VOICING THE SUPERNATURAL IN ANGLO-SAXON ENGLAND

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Abstract

'Voicing the Supernatural in Anglo-Saxon England' is a study of the representation of supernatural voices in Anglo-Saxon literature, with a special emphasis on Old English poetry. Focusing primarily on representations of the direct discourse of supernatural characters, especially when, how, and why these characters' voices are represented with unique stylistic features, the aim of this dissertation is twofold: a) to understand what representations of supernatural discourse can teach us about how Anglo-Saxon verbal artists perceived and interacted with the supernatural; and b) how these representations might inform our understanding of Anglo-Saxon poetic style and of the cultural roles of poetry in Anglo-Saxon society. In five chapters, 'Voicing the Supernatural' incorporates stylistic analysis of direct speech in six Old English poems: *Solomon and Saturn I*, *The Phoenix*, *Soul and Body I*, *The Dream of the Rood*, *Guthlac A*, and *Genesis A*, grounding these analyses in extensive research into their artistic, religious, and social contexts and incorporating Old English and Anglo-Latin poetry and prose as well as ecclesiastical, Germanic, Celtic, and classical sources and analogues. 'Voicing the Supernatural' argues that as poets translated their subject matter into the Old English poetic medium, they left traces of important historical conceptions about spirituality and poetry: for example, the consistent association between hypermetric lines and divine discourse observed in this dissertation throws into relief the genealogical relationship thought to exist between Old English hypermetric lines and Old Norse *ljóðaháttr* verse, which is primarily used for mythological and gnomic poems.

To my God,

who has always been so kind.

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ABBREVIATIONS

ASPR	The Anglo-Saxon Poetic Records, ed. by G. P. Krapp and E. V. K. Dobbie, 6 vols (New York: Columbia University Press, 1931–1942)
B-T	Bosworth, Joseph, *An Anglo-Saxon Dictionary: Based on the Manuscript Collections of the Late Joseph Bosworth*, ed. by Thomas Northcote Toller (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1898)
CCSL	Corpus Christianorum, Series Latina, 221 vols (Turnhout: Brepols, 1953–2018)
CSEL	Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum, 104 vols (Vienna: Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1868–2012; Berlin, De Gruyter, 2012–2018)
DMLBS	*The Dictionary of Medieval Latin from British Sources* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2018)
DOE	*The Dictionary of Old English: A to I* online, ed. by Angus Cameron and others (Toronto: Dictionary of Old English Project, 2018)
PL	Patrologia Latina, ed. by Jacques-Paul Migne, 221 vols (Paris: Vrayer, 1844–1865)

Voice and Subjectivity

The world of Old English poetry is permeated by speaking supernatural personae: all things are created by the voice of the chief divine being, and by his speech he intervenes in creation, enlisting messengers—angels, inspired prophets, and even the Cross of Christ—to teach all things to endure according to his word, lest they perish in the judgment like the damned spirit of the *Soul and Body* poems or the man who does not know the Pater Noster in *Solomon and Saturn I*.[1] The very existence of these and other supernatural characters is thus always closely related to deeper ontological questions of theology and cosmology, of knowing one's place in the world, and therefore we might imagine that poets handled the representations of these beings with care, especially in terms of their direct speech, which, scholars have shown, serves an exemplary, iconic, and ethical function in Old English verse.[2] To better understand these speeches, then, is to better understand a number of matters key to the study of Old English poetry: most obviously Old English poetics and poets' conceptions of supernatural beings, but also of the roles of poetry in Anglo-Saxon society, and even conceptions of humanity.[3]

But the value of direct speech in Old English poetry has not always been appreciated: Elise Louviot, in her wide-ranging study of direct speech in Old English poetry, reviews scholarly receptions of direct speech in Old English poetry, noting that early critics were disappointed in the speeches' failures at characterization and advancing narrative action while modern scholars have kept from criticizing poets on these points (yet still praise them

[1] I treat cosmology in Old English poetry in more detail in Chapters Three, Four, and Five. On *Solomon and Saturn I*, see Chapter One, pp. 54–64.
[2] See Louviot, *Direct Speech*, pp. 35–36 and 43, and Mize, *Traditional Subjectivities*, pp. 17–25, who notes the ethical grounding for Old English poetry's omnipresent concern with subjectivity.
[3] The latter two questions are considered throughout this dissertation, but especially in Chapter Three.

when they succeed in achieving these effects).[4] By systematically addressing a number of critical preconceptions towards direct speech, Louviot is able to subsequently demonstrate why it makes more sense to approach these poems within their own tradition and stylistic terms. For example, if Old English poems fall short of our expectations in terms of characterization, it is because the characters in Old English poems exhibit what Britt Mize has termed 'archetypal subjectivities'. In his words:

> the continual reference to qualities and states of mind in classical Old English poetry works less to create distinctive fictional persons than to evoke a system of ethical positions and relationships, even when such a system is not fully articulated within a given text.[5]

That is, Old English poets are not generally concerned with creating characters which are what we might call 'realistic' or 'convincing' in their verisimilitude, but with shaping these characters along traditional models, for example depicting God as a king and his angels and saints as his thanes, while the devils and sinners are outlaws.[6]

While Mize is primarily concerned with mentality in Old English poetry, Louviot's study has largely borne out Mize's conclusions with regard to direct speech.[7] Louviot makes two points regarding characterization in Old English poetic speeches which are especially relevant to our discussion:

> First, stylistic discrepancies between various speeches or between speeches and narrative are very limited. Second, those discrepancies are not used to single out one character's voice but rather one type of speech (a lament, an accusation, a profession of faith, etc.).[8]

But while these 'limited' 'stylistic discrepancies' are used to characterize types of speech (rather than characters' voices), it is notable that several Old English poems make a concerted effort to repeatedly associate types of speech with specific characters. As Mark Griffith has

[4] *Direct Speech*, pp. 1–23 (esp. pp. 1–2).
[5] Mize, *Traditional Subjectivites*, pp. 3–31 (esp. p. 19).
[6] O'Brien O'Keeffe, 'Heroic Values and Christian Ethics', gives a fine summary of the Anglo-Saxon heroic ideal; see further Chapter Five (esp. pp. 232–43) for this model of characterization.
[7] See especially *Direct Speech*, pp. 102–222.
[8] *Direct Speech*, p. 187.

demonstrated, for example, God's speech in *Genesis A* is consistently set in a higher poetic register than that of other characters, and Robert Bjork has demonstrated an 'iconographical' stability in the saints' discourse in poetic saints' lives.[9] Hypermetric lines, too, which are used almost exclusively by God in *Genesis A*, are often found in the mouths of supernatural speakers, especially divine ones, as will become apparent in Chapters Three through Five of this dissertation.[10] Archetypal direct discourse is, after all, a kind of distinct characterization, albeit varying in degree from the desire for greater individuation and realism in art (which privileges mimesis over diegesis in storytelling), and in this thesis I demonstrate some of the various ways poets use stylistic devices to communicate what it means to be and sound supernatural.

It is first important to explain how I define 'supernatural voices': for the purposes of this dissertation, I mean discourse issuing from 1) non-human spiritual beings, such as God, angels, demons, and disembodied ghosts, 2) entities not normally perceived as endowed with personhood and capable of speech, such as the Cross of Christ, and 3) supernaturally inspired speech as mediated through humans. The methodology I originally hoped to employ for this investigation was examining poems where two or more supernatural voices are in dialogue with one another, as this would grant greater opportunity for observing contrasting characterization. After exploring a considerable amount of prose and poetic texts, it became obvious that in Old English texts supernatural voices do not generally speak to one another in an extended way, such as would support my proposed methodology; rather, far more frequent is the intercession of one supernatural being into the life of a human. Demons are especially frequent guests in poetic saints' lives, for example, but—while I focus especially on poetry in this dissertation—rather than rehashing the work of Bjork, whose monograph *Old English*

[9] Griffith, 'Register of Divine Speech'; Bjork, *Verse Saints' Lives*, pp. 23–27. Another excellent example is Garrison's analysis of gendered speech in *Beowulf* ('Speaking of Nostalgia').
[10] See further Coker, 'Function of Hypermetric Lines', pp. 17–19.

Verse Saints' Lives deftly details many intricacies of saintly discourse (contrasting it with that of demons and other characters) in *Guthlac A*, *Juliana*, *Elene*, *Guthlac B*, and *Andreas*, I have largely sought to approach a different corpus of texts, which I hope the reader will find has been similarly productive and stimulating. There is, frankly, too much primary and secondary material to explore in order to give an exhaustive study of supernatural discourse, if such a thing were even possible, but I have attempted to bring together a wide variety of sources in Old English and other languages of influence in the insular sphere in order to draw specific conclusions about six Old English poems: *Solomon and Saturn I*, *The Phoenix*, *Soul and Body I*, *The Dream of the Rood*, *Guthlac A*, and *Genesis A*.

In Chapter One, I explore the notion of divinely inspired poetry as it occurs in select Anglo-Latin, Old English, and Old Norse poems, showing how these poets conceived of inspiration, how their conceptions relate to their notions of poetic composition itself, and what (if any) influence these varying conceptions might have had on one another. A notable pattern in this chapter is that inspiration is regularly conceived of not as inbreathing but as receiving a word or song which spiritually or psychologically ennobles its hearer, and the investigation culminates in a reading of *Solomon and Saturn I*, where Solomon's knowledge of the Pater Noster sets his discourse apart from the otherwise widely-read Saturn. Chapter Two addresses the relationship between spirit and form in supernatural communication, touching on a variety of formal concerns, from poetic and linguistic form to exegesis and musical number. After surveying select theoretical discussions of these matters which were available to Anglo-Saxon writers, I demonstrate how the poet of *The Phoenix* navigates truth and virtuosity in the poetic medium as he translates the voices of a divinely-inspired Job and angels in heaven, comparing these to the poet's renderings of other songs, such as the phoenix's and the *De ave phoenice* itself. In Chapter Three, I analyse homiletic and elegiac admonitions to explore how poets represent the supernatural speeches derived from 'visions'.

Focusing especially on *Soul and Body I* and *The Dream of the Rood*, I demonstrate how poets and preachers use style to help us learn from and remember supernatural voices.

Chapters Four and Five draw the findings from Chapters One through Three, which out of necessity survey a broad range of sources, into close readings of two texts. Chapter Four is an analysis of speech in *Guthlac A*, especially focusing on how the poet uses poetic form in the direct speech of his characters to demonstrate his conceptions of the relationship between rhetorical style and authoritative power in speech. In this chapter I demonstrate that while angels, saints, and demons employ different poetic forms to give their speeches rhetorical weight, only speech founded in authoritative truth has spiritual power. Chapter Five shows how the *Genesis A*-poet uses both the words–deeds theme and hypermetrics to highlight the power of God's word, not only in the Genesis narrative but also in the present and future.

This dissertation has a notable trajectory, beginning with the human dimension of divine inspiration, continuing with the speeches of intercessory beings, and ending with the representation of God's discourse. The first two chapters are a necessary precursor to the latter chapters, as they examine the ways humans voice divine language, especially in poetry, and Chapter Three, in its focus on how supernatural voices and how to remember them, is a hinge between the human voicing of spirits in Chapters One and Two and 'direct' supernatural discourse in Chapters Four and Five. While I have not had sufficient space to analyse several Old English poems—not to mention prose texts!—which would no doubt bolster this analysis, I have tried to choose a variety of poems which differ in genre and subject-matter in order to give this dissertation a scope broad enough to approach comprehensive and suggestive results while still leaving room, as it must, for further analysis. But beyond their sundry variety, the chosen poems are among the most striking in the Old English poetic corpus for their distinctive character and intrinsic interest both to the study of

the Old English poetic medium and to Anglo-Saxon spiritualities and worldviews. They have challenged, delighted, and instructed me, and, with gratitude to these poets, whose names history seems to have forgotten, it is my sincerest hope that this dissertation might somehow achieve the same effects for the reader.

Chapter One

The Gift of Song: Inspired and Inspiring Words

> In due time he stretched himself out and went to sleep, whereupon he dreamt that someone stood by him, saluted him, and called him by name: 'Cædmon,' he said, 'sing me something.' Cædmon answered, 'I cannot sing; that is why I left the feast and came here, because I could not sing.' Once again the speaker said, 'Nevertheless you must sing to me.' 'What must I sing?' said Cædmon. 'Sing,' he said, 'about the beginning of created things.' Thereupon Cædmon began to sing verses which he had never heard before in praise of God the Creator…'
>
> —The Venerable Bede, *Ecclesiastical History*, IV. 24[1]

In the instigation of allegedly divine visitation, one of the earliest recorded Old English poems, *Cædmon's Hymn*, found its genesis. Of course, Cædmon (who died around 679–684) came lately to the Old English poetic tradition, whose history seems to extend beyond the grasp of human memory.[2] Before he received the gift of song, Cædmon would flee feasts in which each guest took a turn singing because, according to the Venerable Bede (circa 673–735), he had previously learned 'nothing of songs': *Siquidem in habitu saeculari usque ad tempora prouectioris aetatis constitutus, nil carminum aliquando didicerat* ('Since he was set up in worldly estate until times of older age, he never learned anything of songs').[3] Bede's implication seems to be that songs were not prominent in his life such that he might commit any to memory as would be required in, say, an ecclesiastical setting.[4] But as soon as his dream-visitor compels him, Cædmon is able to sing unequalled verse, because 'he did not learn the art of singing, instructed by men or through a man, but, divinely aided, he freely

[1] Eds. and trans. Colgrave and Mynors, p. 417. Translations unaccompanied by texts in their original languages are not my own, and in such cases I indicate the translators; where texts in original languages are cited and accompanied by translation, the translation is mine.
[2] The date of Cædmon's death is controversial, on which see O'Donnell, *Cædmon's Hymn: A Multimedia Study*, p. 10 (n. 6).
[3] Colgrave and Mynors, *Ecclesiastical History*, p. 414 (where Latin is cited from this edition, the translation is my own). See also Orchard, 'Poetic Inspiration', p. 411, who notes similarities between Bede's language and Isidore's generic description of song and suggests that Bede may have 'Latinized' an oral tradition.
[4] On the omnipresence of psalmody, for example, in Anglo-Saxon ecclesiastical life, see Toswell, *Anglo-Saxon Psalter*, pp. 4–10.

received the gift of singing' (*non ab hominibus neque per hominem institutus canendi artem didicit; sed diuinitus adiutus gratis canendi donum accepit*).[5] The Old English translator of Bede's *Historia* indicated this explicitly as well: *canendi artem didicit* is rendered *leoð-cræft leornade* ('learned poem-skill'), and *canendi donum accepit* as *song-cræft onfeng* ('received song-skill').[6] An *ars*, unlike a gift, is a learned skill requiring experience: Isidore of Seville (circa 560–636) claims that the very word *ars* derives from its 'strict precepts and rules' (*artis praeceptis regulisque*) or from the Greek word for knowledge.[7]

But Bede specifies that Cædmon did not learn his craft from men but received a free gift, which, as Andy Orchard notes, evokes Christ's commissioning of his apostles to preach and work miracles, saying, 'you received freely, give freely' (*gratis accepistis, gratis date*, Matthew 10. 8).[8] Because his song was a divine gift, Cædmon 'could never make anything of frivolous or useless poetry, but only those things which pertain to religion suited his religious tongue' (*nihil umquam friuoli et superuacui poematis facere potuit, sed ea tantummodo quae ad religionem pertinent religiosam eius linguam decebant*).[9] Paul Battles suggests that although Cædmon's work takes the form of vernacular verse, this story gives his poetry an 'immaculate pedigree', and this pedigree frees his verse from secular influence of subject-matter and allows other Christian poets to imitate him in vernacular composition.[10] This is doubtless true, yet Bede's focus is not on poetic composition *per se* but the spiritual nature and effects of his gift: like the apostles' receipt of tongues at Pentecost, Cædmon received the gift of song for preaching.[11]

---

[5] Colgrave and Mynors, *Ecclesiastical History*, p. 414.
[6] Miller, *Old English Version of Bede*, I, 342. Exactly what the translator intended by varying *leoð-cræft* with *song-cræft* is unclear: elsewhere the translator refers to Cædmon's songs as *leoð*, *song*, and *leoð-song*, among other names, and he may not have intended a contrast in the words (see further Toswell, *Anglo-Saxon Psalter*, p. 362).
[7] Lindsay, *Etymologiae*, I, 25 (Book I. 1. 2)
[8] Orchard, 'Poetic Inspiration', p. 403. For biblical quotations I cite the Vulgate unless otherwise indicated; translations of Scripture unaccompanied by the Vulgate text are from the Douay-Rheims Bible.
[9] Colgrave and Mynors, *Ecclesiastical History*, p. 414.
[10] Battles, 'Art of the Scop', p. 12.
[11] Dekker, 'Linguistic Self-Consciousness', pp. 354–56.

Pentecost was of major importance to Bede's theology as a miracle of unification, restoration, and preaching the Gospel, and just as at Pentecost the Holy Spirit inspired the apostles to speak different languages and Peter to preach, resulting in 3,000 new believers, through Cædmon's gift of song many 'were kindled to contempt of the world and desire for heavenly life' (*ad contemptum saeculi et appetitum sunt vitae caelestis accensi*).[12] Bede seems to allude to tongues in his account of Cædmon, highlighting translation at various points in the episode: besides specifying that Cædmon composed poetry in 'his (that is, the English) tongue' (*in sua, id est Anglorum, lingua*), Bede notes that Cædmon learned from Scripture 'through interpreters' (*per interpretes*), which he was asked 'to translate into the measuring of song' (*in modulationem carminis transferre*), and explains, as he translates Cædmon's poem into Latin, that in translation poetry loses some of its 'glory and dignity' (*decoris et dignitatis*).[13] In his commentary on Acts (where the events of Pentecost are recorded), Bede claims that his primary source was a poet (Arator).[14] Moreover Cædmon's project has a distinctly Christian, didactic aim: he versifies what he is taught from the Bible and about future joys and judgments, and it seems likely that Cædmon's teachers followed the model set out by Augustine in his *De catechizandis rudibus*, teaching Cædmon and those he sang to the most necessary stories of salvation history.[15]

As Jan Ziolkowski notes, the Holy Spirit was especially associated with verbal inspiration, both poetry and prophecy, in the Bible, giving ability and knowledge to speak.[16] Bede demonstrates the import of this fact in his commentary on the Acts of the Apostles:[17]

[12] Major, *Undoing Babel*, pp. 115–28 (see further Chapter Two, pp. 100–02); Colgrave and Mynors, *Ecclesiastical History*, p. 414.
[13] Colgrave and Mynors, *Ecclesiastical History*, pp. 414–16.
[14] Laistner, *Expositio Actuum*, p. 3 (Preface). On the *Expositio*, see Chapter Two, pp. 100–02. On Arator's poem on Acts, see pp. 23–24 below.
[15] Orchard, 'Poetic Inspiration', p. 415. See also Day, 'The Influence of the Catechetical *Narratio'*.
[16] Cited in McBrine, *Biblical Epics*, p. 254.
[17] *Expositio Actuum*, pp. 16–17 (Chapter 2. 4).

> Verum non incongrue spiritus sanctus intellegitur ideo primum linguarum donum dedisse hominibus, quibus humana sapientia forinsecus et discitur et docetur, ut ostenderet quam facile possit sapientes facere per sapientiam dei quae eis interna est.
>
> Indeed not incongruously is the Holy Spirit understood to have first given the gift of tongues to men, to whom human wisdom is taught and learned from without, so that it might be shown how easily he can make wise through the wisdom of God which is within them.

That is, while men labour at understanding things, the Holy Spirit can just as easily inspire them all at once. This contrast between human learning and divine power may be why Bede contrasts the art of song with the gift of song, and just as the Apostles received tongues and preaching for mission, so Cædmon received his poetry for mission.

Not least because song was a regular part of monastic life, Bede may have considered Cædmon's an especially heavenly gift.[18] There are many other accounts of musical heavenly revelations in Anglo-Saxon England: for example, when the Irish saint Fursa (died 649) was led to heaven, where he heard thousands of angels singing, the angels bearing him thither and thence sang the half-verses of Psalm 83(84). 8;[19] when St Chad (or Ceadda, died 672) was visited in his oratory at Lichfield by angels, the monk Owine does not see them descend but hears their song;[20] and almost a century after Bede's death, the priest Aediluulf in his *De abbatibus* (written sometime between 803–821) recounts the story of angels appearing from heaven one night with light and the sound of music, who move into a chapel of Aediluulf's monastic cell near Lindisfarne, filling it with holy song.[21] Furthermore, the *Rule of St Benedict*, citing Psalm 137(138). 1, urges monks to be sure that 'our mind may be in harmony with our voice' when reciting the Psalms (to which Cædmon's *Hymn* has been compared),[22]

[18] On Anglo-Saxon monks' self-identification with angels, see further Chapter Four, pp. 196–97.
[19] Shepherd, 'Prophetic Cædmon', p. 8. The story of Fursa is given by Bede (who bases his account on the anonymous *Vita Fursei*) in *Ecclesiastical History*, Book III. 19.
[20] Colgrave and Mynors, *Ecclesiastical History*, pp. 336–47 (Book IV. 3).
[21] Campbell, *De abbatibus*, pp. 52–55 (Chapter 21. 656–91).
[22] On Cædmon's *Hymn* and the Psalms, see Orchard, 'Poetic Inspiration', pp. 403–04, and Toswell, *Anglo-Saxon Psalter*, pp. 360–63.

because they are performed in the sight of God and his angels;[23] and Geoffrey Shepherd points out that many Anglo-Saxon saints with a particular reputation for prophetic experience were especially devoted to the Psalms.[24]

Although Bede seems reluctant to call Cædmon's gift a miracle, he clearly highlights the episode's spiritual significance, and this act of what has been called divine inspiration provides a key point of origin for English vernacular verse.[25] Other named figures reputed to have composed vernacular verse, such as Aldhelm of Malmesbury (circa 639–709) and King Aldfrith of Northumbria (reigned 685–705), left no clear record of their Old English compositions, and the various forms of Cædmon's *Hymn* which have come down to us represent one of the earliest surviving poetic artefacts of the Anglo-Saxon period.[26] Therefore, inspiration is an especially apt topic to begin this investigation into supernatural discourse. In this chapter, I discuss the nature of inspiration as it is represented in select Anglo-Latin and Old English texts to examine how the phenomenon was perceived by various poets and what this supernatural intervention meant for verse-composition. I first discuss the role of poetic invocations in Anglo-Latin verse, devoting special attention to poetic invocations and how these petitions bespeak poets' conceptions of inspiration and poetic craft. I then turn to representations of inspiration in Old English and Old Norse poetry, noting especially the tendency of poets to describe inspiration in terms of receiving words or songs. Finally, I show how the chapter's findings come together in *Solomon and Saturn I*, where Solomon's knowledge of the inspiring Pater Noster ennobles his discourse, elevating it above Saturn's.

[23] Trans. by Verheyen, p. 11 (Chapter 19). See also Toswell, *Anglo-Saxon Psalter*, pp. 7–8.
[24] Shepherd, 'Prophetic Cædmon', p. 118 (n. 3).
[25] O'Donnell, *Cædmon's Hymn: A Multimedia Study*, pp. 24–28.
[26] On the vernacular verse of Aldhelm and Aldfrith (who was primarily known for composing in Irish), see Orchard, *Poetic Art of Aldhelm*, p. 5, Lapidge, 'Aldhelm's Latin Poetry', pp. 228–29, and Braswell, 'Sacred Prosopopoeia', pp. 464–67. The surviving forms of *Cædmon's Hymn*, of which there are five recensions in twenty-one manuscripts, are described by O'Donnell, *Cædmon's Hymn: A Multimedia Study*, pp. 78–118.

The literal meaning of *inspiratio*, 'inbreathing', points to an ancient association between spiritual life and breath or wind (though 'breath' is only one inspiration-metaphor).[27] The association is explicit in several languages, including the *tres linguae sacrae*: Hebrew רוח (*ruach*), 'wind, breath, spirit'; Greek, *πνεῦμα*, 'breath, spirit'; Latin *spiritus*, 'breath, spirit'.[28] Hence to be inspired is fundamentally to be influenced by one or more spirits, whether ancestral or divine, and Emily Thornbury notes that the types of inspiration exist on a continuum from 'possession' to 'encouragement'.[29] The former is rarer (if not absent) in Anglo-Saxon poetry, though we shall see its presence in other vernaculars, but the latter is present, for example, in Bede's account of Cædmon, where the compunction of the Holy Spirit moves Cædmon's verse and his listeners' hearts, and this in another sense also 'inspires' other poets to imitate him. According to Bede, 'It is true that after him other Englishmen attempted to compose religious poems, but none could compare with him'.[30] The influence of Cædmon's account has even been detected in the prose and verse prefaces to the mid-ninth-century Old Saxon poem *The Heliand*, which claim that a *non ignobilis vates* ('not undistinguished poet-seer') was divinely moved to compose the *Heliand* (and other poems).[31]

In a wide-reaching study, N. K. Chadwick notes that throughout the world numerous products are attributed to inspiration, such as knowledge and poetic gifts, but the main effect is consistently identified as knowledge.[32] And yet Chadwick demonstrates that inspired revelation is inseparable from poetry; in fact, revelation is most often communicated in poetic

[27] Chadwick and Chadwick, *Growth of Literature*, I, discuss two other prominent inspiration-metaphors, for example: the draught of inspiration (pp. 651–53) and the vision (pp. 657–60).
[28] See further Chapter Two, *passim* (on breath and spirit) and 92–3 and 98–99 (on the *tres linguae sacrae* in an insular context).
[29] 'Aldhelm's Rejection', pp. 83–87.
[30] Colgrave and Mynors, *Ecclesiastical History*, p. 415.
[31] Battles, 'The Art of the Scop', p. 16, discusses Cædmonian influence on this Continental account, which may not be authentic. For an introduction to the *Heliand*, see Cathey, *Hêliand*, pp. 3–25.
[32] *Poetry and Prophecy,* pp. 14, 28–29, and 41–48.

speech, whether sparsely or strongly 'marked'.[33] One reason for this is simple: the sonic patterns of poetry and song have made them useful mnemonic tools, linking words and ideas together in a form of memorable fortification against oblivion, especially where the technology of writing is not widespread.[34] It is therefore natural for inspiration, perhaps the most important kind of knowledge, to be set in more memorable form.

Indeed, the importance of inspiration, memory, and poetry in the ancient world is clearly evident in the classical poetic practice of invoking the Muses, for example, who are the daughters of Zeus and Mnemosyne ('Memory').[35] As spiritual beings presiding over mnemonic arts such as poetry and dance, these were seen as inspiring the arts and enabling artists to retell the deeds of the past.[36] As Thornbury notes, poets invoked these and other deities primarily for information or recollection rather than poetic skill, coinciding with their memorial function.[37] Such invocations were so customary that it has been argued they were based more in convention than belief, perhaps even as early as Homer's time seven to eight centuries before Christ;[38] the itinerant Greek poets known as Rhapsodes (active from prehistory to the time of Christ), for example, began every poem 'from a deity', including an invocatory proem as a generic convention.[39] According to Charles Segal, the development of literacy eventually led to an increased regard for poetry not as the product of inspiration but the artistic craft of poets.[40] The evolution is easy to imagine: because in performance poets no longer let their minds and voices flow extemporaneously before a present audience but rather recited a previously written work, the original conception of the Muses' gifts must

[33] See also Nagy, *Greek Mythology and Poetics*, pp. viii–ix.
[34] *Poetry and Prophecy*, pp. xiii–xv; Ong, *Presence of the Word*, p. 27. For other reasons, see Chapter Two, pp. 66–70. On poetry's mnemonic function and representation as construction in an Indo-European context, see West, *Poetry and Myth*, pp. 33–45. On the use of poetry as monuments against oblivion in an Anglo-Saxon context, see for example Chapter Three, pp. 143–51.
[35] G. Levy, 'Muse', pp. 901–03; J.A. Winn, 'Music and Poetry', pp. 903–06.
[36] See further Curtius, *European Literature*, pp. 228–46.
[37] Thornbury, 'Aldhelm's Rejection', pp. 75–78;
[38] Chadwick and Chadwick, *Growth of Literature*, I, 635.
[39] West, *Homeric Hymns*, pp. 3–6.
[40] Cited in Lerer, *Literacy and Power*, p. 21.

necessarily have come into question, the spirit of extempore performance overshadowed by premeditated deliberation and the written word. The first-century satirist Persius even scoffed that he was inspired not by gods but by hunger.[41] But the invocatory proem remained customary into the times of Christian Latin poetry, and as we shall see in the next subsections there can be no doubt that these invocations, which introduced distinctly religious works, were genuine pleas for aid, if still firmly rooted in convention.

Aldhelm's Verse Preface to the *Enigmata*

Beginning in the fourth century with Juvencus, author of the first Christian epic (written circa 330), Proba (circa 320–370), author of the first Christian Vergilian *cento* (a poetic work composed entirely of recycled lines and phrases, in this case Vergil's) on the creation of the world and the life of Christ, and Prudentius (born 348), whom Ernst Curtius deems the most innovative of Christian Latin poets, the Muses were ousted from poetic invocations in favour of the Holy Spirit's aid.[42] By examining such invocations we can see how poets were thinking about their craft and the Spirit's role in it: as Jonathan Culler puts it, 'invocation is a figure of vocation'.[43]

Aldhelm's *Enigmata*, a century of riddles, was the poet's first major poetic composition, and the work's prefatory invocation tells us much about the poet's perception of himself, his craft, and God's aid in versification.[44] Thornbury notes that some earlier, Continental Christian Latin poets had invoked the Muses, seeing them as allegorical symbols, while others insisted that a heart given to Christ could not call on any other spirits, attributing

[41] Thornbury, 'Aldhelm's Rejection', p. 79.
[42] Curtius, *European Literature*, pp. 458–59; Wehrli, 'Sacra Poesis', 268. On the authors, see McBrine, *Biblical Epics*, pp. 22–24, and Harrington, *Medieval Latin*, pp. 101–04 and 111–13. On the study of these authors in Anglo-Saxon England, see Lapidge, 'Versifying the Bible', for example.
[43] Culler, 'Apostrophe', p. 63.
[44] On the text, see Lapidge, *Poetic Works*, pp. 61–69.

to the Muses injurious supernatural agency.[45] This conflict of opinion appears to reflect the confused situation Christians had inherited from the Romans: while Christian clerics presumably believed in God's supernatural power, the allegorical and conventional nature of pagan invocations left room for calling on other supernatural personae as merely symbolic aides. In the metrical preface to his *Enigmata* Aldhelm denies inspiration from Muses, nectar,[46] and the visions and dreams inspired by pagan deities; rather, he asks for God's help in composing his own verses:[47]

Arbiter, aethereo iugiter qui regmine sceptrA
Lucifluumque simul caeli regale tribunaL
Disponis moderans aeternis legibus illuD–
Horrida nam multans torsisti membra VehemotH
Ex alta quondam rueret dum luridus arcE–
Limpida dictanti metrorum carmina praesuL
Munera nunc largire rudis quo pandere reruM
Versibus enigmata queam clandistina fatV:
Sic Deus indignis tua gratis dona rependiS.
Castalidas nimphas non clamo cantibus istuC
Examen neque spargebat mihi nectar in orE
Cynthi sic numquam perlustro cacumina, sed neC
In Parnasso procubui nec somnia vidI
Nam mihi versificum poterit Deus addere carmeN
Inspirans stolidae pia gratis munera mentI;
Tangit si mentem, mox laudem corda rependunT.
Metrica nam Moysen declarant carmina vateM
Iamdudum cecinisse prisci vexilla tropeI,
Late per populos illustria, qua nitidus soL
Lustrat ab oceani iam tollens gurgite cephaL;
Et psalmista canens metrorum cantica vocE,
Natum divino promit generamine numeN
In caelis prius exortum, quam Lucifer orbI
Splendida formatis fudisset lumina saecliS.
Verum si fuerint bene haec enigmata versV,
Explosis penitus naevis et rusticitatE
Ritu dactilico recte decursa nec erroR
Seduxit vana specie molimina mentiS,

[45] 'Aldhelm's Rejection', pp. 74–75.
[46] Orchard, 'Poetic Inspiration', p. 407, and Thornbury, 'Aldhelm's Rejection', p. 80, note that this nectar likely refers not to the nectar of classical gods, but to a legend that a swarm of bees left honey on the lips of St Ambrose when he was an infant, portending that the saint would be eloquent. Aldhelm recounts the story in *Carmen de virginitate* 651–76 (ed. Lapidge and Rosier, *Poetic Works*, pp. 117–18), but elsewhere in the *Carmen* (2446–533, Lapidge and Rosier, *Poetic Works*, pp. 157–9) he regularly calls alcohol nectar, and it seems reasonable to suggest he denies some sort of drunken 'inspiration', such as Symphosius's (see *Ænigmata*, Preface. 15 [ed. Hickman, *Hundred Riddles*, pp. 16–17]) or the Mead of Poetry (discussed below).
[47] *Enigmata,* Preface. 6–16.

Incipiam potiora, sui Deus arida servI,
Belligero quondam qui vires tradidit IoB,
Viscera perpetui si roris repleat haustV.
Siccis nam laticum duxisti cautibus amneS
Olim, cum cuneus transgresso marmore rubrO
Desertum penetrat, cecinit quod carmine DaviD.
Arce poli, genitor, servas qui saecula cunctA,
Solvere iam scelerum noxas dignare nefandaS.

Judge, who perpetually by ethereal guidance arrange powers and simultaneously heaven's royal judgment seat, streaming with light, governing it by eternal laws—for you, punishing, once tortured the members of ghastly Behemoth as he fell from the citadel—Protector, bestow now to the composer the gifts of clear songs of metre, so I, undeveloped, might open up mysteries of things in verses, hidden things in speech: thus, God, you freely return your gifts to the unworthy. (1–9)

I do not call hither the Castalian nymphs with songs, nor did a swarm sprinkle nectar in my mouth; I never thus wander through the summits of Cynthus, and neither did I lay down in Parnassus or see a dream. For God is able to grant me a versified song, freely inbreathing pious gifts to the stupid mind; if he touches a mind, soon hearts return praise. (10–16)

For metrical songs declare Moses a poet who sang long ago the standards of ancient victory, famous widely through the nations where the shining sun circles, lifting up its head from the oceanic flood; and the psalmist singing canticles of metre in voice declared that the Deity born by divine generation rose first in the heavens, how the Light-Bearer had poured out beautiful lights to the earth once the world had been formed. (17–24)

Indeed, if these enigmas will have been well run through in verse and rightly in the dactylic custom, with mistakes and rudeness thoroughly cast off, and error, with its empty beauty, has not led the mind's endeavours astray, I shall begin stronger ones, if God, who once gave strength over to warlike Job, will fill anew the arid depths of his servant with a draught of dew. For once out of dry rocks you led rivers of liquid, when the troop, having crossed the Red Sea, penetrates the desert, which David sang in song. Creator, who protect all worlds in the citadel of heaven, deign now to remove the unspeakable harms of sin. (25–36)

Unlike classical poets, who regularly invoked the Muses for information or remembrance, Aldhelm calls on God for metrical songs, and Thornbury argues that this reflects 'Germanic' taste in poetry, which favoured 'technical skill' over 'lofty subject-matter', the converse of classical tastes.[48] This claim is in a sense unfalsifiable because, as Thornbury acknowledges, Christian poets would versify based on received subject-matter rather claiming to receive special revelation, and it has several problems:[49] first, it is tantamount to saying that, because

[48] Thornbury, 'Aldhelm's Rejection', pp. 80–83.
[49] 'Aldhelm's Rejection', pp. 81–89. Surely the question of whether special knowledge or technical skill was of higher value has less to do with tradition *per se* than with whether a composer was considered more a prophet or

they primarily adapted their received tradition (as did classical and Germanic poets, we should note), Christian poets were not keepers of special knowledge, nor was their received subject-matter perceived as lofty;[50] second, there is good reason to believe that special knowledge, indeed wondrous knowledge, was in fact the traditional domain of Germanic poets;[51] third, it is hard to imagine that any poet's work would be praised (as poetry, at least), no matter how lofty the subject-matter, without technical skill and appropriate delivery.[52] I examine inspiration in vernacular Old English and Old Norse verse below, but rather than looking outward to ostensibly Germanic tastes, we must understand Aldhelm's preface in its context.

What Aldhelm asks God for is 'clear songs of metre' rather than special knowledge, which can be read as coinciding with Thornbury's claim that Aldhelm sought technical aid rather than inspired information; yet there is no indication that this prayer represents his complete 'theology' of poetics. Quite the reverse: Aldhelm asks rather for help based only on his immediate need. The *Enigmata* are thought to have been Aldhelm's first major poetic composition (he himself says they were composed 'to exercise the first rudiments of [his] meagre skill'), and the poet specifically identifies them as a metrical practice exercise before he could move on to greater things (lines 6–9, 25–31).[53] Indeed, Aldhelm was the self-proclaimed first Germanic writer of Latin verse, and his attention to metre and flawless verse must be understood in this light, as his first major exercise.[54] Although much of this language is doubtless affected modesty, Aldhelm does go on to sing 'greater' things, the *Carmen de virginitate* being the chief example, and his invocation in that work takes a different shape:

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a poet. It is, anyway, doubtful that poets such as Vergil really invoked the Muses expecting to receive inspired knowledge; rather, these invocations serve to highlight impressive passages (Curtius, *European Literature*, p. 232).

[50] Classical Latin verse, after all, took much of its inspiration from Greek tradition. I discuss tradition in Germanic verse below.

[51] I discuss the evidence below at pp. 28–42.

[52] See Chapter Two, pp. 70–73, for example, on some of the traditional expectations of poetry.

[53] *prima ingenioli rudimenta exercitari* (*De metris*, ed. Ehwald, *Aldhelmi opera*, p. 76).

[54] Ruff, 'The Place of Metrics', p. 154 (n. 13).

there he does not ask for skill in metre or express doubts about his verses or poetic craft; rather, he says '[God] brings us oracles of a peaceful word; I ask for a word from the Word' (*Qui nobis placidi confert oracula verbi; / Verbum de verbo peto*), citing Psalm 44. 2 (45. 1).[55] Here the poet asks for a word from Christ, equated with the '*oracles* (that is, divine revelations) of a peaceful word' of the previous line, gesturing to the role of divine revelation in his verse; given his citation of a psalm which was seen as a prophecy of Christ, no doubt it did not escape Aldhelm's notice that his named biblical predecessors (David, Moses, and Job) were not just poets but prophets.[56] Aldhelm is practical in his invocations, asking for help where it's needed; in his first poetic enterprise he asks for skill, and in a later work of more spiritual significance he seems to ask God for subject-matter.

Although he had previously been educated before he attended the school of Theodore and Hadrian in Canterbury for two years between 670–675, up to that point Aldhelm had no understanding of Latin quantitative verse.[57] I discuss the importance of this breakthrough in Aldhelm's education further in the next chapter, but suffice it to say here that his new ability represented a spiritual, not simply metrical, enlightenment, and so his petition for aid in versification is a matter of spiritual significance.[58] In fact, rather than asking for poetic excellence, Aldhelm asks for competency, that he be released from faults and receive the gifts of 'clear' verse and pious gifts of song. His desire is a holy poetry, one free of sins (not unlike Cynewulf's perception of his own inspiration) and this view bespeaks the cloister more than the mead hall.[59]

Fittingly, the poet styles God here as though he were a master poet instructing his pupil: here the Creator God is a 'measuring' (*moderans*) 'judge' (*arbiter*) who 'arranges'

[55] *Carmen de virginitate* 32–33 (Ehwald, *Aldhelmi opera*, p. 354).
[56] On Job's status as a prophet, see Chapter Two, pp. 103–15.
[57] Orchard, *The Poetic Art of Aldhelm*, pp. 3–5. On the school, see Lapidge, 'School of Theodore and Hadrian'.
[58] See further Chapter Two, pp. 94–98.
[59] For Cynewulf's account of his inspiration, see pp. 34–37 below.

(*disponit*) his sceptres and throne 'by eternal laws' (*aeternis legibus*).[60] The prayer owes a considerable part of its diction to Wisdom 11. 21 (*omnia in mensura et numero et pondere disposuisti*), but here it is as if Aldhelm has rendered *mensura* and *numerus* in a metrical sense, as if here God (so often called *Scyppend*, 'craftsman' and *meotod*, 'Measurer' by Old English poets) is chief poet (Old English *scop*, *leoþ-wyrhta*, 'song-worker') himself and judge of poets.[61] Note, for example, that Aldhelm styles dactylic metre as a *ritu*, 'rite' or 'custom', a word with obvious religious and legal significance. Thornbury notes the significance of numerology to Aldhelm, evidenced in his treatise on the number seven in the *Epistola ad Acircium*, for example: 'he believed the entire cosmos was organized according to numerical patterns, and that metre provided one window into that rational organization'.[62] In the poetic preface to the *Enigmata*, then, Aldhelm is describing God both as a religious teacher and as a schoolteacher who can rid him of vices, spiritual and metrical. This claim is strengthened by Aldhelm's own assertion that 'the whole understanding of metres is made known from this triplex distinction of syllables more than from the spring or mountain of the Muses'; in his view, poetics, especially metrics, are the domain of the schoolroom, and God, who created all things in 'measure, number, and weight', is the master teacher.[63]

In lines 17–36, as Aldhelm asks for his own metrical songs, he cites his biblical poetic forerunners Moses, David, and Job as if to prove the orthodoxy of his exercise.[64] He also voices concern that his work be proven orthodox in *De pedum regulis*, which follows the *Enigmata* in his letter to King Aldfrith.[65] There he gives biblical examples of prosopopoeia, which he cites 'lest one perhaps think [he] sang with a new and unusual theme of speaking

[60] On God's portrayal as a teacher in patristic writings, see Jager, *Tempter's Voice*, pp. 23–49.
[61] According to Thornbury, *Becoming a Poet*, pp. 19–26, *scop* and *leoþ-wyrhta* are the two most common Old English words for 'poet'.
[62] *Becoming a Poet*, pp. 44–45 and 55.
[63] *ex hac enim triplici sillabarum definitione potius quam de fonte aut monte musarum* […] *omnis metrorum ratio monstratur* (*De pedum regulis*, Ehwald, *Aldhelmi opera*, p. 78).
[64] On Job's authorship, see Chapter Two, p. 73.
[65] Lapidge, *Poetic Works*, p. 11.

and as if having trod no paths of predecessors'.[66] He even rejected the classical *artes* per se, saying that they were only valuable insofar as they help us understand the Bible.[67] Therefore Aldhelm's attention to poetic form probably has to do less with Germanic convention than it does with the fact that the *Enigmata* were his first major composition and that authority, indeed even the spiritual authority of metre, was a major concern of his, a concern which was perhaps intensified by his conflict with the Irish tradition of learning.[68]

In this preface, then, we do not have a Germanic poet calling on God for the mead of poetry, but a Christian poet calling on God to aid his hand in his studies. Thornbury argues that statements of Aldhelm's such as these that show the powerlessness of the Muses freed later writers to use the Muses symbolically, as their classical forebears had done.[69] This claim is more difficult to prove, but Aldhelm's rejection of the Muses does not explicitly bespeak disbelief in their existence any more than he explicitly denies the legend of Ambrose's bees;[70] rather, this rejection serves to emphasize his own humility, as Thornbury notes, and orthodoxy: as the first Germanic poet composing in Latin, he clarifies the source and end of his verse.[71] I Corinthians 10. 19–21 or the story in Daniel 14 of Bel and the Dragon, for instance, gave good reason to believe demons could pose as gods to deceive pagans, and Ælfric of Eynsham (circa 950–1010) affirms this view in later Anglo-Saxon England.[72]

Without more explicit evidence, it would be rash to say Aldhelm did not believe the 'Muses' had injurious power. In his disavowal of classical sources of inspiration (10–13), the

[66] *ne quis forte novo nos et inusitato dicendi argumento et quasi nullis priorum vestigiis* […] *trito cecinisse arbitretur* (Ehwald, *Aldhelmi Opera*, p. 76). Two of Aldhelm's verses are cited from the book of Judges, one of the major conflicts of which hinges on Samson's riddle (chapters 14–15).
[67] Curtius, *European Literature*, pp. 457–58.
[68] See further Chapter Two, pp. 94–98.
[69] 'Aldhelm's Rejection', pp. 89–92.
[70] See n. 46 above.
[71] Thornbury, 'Aldhelm's Rejection', pp. 80–81, notes that Aldhelm's denial of inspiration like Ambrose's can only be understood as a modesty topos.
[72] *De falsis diis* (ed. Pope, *Homilies of Ælfric*, pp. 687–68). Pagan deities were always associated with demons in the Bible (see, for example, Deuteronomy 32. 16–17) and in early Christian tradition (see Kofsky, *Eusebius of Caesarea Against Paganism*, pp. 130–36).

acrostic-telestich reads *ceci*, 'blind', and is enveloped by two verses (9, 14) in which God (*deus*) is the subject. It is unclear whether or not Aldhelm believed in the power of the Muses or demons who might go by that name; all that is clear is that he does not wish to be associated with these blind guides. Thornbury's suggestion, that technical skill and inspired knowledge are signs of Germanic and classical tastes respectively, cannot stand (at least as far as Anglo-Saxon evidence is concerned); nevertheless, the dichotomy between skill and knowledge (however alien to the evidence we examine here) creates a good metric for this chapter's vernacular investigations. But first I turn to the Latin poetry of the other most prominent Anglo-Latin poets: Bede and Alcuin.

Patterned Invocations in Bede and Alcuin

The genre of biblical epic, which (following the classical style of Vergil and others) regularly featured invocations to God, was especially influential in Anglo-Saxon England, as Patrick McBrine indicates.[73] McBrine analyses poetic invocations written by Bede and Alcuin of York (circa 735–804) in comparison with those of Juvencus and Arator (*floruit* circa 550), and it is helpful to further develop his comparison in terms of these poets' conceptions of inspiration.[74] First, I cite the final lines of Juvencus's verse preface to the *Evangeliorum libri quattuor* (circa 330), where the poet states his objective and solicits divine aid (19–27):[75]

> Nam mihi carmen erit Christi vitalia gesta,
> Divinum populis falsi sine crimine donum.
> Nec metus, ut mundi rapiant incendia secum
> Hoc opus; hoc etenim forsan me subtrahet igni
> Tunc, cum flammivoma descendet nube coruscans
> Iudex, alti-throni genitoris gloria, Christus.
> Ergo age! sanctificus adsit mihi carminis auctor
> Spiritus, et puro mentem riget amne canentis
> Dulcis Jordanis, ut Christo digna loquamur.

[73] McBrine, *Biblical Epics*, pp. 210–346. See also Lapidge, 'Versifying the Bible'.
[74] *Biblical Epics*, pp. 249–54 and 258–59.
[75] Ed. Huemer, *Evangeliorum libri*, p. 2.

> For my song will be the vital deeds of Christ, a divine gift to peoples without deceitful crime. Nor do I fear that the flames of this world might seize this work for themselves; indeed, perhaps this will remove me from fire then, when he will descend flashing by flame-spewing cloud, the Judge, Glory of the High-Throned Creator, Christ. Therefore lead! Let the sanctifying author of song—the Spirit—be near to me and wet the singer's mind in the pure river of the sweet Jordan [or 'wet the mind in the pure river of the sweet, singing Jordan'], that I may speak worthy things about Christ.

After describing the transience of the world and the endurance of poetic fame, Juvencus claims that his song of Christ, in contrast to the lying pagan poets, will be a divine gift (1–18). He asks for the Spirit's direction (*age!*) and presence (*adsit*) and the mental refreshment of spiritual waters (*mentem riget*), effectively 'baptising' the epic genre, as McBrine suggests.[76] The 'sweet Jordan' certainly alludes to the classical topos of eloquence as a stream, which Bede also employs in his metrical *Vita Cuthberti*, referring to the 'evangelical rain-clouds' (*evangelicis* […] *nubibus*, 18), as do Aldhelm and Alcuin.[77] But to understand what this means for verse-composition, we must turn to the poem's end (IV. 802–05; the poem's final line is IV. 812), where Juvencus reframes his invocation as having been successful, ending his work as he began:

> Has mea mens fidei vires sanctique timoris
> Cepit et in tantum lucet mihi gratia Christi,
> Versibus ut nostris divinae gloria legis
> Ornamenta libens caperet terrestria linguae. 805
>
> My mind took these powers of faith and holy fear and Christ's grace so shines in me that the glory of divine law happily took the tongue's terrestrial ornaments.

In both excerpts the poet envisions his mind as enlivened by spiritual things—the Holy Spirit's presence, the Jordan, the powers of faith and fear, and Christ's grace—and by creating parallelism between *cepit* and *caperet* in this second account, Juvencus links the act of taking these gifts to his ability to speak 'worthily' so that Scripture takes on earthly eloquence. While Juvencus is not more specific about this process, he does not ask for poetic

[76] See further McBrine, *Biblical Epics*, pp. 27–33.
[77] See further Steen, *Verse and Virtuosity*, p. 26, pp. 15–16 above and pp. 25–26 below.

gifts but links the Spirit's work to his ability to use his skills well. This conception, whereby the Spirit enlivens his mind and enables him to write well, is also analogous to Cynewulf's conception of inspiration, as we shall see.

Arator, after beginning Book I of his *Historia apostolica* (circa 544) *in medias res*, delays his invocation for over two hundred lines, first recounting the biblical narrative from Christ's ascension until the Holy Spirit's inspiration of unity and good works in the primitive Church (221–27):[78]

> Hinc canere incipiam. Sacris bis Spiritus almus
> Discipulis concessus erat: spiratus in illos
> A Christo surgente semel; post missus ab astris
> Nescia verba viris facundus detulit ignis.
> Ne quid inexpertum studio meditemur inani,
> Spiritus alme, veni! Sine te non diceris umquam;
> Munera da linguae qui das in munere linguas!
>
> Here I will begin to sing. The nourishing Spirit had twice come to the holy disciples: once breathed on them by arising Christ; afterwards, sent from the stars, eloquent fire bore down words unknown to men. Lest anything be considered unskilled in empty zeal, come, nourishing Spirit! Without you, you are never spoken of; give gifts to the tongue, you who give tongues as a gift!

Arator deliberately draws together Christ's breath with the eloquent fire and gift of tongues at Pentecost (223–24 and 227) to make a theological play on the nature of language, which requires *spiritus* (both 'breath' and 'spirit').[79] Perhaps because of this conception of language, after asking for the Spirit's presence (*veni!*) Arator asks for help with his subject-matter (*Sine te non diceris umquam*) and his verse (*munera da linguae*), soliciting linguistic gifts lest he speak anything 'unskilled in empty zeal'. Whereas Juvencus primarily asks for direction and refreshment, considering his poem a divine gift, Arator asks for gifts in every aspect of his poetic labours.

[78] Ed. Orbán, *Historia Apostolica*, I, 239.
[79] McBrine, *Biblical Epics*, p. 254.

Like Juvencus, Bede sets his invocation in the *Vita Cuthberti* (circa 705) at the end of a verse preface, after he describes God's work through Christ, the Spirit, and the saints (35–38; parallels from Juvencus in bold; from Arator in italics):[80]

> Tu, rogo, summe, iuua, **donorum spiritus auctor**, 35
> *Te sine* nam **digne** *fari* tua gratia nescit;
> **Flammivomisque** soles dare qui nova famina *linguis*,
> *Munera da verbi linguae* tua **dona canentis**.
>
> Help, I pray, o highest Spirit, Author of gifts, for without you your grace cannot be worthily spoken of; you, who are accustomed to give new speeches by flame-spewing tongues, give the word's gifts to the singer's tongue, your gifts.

Among other parallels, Bede borrows the verse-final (*spiritus*) *auctor* and *canentis* from Juvencus, along with the compound *flammivomus*, clearly relying on the poet for his construction of the verses.[81] Bede also relies on Arator, from whom he borrows the phrase *munera da* and a passive construction begun *te sine*.[82] In terms of inspiration, Bede also cites Pentecost (*flammivomisque* […] *linguis*) and the Spirit's gifts (*donorum spiritus auctor*), asking for help (*iuua*) and 'the word's gifts', inserting Christ (*verbi*) into Arator's phrase (*munera da linguae*). He develops Arator's theological play on the need for *spirit* (that is, breath) in language, showing his theological notion of language and the poetic medium itself by bringing together the Breath and Word in his invocation. He makes the same connection in his comment on Genesis 1. 3, where he says: 'God was able to create by the Spirit (*afflatus*) of his mouth', referencing Psalm 32(33). 6: *Verbo Domini caeli firmati sunt; et spiritu oris ejus omnis virtus eorum* ('By the word of the Lord all the heavens were established, and by the breath of his mouth all their power').[83] Again, Pentecost serves as Bede's authority for verse: by the Spirit's aid, Bede will proclaim the Spirit's work done through Cuthbert.[84] It is

[80] Ed. Jaager, *Bedas Metrische Vita*, p. 61.
[81] On the use of poetic compounds in Old English and Anglo-Latin verse, see Chapter Two, pp. 68–69.
[82] McBrine, *Biblical Epics*, pp. 252–54.
[83] Kendall, *Bede: On Genesis*, p. 74 (esp. n. 30).
[84] See further McBrine, *Biblical Epics*, pp. 248–50, who discusses the importance of preaching, fire, and light in Bede's preface.

noteworthy that Bede does not ask for the Spirit's guidance or presence, as Juvencus and Arator do, but only for his gifts: his sense of inspiration here seems similar to his later account of Cædmon, where inspiration is perceived as a spiritual gift.

