

Notes on Decorated Initials in *PearlMS*

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April 2017

Sec 1, lines 1-60 (fol 39r): Capital P → “Perle”

- 15-16 lines high
- primarily red, secondarily blue
- oak-like leaf in chamber of P
- X with a single unfilled red circle in each of the angles about 1/3 of the way down the left side of the pillar of the P
- detailed leaves on the lower right side of pillar of the P (under the chamber)
- leafy decoration; small leaves continue down left margin and peter out near bottom
- <http://contentdm.ucalgary.ca/cdm/singleitem/collection/gawain/id/186/rec/5>

Sec 2, lines 61-120 (fol 39v): Cap F → “Fro”

- 4 lines high
- primarily blue, secondarily red
- red flower amid beams of F; red bumps (crenellations) around F
- additional loops ascend and descend six lines on left margin
- <http://contentdm.ucalgary.ca/cdm/ref/collection/gawain/id/185/rec/6>

Sec 3, lines 121-180 (fol 40v): Cap T → “The”

- 3.5 lines high (T crossbar above the first line, poke into line 120)
- primarily blue, secondarily red
- red flower-ish object amid (but somewhat obscured by) the curve of the T descender
- additional loops ascend six lines; squiggles added as well
- a face down three lines on left margin; wearing a cap with five dots on it
- <http://contentdm.ucalgary.ca/cdm/ref/collection/gawain/id/188/rec/8>

Sec 4, lines 181-240 (fol 41v): Cap M → “More”

- 3 (4) lines high (top of M rises one line-height above the written first line)
- primarily blue, secondarily red
- box around M, flowers at two top corners thus created
- leaf-vein design inside arches of M
- loop descends three lines on left margin on angle
- NB: this is the first instance (at line 181) since the opening of the poem where a section coincides with the top of a page
- <http://contentdm.ucalgary.ca/cdm/ref/collection/gawain/id/191/rec/10>

Sec 5, lines 241-300 (fol 42r): Cap O → “O [perle]”

- 4 lines high
- primarily blue, secondarily red, but given the amount of the red decoration on the page, the red is almost a match for the blue of the letter
- red box around the blue O; red curved lines inside O
- loop ascends 10.5 lines above; squiggles added as well
- three lines descend the remaining 9 lines on the page plus all the way to the bottom of the folio, one ending in curls
- <http://contentdm.ucalgary.ca/cdm/ref/collection/gawain/id/192/rec/11>

Sec 6, lines 301-360 (fol 43r): Cap I → “I [halde]”

- 4 lines high
- primarily blue, secondarily red
- very lightly drawn loop ascends six lines (only three lines' worth really visible); much bolder, wider loop with usual dot decorations descends 6.5 lines
- what may be an aborted attempt at a face off the upper-left corner of the I; a scrambled jutting decoration off lower-left corner
- <http://contentdm.ucalgary.ca/cdm/ref/collection/gawain/id/194/rec/13>

Sec 7, lines 361-420 (fol 44r): Cap T → “Thenne”

- 5 lines high
- primarily blue, secondarily red
- $\frac{3}{4}$ box formed around T; left side curves with T structure, while bottom and right side are straight
- bottom and left side of box blend into four-line loop which descends from box
- top of T (above top line of text) adorned with rounded crenellations plus on triangle shape midway through
- NB: cf. Sec 4 (line 181) where the beginning of a section coincides with the top of a folio
- <http://contentdm.ucalgary.ca/cdm/ref/collection/gawain/id/195/rec/15>

Sec 8, lines 421-480 (fol 44v): Cap B → “Blyful”

- 4 lines high
- primarily blue, secondarily red
- $\frac{1}{2}$ box to right of B; red decorations inside B and inside area created by demi box
- loops ascending and descending five lines
- <http://contentdm.ucalgary.ca/cdm/ref/collection/gawain/id/196/rec/16>

Sec 9, lines 481-540 (fol 45v): Cap T → "That"

