

### Paper 1–Poetry Explication

**Content:** Write an explication of **one** of the poems listed below (3-5 pages for undergraduates; 5 pages for graduates, not counting the Works Cited page). I have purposefully selected editions with a facing page translation so that you can see the original; the Middle English poems are not translated. The first four poems are in a file on eReserve:

*Carmina Burana*, “Dic Christi Veritas.”

Giraut Riquier, “The Fourth Pastourelle.”

Azalais d’Altier, “Tanz salutz e tantas amors.”

Giacomo da Lentini, “Madonna dir vo voglio.”

Hoffman and Luria, “Poem 73: To you, dere herte, variant and mutable.”

Hoffman and Luria, “Poem 171: Yit is God a curteis lord.”

A Poetry Explication is the special kind of analysis of poetry. As its Latin root (*explicare*, to unravel) implies, explication is a very close reading of a poem that attempts to understand (by unraveling) the various aspects of its structure. Explications often emphasize (though not necessarily all of these or in any particular order) rhetorical figures (metaphor, symbol, metonymy, prosopopoeia, etc.), imagery, meter, rhythm, diction, sound properties, and a variety of less technical linguistic features. Explications may also emphasize the generic form of a work (ode, short lyric, sonnet, dramatic monologue, etc.). Despite their emphasis on structure, the best explications will use close analysis in order to say something about what a poem means. Thus, one way of thinking about explication is to regard it as a way of articulating meaning through the analysis of structural and formal properties. Merely listing the instances of a particular rhetorical figure or indicating the meter of a poem’s lines does not constitute explication nor does it tell the reader anything about the poem’s meaning.

There is no one way to explicate a poem. One can be more or less “technical,” depending on the kind of poem one is analyzing. Formalist poetry, for example, is far more amenable to prosodic than free verse. In any case, the kind of explication one attempts ought to be suited to the kind of poem under analysis. This assignment is supposed to test your close-reading and interpretational skills; therefore, you are not supposed to use outside criticism (secondary sources) but can apply primary sources, such as notes from class, intros in our anthology and essays, handbooks to literature, dictionaries, the Bible, mythology, etc.

Please see #12 in the online *Guide to Style* for sample explications. The Sample Paper webpage also has further explication papers (links on CWP).

**Format:** I will **NOT ACCEPT** papers that do not follow the guidelines outlined in the online *Guide to Style* containing the format guidelines of the *MLA*, plus instructions on writing papers, sample introductory paragraphs with developed theses, frequent errors in critical writing, and a list of tools for the literature student. Refrain from quoting several lines in a row; rather, quote words and phrases, as that is more appropriate for an explication. In general, however, if you quote three or fewer lines of a poem, your quotation should not be set off or indented. It should be integrated into the text of your paper. Use a slash with a space on either side to indicate the end of a line and give line numbers for each quotation. See #49-50 in the *Guide to Style*. Persistent errors in format will result in lower grades.

**Structure:** I would like to reiterate that you are writing a **formal** paper, both in content and in style. Thus, your paper needs an introduction providing a context and a precisely phrased thesis at the end of the first paragraph (see especially #2-3 in *Guide to Style*). I encourage you to edit, revise, and proofread your papers, striving for coherence, grammatical correctness, and good transitions. **First drafts rarely hold up to critical scrutiny. I am available in office hours or via email to discuss ideas, outlines, and drafts of your paper with you before it is due.** Sample papers for this assignment can be accessed on the class webpage with a UNM netid and password.

**Note:** The following sections in the *Guide to Style* might be especially helpful for this assignment: **1-10, 28-30, 32, 42-50, 53-62, 72-76, 81-83.** Also see **102-7** for proper usage of quotations and paraphrases.

**Due Date:** Friday, 3.4.2011. Email submission in MS Word format.