Alcuin reverses the order of things somewhat in his *Versus de patribus, regibus, et sanctis euboricensis ecclesiae* (circa 780–782):[85] unlike Juvencus, Arator, and Bede, who set their invocations at the end of a verse preface (as Vergil had done), Alcuin brings his invocation to the first line, beginning from Christ (1–7; borrowings from Juvencus in bold; from Arator in italics; from Aldhelm underlined; from Bede enclosed by asterisks):[86]

> **Christe** deus, *summi* virtus sapientia patris,
> Vita, salus, hominum factor, renovator, amator,
> Unica *lingua* Dei, *donorum* tu dator *alme*,
> *Munera da* **mentis**, fragili *da verba* poetae,
> Irrorans stolidum vivaci flumine pectus,
> Ut mea *lingua* queat de te tua *dicere* *dona*;
> *Te sine* nulla valet **dignum** quid *dicere lingua*.
>
> Christ God, Wisdom of the highest Father's strength, Life, Salvation, Creator of men, Renewer, Lover, unique Tongue of God, you nourishing [or 'holy'] Giver of gifts; give gifts of the mind, give words to the weak poet, soaking the stupid breast in the living river, that my tongue might speak your gifts from you. Without you no tongue is able to say anything worthy.

Alcuin is the only poet to address his invocation to Christ, and he does not mention the Spirit's gifts of language; he asks for gifts of the mind (*mentis*), words (*verba*), and a refreshed mind (*irrorans*), as Juvencus does, seemingly focusing on the mind and the importance of gifts more than the other poets. Indeed, he employs fourfold polyptoton of the root 'give' (*donorum*, *dator*, *da*, *dona*) and threefold alliteration (*Dei, donorum* […] *dator*) to associate God with gifts, and like Bede makes no petition for God's presence as Juvencus and Arator do. Alcuin shares extensive verbal parallels with Arator, but he also develops Juvencus's image of a river refreshing a dull mind, sharing diction with Aldhelm, who also

[85] Godman, *Bishops, Kings, and Saints*, pp. xlii–xliv.
[86] Ed. Godman, *Bishops, Kings, and Saints*, p. 1; compare Vergil, *Aeneid* 8–11.

appropriates the aqueous imagery.[87] Alcuin's chief work was as a teacher in Charlemagne's court, and the focus of his verse-composition seems primarily didactic; it seems no coincidence then that he makes no claims to eloquence, but rather focuses on intelligence and the lessons Christ can give, referring to Christ as Wisdom, Tongue and Giver of gifts and patterning his diction closely on the authority of earlier poets.[88] Moreover, Alcuin is unique in another regard: after his invocation of Christ, the poet calls on the saints, *Mecum ferte pedes, vestris componite carmen / hoc precibus* ('Stir your feet with me, compose this song with your prayers'), fittingly for a poem on the saints of York.[89] Aldhelm's invocation in the *Enigmata* is directed to God, Bede's in the *Vita Cuthberti* is to the Spirit, and therefore Alcuin may have chosen to call on Christ and the saints to complete the Trinity and the whole host of heaven—all of these works are the poets' first compositions of 'epic' scale.

In these excerpts both Bede and Alcuin are strongly reliant in their diction on their predecessors, with Alcuin even borrowing from Aldhelm and Bede. Michael Lapidge has suggested that this sort of 'formulaic' composition is partly to do with poets being new to Latin verse-composition, but he notes that it is a stylistic feature of medieval Latin verse in general.[90] Late Antique and medieval Latin poets, Thornbury points out, relied on memorizing previous authoritative poems in order to learn the principles of verse because vowel quantity was no longer observed in Late Antique spoken Latin.[91] As McBrine indicates, Juvencus and Arator's works, too, are heavily influenced by their tradition in terms of style, and he concludes that the Anglo-Latin formulism is a form of reference, and,

[87] See also Aediluulf, *De abbatibus* 796–99 (Campbell, p. 63), who in his 'salutation and prayer to the saints and Lord', like Alcuin, calls himself a poet (*vates*) and shares with Alcuin's invocation the words *stolidus*, *pectus*, *mens*, *dignum*, *munus*. See further Thornbury, *Becoming a Poet*, pp. 29–30.
[88] On Alcuin's vocation as a teacher, see Orchard, 'Alcuin's Educational Dispute', pp. 162–64.
[89] Godman, *Bishops, Kings, and Saints*, p. 4.
[90] 'Aldhelm's Latin Poetry', pp. 223–31. Compare Godman, *Bishops, Kings, and Saints*, pp. cvi–cvii.
[91] Thornbury, *Becoming a Poet*, pp. 40–41, 46, and 74.

especially in invocations, a sign of prestige— as they allude to remembered reading, these invocations are, McBrine suggests, 'the best way to begin a Christian poem'.[92]

Speaking specifically of Aldhelm, Lapidge suggests this formulism could perhaps be related to formulism in Old English poetic style. Orchard draws out this latter thesis, demonstrating that repetitions in Aldhelm are not at all the sign of amateurism but of a 'flexible formulaic system' recognizable in Old English verse, and that such repetitions (which are notably absent in Aldhelm's prose) are stylistically significant in poetry for allusiveness and evoking idea-complexes.[93] Geoffrey Russom notes that 'oral-traditional' poetry is learned like language, with rules internalized by listening and speaking, rules which poets are often not able to explain even if they can compose according to them intuitively.[94] Learning a store of songs is thus a requirement to both Anglo-Latin and Old English poetic composition, and in the following section we will see that in the vernacular a repertoire of songs is even associated with poetic inspiration.

Two things are explicit from the invocations of these three Anglo-Saxon poets. First, all three ask for words in a rather holistic sense, and Aldhelm also asks for 'songs'. Second, the poets rarely ask for God's presence or guidance but ask rather for his gifts, perhaps because they have as Christians already been inspired by the Holy Spirit. By asking for God's words, the poets align themselves with Bede's definition of prophets, who 'would write not their own but God's words', though even the Old Testament prophets did not 'always have the Holy Spirit' as Christians do 'but the Spirit filled their hearts when he wished'.[95] And given that learning authoritative songs gave poets the building blocks for composing good

[92] *Biblical Epics*, pp. 24–25, 186–87, and 269. See further Orchard, *Poetic Art*, pp. 221–24.
[93] Orchard, *Poetic Art*, pp. 98–125.
[94] *Beowulf and Old Germanic Metre*, pp. 3–5. Compare this to Boethius's famous distinction between the intuitive 'performer' and the learned 'musician', discussed by Thornbury, *Becoming a Poet*, pp. 74–78.
[95] *Non sua propria sed Dei uerba scribebant*; *semper habere Spiritum Sanctum* […] *sed ipse Spiritus eorum corda quando uoluit impleuit* (*In epistolas VII catholicas* [II Peter 1. 20–21], cited in Thornbury, 'Aldhelm's Rejection', p. 84).

poetry, it seems that when these poets ask for words and songs from God (rather than skill or wisdom), they are expressing a desire not only for him to teach them what to say, but also for him to give them the authoritative tools by which they can do well in composing verse.

Inspiration in Old English Verse

Having examined the account of Cædmon and some Anglo-Latin invocations, it is useful to compare these to examples of poetic inspiration in vernacular poems. No poetic invocations for inspiration survive in Old English verse, but there are a few representations of poetic inspiration, each of which displays important similarities and differences with the previously examined evidence. A perception of poetry predominates in these accounts, which holds poetry to be a medium for special, even spiritual, knowledge, and it may be that this perception reflects a very ancient notion of poets as keepers of words and wisdom.

Travelling Poets and Special Knowledge

Old English poetry is relatively unclear in its preferences for skill or knowledge. On the one hand, wisdom and knowledge seem to be the emphasis in good verse. Take, for example, this account from *The Order of the World*, a poem about understanding the wonders of God's creation (1a–26a):[96]

> Wilt þu, fus hæle, fremdne monnan,
> wisne woð-boran[97] wordum gretan,
> fricgan fela-geongne ymb forð-gesceaft,
> biddan þe gesecge sidra gesceafta
> cræftas cyndelice cwic-hrerende, 5
> þa þe dogra gehwam þurh dom godes

[96] Titles, lineation, and readings of Old English poetry throughout are from ASPR unless otherwise indicated. Huppé, *Web of Words*, pp. 40–42, notes the poem's reliance on Psalm 18(19), in which nature declares God's glory.
[97] For more on this term, see pp. 39 and 43 below.

bringe wundra fela wera cneorissum!
Is þara anra gehwam orgeate tacen,
þam þurh wisdom woruld ealle con
behabban on hreþre, hycgende mon,
þæt geara iu, gliwes cræfte,
mid gieddingum guman oft wrecan,
rincas ræd-fæste; cuþon ryht sprecan,
þæt a fricgende fira cynnes
ond secgende searo-runa gespon
a gemyndge mæst monna wiston.
Forþon scyle ascian, se þe on elne leofað,
deop-hydig mon, dygelra gesceafta,
bewritan in gewitte word-hordes cræft,
fæstnian ferð-sefan, þencan forð teala;
ne sceal þæs aþreotan þegn modigne,
þæt he wislice woruld fulgonge.
Leorna þas lare. Ic þe lungre sceal
meotudes mægen-sped maran gesecgan,
þonne þu hyge-cræftig in hreþre mæge
mode gegripan.

You desire, eager man, to greet the foreign man, a wise song-bearer, with words; to ask the widely-travelled one about the original order; to pray he tell you the virtues of vast creations, innately live-moving, those that every day may bring many wonders to the generations of men through God's decree! (1–7)

It is a clear sign for each one of them, him who can grasp all the world in heart through wisdom, the thinking man, that long ago, by the art of song, men often knew how to[98] express with wise utterances, men firm in counsel, to speak rightly, so that they, always inquiring of mankind and recounting the joining of artful mysteries, always remembering, knew the most of men. (8–16)

Therefore, a deep-thinking person, he who lives boldly, should inquire about the secret creations, write the word-hoard's skill in his understanding, fasten his heart-safe, think on well. It will not weary a spirited thane to fulfil the world wisely. (17–22)

Learn this teaching. I shall tell you more about the Measurer's strong power right away than [or 'when'] you, thought-skilled, can grasp [it] in mind, in spirit. (23a–26a)

Critics have noted that it is unclear whether the men who spoke by the art of song are Hebrew or Germanic poets: Bernard Huppé sees the poem in a monastic context as referring to Scripture,[99] but Robert DiNapoli highlights the indeterminacy of referent.[100] Since the text gives us no explicit clues as to their identity, it is best for our purposes to note the effects of

[98] Contrary to ASPR punctuation, which leaves the infinitive *wrecan* without an auxiliary, I take *cuþon* (13b) as an auxiliary for both *wrecan* and *sprecan*.
[99] *Web of Words*, pp. 35–40.
[100] 'Visionary Experience', pp. 99–100 (citing Opland, *Anglo-Saxon Oral Poetry*, p. 228).

this nostalgic description, how it characterizes poets, rather than their literal identities. Thornbury rightly cautions against reading such idealized accounts of poets as objectively reflecting the reality of poetic practice in Anglo-Saxon England.[101] Nevertheless, as Paul Battles and Charles Wright note, poets' ideology about their own practice can tell us something about its historical realization, and my interest here lies more in how poets thought of their craft and conceived of inspiration anyway.[102]

These wise men are described as dealers in knowledge who communicate their wisdom in poetry: as DiNapoli notes, they have the threefold work of *a fricgende* […] *ond secgende* ('always asking and speaking', 14a and 15a) and being *a gemyndge* ('always mindful', 16a), and he points out that the subsequent description of the appropriate duties for a 'deep-thinking person' (beginning with 'therefore', 17–20) suggests that the poet aligns those past roles with his present work.[103] It should be noted, then, that the poet says a deep-thinking person in the present does four things: inquire (*ascian*), write 'the word-hoard's skill' in mind (*bewritan in gewitte word-hordes cræft*), fasten the mind (*fæstnian ferð-sefan*), and think well (*þencan forð teala*). These four virtues, therefore, are close in nature to the above three (asking, speaking, and being mindful). The 'word-hoard's skill' is surely wisdom and probably also the speech of poetry, a way of remembering wisdom received from inquiry.[104] Verse 23a, for example, instructs the pupil to learn this very poem, perhaps because the poet will speak more than the pupil can understand immediately. Furthermore, fastening the mind is a poetic metaphor of remembering or fortifying the mind with remembered wisdom (as we shall see further in Chapter Three).[105] According to this portrait, the purview of *woð-boran*, past and present, is not verse-form *per se* (although the poet uses

[101] *Becoming a Poet*, pp. 14–19.
[102] '"The Scop's Repertoire"', pp. 3–4.
[103] 'Visionary Experience', pp. 100–01.
[104] Thornbury, *Becoming a Poet*, pp. 19–26, notes that a *woð-bora* is not necessarily a poet.
[105] See pp. 143–51.

some unique poetic patterning, such as end-rhyming lines at 9–10 and 12–13), but the accumulation of wisdom, especially special knowledge about God's decrees and creations (*forð-gesceaft*; *sidra gesceafta / cræftas*; *þa þe* […] */ bringe wundra*; *searo-runa gespon*; *dygelra gesceafta*).[106]

As Barbara Raw notes, the *ic gefrægn*-formula and similar phrases meaning 'I learned by inquiry' are ubiquitous in Old English poetry.[107] These references to research and learning signify a poet's role as keeper of knowledge and to the importance of authority in this knowledge, the citation of sources. Ward Parks points out that in primarily oral cultures reference and repetition have special significance, because where memory is the only recording strategy citation and repetition help to keep knowledge present, whereas in environs with written records more readily available, novelty becomes a virtue as the stability of written texts becomes increasingly apparent.[108] This 'oral' necessity appears to have become engrained in the Anglo-Saxon poetic sensibility: even highly literate poets such as Aldhelm or the poet of *The Phoenix* show traces of this 'oral aesthetic', employing formulae and traditional motifs.[109] The citation of sources, too, appears to have been a part of the residual orality of the Old English poetic (although, as we shall see, poets play with this traditional notion), even when these sources explicitly became books, and Parks suggests that poets would use this conventional device to show awareness of their status as poets.[110] Indeed, there is a striking parallel between such citation strategies and classical invocations: Parks demonstrates that the 'I heard'-formula occurs frequently at prominent points in a poem, such as at the beginning or before recurrent motifs such as sea-travel or the giving of treasure; and Curtius notes that classical invocations occur frequently not only at the

[106] See also the similar line endings of 1–2, 3–4, and 18–19.
[107] *Art and Background*, pp. 30–33.
[108] '"I Heard" Formulas', pp. 48–51. See also Ong, *Orality and Literacy*, p. 41.
[109] Benson, 'Literary Character' (esp. pp. 335–36); Orchard, *Poetic Art*, pp. 119–25. See further Foley, 'Oral Texts, Traditional Texts', pp. 122–28.
[110] '"I Heard" Formulas', pp. 60–61. See further Chapter Two, p. 72.

beginnings of poems but also mid-text to highlight impressive passages.[111] Old English and classical poets therefore seem to use the conventional trappings of poetry to draw attention to their own poetic craft.

This traditional emphasis on a poet's special knowledge clearly set a premium on the widely travelled wordsmith for the *Order*-poet and others. As much is clear from the account of *Widsith*, a poem about the scop Widsith, 'the widely-travelled one' (50–56):

> Swa ic geondferde fela fremdra londa
> geond ginne grund. Godes ond yfles
> þær ic cunnade cnosle bidæled,
> freo-mægum feor folgade wide.
> Forþon ic mæg singan ond secgan spell,
> mænan fore mengo in meodu-healle
> hu me cyne-gode cystum dohten.
>
> So I travelled throughout many foreign lands throughout the vast terrain. I tested good and evil there, separated from kin, far from noble-kinsmen, followed widely. Therefore, I can sing and speak a story, declare before many in a mead-hall how the excellent availed me with generosity.

Because the poet has travelled and experienced much (indeed, more than is humanly possible), he can share his knowledge: he characterizes his experiences with the verb *cunnian*, which means 'to test' or 'try' but by extension means 'to inquire' and 'to experience (as a result of inquiry)'.[112] The fact that asking or seeking are often realized in Old English poetry as a journey seems related to T. A. Shippey's point that journeying in the elegies (signalled by the word *sið*, which Shippey suggests must have the dual sense of 'journey' and 'experience', likening it to German *erfahrung* [compare *fahren*, 'travel']) has to do with gaining experience to share with the audience.[113]

The same is the case in the appraisals of Saturn's wisdom in *Solomon and Saturn I* and *II*, debate poems which feature figures of Christian learning (Solomon) and worldly

[111] See n. 49 above.
[112] *DOE*, 'cunnian'. On the impossible scope of Widsith's travels and analogues in Old Norse literature, see Schlauch, 'Wīdsīth, Víðförull', pp. 969–77.
[113] *Old English Verse*, pp. 53–79. Compare Chapter Three, pp. 127 and 132. See also McBrine, 'Journey Motif', pp. 298–317.

learning (the euhemerized god Saturn):[114] in lines 1–21 (the beginning of *Solomon I*), Saturn, despite his reading of many foreign books, seeks out Solomon's wisdom, and in 188b–208b (the beginning of *Solomon II*), Solomon is described as wiser than Saturn although the latter had travelled to many lands, which the poet enumerates at length. That the poets characterize Solomon as wiser than the widely-travelled Saturn nods not simply to Godly wisdom's supremacy over worldly wisdom but also to the traditional value attributed to travel in gaining wisdom.[115] Elaine Hansen notes that this figure of the widely-travelled, wise poet is a topos in wisdom contests especially, such as *Solomon and Saturn II* reputes to be, and valuable analogues are also evidenced in Old Norse poetry.[116] Óðinn, god of poetic inspiration, appears to have gained wisdom from travel and inquiry: he is often depicted not as dispensing information, but as questing for it himself, and he has a reputation as a wanderer and disguised guest.[117] The mead of poetry, for example, is first sought out and stolen by Óðinn before he gives it to poets.[118] Venturing to the giant Vafþrúðnir's hall in *Vafþrúðnismál* (circa tenth century[?]), a riddle-contest of mythological knowledge between Óðinn and Vafþrúðnir, the traveller repeats seven times throughout the poem: *Fiǫlþ ec fór, fiǫlþ ek freistaða(c), / fjǫlþ ec reynda regin* ('Much I travelled, much I found out, much I experienced of the gods').[119] *Hávamál*, a poetic collection of gnomic sayings and stories spoken by or about Óðinn, also has a great deal of wisdom for travellers (especially stanzas 1–79, the so-called 'Gnomic Poem'), perhaps gleaned from Óðinn's ventures, although it is difficult to distinguish at times who the speaker is.[120] In a later section (stanzas 112–37) a

[114] On the poems, see further pp. 54–64 below. On the representative character of Solomon and Saturn, see Menner, *Solomon and Saturn*, pp. 21–26.
[115] On the different character and authorship of these two poems, see Menner, *Solomon and Saturn*, pp. 35–37, 49–53.
[116] *Solomon Complex*, pp. 82–83 (cited in DiNapoli, 'Visionary Experience', p. 98).
[117] Schlauch, 'Wīdsīth, Víðförull', pp. 973–76; Chadwick and Chadwick, *Growth of Literature*, I, 640. Chadwick, *Poetry and Prophecy*, p. 10 notes his characterization as exceedingly wise and as the poet of the gods. For more on the figures of Óðinn and Woden, see pp. 47–49 below.
[118] Faulkes, *Skáldskaparmál*, I, 4–5. On the mead, see pp. 49–54 below.
[119] Machan, *Vafþrúðnismál*, pp. 10–11, 59, and 67–69.
[120] Evans, *Hávamál*, pp. 9–23; Schlauch, 'Wīdsīth, Víðförull', pp. 973–74.

poet named Loddfáfnir is even depicted as having visited Óðinn's hall for wisdom: his seeking out divine inspiration *qua* special knowledge is strikingly characterized as a journey.[121] There is clearly a tradition in Old English and Old Norse poetry that poets are associated with special and even supernatural knowledge, and that this knowledge must be gained by inquiry, whether of other poets, the gods, or experience. The reasons poetry is the chosen medium for transmitting such knowledge are discussed in depth in the following chapter; for now, I turn to the ties between poetry and special knowledge.

Cynewulf's Wondrous Knowledge

In line with a 'knowledge-model' are the accounts of inspiration in Cynewulf's *Elene*. This poem contains three accounts of divine revelations paired with what might be called inspiration: Constantine's vision of the Cross, which compels him to become Christian (69–98); Judas Cyriacus's conversion, after which God reveals to him the resting place of the Cross (696b–826b); and Cynewulf's own inspiration near his poetic signature, which the poet describes as an uncovering and expansion that allows him to perceive the Cross rightly (1236a–56a).[122] This pattern of 'strife, revelation, and conversion', as Daniel Calder has named it, is driven home by the parallel monologues of Judas and Cynewulf.[123] Cynewulf (*floruit* between 750–850[?]),[124] much like Aldhelm above, characterizes his inspiration as freedom from sin—and with heightened poetic patterning (1236a–51a; assonance indicated

[121] Dronke, *Poetic Edda*, III, 59, suggests the name-elements *lodd-* and *-fáfnir* may refer to an 'itinerant entertainer' and 'priest' or 'wandering scholar' respectively.
[122] For a thorough discussion of these three 'panels' of the poem and their relationship to the Latin source text, the *Acta Cyriaci*, see Fish, 'Theme and Pattern'.
[123] 'Strife, Revelation, and Conversion'.
[124] Fulk, *Old English Meter*, pp. 362–68, notes that the substitution of Anglian forms, such as on line 1238 (i.e. *reht*, *geþeht*) repairs the rhyme, and based on other linguistic evidence concludes that Cynewulf was a Mercian poet composing sometime between 750 and 850. See also Anderson, *Cynewulf*, pp. 16–17. But Orchard, 'Alcuin and Cynewulf', has recently provided new evidence for the suggestion that Cynewulf could be Bishop Cynewulf of Lindisfarne (d. 782/3).

by italics; structural alliteration in bold; artful alliteration by underlining—hereafter 'standard mark-up'):[125]

> Þus ic **f**rod ond **f***us* þurh þæt **f**æcne h*us*
> **w**ord-cræftum **w***æ*f ond **w**undrum l*æ*s,
> **þ**ragum **þ**r*eodude* ond ge**þ**anc *reodode*
> **n**ihtes **n***earwe*. **N**ysse ic g*earwe*
> be ðære **r**ode[126] **r***iht* ær me **r**umran *geþeaht* 1240
> þurh ða **m**æran **m***iht* on **m**odes *þeaht*
> **w**isdom on**w**re*ah*. Ic wæs **w**eorcum f*ah*
> **s**ynnum a**s***æled*, **s**orgum ge*w*æ*led*,
> **b**itrum ge**b***unden*, **b**isgum beþr*ungen*,
> ær me **l**are on**l***a*g þurh **l**eohtne h*ad* 1245
> **g**amelum to geoce, **g**ife unscynde
> **m**ægen-cyning a**m***æt* ond on ge**m**ynd beg*eat*,
> **t**orht on**t***y*n*de*, **t**idum ger*y*m*de*,
> **b**an-cofan on**b***and*, **b**reost-locan onw*and*,
> **l**eoðu-cræft on**l***eac*. Þæs ic **l**ustum b*r*e*ac*, 1250
> **w**illum in worlde.

> Thus, I, aged and eager [that is, 'on the brink of the journey of death'],[127] by my sinful body wove with word-arts and gathered with wonders, at times deliberated and turned my thinking by trial of night. I did not readily perceive rightly about the Cross before wisdom, through that renowned strength, uncovered a roomier plan in my mind's counsel. (1236a–42a)
>
> I was guilty in deed, sullied by sins, vexed by sorrows, bound with griefs, thronged with worries before he granted me teaching through a light state, help for an old man; a noble gift the King of might measured out and produced in mind, brightly opened, in time made roomy, unbound my bone-coffer, unwound my breast-locker, unlocked song-craft. I made use of that with pleasure, willingly in the world. (1242b–51a)

Whereas Cynewulf had previously laboured arduously over his work and composed verses by his own understanding, through teaching he received a gift: wisdom, perhaps a

[125] This will be identified as the 'standard mark-up' throughout this dissertation. On the definition and poetic function of 'artful alliteration', see Orchard, 'Artful Alliteration'. See also Stanley, 'Alliterative Ornament', and Griffith, 'Extra Alliteration' (forthcoming in *Anglo-Saxon England*). Griffith observes that double-alliteration appears to be required when the second foot of the a-verse is longer than first, in heavy verses, and where the second stressed element has an unstressed prefix. In relation to this passage, it is also key to note Griffith's observation that in classical Old English verse double-alliteration is necessary in the a-verse where the half-lines of a line have end rhyme. Yet I argue that in one sense double-alliteration is always 'artful', even if not 'extra' (that is, even if the principles of metrical construction require it); like hypermetrics, for example, one still needs the skill to employ double-alliteration correctly, and I therefore underline all instances of double-alliteration.

[126] Mize, 'Mental Container and the Cross', pp. 159–61, notes that although *rode* is missing from the manuscript, it is a solid guess for emendation based on 'sense, gender, and meter', and, citing the mention of the Cross in lines 1251b–57a, he points out that perceiving the Cross is integral to Cynewulf's sense of his inspiration, just as it was for Constantine and Judas.

[127] For this sense of *fus*, see Huppé, *Web of Words*, p. 35 (n. 2). On the journey of death in Cynewulf's writings, see McBrine, 'Journey Motif', pp. 298–306 and 316–17.

personification of Christ, frees Cynewulf from the enclosure of his own understanding, expanding and unlocking his heart and his gift of poetry through divine grace and changing him, in the words of Varda Fish, 'from the poet of the *littera* to the poet of the *spiritus*'.[128] The image is one of movement from dark confinement to light expansion and enlivening, which Earl Anderson calls the 'sapiential theme'.[129] The poet no longer struggles through his sins, darkened thought, or verse composition, and he enhances this image of expansion by paronomasia: wisdom *onwreah* ('uncovered') *rumran geþeaht* ('a roomier plan') in his *modes þeaht* ('mind's counsel'); *þeaht* can also mean 'covered' (if derived from *þeccan* rather than *þencan*), implicitly contrasting wisdom's revelation with Cynewulf's concealing thought. Britt Mize points out that not only is new teaching uncovered (*onwreah*) within Cynewulf, but Cynewulf himself 'had uncovered that wonder' (*þæt wundor onwrigen hæfde*, 1253), 'the remembrance of the tree of glory' (*wuldres treowes /* […] *ingemynd*, 1251b–52b), by speaking it to his audience, and Mize further notes that the same movement from unrest, to spiritual revelation, to publishing of revelation is a larger motif also present in *The Dream of the Rood*.[130]

That the poet apposes word-craft with wonders on line 1235 and suggests he revealed the wonder of the Cross (1251b–56a) is instructive regarding poetic composition: as we saw in the previous section, it would appear that poetry ought to be composed with a sense of the unusual or awe-inspiring. Cynewulf does not indicate whether these wonders are awesome facts or awesome poetic effects; rather, he intimately connects spiritual revelation and verse quality: it is wisdom's inspired teaching that expands his mind and unlocks 'song-craft', but he tells this account of his wondrous inspiration with wondrous poetics, including double

[128] Fish, 'Theme and Pattern', pp. 22–23. Fish (pp. 7–10) also points out the patristic identification of Christ with the Word, Wisdom, and the Cross.
[129] Anderson, *Cynewulf*, p. 161 (cited in Bjork, *Verse Saints' Lives*, pp. 64–65).
[130] Mize, 'Mental Container and the Cross', pp. 145–46 and 156–63. On the relationship between *The Dream* and *Elene*, see further Irvine, *Textual Culture*, pp. 437–49. For more on *The Dream*, see Chapter Three, pp. 151–60.

alliteration in every line and rhyme in all but one.[131] While it can be useful to consider poetic skill in terms of a dichotomy between knowledge and technique, Cynewulf clearly did not differentiate these aspects.

Peter Clemoes, arguing that Cynewulf identifies with Judas (who is also depicted in the poem as an old keeper of words), notes similarities between Cynewulf's inspiration and Judas's (807–12):[132]

> Nu ic þurh soð hafu seolf gecnawen
> on heardum hige þæt þu hælend eart
> middan-geardes. Sie ðe, mægena god,
> þrym-sittendum þanc butan ende,
> þæs ðu me swa meðum ond swa man-weorcum
> þurh þin wuldor inwrige wyrda geryno.
>
> Now I myself have recognized in my hard mind by the truth that you are the Saviour of this middle-earth. Thanks be to you without end, God of strength, among those seated in might, because you revealed to me, so weary and so sinful, the mysteries of fate by your glory.

Just as Cynewulf was tired, sinful, and had a hardened mind, so Judas is healed from the same state by God's revelation of 'mysteries of fate' (*wyrda geryno*); and just as Cynewulf's inspiration is narrated with heightened style, Bjork has shown that the rhetoric of Judas's direct discourse also changes after his conversion from closed circularity to linear openness of argumentation, and that he begins to use poetic devices such as chiasmus and plurilinear alliteration.[133] These rhetorical and poetic alterations conform to what Bjork names the 'iconographic' model of Elene's speech, the 'formal, rhetorical, balanced, or symmetrical discourse' which 'comes to signify the essence of the saints' faith' as 'an object of contemplation'.[134]

[131] See further Cavell, *Weaving Words*, pp. 234–38, on this passage's poetics.
[132] Clemoes, 'King Alfred's Debt', pp. 236–37. On Judas as a keeper of words, see Dinapoli, 'Poesis and Authority'.
[133] *Verse Saints' Lives*, pp. 62–89
[134] *Verse Saints' Lives*, pp. 26–27.

Cynewulf also emphasizes spiritual knowledge in an account of poetic inspiration in *Christ II* 664a–68a:

> Sumum word-laþe wise sendeð
> on his modes gemynd þurh his muþes gæst, 665
> æðele ondgiet. Se mæg eal fela
> singan ond secgan þam bið snyttru cræft
> bifolen on ferðe.
>
> [God] wisely sends to one discourse into his mind's memory, noble perception through the Spirit of his mouth. He can sing and say a great many things, the one on whose heart the virtue of wisdom is committed.

This inspiration is only the first of God's many gifts to men enumerated in lines 659a–91a in the form of a '*sum*-catalogue', catalogues which Matti Rissanen shows are especially associated with fate and divine providence in Old English poetry.[135] It is notable that the first gift in this catalogue is 'the craft of wisdom', which is specifically (and uniquely among the other gifts) depicted as inspired by the Spirit of God's mouth: the description incorporates all three persons of the Trinity in words reminiscent of Psalm 32(33). 6 (the *Spirit* of *God's* mouth brings *words* to this individual's mind). As we have seen, the Holy Spirit is especially associated with verbal inspiration, and the prestige of being able to recite a great many things, song and speech—along with a tinge of poetic self-consciousness, no doubt—grants it first place in the list.[136]

This special perception which grants one the ability to sing and say many things may be the sense of the Old English word *witega*, or 'prophet'. This word comes from the *wit-* or 'knowing'-stem and can also mean 'wise man' without divine connotations, but according to *B-T* more regularly indicates wisdom, intelligence, and knowledge of divine origin. Old English *wis* often collocates with the compound *woð-bora*, used of a poet in *The Order of the World*: *wisne woð-boran* (*Order of the World* 2a), *wisum woð-boran* (*Riddle 31* 24a), *wise*

[135] Rissanen, '*Sum* in Old English Poetry'. See also Russom, 'Germanic Concept of Nobility', for the same effect in Old Norse verse.
[136] See p. 9.

woð-boran (*Death of Edgar* 33a); and in *Christ A woð*-compounds accompany *witega*: prophecies are called *witgena woð-song* (46a) and the prophet Isaiah is called both *woð-bora* (302b) and *wis-fæst witega* (306).[137] In *Elene* it is divine wisdom which frees and expands the minds of Judas and Cynewulf to speak well. In the Old English *Daniel*, when Nebuchadnezzar's seers are unable to guess the king's dream, he criticizes that their thought is not as 'increased' as they claimed: *Næron ge swa eacne ofer ealle men* / *mod-geþances swa ge me sægdon* ('You are not as increased in mind-understanding over all men as you said to me', 136–37). The word *eacen* literally means 'increased' but according to the *DOE* is also used to mean 'inspired' and 'pregnant' and clearly connotes a sense of filling with 'excellent gifts' from another source, the gift in this case being a capacity for divine wisdom, perhaps created by the receipt of divine wisdom, as in Cynewulf's case. It would appear that the Anglo-Saxon model of a prophet is one with special mental capacities or capacities of perception, more like Isidore's description of a *vates* (one inspired by *vis mentis*, 'force of mind'—*vates*, incidentally, probably being of the same Indo-European root as *woð*) than of a *propheta* (*praefator*, 'pre-speaker') or *videns* ('seer').[138] Given the Anglo-Saxon poetic conception of the mind as an enclosure for words, it is not surprising that prophets, who seem to have an 'expanded' mind, are comparable to poets: both can speak many things, and perhaps it is receiving words and songs which expands their minds.[139]

Yet if inspiration seems to be a matter of knowledge, *Christ II* may also indicate that versifying is a gift from God. In the aforementioned *sum*-catalogue God 'sowed and set throughout the hearts of men' (*seow ond sette geond sefan monna,* 663) other skills as well, which are identified as *modes snyttru* ('wisdoms of the mind', 662b) and *cræft* ('skill', 685a). These include harping (668b–70a), fighting (673b–76a), and navigating the sea (676b–78a)

[137] See further pp. 42–43 below and Hollowell, '*Scop* and *Woðbora*', pp. 320–25.
[138] *Etymologiae*, I, 300, 320, and 288–89 (Books VII. 12. 15, VIII. 7. 3, and VII. 8. 1). On *woð*, see further pp. 47–49 below.
[139] On this conception of Anglo-Saxon psychology, see Chapter Three, pp. 140–42.

and land (680b–81a), a breadth of skills which reflects the breadth of the Holy Spirit's gifts in Scripture, where he inspires artistic skill (Exodus 31. 3, Job 32. 8), physical strength (Judges 14. 6), wisdom (Isaiah 11. 12, John 16. 13), and prophecy (Joel 3. 28, Luke 1. 67–79), among other things. One of these other crafts is listed in lines 672b–73a: *Sum mæg searolice / word-cwide writan* ('One can cunningly write word-sayings'). The word *searolice* denotes formulation, art, and artifice, and therefore this may be a description of a poet's or rhetorician's work, one who is able to work words with skill (see also *The Phoenix* 548a for a similar use of *writan*), though it may alternatively describe the work of a scribe.[140] There can be no doubt that inspired knowledge is ascribed more prestige than writing because wisdom comes listed first, spans nine verses, and originates from God's inbreathing.[141] Most descriptions of gifts in this poem span only two verses, but the other longer descriptions (that of the harpist spans four verses [668b–70a], the warrior six [673b–76a], and the sailor four [76b–78a]) seem to be expanded because of the traditional prestige their craft held within poetry.[142]

Wisdom, which is received in the heart by God's breath, has a very different origin than writing in this poem, but writing is nevertheless a gift from God, and God's inbreathing does not appear to have taken place in Cædmon's story, for example. Indeed, citing Old English homilies, Thornbury notes that in vernacular accounts of biblical authors' inspiration God most frequently 'dictates' his words to the prophets, which is another valuable example of the importance of 'words' in cognition and inspiration.[143] As stated above, all of these gifts are called 'wisdoms' or 'crafts' from God, coinciding perfectly with the sense of Old English

[140] On *The Phoenix* 548a, see Chapter Two, pp. 104–07.
[141] For a similar description of inspiration, see *The Phoenix* 549b–51b, discussed in the next chapter, pp. 103–07.
[142] See Orchard, 'Word Made Flesh', (esp. p. 298), on traditional poetic scenes such as battles and voyages, which often occur in versifications of Latin material without warrant from their source-texts, showing their enduring place in Old English poetic taste.
[143] 'Aldhelm's Rejection', pp. 84–85 (esp. n. 53).

cræft as it was employed in an Alfredian context, a context Clemoes believes was influenced by such traditional vernacular poetic usage.[144] Alfred, who was himself by 'divine inspiration' driven to memorize a book of poetry as a young man, seems to use *cræft* in its traditional poetic sense to denote an innate faculty, virtue, or strength, a capacity as well as its realization, involving intelligence and originating in divine wisdom.[145] But since the majority of these crafts, planted by divine wisdom though they may be, seem to be innate, it is best to consider only the prophet as 'inspired' *per se*, and similar conclusions can be drawn from another *sum*-catalogue, as we see in the next subsection.

A Store of Songs

The Gifts of Men contains two statements about poets, both of which are sparse but nevertheless instructive (35b–36a and 52a):

> Sum biþ woð-bora, 35
> giedda gif-fæst.
> […]
> sum leoða gleaw
>
> One is a song-bearer, gift-fast[146] with sententious utterances. One [is] excellent with songs.

While this could simply be a repetition of the same idea, the *Gifts*-poet appears to distinguish between one who knows *giedd* and one who knows *leoð*, perhaps drawing a distinction between spiritual insight and poetics, as Cynewulf seems not to do. Ida Masters Hollowell, for example, suggests that there was an occupational distinction between a *woð-bora* and *scop*: the former being a teacher, wiseman, and orator, perhaps like the *þyle*, at times itinerant, and the latter being a eulogist, maintained in one court for praise and

[144] 'King Alfred's Debt to Vernacular Poetry', pp. 226–28.
[145] 'King Alfred's Debt to Vernacular Poetry', pp. 213 and 223–38.
[146] *DOE*, 'gyffæst, giffæst', also suggests 'fruitful' and 'capacious (of memory)' as translations.

entertainment.[147] But the exact role of a *þyle* is not clear, either, though it seems generally associated with wisdom and oration, perhaps as the keeper of traditional wisdom or, as some scholars suggest, even an Odinic priest.[148] Having noted the agonistic nature of dialogues between well-travelled wise men, we should also note that Unferth, Hrothgar's *þyle*, engages in a verbal contest of truths with the traveller Beowulf.[149]

The first excerpt of *Gifts of Men* is rather ambiguous. Old English *woð*, which is related (though perhaps distantly) to mantically-inspired utterance, can refer to sound, noise, song, or speech, but through its sonorous and spiritual connotations signifies 'eloquence', of thought and sound; and as an exclusively poetic word, it is probably connotative of the wisdom and eloquence of song specifically.[150] As the first element of compounds it seems to refer predominantly to the wisdom or eloquence of prophets and poets, and as a standalone or second element it seems to refer more often to the sounds of voices.[151] The next half-line in *Gifts* qualifies the *woð-bora* as one with the gift of *giedd*. Hollowell points out that *giedd* are especially associated with the *woð-bora*, but in *Beowulf* a *giedd* is uttered by Hrothgar's *scop* (1063–70 and 1159b–60a—here the *gyd* is also called a *leoð*), Hrothgar himself (1722b–24a and 2105–10), and Beowulf's mourners (3148–55 and 3169–72), for example, and this type of speech does not seem to have been the exclusive province of any specific orator.[152]

The term *giedd* is used with special frequency in the Old English elegies, and Scott Gwara suggests that it could refer to a 'didactic or prophetic comparison'.[153] In Old Norse,

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[147] '*Scop* and *Woðbora'*, pp. 318–20 and 325.
[148] See further Gwara, *Heroic Identity*, pp. 86–89, and Fulk, Bjork, and Niles, *Klaeber's Beowulf*, pp. 150–51.
[149] See further Clover, 'Germanic Context' (esp. pp. 462–63).
[150] See further pp. 48–49 below.
[151] Contexts for use as first element: prophets' songs (*Christ I* 46a, 302b); poets' skills (*The Gifts of Men* 35b, *The Order of the World* 2a, *The Whale* 2a, *Riddle* 31. 23a); wise men (*The Death of Edgar* 33a); an animal's gift of song (*Riddle* 31. 18a); glossing *rhetoribus* (*Cleopatra Glossaries* 3. 871). Contexts for use as a standalone or second element: a wicked priest's invective (*Andreas* 675a); angels' praise (*Elene* 748a); demons' voices (*Guthlac A* 263b and 391b and *Guthlac B* 899b); animal voices (*Riddle* 8. 3a, 11b, *The Panther* 43a); glossing *facundia i eloquentia* (*Cleopatra Glossaries* 1. 2437) and *lepida* (*Cleopatra Glossaries* 1. 3541). The compound *woð-cræft* occurs twice in *The Phoenix* and only once elsewhere (*The Whale* 2a).
[152] Hollowell, '*Scop* and *Woðbora'*, p. 325.
[153] On the term elegies, see Chapter Three, n. 43. Gwara, *Heroic Identity*, pp. 38–39.

the word *geð* can refer to 'mind', 'disposition', or 'sense', and Richard North has argued that *giedd* and *geð* derive from the common idea of 'spirit', the *giedd* being the spirit's expression in song.[154] But Erik Björkman and Friedrich Holthausen argue that *giedd* and *geð* are etymologically unrelated.[155] These scholars suggest *giedd* derives from the same root as 'gather', suggesting a *giedd* is an assemblage (especially a 'joined' poem), and Karl Reichl shows that *giedd* refers to song, prophecy, or any sententious utterances, concluding that it was generally a term referring to poetry.[156] That a *woð-bora* has the gift of sayings seems to indicate again the importance of knowledge, especially spiritual knowledge, as the coincidence of *woð-* and *giedd* may indicate, and North suggests that both terms develop from a notion of expressing one's soul in a poem.[157]

The second quotation notably coincides with our foregoing discussion of *cræft*, a God-given faculty or adeptness to a certain activity which is characterized as a kind of wisdom or mental facility, as is apparent given the meaning of *gleaw* ('keen' or 'excellent').[158] Yet to be excellent with songs may refer to a repertoire of memorized songs, as we have already seen that inspired wisdom leads to a capacious mind. Both of these excerpts could be read as saying these gifted individuals have a store of sayings and songs respectively, or that the individuals are skilled as producers of these arts. The former seems consonant with a more literal interpretation, but the latter seems possible in context; I would argue for a mixture of both—one needs to know the material before one can produce it on one's own (barring divine inspiration). Orchard, for example, has argued that memorizing songs was a regular practice in Anglo-Saxon England, and that the traditional character of

[154] *Pagan Words*, pp. 39–46; Tolley, *Shamanism in Norse*, I, 183–84.
[155] Reichl, 'Old English *giedd*', pp. 352–53; North, *Pagan Words*, p. 40.
[156] 'Old English *giedd*'. See also *DOE*, 'gydd', 'gyddung', 'gyddian'. Perhaps *giedd* is related to Old English *gydig* and *god* (from Pokorny, *Etymologisches Wörterbuch*, I, 413–14, ĝhau-, ĝhaud̯ə-, 'to call') with their supernatural connotations. On Old English *gydig*, see Hall, *Elves in Anglo-Saxon England*, pp. 148–53.
[157] *Pagan Words*, p. 41. See also pp. 51–56 and 60–62 on *giedd* as a formulaic purgation of grief.
[158] See *DOE*, 'gleaw'.

much verse may indicate the omnipresent role of poetry in society.[159] *Beowulf* 867b–78b gives us a similar picture of poetic skill to these excerpts (standard mark-up):

> Hwilum **c**yninges þegn,
> **g**uma **g**ilp-hlæden, **g**idda ge*mynd*ig,
> se ðe ***e****al* fe*l*a ***e****al*d-gesegena
> **w**orn ge*mund*e, **w**ord oþer f*and*
> **s**oðe ge*bund*en; **s**ecg eft ong*an*
> **s**ið Beowulfes **s**nyttrum styrian
> ond on **sp**ed wrecan **sp**el gerade,
> **w**ordum wrixlan; **w**elhwylc gecwæð
> þæt he fram **S**ige*mund*e **s**ecgan hyrde
> **e**llen-dædum, **u**ncuþes fela,
> **W**ælsinges ge**w**in, **w**ide siðas,
> þara þe **g**umena bearn **g**earwe ne wiston.
>
> At times the king's thane, a man stocked with high words, mindful of speeches, he who completely remembered a great deal of old sayings, found another word bound truly. The man began to stir again Beowulf's venture with wisdom and express effectively a learned story, exchange in words. He spoke of everything that he had heard said about Sigmund, his bold deeds, many strange things, the Wælsing's conflict, long journeys, things of which the sons of men did not readily know.

Compositionally speaking, these tales are expressed by one well-versed in the 'classics', as it were. As one who knows the old sayings, this poet can produce a new one and deliver it 'successfully' (*on sped*, 873a). The 'story' is represented as 'learned' or 'instructed' (*spel gerade*, 873b), the product of one well-trained and as a part of a web of songs, a traditional framework within which it should fit. Of course, there is no divine inspiration here; these fresh songs are inspired only by Beowulf's feats.[160] Yet it seems notable that *wondrous* exploits inspire the poet, reminiscent of the special knowledge Cynewulf required for his verse and the special knowledge received by inquiring poets: Beowulf's amazing deeds seem themselves to be the new 'word' the poet 'found' and 'bound', and the tales of Sigemund told alongside Beowulf's *spel* are also considered extraordinary (*uncuþ*) and not readily known by all (874b–78b). It is also notable that the poetics of this passage about poetry are heightened,

[159] Orchard, 'Word Made Flesh', pp. 294, 298–302, and 307–09.
[160] See *B-T*, 'gerad'.

featuring consonance (*ge**myndig***, *ge**munde***, *fa**nd***, *gebu**nden***, *Sige**munde***) and rhyme (*gem**unde**/geb**unden***, *fa**nd**/ga**n***), as Orchard notes, in addition to maintaining alliteration on s, sp, w, g, and vowels.[161] Cynewulf may draw words from *Beowulf* in *Fates of the Apostles*, a poem Cynewulf also claims to have 'found' (*fand*, 1b) and 'assembled' (*samnode*, 2b), its third line echoing *Beowulf's* third line almost precisely, thereby characterizing the apostles as princely heroes: *hu þa æðelingas ellen cyðdon* (compare *hu þa æðelingas ellen fremedon*' in *Beowulf*); if so, it seems Cynewulf's perspective on poetry was formed, like Aldhelm's, Bede's, and Alcuin's perspectives, by a blend of divine enlightenment and authoritative texts.[162]

Battles and Wright demonstrate the presence of a traditional Germanic poetic theme they name 'The Scop's Repertoire' in a variety of poems (including *Christ II*, *Gifts of Men*, and *Beowulf*). The motif includes references to 'orality' in transmission (indeed, Cynewulf even refers to a prose text—God's words to Adam and Eve at their Fall—as a song in *Christ II* 618b–26b), 'copiousness' of repertoire, and 'antiquity' of repertoire; but the scholars note an important subtype of this theme, which they call the '"poetry-as-inspiration" variant' (citing the above accounts from *Christ II* and *Gifts of Men*, in addition to an account from *Maxims I*), in which orality and copiousness are still present but reference to antiquity is replaced by reference to song as a divine gift.[163] Given that inspiration replaces antiquity in this variant of the theme, it seems to me that this aspect of the theme has more to do with the ability of these poets to bear a great deal of 'songs' rather than with their ability to versify, which is not mentioned.

Looking back at all of these Old English accounts, it is unclear whether these poets only store up poems (although it seems likely they also speak prose), nor is it clear whether

[161] *Critical Companion*, p. 107.
[162] See further Orchard, 'Computing Cynewulf', p. 98. For more on Cynewulf's poetic self-consciousness and literary references, see Schaefer, 'Hearing from Books', pp. 125–34.
[163] '"The Scop's Repertoire"', pp. 4 and 12–15.

they are occupational poets (although this seems to me unlikely), yet these accounts still tell us a great deal about inspired verse. These portrayals of poetic craft do not generally seem concerned with describing the mechanics of poetry so much as with how people know and sing songs. Orality in these excerpts, for example, is not simply a matter of performance, but of hearsay, of the songs' origin, whether tradition, travel, or God. Of course, inspiration is also about receiving the ability to compose at all as it was for Cædmon: in Cynewulf's verse, it seems to be an increased mental capacity (granted by divine teaching in *Elene* and the Holy Spirit in *Christ II*) that allows him to compose poetry well and others to know a great deal of songs. But these accounts are not so much about poetry as versification as they are about poetry as a way of transmitting wondrous knowledge or glory and about the wonder of this knowledge, realized as 'words' or 'songs', the very things the Anglo-Latin poets asked God for.

Mead and Madness: Other Insular Forms of Inspiration?

Unlike Cædmon's receipt of the poetic gift, inspiration often entails possession by a spirit or cognitive dissociation.[164] As a succinct formulation of this sort of inspiration, Isidore of Seville derives Latin *carmen*, 'song, poem' either from its pronunciation 'in pieces' (*carptim*) or because poets 'were thought to lack their minds' (*carere mentem existimabantur*).[165] Speaking of the classical *poeta vates*, he tells how they were reputedly prophetic (*vaticinius*), having been inspired to write by 'a certain force' (*vi quadam*) as if in madness (*vesania*), and that 'through frenzy' (*per furorem*) the prophets (who also wrote much in verse) are called *vates* for the same reason.[166] Isidore is not the only one to identify inspiration as a frenzy: the

[164] Thornbury, 'Aldhelm's Rejection', pp. 83–87.
[165] *Etymologiae*, I, 76 (Book I. 39. 4).
[166] *Etymologiae*, I, 320 (Book VIII. 7. 1–3).

strangeness of inspired utterance and even unintelligible fits during possession have everywhere caused divine inspiration to be known as 'raging' or 'raving'.[167]

The notion of frenzy is latent in the name of Woden (Old Norse Óðinn, Old High German Wuotan), a figure who seems intimately related to supernatural wisdom and poetry.[168] The eleventh-century German chronicler Adam of Bremen makes the connection between Woden and frenzy explicit in his *Gesta Hammaburgensis ecclesiae pontificum*: *Wodan, id est furor, bella gerit, hominique ministrat virtutem contra inimicos* ('Woden, that is, 'fury', wages wars and gives to men strength against enemies').[169] The Old English *wod*, of the same etymological origin as the name Woden, indicates fury and insanity, and is regularly used to denote demonic activity and possession in Old English literature, a denotation it shares with Gothic **woþs* in Wulfila's fourth-century Bible translation.[170] Ælfric of Eynsham (circa 955–1010), for example, in his Old English rendering of Alcuin's *Quaestiones in Genesim*, states that the devil spoke through the serpent of Genesis 3 as he speaks 'through a *wod* man' (*þurh wodne man*, translating Alcuin's 'like a demoniac and one captive in mind', *sicut demoniacus et mente captus*) with no understanding of what it did, following Augustine of Hippo's (354–430) assertion that the serpent submitted to possession.[171] The same fury Adam of Bremen describes as inspiring 'strength' (*virtus* can also mean 'skill', 'virtue', or even 'miracle') also inspires the craft of poetry, as is clear from inspiration myths about the Old Norse Óðinn such as his theft of the mead of poetry

[167] A few examples of such fits are given by Chadwick, *Poetry and Prophecy*, pp. 24 and 32–40. Curtius, *European Literature,* pp. 474–75, gives a brief survey of the evidence in a classical context.
[168] Faulkes, *Poetical Inspiration*, pp. 5–6, points out that in Old Norse evidence Óðinn is usually credited with bestowing poetical inspiration, and despite Bragi being named a god of poetry in *Skáldskaparmál*, no surviving evidence describes his relationship to verse.
[169] *Gesta Hammaburgensis ecclesiae pontificum*, p. 200 (Book IV. 26). Eliade, *Shamanism: Archaic Techniques of Ecstasy*, pp. 98 and 385, cites evidence that may also link Woden to the wildness of animals.
[170] On the Old English evidence, see *B-T,* 'wód'. On the name Woden and the Gothic evidence, see Watkins, *How to Kill a Dragon,* p. 118. The nominative *woþs* is unattested, but accusative *wodan* occurs in Mark 5. 15–16 (ed. Massmann, *Ulfilas*, p. 110).
[171] Ed. Maclean, *Interrogationes Sigewulfi in Genesin*, pp. 24–25. On the work, especially Ælfric's adaptive strategy and its Augustinian exegesis, see Fox, 'Ælfric's *Interrogationes Sigewulfi*'.

discussed below.[172] Furthermore, the first element *woð,* 'sound, noise, song, speech' seems to share the same Indo-European etymon with *wod*, namely **u̯āt-* or **u̯ōt-*, meaning 'to be mentally or spiritually excited', which would indicate the production of sound, song, and discourse from such mantic states.[173] Calvert Watkins thus supplies a proposed original etymology for *Woden*: 'one who incarnates shamanic wisdom, poetry'.[174]

Although *wod* seems an exclusively prosaic usage while *woð* is poetic,[175] the value of such paronomastic links should not be underestimated.[176] Woden as a character seems to link them together. Ælfric, synthesizing pagan deities in his *De falsis diis*, shows some familiarity with the deity and identifies him with Mercury, the god of exchanges and discourse, noting his reputation for dishonesty and falsehood.[177] But Ælfric calls the god *Oðan*, purporting to see him as a foreign, Danish god, and Diane Szurszewski suggests that the intellectual, informative approach of Ælfric's sermon on false gods owes not to a present threat of latent Anglo-Saxon tradition but to the coming threat of invading pagans.[178] His approach should be contrasted with Wulfstan the Homilist's (died 1023) sermon of the same name, which is directed against the spread of paganism due to Norse invasions (but of course this sermon, too, is directed at combatting capitulation to what had become foreign gods).[179] Furthermore, the euhemerization of pagan gods appears to have been complete for Anglo-Saxon Christians in early days: English regnal lists, including Alfred the Great's (reigned 871–899), point to Woden's humanity, and the *Nine Herbs Charm*, *Maxims I*, and even the Old High German

[172] *DMLBS*, 'virtus', sense 7.
[173] *geistig angeregt sein*, Pokorny, *Etymologisches Wörterbuch*, II, 1113. On *wóð*, see *B-T,* 'woþ'.
[174] *How to Kill a Dragon*, p. 118.
[175] According to a *DOE Corpus* search, as a root, *wod* occurs only thrice in verse (including compounds): twice meaning insane (*Daniel* 627a, *Meters of Boethius* 25. 41b), once referring to eloquence (*Solomon and Saturn I* 95a). Likewise, *woð* occurs only once in prose as a root (excluding glosses) where it appears to mean *wod*, referring to the wild fury of a wolf (Ælfric, *Admonitio ad filium spiritalem*, 6. 7).
[176] On paronomastics and etymologizing in Old English poetry, see, for example, Frank, 'Some Uses of Paronomasia', and Robinson, *Beowulf and the Appositive Style*, p. 22.
[177] *De falsis diis* (ed. Pope, *Homilies of Ælfric*, pp. 684–85).
[178] Szurszewski, 'Ælfric's *De falsis diis*', pp. 73–74.
[179] See further Major, *Undoing Babel*, pp. 201–05.

