

1: Lyric Poems - Poems For Lyric - - Poem by | Poem Hunter

The Middle English lyric is intimately related to late medieval preaching, not only because many lyrical poems have been preserved in sermon manuscripts, but also because preaching furnished a unique opportunity to create and utilize poems. Preachers, Poets, and the Early English Lyric explores this relationship in detail.

Almighty and al merciabe queene, To whom that al this world fleeth for socour, To have relees of sinne, of sorwe, and teene, Glorious virgine, of alle floures flour, To thee I flee, confounded in errour. Help and releeve, thou mighti debonayre, Have mercy on my perilous langour. Venquished me hath my cruel adversaire. The influential Blanche, a woman known for her piety, seeks devotional material in the vernacular for her personal use, and perhaps also for instructional use within her great household. She makes her request of a courtier in the service of her husband, John of Gaunt. The poem demonstrates the centrality of the Virgin Mary to devotional literature among the highly sophisticated Christians of the age. In many ways, their devotion to Mary is the key to their refinement; she is the model of courtesy and of faith. Chaucer uses common Marian typology here: The legalistic imagery is noteworthy and typical: And Mary, "largesse of pleyn felicitee" line 13, will not refuse the penitent supplicant. In choosing a French source, Chaucer mines a rich vein, the continental vernacular tradition. His works echo other Marian poems, some well known, some obscure. Coulton remarks that "it is difficult to see how the ordinary medieval worshipper can have avoided the conclusion that, for practical purposes, Mary mattered more to him than Christ. As a non-judgmental figure of graciousness and kindness, she served well as an ever-available mediator and model for believers who sought to reconcile guilt and hope. The poems selected for this volume provide a sampling of the rich tradition of Marian devotion expressed in Middle English lyrics. Mary and Church History As the primary source of historical information about the mother of Jesus, the Bible provides few details. Luke offers accounts of the Annunciation 1: The story of her long-childless parents, Anna and Joachim, and the miraculous conception is patterned after the Old Testament stories of Anna, mother of Samuel, and of Sarah, mother of Isaac, as well as the Gospel accounts of Elizabeth, mother of John the Baptist, and of the conception of Jesus. Instead, they tend to focus on her roles as maiden, mother, queen, and mediator. Theologian Wolfhart Pannenberg argues that while Christology endeavors to understand the theological significance of historical events, Mariology attempts to symbolize or personify that significance, to embody the meaning of the events pp. So it is, perhaps, that Marian lyrics focus on a figure who is herself less important as a historical figure than as a symbol of faith and obedience to God. Various Old Testament characters and images prefigured her. In the second century, St. In the fourth century, St. Ambrose made extensive use of typology to describe Mary, and such imagery was absorbed into the liturgy. Medieval poets assembled catalogues of typological readings that allow readers to meditate on the various attributes of Mary: The Marian feast masses, particularly for the Assumption, emphasize this bridal imagery. Pannenberg describes Mary as "the symbol of humanity receiving the grace of God in faith in contrast to the old humanity symbolized by Eve, and thus also the symbol of the church in its relation to God" p. This equation took shape early in the development of Christian thought. Pre-Christian myths also helped to shape the legends of Mary. As Christianity spread, the art and traditions of old and new cultures blended, and the Blessed Virgin assumed some of the mythic and iconographic roles of Isis and Ceres mother goddesses; Minerva and Diana virgin goddesses; and Rhea a virgin who conceived by the god Mars. Such fluid identities were easily absorbed into the figure of Mary. Until the late fourth century, when Christianity was experiencing a surge of growth and expansion to become the primary religion of the Roman Empire, Marian devotion focused mainly on Mary the Virgin. The fifth century, then, marks the beginnings of steady growth in Marian devotion. Hilda Graef remarks that litanies to the saints became so unbalanced with petitions to Mary that separate litanies to her were introduced p. In the seventh century, Rome recognized four Marian feasts: After some early inconsistencies in practice, the English church adopted these feasts by the late eighth century Clayton, pp. By the end of the Anglo-Saxon era, England was full of Marian shrines, chapels, and relics many of which were later destroyed during the Reformation. The number of Marian feasts and masses had increased substantially, and Mary Clayton argues that Anglo-Saxon Marian devotion was