- 3 lines high (also dips half below line of text)
- primarily blue, secondarily red; very light on red decoration
- some rounded crenellations on left side of T and on bottom; squiggles, almost tendrils, on pole of T
- four-line loops ascending and descending
- <http://contentdm.ucalgary.ca/cdm/ref/collection/gawain/id/199/rec/18>

Sec 10, lines 541-600 (fol 46v): Cap T → "The"

- 3.5 lines high (half above three lines of text)
- primarily blue, secondarily red
- rounded crenellations all around blue T
- three-line loops off both upper corners of T
- lower left corner has five-line loop descending that runs off page
- NB: cf. Sec 4 (line 181) and Sec 7 (361) where the beginning of a section coincides with the top of a folio
- <http://contentdm.ucalgary.ca/cdm/ref/collection/gawain/id/200/rec/20>

Sec 11, lines 601-660 (fol 47r): Cap O → "Of"

- 3 lines high
- primarily blue, secondarily red; very light on red decoration
- near-complete box around O with just a few additional squiggles
- no loops
- <http://contentdm.ucalgary.ca/cdm/ref/collection/gawain/id/201/rec/21/nl/1>

Sec 12, lines 661-720 (fol 48r): Cap G → "Grace"

- 3 lines high
- primarily blue, secondarily red; a fair balance of colours all considered, although the letter itself is all blue
- 7/8 box around G; upper right portion missing
- two large flower decorations on upper left and lower left corners
- loop ascends four lines above; loops descends five lines below
- NB: full male face appears inside G; narrow inner part of G appears to form his cap
- <http://contentdm.ucalgary.ca/cdm/ref/collection/gawain/id/204/rec/23>

Sec 13, lines 721-780 (fol 49r): Cap I → “Ihs” [Ihesu]

- 3.5 lines high (letter extends above and below three ruled lines)
- primarily blue, secondarily red; some white accenting on the right side of the pole of the I
- red, almost cloud-like crenellations all around I
- no loops, but some minor curls extending from corners
- NB: cf. Sec 4 (line 181), Sec 7 (361), and Sec 10 (541) where the beginning of a section coincides with the top of a folio
- <http://contentdm.ucalgary.ca/cdm/singleitem/collection/gawain/id/206/rec/25>

Sec 14, lines 781-840 (fol 49v): Cap M → “Maskelles”

- 5.5 lines high (including extra-large box with elaborate corner decoration)
- primarily blue, secondarily red
- full red box around M; rounded crenellations on top, right side, and bottom, covering roughly 60% of box
- wing- or feather-like decorations inside arches of M
- cf. Cap M in Sec 4 (line 181; fol 41v)
- loop ascending five lines; loop descending three lines
- <http://contentdm.ucalgary.ca/cdm/ref/collection/gawain/id/207/rec/26>

Sec 15, lines 841-912 (fol 50v): Cap T → “Thys”

- 3.5 lines high (exceeds the top of the three ruled lines)
- primarily blue, secondarily red; lots of red decoration means that the total amount of ink is about equal
- arguably the most elaborate of the decorated capitals in the poem
- red box around T, which is square on three sides and follows the curves of the cross bar on the top
- three-petalled flower off the top-right corner, with rounded crenellations descending along the right side of box, which gives way to four-line loop containing flower; on other side of the said loop are two other floral designs
- loop ascends seven lines above
- red line descends straight along left margin (with minor decoration) for 15 lines
- NB: face (with bangs!) in the curl of the T
 - cf. other capital T (Sec 3, 7, 9, 10)
 - cf. other faces (Sec 3, 12)
- <http://contentdm.ucalgary.ca/cdm/ref/collection/gawain/id/209/rec/28>

Sec 16, lines 913-972 (fol 51v): Cap N → “Neuer þe lese”