Merseburger Zaubersprüche seem to depict him in euhemerized form as a magician, and it is therefore important to distinguish between Old English Woden and Old Norse Óðinn.[180] In sum, the Germanic root **woða* appears to have clearly linked vernacular poetry and raving inspiration, but by the age of Anglo-Saxon literary records, the evidence for such poetic frenzy is less conclusive.[181]

The Mead of Poetry

The Norse Óðinn is the subject of the most prolific account of poetic inspiration in Germanic vernaculars: the theft of the mead of poetry, which is recorded by Snorri Sturluson in the *Skáldskaparmál*.[182] The mead is synonymous with poetic inspiration throughout Old Norse poetic records, and a catalogue of poetic figures referencing this inspiration is given by Snorri in the same work.[183] The mead is made from the blood of Kvasir, a man made by the spittle of the Æsir (the Norse gods of heaven) and Vanir (the Norse gods of earth and water who intermarried with the Æsir and moved to Ásgard after a war between them), who was *svá vitr at engi spyrr hann þeira hluta er eigi kann han órlausn* ('so wise that none asked him for an answer which he could not solve'); when this blood has been mixed with honey and made mead, *er hverr er af drekkr verðr skáld eða frœðamaðr* ('whoever drinks of it becomes a skald or scholar').[184] For Snorri, who wrote in the thirteenth century, the mead makes both poets and scholars; as in Aldhelm's and Cynewulf's verse, for example, as well as in Old

[180] On the deity's semblance to a human magician rather than a god, see Chadwick and Chadwick, *Growth of Literature*, I, 639–41. On euhemerism in Anglo-Saxon England, see Szurszewski, 'Ælfric's *De falsis diis*', pp. 67–69 (esp. n. 47).
[181] Chadwick and Chadwick, *Growth of Literature*, I, 657, note that there is very little surviving evidence for this sort of frenzy and that visions are more common.
[182] Though Stephens, 'Mead of Poetry', pp. 261–64, suggests Snorri's account was probably not the myth's earliest form.
[183] A catalogue is given by Sturluson in Faulkes, *Skáldskaparmál*, I, 12–14 (verses 27–41).
[184] On the Æsir and Vanir, see *Dictionary of World Mythology*, 'Aesir', and *Oxford Companion of World Mythology*, 'Vanir'. Text cited in Faulkes, *Skáldskaparmál*, I, 3.

Irish texts we will analyse, Snorri emphasizes on the knowledge and learning of a poet, and John Stephens suggests a metaphorical significance for the mead's ingredients: the saliva and blood represent Kvasir's wisdom and honey represents eloquence, two key ingredients for poetry.[185] But the mead of inspiration is not just a matter of special knowledge: it is given *þeim mǫnnum er yrkja kunnu* ('to those men who know how to compose poetry'), and therefore explicitly refers to technical skill. Perhaps like the idealized poets of *The Order of the World*, these are wise men who communicate in verse.

Egils Saga Skallagrímssonar, which might indeed have been written by Snorri, references this mead of poetry in its embedded poem *Hǫfuðslausn*, 'head's ransom'.[186] This saga about the eponymous Icelander (circa 910–990) is especially relevant to our discussion because it is situated partly in the northeast of Anglo-Saxon England: *Hǫfuðslausn* was delivered to King Eric Bloodaxe and Queen Gunnhildr when they were resident in York in hopes that the monarchs would forgive him for slaying one of their retainers.[187] Faulkes rightly notes that, as in this poem, poets are said to pour out the mead of poetry rather than to drink it, but that must mean they already have it in some capacity, or that it flows through them in performance.[188] Regarding this mead, consider these examples from the beginning and end of Egil's *Hǫfuðslausn*'s 21 stanzas (1. 1–4 and 19. 5–8):[189]

> Vestr fór ek of ver,
> en ek Viðris ber
> mun-strandar mar,
> svá er mitt of far.
>
> West I went from the sea, and I bear Óðinn's mind-shore's sea; such is my state.
>
> Hrœrða ek munni
> af munar grunni
> Óðins ægi
> of jǫru fægi.

[185] 'Mead of Poetry', pp. 259–60 and 66–67.
[186] Bjarni Einarsson, *Egils Saga*, pp. 187–89, briefly lays out the case for Snorri's authorship.
[187] Stephens, 'The Mead of Poetry', pp. 264–67, notes the saga writer's identification of Egil with Óðinn.
[188] *Poetical Inspiraton*, pp. 5–6.
[189] Ed. Bjarni Einarsson, *Egils Saga*, pp. 106 and 111.

> With my mouth I moved from mind's shallows Óðinn's sea [that is, 'poetry'] about the worker of battle.

Bjarni Einarsson explains that the 'mind's shore' is the heart, and 'Óðinn's sea' is the mead of poetry: the mead therefore comes from Óðinn's heart and rests within the poet's. Egil's usage may not mean that the poet is inspired: it seems a mere idiom for poetry. If it does suggest inspiration, it must mean that Egil has already drunk the mead or that wherever poetry is composed, somehow Óðinn is mystically involved in this process.

Egil also refers to the mead in *Sonatorrek* ('Wreck of Sons'), a poem composed in grief for his dead sons after his son Bǫðvarr died in Iceland. In the first stanza Egil tells how difficult it is to bring poetry (referred to as *Viðurs þýfi*, 'Óðinn's theft') 'from the mind's hiding-place' (*ór hugar fylgsni*) because of grief.[190] There he claims that, despite his anger at the gods, Óðinn gave him 'the skill without fault' and a resourceful 'mind' (*Gáfumk íþrótt / […] / vammi firrða / ok þat geð*, 24. 1, 4–5). Egil references the myth at the beginning and end of this poem, too (stanzas 1, 2, and 24 of 25), showing how essential it was to his conception of poetry. Moreover, because he claims to have received a skill (*íþrótt*) rather than extempore inspiration, it seems that he conceives of this gift as an indwelling capacity given by Óðinn, much like the Old English 'crafts' of *The Gifts of Men* or Cædmon's special grace; and while Egil associates poetry with the mind and intelligence, he makes no mention of inspired knowledge or spiritual wisdom in these excerpts and seems to conceive of poetry as a technical skill.

In contradistinction to Egil's conception is the one explicit invocation in a poet's voice for poetic inspiration in ancient Germanic poetry (to my knowledge), which notably coincides with the sharing of intoxicating drink and reflects its gifts of both poetic speech and supernatural wisdom. In *Sigrdrífumál*, a wisdom poem of the thirteenth-century Codex

[190] Stephens, 'Mead of Poetry', p. 267. The text of *Sonatorrek* is in Bjarni Einarsson, *Egils Saga*, pp. 146–54.

Regius about the hero Sigurðr, the Valkyrie Sigrdrífa (generally assumed to be Brynhildr of Snorri's *Skáldskaparmál* and the *Vǫlsunga Saga*) gives Sigurðr a 'memory-draught' (*minnis-veig*) of mead and recites a poem immediately after.[191] I cite the second stanza:[192]

> Heilir æsir,
> heilar ásynior,
> heil siá in fiǫl-nýta fold!
> Mál ok man-vit
> gefit ocr mærom tveim
> oc læcnis-hendr, meðan lifom.
>
> Hail gods, hail godesses, hail this greatly useful earth! Give the glorious two of us speech and wisdom and healing hands while we live.

Here the mead brings poetry and wisdom. It is curious that Sigrdrífa, a Valkyrie, calls on the gods for inspiration, not Sigurd, who rather 'asks her to make wisdom known to him' (*biðr hana kenna sér speki*) if as an intermediary she should know 'tidings from all worlds' (*tíðindi ór ǫllom heimom*): it is she who invokes the gods for wisdom which she then shares with him. While Eric Haimerl detects the intrusion of Christian teaching in this poem, perhaps the paucity of Germanic invocations for inspiration has something to do with the traditional perceived avenues for receiving wisdom;[193] and indeed H. M. and N. K. Chadwick note that Valkyries were sometimes perceived as supernatural and sometimes as human, but are usually considered witches outside of poetry, and it may be that this intermediary function was related to the activity of witches.[194]

In the fourth strophe, after Sigurd asks Sigrdrífa for wisdom, the valkyrie mentions the mead:

> Biór fœri ec þér,
> Bryn-þings apaldr,
> magni blandinn
> oc megin-tíri;
> fullr er hann lióða

[191] On the poem's manuscript context and relationship to *Fáfnismál*, see Acker and Larrington, *Revisiting the Poetic Edda*, pp. 28–30.
[192] Ed. Neckel, *Edda*, I, 190.
[193] 'Sigurðr, a Medieval Hero', pp. 47–48.
[194] *Growth of Literature*, I, 646–47.

> oc lícn-stafa,
> góðra galdra
> oc gaman-rúna.
>
> Beer I bear you, byrnie-meeting's [that is, 'battle's'] apple-tree [that is, 'warrior'], blended with strength and great-glory. It is full of songs and mercy-staves, of good spells and fun-runes.

Here it is explicit that the poetry is called an intoxicating drink, essentially synonymous with the poetic mead and working the same effect.[195] What is interesting is not only the Valkyrie's invocation, but that the wisdom takes the form of poetry and treats with special knowledge in the form of arcane rune-lore and gnomic statements. In fact, the poem is mostly in *ljóðaháttr* verse, which was a metrical form particularly associated with divine discourse and gnomic wisdom, and the poet varies verse-forms in a way that suggests conscious adaptation of poetic medium to message.[196]

These counsels which embody arcane wisdom are more reminiscent of Old English poetry's spiritual function than Egil's verse-craftsmanship, more about memory and special knowledge than technical skill. Quinn notes that Snorri seems to ascribe the simpler Eddic forms memorial value, and the often-mythological content of Eddic verse, whose poetic forms are closer to Old English verse than courtly skaldic verse, perhaps suggest that Eddic verse was the form for spiritual wisdom while Skaldic verse like Egil's, with its intense poetic strictures, was conceived of more as a craft *per se*.[197] While there are widely varying conceptions of inspiration in Old English and Old Norse poetry, one general trend in all these accounts is that poetic inspiration ennobles the poet. In the Old English accounts, the mind is expanded or able to hold a great deal of special words and songs. It is now useful to demonstrate how these findings play out within one whole poem, and for our purposes the

[195] But see Stephens, 'Mead of Poetry', p. 260, who sees no need to link this account with Óðinn's theft.
[196] Coker, 'Function of Hypermetric Lines', p. 11; Quinn, 'Verseform and Voice', pp. 111–17.
[197] Quinn, 'Verseform and Voice', p. 103. On the distinction between Eddic and Skaldic verse, see Turville-Petre, *Scaldic Poetry*, pp. xi–xvii.

dialogue poem *Solomon and Saturn I*, where a mystical poem-prayer spiritually ennobles those who know it, will be an ideal case study.

The Inspiring Pater Noster in *Solomon and Saturn I*

There are five attested Old English *Solomon and Saturn* dialogues: four in Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, Manuscript (hereafter CCCC MS) 422—*Solomon and Saturn I* (also attested in CCCC MS 41), the Prose Pater Noster Dialogue, the *Solomon and Saturn Poetic Fragment*, and *Solomon and Saturn II*—and the *Prose Solomon and Saturn* (found in the *Beowulf* manuscript, London, British Library, MS Cotton Vitellius a. xv), attesting to diverse interest in dialogues between these characters.[198] I am only concerned with the first poem here. This work uses the conceit of dialogue between figures renowned for wisdom in order to share wisdom—namely the Pater Noster and its power—with the audience, much like Old Norse mythological dialogues such as *Vafþrúðnismál*, although the conceit is somewhat eroded by Solomon's domination of direct speech: he speaks 135 lines, about four times more than Saturn's 35. The poem begins as Saturn comes to King Solomon asking for the king to teach him the Pater Noster, promising to give Solomon thirty pounds of gold and his twelve sons if 'you [Solomon] conduct me so that I [Saturn] become inspired through the canticle's utterance, Christ's rule, satisfy me with truth' ([…] *gebringest þæt ic si gebryrded / ðurh þæs cantices cwyde Cristes linan, / gesemesð mec mid soðe*, 17a–19a). The word *gebryrdan* literally refers to 'goading', but by extension means 'incite, inspire', and it is used elsewhere in Old English poetry to refer to inspiration.[199] This seems a clear instance of the close

[198] Menner, *Solomon and Saturn*, pp. 1–12. Anlezark, 'Stray Ending', p. 205 (cited in Estes, 'Constructing the Old English *Solomon*', p. 486) suggests the various texts of CCCC MS 422 were assembled to form an anthology of *Solomon and Saturn* lore.
[199] Thornbury, 'Aldhelm's Rejection', pp. 85–88. See also Chapter Two, pp. 107–10.

relationship between knowledge and inspiration we have observed thus far, and as in *Elene* this knowledge comes with spiritual power.

Especially notable for this discussion is the fact that the Pater Noster is repeatedly called a *cantic* ('canticle', 18a, 26a, 53a), *organ* ('song', 35a, 58a), and *cwide* ('saying', 18a, 69a, 90b, 152a), but is only called a *gebed* ('prayer', 47a) once. Battles and Wright note Cynewulf's characterization of biblical learning as oral songs, and the *Solomon and Saturn I*-poet at once employs this theme and diverges from it by using Latinate words for liturgical song (*cantic*, *organ*), augmenting the status of traditional songs by replacing them with authoritative Christian ritual.[200] In fact, the Pater Noster is the words of Christ, giving it exceptional power, which the poet attests to throughout, especially in its efficacy against demons. But because the prayer is called a song, it seems relevant that Solomon is the more poetically eloquent of the two speakers.

The first twenty-one lines of the poem represent Saturn's petition for knowledge of the Pater Noster, but the speech is, fittingly for one seeking wisdom, unadorned by comparison with Solomon's speech, as we shall see. Solomon's first speech begins with the gnomic verb *beon*, which he employs four times (*bið*, 23a, 32a, 36a; *beoð*, 30b), giving the utterance a stately gnomic quality, and he uses special poetic patterns which set a precedent for the rest of the poem (23a–28a; standard mark-up):[201]

> Salomon cwæð:
> '***U**n*læde bið on **e**orþan, ***u**nnit* lifes,
> **w**esðe **w**isdomes, **w**eallað swa *niet*en,
> **f**eld-gongende **f**eoh butan ge*wit*te,
> se þurh ðone ***c**an*tic ne ***c**an* **C**rist geheri*an*.
> ***W**orað* he **w**indes *full*, ***wor**það* hine deo*fol*
> on **d**om-**d**æge…'

Solomon spoke:

[200] On these words and their liturgical significance, see O'Neill, 'Date, Provenance, and Relationship', pp. 158–64. If the poem originated in Alfred's court (see p. 63 below), this Latinization constitutes evidence of what Thornbury, *Becoming a Poet*, pp. 223–37, has named the 'Southern Style' of Old English poetry, with its 'simulacra'-like Latinization.

[201] For more on gnomic auxiliaries (namely *sculan*), see Chapter Five, pp. 253–54.

> ‘He is miserable on earth, useless in life, devoid of wisdom, wanders like a beast, field-going cattle without sense, who knows not how to praise Christ through the song [i.e., the Pater Noster]. He errs full of wind; the devil throws him down on Judgement Day…’

Solomon not only suggests that such a person is without stability and wisdom, but also says that without embracing the Pater Noster a human is not only *englum ungelic* (‘unlike angels’, 37a), but *swa nieten* (‘like a beast’), which, the sage later specifies, is vulnerable to shapeshifting demons: in the form of a snake, a demon *stingeð nieten, / feld-gongende feoh gestrudeð* (‘stings an animal, destroys field-going cattle, 153–54).[202]

Solomon’s speech begins with parallel adjectives beginning with *un-*, part of a threefold variation on the negative qualities of the ignorant one (*unlæde*, *unnit*, *wesðe*). The following three verses also employ two more variations: *weallað* varies *bið* (and note also the assonance between *un**nit*** and ***niet**en*), giving lines 23–24 a chiastic syntactical structure (verb phrase, adjective phrase with qualifying genitive; adjective phrase with qualifying genitive, verb phrase). Then, *feld-gongende feoh* on the next line varies *nieten*, and t-consonance in *gewitte* (with its short vowel) brings out the paronomasia inherent in the latter word (*nyten*, ‘ignorant person’; *nīten*, ‘animal’) by contrasting divine wit with bestial ignorance (and indeed the ‘uselessness’ of 23b).[203] The following two lines then use more assonance (***can**tic*, ***can***, *geher**ian***; ***worað***, ***worpað***; ***full***, *deo**ful***), driving home associations between know-how (*cunnan*) and praise (*cantic*, *geherian*); erring (*worað*) and defeat (*worpað*); emptiness (*windes full*) and the demonic (*deoful*).[204]

By comparison, Saturn’s first speech contains no rhyme and very little variation, although the wayfarer does use a fivefold catalogue of parallelism to describe the Pater

[202] See further Wade, ‘Language, Letters’, pp. 179–82, who notes that, in contrast with the rumination of clean animals, in *Solomon and Saturn I* and *II* Saturn is depicted as eating discourse but not benefiting from it, like the moth of *Riddle 47*.
[203] See *B-T*, ‘nyten’, ‘níten’.
[204] On the empty words of devils and their inability to worship, see especially Chapter Four, pp. 201–03 and 221–22.

Noster: *hwylc wære modes oððe mægen-þrymmes*, / *elnes oððe æhte oððe eorlscipes* ('that which is of spirit or strength-glory, courage or possession or lordliness'), enumerating its glories.[205] But this catalogue is less impressive than true variation, and the two Old English poetic devices which stand out the most in this poem (variation and rhyme), are used preponderantly more by Solomon.[206] Solomon closes his first speech by echoing his first lines in a ring composition (36–37): ***F**racoð he bið ðonne and **fr**emede **fr**ean æl-mihtigum, / **e**nglum **u**ngelic **a**na hwearfað* ('Then he will be wicked and alienated from the almighty Lord; he wanders alone unlike angels').[207] The penultimate line of his speech begins like the first, declaring the ignorant person *bið* a negative adjective (*fracoð*), which is again followed by two variations (*fremede*, *ungelic*). Likewise, there is a chiastic structure very similar to that in the first two lines (verb phrase, noun phrase with qualifying dative; adjective phrase with qualifying dative, verb phrase). Just as the second b-verse varies *bið* with *weallað* ('wanders'), so the final b-verse varies *bið* with *hwearfað* ('wanders'), and the gnome, with its repeated pattern, gives the effect of orderly closure, expressed with eloquence befitting the author of the scriptural book of Proverbs. Of the seven stylistic devices for direct speech catalogued in Bjork's 'Speech as Gift'—1) envelope or ring structure, 2) parallelism or anaphora, 3) chiasmus or chiastic patterning, 4) enjambed, enveloping, or plurilinear alliteration, 5) generative composition,[208] 6) bracketing pattern of auxiliary and verbal, and 7) maxim or gnomic observation—all of these devices but 6) are present in Solomon's first speech, but only 2) and 5) (*boca*, 3a; *bec*, 7a) are present in Saturn's first.[209]

[205] I count four instances of variation or parallelism in twenty-one lines: *lar-cræftas* (3a) and *istoriam* (4a) vary *boca* (2a); *gesemesð* (19a) parallels *gebringest* (17a); and *wende* (20a) varies *fare* (19b).
[206] I follow Brodeur's distinction between variations (which have the same referent) and parallelisms (which have the same syntactic structure but different referents) throughout this dissertation (*Art of Beowulf*, pp. 39–42).
[207] On ring composition and envelope patterns, see Niles, 'Ring Composition'.
[208] On this term, see Rosier, 'Generative Composition'.
[209] 'Speech as Gift', pp. 1019–22 (Appendix C). On the 'bracketing pattern', see pp. 1011–14. 1) may also be present in that Saturn is said to have tasted the literature of many countries at the beginning of his speech and at the end he says he will go back home if Solomon satisfies him.

Solomon twice compares the Pater Noster to treasure, saying it is better than gold (33b), silver (33b), or treasures (*feoh-gestreon*, 34b; note the generative composition and play on *feoh*), and that it is golden (69a), with gems (69b) and 'silver leaf' (70a). This is a common biblical sentiment but one which is especially like one of Solomon's own Proverbs (3. 14–15): 'The purchasing [of wisdom] is better than the merchandise of silver, and her fruit than the chiefest and purest gold: She is more precious than all riches'. Words are commonly compared to treasure in Old English verse, and Solomon's speech makes clear why: words (especially *wise* ones) give structure and substance to a person, elevating one above beasts to angelic status.[210] This is especially significant because humans are regularly called *reord-berend* ('speech-bearers') in Old English poetry, and particularly wise humans are *woð-bora*, as we have seen; as will become more apparent in Chapter Three, thoughts and wisdom are usually conceived of as 'words' in poetry, and therefore knowing the words of the Pater Noster is to bear God's wisdom within oneself, and knowing its structure is to receive structure for one's soul. Against this background it is abundantly clear why receiving wisdom expands the heart and having a store of songs is related to inspiration.

Saturn's second speech comprises a mere (and unadorned) three lines (39–41), and he asks who can most easily open (*ontynan*) the doors of heaven's (*heofona*) kingdom. Solomon responds by answering the question directly and expanding it with five litanic parallelisms (43–46):[211]

> Đæt gepalm-twigede Pater Noster
> heofonas ontyneð, halige geblissað,
> metod gemiltsað, morðor gefylleð,
> adwæsceð deofles fyr, dryhtnes onæleð.
>
> The palm-twigged Pater Noster opens the heavens, the holy one rejoices, makes the Lord mild, fells great sin, quenches the Devil's fire, kindles the Lord's.

[210] On the relationship between words and treasure, see Chapter Three, pp. 140–42.
[211] Wright, *Irish Tradition*, pp. 235–44, notes the poem's prominent litanic style.

This catalogue of third-person singular finite verbs, a style with clearly didactic aims in *Guthlac A*, for example, expands the Pater Noster's reach, personifying it and attributing it far more actions than simply answering Saturn's question.[212] In the following six lines, Solomon states how the Pater Noster tortures the devil, giving a solution for the devil's attacks against those ignorant of the prayer (27–31). Then the final four lines of the speech describe how the prayer inspires its observers, again using enumerative parallelism (53–56):

> Forðon hafað se cantic ofer ealle Cristes bec
> wid-mærost word; he gewritu læreð,
> stefnum steoreð, and him stede healdeð
> heofona rices, here-geatewa wigeð.
>
> Therefore the song has the most wide-famed sense over all of Christ's books. It teaches writings, guides voices, and keeps a place of heaven's kingdom for him [the petitioner(?) itself(?)], bears army-weapons.

The prayer is esteemed as the most renowned of Christ's words, and in this catalogue it becomes a teacher, guide, protector, and warrior; when it rests in the heart it directs the words of the speaker and gives him spiritual weapons. If it were not clear from this that the poet means to attribute the Pater Noster a life of its own, he enumerates at length how the very letters of the prayer fight demons later in the poem (90–152); but whether this personification is intended to be an accurate representation of the prayer's power or simply a fanciful poetic metaphor is unclear.[213]

Saturn's third and final speech is, poetically speaking, more interesting than the previous, and warrants quotation in full (58–67; standard mark-up):

> Ac hulic is se **o**rgan **i**ngemyndum
> to be**g**onganne ðam ðe his **g**ast wile
> ***m***elt*an* wið **m**o*r*ðr*e*, ***m***e*r*g*an* of s*o*r*ge*, 60
> a**sc**eadan of **sc**yldum? Huru him **sc**ippend geaf
> **w**uldorlicne **w**lite. Mec ðæs on **w**orolde full oft
> **f**yr-*wit* **fr***i*neð, **f**us ge*wit*eð,
> **m**od ge**m**engeð. Nænig **m**anna wat,

[212] On finite verb catalogues, see Chapter Four, pp. 193–95, for example.
[213] On the reification of speeches, see also Chapter Three, pp. 140–42 and 152–60.

hæleða under **h**efenum,[214] hu min **h**ige dreoseð, 65
bysig æfter **b**ocum; hwilum me **b**ryne stigeð,
hige **h**eortan neah **h**ædre wealleð.

> But how is the song to be observed in remembrances for the one who desires to melt his soul against great sin, cheer it from grief, separate it from guilts? Indeed, the Creator gave it a glorious beauty. Therefore curiosity always inquires of me, departs eagerly, confuses the mind. No man knows, men under heaven, how my thought sinks, preoccupied with books. At times a burning arises in me, thought near my heart wells up anxiously.

Immediately obvious is Saturn's use of parallelism: as if he has already learned something from Solomon's wisdom, the giant links two verses of a three-verse parallelism (*meltan*, *mergan*, *asceadan*) by rhyming on every stressed syllable (***melt*an**, ***mer*gan**; ***mor*ðre**, ***sor*ge**). This is followed by two threefold variations (*frineð*, *gewiteð*, *gemengeð*; *dreoseð*, *stigeð*, *wealleð*), the first of which includes paronomastic play on *wit* (including artful *w*-alliteration) that develops the poetic notion of the wandering mind (*fyr-**wit***, *ge**wit**eð*), evident in the 'elegies' *The Wanderer* and *The Seafarer*, for example.[215] The final variations give a special sense of turbulence: Saturn uses parallel syntax in lines 65 and 66, ending both a-verses with dative plural *-um* and both b-verses with third-person singular finite verbs; and by creating this parallelism, he draws our attention to the meaning of those verbs, the first of which describes sinking (*dreoseð*), the second rising (*stigeð*). Then, as if to cap off the variations, the next and final line ends with another finite verb which sums up these surging emotions (*wealleð*).

In his classic discussion of variation in *Beowulf*, Arthur Brodeur notes that the device occurs especially in psychological descriptions because it is regularly used to develop and express high emotion.[216] Indeed, highlighting Saturn's unstable mind seems to be the poet's primary objective in this entire speech; as Saturn wanders the world seeking its wisdom,

[214] One of several resonances between *Beowulf* (50b–52b) and the *Solomon and Saturn* poems. See especially *Solomon* 167a–69a and *Beowulf* 798a–805a on the cursing of swords.
[215] On this motif and the so-called elegies, see Chapter Three, pp. 143–51.
[216] See Brodeur, *Art of Beowulf*, pp. 45–61, for this effect in *Beowulf*.

Solomon is resolutely stable in the truth.[217] Moreover, Saturn asks how to observe the song in his memory, and, as we shall see in Chapter Three, this is in effect to ask how he can fasten his word-hoard or mind with this spiritual song and find the stability he needs.[218] Saturn is allowed eloquent expression in his last speech. It is not a certain, gnomic eloquence like Solomon's, but an elegiac eloquence, lamenting his current state, wandering and sorrowful, as do the speakers of *The Wanderer* and *The Seafarer*, looking forward to the steadfastness of the Pater Noster.[219]

At 106 lines, Solomon's final speech is too long to consider in full here, and indeed due to the demands of his catalogue of the Pater Noster's constituent letters (90–151) and of demonic wiles (152a–169a), poetic patterning falls somewhat from prominence, with few rhymes and few extended variations (threefold or greater). But between lines 69 and 89, Solomon gives his most eloquent catalogue, the final eleven lines of which are comparable to Cynewulf's account of inspiration in its use of rhyme and variation. Answering Saturn's question of how to perform the prayer, Solomon begins the speech by praising the Pater Noster and saying that *sundor mæg æghwylc / ðurh gastes gife god-spel secgan* ('each may individually speak the good-news through the Spirit's gift', 70b–71b). He then gives a fourfold catalogue of the prayer's virtues for the mind, answering Saturn's worries and evoking the milk and honey of the Promised Land, extending rest from journeys to the giant: *He bið seofan snytro, and saule hunig / and modes meolc, mærþa gesælgost* ('It is wisdom for the heart, honey to the soul and mind's milk, most blessed of glories', 72–73). After a short description of how the prayer can rescue a soul from any fetters of the devil, Solomon speaks eleven lines which contain fourteen parallelisms (79–89; standard mark-up, with parallel elements enclosed by asterisks):

[217] The location of these debates is discussed by O'Neill, 'Date, Provenance, and Relationship', pp. 145–47.
[218] See especially pp. 143–51.
[219] Compare Mize's discussion (*Traditional Subjectivities*, pp. 72–78) of Hagar's lament in *Genesis A*. On the exile motif, see Chapter Four, p. 179.

Hungor he a**h**ieðeð, *__**h**__elle gestrudeð*,
*__**w**__ylm to__**w**__eorpeð*, *__**w**__uldor getimbreð*.
He is **m**odigra **m**iddan-gearde
*__**st**__aðole __**st**__rengra* ðonne ealra **st**ana gripe.
Lamena he is __**l**__æce, *__**l**__eoht wincendra*,
swilce he is **d**eafra __**d**__*u*ru, *__**d**__umbra t*u*nge*,
*__**sc**__yldigra __**sc**__y*ld*, *__**sc**__yppendes se*ld*,
*__**f**__lodes __**f**__*erigend*, *__**f**__olces n*erigend*,
*__**y**__ða __**y**__rfe-weard*, *__**e**__armra __f__isca
and __**w**__yrma __**w**__elm*, *__**w**__il-deora holt*,
on __**w**__estenne *__**w**__*eard*, *__**w**__eorð-mynta g*eard*.

It destroys hunger, plunders hell, overthrows surging, builds glory. He is more spirited in middle-earth, stronger in foundation, than all stones' hold. He is doctor to the lame, light to the blinking, as he is door of the deaf, tongue of the dumb, shield of the guilty, the creator's throne, bearer of flood, saviour of people, heir of waves, surging [against(?) of(?)] wretched fish and worms, forest of wild animals, guardian in the desert, land of honour-remembrances.

While this poet rhymes only for three successive lines (84–86), he employs parallelism, his favourite technique, at an extraordinary rate, which seems to force him to descend into obscurity by the catalogue's end. The praise dimension of this catalogue is clearly what inspires litanic enumeration, which evokes the prayer's splendour.[220] Given that this rhyming, parallelistic catalogue occurs in close proximity to a discussion of letters, it is tempting to suggest that the poet was influenced by Cynewulf: the poet also collocates *torht* and *ontynan*, as Cynewulf does in the rhyming catalogue of *Elene* 1248a.[221] It is further tempting to suggest that, given the didactic and martial character of this poem, its potential allusion to seminal Old English poems, and the importance placed on the Pater Noster, to agree with Patrick O'Neill that all the *Solomon and Saturn* poems derive from the same milieu in Alfred's time.[222] Perhaps the poem was composed to teach (young[?]) nobles the prayer, which they legally had to know, using familiar poetic tropes to teach aspects of Christian

[220] Compare *Cædmon's Hymn*, discussed in Chapter Two, p. 69. See also Brodeur, *Art of Beowulf*, pp. 40–44.
[221] *Torht* and *ontynan* collocate eight times in the Old English corpus, *Guthlac A* being the earliest and using the collocation twice, Cynewulf using it once, and the remaining two poems (*Andreas* and *Christ and Satan*) are usually agreed to cite other poems heavily. On the chronology and Cynewulf's knowledge of *Guthlac A*, see Chapter Two, pp. 109–10.
[222] See further O'Neill, 'Date, Provenance, and Relationship', pp. 152–65.

doctrine and even literacy. After all, the poem ends with a gnomic warning (twice stating its assertions with the gnomic *sculan*: 169b, 172a) not to draw a blade too often, and to sing the Pater Noster for protection as often as one does draw it (169b–75b).

While Solomon is a human king, and Saturn appears mostly euhemerized (though he is called a giant in *Solomon and Saturn II*), this dialogue clearly has value regarding the understanding of supernatural utterance in Old English poetry. Not only do Solomon and Saturn have 'legendary' status, which seems closely related to Old Norse wisdom dialogues between supernatural beings (it must be remembered that Norse gods were also conceived of euhemeristically by the time of written records, and indeed the poetic form of many of these dialogues has supernatural associations, as we shall see in Chapter Two), but the poem instructs the audience about the inspiring power of holy songs to bring order to the soul and to defeat demonic foes. The role of eloquence in the poem appears to highlight the convergence of divine wisdom and eloquence in Old English poetry, with wisdom often composed in especially patterned forms (a trend we will observe throughout this dissertation). That Solomon should have the upper hand when it comes to eloquence is not surprising, and the poet uses different poetic styles for characterization: elegy for Saturn, gnomic wisdom and praise for Solomon.

Conclusions

There was clearly a variety of traditions regarding poetic inspiration in Anglo-Saxon England which might have influenced poets: divine intervention in Anglo-Saxon poetry, vernacular and Latin, could affect both subject and form, and there does not seem to have been one dominant theological notion of poetic inspiration; rather, a poet could call for divine intervention for any task, or inspiration could be an indwelling gift; it could affect a poet's

spiritual insight or his verse-craftsmanship. But it is notable both how regularly poets ask for words or songs and that these are usually either spiritual or otherwise wondrous in nature. However inspiration is conceived, the interrelation between wondrous subject-matter, claims to authority, and the spiritual-didactic orientation of most Old English verse shows that Anglo-Saxon poetry cannot be properly understood without some notion of divine intervention in the poetic medium; and, having examined what divine aid could bring to poets in a general sense, in the following chapter we will examine the effect of the spiritual on linguistic and poetic form.

Chapter Two

The Physics of Eloquence: Translating Spirit into Letter

> Ne wene þæs ænig ælda cynnes
> þæt ic lyge-wordum leoð gesomnige,
> write woð-cræfte. Gehyrað witedom
> Iobes gieddinga. Þurh gæstes blæd
> breostum onbryrded, beald reordade,
> wuldre geweorðad; he þæt word gecwæð
>
> —*The Phoenix*, 546–51[1]

In this excerpt from the Old English poem *The Phoenix*, an adapted and exegetically-expanded rendering of the 'Lactantian' *De ave phoenice*, the poet contrasts the 'eloquence-' or 'song-skill' (*woð-cræft*) of 'lying words' (*lyge-word*) with Job's prophecy (*witedom*), perhaps suggesting that skilled speech is merely a matter of sonic patterning without any substance, whereas the prophecy of Job, instigated by the Holy Spirit, is truly powerful language.[2] Yet eloquence is a more complex matter for the *Phoenix*-poet than this passage seems to suggest. The poet's contrast between form and content does not prevent him from using ornate poetic strategies throughout the poem. Rather, the study of poetry's art was part of ecclesiastical education throughout the Anglo-Saxon period, and in this chapter I locate the *Phoenix* within larger discourses regarding the religious roles of poetry and the meanings and roles of eloquence. I first discuss some of the cultural roles of poetry in insular Christian and secular education, especially discourse on voice, harmony, and eloquence. I then turn to the relationship between eloquence and corporeality in insular verse-forms, pointing to the heightened role of physics and linguistic form in some insular poetic traditions, as well as

[1] For a translation and discussion of this excerpt, see pp. 104–07 below.
[2] Cook, *Elene, Phoenix, and Physiologus*, pp. xxxiii–xxxviii, discusses the case for Lactantius's authorship, though Blake, *The Phoenix*, p. 17, notes that most scholars accept Lactantius as the author. On the relationship between *De ave phoenice* and *The Phoenix*, see, for example, Blake, *The Phoenix*, pp. 17–24, and pp. 105–06 below.

Aldhelm and Bede's places in relation to these traditions. Finally, I show how the *Phoenix*-poet navigates considerations of truth and ornament, and why the poet makes these choices.

Divine Language and Poetic Form

As we saw in the previous chapter, the numinous has historically been perceived as interacting with humans via inspiration, and the natural language of oracles is song. Beyond the practical uses of song, its ornaments have both consecrated it to the divine and reflected supernatural 'otherness' to its audiences.[3] Such marked form is attributed more often to the skills of the poet than an inspiring force, although sonic patterns themselves can be perceived as supernaturally efficacious, as seems to be the case in magical formulae such as charms.[4]

The divine ties with song have even led certain Indo-European cultures to delineate a special tier of poetic language used by the gods.[5] Two outstanding cases relevant to the insular world of Anglo-Saxon poetry are the Old Norse poem *Alvíssmál* and the Old Irish linguistic tract *Auraicept na n-Éces*. In *Alvíssmál*, a mythological poetic dialogue (circa eleventh century[?]) in the *Codex Regius* between the god Thor and the dwarf Alvíss ('All-wise'), Alvíss recites the names of thirteen different things (earth, sky, and moon, for example) as they are called in various worlds, including the worlds of men, Æsir (hereafter 'gods'), Vanir, giants, elves, dwarves, and hell respectively, although there are some unclear

[3] Chadwick, *Poetry and Prophecy*, pp. xiii and 1; West, *Poetry and Myth*, pp. 31–33. Isidore, *Etymologiae*, I, 320 (Book VIII. vii. 1–2), quotes Suetonius's suggestion that the desire to please gods with grander and more beautiful language was the very origin of poetry. Various cultures have suggested spirits are drawn to the beauty of song, on which see Chadwick, *Poetry and Prophecy*, p. 8, and Chadwick and Chadwick, *Growth of Literature*, I, 651. On song's ability to reflect divine alterity, see Chadwick, *Poetry and Prophecy*, pp. 45–49 *et passim*.

[4] Watkins, *How to Kill a Dragon*, p. 73, points to the training involved in becoming a poet and suggests that the Greek Muse's inspiration is simply 'a personification of the trained mind of the poet'. Chadwick, *Poetry and Prophecy*, pp. 41–57, also discusses the necessity of a poet's training in various contexts. On magic in verbal form, Chadwick, *Poetry and Prophecy*, pp. 73–89, suggests that belief in such magic is often a result of degenerate or misunderstood traditions. Watkins, *How to Kill a Dragon*, pp. 85–93, and West, *Poetry and Myth*, pp. 326–39, discuss belief in formal efficacy in ancient Indo-European texts.

[5] See for example West, *Poetry and Myth*, pp. 160–62; Watkins 'Language of Gods'.

variations.[6] M. L. West has pointed out that this poem has a thesaurus-like quality, and Calvert Watkins considers it a 'superficial proliferation of synonyms'.[7] Yet it is notable how often the words of the gods are marked, poetic words, as opposed to the unmarked, prosaic words of humans: citing Hermann Güntert, Watkins notes that nine of the thirteen words of the gods are poetic terms; in the other four stanzas, the two poetic terms were relegated to populations other than the gods simply for the sake of alliteration, and two had no special poetic word.[8] The words of other worlds are usually much rarer and are likely to be nonce-compounds. Lennart Moberg adds that two words of the Æsir, that is *biórr* ('beer') and *sunna* ('sun'), appear to be West Germanic loan-words, the latter of which may have had a distinctly literary flavour.[9] Moberg concludes that poet's primary focus was poetic flair and that the languages were probably not taken seriously; the point to note is that the Æsir's language is poetic or otherwise exotic.

Similarly, the *Auraicept na n-Éces* ('The Scholars' Primer'), is also particularly important evidence as an insular didactic tract on language. The earliest portion of the text is dated by Ahlqvist to approximately the eighth century; and though this 'canonical core' text was commented on in the style of Irish legal tracts, its exegetical accretions, too, seem to have been part of a shared tradition until around the year 1100 when the commentaries begin to diverge.[10] I return to the details of this text below, but most important here is that a commentator gives three ways of indicating gender, each gender being considered the

[6] On the text, see Acker, 'Dwarf-lore in *Alvíssmál*', pp. 179 and 181. Without speculating about the poem's unclear terms, in the thirteen stanzas, the words of men are mentioned thirteenfold, of gods thirteenfold, of giants thirteenfold, of elves elevenfold, of Vanir ninefold, of dwarves sevenfold (eightfold if Suttungr's sons are dwarves), of hell-dwellers sevenfold, of holy ones thrice, and of sons of the gods once for a total of seventy-eight names.
[7] West, *Poetry and Myth*, pp. 161–62; Watkins, 'Language of Gods', p. 3.
[8] Watkins, 'Language of Gods', pp. 3–5.
[9] 'Languages of *Alvíssmál*', pp. 301–07.
[10] Ahlqvist, *Early Irish Linguist*, pp. 17–20 and 31–34.

language of different races: the sons of Mil (Gaels), the Fir Bolg (a legendary invading tribe), and the Túatha Dé Danann (a tribe representing euhemerized ancient Irish deities).[11]

Watkins and West agree in pointing out that, as in these two works, in an Indo-European context the language of the gods is typically a matter of diction, not necessarily syntax or sonic patterning, although we have observed general *markedness* in language is the sign of its divinity.[12] Both scholars argue that the esoteric status and function of such diction may have served to constitute poets as poets, who were keepers of special language.[13] Given the formal strictures of poetry, this divine diction is probably also the result of the need for words to fit in verse-forms, poets forging new locutions which are subsequently considered poetic or special, as is the case in much of *Alvíssmál*. Perhaps even more simply, the preference for special diction rather than unique poetic patterning in divine language has to do with how humans appreciate eloquence: according to one study, our appreciation for poetic language has more to do with the meanings of words than sonic patterns such as rhyme, which rather adorn or enhance our appreciation of meaning.[14] Hence eloquence, especially divine eloquence in poetry, seems generally to be a matter of sense, while the patterning of poetry enhances or makes memorable the special message of inspired truths.

This is not the place to go into detail about the features of Old English poetry in general, but one of the most remarkable features of the verse-form is its use of poetic diction. A broad lexicon is helpful for the alliterative requirements of Old English verse, as is compound diction for its economic use of syllables, but Malcolm Godden notes that we can assume these two aspects of poetic diction also heighten the register of verse because such poetic forms are used even where they are not needed; that is, the necessities of Old English

[11] Watkins, 'Language of Gods', pp. 8–11. But note that Ahlqvist does not include this suggestion in his canonical text.
[12] Chapter One, n. 33.
[13] West, *Poetry and Myth*, pp. 77–78; Watkins, 'Language of Gods', pp. 16–17.
[14] Powell, 'Sound and Meaning Correlates'.

poetry were made into virtues.[15] Godden goes on to suggest that although these features of Old English poetry were part of an earlier Germanic tradition, Old English poets used them with special enthusiasm.[16]

The nine lines of the West-Saxon version of *Cædmon's Hymn*, for example, include six compounds, of which the first three are poetic: *heofon-rices* (1b), *mod-geþanc* (2b), *wuldor-fæder* (3a), *middan-geard* (7a), *mon-cynnes* (7b), *æl-mihtig* (9b); and four other poetic words: *meotod* (2a), *firum* (9a), *foldan* (9a), *frea* (9b).[17] Without making mention of other poetic effects, such as the hymn's abundant variation (especially in epithets for God: for example, *mon-cynnes weard* [7b], *ece drihten* [4a and 8a], *frea æl-mihtig* [9b]), it is especially significant that the greatest variety of poetic diction occurs in the first three lines of the poem, where the call to praise and its object (the Creator) are articulated, and the final line, giving a sense of hymnic closure.[18] The subsequent narrative portions are less adorned with poetic diction, although variation on the name of God maintains the focus throughout the poem. It must be remembered that while such repetition can make for dry prosaic reading, in performance it is a virtue to repeat and rework; while a cliché is an empty repetition, something enjoyable or true bears repeating.[19] In an inspired poem to celebrate God, the traditional trappings of Old English verse, varied diction and variation, mark this as stately and elevated composition.[20]

Yet there is evidence that not just diction and variation but sound patterns were also related to divine discourse in Germanic verse. Elsewhere I have illustrated the link between Old English hypermetric lines and Old Norse *ljóðaháttr* metre, not simply in verse-form but

[15] Godden, 'Literary Language', pp. 494 and 498–502.
[16] Lapidge, 'Poetic Compounds: A Latin Perspective', pp. 31–32, citing Godden's note above that Old English poets especially valued poetic words and compounds, suggests that such use of compounds in Latin verse might have influenced Old English poets.
[17] On these and other poetic words, see further Griffith, 'Poetic Language', pp. 168–71.
[18] On the formulaic nature of these epithets, see Fry, 'Cædmon as a Formulaic Poet', pp. 236–45; Orchard, 'Poetic Inspiration', pp. 403–04, detects influence of the Psalms.
[19] See for example Ramey, 'Variation and the Performance'.
[20] Compare Brodeur, *Art of Beowulf*, pp. 39–69.

in subject-matter, a point first discussed by Bliss.[21] In the *Elder Edda*, *ljóðaháttr* verse is used almost exclusively for gnomic wisdom and dialogues featuring divine speakers, leading Bertha Phillpotts and later Terry Gunnell to suggest the form may be related to ritual drama;[22] likewise there is a notable preponderance of divine speech and gnomic wisdom in hypermetric lines in various Old English poems, such as *Genesis A*, *The Dream of the Rood*, and *Maxims I* (which is 33% hypermetric, the highest proportion of hypermetrics apart from the first part of *The Dream of the Rood*).[23] The link in form and subject-matter appears to reflect an ancient, more emotive or even ceremonial mode of poetry which was especially suited to the commemoration of divine wisdom, and the significance of hypermetrics is a recurrent point of emphasis throughout this dissertation. Furthermore, the specially-marked forms of hypermetrics and *ljóðaháttr* employ more alliteration and (in hypermetrics) stricter prosody than standard Old English verses.[24] There is therefore clearly a unique, 'other' verse-form, not simply special diction, which represents divine speech in these Germanic forms, and especially in Old English the form is clearly one with heightened style. Hence, not only was verse an especially fitting form for religious matters, but special poetic forms were clearly also of importance in communicating religious topics in various insular poetic traditions.

Poetic Form and Exegesis

Poetry's inherently marked form has historically drawn not only reverence, but also scepticism; the fundamental myths of the ancient world often remained authoritative only

[21] See further Coker, 'Function of Hypermetric Lines'.
[22] See Phillpotts, *Ancient Scandinavian Drama*, and Gunnell, *Origins of Drama*.
[23] Coker, 'Function of Hypermetric Lines', n. 32. On the composite authorship of the *Dream*, see Chapter Three, pp. 130–31.
[24] Coker, 'Function of Hypermetric Lines', p. 13 (n. 35).

through whatever truth could be drawn from them, especially allegorical truth and grammatical or rhetorical value.[25] The etymology of allegory, evidenced in Isidore's calque *alieniloquium*, 'other-speech', is in essence the same as describing poetry as 'marked speech'.[26] Isidore suggests that the duty of poets is to transfer true events into *alias species obliquis figurationibus cum decore aliquo conversa* ('other likenesses by indirect formations, altered with some ornament'), even excluding Lucan's too-straightforward historical verse from the category of poetry.[27] Study of poetic other-speech generally had two foci: allegory in words and allegory in deeds.[28] Allegory in words was attributed both to the simple desire for ornament (ornaments described as *mistakes* allowable for poets and which are only considered skilful if used on purpose)[29] and to the enigmatic speech of inspiration, which colours both pagan oracles and biblical mysteries, formally distinguishing holy wisdom from what is common.[30] Allegory in deeds, on the other hand, has been less well-received. Not only Homer's narratives, whose survival hinged on enthusiastic Greek allegoresis, but also the traditional subject-matter of Anglo-Saxon poetry were the butt of exegetes' scepticism:[31] Barbara Raw reminds us of Alcuin's criticism of an unstated audience (most likely Unuuona of Leicester, a Mercian Bishop, as Donald Bullough argues) for listening to tales of heathen kings and the criticism received by Dunstan of Canterbury for learning the songs of pagan ancestors, for example.[32]

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[25] Curtius, *European Literature*, pp. 203–27 and 436–67, discusses the troubled relationship between poetry and truth in classical and medieval contexts, including poetry's relationship to allegory and theology. See also Wehrli, 'Sacra Poesis', p. 265.
[26] *Etymologiae*, I, 72–73 (Book I. 37. 22).
[27] *Etymologiae*, I, 321 (Book VIII. 7. 10).
[28] Copeland and Sluiter, *Medieval Grammar and Rhetoric*, pp. 259–60.
[29] According to Lactantius, who echoes Suetonius (Curtius, *European Literature*, p. 454). This same desire appears to motivate the *kenning* and *heiti* of the skalds, for example (see Faulkes, *Skáldskaparmál*, I, xxv–xxxix). On poetic licenses as allowable mistakes, see Isidore, *Etymologiae,* I, 59 and 62–64 (Book I. 32. 2, 35. 1, 35. 7, and 36. 1).
[30] See Numbers 12. 6–8; Auerbach, *Literary Language*, pp. 50–51; Curtius, *European Literature*, pp. 205–06; and Gerald of Wales's account of the *awenyddion* (ed. and trans. Thorpe, *Description of Wales*, pp. 246–51 [Book I. 16]). See also Law, *Wisdom, Authority and Grammar*, pp. 83–96, and Corthals, 'Stimme, Atem, und Dichtung', p. 132, for this idea in Virgilius Maro Grammaticus, whose *oeuvre* is discussed below.
[31] Curtius, *European Literature*, pp. 203–06.
[32] *Art and Background*, p. 3; Bullough, 'What has Ingeld' (esp. p. 121).

Mary Garrison argues that Alcuin's problem with the secular entertainments of the Mercian bishop was their political rather than fictional basis;[33] but beyond the questionable moral content of heathen poems, narratives within the poetic medium seem to have savoured of untruth, perhaps because of their traditional subject-matter. Raw suggests that the *Genesis A*-poet, for example, uses the phrase *ic gefrægn* ('I've heard/learned'—the traditional Old English poetic claim to authority) to signal his departure into fiction, while his reference to books, *[us] secgaþ bec* ('books tell [us]'), or leaving out such signals entirely is the dominant mode for non-fiction.[34] Moreover, in *The Phoenix*, Raw notes that the poet uses the traditional poetic claim to authority in the first part of the poem (*hæbbe ic gefrugnen*, 1a; *mine gefræge*, 176b) where the poet's source is *De ave phoenice*, whereas in the second part of the poem, where the tale of the Phoenix is interpreted allegorically, the poet cites the authority of books and teachers for his moral lessons (*þæs þe us leorneras / wordum secgað*, *ond writu cyþað*, 'about which teachers tell us words and writings make known', 424b–25b; *swa us gewritu secgað*, 'as writings tell us' 655b). As Raw concludes, this seems to indicate that the poet only saw the need to cite hearsay for the poetic narrative itself but needed true authoritative substantiation for the moral interpretation. We saw in the previous chapter that such citation strategies were intended to highlight poetic craft rather than to substantiate veracity, and so while books and bookish learning could be trusted for absolute truth, the traditional Old English poetic medium itself apparently had a connotation of uncertain veracity.[35]

In Scripture, God frequently speaks through the poetry of prophets, and for the church fathers who approached Scripture from a background of classical learning, this necessitated a

[33] '*Quid Hinieldus*'.
[34] *Art and Background*, pp. 30–37.
[35] Chapter One, pp. 31–32. Compare also the inspiration-variant of 'The Scop's Repertoire' (Chapter One, pp. 45–46).

grammatical and literary approach to the poetic features of the Word.[36] Jerome famously commented on the metrical character of several biblical works, and Isidore later asserted the poetic primacy of several biblical authors: Moses was the first to compose hexameters; David hymns of praise to God; Solomon the epithalamium; Jeremiah the threnody—all of these, in addition to Job and Isaiah, were thought to have composed their works in metre.[37] Isidore and Bede both located biblical works within the classical schema of the three modes of poetic delivery, suggesting that the Song of Songs is active, Proverbs and Ecclesiastes are expository, and Job is mixed.[38] Cassiodorus and Bede even celebrated Scripture as the origin and paragon of verbal ornament.[39] As a culmination of such literary exegesis, Bede is credited with the great intervention of linking hermeneutics and grammar together as the art of reading.[40]

In both Christian and pagan contexts, then, the eloquence of poetry has been used to voice the supernatural. Whether this meant that the gods spoke their own special poetic forms or in poetry as a medium, there was a widespread association between poetic form and divine content. For ecclesiastical authors this meant that the figures of Scripture required a learned approach to be understood, but it remains to be seen how precisely voice interacted with spirit in these contexts and what was the nature of its eloquence—whether the forms were true relics of divine speech or rather simply reflections of divine alterity—to which I now turn.