sufficiently strong to provide inspiration for the rest of Europe. The twelfth century saw the beginnings of a trend toward emphasis on the human, emotional aspects of faith, and Mary provided both a focus and a model for affective devotion. Through his widely circulated prayers and such works as the *Cur Deus Homo*, St. Thomas Aquinas, rejecting the controversial doctrine of the Immaculate Conception that is, the idea that Mary was herself free of original sin, he argued that what made her union with God significant was not her extraordinary virtue, but her simple humanity. This idea, of course, made it possible to regard Mary with empathy as well as awe, and such empathy inspired renewed devotion. By the early Middle Ages, the Church had prescribed that Saturdays and several feast days be devoted to Mary. The Lateran Council of 1215 made the Ave Maria compulsory learning for every layman. But as this volume attests, the Ave Maria was soon augmented with hundreds of other verses devoted to Mary. Artistic depictions of religious scenes were everywhere during the Middle Ages: The visual iconography owing much to Jacobus de Voragine and his scriptural and apocryphal sources carried over into the literature, where a shorthand symbolism of images often conveys a host of associations. The figure of Mary signified many things to many people; her position in the culture was complex, which helps to explain the wealth of art created in her honor. But three roles dominate devotional and artistic depictions of Mary: But it had further implications for Mary herself; it was perhaps a recognition of the virgin birth as a symbol of her union with the Holy Spirit that led later Christians to ponder the possibility of her perpetual virginity. In the apocryphal *Protevangelium*, the midwife who delivers Jesus announces that Mary is a virgin; when the doubting midwife Salome checks, her hand withers. In the later *Pseudo-Matthew*, the midwife Zelomi declares, "as there is no defilement of blood on the child, there is no pain in the mother. A virgin hath conceived, a virgin hath borne, and a virgin she hath continued. They often focus on the wonder she must have felt, and so there is a combination of veneration and empathy in the songs that celebrate the Annunciation. The Virgin Mary is not simply the paragon of human goodness; she is the embodiment of the union of God and humankind. Ambrose identified six virtues in Mary: In the earliest biblical reference to Mary, Mark identifies Jesus as the son of Mary 6: That Mary was the mother of Jesus was never questioned. That she was *theotokos*, mother of God, was a debated point which drew particular attention in the fifth century see above. Yet she was not simply the prototypical maternal goddess through which motherhood is venerated. In the humble circumstances of the Nativity -- the poor travelers forced to seek shelter in a cave or barn -- the emphasis in medieval artistic depictions of the Nativity is nevertheless celebratory; the event is commemorated as the birth of the savior, and his mother is portrayed as joyful. Only a very few lyrics deviate from this tone. But Mary came to know the pain of motherhood at the Crucifixion, and so she participates fully in the human maternal experience. As mother of the king, then, Mary is elevated to royal status. Metaphorically, moreover, Mary reigns in the sense of being preeminent in Christian virtue. Medieval theologians argue that as a perfect follower of Christ, Mary has won the "crown of righteousness" 2 Timothy 4: Typological readings of Psalm 45. In the seventh century the writings of St. Agatho refer to Mary as queen; in the next century liturgies employ the title, and Gregory II calls her "ruler of all Christians" Schmidt, pp. Clayton argues that in Anglo-Saxon England, the regal imagery coincides with societal rise of queenship and "enhances the position" of Anglo-Saxon queens p. It is a particularly important image in the feudal Middle Ages; Marina Warner writes that "the image of the Virgin as queen is scored so deep in western imagination that many Catholics still think of her as a medieval monarch" p. Mary and Medieval Christians Popular medieval religious beliefs were often understood through secular analogies. Individuals sought sympathetic mediators to defend them to judges. To the medieval Christian, Christ was both human and divine; he was Mediator, but also Judge, and therefore to be feared. As virtuous virgin, queen of heaven, and loving human mother, Mary was perceived as a powerful and accessible intercessor. In the *Fasciculus morum*, a typical fourteenth-century preaching handbook, the sinner is counseled to appeal to Christ through his mother: At this she will certainly, like a loving mother, hasten to come between you and Christ your father who wants to chastise you for your failing, and she will stretch her mantle between you and his rod. And he will surely relinquish all punishment or at least soften it to a large extent, so that we will go free without grief. Bernard of Clairvaux was also aware of her function as mediatrix, his words give a fuller description of the relationship evident in Marian lyrics: Let us therefore venerate Mary in the very marrow of our hearts, with all the feelings in our breasts, and with all our devotion;

for this is the will of Him who has ordained that we should have all through Mary. In all things and in all ways she provides for us in our wretchedness: The Son hears the prayer of His mother, and the Father hears the prayer of His son. Three centuries later, Margery Kempe shows a similar -- if more intense -- emotional orientation. When she falls into despair, near the beginning of *The Book of Margery Kempe*, Jesus appears in her mind and says, "Dowtyr, thynke on my modyr, for sche is cause of alle the grace that thou hast. To all these glimpses Dame Margery responds from the perspective of the Passion, weepingly. Subsequently, Mary appears again and again to Margery as her comforter and intercessor. Her understanding of Mary, clarified through meditation, has little to do with politics, far more to do with affective concerns and personal relationships. Her meditative methods illustrate a key principle in medieval religious art: The visual or verbal image provides a catalyst for inward contemplation. For Margery, Mary mediates by providing her with the very language of meditation. When the first collections of miracle stories the *Golden Legend* and the *South English Legendary*, for example were compiled in England in the twelfth century, Mary figured in numerous legends. She is a central figure in the mystery cycles, particularly the N-Town plays. The Pearl poet was particularly fond of Mary: Countless romances and secular poems begin or end with invocations to Mary. And of course she is the subject of hundreds of medieval poems, songs, carols, and prayers which survive today. Some of the poems survive in commonplace books, on flyleaves, or as incidental pieces in longer works. Many appear in liturgical manuscripts, hymnals, and sermon notebooks. Others are preserved in private devotional materials -- "closet hymnals," books of hours, and fifteenth-century presentation books.

2: Preachers Poems | Examples of Preachers Poetry

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