- 3 lines high
- primarily blue, secondarily red; red tracing all around N
- red wing-like pen work inside arch of N; triangular crenellations atop N, rounded ones on side
- three-line ascending loop, four-line descending loop
- <http://contentdm.ucalgary.ca/cdm/singleitem/collection/gawain/id/210/rec/30>

Line 961 (fol 52r, line 25 of 36): Cap M → “Moteles”

- a scribal error; the last stanza in this group, but perhaps an error in counting, given the additional stanza in Sec 15. (But one would expect *that* Sec to have *its* final stanza's initial decorated.)
- 3+ lines (dips below into the next line)
- primarily blue, secondarily red
- three-sided red box around M; bottom formed by M's crossbar
- large flower off top left corner
- fern-like red pen work in M's arches
- red crenellations down left side of box
- loops ascends four lines off petal of flower; loop descends three lines off corner of box
- <http://contentdm.ucalgary.ca/cdm/ref/collection/gawain/id/212/rec/31>

Sec 17, lines 973-1032 (fol 52v): Cap I → “If”

- 3.5 to 4 lines (rises above and dips into ruled lines)
- primarily blue, secondarily red
- rounded crenellations on both sides of I pillar and on 70% of to I crossbar
- flowers on both left side corners
- loops coming off of lower left corner; ascending loop measures 1.5 lines, while descending loop measures 3.5 and is cropped
- cf. Cap I of Sec 6 and Sec 13: more ornate than both
- <http://contentdm.ucalgary.ca/cdm/ref/collection/gawain/id/213/rec/32>

Sec 18, lines 1033-92 (fol 53r): Cap A → “As”

- 3.5 to 4 lines (rises above and dips into ruled lines)
- primarily blue, secondarily red; also include white in the left pillar of the A, which is decorated with five red circles (not filled in)
- outside of left pillar descends beyond all twelve lines of stanza and another two or three lines' distance before ending in a curl around which a number of red lines and flourishes are added; a mix of rounded and angled crenellations on left side of blue descender inside chambers of the A are abstract designs somewhere between crosses and swastikas
- a single loop ascends four lines above upper left corner
- what may be a face forms part of loop just above the A
- <http://contentdm.ucalgary.ca/cdm/ref/collection/gawain/id/214/rec/33>

Sec 19, lines 1093-1152 (fol 54r): Cap R → “Ryzt”

- 3 lines high
- primarily blue, secondarily red
- quasi-box formed to right of R using vertical double line in red plus line joining curve of R to the said double line; red crenellations around rest of R
- ascending three-line loop, plus descending five-line loop, as well as a middle loop that disappears into the gutter
- <http://contentdm.ucalgary.ca/cdm/singleitem/collection/gawain/id/216/rec/35>

Sec 20, lines 1153-1212 (fol 55/59r): Cap D → “Delyt”

- 3 lines high (cut off by cropping)
- primarily blue, secondarily red; the vitality of the red in this initial is worth noting
- 60% box: right side is straight, most of bottom is flat, and, were it not for the cropping, presumably the top, too; left side between the curls of the D—that is, parallel to the vertical line of the D itself—the box continues
- the decorations at each of the left side corners are more flame-like than flower-like; the pen work inside the D is likewise reminiscent of a flame rather than the fern or feather image seen in other initials
- a single, prominent loop descends five lines straight down
- <http://contentdm.ucalgary.ca/cdm/ref/collection/gawain/id/218/rec/37>

Distribution of Capitals

Section	Initial	Section	Initial
1	P	11	O
2	F	12	G
3	T	13	I
4	M	14	M
5	O	15	T
6	I	16	N ¹
7	T	17	I
8	B	18	A
9	T	19	R
10	T	20	D

T: 5 times

I: 3 times

M: 2 times²

O: 2 times

All other capitals (P, F, B, G, N, A, R, D) are used only once each

¹ Line 961 also includes a decorated initial M at the head of stanza 81 in “Moteles.”

² Unless, of course, we count “Moteles” in line 961.