[36] Curtius, *European Literature*, pp. 446–47.
[37] Curtius, *European Literature*, p. 46; *Etymologiae,* I, 77–78 and 219–21 (Book I. 39. 11, 39. 17–19 and Book VI. 2. 13–24). Compare Aldhelm's conception of these poets in Chapter One, pp. 15–18.
[38] Ed. Kendall, *De arte metrica,* pp. 164–67 (Chapter 25).
[39] Curtius, *European Literature*, p. 448; Copeland and Sluiter, *Medieval Grammar and Rhetoric*, pp. 258 and 267.
[40] Copeland and Sluiter, *Medieval Grammar and Rhetoric*, p. 260.

Because exegesis required linguistic and grammatical training, grammar was the starting point for learning. In a programme reflecting the practice of elementary Roman education, *grammatica* was the first point of entry for ecclesiastical students like Aldhelm and Bede.[41] The discipline focused on reading, speaking, and writing, probably loosely encompassing a trifecta of colloquies, glossaries, and formal grammar,[42] but also included metrics and to some extent 'rhetoric',[43] and was, in the last resort, aimed not only at linguistic and moral integration into ecclesiastical culture but at interpretation and exegesis.[44] Not only did grammars provide instruction in the proper use and understanding of the Latin language and verse, many also gave definitions for the substance of 'voice'. Voice is highly important for ecclesiastical and native insular conceptions of eloquence, so discussing it briefly here is necessary, and it is especially valuable to set it in the context of the Psalms, Latin songs which were a fundamental part of elementary education.[45]

Voice in the Grammars

Most major Roman grammars known from the earliest period of Anglo-Saxon literature which comment on the nature of voice conclude that, as pure vocal sound, it is air 'stricken'

[41] Law, *Insular Latin Grammarians*, pp. 7–12, suggests that early Roman education began with reading, writing, and some calculation, then proceeded to grammar and classics, and finally culminated in public speaking under a rhetorician. See also Glauche, *Schullektüre im Mittelalter*, pp. 3–4.
[42] Gwara and Porter, *Anglo-Saxon Conversations*, pp. 16–19. Gneuss, 'Study of Language', p. 7, likens grammar's more formal nature to linguistic or philological study.
[43] Gneuss, 'Study of Language', pp. 28–30, suggests that the oratorical element of classical rhetoric had lost its significance by this period, and that the grammatical rhetoric which had taken the fore was more concerned with tropes and figures and the correct usage of language. See also Irvine, *Textual Culture*, pp. 7–8, and Knappe 'Classical Rhetoric', pp. 7–11, on the distinction between classical rhetoric and medieval, 'grammatical' rhetoric.
[44] Irvine, *Textual Culture*, pp. xiii–iv and 5–7; Gneuss, 'Study of Language', p. 4; Glauche, *Schullektüre im Mittelalter*, pp. 17–21.
[45] Toswell, *Anglo-Saxon Psalter*, pp. 1–11.

or ‘beaten’ by breath.[46] Few grammarians comment further on the phenomenon, partly because by the fourth century there was a very standardized format in the classical world for how grammars were constructed, partly because these accounts of voice were not meant to be comprehensive.[47] Donatus (*floruit* circa 350) only analyses voice in his more systematic school grammar, *Ars maior* (the *Ars minor*, which was more frequently adapted in Anglo-Saxon grammars, was probably excerpted from this work for beginners), which indicates that it was not a concept involved in basic instruction.[48] Indeed, Servius (*floruit* circa 400), renowned grammarian and scholar of Vergil, concludes that grammarians should write about language and that *de voce nemo magis quam philosophi tractant* (‘no one theorizes about voice more than philosophers’).[49] Recourse and deference to philosophers is evident throughout the grammatical tradition; indeed grammars themselves were originally the product of Stoic ideology, which is ingrained therein.[50] Following suit, Audax (*floruit* seventh century), in a work used by both Bede and Aldhelm, points out that Greek philosophers had differing views on the substance of voice regarding whether it was corporeal or incorporeal.[51] He cites the Stoic theory for his own definition of voice: *aer ictus auditu sensibilis* (‘stricken air perceptible to hearing’); the Academic, quoting Plato as saying, *non enim percussus* […] *aer, sed plaga ipsa atque percussio, id est vox* (‘Not lashed air, but the blow itself and the

[46] Although several were rare (such as Diomedes, Julian of Toledo, Sergius, Servius, and Marius Victorinus), the following grammars which discussed *voice* were either cited by an Anglo-Saxon author or attested in at least one manuscript of Anglo-Saxon provenance (according to Lapidge’s ‘Catalogue of Classical and Patristic Authors and Works’ in *Anglo-Saxon Library*): Audax, *Excerpta*; Cassiodorus, *Institutiones*; Charisius, *Ars grammatica*; Diomedes, *Ars grammatica*; Donatus, *Ars grammatica*; Isidore, *Etymologiae*; Julian of Toledo, *Ars grammatica, poetica, rhetorica*; Pompeius, *Commentum artis Donati*; Priscian, *Institutiones grammaticae*; Probus, *Instituta artium*; Sergius, *Explanationes in Donatum*; Servius, *Commentarius in artem Donati*; Marius Victorinus, *Ars grammatica*.

The authors use the words *ictus* ‘stricken’ (Audax, VII, 323; Charisius, p. 4; Diomedes, I, 323; Donatus, IV, 367; Priscian, II, 5; Sergius, IV, 487), *percussus* ‘lashed’ (Cassiodorus, col. 1152D; Probus, IV, 47), or *verberatus* ‘beaten’ (Isidore I, 141; Julian of Toledo, p. 114).

[47] Law, *Insular Latin Grammarians*, p. 13; Ax, *Laut, Stimme, und Sprache*, pp. 51 and 58.

[48] Copeland and Sluiter, *Medieval Grammar and Rhetoric*, pp. 82–83.

[49] *Commentarius in artem Donati*, IV, 405, where he claims that his definition for voice comes from Aristotelians. On the author, see Copeland and Sluiter, *Medieval Grammar and Rhetoric*, p. 125.

[50] Law, *Insular Latin Grammarians*, pp. 12–13.

[51] *Excerpta*, p. 323. On the author, see Copeland and Sluiter, *Medieval Grammar and Rhetoric*, p. 256.

lashing, that is what voice is'); and the early Atomistic, citing Democritus and Epicurus, who say, *ex indivisis corporibus vocem constare* ('voice is composed of undivided bodies'). Of course, the details of such philosophical discourse were unavailable in Anglo-Saxon England, but as we shall see, an insular brand of philosophers also had much to say about voice and eloquence.

Voice was generally considered 'articulate', that is, able to be written with letters, or 'confused', unable to be written with letters, although various grammars, such as Priscian's *Institutiones grammaticae*, attest to other distinctions of voice.[52] But beyond the brief treatment of voice's nature, another key portion of the grammars is the chapter *De interiectione*. The interjection is described as one of the parts of speech, and its definition is usually that it is *pars orationis affectum mentis significans voce incondita* ('the part of speech signifying a state of mind with unformed voice').[53] Audax similarly defines it as *pars orationis ostendens animi motum per suspirationem* ('the part of speech showing the motion of the mind through sighing').[54] Isidore claims that interjection *affectum commoti animi exprimit* ('expresses the stirred mind's state'), combining the *affectus* of the mind with Audax's *motus*.[55] While *interiectio* is the final part of speech and usually receives little more attention than this definition, a few important points can be gleaned from this chapter of the grammars. Even when voice is unformed, it is still intimately connected to the inner person, directly expressing his or her state of mind, as in in St Paul's discussion of spiritual language and St Augustine's discussion of the *jubilus*. As Julian of Toledo says in his chapter on the

[52] Donatus, *Ars grammatica*, IV, 367. Priscian, *Institutiones grammaticae*, II, 5–6.
[53] This Donatan definition (*Ars minor*, IV, 366) is used by Cassiodorus, *Institutiones*, col. 1153B; Charisius, *Artis grammaticae*, p. 311 (who, however, does not include the phrase *voce incondita*); Diomedes, *Ars grammatica*, I, 419; and Julian of Toledo, *Ars grammatica*, p. 109.
[54] *Excerpta*, p. 356.
[55] *Etymologiae*, I, 40 (Book I. 14).

interjection, 'without voice, the state of mind is barely shown' (*sine voce, affectus mentis minime ostenditur*).[56]

St Paul on Spiritual Language

Paul (*floruit* mid-first century) gives an influential discussion of the relationship between spiritual life, wisdom, and speech in I Corinthians, which constitutes an important point of reference here. Chapters 1. 17–2. 5 famously contrast the wisdom and eloquence of the world with the power of the Cross and Spirit, and in chapter 4, Paul states that 'the Kingdom is not in words but in power'.[57] More to the point for our discussion, in chapter 14 Paul discusses spiritual gifts of voice, including the gift of 'tongues'. These tongues are sounds unintelligible to corporeal minds but which nevertheless communicate with God. Paul highlights the importance of prophecy over tongues in gatherings because tongues only build up the individual, whereas intelligible speech builds up the whole Church.[58] In verses 7–11, Paul further illustrates the necessity of clarity in voice, likening voice to musical instruments:

> Even things without life that give sound, whether pipe or harp, except they give a distinction of sounds, how shall it be known what is piped or harped? For if the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to battle? So likewise you, unless you utter by the tongue plain speech, how shall it be known what is said? For you shall be speaking into the air. There are, for example, so many kinds of tongues in this world; and none is without voice. If then I know not the power of the voice, I shall be to him to whom I speak a barbarian; and he that speaketh, a barbarian to me.

The 'power of voice' in verse eleven aligns voice with spirit, intelligibility, and power, rather than with physical articulation (which David Lawton suggests is what the tongue represents for Paul).[59] That is, in this epistle, spiritual language and voice seem more closely allied with spirit, but they must be articulated in familiar forms if they are to be made public. This

[56] *Ars grammatica*, p. 109.
[57] Verse 20: *Non enim in sermone est regnum Dei, sed in virtute*.
[58] I Corinthians 14. 2–4.
[59] For a fuller discussion of this passage in I Corinthians, see Lawton, *Public Interiorities*, pp. 12–19.

passage, then, sets a profound precedent for theories of supernatural communication. This point was possibly also a matter of personal importance for Paul: Bede notes in his *Expositio Actuum apostolorum* that when Jesus appeared to Paul on the road to Damascus, those travelling with him heard 'the sound of confused voice' (*sonum confusae vocis*) without 'distinction of words' (*discrimen verborum*), although Paul understood exactly what was being communicated.[60] Bede understands this vocal miracle through grammatical terminology: in the grammars, the 'confused voice' is any voice that is not 'articulated'.[61] But for Paul, this 'confused voice' was in fact the voice of God, and inarticulate voice continued to play an important role in early Christian spiritual life, perhaps especially in song.

St Augustine and the Music of Voice

The musical quality of voice is also imperative to note here, for musical harmony had long been considered to exert direct influence on the soul. Plato (circa 429–347 B.C.) claimed that rhythm and harmony went directly to the soul, took hold of it, and could even alter its course.[62] Indeed, in much of classical philosophy, the cosmos was all held together by a sort of musical harmony, and the human, a microcosm of this greater macrocosm, was likewise composed.[63] Thus Boethius (died 525/6),[64] in his influential *De institutione musica*, cites Aristotle (384–22 B.C.), claiming that what brings together body and soul, rational and irrational, is 'musical' harmony.[65]

[60] Laistner, *Expositio Actuum*, p. 88 .
[61] See, for example, Donatus, *Ars maior*, IV, 367. The story of Paul's conversion is given in Acts 9 and 22. Compare John 12. 28–29: when the Father speaks from heaven about Jesus, it is interpreted by bystanders as a thunderclap or an angel.
[62] Brennan, 'Augustine's *De Musica*', p. 272.
[63] Chadwick, *Boethius: The Consolations*, pp. 81–84.
[64] Chadwick, *Boethius: The Consolations*, p. 1.
[65] *De musica*, cols. 1172C–1172D (Book I. 2).

Granted, when these authors speak of music they speak less of sound than of the underlying system of music, musical theory, but voice plays the main role in human music. In Augustine's (354–430) treatise *De musica*, for example, poetry is the main object under discussion. Furthermore, on the discipline of harmonics, Isidore (circa 560–636) writes: 'This makes movement from mind and body, and sound from the movement, from which is gathered music, which is called voice in humans. Voice is air beaten by breath, whence also words have been named.'[66] Hence Isidore claims that voice is air beaten by *spiritus*, 'breath', and indeed is a kind of music which comes from the movement of mind and body. I discuss medieval conceptions of interiority throughout this dissertation, but it should be noted that the *bipartition* of man into body and soul (rather than tripartite body-soul-spirit or another model) was the early medieval doxa.[67] In one sense, then, voice is the meeting point of the two meanings of *spiritus*, 'spirit' and 'breath': it is the primary means by which human intelligence takes shape, manifesting human hearts—in *musical* form, no less.[68] Voice is therefore the fundamental tool of eloquence, the link between spirit and art.

Augustine began a project (of which *De musica* was a part), of writing on the liberal arts around the time he was baptized (387), and the importance of music to his life, as he relates in *Confessions*, is aptly demonstrated by Brian Brennan.[69] It is in *De musica*, a tract evidently known to Aldhelm, that Augustine calls all creation *carmen universitatis*, 'the song of everything'.[70] The *De musica* is primarily preoccupied with the theory of numbers in music—the dominant scholarly conception of music was the study of numbers as revealed in sound—but his work has a notable preponderance on music in the human voice, especially

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[66] *Etymologiae*, I, p. 141 (Book III. 19. 1): *Haec ex animo et corpore motum facit, et ex motu sonum, ex quo colligitur musica, quae in homine vox appellatur. Vox est aer spiritu verberatus, unde et verba sunt nuncupata.*
[67] Law, *Wisdom, Authority and Grammar*, pp. 57–66, gives a summary discussion of the conflicting theories.
[68] That one biblical author might have understood such a model of voice-physics to be true seems suggested by Psalm 32(33). 6.
[69] 'Augustine's *De Musica*', p. 267.
[70] See Lapidge, *Anglo-Saxon Library*, p. 179, citing Ehwald, *Aldhelmi opera*, p. 81. Compare Aldhelm's *Enigma* 100, discussed below at pp. 94–98.

the rhythms of poetry.[71] While Varro and his Greek antecedents had suggested that the soul, which seeks balance in the body, was moved by the sound of music, Augustine reacted against the idea that corporeality could affect the soul, which he saw as incorporeal.[72] Rather, he praises Ambrose's hymn *Deus Creator Omnium* not only for its sound, but more for its meaning; it is reason and number which affect the soul, not sound *per se*.[73]

While Augustine distrusted the enjoyment of sound over sense, sound for him still had a privileged role: he observed that the numbers and words which are communicated through sound seem to make voice special for humans as a more direct and fitting conduit for truth and, therefore, more direct in helping us contemplate God.[74] He believed words have some 'hidden kinship' with sound, affecting the soul even more directly when sung.[75] This idea seems based on Augustine's own experience: he tells of vocal song's powerful influence on him, flowing into his soul via Ambrosian hymns at his baptism, for example, hymns which he also noted united the singers in voice and heart during days of persecution.[76] For Augustine, music somehow goes directly to the heart, musical modes corresponding to and stimulating moods, and he even comes to describe truth as *melodia interior*, although he also claims that words themselves 'enliven' music, which is in turn an appropriate setting for them.[77]

The 'immediacy' of voice, like Paul's tongues or the *interiectio* of grammars, is clearly visible in Augustine's commentary on the Psalms, which appears to have enjoyed broad circulation in Anglo-Saxon England.[78] In his commentary on Psalm 94, the *jubilus*

[71] On the numeric conception of music, see, for example, Stevens, *Words and Music*, pp. 13–23. The first six books of *De musica*, about rhythm, were intended to be accompanied by six more books on harmony, which Augustine never finished (Taliaferro, *On Music*, pp. 153–54).
[72] Brennan, 'Augustine's *De Musica*', pp. 273–76.
[73] Ed. Taliaferro, pp. 375–76 (Book VI. 17. 56–57).
[74] Brennan, 'Augustine's *De Musica*', pp. 277 and 274.
[75] Chadwick, *Boethius: The Consolation*, p. 86; Sieben, 'Bekehrung der *Voces*', pp. 491–94.
[76] Brennan, 'Augustine's *De Musica*', p. 268; Holsinger, *Music, Body, and Desire*, pp. 70–71, citing *Confessions*, Book IX. 6. 14, and 7. 15.
[77] Brennan, 'Augustine's *De Musica*', p. 269; Holsinger, *Music, Body, and Desire*, pp. 74–75, citing *Confessions*, Book X. 33. 49.
[78] See further Lapidge, *Anglo-Saxon Library*, p. 288.

(probably referring to the melisma on the extended final -*a* of the liturgical 'Alleluia') particularly expresses feelings without articulated sense.[79] This he calls the 'sound of joy', because 'the voice of the soul is being poured out in joy, showing as much as it is able the feeling without comprehending the sense'; and of Psalm 32 he counsels 'if you cannot speak him, yet ought not to be silent, what remains but that you jubilate; so that the heart rejoices without words, and the great expanse of joy has not the limits of syllables?'.[80] Picking up Augustine's discussion, Gregory the Great (died 604) adds:

> But we call it shouting (*jubilum*), when we conceive such joy in the heart, as we cannot give vent to by the force of words, and yet the triumph of the heart vents with the voice what it cannot give forth by speech.[81]

Gregory famously also said that he thought it 'very far from meet to submit the words of the divine Oracle to the rules of Donatus', and it is clear that for these exegetes voice is a direct medium for the heart to express itself.[82]

Cassiodorus and the Psalter's Eloquence

Cassiodorus (circa 490–585) mentions Augustine's work in his own chapter on music in the *Institutiones* and generally takes a more speculative approach to music, but regarding corporeality he says that when we are obedient to God's commands, everything we say and our very pulses are tied 'by musical rhythms to the virtues of harmony', and that the whole world was established and can receive order by music.[83] For Cassiodorus, everything which accords with God's will is the concern of music and hence he notes that not only can the righteous join the angels in vocal harmony, but the power of harmony can be used to exorcise

[79] Holsinger, *Music, Body, and Desire*, p. 76.
[80] Holsinger, *Music, Body, and Desire*, pp. 76–77.
[81] *Morals on the Book of Job*, I, 489 (Book VIII. 52. 88).
[82] *Morals on the Book of Job*, I, 11 ('The Epistle').
[83] Trans. Halporn, *Institutions*, pp. 217 and 222 (Book II. 5. 2 and 10).

and calm spirits, as David's music did for King Saul.[84] As we saw in the previous chapter, Cassiodorus's contemporary St Benedict (circa 480–563) notes that the Psalms are performed in the presence of God and his angels, which requires unity of mind and voice.[85] For these monks, the joining of human voices is a harmonic unity of truth, obedience, and worship all in one, with voice figuring the interior, spiritual state of the singer and exercising spiritual power by its spiritual harmony.

Cassiodorus dedicated the most space (of these early fathers) to the links between song, spirit, and eloquence in the preface to his *Expositio Psalmorum*, a text read throughout the Anglo-Saxon period, in which Cassiodorus again declares his debt to Augustine, this time to the *Enarrationes in Psalmos*.[86] In Cassiodorus's *Expositio* he defines prophecy as 'the divine breath' (*aspiratio divina*, the Holy Spirit) which combines teaching with divine eloquence.[87] For him the Psalms are 'truly vessels of truth' (*revera vasa veritatis*—and note *v*-alliteration and other consonance), forms to hold the truth of revelation, and when they are performed again, the believers are united in and through God, singing his words back to him.[88] The mnemonic and aesthetic values of these prophecies are ideal for imparting a sense of divinity, communing with it, and celebrating it. Cassiodorus even equates David's prophecy with David's descendant, Christ; both are incarnations of the Word, divine eloquence and wisdom.[89]

But if song is merely a vessel, what is the value of its eloquence? Cassiodorus defines eloquence not merely as a matter of poetry or singing *per se*, but as the 'right and fitting exposition of any matter'.[90] Eloquence is thus to some degree a matter of register, the most

[84] *Institutions*, pp. 217 and 219–22 (Book II. 5. 3 and 8–9).
[85] Chapter One, pp. 10–11.
[86] Lapidge, *Anglo-Saxon Library*, p. 298; *Explanation of the Psalms*, p. 23 (Preface).
[87] Trans. by Walsh, *Explanation of the Psalms*, p. 27; ed. Adriaen, *Expositio Psalmorum*, p. 7.
[88] Walsh, *Explanation of the Psalms*, pp. 24–25.
[89] Augustine before him had also propounded this idea (Jager, *Tempter's Voice*, p. 107). See Jager, *Tempter's Voice*, pp. 99–142, for the theology of eloquence in Ambrose, Augustine, and Avitus.
[90] *Explanation of the Psalms*, p. 36.

important being the low style, *sermo humilis*. This style, used especially for teaching, was thought to be the reason Scripture is composed in humble language; as Christ was incarnated in humble form, so should the written Word be.[91] God had even been characterized as a schoolteacher since the earliest patristic times.[92] Cassiodorus claimed that Scripture has the 'purest possible expression' because it 'comprises the truth of its Author' and 'speaks to the heart, not the ears'.[93] Thus eloquence for Cassiodorus is not in the words themselves so much as in the truths, the prophecy rather than the poetics. Even in his discussion of the poetry of Scripture, Cassiodorus notes that the *fastucia* (the parallelistic sense-units which constitute Hebrew poetry) of the Psalms are composed in common language, and that this poetry draws out the sense of buried truth rather than obscuring it, an important distinction from some more esoteric poetic traditions which thrive on obscurity in language.[94]

His opinion was orthodox: even Jerome, who was known to critique certain aspects of biblical style, had insisted that formal beauty was not as important as the inspired meaning,[95] and although Cassiodorus joins exegetes such as Augustine, Jerome, Ambrose, and Hilary in claiming that the flowers of rhetoric were all present in Scripture *before* they were named and studied by classical scholars, he states that Scripture speaks in the common tongue.[96] And yet Cassiodorus sums up his thoughts on divine eloquence with the claim that the very divinity of Scripture is shown in that only those 'filled with the divine Spirit' can interpret it; God spoke it, and only God can understand it and explain it to men.[97] For Cassiodorus, then, God's eloquence is beyond us all, though he delights men by revealing his thoughts to them. His assertions seem contradictory—that true eloquence is both the 'purest expression' and the

[91] Auerbach, *Literary Language*, pp. 27–66; *Etymologiae*, I, 94–95 (Book II. 17. 1–3).
[92] Jager, *Tempter's Voice*, pp. 23–49.
[93] *Explanation of the Psalms*, pp. 36–37.
[94] On the *fastucium*, see *Explanation of the Psalms*, p. 37.
[95] Wehrli, 'Sacra Poesis', p. 264.
[96] *Explanation of the Psalms*, pp. 37–40. See also Curtius, *European Literature*, p. 448, and Auerbach, *Literary Language*, p. 47, who suggests Cassiodorus might have propounded this idea most ardently of them all.
[97] *Explanation of the Psalms*, p. 37.

'right and fitting exposition', and yet only God can understand them—but Cassiodorus's claim that he could barely understand the Psalms until he sought Augustine's commentary, shows that a pure expression is not always readily understood, and that the eloquence he describes is spiritual rather than physical and is reliant on special revelation.

Hence, for the church fathers, just as Christ was humble in form but of immeasurable mystery in spirit, inspired eloquence was more a matter of spiritual truth rather than physical form. Yet despite the Scripture's humble language, its truths are not all equally obvious, and an understanding of truth's eloquence must be eagerly sought out.[98] Hence there is a paradox inherent in these discourses of harmony and eloquence: although Scripture speaks in plain language, the truths of musical harmony actively move their listeners, and indeed inarticulate voice is capable of spiritual communication with God, even these more direct modes of communication are not necessarily clear to humans, and where the Holy Spirit does not supernaturally inspire understanding, what has been revealed to other Christians must be passed on in the schoolroom. This eloquence of truth is analogous to voice, the purest possible expression, which nevertheless cannot be understood by others unless articulated according to human conventions. In the next section, I examine some disparate insular approaches to education and vocal articulation.

The Physics of Eloquence in Insular Education

Among other well-known intellectual and ecclesiastical differences such as tonsure and the calculation of Paschal dates, according to Aldhelm, Irish schools used a different categorization of the seven liberal arts, replacing the classical trivium of grammar, rhetoric,

[98] See also Auerbach, *Literary Language*, pp. 50–51, who shows that this paradox was widely accepted among the fathers.

and dialectic with astrology, mechanics, and medicine, a scheme also attested in the seventh-century grammar of Irish provenance, *Anonymus ad Cuimnanum*.[99] These Aldhelm called the 'disciplines of philosophers' (*disciplinae philosophorum*), and Marina Smyth has illustrated the interest in natural philosophy in a number of texts thought to derive from seventh-century Ireland, including the *Liber de ordine creaturarum*, Augustinus Hibernicus's *De mirabilibus Sacrae Scripturae*, and the *Hisperica Famina*.[100] This interest in natural philosophy (what *Anonymus ad Cuimnanum* names *phissica*, that is, 'physics') and especially the elements is also reflected in insular grammars and Irish linguistic treatises, from the elemental composition of humans to the elemental composition of language in humans, an emphasis which has important implications for our understanding of eloquence. My selections in this section are not intended to caricature the states of learning in Ireland or Anglo-Saxon England; I hope simply to give a sense of a philosophical trend in insular scholarship and how two prominent but geographically distant Anglo-Saxon scholars fit into this trend.

Phissica and Insular 'Philosophy' in Matters of Voice

Ireland was at this time a great centre of learning, attracting Anglo-Saxon and Frankish students.[101] But as we shall see, Aldhelm, who was first educated by an Irishman named Maildubh, appears to have seen his early learning as deficient after he came to the school of Theodore and Hadrian at Canterbury.[102] There Aldhelm learned quantitative verse, which was apparently not part of his early instruction, and, as G. T. Dempsey notes, this became the source of a persistent contrast between Aldhelm's self-perceived role as a versifier and the

[99] Dempsey, 'Aldhelm of Malmesbury and the Irish', p. 9. On the provenance of *Anonymus ad Cuimnanum*, see Law, *Insular Latin Grammarians*, pp. 87–90.
[100] Dempsey, 'Aldhelm of Malmesbury and the Irish', p. 9; Smyth, 'Physical World', pp. 205–11.
[101] Smyth, 'Physical World', pp. 201–02.
[102] Orchard, *Poetic Art*, pp. 3–5. On the study of Latin metrics in the Canterbury school, see Thornbury, *Becoming a Poet*, pp. 136–43.

'physical' interests of Irish 'philosophers', a contrast which is instructive regarding eloquence.[103] Grammar and exegesis were the foremost objects of study in seventh-century Hiberno-Latin, and it has been noted that this attention to language and the exegesis of canonical texts is also a concern of scholars of the vernacular, whose linguistic knowledge was needed not simply for poetry but for interpreting early legal texts, for example, an act which necessitated strong understanding of Old Irish's earlier forms.[104] Moreover, this scholarly, grammatical focus evidently paired with the aforementioned interest in philosophy to produce linguistic and poetic tracts which attest to a deep interest in the physiology of language.

To understand the importance of man's elemental composition, we must first look back to the creation of Adam. The author of Genesis says that God formed him of 'mud of earth' (*limo terrae*) and 'breathed the breath of life into his face' (*inspiravit in faciem ejus spiraculum vitae*).[105] This *spiraculum vitae* was usually understood as figuring the spiritual and rational part of Adam, his ensoulment, and not physical breath or a part of God, as orthodox exegetes were careful to say.[106] Yet this wondrous *ex nihilo* creation was the source of enthusiastic apocryphal expansion, of which II Enoch and the *Adam Octopartite* legend are particularly influential.[107] These two texts expand on the 'mud' and 'breath' of Genesis 2. 7, suggesting that Adam's bones were made from stone and his thought from cloud, for example.[108] Most important to matters of voice, of course, is Adam's breath. In II Enoch, Adam's spirit is made from God's spirit and wind, and he is made both of visible and

[103] 'Aldhelm of Malmesbury and the Irish', pp. 9–22.
[104] Ahlqvist, *Early Irish Linguist*, pp. 12 and 20; Smyth, 'Physical World', pp. 201–05.
[105] Genesis 2. 7.
[106] Augustine stresses the *de nihilo* creation of the soul in *Contra adversarium legis et prophetarum*, cols. 614–15 (Book I. 14. 21–22), and both Bede, *On Genesis*, pp. 109–11 (Genesis 2. 7), and Alcuin, *Quaestiones in Genesim*, col. 521D (*Interrogatio* 50), for example, follow suit. See further Fox, 'Augustinian Hexaemeral Exegesis', pp. 29–31, 82, and 140.
[107] The texts are edited and discussed in Charlesworth, *Pseudepigrapha*, I, pp. 91–222 and Macaskill, 'Adam Octipartite/Septipartite', pp. 3–21 respectively.
[108] II Enoch 30. 8; Macaskill, 'Adam Octipartite/Septipartite', pp. 17–21.

invisible nature, knowing 'the word', ruling, and having wisdom.[109] This work could be accused of two opposite heresies at once: claiming man's spirit is both of God's substance and corporeal. In contrast, in the various versions of *Adam Octopartite*, Adam's breath is usually said to come from the wind and his soul from the Holy Spirit, delineating the physical and spiritual while still suggesting that the soul is of the same substance as the Holy Spirit, not created *ex nihilo*.[110] By contrast, A. M. Luiselli Fadda's *Homily 1*, for example, one of the Anglo-Saxon *Three Utterances of the Soul* homilies, is careful to state that man's soul is *Godes oroðes*, 'God's breath', clearly distinguished from the *Halig Gast* mentioned later in the text.[111]

Wright has edited a similar text, *Interpretatio Sancti Augustini*, which makes unique interventions, drawn from the *Questions of Bartholomew*, to *Adam Octopartite*, and Wright considers this work to have originated in the insular sphere.[112] Here Adam is composed of earth from four parts of the world and water from the four rivers of paradise, is inspired by the four winds, and is named after four stars. Similarly, in the prose *Solomon and Saturn*, Adam's breath (*æðung*) comes from 'a pound of wind' (*windes pund*).[113] Cross and Hill locate the earliest example of this theme in II Enoch, noting that it is based on an understanding of man as a microcosm of the macrocosmic universe, and they further indicate how widespread the interest in this apocryphal expansion was.[114] Ælfric of Eynsham, for example, claims in his *Exameron anglice* that every creature is made from the four elements, and that *Ure lic-hama is eorðe, and he oft ðeah swæt, / and of ðam fyre hætað, ðe him on wunað*' ('our body-covering is of earth, and yet it often sweats and is heated by the fire that

[109] II Enoch 30. 8, 10–12. Böttrich, *Adam Als Mikrokosmos*, pp. 35–53.
[110] Macaskill, 'Adam Octipartite/Septipartite', pp. 17–21.
[111] Fadda, *Nuove Omelie Anglosassoni*, pp. 17. 143–47 and 21. 198–202. On the *Three Utterances* exemplum, see Chapter Three, pp. 133–35.
[112] The text and commentary are given in Wright, 'Apocryphal Lore', pp. 140–44.
[113] Cross and Hill, *Prose Solomon and Saturn*, p. 26.
[114] *Prose Solomon and Saturn*, pp. 67–70; and for more on the microcosm and macrocosm in Anglo-Saxon England, see Cross, 'Aspects of Microcosm and Macrocosm'.

dwells within it').[115] The Old Irish *Evernew Tongue* even suggests that the cosmos was resurrected with Christ because 'the nature of all the elements' was found in the body of this second Adam.[116] But none of these insular works suggests that the soul is corporeal or formed of the same nature as the Holy Spirit.

Similar ideas about humanity's elemental composition are present in a number of insular linguistic texts. Possibly working within the British Isles, Virgilius Maro Grammaticus (circa seventh century) is far and away the most idiosyncratic grammarian of this discussion.[117] He expounds Donatus's *Ars grammatica* in two works, the *Epitomae* (based on Donatus's *Ars maior*) and *Epistolae* (based on the *Ars minor*), with sensational additions. One example of his innovations comes in chapter thirteen of the *Epitomae*, where Virgilius uses the word *fonum*, a combination of Greek *φωνή*, 'voice, sound' and Latin *sonus*, to signify the physical quality of utterance as opposed to the semantic quality, for which Virgilius uses *verbum*.[118] Combining the words of two sacred languages shows both an awareness of philology (perhaps even an attempted philological reconstruction) and an interest in interpreting the enigma of forms: *fonum* forms part of his explanation of a curious practice he designates *scinderatio fonorum*, that is, scrambling sounds of words to disguise them. Thus Virgilius appears to hold the conviction that truth is to be discovered in forms, however enigmatic.[119] Virgilius's work was influential in the insular sphere: some of his etymologies found their way into Bede's *De temporum ratione*, and Aldhelm also seems to cite the author.[120]

[115] See Crawford, *Exameron anglice*, pp. 26 and 64. Ælfric's other hexaemeral writings are silent on voice.
[116] Macaskill, 'Adam Octipartite/Septipartite', p. 12.
[117] On Virgilius, see Law, *Wisdom, Authority, and Grammar*, pp. 42–52.
[118] Law, *Insular Latin Grammarians*, pp. 18–21 (esp. n. 35) and 42–48; *Wisdom, Authority, and Grammar*, pp. 1–4 and 22–23.
[119] Law, *Wisdom, Authority and Grammar*, pp. 83–96; Corthals, 'Stimme, Atem, und Dichtung', p. 132
[120] Virgilius and Aldhelm could conceivably quote from a mutual predecessor. See Bracken, 'Virgil the Grammarian and Bede', and pp. 95–97 below.

Regarding the elements and language, Virgilius contends in the *Epitomae* that all the parts of the world are in man, including 'fire in the soul' (*ignis in anima*) and 'sun in the splendour of wisdom' (*sol in splendore sapientiae*).[121] Moreover, just as humans are made with 'form' (*plasto*), 'breath' (*affla*), and 'celestial fire' (*caelesti igne*), a letter has in its 'body' (*corpore*) 'a soul in its meaning' (*animam in sensu*) and 'a spirit in its higher contemplation' (*spiridonem in superiore contemplatione*).[122] The author also discusses fire and its vital and breath-like qualities in *Epitomae*, chapter 1 in his examples of the 'twelve types of Latinity', a catalogue of twelve different words for fire, each of which brings out a different aspect of the element. Here *ignis* ('fire') is also called '*spiridon, ex spiramine*' ('*spiridon*, from breath'), '*vitius, qui pene mortua membra suo vigore vivificat*' ('*vitius*, which vivifies nearly dead members with its strength'), and more curiously '*aeneon, de Aenea deo, qui in eo habitat, siue a quo elementis flatus fertur'* ('*aeneon*, from the god Aeneas, who dwells in it, or from whom breath is brought to the elements'). In fire, breath is found (and likewise soul in spirit[?]), a conflation which seems due in part to classical theories of medicine and the elemental composition of the universe.[123] Furthermore the fiery spirit is, as Law instructs, like the illumination brought by the fire of the Holy Spirit, the 'heavenly spark' of intellect, and Christ himself, the Word who, according to John 1. 9, 'was the true light that enlightens every man'.[124] Hence the soul is like a little fire formed from the great eternal fire of wisdom, represented by the sun.[125]

Law points out that, in contrast to what had become the Western Church's reliance on authoritative tradition, Virgilius's approach to wisdom was more eclectic, involving new

[121] Corthals, 'Stimme, Atem, und Dichtung', p. 135.
[122] Ed. Polara, *Epitomae,* p. 8 (Chapter 2). Law, *Wisdom, Authority, and Grammar*, pp. 67–71.
[123] See especially the *anima animae* in Lucretius's material spirituality (*On the Nature of Things*, pp. 202–15 [Book III. 177–349]).
[124] Law, *Wisdom, Authority, and Grammar*, pp. 72–73.
[125] On Christ as the sun, see for example *The Phoenix* 583–90 and perhaps also Aldhelm's verse preface to the *Enigmata* 17–24.

paths and ways of thinking.[126] Thus, Virgilius's use of 'natural philosophy' brings out the spiritual significance of man's elemental composition, with inner fire and breath signifying spiritual life. More significantly for our investigation, for Virgilius, just as breath and spirit are intimately connected in their fiery origins, human speech itself, formed from both, also has a soul and spirit, giving voice an intimate sense of personhood. In elemental lore, etymologies, *scinderatio fonorum*, and the twelve types of Latinity, Virgilius indicates the importance of discerning the truth from various forms.

While Virgilius does not fit into any traditional categories, the other insular grammars are divided into two main schools by Vivien Law: elementary and exegetical.[127] The elementary grammars, such as those composed by Boniface (circa 675–754) and Tatwine (died 734), were basic compilations of need-based grammatical information to teach beginners. These follow a tradition based loosely on Donatus's *Ars minor*, focusing on the practicalities of the eight parts of speech and accidence. Law notes that, generally speaking, Anglo-Saxon authors seemed to prefer the elementary model, while the exegetical grammars seem to point to Irish authorship.[128] The exegetical grammars, though more *ad hoc* in nature, are more expansive on their subjects, using the lines of Donatus' *Ars maior* as *lemmata* for commentary.[129] These add little to their sources regarding voice, despite their compendious nature, which perhaps surprisingly generally focus on other parts of the *Ars maior* than that which discusses the voice. One exegetical grammar, *Quae sunt quae* (circa 700), gives a veritable treatise on the voice, including a plethora of voice-trivia, but adds little of substance

[126] Law, *Wisdom, Authority, and Grammar*, pp. 47–56.
[127] Law, *Insular Latin Grammarians*, pp. 53–56 and 81–85. The elementary grammars are *Declinationes nominum*, *Ars Tatuini*, *Ars Ambianensis*, *Ars Bernensis*, *Ars Bonifacii*.
[128] Law, *Insular Latin Grammarians*, p. xiv.
[129] Law, *Insular Latin Grammarians*, pp. 81–97. The exegetical grammars are *Quae sunt quae*, *Anonymous ad Cuimnanum*, *Congregatio Salcani filii de verbo*, *Aggressus quidam*, and potentially (but most likely not of Insular provenance) *Ars Ambrosiana*. Donatus addresses the substance of voice in *Ars maior*, p. 367, but according to Law, *Anonymous ad Cuimnanum* and *Ars Ambrosiana* comment only on Donatus's exposition on letters (pp. 88 and 94), while *Congregatio* analyses the noun and pronoun section of *Ars Ambianensis* (p. 90), and *Aggressus* expounds only on Donatus's treatment of the noun (p. 92).

to this discussion in terms of physiology. Noteworthy are the grammarian's assertions that there are not just 'grammatical' and 'confused' voices, but 'musical' voices, an acknowledgment shared by *Anonymus ad Cuimnanum*,[130] and that while philosophers define voice as the sound proper to each thing, it is the duty of grammarians to examine where and how voice works in man, contradicting Servius's judgment and taking matters into his own hands.[131]

We see a similar interest in the physiology of speech in Irish vernacular works. For example, *Dliged sésa a huraicept na mac sésa* (translated by Corthals as 'System of higher learning from the handbook of the students of higher learning', circa seventh to eighth centuries) gives a vocal genealogy, saying that wind is mother of breath, which is mother of sound, mother of voice, mother of words.[132] While (in traditional fashion) the writer considers voice stricken breath, this breath is said to come from an 'inner fire' and is called the 'shrine of life' (*comhra(i)r bethadh*), 'declaring of soul' (*forneis anma*), and 'soul's firey smoke in the lightless bodies' (*dé án anma i gcurpaibh siosoillsi[b]).*[133] In an Irish work known as 'The Caldron of Poesy' (circa eighth century), knowledge, poetry, and inspiration are said to be contained by three cauldrons within humans.[134] Here a cauldron known as the 'Cauldron of Goiriath', for example, is said to be a God-given gift 'out of the mysteries of the elements' (*a dúile ndemrib*), founding the vessel for understanding resolutely in the body.[135] In *Auraicept na n-Éces*, one commentator points out 'the poet's duty to be a philosopher' (*dliged in filed guru fellsumh*),[136] and Fénius Farsaid, legendary inventor of the Irish

[130] Munzi, *Multiplex Latinitas*, p. 30 (Chapter 36); *Anonymus ad Cuimnanum*, pp. 5–6 (Chapter 1. 168–78).
[131] Munzi, *Multiplex Latinitas*, p. 30 (Chapter 36): *In ratione grammaticorum interrogandum est, in quo loco vox homine gignitur, in quo plectro gubernatur, quo follie abstrahitur*.
[132] Corthals, 'Decoding the Caldron', p. 87. Text edited in Corthals, 'Stimme, Atem, und Dichtung'.
[133] Corthals, 'Stimme, Atem, und Dichtung', pp. 134–35. Note the author's reliance on antique medical theories and elemental discussions.
[134] 'Caldron of Poesy', pp. 48–52. Text edited in Breatnach, 'Caldron of Poesy' and 'Addenda and Corrigenda'. Compare the *awenyddion*, whose inspiration is also said to come from cauldrons (Chadwick and Chadwick, *Growth of Literature*, I, 637).
[135] Trans. by Breatnach, 'Caldron of Poesy', pp. 64–65.
[136] Calder, *Auraicept na n-Éces*, pp. 50–51.

language, is said to have formed Irish from the best portions of every language shortly after God had confused all the languages at Babel.[137] There is much more to say about these works, but suffice it to say that the physics (indeed, metaphysics) of voice and ideal linguistic forms are clear concerns of these Irish linguistic and poetic scholars.

Robert McNally, who illustrates a prominent scholarly interest among the Irish in the three sacred languages, even suggests that this interest bespeaks a tendency to mystically relate grammar to theology.[138] As an example, he cites the Hiberno-Latin *Liber de numeris* (late eighth century[?]), where it is said that the angels always sing *Almus! Ageos! Alleluia!* (Latin, 'holy'; Greek, 'holy'; Hebrew, 'Praise Yah') in praise of the Trinity, and that *in his vocibus A semper precedit* ('A always comes first in these voices').[139] This interest, not just in sacred languages, but in the commonalities between them—and in angels' song, no less—locates spiritual truth in form, letter and number. Smyth notes that the text as a whole is prone to 'excessive alliteration' and represents the late seventh-century turn in Ireland, influenced by an influx of patristic literature, towards interpreting numbers symbolically.[140] Indeed, orderly form and seemliness appear to be placed above spiritual or even philological veracity here: rather than a scriptural threefold repetition of 'holy' or the inclusion of the Hebrew word for 'holy' in this triad, alliteration was the prominent point, giving the angels a formally-patterned song. This emphasis stands in contrast to two angelic revelations mentioned in Chapter One.[141] Aediluulf's poetic account of angel song seems based on patristic estimations of biblical style: he relates, '[the song] shines, if not in construction still in holy merits' (*si non structura, tamen meritis micat almis*).[142] Bede notes in his story of

[137] On this and other permutations of the legend, see McLaughlin, 'Farsaid and the Alphabets'.
[138] McNally, 'Tres Linguae Sacrae', pp. 402–03.
[139] Cited in McNally, 'Tres Linguae Sacrae', p. 402; On the date of the work, see Smyth, 'The Irish *Liber*', p. 291.
[140] 'The Irish *Liber*', pp. 294–95 and 297.
[141] See p. 10.
[142] Campbell, *De Abbatibus*, p. 53 (line 673).

Chad's death that the angels had 'the sweetest voice of those singing and rejoicing' (*uocem suauissimam cantantium atque laetantium*).[143] In each of these three accounts it is clear that angel song is meant to be beautiful, but the writers differ in whether it is the poetry, the spiritual value, or the voices which beautify it.

Hence, in the Irish or potentially-Irish linguistic works, there is a sustained interest in discerning truth in physical forms, whether in the elements ([meta]-physics) or in language (philology), or, in some cases, in the construction of new ideal forms. The legend of Fénius Farsaid perhaps attests to the importance of seeking out the truth from the fragments of postlapsarian life: there were once true forms, and now it is left for us to discover what is best and indeed create something new with it. *Anonymus ad Cuimnanum*, too, sets the origin of arts and philosophy in Adam, who had the *spiritum sapientiae*, the fragments of whose knowledge must now be recovered bit by bit.[144] A similar tendency seems to inform Virgilius Maro Grammaticus's eclectic, pluralistic, and inventive approach to wisdom, and Augustinus Hibernicus's controversial tract on the miracles of Scripture (*De mirabilibus Sacrae Scriptura*, composed in 655), which found naturalistic (though God-ordained) explanations for scriptural supernatural phenomena.[145] But these authors' physical naturalism stands markedly in contrast with the church fathers' spiritual approach to the Word which we have seen thus far, where physical form is of minimal importance next to spiritual understanding. Moreover, as with any scientific approach, this physical examination required a healthy dose of guess-work, especially in less scientific, idealistic (re-)constructions, and without the proper means of substantiating its claims (that is, Scripture or ecclesiastical authority) this approach was not always a popular one, as we shall see in the following subsection.

[143] Colgrave and Mynors, *Ecclesiastical History*, p. 340.
[144] *Anonymus ad Cuimnanum*, pp. 2–3 (Chapter 1. 42–92).
[145] On Hibernicus's *De mirabilibus*, whose argument is in fact drawn ultimately from Augustine of Hippo, see Smyth, 'Body, Death, and Resurrection', pp. 531–33.

Aldhelm exhibits a similar interest in natural phenomena in his *Enigmata*, as well as in certain aspects of linguistic form, composing verse with often-arcane and flamboyant diction, poetic strictures such as *versus intexti*, and numerous verse-forms, but he seems to have taken issue with philosophers and their approach to knowledge.[146] He voices antagonism with *sofi*, 'wise men' or 'philosophers', in his final enigma, *Creatura*. Consider the final lines of the poem (70–84; bold typeface used for emphasis):[147]

> **Sic mea prudentes superat sapientia sofos**,
> **Nec tamen in biblis docuit me littera dives**
> **Aut umquam quivi, quid constet sillaba, nosse**.
> Siccior æstivo torrentis caumate solis,
> Rore madens iterum plus uda flumine fontis;
> Salsior et multo tumidi quam marmora ponti
> Et gelidis terræ limphis insulsior erro,
> Multiplici specie cunctorum compta colorum,
> Ex quibus ornatur præsentis machina mundi,
> Lurida cum toto nunc sim fraudata colore.
> Auscultate mei credentes famina verbi,
> Pandere quæ poterit gnarus vix ore magister
> Et tamen infitians non retur frivola lector!
> Sciscitor **inflatos**, fungar quo nomine, **sofos**.
>
> **Thus my wisdom surpasses wise scholars, and yet the abundant letter in books did not teach me, nor could I ever learn what might make a syllable**. Drier than summer heat of the blazing sun, yet dripping with dew more than a fountain's wet flow; both much saltier than the marbled swelling sea and less salty than the cold waters of earth I roam, beautiful with the manifold appearances of all colours by which the design of this present world is adorned, while, pale, I am now robbed of all colour. Hear, believing the sayings of my word, which a master skilled in speech can scarcely reveal—and yet the denying reader does not consider them trifles! I ask **puffed-up wisemen** what name I use.

Vivien Law suggests that because classical philosophers posed no threat to Aldhelm's sphere, these *sofi* may be insular 'philosophers' such as Virgilius Grammaticus and Augustinus

[146] On Aldhelm's style, see Orchard, *Poetic Art*, pp. 8–18; Howlett, 'Threefold Play', pp. 98–99 and 104. On this ostentatious style in general, see, for example, Lapidge, 'Hermeneutic Style', and Earl, 'Hisperic Style'.
[147] Ehwald, *Aldhelmi Opera*, pp. 148–49.

Hibernicus.[148] In the case of Virgilius Maro Grammaticus, Law notes a disjunction between his 'pluralistic' approach to learning and wisdom compared to more orthodox Catholic doctors, such as Isidore and Aldhelm, who were both very concerned with church unity based on the received authority of the doctrine and tradition of the Roman Catholic church.[149] Aldhelm, for his part, wrote a letter to King Geraint of Dumnonia (Devon) urging the king and his bishops to accept Roman authority in ecclesiastical matters, namely the dating of Easter and clerical tonsure—notably 'physical' matters misaligned with Roman spiritual authorities.[150]

It should be stressed that alongside the pluralistic eclecticism we observed there is a certain sense of individualism or independence of authority, the notion that independent judgment is satisfactory. Although Virgilius's individualism was obviously not representative of the entire Irish church—indeed, the authority of tradition (rather than individualism) was the cause of controversy on both sides of the Synod of Whitby (664), for example—Bede suggests that geographical isolation led the Irish church into error on the calculation of Easter, and it was through appeals to Petrine authority and the Catholic (that is, 'universal') nature of Roman practice that the Irish practice was changed.[151] The notion of universal authority in doctrine was of fundamental importance at this time and place, and individual deviations were not taken lightly.

Moreover, on at least one occasion Aldhelm boasts the superiority of Anglo-Saxon over Irish learning. David Howlett notes that in Aldhelm's letter to Heahfrith, in which he quotes from Virgilius's *Epistolae*, Aldhelm parodies Hiberno-Latin poetry and learning in an

[148] Law, *Wisdom, Authority, and Grammar*, pp. 103–04.
[149] Law, *Wisdom, Authority, and Grammar*, pp. 51–56 and 97–105; Herren, 'Aldhelm the Theologian', II, 70–71.
[150] Dempsey, 'Aldhelm of Malmesbury and the Irish', p. 10.
[151] Colgrave and Mynors, *Ecclesiastical History*, pp. 222–25 and 294–309 (Book III. 4 and 25). Colgrave and Mynors (224, n. 1) also suggest that there was a more liberal sense of ecclesiastical hierarchy in the Irish church, which seems to have lacked diocesan organization and whose bishops therefore did not have fixed diocesan responsibilities.

attempt to keep an Anglo-Saxon student within the Anglo-Saxon school.[152] In this epistle, Aldhelm employs fifteen-fold *p*-alliteration in the first sixteen words: the phoneme /p/ had fallen out of Old Irish, and therefore Aldhelm's patterning appears to be antagonistically parading a difficult phoneme in a boast of superiority. In the last words of the letter, too, Howlett suggests a masterful joining of letter, verse, and number in further parody:[153]

> ut uersidicus ait digna:
> Fiat fante Glingio
> gurgo fugax fambulo.
> Neu timeat scriptor terrentis ludicra linguae.
> Sic semper cupiunt scriptorum carpere cartas
> Ut caper hirsutus rodet cum dente racemos
> Nec tamen emendant titubantis gramma poetae.
> Arbiter aeternus tibi iam miserescat in aeuum
> Fulgens diuitiis semper et ore clarus.
>
> As the versifier said worthy things:
> As Glengus says, let *gurgo*(?) a storyteller(?) become fugitive.
> And let the writer not fear the jests of an intimidating tongue. Thus they always desire to gather the pages of writers as the hairy goat gnaws grapes with teeth; yet they do not reform the letter of a stumbling poet.
> Now may the eternal Judge have mercy on you forever, always gleaming in riches and clear in mouth.

