bote*, "remedy" (MED). The remedy is liquid and abundant, water and blood. Its fluidity is perhaps also depicted in the especially rich concatenation of sound correspondences of this line: *ryche ran rode roghe* form not only a four-member alliterative chain, but what Gerard Manly Hopkins would have termed a "vowelling off"; the only major non-alliterating word in the line, "blod," rhymes with "rode," and even the function words *on* and *so* are tied in phonetically (both have the /ɔ/ vowel that dominates in this line, and *ran* and *on* are near-rhymes). This is the only stanza in which the refrain is varied, with the mildly surprising verb *wex*: if God's grace is abundant and "gret inoghe," how can it *grow*?[11] But the verb is also

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[11] Prior, 38.

entirely appropriate here. It captures the copious shedding of liquid in the previous lines (*waxen* in the sense of welling forth). More importantly, it marks a precise point in time (assisted by *firste* in line 638 and *as-tyt* in line 645). The redemption, which made abundant grace available, happened at a precise historical moment, one that crucially interrupted the timeline from Creation to Doomsday, creating an all-important before-and-after; and it also disrupts eternity, here in the form of shutting down the eternity of "helle hete" referred to in lines 643-44.

Stanza lv (lines 649-60). The first line (649) confirms our reading of *wex* in line 648, as a voluminous pouring forth: "innoghe þer wax out of þat welle/ Blod and water." Even the wound is described as "brode" (line 650) participating in the semantic thread of copiousness. The imagery continues to rely on water and blood–not new or unique to this section, and unsurprising in itself. But the combination and condensation of the images is bold and at times startling. The stanza economically condenses an image of the crucifixion with the harrowing of hell. Even more economical is the formulation in line 654: the water, equated with baptism, "follows" the spear (John 19:34). A causal connection is indicated, albeit an abbreviated one that omits several logical steps: *because* Christ's body was pierced, baptism became possible. (If one is not already familiar with the theology, one will ask, "but how does one cause the other?", and the explanation would involve a number of intermediary steps between cause and–ultimate–effect, here elided.) But we are also invited to picture not so much the spear being thrust into Christ's side, but its being withdrawn, so that blood and water "folȝe" ("follow"–and a near-homophone of "flow"). The visual effect is striking (we can certainly visualize the stabbing motion, but who has ever paused to imagine the spear being pulled back?), and in its unusualness manages to condense a whole string of theological reasoning into less than two lines. The idea of a withdrawal is taken up in line 658: salvation consists of Christ *withdrawing* any obstacles between us and bliss. ("now ther is noght.... bytwene uus and blysse bot that he wythdrough"). The sudden reversal of the semantics of copiousness is a little startling. It may remind us of the first stanza of Section XI, were God "laues his giftes" (607) and does *not* withhold ("reparde," line 611). Where grace has so far been figured as a limitless pouring forth and piling on, it is suddenly re-thought as a clearing of space, an emptiness that is also an opening for new

pourings-forth (water and blood follow the withdrawn spear): equally generous but visually very different.

While this final stanza in one way interrupts the continuity of thought from Section XI's *enough* to Section XII's *by ryghte*, it also acts as a pivot between them. The crucifixion/harrowing of hell image we are left with at the end of Section XI is both the wellspring (literally) and the logical resolution of the Pseudo-Dionysian paradox the section sets up, to be continued in Section XII. Readers are challenged, first, to think beyond their own quantitative, literal, "just" but ungenerous conception of reward and punishment: the reign of God is a space of copiousness, where stingy calculations are irrelevant. This opposition, however, does not immediately create a paradox, an ineffability, or even a mental discomfort. It is not difficult, or unpleasing, to think that quantitative thinking is simply negated in heaven. In fact, first-time readers (such as college students) who have made only this first step often find it hard to account for the Dreamer's difficulty with that notion, and his opposition to it comes across as small-minded. Pearl, indeed, sets us up to think so, in Section V, where she chides him for being an "unkind jeweler." But of course his discomfort is deeper than that. He is sensing, and the poem is naming, a genuine disjuncture between a finite world of measurements and time, and a qualitatively different realm that is *not* merely a negation of our world, but both its negation and its fulfillment. Pearl's apparent inability, or indifference, to fully grasp what troubles her father underscores the fundamental divide between their ways of thinking. The poem cannot fully name this disjuncture, or the nature of that other world, and therefore resorts to a different sort of bafflement. Just as we thought we had grasped the limitlessness of heaven, the poem reinscribes the notion of proportional justice, but–it hints–in a different and unfathomable way.

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