Dempsey suggests the passage seems to be a response to potential Irish criticism.[154] Moreover, according to Howlett, the first two lines parody Hiberno-Latin heptasyllabic verse using the same words as Virgilius Maro Grammaticus's *Epistolae* 2. 2 (*Glengi* […] *gurgo* […] *fugax fabulo* […] *dignus est*), while the next four lines are hexameters drawn from Aldhelm's own *Carmen de virginitate*, and the final two are an elegiac couplet; this demonstrates Aldhelm's mastery of three verse-forms, two classical and one Hiberno-Latin.[155] It is of course significant that the last word is 'clear, bright', referring to both the clarity and the fame of God's own speech, perhaps in direct contrast to the cryptic and

[152] Howlett, *British Books in Biblical Style*, pp. 103–24 (esp. 120). The letter is edited in Ehwald, *Aldhelmi Opera*, pp. 486–94.
[153] Howlett, 'Threefold Play', pp. 98–99.
[154] Dempsey, 'Aldhelm of Malmesbury and the Irish', pp. 16–18.
[155] Howlett, 'Threefold Play', p. 99.

bizarre—if densely patterned with alliteration and rhyme and regularly rhythmic—heptasyllabic verses.[156]

Having learned quantitative verse at Canterbury, Aldhelm must have sensed something deficient in that tradition so proficient in the study of language and exegesis which had not, in fact, understood a fundamental aspect of Latinity because of its isolation from Roman authority. As we noted before, Latin quantitative verse could only be learned by accepting and memorizing authoritative texts, rather than by independent speculation.[157] The force of such a realization, paired with other disparities in educational conclusions (such as the dating of Easter), cannot be understated, and Aldhelm's writings reflect a strong belief that the correct use of Latin learning lies in Roman authority rather than in scholarly eclecticism, formal invention, or independent speculation—physical, philosophical exercises.[158]

In fact, Aldhelm's *Enigmata*, an exercise in the rudiments of traditional Latin verse, could be said to do precisely the opposite work of philosophy. As Law notes, Aldhelm's final riddle gives creation a voice which speaks elliptically and paradoxically, expressing the wonder of creation by paradox, training the mind to look past the form of things to their maker.[159] Rather than delving into arcane speculation about the origins and compositions of forms in a 'demystification of the mysteries', as Law calls it, Aldhelm's *Enigmata* use obscurity to show that creation is beyond fathom; they present the mystery of creation as a mystery, not something which can be known except by revelation. Thornbury notes that the solution to *Enigma* 37 (*cancer*), for example, is not a physical crab or the constellation Cancer, but the word *cancer* itself; words, not the physical things they describe, are the key to

[156] It must be noted that the first syllable of *clarus* is long, which spoils the metre, but perhaps this is a sign of its especially emphatic status.
[157] Chapter One, pp. 26–28.
[158] Law, *Wisdom, Authority, and Grammar*, pp. 101–04.
[159] Law, *Wisdom, Authority, and Grammar*, p. 102.

understanding.[160] Aldhelm does this all in correct hexametrical verse, and, given his regular poetic invocations and assumption that biblical poets, too, composed metrical songs, he may not have assumed that his poetic form was precisely how God would have spoken, but he probably saw it as a sign of authoritative orthodoxy.[161] Thus for Aldhelm, it would appear that poetic form matters not *per se* as a transmutation of the divine but as a sign of received spiritual authority and allegiance, and indeed the poet flaunts his expertise in various forms as evidence of the importance not of the forms themselves, but of the power of authoritative knowledge. Bede, who was markedly more sympathetic to his Irish brothers, does not engage in similar rhetorical battles, but he similarly rejects the notion of a spirituality of linguistic form, as we see in the next subsection.[162]

Bede and the Diversity of Languages

According to Genesis 11. 1–9, until the confusion of language at Babel, there was only one tongue spoken throughout the world. In his *Etymologies* Isidore suggests that this language was Hebrew, and, according to Roberta Frank, it was common for insular scholars to suggest that Hebrew is the language spoken in heaven.[163] But later in the same chapter Isidore notes that while some believe the first language was the same as God's own language and others that God speaks to individuals in their own language, God speaks to men by *creaturam corporalem* ('bodily creation') not by *substantiam invisibilem* ('invisible substance'), seemingly supporting the latter argument.[164] Hence, for Isidore Hebrew may have come first but does not seem to be a heavenly language, and God is able to speak through any language.

[160] *Becoming a Poet*, pp. 54–55.
[161] Compare Chapter One, p. 19.
[162] On Bede's sympathy with the Irish, see his account of the Synod of Whitby in Colgrave and Mynors, *Ecclesiastical History*, pp. 294–309 (Book III. 25).
[163] Frank, 'Some Uses of Paronomasia', p. 223 (n. 47).
[164] *Etymologiae*, I, 343–45 (Book IX. 1. 1 and 11–12).

Indeed, there was a patristic tradition of venerating the *tres linguae sacrae*, as we have already seen in part. Scholars such as Hilary of Poitiers (circa 315–367) and Augustine note that God used these languages in a historically significant way, and they are therefore of descriptive, rather than prescriptive significance.[165] But Isidore seems to presuppose both their descriptive and prescriptive value: he notes that the veneration of the *tres linguae* comes from Pilate's use of all three languages on the Cross, but he also claims that reference to each is needed to interpret unsure points of Scripture, suggesting that special truth lies in each.[166] It is presumably a similar line of thinking that led to the insular enthusiasm for these languages, and according to Irven Resnick, it was Isidore who popularized the notion that these languages were sacred.[167]

Yet Tristan Major points out that Bede aligns more with Hilary and Augustine, in suggesting that no language has essential spiritual value, though he concedes the practical and authoritative, scriptural value of Greek and Hebrew.[168] Major even notes various places in which Bede writes favourably of multilingualism, such as at the Synod of Whitby, in his association of the five languages of Britain with the Pentateuch, and even in Cædmon's vernacular poetic inspiration.[169] Bede's favourable view towards multilingualism is practically-minded, for everywhere he indicates the Catholic nature of the Church, which *uno ac non diuiso corde et intentione domino famulantur* ('serve the Lord with one undivided heart and intent');[170] and as he states in *In Genesim*, 'as long as men remain in this light [Christ], they are of one tongue and the same speech'.[171]

[165] McNally, 'Tres Linguae Sacrae', pp. 395–96.
[166] *Etymologiae*, I, 343 (IX. 1. 3).
[167] Cited in Major, *Undoing Babel*, pp. 117–18.
[168] *Undoing Babel*, pp. 115–28.
[169] *Undoing Babel*, pp. 121–27.
[170] *Retractatio in Actus apostolorum* (Chapter 4), cited in Major, *Undoing Babel*, p. 126.
[171] Trans. Kendall, *On Genesis*, p. 233.

Likewise, Bede points out that the confusion of languages stems from a spiritual problem more than a formal one. Developing a patristic tradition, Bede claims that at Babel language became confused by disobedience and in Jerusalem it was redeemed by obedience at Pentecost when the Holy Spirit gave the Church the gift of tongues.[172] In fact, although Bede, too, considers Hebrew to be the original language of humanity, he suggests that it was God himself who provided the names for things in each new language when human language became confused at Babel.[173] Paired with the Holy Spirit's gift of languages to men, this constitutes a view which grants each language equal status as God-given.[174] Hebrew, as the first language and that of Scripture, still held value for Bede as the language God chose to speak through, and Damian Fleming notes that Gregory the Great and Bede (perhaps by Gregory's influence) both consider the Hebrew word *alleluia* to be a symbol of the unity of the church; but neither scholar suggests the intrinsic value of the Hebrew: *alleluia* is simply a symbol, and Bede's frequent citation of *hebraica veritas* does not presuppose Hebrew's inherent power, but its scriptural authority.[175]

In contrast to elemental understandings of language, although Bede took an interest in physics, writing his own *De natura rerum* (based on Isidore's, rather than Lucretius's model), he takes an Augustinian approach to the corporeality of language.[176] In *In Genesim*, for example, he cites Augustine's *De Genesi contra Manichaeos*, where Augustine claims that when God named his creations it was not in Greek, Hebrew or any human language:[177]

> with God intellection is simple, without the noise and diversity of languages. Moreover, 'he called' was used to mean 'he caused to be called', because he distinguished and ordered everything in such a way that days could be discerned and receive their names.

[172] *Expositio Actuum apostolorum*, pp. 16–17 (Chapter 2. 4). On the patristic contrast between Babel and Pentecost, see Major, *Undoing Babel*, pp. 63–72.
[173] Kendall, *On Genesis*, pp. 220–21.
[174] See further Major, *Undoing Babel*, pp. 115–28, on Bede's linguistic theology.
[175] 'Most Exalted Language', pp. 142–50. See also pp. 53–79.
[176] Kendall and Wallis, *Nature of Things and Times*, pp. 7–13.
[177] *De Genesi contra Manichaeos* (Book I. 9. 15), as cited and altered by Bede in *In Genesim*, 1. 5a (trans. by Kendall, *On Genesis*, pp. 74–75).

Contrary to Isidore's perception of God's speech, for Augustine God's language is spiritual rather than physical. Bede, in the second chapter of his *Expositio Actuum apostolorum*, where he writes about the Holy Spirit's gift of tongues, introduces his discussion of Pentecost by saying, 'anyone who desires to be filled with the Spirit must transcend the bodily dwelling in the mind's contemplation'.[178] Drawing on Gregory of Nazianzus, Bede compares the Pentecostal fire and sound coming from heaven and resting on the apostles to the fire and sound which descended on Sinai, claiming 'God was not the fire nor the sound; he appeared **through** fire […] but **through** it he spoke **within**' (*Et neque ignis deus neque ille sonitus fuit;* ***per*** *ignem* […] *apparuit, sed* ***per*** *semetipsum locutionem* ***interius*** *fecit*; emphasis mine); that is, the fire and the sound were rather outward expressions of what happened internally (*per hoc quod exterius exhibuit expressit hoc quod interius gessit*).[179] So with the apostles, the 'tongues' of fire signified that they were kindled with zeal (*zelo succensos*) and instructed in word (*verbo eruditos*): 'All whom he might fill he also makes burn at the same time, burning everywhere because of him and speaking about him' (*omnes quos impleverit ardentes pariter et facit, ardentes utique ex se et loquentes de se*).[180]

In the receipt of tongues, it is not the corporeal that matters: rather, 'therefore the elements were moved in signification, that bodies might feel fire and sound, yet hearts might be taught with invisible fire and voice without sound' (*In significatione igitur admota sunt elementa, ut ignem et sonitum sentirent corpora, igne uero inuisibili et uoce sine sonitu docerentur corda*). Shortly thereafter, Bede shows the true place of corporeal learning in study: as we saw in Chapter One, the Holy Spirit is able to inspire humans easily with that which they otherwise labour for, such as language learning and wisdom.[181] Bringing together

[178] Bede, *Expositio Actuum apostolorum*, p. 15 (Chapter 2. 1): *Quicumque enim spiritu sancto adimpleri desiderant, carnis domicilium necesse est mentis contemplatione transcendant*.
[179] *Expositio Actuum apostolorum*, p. 16 (Chapter 2. 1). Bede makes more of the relationship between Pentecost and Sinai in *Retractatio in Actus apostolorum*, pp. 109–10 (Chapter 2. 2).
[180] *Expositio Actuum apostolorum*, p. 16 (Chapter 2. 2–3).
[181] See Chapter One, pp. 9–10.

this chapter's recurrent points of voice, form, spirit, and fire, this passage makes clear that for Bede linguistic and elemental forms are not spiritual *per se*; they are external forms which are only of spiritual value if they betoken greater truths. Yet we should not understand Bede as having taken an entirely relativistic view of language; he and his contemporary Boniface, a student of Aldhelm's, note that grammar, or the study of using language well, is a divine study, because a proper understanding of language helps man to see through the veil of Scripture's language into its spiritual sense.[182] But for these Anglo-Latin authors, as for the patristic writers before them, form is a veil: truth is sought through form, not in it.

In sum, it is clear that many aspects of linguistic form, from the elemental composition of man to the proper composition of poetry, were valued highly by insular writers and had spiritual associations; yet there was discord regarding the value of these forms themselves. Formal eloquence is for Aldhelm, like an understanding of Scripture, a matter of mastering tradition and asserting authority, and as a composer of metrical songs he sees himself taking part in a long authoritative custom reaching back to Moses. In contrast to Aldhelm's florid formal exuberance, Bede is a notably more restrained composer of prose and poetry, and an Augustinian subordination of form to content, letter to spirit, breathes through his works.[183] No insular writers explicitly say that linguistic forms are spiritual *per se*, but some more inventive authors vest deeper spiritual significance into formal patterning and elemental discourse. It is these matters—the relationship between spirit and voice, divine instigation and formal patterning—which are a central concern of the *Phoenix*-poet, and in the following section we will see how the poet navigates these questions.

[182] Martin, 'Bede as Linguistic Scholar', pp. 205 and 216; Copeland and Sluiter, *Medieval Grammar and Rhetoric*, pp. 258–59.
[183] Colgrave and Mynors, *Ecclesiastical History*, pp. xxxvi–xxxviii. Orchard, *Poetic Art*, pp. 254–60, notes that Bede's compositional style in verse contrasts sharply (perhaps consciously) with Aldhelm's.

Voice and Inspired Song in *The Phoenix*

The Phoenix, an Exeter Book poem about the eponymous bird of legend, is written on folios 55ᵛ–65ᵛ between the biblical *Azarias* and saint's narrative *Juliana*.[184] The poem combines Old English verse-translation of a Latin poem with versified exegesis and biblical quotations in an impressive allegory, one which paints an intimate picture of the workings of form and inspiration both within a human and in verse.[185] The Lactantian *De ave phoenice* was interpreted by medieval writers as an allegory for Christ, although this matter is still the subject of debate, and the Old English poet makes his interpretation explicit, with the first 380 lines dedicated to translation, the latter 297 to exegesis.[186] What makes *The Phoenix* so important to this analysis is that, as a learned Latinate poem, it gives us an Anglo-Saxon poetic cross-section of various traditions regarding both poetic inspiration and what relationship existed between form and spirit in poetic eloquence.

This poet recounts an instance of Job's prophetic inspiration by divine breath (*gæstes blæd*, 549b) similar to that in *Christ II* 664a–68a.[187] OE *blæd*, which literally means 'something blown', is used to signify breath, wind, vigour, glory, and spirit (especially the Holy Spirit).[188] Likewise, the related *blawan*, 'to blow' (along with its permutations, such as *geblawan* and *ablawan*) is regularly used to render *inspirare*.[189] These breath-words are used quite frequently by Ælfric in his *Exameron anglice*, for example, where he translates *spiraculum*, the breath God breathes into Adam to give him life, with the word *blæd*

[184] Blake, *The Phoenix*, p. 1.
[185] J.J. Conybeare, *Illustrations*, p. 224 (cited in Steen, *Verse and Virtuosity*, p. 35 [n. 5]), was the first to recognize the Old English poem's debt to *De ave phoenice*. See also Blake, *The Phoenix*, pp. 17–24. The numerous sources underpinning the poem's second half are also outlined by Steen, *Verse and Virtuosity*, p. 35 (n. 6).
[186] Compare n. 2 above.
[187] See Chapter One, pp. 38–41.
[188] *DOE*, 'blæd'.
[189] For more examples, see *DOE*, 'blæd' and 'blawan'.

(346b).[190] Judging by its *DOE* entry, *blæd* denotes 'breath' more in ecclesiastical works and glosses while poetry favours the senses 'glory' and 'prosperity'; thus while *blæd* may be have been consciously related to breath in poetry, one cannot be sure.[191] But this Christian Latin breath-connotation clearly inspired the *Phoenix*-poet: in a passage which incorporates the foregoing discussions of poetic form and inspiration, the poet contrasts the inspiring work of the Holy Spirit with the *lyge-wordum* ('lying words') and perhaps also the *woð-cræfte* ('voice-skill') of other sorts of poetry, not coincidentally associating poetic compounds with poetic composition (539a–75a):

Þonne hleoþriað halge gæstas,
sawla soð-fæste song ahebbað,
clæne ond gecorene hergað cyninges þrym,
stefn æfter stefne, stigað to wuldre
wlitige gewyrtad mid hyra wel-dædum;
beoð þonne amerede monna gæstas,
beorhte abywde þurh bryne fyres.
Ne wene þæs ænig ælda cynnes
þæt ic lyge-wordum leoð gesomnige,
write woð-cræfte. Gehyrað wite-dom
Iobes gieddinga. Þurh gæstes blæd
breostum onbryrded, beald reordade,
wuldre geweorðad; he þæt word gecwæð:
'Ic þæt ne forhycge heortan geþoncum,
þæt ic in minum neste neo-bed ceose,
hæle hra-werig, gewite hean þonan
on longne sið, lame betolden,
geomor gu-dæda, in greotes fæðm,
ond þonne æfter deaþe þurh dryhtnes giefe
swa se fugel fenix feorh edniwe
æfter æriste agan mote,
dreamas mid dryhten, þær seo deore scolu
leofne lofiað. Ic þæs lifes ne mæg
æfre to ealdre ende gebidan,
leohtes ond lissa. Þeah min lic scyle
on mold-ærne molsnad weorþan
wyrmum to willan, swa þeah weoruda god
æfter swylt-hwile sawle alyseð
ond in wuldor aweceð. Me þæs wen næfre
forbirsteð in breostum, þe ic in brego engla
forðweardne gefean fæste hæbbe.'

[190] Compare also the mention of God's mouth in Adam's creation *Genesis A* 1000b–01b.
[191] *Blæd* can also denote 'fruit' or 'leaf' (*DOE*, 'bled, blæd'), and this, rather than breath, may be its etymological association with prosperity.

Đus frod guma on fyrn-dagum 570
gieddade gleaw-mod, godes spel-boda,
ymb his æriste in ece lif,
þæt we þy geornor ongietan meahten
tir-fæst tacen þæt se torhta fugel
þurh bryne beacnað. 575

Then the holy spirits resound, the truth-firm souls raise up a song; pure and chosen, they praise the might of the King, voice after voice; they rise to glory, beautifully clothed with their good deeds. Then the spirits of men are refined, brightly clarified by the fire's burning. (539–45)

Let none of mankind expect that—that I assemble a song with lying words, write with song-skill. Hear the prophecy of Job's songs: moved in his breast by the Spirit's breath, he spoke boldly, honoured with glory; he spoke this speech: (546–51)

'I do not scorn in my heart's thoughts to go to my grave in my nest, a man corpse-weary, to depart humbly from there on a long journey, surrounded by clay, depressed for earlier deeds, in dirt's embrace, and then after death, by the Lord's gift to be permitted to have renewed life after resurrection like the phoenix bird, [and] joyful songs with the Lord, where the dear band praises the Beloved. I cannot ever in my span endure the end of that, life, light, and graces. Though my body should be decayed in the earthen-hall, delight to worms, nevertheless the God of hosts will loose my soul after the hour of death and awaken it in glory. The expectation of that—that I have future joy securely in the Ruler of angels—never fails in my breast.' (552–69)

Thus the sage man, wise in mind, God's messenger, sang in distant days about his resurrection into eternal life, that we might more readily perceive the glorious sign that the bright bird signifies in burning. (570a–75a)

Here the *Phoenix*-poet gives a vision of the afterlife and validates the vision with the authority of Job's inspired prophecy. Yet the poet clearly takes license with his scriptural sources, freely expanding them. The relevant passages are Job 29. 18: *dicebamque in nidulo meo moriar et sicut palma multiplicabo dies* ('and I said I will die in my nest, and like a palm I will multiply my days'; corresponding to 552–59); and 19. 25–26: *scio enim quod redemptor meus vivat, et in novissimo die de terra surrecturus sim*, *et rursum circumdabor pelle mea et in carne mea videbo Deum* ('for I know that my redeemer lives, and on the last day I will rise from the earth, and I will be wrapped about with skin again and in my flesh I will see God'; corresponding to 563b–67a).[192] Although the poet, whom N. F. Blake notes is

[192] *Fontes Anglo-Saxonici*. While *palma* was the dominant reading in the Vulgate and Old Latin translations, 'phoenix' was traditionally understood here because the Greek word *φοίνιξ* meant both 'palm' and 'phoenix', a point acknowledged by this poet (171–74), Bede, and other ecclesiastics. See Cook, *Elene, Phoenix, and Physiologus*, p. 121 (n. to 552–69).

no ‘slavish’ translator, expands the scriptural references, he seems to purposefully diminish his poetic flair in this same expansion, as we shall see, suggesting a focus on clarity and exposition of the sense.[193]

There are various notable points in this poetic expansion. First is the important variation *lyge-wordum leoð gesomnige* / *write woð-cræfte*. It is possible to read *leoð gesomnige* as varying *write woð-cræfte* since both occupy only one half-line, but given that *lyge-wordum* and *woð-cræfte* are both compounds in the dative, it makes better sense to treat these verses as forming syntactic chiasmus (dative compound, verb [phrase]; verb, dative compound).[194] The poet sets us a stark contrast between gathering song with lying words, writing with song-skill, and Job’s inspired prophecy. Janie Steen notes that this exhortation echoes the prefaces of Juvencus’s and Caelius Sedulius’s (*floruit* circa mid-fifth century) poems, for example, where the poets justify their compositions by contrasting the Christian truths therein with pagan poets’ fictions.[195] Although the *Phoenix*-poet’s aside comes towards the poem’s end, after the general interpretation of what the phoenix represents (381–545) and specifically after the poet’s description of the resurrection of the dead (491–545). It echoes precisely the concerns about inspiration we have seen so far: inspiration is a question of where the poet’s words come from, whether from knowledge of a traditional fabric of songs or from God.

When the poet reassures that he does not ‘gather a song with lying words, write with voice-craft’, he signals several things. Usually the first element *woð-* bears the sense of ‘eloquence’, and implicit in the apposition of gathering song with lying words and writing

[193] Blake, *The Phoenix*, p. 25, notes the poet’s free translation of *De ave phoenice*, adding or subtracting details at will to develop his theme. Even in view of these alterations, Steen, *Verse and Virtuosity*, p. 35, considers it a ‘close’ translation.
[194] See pp. 111–12 for another notable use of chiasmus.
[195] *Verse and Virtuosity*, pp. 39–40. On Caelius Sedulius, see McBrine, *Biblical Epics*, pp. 93–96. On Juvencus and Sedulius’s prefaces, see Chapter One, pp. 21–23, and McBrine, *Biblical Epics*, pp. 27–30 and 103–07, respectively.

with voice-craft is the notion that traditional poetry's artful craft is not always truthful, a suspicion probably owing to poetic licenses and expectations for poetry, such as those discussed above.[196] This contrast between pleasing art and truthful sense is enhanced by the poet's suggestion that he 'writes': rather than performing for the praise of his present audience, the poet's craft is literate and linked to bookish truth.[197]

What makes this account of Job's inspiration so important is that the book of Job is primarily poetry, making Job a poetic prophet.[198] As opposed to lying poets, Job, 'stirred in his chest by the Spirit's breath' (*Þurh gæstes blæd / breostum onbryrded*) receives 'prophecy' (*witedom*) before he speaks his oracles boldly (*giddinga*; *beald reordade*). The *Phoenix*-poet ostensibly relays only what Job already said, and Job himself says what the Spirit stirred him to say. How Job's inspiration occurs is noteworthy: literally 'through ghost's breath, pricked in his breast, he spoke boldly, honoured with glory'. The ghost is presumably the Holy Spirit, and the word *onbryrdan* refers to a goading like spiritual compunction.[199] The picture is vivid: as in *Christ II*, God's breath fills and stirs Job's chest, the traditional seat of words and cognition in poetry, and compels him to speak boldly, with authority, as is characteristic of Christ and his servants.[200] Because of his inspiration, Job himself is 'honoured with glory' (551a).

Following from this general veneration of Christian poetry over worldly verse is the second notable point about this passage: it validates Christian poetical figures. At the end of the passage, the poet makes the figural value of the phoenix explicit: unlike the lying embellishments of common poetry, not only does the phoenix exist, but it signifies,

[196] See pp. 70–73.
[197] Steen, *Verse and Virtuosity*, pp. 35–40, *et passim*, discusses the literary context of *The Phoenix* at greater length.
[198] See p. 73 above and *Fontes Anglo-Saxonici*, which cites six parallels between *The Phoenix* and Isidore's *Etymologies*, a source claiming Job's book is metrical.
[199] On this term, see Thornbury, 'Aldhelm's Rejection', pp. 85–86.
[200] On the heart as the seat of words and cognition, see Chapter Three.

betokening allegorically Christians and especially Christ.[201] As we have already seen, such figures and allegories were always part of biblical interpretation for the early church; and Lactantius himself, as Steen reminds us, claimed that 'the things poets speak are therefore true, but with a certain covering and veiled face' (*Vera sunt ergo quae loquuntur poetae, sed obtentu aliquo specieque uelata*).[202] Even pagan poets cannot help but speak the truth—a point also made later by Augustine—though they veil it.[203] But in the figure of the phoenix we have a taste of God's own poetry: for the audience, both the underlying truth (Christ) and the veil (the phoenix) are true, the allegory figural rather than fictional.[204]

Thirdly, Christian poetry is not merely validated in this work, it is celebrated and carried out with great skill. The poet references song in the phoenix's paradisiacal country (11–12), the pious songs of the phoenix (120–45), other birds singing to the phoenix (335b–41a), and the songs of humans and angels (615b–637a and 650a–61a), reflecting a sustained interest in holy song.[205] Because the phoenix figures Christ in lines 335b–41a, and the other birds figure his servants, so the Christian life of worship is represented as a life filled with joyful singing. The association of joy and singing is ubiquitous in Old English verse, from the songs of celebration in *Beowulf* (89b–101b and 856b–916b), to the angels' song in *Genesis A* (8b–23a), and the birds of the redeemed *beorg* in *Guthlac A* (731–38), for example. The account of the phoenix's song is particularly suggestive (120–39):

> Đonne bið swa fæger fugles gebæru,
> onbryrded breost-sefa, blissum hremig;
> wrixleð woð-cræfte wundorlicor
> beorhtan reorde þonne æfre byre monnes
> hyrde under heofonum, siþþan heah-cyning,
> wuldres wyrhta, woruld staþelode,

[201] Blake, *The Phoenix*, pp. 33–35, argues that these 'overlapping interpretations sometimes confuse the reader' and are therefore not wholly successful, but that the poet did not tie the allegory into a neat package is due both to the allusive style of Old English verse and the transferred identity of Christ onto his followers.
[202] *Divinae institutiones* (Book I. 11. 34), cited in *Verse and Virtuosity*, p. 37 (n. 17).
[203] *City of God*, pp. 18–25 (Book I. 3).
[204] On the different senses of exegesis, see Chapter Five, pp. 245–46.
[205] On the poem's musical background, see Wright, 'Music of *The Phoenix*'. I am most grateful to Professor Wright for sharing this paper with me, which has been instrumental in the development of my conclusions on *The Phoenix*. On the poet's rhetorical prowess, see Steen, *Verse and Virtuosity*, pp. 35–70.

heofon ond eorþan.
Biþ þæs hleoðres sweg
eallum song-cræftum swetra ond wlitigra
ond wynsumra wrenca gehwylcum.
Ne magon þam breahtme byman ne hornas,
ne hearpan hlyn, ne hæleþa stefn 135
ænges on eorþan, ne organan,
sweg-hleoþres geswin, ne swanes feðre,
ne ænig þara dreama þe dryhten gescop
gumum to gliwe in þas geomrum woruld.

Then is the bird's voice[206] so lovely, its breast-thought stirred, exultant in joys; he varies his sound-skill with bright voice more wondrously than any son of man ever heard under heaven since the high King, Maker of glory, founded the world, heaven and earth.

The noise of the sound is sweeter and more lovely than all manner of song and more pleasant than every melody. Neither trumpets nor horns, nor the sound of the harp, nor the voice of any man on earth, nor organ, vocal melody, nor swan's feather, nor any of the joyful sounds[207] which the Lord made for men's delight in this sad world can [compare(?)] to that sound.

Many words in this passage are the same as the subsequent passage about heavenly song and Job's inspiration: *onbryrdan* (126a), *breost* (126a), *woð-cræft* (127a), *wuldor* (130a), *hleoðor* (131b), *song* (132a), *wlitig* (132b), *stefn* (135b). Granted, words like *hleoðor* and *stefn* belong to the same lexical field as any description of song, but it is no coincidence that the phoenix's heart is stirred (*onbryrded breost-sefa*) to sing with song-skill (*woð-cræfte*), just as the poet denies that he composes with song-skill (*woð-cræfte*) and two lines later says that Job was stirred in heart (*breostum onbryrded*) to prophesy.

The collocation of *breost* and *onbryrdan* is rare, occurring near *woð-cræft* only in this poem and appearing only three other times in Old English poetry (*Andreas* 1118a, *Elene* 1094a, *Guthlac A* 335a). Only in one of those cases does it refer to inspiration as we have discussed it: *Guthlac A* 335a refers to Guthlac's heart, stirred by a joyful spirit from heaven. The collocation in *Guthlac A* probably predates the other references and therefore may

[206] On the translation of *gebæru* as 'voice', see Blake, *The Phoenix*, p. 73 (n. 125).
[207] I translate *dream* as 'joyful song' throughout. While the word has often been generalised to mean 'joy', the more common usage is regards music, especially joyful music, and *dream* probably gained the more general connotation 'joy' from an association with joyful, celebratory sounds. See further Karasawa, '*dream* for Horrible Noise', pp. 53–55, and 'Christian Influence on OE *dream*'.

represent the original sense, making it more likely that the *Phoenix*-poet's repetition is intentional.[208] Janie Steen notes that the poet regularly uses such echoic strategies of repetition, deliberately setting lexical links between the figure of the phoenix and the subsequent interpretations of the figure.[209] Here the poet draws an explicit link between the phoenix's virtuosity and Job's prophecy: whereas the bird's song-skill is the result of divine inspiration, among men divine inspiration leads Job to prophesy rather than leading him to compose lying songs with song-skill. But what of the poet's ostensive condemnation of *woð-cræft* if he describes the phoenix's *woð-cræft* in positive terms? It must be the case that *woð-cræft* is a neutral term referring to skill with voice: while it is appropriate here for birdsong, at verse 548a the poet needs to emphasise that his poem is not just song or skilful singing because he wants the truth to be taken in, not just the sound of his voice.

By comparison with the Latin, the phoenix's inspiration seems still more significant:

Atque ubi Sol pepulit fulgentis limina portae
Et primi emicuit luminis aura levis,
Incipit illa sacri modulamina fundere cantus
Et mira lucem voce ciere novam,
Quam nec aedoniae voces nec tibia possit
Musica Cirrhaeis adsimulare modis,
Sed neque olor moriens imitari posse putetur
Nec Cylleneae fila canora lyrae.[210]

And where the sun has pressed the thresholds of the gleaming door and the light air of first light has leapt forth, [the phoenix] begins to pour out melodies of a sacred song and to stir the new light with wondrous voice, which neither nightingale voices nor musical flute might simulate in Cirrhaean modes, but neither let the dying swan be thought to be able to imitate it, nor the tuneful strings of the Cyllenean lyre.

[208] On the early date of *Guthlac A*, see, for example, Fulk, *History of Old English Meter*, pp. 399–400 (and compare Chapter Four, n. 65). Cynewulf appears to take this collocation from *Guthlac A* to *Elene*: the collocation *hleor onhylde* occurs near the *breost-onbryrdan* collocation both in *Guthlac A* (334a) and *Elene* (1098a). *Breost* and *inbryrdan* also collocate four times: *Guthlac A* 654a in the same manner as 335a, and in Cynewulf's *Juliana* 535a and *Elene* 841a, 1045a. Thus, the same pattern of influence applies.
[209] *Verse and Virtuosity*, pp. 42–43.
[210] Ed. Harris, '*De ave phoenice* of Lactanius', p. 46.

While the Old English poet clearly draws his *ne*-anaphora from the Latin (a rhetorical device which Steen shows is one of the poet's favourites to draw from *De ave phoenice*),[211] there is nothing in this passage to suggest the bird is inspired, and the *Phoenix*-poet appears to deliberately censor classical references.[212] Clearly, then, it is no coincidence that in *The Phoenix* the phoenix is stirred to sing in the same manner Job is later stirred to prophesy.

But the poet's denial of his own *woð-cræft* at 548a is surely also a modesty topos, for he shows a great deal of 'voice-skill' in poetic patterning. Apart from the skilful lexical structuring of the five envelope patterns (*sawol*: 540a, 566b; *wuldor*: 542b, 551a, 567a; *wen-*: 546a, 567b; *giedd-*: 549a, 571a; *breost*: 550a, 568a) which link heavenly song with Job's prophetic validation, lines 539–52 display much alliterative ornament and other sonic patterns, such that they require quotation again (standard mark-up):

Þonne **h***l*eoþri*að* **h***al*ge g*æst*as,
s*awl*a **s**oð-f*æst*e **s**ong a**h**ebb*að*,
clæne ond ge**c**orene her*gað* **c**yninges þrym,
stefn æfter **st**efne, **st**igað to wu*ldr*e
w*lit*ige ge**w***yrt*ad mid hyra **w**e*l-d*ædum.
Beoð þonne a**m**erede **m**onna gæstas,
beo*r*hte a**b**ywde þurh **b***ryne* f*yre*s.
Ne wene þæs **æ**nig **æ**lda cynnes
þæt ic **l**yge-wordum **l**eoð gesomnige,
write **w**oð-cræfte. Gehyrað **w**itedom
Iob*es* **g**ieddinga. Þurh **g***æst*es bl*æd*
b*reo*stum on**b***ryrded*, **b**ea*ld* r*eordad*e,
wu*ldr*e ge**w***eorðad*; he þæt **w**o*rd* gec*wæð*

The first two lines of the passage are rich in assonance, with chiastic cadences of *-að* homoioptoton and fully rhyming *-æst* roots supplementing *h-* and *s*-alliteration, to which is added the artful *h* of *ahebbað*. The hl- cluster of *hleoþriað* is split in *halge* which in turn has loose internal rhyme with *sawla*, giving 539b and 540a both *al* and *æst* rhymes. Not only is the patterning chiastic, the sense is too, equating the meanings of half-lines and expanding its

[211] *Verse and Virtuosity*, pp. 43–56.
[212] Blake, *The Phoenix*, pp. 24–35, describes the Christianization of the Old English poem at length.

splendour: ‘Then they sing, the holy spirits, tried-and-true souls, raise a song’. It is a metapoetic scene of rich sonic harmony describing the harmony of heavenly song. The following three lines (541–43) all contain artful alliteration of one kind or another, with a third verb describing the souls’ praise and also alliterating on *h*, though it does not bear structural alliteration. Amid this rich patterning, lines 542–43 seem to conflate the songs with the singers’ very souls: ‘[the souls] voice after voice ascend into glory beautifully dressed in their good works’. The *st*-alliteration draws the voices (*stefn*) together with the rising (*astigað*); shortly after the poet says the souls lift up a song, the souls rise with their song, harmonizing *stefn æfter stefn* into ecstasy.[213]

The next five lines (544–48) display fewer sonic patterns, but this has to do with the sense of the passage. *Satzpartikeln* take the first dip where extra alliteration might have been, and the sense of 544–45 is that there will be radiant clarity in the souls as they have been tried by fire, a felicitous shift from the harmonious but mixed voices of the previous lines into syntactic clarity.[214] Lines 544 and 546 both begin new sentences, share the same prosodic pattern (xxxxSx | SxSx), and end with similar senses (‘the ghosts of men’, ‘[of] the kind of men’).[215] This equivalence links the vision of souls in heaven with men on earth, and the poet pre-empts his audience’s scepticism: prosodic repetition highlights the contrast between heavenly and earthly song, and the proving fire gives the poet reason not to lie. Interlinear alliteration joins *wene*, *-wordum*, and *woð-cræfte* across lines 546–48, linking the audience’s expectation of poetic entertainment to the contrast of Job’s prophecy (*witedom*), and assonance notably falls away in these verses. And indeed, the next line, which begins to narrate Job’s inspiration by the Holy Spirit, reinstates the ornate assonance of the previous lines. The genitive phrase *Iobes gied-* (649a) is equated with its inspiration, *gæstes blæd*, on

[213] Wright suggests that *stefn æfter stefn* singing may even refer to antiphonal song (see further below, pp. 117–18).
[214] On word classification in Old English poetry, see Momma, *Composition of Old English Poetry*, pp. 25–54.
[215] I indicate prosody throughout in the style laid out by Russom, *Meter and Linguistic Theory*, pp. 8–21.

the following half-line, and continued alliteration between 649b and 650a join a parade of liquid (*r/l*) and voiced dental (*d/ð*) assonance, all with *æ* and *eo* internal rhymes and *-ad*/*-ed* homoioteleuton.[216]

The passage quoted above about the phoenix's song (125–39) is similarly richly patterned, with frequent double and continued alliteration, rich in assonance and rhetoric (standard mark-up):

> Đonne *b*ið swa **f***æger* **f**ug*l*es ge*b*<u>*æ*</u>ru, 125
> on**b***r*y*r*ded **b**<u>*r*</u>eost-sefa, ***b****l*issum h*r*emig;
> **w***r*i*x*le*l*ð **w**<u>o</u>ð-c*r*æfte **w**undo*rlicor*
> **b***eor*htan r*eor*de þonne æfre **b***yr*e monnes
> **h***yr*de under **h**<u>e</u>ofonum, siþþan **h**eah-cyning,
> **w***uldr*es <u>w</u>y*rht*a, **w**o*ruld* staþelode, 130
> **h***eofon* ond <u>*e*</u>*orþan*. Biþ þæs **h**l*eoðr*es <u>s</u>weg
> <u>e</u>all*um* **s**ong-cræft*um* **s**wet*ra* ond <u>w</u>litig*ra*
> ond **w**yn<u>s</u>um*ra* **w**renc*a* ge<u>h</u>wylc*um*.
> Ne *m*agon þam **b**reaht*m*e **b**y*m*an ne <u>h</u>ornas,
> ne **h**earpan **<u>h</u>***l*y*n*,[217] ne **h***æl*eþa stef*n* 135
> **æ**nges on **<u>e</u>**orþ*an*, ne **o**rgan*an*,
> **sw**eg-hleo*þr*es ge**<u>sw</u>***i*n, ne **sw**a*n*es fe*ðre*,
> ne ænig þara **dr**eama þe **dr**yhten gescop
> **g**umum to **<u>g</u>**liwe in þas **g**eomrum woruld.

While almost every line of this excerpt features artful alliteration and assonance, what is most interesting about the poetic patterning of this passage is the four-line cluster of artful alliteration which characterizes the description of the Phoenix's song (131b–35a): just as the poet describes the most beautiful sound heard in the world, the verses are all locked intimately together, each primary stress alliterating for eight consecutive half-lines, and after the alliterative ornament ebbs, final-*n* assonance featuring homoioteleuton (*hlyn*, *stefn*, *geswin*; *eorþan*, *organan*) and rhyme (*hlyn*, *geswin*; *organ-*, *swan-*) complement the *ne-*

[216] As an analogue for this consonantal rhyming scheme in which all classes (e.g. velars, dentals, bilabials) respectively rhyme with themselves, whether stops, nasals, or fricatives, Old Irish poetry uses a similar, though systematised, scheme (see Murphy, *Early Irish Metrics*, pp. 36–39).

[217] Whether *h*-alliteration in *hlyn* (135a) is required is uncertain: Griffith, 'Extra Alliteration', argues that double-alliteration is required in verses employing end-rhyme, but it is unclear whether the *n*-homoioteleuton (or rhyme with *geswin* [137a]) would qualify these verses. I consider *hlyn* rhyming because the following line has *an*-homoioteleuton, resembling the poet's other coinciding uses of anaphora and end-rhyme, and I therefore consider this alliteration structural.

anaphora, further emphasizing the singularity of the song in an already rhetorically heightened array. As Steen has shown, the *Phoenix*-poet is especially fond of anaphora, adapting and greatly expanding even the smallest examples of it in the Latin poem, and regularly adding to such catalogues rhyme and assonance (as in this example) in addition to envelope patterns and rhythmic effects.[218] The fact that the poet takes such licenses clearly indicates his enthusiasm for poetic skill, in some ways mimicking and in others surpassing his Latin model.

But compared to these ornamented lines, the lines of Job's prophesy are by contrast notably less patterned (552–69):

> Ic þæt ne for**h**ycge **h**eortan geþoncum,
> þæt ic in minum **n**este **n**eo-bed ceose,
> **h**æle **h**ra-*w*erig, ge*w*ite **h**ean þonan
> on **l**ongne sið, **l**ame betolden,
> **g***eo*mor **g**u-d*æd*a, in **g**r*eo*tes f*æð*m,
> ond þonne æfter **d**eaþe þurh **d**ryhtnes giefe
> swa se **f**ugel **f**enix **f**eorh edniwe
> *æ*fter **æ**riste **a**gan mote,
> **d***r*eamas mid **d***r*yhten, þær seo **d**eo*r*e scolu
> **l**e*of*ne l*of*iað. Ic þæs **l**i*f*es ne mæg
> **æ**fre to **e**aldre **e**nde gebidan,
> **l**eohtes ond **l**issa. Þeah min **l**ic scyle
> on **m***ol*d-ærne **m***ol*snad weorþan
> **w**y*r*mum to **w**illan, swa þeah **w**eo*r*uda god
> æfter **s***wyl*t-h*wil*e **s**a*wl*e a*lys*eð
> ond in **w**u*l*dor a**w**eceð. Me þæs **w**en næfre
> for**b**i*rst*eð in **b***r*eo*st*um, þe ic in **b***r*ego engla
> **f**orðweardne ge**f**ean **f***æst*e h*æ*bbe.

There is a stark lack of assonance and artful alliteration (apart from double-alliteration) in the passage until Job's summative prophecy or statement of faith at the end of the quotation (566–69), where assonance returns and four of the five envelope-words come together in four consecutive verses (*sawle*, *wuldor*, *wen*, *breostum*). Besides the equation by rhyme of sin-sadness and 'dust's embrace' in line 556 and the common *lif-lof-leof* collocation in line 561,

[218] *Verse and Virtuosity*, pp. 44–55 and 68.

the lack of ornament in comparison to the two aforementioned excerpts makes the back-linked and continued alliteration of lines 557–58 look accidental.[219] Furthermore, whereas lines 125–39 and 539–52 have six light a-verses between them (125a, 133a, 134a, 539a, 544a, and 546a; arguably also 132a and 138a) in this excerpt alone there are six (552a, 553a, 557a, 559a, 564a, and 566a). Light verses in general can be a sign of prosaic register, but they are especially noticeable in the a-verse here where this poet so frequently uses double-alliteration.[220] The light flourish of assonance at 566–69 stands apart from the rest of the excerpt, ornamenting the lexical repetitions and highlighting Job's hope, which is the same as the poet's. This excerpt's relatively straightforward syntax, light in variation and repetition, paired with this lack of extra ornament, seems to indicate that clarity of message took precedence over poetic virtuosity.

The lack of patterning in the first portion of this passage need not be the result of direct speech; the poet speaks in the first person around this passage with no similar diminuendo of patterning. Rather, given the laxer ornament of Job's direct speech, we should suppose that the poet is self-conscious about the authority of an utterance that is too sonically patterned and that he is more concerned with versifying the scriptural truth clearly than adorning it.[221] I argue that the mention of inspired song offers a chance for the poet to embellish his description with heightened song-craft, whereas the truth of the prophesy itself should not be altered, and thus is not an opportunity to prioritise sound over sense. This passage of *The Phoenix* therefore appears symptomatic of a patristic understanding of inspiration, especially of poetic inspiration: the eloquence of truth takes precedence over song-craft, but that does not preclude flights into poetic eloquence. Even though *sermo humilis* and the spiritual eloquence of truth are preferable to a grand style and impenetrable

[219] On this common pattern, see Kintgen, '*Lif*, *Lof*, *Leof*'.
[220] Raw, *Art and Background*, pp. 108–116; Griffith, 'Register of Divine Speech', pp. 63–65.
[221] Compare p. 72 above.

opacity when it comes to instruction, Augustine, for example, argues in *De doctrina Christiana* that rhetoric has the power to move people to good or evil, and that it should therefore be used to move people to good, just as Cædmon and Aldhelm, for example, used poetry.[222] Describing the beauty of pious song and the glory of inspiration with heightened ornament makes these holy virtues more appealing, and delivering Scripture in plain poetry makes it more comprehensible.

The poem's only other instance of overt scriptural quotation makes a useful comparison to Job's speech. On lines 615b–37a holy souls and angels sing together to God, and the text of their song, although an amalgam of citations (like Job's quotation), clearly relies most heavily on Revelation 7. 10 and 12 and the *Sanctus* of the Mass (standard mark-up):

Þær **g**æsta gedryht
hælend h*ergað* ond **h**eofon-cyninges
meahte **m***ærsiað*, sing*að* **m**etude lof.
S*w*ins*að* **s**ib-gedryht **s***w*ega mæste
hædre ymb þæt **h**alge **h**eah-seld godes,
b*l*iþe **b***letsiað* **b***r*egu se*lest*an
eadge mid **e**nglum, **e**fen-hleoþre þus:
'**S**ib si þe, soð god, ond **s**ny*tt*ru-cræft,
ond þe **þ**onc sy **þ**rym-si*tt*endum
geongra gyfena, **g**oda gehwylces,[223]
micel, un**m**æte **m**ægnes strengðu,
heah ond **h**alig! **H**eofonas sindon
f*æ*gre ge**f***yll*ed, **f***æ*der æ*l*-mihtig,
ealra **þ**rymma þrym, **þ**ines wuldres,
uppe mid **e**nglum ond on **e**orðan somod.
Ge**f***r*eo*þa* usic, **f***r*ym*þa* scypp*end*! þu eart **f**æder æl-mihtig[224]
in **h**eannesse, **h**eofun*a* wald*end*.'
Ðus **r**eordi*að* **r**yht-fre*mm*ende,
manes a**m***e*rede, in þæ*r*e **m**æ*r*an by*r*ig
cyne-*þ*rym **c**y*það*, **c**aseres lof
sing*að* on **s**wegle **s**oð-fæstra gedryht,
þam **a**num is **e**ce we*orð*-my*nd*

[222] Steen, *Verse and Virtuosity*, p. 17.
[223] ASPR give a full stop after *gehwylces*; however, *mægnes strengðu* is part of the catalogue with *sib*, *snyttru-cræft*, and *þonc*.
[224] 630b is metrically extraneous: 630a can uncontroversially be divided between *usic* and *frymþa* into two normal verses. Moreover, 630b repeats 627a, and the sense is closer to the *Sanctus* by removing this b-verse, so it should be considered an accidental duplication due to eye-skip from 627b.

f*orð* butan e*nd*e.

> There a troop of spirits praise the Saviour and proclaim the Heaven-King's strength, sing praise to the Measurer. The peace-band makes melody with the greatest of sounds, clearly around God's holy high-seat, joyfully they bless the best Lord, prosperous with the angels, thus with one sound: (615–21)
>
> 'Peace be with you, true God, and wisdom, and thanks be to you among the might-dwellers for new gifts, for every good, great, not mean, strength of might, high and holy! The heavens are wonderfully filled with your glory, Almighty Father, Might of all might, above with the angels, and earth together. Preserve us, Creator of origins (you are the Almighty Father) in highness, Ruler of heavens.' (622–31)
>
> Thus sing the right-doers, purified of evil, in the great city. They declare kingly glory, the Caesar's praise; the troop of the truth-fast sings in heaven to whom alone belongs eternal honour-remembrance forever without end. (632a–37a)

For comparison, I quote the relevant verses from Revelation (corresponding to lines 622–25), where men of all nations and the inhabitants of heaven praise God:

> 10: et clamabant voce magna, dicentes: Salus Deo nostro, qui sedit super thronum, et Agno.
> 12: dicentes, Amen. Benedictio, et claritas, et sapientia, et gratiarum actio, honor, et virtus, et fortitudo Deo nostro in saecula saeculorum. Amen.
>
> And [men of all nations] were crying out with a great voice, saying: Salvation to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb. […] [The heavenly beings sang:] saying 'Amen'. Blessing, and renown, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, honour, and power, and strength to our God for ever. Amen.

Compare also the *Sanctus* (corresponding to lines 626a–30a):[225]

> Sanctus, Sanctus, Sanctus, Dominus Deus Sabaoth. Pleni sunt caeli et terra gloria tua. Osanna in excelsis. Benedictus qui venit in nomine domini. Osanna in excelsis.
>
> Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God of Hosts. The heavens and earth are full of your glory. Hosanna [literally 'save'] in the highest. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest.

In this vision of heaven, the men sing 'with the angels' (*mid englum*), and their songs are mainly angels' songs: while the blessed sing before the throne in Revelation 7.10, in *The Phoenix* their song resembles more the song of the heavenly host in verse 7. 12; and the first two colons of the *Sanctus* are partly drawn from the song of the seraphim in Isaiah 6. 3, the last colon from the crowd's song at Christ's entry into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday (Matthew

[225] Ed. Deshusses, *Sacramentaire Gregorien*, p. 86 (cited in Wright, 'Music of the Phoenix').

21. 9, Mark 11. 9–10, John 12. 13). The human and heavenly join in one song, and Charles Wright, citing various contemporary liturgical formulae which preceded the *Sanctus*, has suggested that *efen-hleoþre* ('with one sound') specifically refers to harmonious singing in unison of spirit and performance, in contrast with the antiphonal, *stefn æfter stefn*, song of those who have only begun their ascent to heaven (lines 539–45), or even with the song from heaven which is only *heard* by the blessed in the phoenix's terrestrial paradise (11–12).[226] As Wright argues, the 'poet characterizes different stages of blessedness and embodiedness by different kinds of singing appropriate to each stage'—from hearing, to singing in turn, to singing in unison. And whereas the poet, in a description of holy song, claims 'truth-firm' (*soð-fæste*, 540a) souls will be purified (*amerede*, 544a) at the resurrection, here, in another description of holy song, the 'band of the truth-firm' (*soð-fæstra gedryht*, 635b) has been purified (*amerede*, 633a) in heaven. The movement from earth to heaven, and from listening to joining in unified vocal perfection helps us to understand the phoenix's *woð-cræft*, which, occurring as it does in the earthly paradise from the voice of a bird, is a more corporeal mode of song, while inspired human song should apparently be more like that of the angels above, moving from corporeal obscurity and division to spiritual sublimity and authoritative unity.

When it comes to the poetic adornment of this passage, again many of the poet's devices are used outside of the quotation but are absent within the quotation. Just like the passage preceding Job's prophecy, the blessed sing in an *að*-homoioptoton-patterned catalogue of vocal verbs (*hergað*, *mærsiað*, *singað*, *swinsað*, *bletsiað*).[227] Beginning with *singað*, three sonorous s-words (*singað*, *swinsað*, *sweg*) initiate four lines of artful *s*-alliteration, which then reappear in the first two lines of the heavenly song (***S**ib si þe, soð god, ond **s**nyttru-cræft, / ond þe þonc sy þrym-sittendum*), highlighting its resonance. Indeed,

[226] 'The Music of *The Phoenix*'.
[227] Compare the repetition of finite verbs in *Solomon and Saturn I* (Chapter One, p. 54) and *Guthlac A* (Chapter Four, pp. 193–95).

the quotation is densely packed with artful alliteration, which occurs on nine out of ten lines, and four of ten alliterate on every stressed syllable.

Again, assonance is largely missing from this song until its end, when the poet expands 'Hosanna in the highest' by inserting two grammatically- and prosodically-identical b-verses (*frymþa scyppend*, *heofuna waldend* [Sx|Sx]) employing homoioptoton, though assonance occurs in the lines preceding and succeeding the song. Furthermore, although the poet includes a fourfold list of accolades for God, the scriptural catalogue is sevenfold. Not only did this telescope the number from seven's perfection to four, but the diminution goes against a common practice of the poet's treatment of *De ave phoenice*, whose catalogues he often expands.[228] The poet only gives the spirits one 'holy', despite the scriptural and liturgical *tersanctus*.[229] But the syntax of this passage is far less clear than that of Job's prophecy, filled as the former is with variation and apostrophe. The reason for this is simple: whereas Job's prophecy, like the biblical text, transmitted wisdom to be taken on by the audience, this quotation depicts heavenly song, which is not aimed at communicating truths to live by to the audience so much as it is aimed at representing a song of praise, and in its heavy use of apposition, epithets, and apostrophe, it is notably similar to Cædmon's *Hymn*, but with extra alliteration binding the words and the voices of this song together. Unsurprisingly, after the heavenly song, *reordiað*, *cyþað*, and *singað* continue the *að*-homoioptoton, which was suspended by the quotation, and a degree of sonorous assonance returns to this description of song. It would seem that the poet uses alliteration and lexical repetition to link words logically, but additional patterning like assonance and variation highlight the sonorous, song-like quality of the words.[230]

[228] See n. 147 above.
[229] Compare this with the much more literal treatment of the Sanctus in *Advent Lyric* 11, discussed by Maring, 'Bright Voice of Praise', pp. 314–15.
[230] Compare lines 539–52 and Griffith's ('Extra-Alliteration') distinction between the largely structural role of alliteration and its artful usage.

Wright also points out how the unity of heavenly song is evoked by the poem's closing lines. The poet concludes with eleven macaronic lines, alternating Old English in the a-verses and Latin in the b-verses, which Yun Lee Too notes '[mimic] the antiphonal form of the sequence', a musical form which is commonly thought to have developed from the practice of jubilation on the *Alleluia* of the Mass (although Crocker notes that this assumption, while sometimes demonstrable, is unproven).[231] Furthermore, the poem's final verse is the single word *alleluia*, and as Wright notes, *alleluia* was a form of linguistic unity in both heaven and earth: as we have seen, *alleluia* is sung by all believers regardless of which language they speak, and because it is even sung by angels (Wright points out that the penultimate half-line says we will sing *eadge mid englum*, repeating 621a) it is the ultimate sound of unity.[232] In the practice of jubilation, the *Alleluia*'s final vowel *a* becomes a prelinguistic mode of worship, pure voice, pure expression of the soul, and so in the final verse of this poem the poet masterfully draws together the themes of heavenly and earthly poetic form, linguistic form, and music, presenting a model of heavenly song as a unity of intention and voice expressed in pure song.

Conclusions

Even if a Christian poet was not a *vates* or *propheta* receiving new revelation the same way Job did, the poet has a similar role in Christian history: revealing, celebrating, and propagating the truth. We might imagine that the *Phoenix*-poet's relish for inspired song is also a celebration of his own stirring to speak of God's deeds. Though there was a diversity of insular traditions regarding eloquence and the relationship between spirit and form in

[231] Too, 'Appeal of the Senses', p. 237; see further Wright, 'Music of *The Phoenix*', who gives a fuller discussion of this topic. On the sequence, see Crocker, *Early Medieval Sequence*, pp. 11 and 240, and Dronke, 'Beginnings of the Sequence', pp. 52–53.
[232] 'Music of *The Phoenix*'.

language, what is most important for us to observe is that the dominant ecclesiastical model of spiritual eloquence valued the power of truth over formal patterning and did not place any direct link between formal eloquence and spiritual power. While Old English poets did not delineate a special language of the gods, they did use special poetic forms, such as hypermetrics, to encode divine messages, and we have seen in this chapter how the *Phoenix*-poet adapts his poetic style to suit his message: song is described sonorously, truth is communicated straightforwardly, praise is transmitted with variation and apostrophe, and pure worship is given in unified song. In the following chapter we will begin to observe more closely the form of supernatural characters' direct discourse, as well as how humans were perceived as vessels for this speech.

Speech-Bearing Spirits: Taking the Otherworld to Heart

> Cleopað þonne swa cearful cealdan reorde,
> spreceð grimlice se gast to þam duste
>
> Then he cries out, so care-filled, with a cold voice, he speaks grimly, the [damned] spirit to the dust.
>
> Þonne þa gastas gode word sprecað,
> snottre, sige-fæste, ond þus soðlice
> þone lic-homan lustum gretaþ
>
> Then the [blessed] spirits speak good words, wise, victory-fast, and thus truly greet the body-covering with pleasures.
>
> —*Soul and Body I*, 15–16; 132–34[1]

In the previous chapters I examined some of the ways inspiration and the notion of 'spiritual' language are manifested in insular literatures. One notable feature of these chapters was that inspiration and divine discourse are often represented on the level of 'words', and in this chapter I will demonstrate some reasons why this is so. First, I examine select instances of style in vernacular revelations of life after death, showing how writers use structure to emphatic effect, encouraging their audiences to remember the knowledge gained from spiritual visions. Then I discuss the poetic conception of humans as quintessential speech-bearers with a thought-enclosure and some of the implications of this conception. Finally, we will see both how *The Dream of the Rood* uses poetic form to memorialize its revelations and how those who transgress their speech-bearing responsibilities in *The Dream* and *Daniel* are contrasted with non-human entities, which have wondrously become speech-bearers.

[1] For discussions of these excerpts, see pp. 123–24 and 130.

Soul and Speech in *Soul and Body*

The poems *Soul and Body I* and *II* dramatize life after death: both derive from a common ancestor in which a damned soul addresses its dead body, and in *Soul and Body I* the damned soul's address is followed by a blessed soul's speech to its body (though Douglas Moffat and others suggest that the blessed soul's address is a later addition).[2] *Soul and Body I*, a fragmentary poem of 166 lines, is found on folios 101^{v}–03^{v} of the Vercelli Book, preceded by *Vercelli Homily XVIII* (a life of St Martin) and followed by *Homiletic Fragment I*, but one or more folios are missing between *Soul and Body I* on folio 103^{v} and *Homiletic Fragment I* on folio 104^{r}.[3] *Soul and Body II*, a complete poem of 121 lines, is found in the Exeter Book, folios 98^{r}–100^{r}, between *The Partridge* and *Deor*, and although there are some differences between the texts, *Soul and Body II* is largely the same as *Soul and Body I*, corresponding to lines 1–126 of the latter poem. Unless otherwise indicated, I refer to *Soul and Body I* and its lineation as given in ASPR.

After the damned soul departs from its bodily home, it is consigned to hell but must return to berate its corpse every week for three hundred years, seemingly as part of the so-called 'respite of the damned', a tradition that damned souls are given rest from their torments every seventh day.[4] The blessed soul, by contrast, comes to speak kindly to its body, and, although no indication is given as to when or how frequently this occurs, the ghost intimates that they will not be joined again until Doomsday (138b–50b), and it seems that the

[2] *Soul and Body*, pp. 32 and 43; see further pp. 127–32 below.
[3] On the manuscripts and relationships between the poems, see further Moffat, *Soul and Body*, pp. 1–44, and the ensuing discussion.
[4] On the respite in *Soul and Body I* and vernacular homilies, see further Willard, 'Address of the Soul', pp. 966–79.

soul has simply come to comfort the body while the latter deteriorates. The cursed soul greets the body *grimlice* ('grimly', 16a) with *cealdan reorde* ('cold speech', 15b) while the blessed soul greets its body *lustum* ('with pleasures', 'pleasantly', 134b) with *ærende eadiglicre* ('happier tidings', 129); but the poet stresses three times that the dead body is silent, unable to speak (65a, 105b–07b, and 113–15). The damned soul's 'cold speech' should be taken to refer to 'grim' and malicious speech, as the adverb *grimlice* parallels *cealdan reorde* syntactically. Similarly, Vivian Salmon shows that adjective 'cold' often occurs collocated with weapons, water, speech (Old English *reord*, Old Norse *rǫdd*), and counsel (Middle English *rede*, Old Norse *ráð*) in Old English, Middle English, and Old Norse poetry, primarily denoting hostility or deceit in the context of language.[5] The malice of coldness should be compared with the positive emotions of a warm heart in Old English poetry, such as desire and love, described by Leslie Lockett, although Lockett also shows that a hot heart, too, is associated with negative passions, such as anger and sorrow.[6] Yet the soul's speech to its body here is hardly cold in the sense of 'dispassionate'. Richard Dance suggests that the collocation of *cleopað* and *cealdan* here (15) could conceivably have been a traditional one, analogous to the Old Norse collocation of *kalla* and *kaldr*.[7]

Whatever the case, it is notably the soul that speaks in this poem, coming from its dwelling like a messenger: without its soul, the poet represents the body not simply as dead, but as dumb and deaf (65a) like *feld-gangende feoh butan snyttro* ('field-going cattle without understanding', 81), unable to answer the soul's accusations (105b–07b). The fact that the soul addresses a *speechless* body at all is evident in the earliest four treatments of the 'Address of the Soul to the Body' theme, two of which are Old English vernacular

[5] 'Some Connotations of "Cold"', pp. 314–22.
[6] On which see Lockett, *Anglo-Saxon Psychologies*, pp. 54–109.
[7] 'Origins of *Call*', p. 149 (n. 33)

translations of Latin homilies;[8] yet this commonsensical feature is absent in later medieval soul and body literature, where the body is animated to facilitate dialogue between body and soul.[9] The witlessness of animals is also emphasized in *Solomon & Saturn I*, as we have seen, where one who does not know the Pater Noster is unlike the angels and like a beast, unable to stand on Doomsday.[10] That poem twice employs a collocation very similar to one in the *Soul and Body* poems (***feld-gongende feoh butan gewitte***, 25; *stingeð* ***nieten, / feld-gongende feoh*** *gestrudeð*, 153b–54b). Animals and speechlessness also appear in conjunction with Judgment Day in *Vercelli Homilies II* and *XXI* (which quotes *II* verbatim in this instance): *þa fyrenfullan þonne meahton gewiscan þæt hie næfre ne wæren acennede fram hiora fædrum 7 modrum, oððe ælc hiora to* ***dumbum nytenum*** *gewurde* ('then the sinful could wish that they were never born of their fathers and mothers, or that each of them became **dumb animals**').[11] In these homilies, the soul is associated with both the privileges of language and wisdom as well as the responsibilities appurtenant thereto.

However, in *Soul and Body I* 88a–95a, we learn that at the resurrection the *body* must give an account of its deeds to God through its own *muðes reorde* ('the speech of its mouth', 94b), and there is no mention of the soul. Surely the soul's absence here is intended to emphasize the *body's* guilt before God, but this also constitutes evidence of Leslie Lockett's claim that the soul only has autonomous psychology when it is apart from the body; moreover, the account has the happy biproduct of showing that language is the property of the soul, only possible in a body when the soul is present.[12] Compare this to the damned

[8] The texts, two in Latin (Théodore Batiouchkof's Nonantola Homily and *Sermo 69* of the *Sermones ad Fratres in Eremo*) and two in Old English (apparently translated from a Latin original), are given as a parallel edition in Dudley, 'An Early Homily', pp. 225–53. Note that in these homiletic texts, the soul addresses the body at death rather than in respite or on Judgment Day. Willard, 'Address of the Soul', pp. 965–83, discusses these three occasions of the soul's address.
[9] Ferguson, 'Structure of the *Soul's Address*', pp. 73–4 and 79–80.
[10] See Chapter One, pp. 56–59.
[11] Scragg, *Vercelli Homilies*, pp. 58 and 360 (Homilies II. 51–54—quoted above—and XXI. 202–05). Scragg (pp. 48 and 347–50), suggests that the compiler of XXI had a version of II to hand, copying it among many other sources, including some vernacular verse.
[12] Lockett, *Anglo-Saxon Psychologies*, p. 41.

soul's words to its body in *Vercelli Homily IV*: *Ic wæs þin wlite ond þin wunsumnes; Ic wæs þin spræc ond þin swæcc* […]. *Eall þæt ðu wære, ic wæs þis eall on þe* ('I was your beauty and your delight; I was your speech and your scent […] Everything that you were, I was all this in you').[13] The same homily emphasizes that body and soul speak when reunited but cannot speak when separated:[14]

> 7 þa hwile þe hie on twam bioð, ne mæg se lichoma an word geclypian, ne to gode ne to laðe, ac gelice þam he stent swa he wære eorðan lames oððe heardes stancynnes. Ac hie bioð clypiende, sona swa hie on anum bioð.
>
> And as long as they [soul and body] are in two, the body cannot call out one word, neither for good nor for hate, but it remains like those, as though it were of earthen clay or hard stone. But they are calling out as soon as they are one.

In fact, the very organs of speech are destroyed in *Soul and Body I* when the soul departs at death, a destruction the poet describes with great relish in lines 112a–24a, including an extended description of the body's loss of speech (113–15):[15]

> beoð hira tungan totogenne on tyn healfa
> hungregum to frofre; forþon hie ne magon huxlicum
> wordum wrixlian wið þone werian gast.
>
> Their tongue is torn apart into ten pieces, a comfort to the hungry. Therefore they cannot exchange disgraceful words with the cursed spirit.

Though it could not speak without the soul anyway, the body has its tongue's destruction elaborated in detail to emphasize the punishment of its ill-used corporeal faculties.[16] Visions

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[13] Scragg, *Vercelli Homilies*, IV. 275–76 and 281.
[14] Scragg, *Vercelli Homilies*, IV. 169–71.
[15] The referent of *hira* ('their') and hie ('they') is uncertain, and a few possibilities are discussed in Moffat, *Soul and Body*, p. 79. *Soul and Body II* 108–10 has the following, which Orton, 'Further Examination', pp. 190–91, suggests is preferable metrically and semantically:

> Bið seo tunge totogen on tyn healfe
> hungrum to hroþor. Forþon heo ne mæg horsclice
> wordum wrixlan wið þone wergan gæst.
>
> The tongue is torn apart into ten pieces, a solace to hunger. Therefore it cannot disgracefully exchange words with the cursed soul.

Scholarly reaction to the poet's putative contempt for the corporeal is discussed by Smetana, 'Second Thoughts', who offers a contrary view.
[16] Hill, 'Punishment', pp. 409–10, and 'Punishment, Again', p. 246, cites two Irish analogues to this poem's detailed account of the body's punishment.

of the soul's journey from the body are closely allied with the doctrine of deeds, in that the judgment these souls receive at death corresponds precisely to their actions on earth;[17] and Allen Frantzen argues that the body's responsibility and decay are emphasized because the poem is penitential in focus, aimed at calling attention to how the body is used.[18] In fact, the scene of the body's decay fittingly concludes *Soul and Body II*, setting the decomposition in an especially emphatic position, and some critics have suggested that the account of the blessed soul in *Soul and Body I* may be a later addition to this grim conclusion.[19]

Hence, although not intended as a piece on the metaphysics of voice, the *Soul and Body* poems share affinities with homiletic writing and grammatical models of speech. The poems are on a deep level about voice, not merely about physiological voice as it springs from soul and body, but also about the role of voice in sharing the experience of other worlds, voicing them, enlivening them, as it were, through poetic performance. Although the bodies of *Soul and Body I* cannot speak, it is important to discuss the discursive style of their ghosts, and for clarity I adopt and adapt Orton's abbreviations throughout this discussion: *V* for the Vercelli text as a whole, *V1* for lines 1–126 of Vercelli (the account of the damned soul), *V2* for lines 127–66 (the account of the blessed soul), and *E* for the Exeter text.[20]

Neither *V* nor *E* is particularly notable for virtuosity. Cyril Smetana, for example, claims that both poems use poetic compounds half as much proportionally as *Beowulf* (and even these compounds are usually homiletic and prosaic rather than poetic), and Griffith calculates that they employ extra alliteration at a frequency of 18% and 19% respectively, right around the middling range of all Old English poems over 70 lines (20.6% or 20.8%).[21]

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[17] Willard, *Two Apocrypha*, pp. 62–66; Healey, *Old English Vision*, p. 42.
[18] 'Body in *Soul and Body I*', pp. 81–83.
[19] Moffat reviews the evidence in *Soul and Body*, pp. 41–44. Although Smetana, 'Second Thoughts', argued for the integrity of a two-part poem featuring both the damned and blessed souls, Orton, 'Disunity in the Vercelli', pp. 450–60, counters Smetana by demonstrating the metrical inferiority and derivative nature of the 'blessed soul' section, suggesting it is an interpolation of a later poet.
[20] Orton, 'Further Examination', p. 173.
[21] Smetana, 'Second Thoughts', pp. 203–04. Griffith, 'Extra Alliteration' (Appendix Six). For my calculation I have simply averaged the percentiles of the poems listed in Griffith's appendix, irrespective of the poems'

If *V* and *E* fail to impress, *V* falls further short of the mark: Orton shows that the work is more prosaic than *E*, containing alterations not present in *E* which are best explained by the scribe's desire for clarification, misunderstanding of poetic style, and a degree of carelessness.[22]

Smetana lists several key instances of repetitions in *V2* which are drawn from *V1*, arguing for *V*'s essential unity: for example, *wyrmum to wiste* (23a, repeated verbatim at 152a); *godes lichoman, gastes drynces* (41, repeated verbatim at 143); *Scealt ðu* […] *sceame þrowian / on ðam myclan dæge* (49a–50a; compare *ðu ne þearft sceamian* […] *on þam mæran dæge*, 145a–47a); *swa ðu unc her ær scrife* (102b; compare *swylc swa ðu me ær her scrife*, 141b).[23] But Orton sees in *V2* the work of a derivative poet whose composition is stylistically inferior to *V1*, citing metrical deficiencies and linguistic differences.[24] I agree with Orton on these and other stylistic grounds. For example, the poet of *V1* uses emphatic rhetorical structures—a practice which is absent from *V2*—such as in lines 22a–25a:[25]

> Hwæt, wite ðu me, weriga![26] Hwæt, ðu huru wyrma gyfl
> lyt geþohtest, þa ðu lust-gryrum eallum
> ful geeodest, hu ðu on eorðan scealt
> wyrmum to wiste! 25
>
> Lo, you might blame me, cursed one! Lo, indeed, you, worms' food, little considered when you completely went into all lust-terrors, how you must go into the earth—a feast for worms!

lengths; if the amount of lines in each poem were accounted for in my calculation, the figures would be different, but just as the appendix gives representative sense of alliterative style on a poem-by-poem basis, my figures are intended to give an average sense poem-by-poem rather than for every line in the poetic corpus. The low and high figures are due to the low and high figures Griffith gives for the *Paris Psalter*.

[22] Orton, 'Further Examination', pp. 193–94. Orton argues convincingly that the differences between *V* and *E* are not due to oral transmission (as Alison Gyger and Kenneth Sisam had argued) but show evidence, such as misunderstanding of poetic practice and eye-skip, of literate transmission.

[23] Smetana, 'Second Thoughts', pp. 197–98.

[24] Orton, 'Disunity in the Vercelli', pp. 452–58.

[25] *E*, which Orton considers the more conservative text (though it, too, present difficulties), does not include lines 23b–26a; but this is easily explainable as eye-skip, for *lyt geþohtest* is repeated directly after a *Hwæt*-phrase on line 26a, just as it is on 23a. See further Orton, 'Further Examination', pp. 181–83.

[26] This half-line cannot represent the body's reply, because the poet asserts three times that the body cannot speak (65a, 105b–7b, and 113–15).

First, there is parallel usage of *hwæt* and *ðu* between the a- and b-verses of line 22. Then, the a-verses of 23 and 24 have the same prosodic structure (S|xSx) followed by a conjunction and *ðu*, creating parallelism between ignorance, sin, and the punishment for these, which fits into the poem's primary theme of encouraging its audience to think about life after death, a theme emphasized at the very beginning (*behofað hæleða æghwylc / þæt he his sawle sið sylfe geþence*, 'it behoves each man to think to himself about his soul's journey', 1–2) and end (*Þæt mæg æghwylcum / men to gemynde*, 'That can be something to remember for each man', 125b–26a) of the poem on the damned soul.[27]

Lines 33–35 are analogous to 22a–25a in structure:

> Eardode ic þe on innan. Ne meahte ic ðe of cuman,
> flæsce befangen, ond me fyren-lustas
> þine geþrungon. Þæt me þuhte ful oft 35
>
> I dwelled within you. I could not come out of you, encompassed by flesh, and your sin-lusts pressed me. Very frequently that seemed to me…

Here the a- and b-verses of 33 begin with a preterite verb followed by *ic þe*, both emphasizing the soul's unhappy union with the body. The a-verses of 34 and 35 share prosodic structure (Sx|xSx) with double-alliteration and the b-verses contain a word followed by *me*. Indeed, this emphasis on the soul's suffering (*ic*, 33a, 33b; *me*, 34b, 35b) seems intended as a direct contrast with the body's deeds (*ðu*, 22a, 22b, 23b, and 24b), using the same rhetorical structure as 22–24 to highlight the contrast between soul and body.[28]

Moreover, the poet makes extensive use of rhetorical lists headed by anaphora (for example, lines 52–54 have a fourfold *ne*-catalogue, cataloguing those to whom the dead body is no longer dear; 57–60 have a sevenfold *ne*-catalogue, listing what the dead body can no longer use;[29] and lines 76–87 have a fourfold *oððe*-/*ge*-catalogue,[30] enumerating alternative

[27] See further Ferguson, 'Structure of the *Soul's Address*', pp. 73–74.
[28] See also lines 76–77 for another example of this structure.
[29] *E* 54–55 has a shorter catalogue by two lines (with no equivalent of *V*'s 59–60), and Orton, 'Further Consideration', pp. 183–84, considers the extra *V* lines an interpolation.
[30] The *E*-poet (71–79) uses *oððe* twice and *ge* twice whereas the *V1*-poet uses *oððe* three times and *ge* once.

fates which would have been better for the body), varied (rather than verbatim) repetitions (for example, *ne synt þine dreamas awiht* [65b], *Ne synt þine æhta awihte* [74b]; *Ac hwæt wylt ðu þær* [95b], *Ac hwæt do wyt unc?* [100b]; *þe ðu me her scrife* [70b], *swa ðu unc her ær scrife!* [102b]),[31] and what Orchard has termed the 'serial past participle' (which occurs especially in judgment-contexts) on lines 108a–11a,[32] showing a strong rhetorical—indeed homiletic—sense for antithesis, enumeration, and emphasis.[33]

Given the verbatim repetitions from *V1* Smetana noted in *V2*, we can guess that the poet of *V2* admired *V1*'s use of rhetorical repetition. The *V2*-poet also seems to borrow from another poem, the beginning of *Guthlac A*.[34] In *Guthlac A* 1–5, an angel meets and greets (*greteð*, 5a) a newly departed soul; and at the beginning of *V2* (lines 127–34) a holy soul greets (*gretaþ*, 134b) its body. Likewise, the soul's joy in *V2* (*gefean*, 130b) recalls the *gefeana* of the angel and soul meeting in a hypermetrical set of *Guthlac A* (1a); *sio halige sawl* (127b) recalls *sio eadge sawl* of *Guthlac A* (2a); and the soul's *ærende eadiglicre* (129) recalls *Guthlac A*'s *eadge* soul (2a) and its angel's *ærende* (5b).[35] It seems clear that the *V2*-poet modelled the meeting of the blessed soul and its body on *Guthlac A*'s account of an angel meeting a blessed soul. But the *V2*-poet does not make use of the other rhetorical patterns found in *V1*, as far as I can tell, and given its derivative nature and Orton's aforementioned observations that *V2* is at variance with *V1* metrically and linguistically, it seems likely that *V2* was composed later as a 'more pleasant' (*hyhtlicre*, 127b) companion to the gloomy *V1*.

Orton's argument for composite authorship in *V* coincides nicely with Leonard Neidorf's similar argument, which regards lines 1–77 (hereafter *D1*) of *The Dream of the*

[31] These repetitions occur in *E* 60b, 69b; 83b, 93b; and 65b, 96b, respectively.
[32] Compare *E* 103–05, which omits one half-line from the catalogue. On the serial past participle, see further Chapter Four, pp. 222–23.
[33] On the enumerative style in Old English homilies, see Wright, *Irish Tradition*, pp. 75–105.
[34] The passage is quoted in full and discussed in the following chapter.
[35] On this passage in *Guthlac A*, see further Chapter Four, p. 188.

Rood (another Vercelli Book poem, discussed in detail below), as distinct from 78–156 (hereafter *D2*).[36] Neidorf, as Orton does for *Soul and Body I*, cites metrically-defective verses and whole-verse repetitions in *D2* (between *D1* and *D2*: *elne micle* [34a, 60a, 123a] and *mæte weorode* [69b, 124a], for example; and within *D2* itself: *on þyssum lænum* [109a, 138a] and *wun- on wuldre* [134a, 143a, 155a], for example); and while *D1* uses lexical repetition for poetic effect, it does not repeat entire verses as *D1* does. His practice mirrors that of *V1* in contradistinction to *V2*, as well.[37] Given that *Dream of the Rood* and *V* are found in the Vercelli Book, and indeed that the *V*-scribe (or the scribe of a previous recension of *V*) misunderstood and altered portions of the poem, the compositional techniques of *D2* and *V2* deserve further comparison, although space forbids such an analysis here.[38] Samantha Zacher also notes whole-line repetitions in three Vercelli poems: *Elene* (the source-text for the repetitions[?]), *D2*, and *Andreas* (another poem known for its heavy borrowings).[39]

Although it may seem relevant (even fitting) that the angry damned soul is a more emphatic and formidable poet than the blessed soul, because I have assumed that *V1* and *V2* are of different authorship, it is not possible to demonstrate any purposeful, authorial differentiation between the ghosts' styles. If *V2*'s repetitions are not a mark of desperation, it can be inferred that the poet sought—repeating *V1*'s details of decay (23a, 152a), communion (41, 143), Judgment Day (49a–50a, 145a–47a), and recompense for deeds (102b, 141b)—to draw clear comparisons between the damned soul and the blessed soul; rather than distinguishing the blessed soul's voice, by using verbal repetition the poet creates memorable points of mutual identification, between the damned and blessed souls and allows the

[36] See 'Composite Authorship', pp. 51–70, where Neidorf cites Orton's *Transmission of Old English Poetry*, but does not mention Orton's argument about *Soul and Body I* specifically.
[37] The only whole-verse repetition in *V1* is *þær swa god wolde* (83b and 85b), which Orton, 'Further Examination', pp. 186–87, suggests is a unique intervention by the *V*-scribe.
[38] Orton, *Transmission of Old English Poetry*, pp. 198–200, notes that these resemblances could illuminate our understanding of the Vercelli Book's history.
[39] *Preaching the Converted*, pp. 273–74; Orchard, 'Cross-References', pp. 250–53.

audience to learn by eavesdropping on a ghostly conversation and bear these speeches with them in memory.

We have already noted the exemplary, iconic function of direct speech in Old English poetry,[40] and the didactic function of such otherworld visions was felt throughout the Anglo-Saxon period.[41] The voices of poems such as *Soul and Body I* bring the otherworld to life by the re-enacted testimonies of witnesses who have gone on a journey of experience.[42] These testimonies, fictional or not, were for the instruction of the hearers, as the Old English 'elegies' make plain.[43] Kathleen Davis describes how voice comes to the fore in these songs of experience inasmuch as the poems are preserved voices set in memorable form by which to benefit from the experiences of others.[44] Both Thornbury (writing of *The Battle of Maldon*) and Roy Liuzza (writing of *Beowulf*) note the integral nature of communal judgment in heroic poetry, and this ethical concern has a natural correlative in religious verse.[45] In the next subsection, I briefly discuss how style is used to similar effect in Old English prose visions.

Vernacular Prose Visions

There was a widely developed body of what we might call 'visionary' vernacular prose literature in Anglo-Saxon England. Vernacular Soul-and-Body narratives, such as the

[40] See Introduction, pp. 1–3.
[41] See Szarmach, 'Prose Vision', pp. 592–602.
[42] On the embodied, performed quality of such poetry, see Parks '"I Heard" Formulas', pp. 47, 51, 53 and 58. O'Dell, 'Dramatizing Devotion', pp. 27–55, argues that even texts read silently and privately, especially those with nonspecific, 'everyman' characters, can productively be considered a sort of interior drama. On the journey of experience, see Chapter One, pp. 32–33.
[43] For a discussion of the contested term 'elegies', see Orchard, 'Not What it Was', pp. 101–17. I use the word simply to describe the conventional grouping of nine poems of the Exeter Book, given by Orchard, 'Not What it Was', pp. 105–07, as *The Wanderer*, *The Seafarer*, *The Riming Poem*, *Deor*, *Wulf and Eadwacer*, *The Wife's Lament*, *Resignation*, *Riddle 60 + The Husband's Message*, and *The Ruin*.
[44] Kathleen Davis, 'Old English lyrics', pp. 332–56, drawing especially from Irving Jr., 'Image and Meaning', pp. 157 and 159–64. Compare this to travelling poets and the purgative function North ascribes to *giedd* (Chapter One, pp. 43).
[45] Thornbury, *Becoming a Poet*, pp. 115–19; Liuzza, 'Monuments, Memory, History', pp. 94–107.

heavenly court case of *Vercelli Homily IV* and the 'Three Utterances' sermon of Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Junius 85/86 (a manuscript particularly invested in such visionary literature), go hand in hand with other descriptions of the Otherworld, such as *Vercelli IX* and the *Visio Pauli* of Junius 85/86.[46] The sources of these texts are of diverse origins: it has been suggested that the origin of 'The Soul's Address' (to its Body) was in Egyptian accounts of the soul's journey, perhaps especially visions of the Egyptian monk Macarius the Younger;[47] the *Visio Pauli* probably also has Egyptian origins and has much in common with 'The Soul's Address';[48] and more 'local' are the out-of-body visions of Fursa (an Irishman) and Dryhthelm (a Northumbrian), recorded in the anonymous Latin *Vita Fursei* and Bede's *Historia Ecclesiastica*.[49] These texts are all concerned with the judgments and destinations of souls (the natural first concerns of Christian cosmology after death), but while such visions regularly include the speech of disembodied souls, angels, demons, and even God himself—in the *Visio Pauli* even the sun and earth speak!—they do not (to my eyes) seem particularly interested in differentiating the rhetorical form of different characters' direct speech in the same way as we have seen in a few Old English poems and are less interested in formal features than verse as a rule.[50]

Perhaps because the Old English visionary texts (and indeed their predecessors) are written in prose, they are not inherently as formally-oriented by the same constraints as poetry; indeed, the visual (rather than sonic) quality of these texts is what gives them their arresting memorability.[51] Nevertheless, there are in these texts some stylistic features of

[46] On the contents of Junius 85/86, see Healey, *Vision of St Paul*, pp. 9–15.
[47] Moffat, *Soul and Body*, pp. 28–29.
[48] Healey, *Vision of St Paul*, p. 19.
[49] On Fursa, see *Ecclesiastical History*, Book III. 19; on Dryhthelm, see *Ecclesiastical History*, Book V. 12.
[50] The Old English version actually excludes direct speech of the moon, stars, seas, and waters included in the Latin source (Healey, *Vision of St Paul*, p. 79 [n. to line 10]).
[51] This is of course not to dismiss prose as somehow stylistically inferior to poetry; rather, I simply mean to highlight that the 'poetic function' is, in Roman Jakobson's terms, language attentive to language, not simply language attentive to message (see Pomorska and Rudy, *Language in Literature*, pp. 62–94), and if these two foci exist on a spectrum prose is necessarily further from the poetic function than verse, which is more formally

direct speech which, as in the *Soul and Body* poems, serve as emphatic reminders to the audience. Since the focus of this thesis is poetry, I do not have space to unpack these examples, but I do hope to draw attention to three particular formal features which give these texts a particularly memorable quality.

In the Three Utterances exemplum, the utterances of a damned soul and a chosen soul after their deaths are structurally contrasted. Willard paraphrases the souls' speeches thus:[52]

> As the soul comes forth, it cries out, "How great is the darkness! How rough the road! How great the pain!" To each utterance the devils reply, "Greater still awaits thee." […] The soul exclaims on the light, the ease of journey, and the great bliss, that it experiences, and the angels reply that there is still greater to come.'

This exemplum occurs in three Old English, one Irish, and over thirty Latin manuscripts, and was clearly a popular piece.[53] In all of its instantiations, the exemplum uses the same structural form—to use the wording of Willard's paraphrase, 'How [adjective] is the [noun]!' + Refrain: 'Greater still awaits thee'—and usually repeats it three times for each speaker, using contrasting information for each speaker in order to highlight the fates of blessed and cursed souls.[54] The repetition of the structure is memorable, and the promise of still worse or better experiences in hell or heaven respectively gives the exemplum an imaginative expansiveness similar to the inexpressibility topos. Without delving too deeply into this form, we should note the structural use of parity and contrast, which, similarly to the *Soul and Body* poems, creates memorable points of mutual identification in order to both contrast the fates of souls and get the audience thinking about their own fates.

In this exemplum, as the demons bear the damned soul away to hell they chant Psalm 51. 3 (52. 1): 'Why dost thou glory in malice, thou that art mighty in iniquity'—which is

constrained. For approaches to Jakobson's poetic function in Old English prose, see Beechy, *Poetics of Old English*, pp. 21–85, who gives examples from the Old English *Boethius*, and vernacular homilies and laws.
[52] 'Latin Texts of *The Three Utterances*', p. 147.
[53] Wack and Wright, 'New Latin Source', pp. 187–88.
[54] Wack and Wright, 'New Latin Source', pp. 188–94, discuss some variations of this format in the different versions.

notably given in Latin—whereas the angels sing Psalm 64. 5 (65. 4): 'Blessed is he whom thou hast chosen and taken unto thee'—again in Latin—as they bear the blessed soul to heaven, although the manuscripts vary in whether the angels, demons, or both sing.[55] We have already noted that in Fursa's vision the angels sing the two *fastucia* of Psalm 83(84). 8: 'For the lawgiver shall give a blessing, they shall go from virtue to virtue', as they bear him to and from heaven respectively, and in the Old English *Visio Pauli* the angels all sing Psalm 118(119). 137: 'Thou art just, O Lord: and thy judgment is right' (as well as Romans 2. 11: 'For there is no respect of persons with God') after a soul is judged.[56] Wright also notes a certain taste for 'litanic runs of parallel or antithetical cola' in *Vercelli Homilies IV* and *IX*, the former of which again has angels singing the verses of a psalm in Latin.[57] Though these details vary slightly, both in which songs and when songs are sung, it is notable that angels—even fallen angels—sing Psalms pertaining to judgment as souls are either led to judgment or are allowed to see adumbrations of the coming judgment. We have already noted in the previous two chapters that angels are particularly associated with song, even scripted, scriptural song, and we might imagine that these 'vision'-writers place psalmody in angels' mouths not simply for veracity—indeed, Scripture does not stipulate that angels sing the Psalms—but for the fittingness of these words to the situation and probably also for the importance of the Psalms to Christian devotion throughout the centuries.[58] That is, these would presumably be familiar and memorable songs (especially given that they are regularly quoted in Latin even in Old English texts), and the writers apply them to these contexts both to characterize angels and to keep their audiences thinking about judgment.

[55] The texts are edited in Willard, *Two Apocrypha*, pp. 38–57.
[56] Healey, *Vision of St Paul*, pp. 68–69 and 71–72.
[57] *Irish Tradition*, pp. 243–64.
[58] On the place of the Psalms in Anglo-Saxon devotion, for example, see Toswell, *Anglo-Saxon Psalter*, pp. 1–11 and 23–32.

Wright demonstrates other memorable structural devices in Old English homilies, such as the 'Tongues of Iron' motif, which uses *gradatio* and enumeration in a use of the inexpressibility topos, in 'The Devil's Account of the Next World' in *Vercelli Homily IX*, and it would be beyond the scope of this dissertation to make mention of any more of such rhetorical devices, which are many.[59] But I have simply wished to suggest briefly some ways Old English prose homilies use varied repetitions of linguistic forms, whether in intradiegetic antithesis or citation of extradiegetic texts, rather than contrasting styles *per se* to characterize otherworldly voices and make those voices memorable. The *V2*-poet seems to have followed a similar impulse in turning *V1* into a contrasting diptych, and while the style of *V2* perhaps leaves something to be desired, the *V2*-poet shares the concern of the *V1*-poet and indeed of many Old English poets, who consider hearing and remembering voices to be at the core of human identity, as we shall see in the following section.

The Importance of 'Bearing Speech'

The spiritual nature of language in the *Soul and Body* poems is also evident in 'homiletic' poetic accounts of Judgment Day, as, for example, in *Elene* 1281b–86a:

> Sceall æghwylc ðær
> reord-berendra riht gehyran
> dæda gehwlycra þurh þæs deman muð,
> ond worda swa same wed gesyllan,
> eallra unsnyttro ær gesprecenra, 1285
> þristra geþonca.
>
> Each speech-bearer there must hear the judgment of each deed from the Judge's mouth, and similarly render a pledge of words, of the foolishness of all things heretofore spoken, of audacious thoughts.

[59] *Irish Tradition*, pp. 145–56. Wright notes that enumeration is characteristic of the homily as a whole (pp. 88–105).

Yet again the physicality of the mouth is present in this account, drawing our attention to our own mouths and how they are being used: humans, called to give an account for their thoughts, words, and deeds (a triad which regularly occurs in connection to judgment in patristic writings), are referred to as *reord-berende*, 'speech-bearers'.[60] This poetic compound exclusively refers to humans even though animals are at times said to have *reord* ('speech'), and according to E.G. Stanley it may suggest not only the special capacity humans have for speaking language but also their capacity for understanding language.[61] In *Andreas* 417a–20a and *The Dream of the Rood* 87–89, for example, *reord-berend* are specifically humans who can receive spiritual teaching—they do not speak; and in this passage from *Elene*, the speech-bearers must both hear and speak, giving an account for the foolish thoughts they have previously given voice to. Cynewulf, then, uses the compound *reord-berend* to emphasize human responsibility in hearing, speech, and thought.

Christ III gives further accounts of *reord-berend* being called to judgment, but in a slightly different manner (1021b–26b):

> Daga egeslicast
> weorþeð in worulde, þonne wuldor-cyning
> þurh þrym þreað þeoda gehwylce,
> hateð arisan reord-berende
> of fold-grafum, folc anra gehwylc, 1025
> cuman to gemote mon-cynnes gehwone.
>
> The most terrible day will come to pass in the world, when the Glory-King rebukes each nation by his might, commands the speech-bearing to arise from earth-graves, every single people, [commands] each of mankind to come to the assembly.

On that day (1362a–68a),

> Onginneð þonne to þam yflum ungelice
> wordum mæðlan þe him bið on þa wynstran hond,
> þurh egsan þrea, al-walda god.
> Ne þurfon hi þonne to meotude miltse gewenan, 1365
> lifes ne lissa, ac þær lean cumað
> werum be gewyrhtum worda ond dæda,

[60] On the patristic association of the triad with judgment, see Sims-Williams, 'Thought, Word and Deed', p. 82.
[61] 'Old English *-reord-*', pp. 28–31.

reord-berendum

> He begins then to speak differently to the wicked, to speak words publicly, to those who are at his weaker hand, through the rebuke of terror, All-Ruler God. They have no need to expect mercy from the Measurer then, life nor grace; rather, a reward comes there to men, speech-bearers, according to works of words and deeds.

As Stanley notes, the excerpts from *Christ III* do not indicate that the humans will be speaking.[62] Rather, the emphasis is on Christ's speech, and thus the wicked's status as speech-bearers seems to highlight their capacity to receive Christ's words and (ironically[?]) their silence before him in the judgment.

In fact, the poet has more to say about vision than sound in this part of the judgment: although the bodies of sinners will rise again and souls 'receive limbs and a body-covering' (*leoðum onfon ond lic-homan*, 1031), when these *reord-berend* bring their hearts before God, the poet specifically indicates that their thoughts will be seen, not spoken (1053b–56a):[63]

> Ne bið þær wiht forholen
> monna gehygda, ac se mæra dæg
> hreþer-locena hord, heortan geþohtas,
> ealle ætyweð.
>
> Nothing of men's thoughts will be hidden there; rather, the great day will reveal all, the breast-coffer's hoard, the heart's thoughts.

Here, the *Christ III*-poet makes striking use of the compound, indicating that 'speech-bearers' need not speak before the Lord: despite the exceptionality bestowed on them by their unique gift, these speech-bearers need not give an account of their deeds because God can see it all in their hearts, rather like a book.[64] Like Cynewulf, the *Christ III*-poet links intelligence, thought, and language; and he also reifies the 'breast-hoard' so often referred to in Old English poetry.[65] These instances of the compound *reord-berend* represent a more widely observable trend of thinking about speech and intelligence in Old English poetry as the ability

[62] Stanley, 'Old English *-reord-*', pp. 23–25.
[63] On the visible thoughts of the heart in *Christ III*, see also lines 1032b–38b and 1045b–53a, for example. See also Hill, 'Vision and Judgment', pp. 233–42.
[64] On contemplation as an act of reading, see Hill, 'Vision and Judgment' (esp. n. 16).
[65] On the 'breast-hord', see pp. 140–42 below.

to ‘wield speech’, receiving, understanding, remembering, and speaking words. It seems significant, then, that the obedience of humans (and other creations) is referred to as ‘holding’ God’s word (that is, ‘keeping’ it, in both remembrance and action) in a variety of Old English poems.[66]

Stanley notes the exclusively martial and spiritual connotations of the *-berend* and *-bora* second elements, most of which occur in poetry.[67] For the second element *-berend*, he lists the first elements *æsc-* ‘ash, spear’, *deað-* ‘death’, *feorh-* ‘life’, *gæst-* ‘spirit’, *gar-* ‘spear’, *helm-* ‘protection, helmet’, *leoht-* ‘light’, *sæd-* ‘seed’, *sawl-* ‘soul’, *segn-* ‘sign’, and *sweord-* ‘sword’ in poetry, and for prose the *DOE Corpus* also has *ator-* ‘poison’, *æppel-* ‘apple, ball’, *blostm-* ‘blossom’, *briost-* ‘breast’, *unriht-* ‘injustice, iniquity’, *tapor-* ‘candle’ (as a compound *tapor-berend* means ‘acolyte’), *wæstm-* ‘produce, stature’, *wol-* ‘pestilence’, *wroht-* ‘accusation, blame’, *wæpen-* ‘weapon’, in addition to numerous Latin-glossing calques.[68] Outside of the glosses, the prose usages of *-berend* compounds are exclusively spiritual. For the similar element *-bora*, the *DOE Corpus* gives *feorh-*, *horn-* ‘horn’, *mund-* ‘protection’, *ræd-* ‘deliberation’, *ræs-* ‘rush (of battle)’ or a variant of *ræd-* (*ræd-bora* means ‘leader’ or ‘counsellor’), *wæg-* ‘wave’, and *woð-* ‘voice, song’ in poetry, to which the prose records add *cæg-* ‘key’, *leoht-*, *segn-*, *sweord-*, and *tacn-* ‘sign, token’ as well as calques in Latin glosses. What is notable in these lists is that in poetry the compounds are always marks of prestige or formidability: whether it is a weapon or a spiritual gift, the thing borne confers an elevated status on its bearer; indeed poetic compounding itself is a mark of heightened poetic style.[69] Stephanie Clark notes the presence of the kingly ‘gift and favour’ economy in

[66] See further Lucas, ‘Loyalty and Obedience’, pp. 129–30; Jager, ‘Speech and the Chest’, pp. 175–83. For other descriptions of obedience as ‘holding’ God’s word or commands, see *Christ III* 1156a–59a and 1232–36; *Genesis B* 244b–45b and 522a–38a; *The Gloria I* 34b–35b; *Guthlac A* 32b–34b, 53b–58b, and 810b; *The Order of the World* 68a–73a; and *The Phoenix* 393a–400a, 474a–77a.
[67] Stanley, ‘Old English *-reord-*’, pp. 19–21.
[68] *DOE Corpus* search, ‘berend’.
[69] To these could be added also *-bære*-compounds, but these tend semantically towards ‘producing’ rather than ‘holding’.

Anglo-Saxon England (as opposed to an individualistic market economy), wherein a king gives gifts such as weapons and land which he then expects recipients to use in his service, a process in which the recipient 'receives and performs his own identity'.[70] In this economy there are both rights and responsibilities for kingly gifts, and it seems that the high status of being a *reord-berend* came with responsibilities to God, as these homiletic poets emphasize. Being a *reord-berend* is not simply being greater than cattle; as we shall see, it is closely related to the *imago Dei*.

Winged Words?

In conjunction with the notion that humans are speech-bearers, there seems to have been a reified conception of words in Old English poetry. Britt Mize has given a detailed account of how cognitive processes were conceptualized by Old English poets: the mind was described as an enclosure which held thoughts that could be released in speech.[71] Among other evidence, Mize cites the compound *word-hord* to show that these thoughts could be conceptualized as interior *words* which rest in this treasury of the heart, and indeed *Riddle 84* even refers to words as *hord-word*, reversing the elements of the compound and demonstrating that this was a living metaphor.[72] Speech is very frequently characterized as an unlocking or opening of this hoard.[73] This bespeaks a conception of language and thought which is inseparable from its incarnation in the spoken word.[74]

Such an 'incarnational' conceptualization of words has the effect of reifying them, such that they are conceived of as discrete units travelling from heart to mouth to air in

[70] *Compelling God*, pp. 110–15. See also Charles-Edwards, 'Social Structure'.
[71] 'Representation of the Mind', pp. 57–90.
[72] Mize, 'Representation of the Mind', esp. pp. 68–72.
[73] See the list compiled in Cavell, *Weaving Words*, pp. 247–48.
[74] See further Ong, *Presence of the Word*, pp. 138–46.

speech, and then to ear and to heart in hearing, a process termed 'pectorality' by Eric Jager, who cites the following example of Hrothgar's words to Beowulf (*Beowulf*, 1841a–42a):[75]

> Þe þa word-cwydas wigtig drihten
> on sefan sende.
>
> The clever Lord sent those word-sayings into your heart.

As Mize shows, our modern sense of the word 'word' as merely a lexeme is not the way the Old English *word* was used; rather, *word* referred to a sense-unit or a speech-act more than divisions of sound, and therefore it could refer to an utterance as small as an individual lexeme, but it could also refer to a sentence, a complete message, or an utterance of any size.[76] In his grammar, Ælfric defines what we might call a 'word' simply as *dæl*, or 'part' of speech, following the model of the grammatical *partes orationis*.[77] What we might consider a word, perhaps most usually a noun, was to the grammatical tradition a 'name' (Modern English 'noun' deriving from Latin *nomen* via French).[78] Even these grammatical, Latinate distinctions seem at variance with vernacular conceptions of word divisions, especially Celtic and Germanic, where, for example, clitics could be considered either part of the nearest strong stress or isolable units, depending on the scribe.[79] Indeed, the desire to divide up voice in this way at all could potentially rely on a literate conception of spoken words as having definite shape in writing.[80] In the same way that 'a thought' can mean a great variety of things to us even now, never limited to a single word or image, so Old English *word* had a broad range of signification.

Two other examples from *Beowulf* seem to reify words. The first comes from Beowulf's assault on the dragon's lair (2550–53):

> Let ða of breostum, ða he gebolgen wæs, 2550

[75] 'Speech and the Chest', pp. 845–59.
[76] Mize, 'Representation of the Mind', pp. 69–71.
[77] Zupitza, *Aelfrics Grammatik*, pp. 1 and 5.
[78] *OED*, 'noun, n.' Ælfric naturally translates this *nama*.
[79] For a good summary of the problem, see Poppe, '*Caide máthair bréithre*', pp. 65–84 (esp. pp. 66–67).
[80] Ong, *Presence of the Word*, pp. 35–47.

Weder-Geata leod word ut faran,
stearc-heort styrmde; stefn in becom
heaðo-torht hlynnan under harne stan.

The man of the Geats then, as he was enraged, let a word go out of his breast; the stronghearted stormed. The voice came resounding in, battle-clear, under grey stone.

Again, this passage has a word in the breast which is released, realized as sound, which, perhaps like Homeric *ἔπεα πτερόεντα* ('winged words'), travels into the cave. The final example from *Beowulf* seems even more metaphorical in nature than the foregoing examples (2790b–92a):

He hine eft ongan
wæteres weorpan, oð þæt wordes ord
breost-hord þurhbræc.

[Wiglaf] then began again to cast water on [Beowulf], until the point of a word broke through [Beowulf's] breast-hoard.

There is a half-line missing after 2792a. Fulk, Bjork, and Niles supply [*Biorn-cyning spræc*] for 2792b and suggest the missing verse is due to haplography caused by the confusion of both a- and b-verses ending in *-ræc*.[81] If so, this would be an exceptionally rhyme-patterned inquit (that is, a marker indicating speech boundaries) for Beowulf's final speech, with three *-ord*-rhymes and two *-ræc*-rhymes.[82] Just as Peter S. Baker notes that the notion of the word-hoard relates words to valuable objects (like this ornate inquit), and that collocations such as *wordum and worcum* point to the similitude that should lie between words and actions, likening words themselves to actions, this passage gives words a more martial shape: the language breaks from its containment like a spear.[83] Hence, it is clear that words in *Beowulf*, at least, could be conceived of as discrete units which travel from word-hoard to word-hoard. In the following subsection we will explore some of the ways 'words', and indeed minds, can be virtuously maintained by humans.

[81] *Klaeber's Beowulf*, p. 256 (n. to 2792b).
[82] On inquits, see further Louviot, *Direct Speech*, pp. 43–55.
[83] 'Beowulf the Orator', pp. 9–10.

The intelligent, speaking spirits *of Soul and Body I* and *II* bear certain affinities with what Peter Clemoes has called the *mens absentia cogitans* in *The Wanderer* and *The Seafarer*.[84] Here the cognitive process of the mind is represented as wandering across the sea apart from the body. I first examine the motif in *The Seafarer* (58a–64a), along with the preceding ten lines for context (48–57):

> Bearwas blostmum nimað, byrig fægriað,
> wongas wlitigað, woruld onetteð;
> ealle þa gemoniað modes fusne
> sefan to siþe, þam þe swa þenceð
> on flod-wegas feor gewitan.
> Swylce geac monað geomran reorde,
> singeð sumeres weard, sorge beodeð,
> bitter in breost-hord. Þæt se beorn ne wat,
> est-eadig secg, hwæt þa sume dreogað
> þe þa wræc-lastas widost lecgað.
> Forþon nu min hyge hweorfeð ofer hreþer-locan,
> min mod-sefa mid mere-flode
> ofer hwæles eþel hweorfeð wide,
> eorþan sceatas, cymeð eft to me
> gifre ond grædig, gielleð an-floga,
> hweteð on hwæl-weg[85] hreþer unwearnum
> ofer holma gelagu.
>
> Groves take blossoms, cities grows fair, fields grow lovely, the world hastens on; all of them exhort the one eager of mind, the heart to a journey, on which he thus intends to travel far on the flood-ways. Likewise the cuckoo urges with sad speech, summer's watchman sings, announces grief, bitter in its breast-hoard. The man does not know that, favour-blessed man—what those ones endure who lay down the exile-tracks most broadly.
>
> Therefore my thought now turns over [or 'beyond'][86] the breast-locker, my mind-heart turns widely with the sea-flood over the whale's homeland, [and] the grounds of earth; it comes back to me ravenous and greedy. The lone-flier cries out, overwhelmingly compels the heart to the whale-way over the expanses of the sea.

[84] '*Mens absentia cogitans*'.

[85] Smithers, 'Meaning of *The Seafarer*', pp. 137–53, and 'Meaning of *The Seafarer* (continued)', pp. 1–22, retains the Exeter Book's *wæl-weg* ('corpse-way') rather than adopting ASPR's emendation *hwæl-weg* ('whale-way'). Smithers suggests that 'the way of the dead' more readily bespeaks the ecclesiastical and homiletic notions of pilgrimage underpinning the poem, in which the pilgrim soul is a seafarer on the sea of the world who dies at sea.

[86] In *The Wanderer* 56–57, *ofer* clearly means 'beyond' (as indeed it often does in Old English), but I translate 'over' to emphasize the poet's parallel association of *hreþer-locan* (58b), *hwæles eþel* (60a), and *holma gelagu* (64a).

The ‘lone-flier’ (*an-floga*) of this passage could refer back to the cuckoo, but contextually and by grammatical attraction the lone-flier refers to ‘thought, mind’ (*hyge*, *mod-sefa*).[87] Compare also lines 36–38:

> monað modes lust mæla gehwylce
> ferð to feran, þæt ic feor heonan
> elþeodigra eard gesece.
>
> All the time my mind’s desire urges my heart to journey, that I seek a country of foreigners far hence.

Still the indeterminacy of *an-floga* supports the current point: the mind here is bird-like, flying out over the sea, returning ‘ravenous and greedy’ (*gifre ond grædig*, 62a—a collocation frequently used of beasts and natural forces), ‘yelling’ like a bird, compelling the seafarer’s heart to go to sea just as the cuckoo does in lines 53a–55a. Pope points out that the verb *giellan* and adjectives *gifre* and *grædig* are used elsewhere to describe birds of prey in Old English poetry.[88] Greenfield notes that the collocation of *gifre* and *grædig* is used to describe ‘unfavourable’ things, such as the worms of *Soul and Body I* and *II* 74a, devils (*Christ and Satan* 32a, 191a), and hell (*Genesis B* 793a), which, he argues, make it unlikely that the soul would be thus described.[89] To Greenfield’s list may be added the birds of *Guthlac A* 738a, the latter of which have a distinctly positive connotation, and perhaps the collocation is better understood in the context of bestial or natural forces rather than merely negative ones, making the comparison of the soul’s desire to avian and natural cycles all the more apt. Pope counters Greenfield’s suggestion by showing that, used individually, *gifre* and *grædig* are also used positively of soul’s desire for the things of God.[90] Thus as spring comes to the land and the cuckoo sings, the seafarer’s thought, after venturing widely across the water, eggs him to the sea. Much like the soul of *Soul and Body I*, the seafarer’s mind

[87] For an alternative view, see Smithers, ‘Meaning of *The Seafarer* (continued)’, pp. 20–22, who considers the *an-floga* to be ‘a disease-bringing malign influence’ (p. 22).
[88] ‘Second Thoughts’, pp. 84–85.
[89] *Interpretation of Old English Poems*, pp. 43–45.
[90] ‘Second Thoughts, pp. 84–85.

journeys to its appointed place (the sea for the seafarer, heaven or hell for the blessed and cursed souls respectively) and afterwards returns to its bodily seat to address it, exhorting it (*monað*) like the cuckoo (*monað*, 53a) and the signs of spring (*gemoniað*, 50a).

The nature of the soul in relation to this poetic figure of reflection in *The Seafarer* and *The Wanderer*, in which the mind roams the earth apart from its body, has been the subject of vigorous critical debate.[91] Citing Alcuin's *De animae ratione liber*, Peter Clemoes points out that Alcuin considers the mind (he uses the words *mens* and *animus*), the soul's (*anima*) intellectual capacity, to be made in the image of God.[92] The mind, Alcuin suggests, is, like God, able to travel throughout all the world with great speed and facility; but Alcuin's poem in elegiacs appended to the same work claims that the *anima sagax* 'knowing soul' does the travelling rather than the mind, and Ælfric, in his translation of the prose tract, also suggests that it is the *sawol*, 'soul' which journeys.[93] Malcolm Godden suggests that, for Alcuin, mind and soul are interchangeable inasmuch as the rational soul of humans is to be completely distinguished from the animal life-force, which is not a soul at all, at variance with Augustine, who had suggested that humans and animals both have souls, but only humans have the rational capacity.[94] Godden alleges that a similar agglomeration of mind and soul can be observed in Alfred's writings and that Ælfric also suggests that only humans, not animals, have souls.

But there may be more stylistically-oriented reasons for Alcuin's conflation: Clemoes notes that the notion of movement through space is more prominent in the elegiac poem than in the prose.[95] In short, while the prose developments seem certainly metaphorical, the

[91] See, for example, Smithers, 'Meaning of *The Seafarer* (continued)', pp. 14–22; Salmon, 'Conception of the Soul', pp. 1–10; Henry, *English and Celtic Lyric*, pp. 133–51; Greenfield, *Interpretation of Old English Poems*, pp. 43–45; Pope, 'Second Thoughts'; Lockett, *Anglo-Saxon Psychologies*, pp. 38–41.
[92] '*Mens absentia cogitans*', pp. 63 and 71–72. See further Godden, 'Anglo-Saxons on the Mind', p. 286.
[93] '*Mens absentia cogitans*', pp. 63–64 (n. 4).
[94] Godden, 'Anglo-Saxons on the Mind', pp. 287–98.
[95] '*Mens absentia cogitans*', pp. 64–65.

travelling mind receives what might be called more elaborate treatment in poetry. Clemoes asks whether Alcuin and the *Seafarer*-poet shared a mutual source, but it does not seem unreasonable to suggest the mind's flight might simply be an Anglo-Saxon poetic convention, brought into Latin poetry by Alcuin, who noticed a correspondence between the Latin prose and an Old English poetic theme.

Besides the mind's flight in *The Wanderer*, Leslie Lockett has pointed out that the mind also journeys in two other Anglo-Saxon passages: the Finnsburh episode of *Beowulf* and the second *Lorsch Riddle*. *Beowulf* 1150b–51a, *ne meahte wæfre mod / forhabban in hreþre*, a crux, conceptualizes the memory of old grievances as the mind's movement beyond the containment of its breast.[96] The sense of these verses has been the subject of controversy, but it is at least clear that cognition is conceived of as a kind of motion beyond its containment, and that the mind must be virtuously restrained is a commonplace in Old English poetry, as Godden (among others) has demonstrated.[97] Although the solution of *Lorsch Riddle 2*, a Latin riddle written in eighth-century Lorsch (under strong Anglo-Saxon influence, Lockett notes), has also been the subject of some debate, Lockett claims it must refer to the thinking heart: it describes an entity with cognition that will become *pulpa putrescens* ('rotting flesh', 13) if cast out of its *propria* […] *sede* ('proper seat', 12), so the heart seems a likely conclusion, with its wondrous ability to travel from its fleshly *carcere* ('prison', 2) via cognition through 'the heavenly court' (*aetheream* […] *aulam*, 3), earth, sea, and Tartarus (though not through Gehenna).[98] But we must note that, as in Aldhelm's 'crab' riddle, it is not a physical entity which is the solution to the riddle, but the *word* 'heart'.[99]

[96] *Anglo-Saxon Psychologies*, pp. 38–39. Lockett translates 'the restless mind was unable to remain in the breast' (p. 38), but the question of whose mind this is is controversial, on which see Fulk, Bjork, and Niles, *Klaeber's Beowulf*, p. 191 (n. to 1150b).
[97] 'Anglo-Saxons on the Mind', pp. 300–08.
[98] Lockett, *Anglo-Saxon Psychologies*, pp. 275–79, discusses the riddle further and the scholarly debate over its solution.
[99] Compare Chapter Two, pp. 97–98.

Salmon also cites Augustine's *De civitate Dei* Book XVIII. 18, where Augustine tells a story of a sleeper who is able to appear in another form, changing his accidence (form) but maintaining his substance (essence)—in this instance by ingesting poisoned cheese!—and Smithers cites a similar account in Pliny's *Naturalis historia*, Book VII. 174.[100] Tolley cites a more immediately apposite example in Alfred's translation of Boethius's *De consolatione Philosophiae*. Whereas Boethius wrote *quod in somno spiritum ducimus nescientes* ('for in sleep we, unknowing, draw breath, III.xi), the Old English has *swa eac ure gast bið swiðe wide farende urum unwillum 7 ures ungewealdes for his gecynde, nalles for his willan; þæt bið þonne þonne we slapað* ('likewise our spirit [sic] is ever traveling very widely without our will and without our control by its nature, not at all by its willing; that happens when we sleep', Chapter 34. 11).[101] The translator takes a completely different direction from the source text, interpreting Boethius's *spiritum ducimus* ('we draw breath') to mean 'we guide [our] spirit', both of which are possible readings; but Alfred makes the point, as Boethius does not, that this is in our spirit's 'nature' (*gecynde*).[102]

If the itinerant mind was a traditional Anglo-Saxon concept, this alternative reading would readily suggest itself, especially given the normal semantic range of *duco* ('I guide, lead, conduct') and the fact that nouns of cognition are regularly used in the singular in a collective sense in Old English. Godden, who notes that Alfred follows Alcuin in equating the soul (*sawl*) and the mind (*mod*) elsewhere in his *Boethius*, also points out that this is the only time Alfred uses the word *gast* in the work, which suggests that Alfred might intentionally be delineating the soul and spirit (*gast*) here, perhaps referring to a folk belief (like Old Norse *hugr*) that the spirit does in fact travel during sleep in a sort of unconscious

[100] Salmon, 'Conception of the Soul', p. 4; Smithers, 'Meaning of *The Seafarer* (continued)', p. 14.
[101] *Shamanism in Old Norse*, I, 178–79.
[102] See further Godden, 'Anglo-Saxons on the Mind', p. 290.

activity (as opposed to the conscious activity of the mind).[103] But the figure of interiorities journeying beyond the body (except when describing death) seems to cluster around cognitive nouns, such as *hyge* and *mod*, and Lockett suggests that *gast* is not a psychological word.[104] Nevertheless, if, as Lockett notes, the soul is psychologized when it is apart from the body, there is no reason why spirit-travel would not have a psychological element, and perhaps, as Godden suggests, the mind was traditionally more closely related to the spirit in Anglo-Saxon thought than in ecclesiastical discourse.

Whether or not the errant mind was a convention, the purpose of Alcuin's *De animae ratione* is to suggest that the soul's faculties—such as reason, creating and storing sense impressions in the memory, and recalling these in creative acts of verbal construction—reflect God's own power.[105] Furthermore, because the soul is made in God's image, it longs for its home. This longing Clemoes relates to Boethius's *De consolatione* IV prosa 1. 9 and metre 1. 1–6, in which Lady Philosophy declares that she can give Boethius's mind wings to reach its native land—and indeed in the corresponding *metrum* the 'quick mind' looks at the world, scorns it, and flies away.[106] F. N. M. Diekstra has demonstrated the frequent coincidence in Christian discourse of the soul's flight and the *contemptus mundi* theme, as also in *The Wanderer*, for example.[107]

As I mentioned above, it is a commonplace in Old English poetry that one must fasten or bind the mind in order to maintain composure and to think and speak well. We have seen

[103] 'Anglo-Saxons on the Mind', p. 290. On the Old Norse *hugr*, see Tolley, *Shamanism in Old Norse*, I, 186–93.
[104] Lockett, *Anglo-Saxon Psychologies*, pp. 37–38.
[105] Clemoes, '*Mens absentia cogitans*', pp. 63 and 71–72.
[106] Clemoes, '*Mens absentia cogitans*', p. 69. The corresponding Old English versions are found in the B Text 36. 34–45 and C Text Prose 24. 34–41, Metre 24. 1a–11a (Godden et al., *Old English Boethius*, pp. 339 and 492–93).
[107] Diekstra, '*The Seafarer* 58–66a', pp. 433–46 (esp. pp. 434–35); see also Whitelock, 'Interpretation of *The Seafarer*', pp. 261–72. For more on the significance of binding, contemplation, and speech in this poem and other Old English elegies, see for example Cook, '*Woriað þa winsalo*', pp. 127–37; Davis, 'Old English lyrics'; and Rosier, 'Literal-Figurative Identity', pp. 366–69.

this notion in *The Order of the World* 17–20 and *Beowulf* 1150b–51a, for example.[108] This notion may be related to the itinerant mind: Davis points out a parallel based on Solomon's Proverbs 25. 28 ('As a city that lieth open and is not compassed with walls, so is a man that cannot refrain in his own spirit from speaking') in Gregory the Great's *Cura pastoralis*, a text which was widely read throughout the Anglo-Saxon period and which Alfred claims he translated because he considered it one of the 'most needful books' (*bec* […] *nidbeðyrfesta*):[109]

> Þæt ðonne bið forðæmþe hit bið todæled on to monigfalda spræca, swelce he self hiene selfne ute betyne from ðære smeaunga his agenes inngeðonces, ond swæ nacodne hiene selfne eowige to wundianne his feondum, forðæmþe he ne bið belocen mid nanum gehieldum nanes fæstennes. Swæ hit awriten is on Salomonnes cwidum ðætte se mon se þe ne mæg his tungan gehealdan sie gelicost openre byrg, ðære þe mid nane wealle ne bið ymbworht.
>
> That happens, then, because [the mind] is divided into too many utterances, as if he himself hedged himself out from the inquiry of his own inner thought, and so shows himself naked to wounding by his enemies, because he is not locked up with the guard of any fastness. So it is written in Solomon's sayings, that the man who cannot hold his tongue is most like an open city, one which is not constructed around with any walls.

As in *The Wanderer*, one who speaks too much forgets to consider what he is like, saying only what comes to mind without considering why he has thought it or whether it is wise to speak, and his failure to know and protect his inner man makes him vulnerable to his enemies. Immediately before this excerpt Gregory compares the mind to water which must be collected, and after this excerpt he compares speech to flowing water.[110] Alfred(?) synthesizes this aqueous image with Christ's promise of living waters (John 7. 37–39) in the *Metrical Epilogue to the Pastoral Care*, where he highlights the importance of keeping *libbendu / wætru*, *wisdomes stream* ('living waters, wisdom's stream', 4b–5a and 14a) in

[108] See Chapter One, pp. 28–31 and pp. 146–47 above.
[109] Davis, 'Old English Lyrics', pp. 347–48. Text cited in Sweet, *Pastoral Care*, I, 276 (Cotton manuscripts, Chapter XXXVIII). See Anlezark, 'Which Books are "Most Necessary"', on the 'most needful books'.
[110] Sweet, *Pastoral Care*, I, 274–78.

one's heart and not allowing the heart to leak or overflow.[111] By fastening one's thought-hoard, one can consider oneself and when it is wise to speak, when to open the gate, without letting the mind overflow.

Poetry, too, is often described as a kind of fastening or binding, as in *Beowulf* 870b–71a, where a poet's new song about Beowulf is 'bound truly' (*word oþer fand* / *soðe gebunden*); *Fates of the Apostles* 98a, where Cynewulf notes that by interpreting his runic signature that his reader can discern 'who joined these verses' (*hwa þas fitte fegde*); and *The Phoenix* 456–57, where the poet denies that he 'assembles a song with lying words' (*Ne wene* […] *þæt ic lyge-wordum leoð somnige*).[112] According to Snorri Sturluson's Old Norse poetic terminology, these words could be bound together by linking alliteration between 'supports' (*stuðlar*, the alliterating letters in the 'a-verse') and the 'head-stave' (*hǫfuð-stafr*, the alliterating letter of the b-verse; *stafir* generally refers to 'staves', 'staffs', or 'letters').[113] This terminology seems reflective of an Indo-European metaphor of poetic construction as carpentry evidenced in Old English, Old Norse, and Welsh poetry.[114] Indeed, although the written record has left us no evidence of the Old English name for poetic stress-elements, letters in Old English are also known as *boc-stafas* ('book-staves') because of their staff-like appearance.[115] But rather than letters or even stress-elements, the binding of Old English poetry may represent the binding of words in a broader sense, including smaller sections or episodes: note that Cynewulf claims he joined 'verses' or 'sections' (*fitte*) in *Fates* and that he 'joined with wonders' in *Elene* (*wundrum leas*, 1237b) on the same line he describes his poetry as weaving, using another ancient metaphor: '[I] wove with word-skills' (*word-*

[111] See further Earl, *Thinking About Beowulf*, pp. 87–99.
[112] See further Cavell, *Weaving Words*, pp. 234–44.
[113] Faulkes, *Háttatal*, pp. 4. 9–16 and 38. 9–12
[114] West, *Poetry and Myth*, pp. 35–41.
[115] For a later analogue, compare *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* 35: *with lel letteres loken* ('locked with loyal letters', in Anderson, *Sir Gawain*, p. 168).

cræftum wæf, 1237a).[116] Moreover, the aforementioned *word* about Beowulf is bound not just poetically, but to other legendary exploits, that is, those of Sigemund and—extra-diegetically(?)—to Heremod (*Beowulf* 867b–915b).[117] Most likely, these two types of fastening—of sounds and ideas—should not be considered as separate: as we saw throughout Chapter One, the art of poetry includes both, and it is best to see both types of gathering together as poetic binding.

As Davis has suggested, there is a direct relationship between these notions of restraining the heart and restraining words; the acts of fastening the mind and words have to do with memory and contemplation. These are acts of containment and construction which stabilize the mind from overflowing or scattering, a necessary measure against the natural decay and dissipation of nature.[118] Just as fastening the heart keeps thoughts from escaping, fastening words in poetry keeps wisdom (as well as lesser thoughts) from escaping, allowing understanding to be hoarded in the fastened heart to be meditated on and shared. In turn, Davis argues that this is the function of the Old English elegies: these poems which speak of the world's transience are ordered constructions of personal experience, fastened monuments of voice shared as wisdom for the betterment of all listeners, wisdom poured out into poetic vessels, reflecting the spirits expressed in those words. If the speech-bearing audience takes these fastened words to heart and hoards them, they too can remain stable against the unstable world.

[116] On the antiquity of the metaphor, see West, *Poetry and Myth*, pp. 36–38.
[117] See further Leyerle, 'Interlace Structure'. On passage specifically, see Orchard, *Critical Companion*, pp. 105–114.
[118] 'Old English Lyrics', pp. 347–56. See further Cavell, *Weaving Words*, pp. 224–30.

The Speaking Cross of *The Dream of the Rood*

The Dream of the Rood, found on folios 104^{v}–06^{r} of the Vercelli book (following *Soul and Body I* and the poem known as *Homiletic Fragment I* and followed by *Vercelli Homily XIX*), is a poem deeply concerned with speech. *The Dream* recounts a dream-revelation of the Cross of Christ, which is wondrously able to speak.[119] As noted above, Neidorf has convincingly argued that the poem should be seen as a composite work, the original fragment of the poem (*D1*, lines 1–77) having received an addition (*D2*, lines 78–156) by a later poet.[120]

In the poem's first sentence, speech is brought to the fore as the speaker claims to retell what he has dreamt while speech-bearers slept (1–3):

> Hwæt, ic swefna cyst secgan wylle,
> hwæt me gemætte to midre nihte,
> syðþan reord-berend reste wunedon.
>
> Lo! I will speak of the choicest of dreams, of what came to me mid-night, after speech-bearers remained at rest.

As Galloway notes, the characterization of humans as speech-bearers draws special attention to the silence of the night, a point reinforced by the linking alliteration between *reord-berend* and *reste*: those identified by the sounds they make have laid their activity to rest.[121] This Galloway relates to a point made by Gregory the Great in his *Moralia in Job* (Books I. 255 and III. 1172–73), who suggests that silence is needed to hear the voice of God in the mind, and that dreams thus make an ideal space for divine revelation.[122] Thus, this is not like a

[119] See further Swanton, *Dream of the Rood*, pp. 1–6.
[120] See pp. 130–31 above.
[121] 'Dream Theory', pp. 476–77.
[122] 'Dream Theory', pp. 476–81.

person's spirit wandering in a dream, such as Alfred describes, but about being visited by an external entity: we might note that in Old English one is not normally the agent of dreaming, as in Modern English ('I will tell what I dreamed'), but the patient ('I will tell what dreamed me').

The agentive nature of dreams could not prepare us for the Cross's agency in the dream, and the mention of sleeping *reord-berend* also sets in relief the Cross's ability to speak and indeed teach the poet. Because there are two speakers in the poem, one natural, one supernatural, we might expect that there would be different poetic styles evident. In one sense this expectation is fulfilled, but not as anticipated. The most prominent stylistic feature of *D1* is hypermetric lines, which occupy 41.56% of its lines (32 of 77; hypermetrics do not occur at all in *D2*).[123] Both speakers employ these lines, but the distribution of hypermetrics across the poem shows a distinct pattern of representing subjective 'revelations': both what the dreamer experienced of the Cross, and what the Cross experienced of the Crucifixion. I have written about these lines more systematically elsewhere, but it is convenient here to quote a portion of my argument:[124]

> Looking back throughout the poem, there is a clear pattern which accounts for the appearance of all hypermetrics: first, the dreamer or cross states what he experiences with a verb of perception, often placing *hwæðre*, 'however, yet' in line-initial position, and then that experience is fleshed out in hypermetrics.
>
> 4a–6a: It seemed to the dreamer that he saw (*þuhte me þæt ic gesawe*, 4a) a tree; a description of the sight with hypermetrics follows.
> 13a–19a: The dreamer saw (*geseah ic*, 14b) the tree honoured, however (*hwæðre*, 18a) through the gold he could perceive (*ic … ongytan meahte*, 18) the old battle; a description of what he sees and his reaction in hypermetrics follow.
> 24–7: Yet (*hwæðre*, 24a) the dreamer saw (*beheold*, 25a) the vision until he heard (*ic gehyrde*, 26a) the rood speak: the rood's direct speech with hypermetrics follows.
> 35–8: The rood dared not bend, transgressing the Lord's word, though it saw (*ic … geseah*, 36b) the earth shake; a description of the [*sic*] Christ's mounting the cross and the cross's steadfastness follows in hypermetrics.
> 44–5: The rood was lifted up, lifting up Christ, but dared not bow; a description of the bloody scene after Christ's death follows in hypermetrics.

[123] For shorthand I follow the catalogue of hypermetrics given by Bliss in *Metre of Beowulf*, pp. 162–68.
[124] 'Function of Hypermetric Lines', pp. 16–17.

> 50–8: The rood experienced many terrible things, seeing (*geseah ic*, 51b) Christ stretch out (*þenian*, lit. 'grow thin') on the rood. Yet (*hwæðere*, 57a) some men came from afar to the Lord, and the cross saw it all (*ic þæt eall beheold*, 58b); a description of the travellers taking Jesus off the cross, burying him, and lamenting him follows in hypermetrics.
> 70–4: The rood says the crosses were nevertheless (*hwæðere*, 70a) steadfast, until they were felled; a description of the burial with a hypermetric line follows. If this is where the original poem tapers off, as some scholars have concluded, additional hypermetrics in an original version may have been lost.

These hypermetrical sets usually follow a first-person verb of perception (or are followed by one, in the case of lines 46–49), and this highlights their revelatory and subjective status.

Perhaps in the same way the poet looks at the adornment of the glorified Cross and is able to perceive the crucifixion 'through' (*þurh*, 18a) it (18a–20a), subsequently seeing the Rood shift between its glory and suffering (20b–23b), after the narrative portions of the poem are related in standard lines, the verses swell into hypermetric lines to evoke the glories and horrors of these revelations, shifting from narration into veritable drama and back again (with the repetition of *hwæðere* signalling the shift).[125] I also argue that hypermetrics are related to Indo-European sung, stanzaic verse, and that they therefore facilitate a more reflective, subjective, and even ceremonial mode for poetry than narrative in standard lines.[126] Like embedded verse within a prose-narrative, these hypermetric scenes vivify the narration, retelling it in heightened poetic form.[127] My conclusions regarding hypermetrics (which have a notable preponderance of variation) are similar to Brodeur's findings regarding variation in *Beowulf*, namely that this formally heightening device is used to magnify and elaborate on a scene and is used especially for expressing charged emotions.[128]

Rather than representing only one speaker's style, hypermetrics are used by both the dreamer and the Cross, and therefore it seems that the formal shifts are more about the spiritual revelations themselves and less about the speakers, who are rather comparable in

[125] Orchard, 'Cross-References', p. 229, notes this conjunction may add to the riddling sense of the poem.
[126] 'Function of Hypermetric Lines', pp. 8–12.
[127] For more on the use of hypermetrics for divine revelations, see Chapters Four and Five.
[128] *Art of Beowulf*, pp. 39–70.

their use of discourse: as the dreamer sees through the Cross, we are meant to 'see' through the dreamer. Indeed, for most of the poem we lose the sense that the poet only sees the Cross; he does not see the story it narrates. The entire revelation of the dream relies on his and the Cross's narration, but this is part of the poem's logic of seeing and hearing 'through' things.

Arguing that the poem exhibits 'dream condensation', Constance Hieatt has catalogued various parallel words and phrases as evidence that the poem's characters and events respectively are mutually identified with and by one another.[129] Among the most notable examples of this lexical parallelism are the adverb phrase *elne micle* ('with great boldness'), which describes the actions of Christ (34a), the Rood (60a), and (in *D2*) the dreamer (123a), and the clause *ic wæs mid* […] *gedrefed*, spoken by the dreamer (20b) and the Rood (59a).[130] These parallels have the effect of linking Christ, the Rood, and the dreamer, and in turn invite the poem's audience to identify with these characters and 'take up their cross', as it were, and follow 'the way of the Cross'. Orchard cites parallels from *The Dream* in various other Old English and Anglo-Latin poems (among them *Elene* and *Daniel*, which I discuss below), on the Ruthwell Cross and Brussels Reliquary Cross, and in an anonymous Palm Sunday homily.[131] If these parallels are signs of the poem's readership, they suggest that the audience did indeed identify with the poem's characters and take inspiration and words from the poem with them, especially in devotional contexts.

As we saw earlier in the chapter, the *D2*-poet used verbatim repetitions of words and phrases from *D1* in its homiletic extrapolation of the dream vision, seemingly intending to make us draw comparisons not only between Christ, the Cross, and the dreamer, but also between the characters of the poem and ourselves. Neidorf, developing a point made by Orton, shows that the *D2*-poet even attempted to reproduce *D1*'s use of hypermetrics (98a,

[129] Hieatt, 'Dream Frame', pp. 255–60.
[130] See also Burrow, 'An Approach', pp. 125–27.
[131] Orchard, 'Cross-References', pp. 239–53.

102a, 125a, 133a, and 153a), but clearly misunderstood the rules for their construction.[132] If so, we have evidence not only of the *D2*-poet using lexical repetition to carry on *D1*'s riddling use of mutual identification, but also of his attempts to appropriate *D1*'s use of metrical style, perhaps to make *D2* seem more convincing as a continuation of *D1*. Like a prayer, hymn, or the symbol of the Cross itself, as Harbus and Mize have argued, the poem and its repetitions form a speaking symbol, a memorial exemplifying the Christian struggle, a verbal iconography.[133]

But returning to *D1*, it is important to our discussion of speaking things that the Cross is described as bejewelled (6b–9a):

> Eall þæt beacen wæs
> begoten mid golde. Gimmas stodon
> fægere æt foldan sceatum, swylce þær fife wæron
> uppe on þam eaxle-gespanne.
>
> That sign was all covered with gold. Gems stood fixed, fair at the grounds of earth,
> likewise there were five up on the cross-beam.

Mize notes that this image has often been taken to evoke reliquary crosses and other such treasures, but the possibility that this loquacious literal symbol of Christ's sacrifice was also conceived of like a text is not beyond belief, especially given Mize's point that words themselves are often likened to treasure: this is both the general conceit of envisioning the mind as a hoard and quite the point of decorating Bibles, for example.[134] Erik Wade has noted that in *Solomon and Saturn I* the Pater Noster is described in relatively concrete terms, 'like an ornamented bible', golden and studded with gems: *Gylden is se Godes cwide, gimmum astæned* (69).[135] We saw the *Solomon and Saturn I*-poet's penchant for describing the prayer in concrete terms, and if the Pater Noster is like a precious text, so too is the speaking Cross.

[132] Neidorf, 'Composite Authorship', pp. 59–62.
[133] Harbus, 'Dream and Symbol', pp. 13–15; Mize, 'The Mental Container', pp. 149–51, *et passim*.
[134] Mize, 'Mental Container', pp. 166–77 and 137–38, 147–48.
[135] 'Language, Letters', pp. 163–64.

James Earl and Wade both point to the recurrence of speaking books and colophons in Old English poetry, which draws attention to the status of language as an intermediary incarnation and to the intimate relationship between voice and personhood; that is, words are initially spoken *by* a person, but the words themselves can also be said to speak, taking on a life of their own, especially when an utterance is iterable.[136] Whether its repetition is facilitated by memory or by inscription, like a symbol, the utterance becomes an entity to itself, a voice which can be stored in the mental container or on the page, speaking silently and always ready to be spoken aloud again. The Cross and books both have intercessory roles and fit into the poem's larger network of nested identities: the Rood speaks of Christ in the dream, the dream 'speaks' in the dreamer, the dreamer speaks in the poem, which itself speaks, and by remembering this poem, a speech-bearer can see through it all to Christ.[137] Harbus and Mize have noted that dream-visions are reported in words, and hence the dreamer's dream is shared with others through the poem itself, making the poem a revelation like the dream.[138] The move from individual experience to public devotion is a major feature of other visions in Anglo-Saxon England, from Fursa's and Dryhthelm's to the *Dream* and the visionary homilies of the Vercelli Book.[139]

Unsurprisingly for a poem about a speaking thing, the language of wonder and enigma runs through the verses. For example, Orchard notes how the poem brings together the two most frequent riddle openings 'I saw' and 'I am', setting both in the mouth of the Cross, a speaking object that tells of what it has seen.[140] Moreover, the poet refers to the Cross as wondrous twice in the opening lines (*syllicre*, 4b and *syllic*, 13a), which is a

[136] Earl, *Thinking About 'Beowulf'*, pp. 87–99; Wade, 'Language, Letters', pp. 168–70; Thornbury, *Becoming a Poet*, pp. 133–35.
[137] On this 'nesting' see Hieatt, 'Dream Frame and Verbal Echo', pp. 255–61.
[138] Harbus, 'Dream and Symbol', pp. 12–15; Mize, 'Mental Container', esp. p. 178. See also Harbus, 'Text as Revelation', p. 651. The composite authorship of the *Dream* does not affect the conceit of the poem as a private dream shared publicly.
[139] Szarmach, 'Prose Vision', pp. 597–99.
[140] Orchard, 'Cross-References', p. 236, and 'Enigma Variations', I, 289–91.

common opening for Old English riddles, though commoner still is the general language of wonder and amazement as the speakers describe sights and creatures as though they were unseen or -heard of.[141] Various scholars have seen a learned, Latinate tradition behind the *Dream*, such as Margaret Schlauch, who first cited the text as a continuation of the classical rhetorical device prosopopoeia.[142] As an Anglo-Saxon analogue, Bruce K. Braswell cites Aldhelm's words on the matter in his Letter to King Aldfrith of Northumbria (r. 685–704/5) (*Epistola ad Acircium*):[143]

> Porro, quod eadem muta insensibilium rerum natura, de qua enigma clanculum et latens propositio componitur, quasi loqui et sermocinari fingitur, hoc et in sacris litterarum apicibus insertum legitur, quia nonnumquam rationabilis creatura irrationabilium gestu et personis utitur et e diverso irrationabilis sensusque vivacitate carens intellectualium gestu et voce fungitur.
>
> Moreover, that the same mute nature of unintelligent things, of which a secret riddle and hiding demonstration is composed, is made as if to speak and converse—this is read inserted even in sacred peaks of letters; for often a rational creature uses the bearing and character of irrational things, and contrariwise an irrational creature lacking the vitality of intelligence performs the bearing and voice of intellectual creatures.

Voice is the property of intelligent, rational creatures, whereas unintelligent things are mute and must be made to speak by humans. Braswell's title is slightly misleading in that Aldhelm does not actually identify this device as prosopopoeia, but his special interest in prosopopoeia is displayed in that all of his *Enigmata* (as well as those of Tatwine and Eusebius) are written in the first-person, even though this is not always a feature of Symphosius's riddles and is frequently not a feature of Old English riddles.[144]

After citing Symphosius and Aristotle as composers of riddles, Aldhelm claims that the practice is biblical and cites various biblical examples as authorities for his own *enigmata*.[145] For example, Aldhelm cites Jotham's parable of speaking trees (which signify

[141] Orchard, 'Enigma Variations', I, 289–91.
[142] '*Rood* as Prosopopoeia'.
[143] Braswell, 'Sacred Prosopopoeia'. Text of the *Epistola* cited from Ehwald, *Aldhelmi Opera*, p. 76.
[144] Orchard, 'Enigma Variations', I, 293.
[145] Ehwald, *Aldhelmi opera*, pp. 75–76.

the men to whom the Israelites offered kingship of Israel) in the book of Judges by saying they speak with 'the articulate voice of man' and 'human speech' (*articulata hominis voce*, *humanae locutionis*), using grammatical terminology.[146] In the same section, Aldhelm continues in his examples, citing the words of Solomon:

> et quot de mutis aut brutis ratiocinationis argumenta requiruntur, cum etiam sapientissimus cunctorum retro regum et deinceps nasciturorum in Ecclesiaste frequenter stolidissimorum personis utatur dicens: *Quid habet homo amplius iumento* [Eccl 3. 19] aut *sapiens stulto* [Eccl 6. 8] et cetera similia.
>
> [the same is the case] also as much as arguments of reasoning are sought from mute and brutish creatures, as even the wisest of all kings past and to be born hereafter frequently uses the characters of the stupidest creatures in Ecclesiastes, saying 'What does man have more than beast?' or 'the wise than the foolish?' and other such things.

Again, Aldhelm is not expressly writing about prosopopoeia, but of transferring attributes of the rational to the irrational and vice versa. This is part of a process of drawing arguments and reason from nature by making riddles, which are 'hiding propositions' (*latens propositio*), that is, cryptic statements that nevertheless teach. Aldhelm conceives of this figure not so much as direct speech as of using the example of nature in order to gain understanding. In a way, this is precisely what happens in *The Dream*, where the symbol of the Cross, an object which reminds us of Christ's passion, is brought to life and actively tells us of Christ's passion.

The juxtaposition of *latens*, literally 'hiding, being unseen' and *propositio* 'a putting forth (for consideration)' is stark and is itself enigmatic in its quality of juxtaposition and paradox.[147] *Propositio* is a word Aldhelm uses of Symphosius's riddles (*propositionum formulas*) and his own (*enigmatum propositiones*), and a mathematical work attributed to Alcuin (*Propositiones ad acuendos iuvenes*) uses the word to denote a mathematical problem, and it seems clear that Aldhelm perceived these *propositiones* as logical puzzles.[148] Aldhelm

[146] Ehwald, *Aldhelmi opera*, pp. 76–77.
[147] On these qualities in Aldhelm's *Enigmata*, see Chapter Two, pp. 97–98.
[148] Ehwald, *Aldhelmi opera*, p. 76.

does not suggest that things themselves speak—precisely the opposite: these insentient things can only be made to speak by rational creatures so that the latter can draw wisdom from them.

Such attributed speech, then, is not to be confused with the notion, shared by Basil, Ambrose, and several Old English poets, that God's word still lives in and upholds creation, a concept which might be taken to suggest that there truly are 'words' spoken through silent things.[149] The idea that nature speaks is perhaps ultimately based in Psalm 18(19). 2–5:

> The heavens shew forth the glory of God, and the firmament declareth the work of his hands. Day to day uttereth speech, and night to night sheweth knowledge. There are no speeches nor languages, where their voices are not heard. Their sound hath gone forth into all the earth: and their words unto the ends of the world.

But Aldhelm explicitly refers to Psalm 97(98). 8: 'The rivers shall clap their hands' as a figure of speech, not literal, and we should expect he would say the same about these verses. These models of language in creation (attributed speech, God's speech through creation, and creation's speech) are not necessarily exclusive in all instances, but Aldhelm's focus is more on how speech-bearers can make creation talk rather than how they can listen to what creation has to say.[150] For Aldhelm, the divine gift of speech is proper to spiritual beings, but in poetry all of these speech models can be put into play, just as the *Dream* attributes to a real and specific object both speech and action (such as we might intuit by gazing on it), and the object, in turn, is vested with a degree of divine authority, even preaching the Gospel. In the next subsection we see how the *Daniel*-poet depicts the arrival of another dream, its ability to 'speak', and its contribution to our understanding of *reord-berend*.

[149] Compare Chapter Five, pp. 236–43.
[150] Williamson, *Old English Riddles*, pp. 23–28, and draws similar conclusions about the Exeter Book *Riddles*.

The dream-context of *The Dream of the Rood* is especially relevant in relation to the Old English *Daniel*, as Galloway, among others, has noted.[151] *Daniel*, a versification of the scriptural book of Daniel, Chapters 1–5, tells of King Nebuchadnezzar's deeds and is, as Harbus suggests, arguably more about him than about Daniel.[152] Nebuchadnezzar has two dreams in the Old English poem, the first of which is alluded to (120–23) by the poet in terms similar to *The Dream of the Rood* 1–3 (quoted above; overlapping diction in bold):

> Het þa tosomne sinra leoda 120
> þa wiccung-dom widost bæron,
> frægn þa ða mænigeo **hwæt** hine **gemætte**,
> þenden **reord-berend** **reste wunod**e.
>
> [Nebuchadnezzar] called together those of his people who most greatly held the power of sorcery, asked the many then what he had dreamed while the speech-bearer remained at rest.

While the *Dream* begins in the first-person, noting that collectively speech-bearers slept, this third-person narration has Nebuchadnezzar as the lone speech-bearer. In the *Dream*, *reord-berend* contrasts the noise and business of day with the quiet and openness of night, but *Daniel* seems to call Nebuchadnezzar a *reord-berend* ironically: the king asks his magicians to speak for him about what he, the 'speech-bearer', cannot even remember: *he ne wisse word ne angin* / *swefnes sines*; *het him secgan þeah* ('he did not know the word or intent of his dream; yet he commanded them to declare it', 125–26).

Not remembering the words of the dream and not understanding it certainly makes this king, who will later be made beast-like as a punishment, a sad parody both of a true speech-bearer, who has the divine gift for speech and understanding, and of a good king, of

[151] Galloway, 'Dream Theory', p. 476.
[152] For an introduction to *Daniel*, see Farrell, *Daniel and Azarias*, pp. 1–2 and 22–36. Harbus, 'Nebuchadnezzar's Dreams', p. 489.

the sort who in Old English poetry are repeatedly said to rule by their words.[153] Although it is not possible to know which poem came first, a few points can be made by comparing these two scenes of dreams and *reord-berend*: in contrast to the *Dream*, in which a divine revelation is treasured and given for the many, the Nebuchadnezzar of *Daniel* is rather an ignominious *reord-berend*, an anti-type of what might be called the *Dream*-poet's (indeed, the inanimate Cross's) mindfulness and generosity. Whereas the *Dream* is largely about commemorating in mind and word the intercessory service of one for all, Nebuchadnezzar conversely awakes in a stupor, forgets his dream, and expects others to remember and interpret it.

It is curious that the *Daniel*-poet says that Nebuchadnezzar did not know the *word* of this first dream, because the dream contained no speech. Whether Old English *word* here is taken as singular or plural, because there were no words spoken in the dream and *word* generally refers to a sense unit, it is best to understand 'message' or 'sense' for *word* here, and the poet's language suggests that God was speaking to Nebuchadnezzar through the dream. That the first dream-vision spoke is perhaps made clearer by Nebuchadnezzar's second dream. This dream is a vision of a great tree, representative of Nebuchadnezzar, and an angel enters the scene (508a–10a):

> Đuhte him þæt engel ufan of roderum
> stigan cwome and stefne abead,
> torhtan reorde.
>
> It seemed to him that an angel from the heavens above came entering and declared in voice, brilliant speech.

This angel commands that the tree be cut down and subdued so that it might know God's power over it (510b–522b), and it does not seem coincidental that the angel's voice is emphasized by variation, given that Nebuchadnezzar, the failed *reord-berend*, will soon lose

[153] See further Chapter Five, p. 243.

his wits (571). Antonina Harbus suggests that the poet calls the dream itself a spirit based on the following passage (523–25):[154]

> Þa of slæpe onwoc, (swefn wæs æt ende),
> eorðlic æðeling, him þæs egesa stod,
> gryre fram ðam gaste ðe þyder god sende.
>
> Then the earthly king awoke from sleep (the dream was at its end). Terror of it was upon him, dread from the spirit that God had sent there.

This is possible, but without any corroborating evidence that dreams were considered spirits, it seems more likely that *gast* here refers to the angel in the dream, or perhaps that an angel delivered the dream to Nebuchadnezzar (or both). After all, Harbus notes that the *Daniel*-poet adds an extra-biblical angel to the poem in lines 154–57:[155]

> Him god sealde gife of heofonum
> þurh hleoðor-cwyde haliges gastes,
> þæt him engel godes eall asægde
> swa his man-drihten gemæted wearð.
>
> God gave him a gift from the heavens through the resounding speech of the Holy Spirit [or 'a holy spirit'], that an angel of God told him everything, just as his human-lord had dreamed.

Whereas in the biblical narrative *mysterium per visionem nocte revelatum est* ('the mystery was revealed in a vision by night'), in the Old English poem an angel speaks to Daniel—the poem does not specify when or how—what Nebuchadnezzar had dreamed.[156] Biblical dream-visions, such as those of Joseph, Pharaoh, and Nebuchadnezzar, do not usually feature dream-visitors, but it is a commonplace in medieval dream-visions for a supernatural figure to guide the dreamer in their revelations.[157] This is a feature of Cædmon's dream, *The Dream of the Rood*, and several accounts of Constantine's vision of the Cross, to name a few examples, and it seems likely that in *Daniel* an angel brought the second dream to Nebuchadnezzar in the

[154] Harbus, 'Nebuchadnezzar's Dreams', p. 502.
[155] Harbus, 'Nebuchadnezzar's Dreams', p. 498.
[156] Daniel 2. 19.
[157] Spearing, *Medieval Dream-Poetry*, p. 4.

same way that an angel brought the interpretation of the first dream to Daniel.[158] After all, intermediaries such as saints and angels began to take a heightened role in Christian theology from the Late Antique period on.[159] Perhaps more importantly, the angel reveals the vision and its meaning to Daniel in speech, and insofar as these visions were given by God (through angels[?]) to teach, the dreams are at once vision and voice. It is, in fact, a notable feature of *D1* that most of the dream is not seen by the dreamer but narrated by the Cross; the dreamer only sees the Cross, which then relates its own experiences in words, but for the audience, who receives the whole dream in words, it is as if the dreamer, too, sees what the Cross saw.

Harbus also points out that in *Daniel*, Nebuchadnezzar's first dream is said to travel: *com on sefan hwurfan swefnes woma* ('the disturbance of a dream came turning into [Nebuchadnezzar's] heart', 110).[160] Harbus compares this movement, described by the verb *hweorfan*, to the mind's movement in *The Wanderer* and *The Seafarer*, which as we have seen above *hweorfan* (or *geondhweorfan*, in *The Wanderer* 51b).[161] Based on this movement, Harbus and Mize both note that dreams are discussed like discrete entities in Old English poetry which travel to the hearts of dreamers, in contrast to 'antique and patristic' theories which consider dreams actions.[162] The reification of dreams Mize further compares to the metaphor of the mind as an enclosure in Old English poetry, noting that just as the dream about the Cross entered the dreamer's mind and left its impression, by sharing the poem the vision of the Cross can also be received by other minds.[163] Thus dreams, like words, are realized in poetry as 'spiritual' or 'psychic' entities which travel from mind to mind. Compare also Daniel's words to Nebuchadnezzar (551–54):

Þæt is, weredes weard, wundor unlytel,

[158] On Constantine's vision, see Harbus, 'Text as Revelation', pp. 647–48.
[159] On intermediaries in late antique theology, see Brown, *Cult of the Saints*, pp. 50–68.
[160] Harbus, 'Nebuchadnezzar's Dreams', pp. 492–93.
[161] See also Harbus, 'Deceptive Dreams', pp. 173–74.
[162] Harbus, 'Nebuchadnezzar's Dreams', pp. 492–93 and 502; Mize, 'Mental Container', pp. 139–42 (quotation at p. 140)
[163] Mize, 'The Mental Container', pp. 147–50.

þæt þu gesawe þurh swefen cuman,
heofonheane beam and þa halgan word,
yrre and egeslicu, þa se engel cwæð

That is, keeper of the troop, a great wonder—what you saw come through the dream, a heaven-high tree and the holy words, wrathful and terrible, which the angel spoke.

The first dream's 'disturbance' came to Nebuchadnezzar, but through the second dream comes a wonder to the king, which is both vision and an angel's words. That an angel's words come through this latter dream seems to clarify that the dream itself is not a spirit; rather, a spirit is able to visit and speak to Nebuchadnezzar through the dream. Indeed, Harbus notes that while the poetic word *woma* seems to connote 'disturbance' in these collocations and in other collocations referring to battle, the word properly means 'noise' or 'sound', even glossing *facundia* ('eloquence') in a mid-eleventh century gloss of Aldhelm's prose *De laude virginitatis* (London, British Library, MS Royal 5. E. xi).[164]

Like the resonances of *The Dream of the Rood* found on material crosses, a portion of *Daniel*, too, has been found in a runic inscription. An Anglo-Saxon clip, known as the Honington Clip, is inscribed with the text of *Daniel* 362–64, the first three lines of the Song of the Three Youths.[165] Of course, this portion of *Daniel* also occurs in the Old English poem *Azarias* (73–75), a poem which overlaps considerably with *Daniel* 279–429—the strongest similarities lying between *Azarias* 1–72 and *Daniel* 279–361—suggesting a certain degree of independent transmission.[166] Indeed, this portion of poetry was not only translated from Scripture—it had been adapted into the liturgy as the Song of Azarias (*Azarias* 5–48, *Daniel* 283–332) and the Song of the Three Youths (*Azarias* 73a–161a, 362–408), also known as the *Benedicite* canticle.[167] Therefore, like the *Dream of the Rood*, it would appear that this

[164] Napier, *Old English Glosses*, p. 172. See also Harbus, 'Text as Revelation', p. 646 (esp. n. 5), and 'Nebuchadnezzar's Dreams', pp. 492–93, on the collocation *swefnes woma*.
[165] On the clip, see Hines, 'The *Benedicite* Canticle'.
[166] See Farrell, *Daniel and Azarias*, pp. 38–45, on the relationship between the texts.
[167] Hines, 'The *Benedicite* Canticle', pp. 270–74.

fragment of biblical verse, too, was remembered and taken from its poetic context in order to serve devotional function.

The Old English *Daniel*, like its biblical source, is primarily concerned with human pride and God's sovereignty, and, comparing *Daniel* and *The Dream*, Nebuchadnezzar's pride and stubbornness stand in stark contrast to the Rood's humble submission.[168] In consequence, when the Rood-tree is removed from its stem and taken to crucify Christ, it is subsequently glorified, whereas the great tree of Nebuchadnezzar's second dream, which represents the high glory (and, according to Manish Sharma, pride) of the king, is removed from its stem and bound, leaving only the stump.[169] This felling signifies that the king's mind will be abased and made beast-like until he recognizes God's sovereignty. Considering that the Old English *stefn* means both 'voice' and 'stem, trunk, origin', it does not seem coincidental that the *reord-berend* king Nebuchadnezzar has the trunk and branches of his tree removed and bound for a time, losing his faculties of human intelligence, while the Rood is removed from its humble roots to become Christ's gallows and is subsequently endowed with the very faculties Nebuchadnezzar lost. There seems to be some relationship between these two tree-dreams, and regardless of which poem came first, perhaps the *Dream*-poet would have known Nebuchadnezzar's story from the Bible. Whatever the case, it is clear that remembering these dreams, like remembering God's words, is part of being a *reord-berend*.

[168] On the centrality of Nebuchadnezzar's pride and God's sovereignty in *Daniel*, see Sharma, 'Defiance of Measure', pp. 103–26, and Harbus, 'Nebuchadnezzar's Dreams'.
[169] Sharma, 'Defiance of Measure', p. 113, citing Caie, 'Warning against Pride', p. 7, notes that in *Daniel* the height of the tree and its subsequent cutting down are reminiscent of the humbling of the Tower of Babel, which was understood to have been in the same location as Babylon.

Conclusions

As vessels for words, humans were expected to hold, meditate on, and share the instruction they received. Poets and preachers had the special roles of disseminating these words, giving voice to the Divine, the blessed, the damned, and the inanimate, enabling their listeners to adequately understand and approach the spiritual battle of life. By mediating not only divine voices but the voices of judged souls, devotional symbols, and dreams, poets and preachers give their audiences the treasures of wise words. These words, in turn, give the audience a sense of who they are, their places in the world, and what use to make of their own minds and speech. This chapter has covered a broad range of sources, but the two poems under primary consideration do not seem interested in attributing their characters unique styles. Nevertheless, they do use style to drive home their spiritual messages, and in the following chapter, I demonstrate how form is similarly used in *Guthlac A* to adorn divine messages. Yet in the spiritual battle of *Guthlac A*, we will observe how even infernal characters can attempt to usurp such emphatic poetic patterning for their own means.

Chapter Four

Words of War: Authority, Hierarchy, and the Power of Voice in *Guthlac A*

swa is lar ond ar
to spowendre spræce gelæded.

—*Guthlac A*, 620b–21b[1]

Guthlac A, an Exeter Book poem of 819 lines, celebrates the life of St Guthlac (674–715), a hermit who takes up residence *on beorge* (a phrase which can be translated 'on [or 'in'] a mount [or '(burial) mound']', although the precise translation has been the subject of much debate) with the goal of pursuing God through an ascetic path of solitude.[2] It is the first of what are generally now considered two separate poems, each concerned with a different aspect of Guthlac's life: *Guthlac A* treats mainly of Guthlac's temptation, while the second, *Guthlac B*, concerns Guthlac's passion. Both poems begin similarly with detailed theological prefaces suited to their respective themes. *Guthlac A* opens with a hierarchical structure that connects heaven and earth lexically and narratologically, as Calder notes: the prologue starts with the meeting of a soul and its angelic psychopomp in the afterlife, proceeds, using a focusing lexical pattern (*monge* […] *sume* […] *sume*; 'many […] certain […] certain'), to discuss the kinds of holiness found on earth, and concludes by introducing the poem's official agon, the temptation of 'a certain' (*sum*) holy man, Guthlac.[3] *Guthlac B*, on the other hand,

[1] For a translation and discussion of this excerpt, see pp. 221–23 below.
[2] The main issue has been whether to construe the poet's use of the word *beorg* as 'burial mound', as Guthlac's dwelling is represented in Felix's *Vita Sancti Guthlaci* (see Wentersdorf, 'Battle for the *beorg*', for example), or as a 'mountain' of spiritual symbolism, as Paul Reichardt suggests in 'Spiritual Perfection'. The confusion is only compounded by the poet's use of the preposition *on*, which can mean both 'in' and 'on'. The question of whether *beorg* should mean 'mound' or 'mount' has largely been in response to the question of whether or not the poet of *Guthlac A* knew or made use of Felix's *Vita* when composing the poem. Clark summarily addresses previous scholarship on the issue in 'Temptation of the Barrow': see especially pp. 48–50 for a brief review of previous scholarship and pp. 50–60 for a more thorough discussion.
[3] 'Some Discriminations', p. 68.

takes Eden as its starting point, setting the story of the Fall of Man before the narrative of Guthlac's life of exemplary steadfastness, which creates a redemptive history of obedience and simultaneously explains that human guilt requires that even a righteous person like Guthlac must taste mortality.

Despite the poems' focus on Guthlac, and while both feature a similar quantity of direct discourse to elaborate their respective arguments, the verbal duels between Guthlac and his demonic tempters which constitute the main conflict of *Guthlac A* are more relevant to the present investigation than Guthlac's consolatory dialogues with his *ombehtþegn* ('attendant servant') in *Guthlac B*:[4] in the former poem the audience can compare the rhetorical skill of the narrator's words with those of an angel, demons, Guthlac, and St Bartholomew, whereas the dialogues of *Guthlac B* are reminiscent of classical and patristic literary dialogues, in which the master's words predominate and the student's words serve merely as an impetus for the master's wisdom.[5] The rhetorical battle between the servants of God (Guthlac and his heavenly helpers) and those of Satan (the demons of the *beorg*), which is a struggle between wisdom (*snyttro*, *wisdom*) and cunning (*searo*), culminates in Guthlac's highly patterned riposte to the demons at the gates of hell, even as he claims that 'instruction and grace are brought to thriving speech' (*swa is lar ond ar / to spowendre spræce gelæded*, 620b–21b).[6] A diversity of speakers, those speakers' supernatural character, agonistic dialogues, and a thematic emphasis on the use and power of language all make *Guthlac A* an ideal place to explore supernatural discourse.

[4] I calculate that direct speech makes up roughly a third (around 35%) of both poems. These are middling figures when compared to the 13% of *Exodus* or the striking 61% of *Juliana* (Louviot, *Direct Speech*, p. 383); but more important than sheer volume of discourse is the structural role direct speech plays in both poems, as I demonstrate here.
[5] Zimmerman, *Dialogues*, pp. vi–vii; Menner, *Solomon and Saturn*, pp. 53–56; and Shippey, *Poems of Wisdom*, pp. 1–3.
[6] In *Guthlac A*, *snyttro* and *wisdom* are used exclusively of the wisdom of good characters (*snyttro* particularly of angels' gifts: 163a, 184b, 473a, and 764a; *wisdom* particularly of men's: 156b, 503a, 529b, and 763b), while *searo* is only used of the demons' wisdom (142a, 228b, 568b, and 674b).

The *Psychomachia*-Allegory

Given the intimate relationship between words and truth (or untruth) which we have observed thus far and the capacity of words to mediate between spirits, it is unsurprising that the tongue's power is a biblical commonplace. In Proverbs 18. 21, Solomon goes as far as saying 'Death and life are in the power of the tongue: they that love it, shall eat the fruits thereof'.[7] It is likely with such sentiments in mind that the anonymous compiler of the Anglo-Saxon wisdom dialogue *Adrian and Ritheus* included a question on the subject (question 43):[8]

> Saga me hwæt byð betst and wyrst.
> Ic þe secge, mannes word.
>
> Tell me what is best and worst.
> I tell you, man's word.

It seems that this excerpt from *Adrian and Ritheus* was phrased to distinguish the perfection of the divine Word from man's fallen word, for other question-and-answer dialogues, such as the *Prose Solomon and Saturn* (37) and the *Collectanea Pseudo-Bedae* (157) ask and answer this same question simply with *word* and *verbum* respectively, rather than '*man*'s word', an attribution which could be misinterpreted as attributing negative qualities to the Word.[9] While the Word of God is frequently depicted as a sword (among other weapons) throughout Scripture, it is always drawn against evil, and it seems generally unlikely that it would be considered wisdom to call God's Word 'worst'.[10]

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[7] See also Proverbs 15. 4 and 16. 24, for example.
[8] Cross and Hill, *Prose Solomon*, p. 39. See also their introduction to this text and the *Prose Solomon and Saturn* on pp. 3–13.
[9] On the *Collectanea* see Bayless and Lapidge, *Collectanea*, pp. 1–24. Cross and Hill, *Prose Solomon*, pp. 103–04, consider it unlikely that these mentions of 'the word' are meant to connote the divine logos.
[10] See, for example, Isaiah 49. 2, Hebrews 4. 12, Ephesians 6. 17, and Revelation 1. 16 and 19. 15. A bow and arrow are also frequently in God's hand in the Psalms (see 7. 12–13, 18. 14, 21. 12, etc.) and in Jeremiah the Word is called a fire and a hammer (5. 14, 20. 9, and 23. 29).

Indeed, words in general are regularly conceived of as weapons in Scripture and subsequent exegesis. Not only does God frequently bend the bow in the Psalter, psalmists' enemies are also said to sharpen their tongues like swords and to shoot arrows at the innocent.[11] Drawing from this scriptural motif, Gregory the Great draws special attention to the weapons of spiritual warfare in his compendious *Moralia in Job*. This seminal exegetical work on the Book of Job, which tells the story of a man's endurance through the devil's assaults, has special relevance for *Guthlac A*. On the war of words, Gregory says:[12]

> But be it observed, that our enemy strikes us with as many darts as he afflicts us with temptations; for it is in a field of battle that we stand every day, every day we receive the weapons of his temptations. But we ourselves too send our javelins against him, if, when pierced with woes, we answer humbly. […] Let us never imagine that our combatant [Job] received wounds and yet inflicted none. For whatever words of patience he gave forth to the praise of God, when he was stricken, he as it were hurled so many darts in to the breast of his adversary, and inflicted much sorer wounds than he underwent.

That temptations are referred to as weapons surely derives from Ephesians 6. 16: 'In all things taking the shield of faith, wherewith you may be able to extinguish all the fiery darts of the most wicked one'. While these temptation-darts are not necessarily limited to words, they are clearly associated with them, for the javelins of the righteous are their words, and in the next book of the *Moralia* Gregory suggests that holy men 'launch the darts of instruction' and that heretics 'pierce [the church] with unreasonable words like as with a kind of dart'.[13] That is, the spiritual battle is largely a rhetorical one, a battle of truth in which temptation, verbal or otherwise, as well as Godly words are conceived of as weapons.

This recurrent motif of spiritual warfare had received vivid allegorization even before Gregory's time by the Christian Latin poet Prudentius, a fourth-century Iberian.[14] His work *Psychomachia* (Greek, 'soul-fight') notably dramatizes the conflict as waged by personified

[11] Psalms 11. 2, 57. 4, 64. 3–4, etc.
[12] Parker, *Morals on the Book of Job*, I, 90–91 (Book I. 18. 32).
[13] Parker, *Morals on the Book of Job*, I, 157 and 159–60 (Book III. 21. 39 and 42).
[14] Harrington, *Medieval Latin*, pp. 103–04.

vices and virtues rather than between angels, souls, and demons.[15] *Psychomachia* appears to have been particularly influential in Anglo-Saxon England, as John P. Hermann demonstrates.[16] Warfare was a recurrent feature of Germanic heroic verse, and Old English poets readily adopted the Christian spiritual war and adapted it to Old English poetic style.[17] Poets regularly highlighted and expanding accounts of warfare, at times adding battles where they were not in their sources.[18] Even Aldhelm inserted a *psychomachia*-allegory in his *Carmen de virginitate*, expanding John Cassian's discussion (*Conference* 5, especially Chapter 14) of how to fight the eight principal vices into a full-fledged battle-poem.[19] It is notable that these battle-allegories are poems rather than prose; in fact, not only did Aldhelm make a battle out of Cassian's prose instructions, the *Carmen*'s battle is absent from his prose *De laude virginitatis*, suggesting that battle was a topic especially suitable for Anglo-Saxon poetry.[20]

However popular this Latin allegory was, the battle for the soul took a different shape in vernacular poetry. There is, as Hermann notes, no 'sustained personification allegory' in Old English poetry, which rather depicts spiritual warfare in its more literal sense as a fight against demons.[21] But this does not preclude a sense of emblematic, figural interpretation of Old English poetic characters, many of whom even have names suggestive of their roles. Guthlac's name, for instance, is etymologized by his hagiographer Felix (who composed the *Vita Sancti Guthlaci* sometime during the reign of King Ælfwald of the East Angles, who reigned 713–49) as *belli munus*, 'offering [or even 'spectacle', perhaps matching the dual meaning of *lac* as 'offering' and 'play'] of war', and this in turn bespeaks Guthlac's bellicose

[15] The text is introduced and translated by Thomson, *Prudentius*, I.
[16] *Allegories of War*, pp. 17–36. See also Wieland, 'Manuscripts of Prudentius's *Psychomachia'*, and Bloomfield, *Seven Deadly Sins*, pp. 78–81.
[17] Cherniss, *Ingeld and Christ*, pp. 218–34.
[18] See, for example, Orchard, 'Conspicuous Heroism', pp. 120–24, who discusses Abraham's battle with the king of Sodom in *Genesis A*.
[19] Hermann, *Allegories of War*, pp. 20–24.
[20] See further Lapidge and Rosier, *Poetic Works*, pp. 99–100.
[21] *Allegories of War*, p. 37.

nature as a physical warrior in youth and a spiritual warrior in maturity.[22] Although there is no clear link between *Guthlac A* and Felix's *Vita*,[23] Fred Robinson has amply demonstrated the significance of character names and etymologizing in a number of Old English poems to suggest that vernacular poets were aware of the convenience of Guthlac's name and lifestyle.[24]

Emblematic characterization is present in the prose and poetic *Solomon and Saturn* dialogues, as we have seen, which take two well-known figures as symbolic embodiments of Christian wisdom (Solomon) and worldly learning (Saturn) in order to contrast these and share wisdom with the audience.[25] The fact that the Solomon and Saturn dialogues are purely didactic question-and-answer texts in prose but are much more dramatic and antagonistic in poetry is surely related to the same trend in Latin verse: in straightforward prose the focus can be strictly didactic, whereas in poetry's art there must be some sense of story and evaluation of deeds. It would seem that there was a tradition within Germanic poetry of transmitting wisdom to an audience via fictive verbal wisdom contests (which should, according to Parks's terminology, be characterized as 'debates' rather than 'flytings', which Parks calls 'public exchange[s] of personal insults and boasts'), especially in Old Norse mythological poems such as *Alvíssmál* or *Vafþrúðnismál*.[26] These are, rather than purely allegorical characters, 'concrete' characters whose words and deeds can speak to the audience both directly as wisdom and allegorically as the characteristics of wisement. Such Old Norse poems regularly take *ljóðaháttr* form, and in Old English we find gnomic wisdom poems

[22] Colgrave, *Life of Saint Guthlac*, pp. 76–79 (Chapter 10).
[23] Roberts, *Guthlac Poems*, pp. 19–23, gives a detailed assessment of major critical arguments, noting that resemblances to the *Vita* are slight and general, and that there are various features present in the poem of which Felix makes no mention, as when Guthlac erects a cross at the *beorg* and when demons lift him into the air to behold monastic indiscipline. See also n. 1 above.
[24] Robinson, 'Significance of Names' (esp. pp. 43–50). See also Frank, 'Some Uses of Paronomasia', pp. 216–220, and 224.
[25] Menner, *Solomon and Saturn*, pp. 5–7; Cross and Hill, *Prose Solomon*, pp. 12–13.
[26] Compare Chapter One, pp. 54–55; Parks, *Verbal Dueling*, pp. 161–78.

making heavy use of hypermetric lines.[27] It comes therefore as no surprise that hypermetrics are found throughout *Guthlac A*, which, as we shall see, is primarily a debate.

Liuzza points to the importance of 'memory and emulation' in Old English poetry, and, as we have seen, Mize further demonstrates the importance of archetypal characterizations in order to give the audience a moral and ethical paradigm by which to live.[28] So while making virtues into characters was part of the *psychomachia*-tradition, Old English poets seem to have preferred concrete characters to embody virtues, and indeed, as Robinson notes, the traditional subject-matter of Old English poems usually dictated the characters of a given story and their names, so explicit allegories were generally out of the question anyway.[29] Rather, *Guthlac A* is what Hill describes as an 'art vita', that is, a type of saint's life which is not intended for public, 'quasi-liturgical' function—with the brevity and clarity attendant thereon—but one which adapts the historical life of the saint artistically to fit narrative conventions of a given genre for 'pleasure and instruction'; it is not allegorical fiction, but emblematic history.[30] As a poem of spiritual warfare and as a debate, *Guthlac A* fits with two planes of narrative convention in Old English poetry, and it now remains to be seen how the poet develops these characteristics.

The Fortress of the Soul

The notion of spiritual warfare also manifests itself in a wide-spread Old English poetic motif: the fortress of the soul. James Doubleday points to this motif in the poem known as

[27] Coker, 'Function of Hypermetric Lines', pp. 10–12.
[28] See Introduction, pp. 1–2, and Chapter Three, p. 132.
[29] 'Significance of Names', p. 14.
[30] '*Imago Dei*', pp. 36–37.

Vainglory, which teaches its audience how to discern an evil person from a good one.[31] In lines 37b–39b, a prideful man (standard mark-up)

> læteð inwit-flan
> **b**recan þone **b**urg-w*eal*, þe him be**b**ead meotud
> þæt he þæt **w**ig-st*eal* **w**ergan sceolde
>
> lets a malice-dart break through the fortress-wall, the war-position that the Measurer commanded him that he should defend.

Doubleday also notes the motif's presence in *Juliana*, Cynewulf's versification of St Juliana's life.[32] In lines 397b–409b a devil under torture confesses his tactics to the saint (standard mark-up):

> Þeah he **g**odes hwæt
> on**g**inne **g**æstlice, ic beo **g**earo sona,
> þæt ic **i**ngehygd **e**al geondwlite,
> hu ge**f**æstnad sy **f**erð innanweard,
> **w**iðst*eall* ge**w**orht. Ic þæs **w***eall*es geat
> on*t*y*n*e þurh *t*e*on*an; bið se **t**orr þyrel,
> **i**n-gong ge**o**penad, þonne ic **æ**rest him
> þurh **e**arg-fare **i**n onsende
> in **b**reost-sefan **b**itre geþoncas
> þurh **m**islice **m**odes willan,
> þæt him **s**ylfum **s**elle þynceð
> **l**eahtras to fremman ofer **l**of godes,
> **l**ices **l**ustas. Ic beo **l**areow georn
>
> Though [one] begin something good spiritually, I am ready straightaway to examine throughout all his inner thought how fixed his heart is inwardly, how built the defensive position. I open the wall's gate by vexation; the tower is open, the entrance opened, when I first send bitter thoughts into his heart by arrow-flight, by various desires of the mind, so that sins seem better to him to perform rather than the praise of God, the body's lusts. I am ever a ready teacher.

In both of these poems, the soul is a fortress under assault by demonic attacks, especially arrows of sin or sinful ideation.[33] Juliana herself refers to the soul's defences as a 'house' (*hus*, a rare word for Cynewulf which he always uses to mean 'body').[34] *Guthlac A* similarly

[31] 'Soul as Fortress', pp. 503–04.
[32] 'Soul as Fortress', pp. 504–05.
[33] Stanley also gives a brief treatment of this motif in Old English poetry in 'Old English Poetic Diction', pp. 418–22.
[34] In Cynewulf's signed poems *hus* appears only here and twice in *Elene*, referring to a dead youth's body (880b) and Cynewulf's body (1236b).

speaks of readying the spirit's house and fighting demons in the same context (802a–03a), explicitly alluding to several major motifs of spiritual warfare in Old English poetry.[35]

In *Juliana*, the devil explicitly refers to himself as a teacher, and these thought-arrows are a sort of discourse of evil, a rhetorical assault which destroys the soul as it penetrates its walls, taking a hold within. In *Juliana*, this rhetorical assault aptly comes with emphatic poetic patterning. The first clause (397b–98a) links the positive spiritual terms and activity of the Christian with continued and double *g*-alliteration (*godes* […] *onginne gæstlice*) only to counter them strongly at the head-stave with the devil's readiness (*gearo*) against this effort alliterating on the same letter, almost as if to say the harmonious joining is sundered by his plans. The devil then twice emphasizes his ability to perceive the Christian's interior defences with the element *in-*, which forms back-linked alliteration, enclosing this interiority with a sense that the devil is always watching. The following three lines (401–03) all feature double-alliteration and added assonance, emphasizing the demon's image of the heart's defences being penetrated, again repeating *in-* as a structurally alliterating element. This was clearly intentional and emphatic, because vocalic double-alliteration (as in verse 403a) is the rarest form of double-alliteration, and this is the excerpt's fourth alliterating repetition of *in-*.[36] The effect is an overwhelming sense of incursion.

In verse 402a *ontyne* and *teonan* share t- and n-assonance, suggesting paronomastic similarity between the devil's vexation and penetration of the heart, and it is also worth noting that here and in *Vainglory*, the elements *-weall* and (*wig-*/*wið-*)*-steall* rhyme in close succession. Such wordplay could suggest both that the devil is emphasizing the power of his tactics and that Cynewulf and the *Vainglory*-poet wish to issue a warning about these tactics,

[35] Hermann, *Allegories of War* pp. 37–52, enumerates these motifs, all of which, I should note, are present in *Guthlac A*: he cites the 'old strife' with Satan (141b), the devil's arrows (discussed below), the soul-as-fortress allegory (discussed below), Christ's role has healer and saviour (604b), his rewards for his faithful retainers (15b–16a), and the use of wisdom as a weapon (discussed below).
[36] Griffith, 'Extra Alliteration'.

which seems to be the narrative aim of Juliana's torturing a monologue out of the demon in the first place. After continued alliteration on the devil's arrows (*earg-fare*), the excerpt ends with continued *l*-alliteration, drawing together the multilinear sins (*leahtras*, *lices lustas*) which surround and stand in contrast to the right praise (*lof*) of God, which forms the head-stave of 408b. The devil then emphasizes his role as an eager teacher on the head-stave of 409b (*lareow*), drawing together this teaching moment of both rhetorical prowess and, perhaps in contrast to the devil's hurrah, spiritual insight for Christians. The equation of the devil's tactics with vicious discourse occasions a show of poetic skill, and as we shall see the very same is the case for demonic speech in *Guthlac A*.

While Doubleday notes that the virtues of *Psychomachia* are said to go out to battle from the camp of the soul (which Prudentius calls *sancta urbs*, 'the holy city'), he suggests Gregory's *Moralia* as a chief source for the image of the soul as fortress (*burh*, after all, means both 'fortress' and 'city').[37] In the preface to the *Moralia*, Gregory suggests that the soul is like a city besieged by enemies and attacked by the weapons of the evil ones.[38] Using a similar image, Gregory, in his commentary on Ezekiel, describes the mind as a city under siege and proceeds to describe a battle between personified vices and virtues, perhaps bespeaking the influence not only of the Bible but also of Prudentius and Cassian on his conception of spiritual warfare.[39]

The figure of the soul as a fortress assaulted by spiritual enemies also occurs in *Beowulf*, during Hrothgar's 'sermon' to the hero (1741b–47b; standard mark-up):[40]

Þonne se **w**eard swefeð,
sawele hyrde; bið se **s**læp to fæst,
bisgum ge**b**unden, **b**ona swiðe neah,
se þe of **f**lan-bogan **f**yrenum sceoteð.
Þonne bið on **h**reþre under **h**elm drepen 1745
biteran stræle (him be**b**eorgan ne con),

[37] 'Soul as Fortress', pp. 505–06.
[38] Parker, *Morals on the Book of Job*, I, 21–23 (Preface. 8–9).
[39] Doubleday, 'Soul as Fortress', pp. 506–07.
[40] On Hrothgar's 'sermon', see Fulk, Bjork, and Niles, *Klaeber's Beowulf*, pp. 213–14 (n. to lines 1700–84).

wom **w**undor-be<u>b</u>odum **w**ergan gastes

> When the watchman sleeps, the soul's herdsman, that sleep will be too deep, bound with troubles, the slayer very near, he who shoots sins from his arrow-bow. Then he will be pierced in his heart, beneath his protective covering—the man does not know how to defend himself—by a bitter arrow, crooked wonder-commands of the accursed spirit.

In this excerpt, Hrothgar explains how pride comes to dwell in the ruler's heart because of ease, after which the *sawles weard* (which could refer to the 'conscience' but more likely means 'intellect' or 'reason') no longer keeps watch against the enemy. Ever ready, the 'slayer' (***bo**na*) shoots from his bow (***bo**gan*) sins, which are equated by variation with *wom wundor-be**bo**dum*, 'crooked wonder-commands'.[41] These 'commands' are evidently of an astonishing or unnatural sort: Stanley has shown that *wundor* can be used in both positive and negative senses to mean not just something amazing, but something unfathomable or even unthinkable (in the negative connotation of that word).[42] The king wounded by the 'wonder-orders' becomes unsatisfied (1748a–49a), ceases magnanimity (1749b–50a), and *forðgesceaft / forgyteð ond forgymeð* ('forgets and ignores what has been ordained', 1750b–51a), conceiving and begetting something astonishingly unnatural. These words are weapons with the power to overcome a soul. As we saw in the previous chapter, earlier in this same sermon, Hrothgar claims that God has sent speeches into Beowulf's heart, and the king, like Cynewulf and the *Vainglory*-poet, seems to have a strong sense that the heart needs fastening against certain 'words'.[43]

Since this figure of a battle for the soul occurs in various contexts, one wonders whether it too may have been a felicitous convergence of Christian doctrine and Germanic poetic convention. The sense of the soul's fortress seems related to the recurrent motif of the human body as an enclosure for life, an enclosure which is often subject to malicious

[41] On the *sawles weard* and *wundor-bebodum*, see Bjork, Niles, and Fulk, *Klaeber's Beowulf*, p. 215 (nn. to lines 1741b–42a and 1743 ff.).
[42] 'Beowulf's *wundordeað*' and 'Wonder-Smiths and Others', pp. 291–93.
[43] See pp. 140–41.

destruction. According to Bede's *Ecclesiastical History* Book II. 13, one of King Edwin's 'top men' (*optimatum*) associates human life with the flight of a sparrow through a hall.[44] The recurrent poetic motif of the hall, the chief site of worldly glory and human civilization, and its vulnerability, paired with the equally-persistent motif of exile, gives a sense of life as a joy fleeting through the houses (building and body) of men.[45] William C. Johnson, Jr. also demonstrates how the decaying city of *The Ruin* is described in terms similar to a body;[46] and Holly Jagger points out the flexibility of the metaphor in *Beowulf*, noting that a building (namely *Heorot*) can be related to a body just as much as a body can be compared to a building.[47] There are many more examples of this body-as-building analogy, most importantly for us in *Guthlac A*, which brings these house- and fortress-motifs together. As we shall see, word-weapons are the main form of conflict in the poem, where Guthlac's fight with the demons is simultaneously a defence of both his *beorg* and his soul; for by their words the demons attempt to make Guthlac doubt and draw him away from his spiritual mission, outside of the territory that God has granted him.

Guthlac's House is his Fortress

'Dwellings' and 'dwelling'-words occur throughout the story of territorial and spiritual conflict in *Guthlac A*. In the opening lines, at the meeting of the angel and the blessed soul, the angel speaks, declaring the soul's destination. The speech requires quotation in full (6–25):

> Nu þu most feran þider þu fundadest
> longe ond gelome; ic þec lædan sceal.
> Wegas þe sindon weþe ond wuldres leoht

[44] Colgrave and Mynors, *Ecclesiastical History*, pp. 182–85.
[45] On the figure of the hall in Old English poetry, see for example Hume, 'Concept of the Hall'; and on exile, see for example Cherniss, *Ingeld and Christ*, pp. 103–19, and Greenfield, 'Theme of "Exile"'.
[46] 'Body-City Riddle', pp. 401–11.
[47] 'Body, Text and Self', p. 30.

torht ontyned. Eart nu tid-fara
to þam halgan ham þær næfre hreow cymeð
eder-gong fore yrmþum ac þær biþ engla dream,
sib ond gesælignes ond sawla ræst
ond þær a to feore gefeon motum,
dryman mid dryhten, þa þe his domas her
æfnað on eorþan.
He him ece lean
healdeð on heofonum þær se hyhsta,
ealra cyninga cyning, ceastrum wealdeð.
Ðæt sind þa getimbru þe no tydriað,
ne þam fore yrmþum þe þær in wuniað
lif aspringeð ac him bið lenge hu sel;
geoguþe brucað ond Godes miltsa.
Þider soð-fæstra sawla motun
cuman æfter cwealme, þa þe her Cristes æ
lærað ond læstað, ond his lof rærað;
oferwinnað þa awyrgdan gæstas, begytað him wuldres ræste.

Now you may venture to where you aimed long and constantly; I shall lead you. The paths for you are pleasant and the light of glory brightly revealed. You are now a timely traveller to the holy home where remorse never comes, transgression on account of miseries; rather there is ever the joyful sound of angels, peace and blessedness, and rest for souls; and there they may rejoice always in life, rejoice with the Lord, those who carry out his decrees here on the earth. (6a–15a)

He keeps an eternal reward for them in heaven where the Most High, the King of all kings, rules in the cities. Those are the buildings that never decay, nor does life fall away from them because of miseries that live therein, but for them [life] will be as long as it is good; they will enjoy youth and the mercies of God. To there may the souls of the truth-fast come after death, those who teach and stand by Christ's law here and lift up his praise, out-battle the cursed spirits, receive glory's rest for themselves. (15b–25b)

That the angel refers to the soul's destination first as 'the holy home' (*þam halgan ham*) and a place of rest is significant, as it stands in contrast to the unrest over Guthlac's *beorg-setl*, which precipitates the action of the poem.[48] In the following line, the poet uses *eder-gong*, a curiously elusive *hapax legomenon*, which I suggest bears threefold connotation. I follow Manish Sharma in accepting *eder-gong* as a term for crossing a boundary line (composed of the elements *edor-/eder-* 'boundary' and *-gong* 'going'; Sharma compares it to the crime of

[48] See also Bjork, *Verse Saints' Lives*, pp. 33–34, who notes the central motif of 'home' in the poem.

ceorles edor-bryce ‘breaching the fence of a *ceorl*’, which is listed among Alfred’s Laws),[49] but I come to slightly different conclusions.[50]

Although the element *gong* is vague enough to refer only to motion, it does not seem that ‘entry’ is what’s at stake here; rather, the phrase *eder-gong fore yrmþum* is in apposition to the word *hreow* (‘sorrow, remorse, repentance’). Rather than selecting a more generic term for sadness, the poet chose the religiously charged word *hreow* to take the head-stave of the line, poetically emphasizing it both by its position and by its alliterating antithesis with *halgan ham*. Indeed, *hreow* suggests a turning back of the soul (whether back towards God in repentance or back away from him in shame) on account of sadness for sins committed, and so its appositive variant *eder-gong* may similarly be treated as having a directional force of turning back, in this case into exile away from the heavenly home, and thus it could fittingly be translated as ‘transgression’, maintaining the force of crossing boundaries but also connoting the involvement of sin.[51] Conflating sin and loss of home evokes two great transgressions: as a result of the first, many angels fall away from heaven, and because of the second, men fall away from Paradise on earth.

Furthermore, *eder-gong* appears to also connote death, due to its use in the context of homes and enclosures; for, as stated in line 3 (*hio wiþ þam lice gedæleð*), at death the soul transgresses the confines of the body. While this suggestion may not be immediately obvious at first glance, by the end of the passage, bodies have been likened to buildings, and the whole passage’s emphasis on departures evokes a world in which sin, death, and separation from God and his heavenly home are all part of a process and are, in effect, the same. Likewise, in the *Moralia*, Gregory the Great describes ‘the heavenly country of angels […]

[49] Attenborough, *Earliest English Kings*, pp. 82–83 (Law 40 of Alfred: ‘*Be burh-bryce*’).
[50] ‘Extremes of Saintliness’, pp. 188–89.
[51] Compare to *Genesis B*, which employs *hreowan* or *hreowig* six times to a similar effect: once to describe Satan’s grief over man’s new status (421b–29b) and five times to describe the grief of Adam and Eve over the results of their sin.

wherein there is neither possibility of sinning nor of death'.[52] The poet indeed seems to invoke the journey-motif, with all life outside of paradise being a sad sojourn.[53]

Just as the holy home of heaven introduces the passage, dwelling-places permeate the rest of the angel's speech, and, in the lines that follow, a series of unclear referents seems to conflate human bodies with buildings as the poet exploits the aforementioned body-as-building analogy. After the angel tells the soul that it is to receive an eternal reward (*ece lean*) in heaven, his explanation of what the reward actually is gets lost in the syntax of the passage. In the immediately following sentence, the angel states: *Ðæt sind þa getimbru þe no tydriað* ('Those are the buildings that by no means decay', 18). The referent for the demonstrative pronoun *Ðæt* could be the *lean* ('recompense') in the initial clause of the preceding sentence, but, because of the grammatical attraction of proximity, it probably refers to *ceastrum*, and indeed *þa getimbru* is, like *ceastrum*, plural. The momentary referential confusion could have caused the audience to stumble over the word *getimbru*, thereby emphasizing it.[54] Gregory the Great uses the same strategy in his *Moralia*: *Mox quippe a carnis colligatione exeunt, in caelesti sede requiescunt* ('For as soon as they depart from the bond of flesh, they repose in a heavenly dwelling').[55]

In the next line (19), however, the poet speaks of the buildings as though they were *bodies*, and by the end of the passage it is unclear whether the angel is referring to dwellings for bodies or to bodies themselves. Literally construed, *ne þam fore yrmþum þe þær in wuniað / lif aspringeð* means 'nor from them on account of miseries that therein dwell life falls away'. Based on word-order, the relative pronoun *þe* seems to refer to *yrmþum*, but it can also refer to *þam*, that is the *getimbru*, with very different resultant senses: either life does

[52] Parker, *Morals on the Book of Job*, I, 220 (Book IV. 28. 54).
[53] Compare Chapter One, pp. 32–33.
[54] Baker, 'Beowulf the Orator', pp. 8–9 offers another example of the force of this same kind of confusion in *Beowulf*.
[55] Adriaen, *Moralia in Job*, p. 200 (Book IV. 29. 56).

not fall away from those that live in the buildings, or life does not fall away from the buildings. Because of the indeterminacy of the passage, buildings again are conflated with their inhabitants. Moreover, the image of a building is emphasized because the prepositional phrase *fore yrmþum* repeats line 11a, on which it occurs directly after *eder-gong*, and this use of the phrase comes directly after a reference to heavenly dwellings. Yet the next clause (21) seems to hint that bodies are in fact the referent, for it seems doubtful that the poet would represent buildings as enjoying youth and the mercies of God (*geoguþe brucað 7 Godes miltsa*).

Immediately thereafter, the angel conflates buildings and bodies again, for after the audience may plausibly conclude that the angel is referring to bodies, he says: 'To there the souls of the truth-fast may come after death' (*Þider soð-fæstra sawla motun / cuman æfter cwealme*, 22), and although bodies could be the referent of *þider*, the angel may also refer back to heaven (perhaps correlating with *þider* in verse 6b) or even to eternal dwellings in a general sense.[56] Now, of course, Scripture promises all of the above—new heavens and a new earth (Isaiah 65. 17–25 and Revelation 21. 1–5), new homes (John 14. 2), and new bodies (II Corinthians 5. 1–4 and 35–49)—but the poet seems to mix country, city, house, and body all to emphasize their function as dwellings for the soul. Given that Guthlac is an ascetic and wages a supernatural war over a dwelling-place, it is fitting that eternal dwellings are a large focus of the poem and are characterized, as in line 12, as dwellings of *sib* 'relationship, familial bonds, peace', *gesælignes* 'happiness, blessedness', and *ræst* 'rest'. Later in the poem, the same conflation of body and city is even used by Guthlac to resist temptation:

> Ðeah min ban ond blod butu geweorþen 380
> eorþan to eacan, min se eca dæl
> in gefean fareð þær he fægran

[56] Roberts, *Guthlac Poems*, pp. 127–28 (n. to lines 26 ff.), notes that scholars have drawn various boundaries for the angel's speech, partly based on their (erring) identification of parallelism between *þider* (6b) and *hwider* (26a); but as Roberts notes, *hwider* is only used to introduce a dependent question (*þider* would be the required relative 'to where'), and moreover line 25 concludes the description of heaven. To this we should add the 'aural punctuation' and summative moral of the hypermetric line, discussed at pp. 193–95 below.

botles bruceð.

> Even if my bone and blood both became an addition to the earth, the eternal part of me would journey in [or 'into'] joy where it might enjoy a fairer building.

Guthlac makes clear that bone and blood are only a temporary edifice for his 'eternal part', which will find a better form.

After the angel's speech, dwellings continue to figure prominently throughout the poem. The righteous hermits of lines 81–92 are described as simultaneously seeking earthly homes in concealment and waiting for heavenly dwellings (81a–84a). Then, when Guthlac is finally introduced, the audience is told that after he directed his spirit into God's will, he took thought for his heavenly home, and that after his salvation he began to inhabit his *beorg*-dwelling (95a–102a).[57] Thus the poet brings the instance of Guthlac's conversion (which begets his focus on his heavenly home) in tandem with his decision to move to his new earthly home: he makes no mention of a two-year coenobitic life before Guthlac's move *in heremum*, as Felix does in his *Vita*, and tells rather of the coincidence of his conversion and eremitic habitation.[58] Whether or not the poet knew Felix's *Vita*, such convergence highlights for the audience the intimate role the *beorg* plays as a territorial symbol of Guthlac's salvation.

Because the source of the poem's entire conflict is the devils' attempts to reclaim from Guthlac the *beorg* they previously occupied, C. A. Jones has demonstrated how the poem is in a sense as much about Guthlac's steadfastness to his physical residence as it is about his spiritual steadfastness to God's word.[59] In fact, the first mention of Guthlac's war is evidently a battle between his attendant angel and demon, during which the angel advises Guthlac to seek eternal life and to leave the worldly life 'further out' (*uttor*), whereas the demon encourages Guthlac to pursue strife and the world (114–35). Like the battle over the

[57] Compare Hume, 'Concept of the Hall', pp. 71–72.
[58] Jones, 'Envisioning the *Cenobium*', pp. 260–61.
[59] 'Envisioning the *Cenobium*', pp. 281–89, expanding on a point made by Hill, 'Middle Way', p. 182.

beorg, these counsels also conflate spirituality and locality, as sin is seen as a place: the world. The world here is a departure to something *uttor* away from God, a place away from which the angel encourages Guthlac and towards which the demon encourages him. This is similar to the language that St Augustine uses in his *De agone christiano* ('On the Christian Conflict', a work W. F. Bolton suggests was fundamental to forming an ideology of Christian spiritual warfare) to describe warring against demons; he claims that when we remain in Christ and overcome our desire for the world, we conquer the world's unseen powers and ruler.[60] So, remaining in the spatial asceticism of the *beorg*, Guthlac stands away from the world and is thus closer to God insofar as he maintains his monastic virtue of *stabilitas* ('steadfastness') to his *propositum* ('purpose').[61]

Jones similarly points out that the poet emphasizes Guthlac's status as a *bytla* 'builder', but while we may see him as a holy *fundator* or *aedificator* as Jones suggests, more important to the poem than the resonances with Benedictine reform noted by Jones are the echoes of warfare, and Guthlac's stronghold of faith seems more likely to evoke the Church in general rather than specific monastic foundations;[62] for it should be noted that Christian teachers are said by Gregory the Great to build and fortify Jerusalem,[63] a point also made by Gregory of Tours, who claims that the Church is built up (*aedificatur*) whenever the saints' deeds are rehearsed,[64] and Guthlac is identified as both a teacher (160b–62a) and an example (174b–75b, 401–03, and 748b–78b), perhaps to emphasize his foundational role as one of the earliest Anglo-Saxon saints in building the Church.[65] Note also the close correspondence

[60] Russell, *The Christian Combat*, pp. 315–17 (Chapters 1–2). Bolton , 'Background and Meaning', pp. 597–99 (cited in Calder, 'Some Discriminations', p. 75).
[61] Hill, 'Middle-Way', pp. 182–85; Jones, 'Envisioning the *Cenobium*', pp. 271–86.
[62] 'Envisioning the *Cenobium*', pp. 271–78.
[63] Parker, *Morals on the Book of Job*, III, 139 (Book XXVI. 6. 9).
[64] James, *Life of the Fathers*, p. 126 (Chapter 20. Prologue)
[65] Conner's argument in 'Source Studies', pp. 383–410 (which Jones cites as evidence of the poem's place in the Benedictine Reform movement), that *Guthlac A* is a product of the Reform, is unconvincing: it primarily relies on the poem's relationship to the *Rule of St Benedict*, the evidence for which seems relatively unobjectionable and convincing (though this does not help his dating criteria), and parallels between the poem and Smaragdus's commentary on the *Rule* (composed between 816–840), which are far looser.

between *bytla* (‘builder’, also attested as *bylda*), *botl* (‘building’), and *bydel*, ‘herald, minister’; such phonemic similarity could easily have supplied a paronomastic connection between proclamation and building.

Thus, the metaphor of the soul’s fortress finds concrete treatment in *Guthlac A*, and, as he defends the *beorg*, he defends his soul. Lapidge, tracing the use of figural interpretation in the Old English poem *Exodus* back to Late Antique Christian poets, reminds us that figures were a feature of the earliest Anglo-Saxon schooling and poetry, and so it is certainly significant that the poet uses the word *beorg* to describe Guthlac’s dwelling.[66] Much has been made of whether the *beorg* refers to a mountain or a burial mound, but no one, to my knowledge, has pointed out the kinship between *beorg* and the verb *beorgan* ‘to protect, to save’, much less the word *burh* (also spelt *burg*) ‘fortification; fortified city’—remember that in *Vainglory*, the soul’s defence is called a *burg-weal* ‘fortress-wall’ (38a)—or even the legal word *borg*, which refers to surety given by one’s legal protector.[67] After all, at the poem’s end, the poet states that the chosen warriors dear to Christ ‘defend themselves against baleful violence’ (*beorgað him bealo-niþ*) (809a) and that ‘it does not grieve them when they move into the holy city after [their] going hence’ (*Him þæt ne hreoweð æfter hin-gonge / ðonne hy hweorfað in þa halgan burg*, 811–12). I do not suggest that the poet envisioned the *beorg* as a physical fortification; rather, the description of the *beorg* is less specific than evocative, suggesting Guthlac’s salvation and security in God. Latin verse saints’ lives were also less specific than their prose counterparts, favouring applicability and a variety of connections over distinguished details.[68]

Hence, it is clear that the speech of spirits is part of the war for the soul, with weapon-words assaulting and defending heart-fortresses. The poet naturally draws on Guthlac’s

[66] ‘Versifying the Bible’, pp. 24–28.
[67] Abraham, ‘Case at Law’, p. 174; *DOE*, ‘borg’. See also n. 2 above.
[68] Godman, *Bishops, Kings, and Saints*, pp. lxxxiv–lxxxviii.

former life as a warrior and stylizes him as a spiritual warrior. Now we turn to the power of these weapons themselves and the form these words take. As we shall see, *Guthlac A* takes a special interest in the form of words, but more so in their authoritative power. Combining the language of hierarchy, which evokes a sense of the naturalness of obedience and maintaining God's word, with the power of that word, the *Guthlac A*-poet demonstrates that form, including the form of spirits and rhetoric, can be deceiving, but the power of truth is the invincible power of God himself.

The Battle: The Power of the Word

Order and Hierarchy: *Guthlac A* 1a–84a

The poet displays a considerable interest in rank in the poem's opening lines, building a picture of a defined natural order and correct hierarchy within which things should operate. As Calder has noted, the word *had* occurs five times within the first 100 lines, and so it would appear to be of great importance to the poem's theme.[69] Each employment of the word comes with a different shade of meaning, and the poet seemingly takes advantage of the word's multivalence to blend all forms of biological life with forms of holy life, emphasizing, as stated above, that all cosmic order was created and is sustained by God's authoritative word.

The poem's first five lines describe in a hypermetric set the meeting of a blessed soul with its angel at death (1–5; hypermetric lines are indicated with margin shifted to left):

Se bið gefeana fægrast þonne hy æt frymðe gemetað,
engel ond seo eadge sawl! Ofgiefeþ hio þas eorþan wynne,
forlæteð þas lænan dreamas, ond hio wiþ þam lice gedæleð.
Đonne cwið se engel, (hafað yldran **had**),
greteð gæst oþerne, abeodeð him godes ærende 5

[69] 'Some Discriminations', p. 67.

> That will be the fairest of joys when they meet at the origin, angel and the blessed soul! She gives up these joys of earth, leaves behind these transitory joys, and she separates from the body. Then the angel speaks—it has elder ***had***—greets the other spirit, announces God's tidings to it.

As Hill has shown, this 'elder' status is invoked to emphasize the angel's role as a superior and teacher of man, because age brings wisdom; and the stable, 'elder' status stands in contrast to the corruption of the world, which tends to unruliness in youth and decay in age.[70]

The second *had*, in line 31, is a bit more ambiguous in its context (30a–32a):

> Monge sindon geond middan-geard 30
> **hadas** under heofonum þa þe in haligra
> rim arisað
>
> Many they are throughout the earth, the ***hadas*** under heaven which ascend into the number of the saints.

Although there is little from the context to aid our understanding here, Gordon Gerould notes that if these instances of *had* echo the phrasing of Gregory of Tours' *Vitae patrum*, Lactantius' *De ira dei*, or something closely related, they are probably meant to translate *gradus*, hence meaning 'rank' or 'grade'.[71] However, given the word's broad scope, the audience is perhaps invited to imagine that all ranks of all men are denoted, not merely the ranks of holy men. This possibility seems supported by a passage shortly thereafter at lines 67a–70a:

> witon þæt se eðel ece bideð
> ealra þære mengu þe geond middan-geard
> dryhtne þeowiað ond þæs deoran ham
> wilniað bi gewyrhtum. 70
>
> they know that the homeland waits eternally for all of the many that serve the Lord throughout middle-earth and so yearn for the precious home with their works.

[70] 'Age of Man' (esp. pp. 13–15).
[71] 'Old English Poems', p. 79.

This excerpt again echoes *monge* and *geond middan-geard* from line thirty but makes no mention of holy orders, only of those who serve God. Thus, the *hadas* mentioned in line 30 may denote not only ecclesiastical orders but the different estates of all men.

The Panther begins with the exact wording of *Guthlac A* 30 to describe many *cynn*, rather than *hadas* (1–3):[72]

> Monge sindon geond middan-geard
> ungerimu cynn þe we æþelu ne magon
> ryhte areccan ne rim witan.
>
> Many are throughout the earth, innumerable kinds, whose lineage we cannot rightly recount nor know a number.

Citing this passage, Liuzza argues that *Guthlac A* 30 marks the beginning of a new poem, and that lines 1–29 were composed as a segue between *Christ III* and *Guthlac A*.[73] A number of close connections between these lines and the rest of the poem make this unlikely: namely, the thematic use of *had*, the use of hypermetrics for angelic speech (discussed below), idiosyncrasies such as the phrase *lenge hu* […] (20b and 138b), and the theme of ascension in lines 1–29 and 781–818, but arguing against such claims is often impossible.[74] Whatever the case, given the full-line parallel and its zoological context (*The Panther* specifies the referent of *cynn* 'kinds' in verse 5a: *fugla ond deora* 'birds and [wild] animals'), the affinities between these two passages might conceivably invite a broader interpretation of *hadas* as 'kinds', an interpretation supported by the third instance of *had* in *Guthlac A* (50a–53a):

> ær þon endien ealle gesceafte 50
> ða he gesette on siex dagum,
> ða nu under heofonum **hadas** cennað
> micle 7 mæte.
>
> before all created things end that he established in six days which now under heaven bear ***hadas*** great and small.

[72] On this Exeter Book poem and its place in the *Physiologus*-tradition, see Squires, *Physiologus*, pp. 14–30.
[73] '*Christ* and *Guthlac*', pp. 8–9.
[74] See also Roberts, 'Metrical Analysis', pp. 116–20, who argues on metrical grounds that *Guthlac A* and *B* are two distinct poems, no more.

The context seems to demand physical 'kinds' or 'forms' here, and certainly the notion of creation multiplying according to God's enduring order underlies the passage.[75]

The next use of *had* is in line 60, and, as Roberts notes, seems to connote the sense of *had* as '[holy] orders' due to the *sume*-comparison (cited above) which distinguishes between hypocrites and hermits.[76] Good works, rather than appearances and empty words, are the evidence of the saint's good heart: '[hypocrites] wish to bear the *hades* renown in words and do not do the works' ('*sume þæs hades hlisan willað / wegan on wordum ond þa weorc ne doð*', 60–61).[77] The fifth appearance of *had* comes forty lines later (93a–96a):

> Magun we nu nemnan þæt us neah gewearð
> þurh haligne **had** gecyþed
> hu Guðlac his in Godes willan 95
> mod gerehte
>
> We can now declare that, near to us, it was made known through holy ***had*** how Guthlac ordered his spirit in God's will.

This *had* refers either to the holy order of men who told Guthlac's story or to the holy way in which Guthlac conducted his life. Despite the frequent use of the word *had* in the first 100 lines of the poem, it occurs only twice more in *Guthlac A*, which suggests the word's function of setting the stage for the poem's thematic concerns, as Calder argues.[78] However, I include the two other instances for the sake of comprehensiveness: *had* occurs as a suffix (though clearly with slightly different sense) in *martyrhad*, 'martyrdom' or 'the way/condition of a martyr' (472);[79] and in line 500, *had* refers to the aspect of the older season or state of life (*yldran hades)* and echoes the first instance of the word in line 4b which refers to the angel's 'elder status'. Together with the structure of the prologue, the word *had* seems to evoke a

[75] Compare Genesis 1. 12 and 25.
[76] *Guthlac Poems,* p. 129.
[77] Gregory the Great, in Parker, *Morals on the Book of Job*, I, 473–74 (Book VIII. 43. 71), similarly likens works to fruit, noting that hypocrites cannot keep their fruit from falling to the ground.
[78] 'Some Discriminations', pp. 65–70.
[79] Guthlac was not a martyr by death, but in spirit. Spiritual or concealed martyrdom—the concept that anyone who surrenders his or her life for Christ, whether slain for the faith or not, is a martyr—is treated by a number of patristic authors, from Jerome (Woolf, 'Saints Lives', p. 56), to Gregory the Great (Zimmerman, *Dialogues*, pp. 160–61 [Book III. 26]), to Isidore of Seville (*Etymologiae*, I, 299 [Book VII. 11. 4]).

sense of God's enduring cosmic order on earth, covering the rank of angels, the estates of humans, and natural species. Theologically speaking, this order is administered by God through intermediaries: Augustine suggests that God rules holy angels and holy men, and angels and men rule creation; while Gregory suggests that some angels rule others and that angels rule men.[80]

What is critical to note here is that this hierarchical order functions optimally only when God's purposes for it are obeyed, and the poet highlights the importance of God's original decrees enduring into the present (53b–58b):

> Is þes middan-geard
> dalum gedæled; dryhten sceawað
> hwær þa eardien þe his æ healden;
> gesihð he þa domas dogra gehwylce
> wonian ond wendan of woruld-ryhte
> ða he gesette þurh his sylfes word.
>
> This middle-earth is divided into shares; the Lord examines where those might dwell that uphold his law. Every day he sees the judgments weaken and turn away from the right order of the world which he established through his own word.[81]

In this passage, the forms of holiness and the forms of creation find their origin and justification: the audience is again reminded of the apportioning of the earth, and, according to the poet, the portions were made by God himself. Furthermore, to the degree that each form endures as God spoke, it still obeys his words.[82] Indeed, obedience, often referred to in the poem as 'holding' God's word, is the centrifuge of both material order and of holy order, as the poet declares above ('for that reason we may rightly belong to each [rank] if we wish to uphold holy decrees') (32b–34b).[83] It is thus the 'true' way on earth, as God's words are the basis for truth and purpose and his heavenly kingdom is the home of truth.[84]

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[80] Russell, *The Christian Combat*, pp. 324–25 (Chapter 8); Parker, *Morals on the Book of Job*, I, 221–22 (Book IV. 29. 55).
[81] On God's *domas*, see Chapter Five, pp. 269–72.
[82] Compare Chapter Five, pp. 236–43, for some other Old English poetic examples of creation 'obeying' God by fulfilling its purpose.
[83] Compare Chapter Three, n. 66.
[84] The same idea is expressed in lines 40–42, 681b–82b, 763–68, 810b, and 816b.

Angels and Inspiration: *Guthlac A* 84b–191a

The poet is clearly concerned both the power of the word and with a sense of hierarchical order and rank in creation. The reasons for this become clearer as the poem advances and angels begin to take a more obvious role in the action. *Guthlac A* begins with an angel leading a soul to heaven, foregrounding the importance of intermediaries, and the next section is especially concerned with the role of angels and demons in the lives of Christians. The poem began with hypermetrical lines discussing the work of angels in ferrying souls to heaven, and angels go unmentioned until lines 88b–92b, which are also hypermetrical:

> Fore him englas stondað
> gearwe mid gæsta wæpnum, beoþ hyra geoca gemyndge,
> healdað haligra feorh, witon hyra hyht mid dryhten.
> Þæt synd þa gecostan cempan þa þam cyninge þeowað,
> se næfre þa lean alegeð þam þe his lufan adreogeð.
>
> Angels stand before them, ready with spiritual weapons; they are mindful of their succour; they preserve the lives of the saints; they know their hope in the Lord. Those are the tried warriors, those who serve the king, he who never lays aside the rewards for the one who bears his love.

As in lines 1–3, this passage constitutes a special revelation of angels' comforting work, not unlike the revelatory hypermetrics of *The Dream of the Rood*: in lines 1–3 an angel ferries a soul to heaven, and here angels fight for souls in times of trouble.[85] The final pair of verses employ homoioptoton (*aleg**eð***, *adreog**eð***) and the antepenultimate and final verses have internal rhyme and homoioteleuton (*þ**eo**wa**ð***, *adr**eo**ge**ð***) in a summative, moralizing statement. In fact, these harmonious sonic patterns, which come after a list of third-person plural verbs (*stondað*, *beoþ*, *healdað*, *witon*)—a type of eloquent repetition we have seen in *Solomon and Saturn I*'s litanic enumerations and *The Phoenix*'s descriptions of heavenly song—telescope the final verbs together into the word *adreogeð*, 'perform' or 'endure',

[85] See Chapter Three, pp. 153–55; Coker, 'Hypermetric Lines', pp. 12–17.

highlighting the importance of bearing God's love.[86] The effect of these hypermetrical lines is magnifying magniloquence paired with mnemonic repetition: the wondrous, comforting aid of angels is set into ornamental and memorable form.

Rhyming hypermetrical verses which seem to memorably encode a moral are a unique and repeated formal feature of the poem. See, for example, lines 22–5:

> Þider soð-fæstra sawla motun
> cuman æfter cwealme, þa þe her Cristes æ
> lærað ond læstað, ond his lof rærað,
> oferwinnað þa awyrgdan gæstas, begytað him wuldres ræste.[87] 25

These lines, which come after a discussion of heavenly rewards, offer a summative statement of how to arrive at heaven and of the reward for those actions. Here double rhyming pairs form fivefold vocalic and consonantal rhyme (*-ær-*, *-æst-*): *lærað*, *læstað*, *rærað*; *gæstas*, *ræste*. And again, there is a pairing of antepenultimate and final verses in the repeated *ræ-* of *rærað* and *ræste*. The memorable tricolon abundans is closely paralleled by Cynewulf (*lufast ond gelyfest, ond his lof rærast*, *Juliana* 48), and the parade of rhymes culminates in the supererogatory patterning and regular cadence of hypermetrics.[88] The similitude in syntax (verb-initial, noun-final clauses), prosody ([(x)x]Sxx[x]SxSx), and tone (*æ*) between 25a and 25b gives them not just harmonious ornament but equative quality: overcoming spiritual enemies is sonically (and hence mnemonically) equated with earning rest and glory after the battle. The final verses of the opening hypermetrical cluster (1–5)—*gret**eð** gæst o**þerne**, abeod**eð** him godes æ**ren**de*—are not strictly end-rhyming but have the same cadence (Ssx) and display assonance and verbal homoioptoton. Similar are lines 76–80:

> Wuldres bycgað,
> sellað ælmessan, earme frefrað,
> beoð rum-mode ryhtra gestreona,
> lufiað mid lacum þa þe læs agun,
> dæghwam dryhtne þeowiað. He hyra dæda sceawiað. 80

[86] Chapters One, p. 59, and Two, p. 118.
[87] Passage translated above at p. 180.
[88] On the regular rhythm of hypermetrics, see Coker, 'Function of Hypermetric Lines', p. 13.

> They buy glory, give alms, comfort the destitute, are magnanimous with proper accumulated wealth, love those who have less with offerings, serve the Lord daily. He watches their deeds.

These lines come after an extended description of types of life on earth and how people ought to conduct themselves (26a–76a).[89] As in the previous excerpts, we see the poet's taste for verbal enumeration (*bycgað*, *sellað*, *frefrað*, *beoð*, *lufiað*, *þeowiað*), and again a statement on moral conduct ends in a hypermetrical assurance with rhyming cadences: *l**ac**u**m*, *a**g**u**n* (another rhyming line remixed by Cynewulf in *Juliana* 111: ***lufi**ge mid **lac**um **þ**one **þe** leoht gescop*); *þeo**wiað***, *scea**wiað***. In all of these excerpts with hypermetrics, the poet employs lists culminating in harmonious cadences, simultaneously enumerating good virtues or things to remember with litanic repetition as well as encoding the most important lesson in rhyming hypermetrics: the poet's use of supererogatory poetics is distinctly didactic. These hypermetrical mementos are nonspecific in subject and therefore have an 'everyman' quality, giving them universal, gnomic applicability, much like the elegies' nonspecific, sympathetic characterization discussed in Chapter Three.[90] So far, isolated hypermetrical lines have more to do with summing up moral discourses and hypermetrical clusters tell of the spiritual work of angels, with lists and rhyming hypermetrical closure offering memorable guidance and reassurance to the audience in both. Furthermore, as I have argued elsewhere, hypermetrical verses, which employ frequent variation and recapitulation, are less straightforwardly 'narrative': they do not narrate, but enumerate and celebrate the works of the righteous and of angels with emphatic poetic craft.[91]

Lines 93–113 more specifically emphasize the role of an angel in Guthlac's own life. In lines 98b–105a, the poet suggests that Guthlac's anchoritic life is 'angelic':

> Him wæs hyht to þam
> siþþan hine inlyhte se þe lifes weg
> gæstum gearwað, ond him giefe sealde 100

[89] See pp. 187–95 above.
[90] See especially p. 132.
[91] Coker, 'Funtion of Hypermetric Lines', pp. 9–14.

engel-cunde, þæt he ana ongan
beorg-seþel bugan, ond his blæd gode
þurh eað-medu ealne gesealde
ðone þe he on geoguðe bigan sceolde
worulde wynnum. 105

[Guthlac's] hope was for [God's reward] after he who readies the way of life for spirits enlightened him and gave him an angelic [lit. angel-born] gift, so that he began to inhabit the mound-seat alone and gave all his vitality to God in humility, that which he should spend on worldly joys in youth.

The angelic nature of this gift could be that angels brought it to him or that the spiritual gift was considered an angelic trait, or both. As evidence that *engel-cunde* means that an angel brought the gift, the poet clearly claims in lines 110b–13b that an angel gave him the gift:

Fyrst wæs swa þeana 110
in godes dome, hwonne Guðlace
on his ondgietan engel sealde
þæt him sweðraden synna lustas.

Nevertheless, the time was in God's judgment when an angel granted to Guthlac's perception that desires for sin would wane in him.

Richard Sowerby argues that here God is the implicit subject and that he gives an angel to Guthlac (rendering *on his ondgietan* as 'in his wisdom'), citing Boniface's account of the monk of Wenlock, in whose vision angels guard the righteous and demons follow the wicked; but there is no reason in this sentence or the preceding why God should be the implicit subject, and it is simpler and makes better sense to read that an angel gives Guthlac a gift.[92] Just before this passage in lines 105b–07b,

Hine weard biheold 105
halig of heofonum, se þæt hluttre mod
in þæs gæstes god georne trymede.

A guardian, holy from heaven, watched over him—one who eagerly encouraged that pure mind towards the spiritual good.

[92] *Angels in Early Medieval England*, pp. 82–88. Indeed, it does not seem clear from Sowerby's citations of Boniface that Boniface believed souls only had good or bad angels based on their spiritual state, as Sowerby argues.

Guthlac clearly moves towards his spiritual life as a result of the providence of God and the dispensation of God's will through an angelic intermediary.[93]

In the poem's beginning there is an inherent contrast between the way of the dying natural world and the still-thriving spiritual hierarchical order established by God, and God's will is shown to work through his ministers. As evidence that the term *engel-cunde* means that his new traits were angelic, the poet has already set great emphasis on the fact that Guthlac gave up the way of the perishing natural world (93a–105a). This line of thinking would be consonant with Anglo-Saxon monastic self-perception. Sowerby notes that Anglo-Saxon monks, from Bede to Ælfric, identified with angels because they had left the world to live a holy life of contemplating the divine and ministering to those who lived outside of monasteries.[94] In fact, Sowerby adds that monks at this time often had the role of educating the laity and administering the sacraments to them, and this act of leaving the monastery to guide the lay was seen as angelic in nature. *Guthlac A* might reflect such a view of monastic life, and indeed Guthlac is said to preach to and pray for those outside his barrow (159b–68a and 331a–34a). Therefore, it is accurate and reasonable to say that the gift is both angelic in nature and brought to Guthlac by an angel.

As we have already seen, angels are intercessors bringing protection, encouragement, and instruction. In the following lines the poet makes more of the 'instruction' (*lar*) brought to Guthlac by his angel and a demon: *Nalæs hy him gelice lare bæron / in his modes gemynd mongum tidum* ('By no means did they bear him similar instruction in his mind's remembrance at many times', 117–18). The angelic characters are not yet manifesting themselves; rather, to this point they speak to his mind, leading Calder to conclude that the demons are not real but emblematic of psychological struggle.[95] There is of course no

[93] Compare Chapter Three, p. 163 (n. 159).
[94] *Angels in Early Medieval England*, pp. 46–67.
[95] Calder, 'Some Discriminations', pp. 71–72. See the response of Hill, 'Middle Way', pp. 182–83, and Dubs, 'Acquisition of Wisdom', p. 609.

theological or textual warrant for this interpretation (compare, for example, lines 140b–43a below). The angel, so says the poet, preached about the world's fleeting nature and the rewards of heaven, as well as God's desire to give (119–26), while the demon encouraged him to continue in his depredations and follow worldly goods (127–32). In the end, *þæs gewinnes weoroda dryhten / on þæs engles dom ende geræhte* ('The Lord of Hosts reached an end to the strife according to the angel's judgment', 134–35).

After God judges on the angel's side, a 'spirit of comfort' (*frofre gæst*, 136) came to Guthlac and 'loved and taught him' (*lufade hine ond lærde*, 138) so that the 'joys of the land, and the building on the mound' (*londes wynne, / bold on beorhge*, 139b–40a) grew dearer to him. The poet then goes on to discuss the fame of Guthlac's wisdom (*wisdomes / hlisan*, 156b–57a), and that (159b–63a)

> Þær he dryhtnes lof
> ræhte ond rærde; oft þurh reorde abead, 160
> þam þe þrowera þeowas lufedon,
> godes ærendu, þa him gæst onwrah
> lifes snyttru
>
> There he obtained and lifted up the Lord's praise, regularly announced in speech God's message to those who loved the customs of sufferers, when a spirit revealed the wisdom of life to him.

The poet points out that *Him wæs engel neah* ('an angel was nearby him', 172b), and *He him sige sealde ond snyttru-cræft, / mund-byrd meahta* ('[The Lord] gave him victory and wisdom-skill, the protection of might', 184a–85a). In order to do spiritual battle, Guthlac *Gyrede hine georne mid gæstlicum / wæpnum* ('geared himself up eagerly with spiritual weapons', 177a–78a), the same weapons the angels are said to give in 89a, surely a reference to the Armor of God in Ephesians 6. 11–18.

The demons came *fær-scytum* ('with sudden-shots', 186a) and *to Guðlaces gæst gelæddun / frasunga fela* ('they led a great many interrogations to Guthlac's spirit', 188a–

89a), apparently bringing their spiritual weapons in the form of temptation and questioning.[96] But in the poem's next hypermetrical set, the poet notes (189b–91b):

> Him wæs fultum neah,
> engel hine elne trymede, þonne hy him yrre hweopan, 190
> frecne fyres wylme. Stodon him on feðe-hwearfum
>
> Comfort was nearby him, an angel exhorted him with courage, when they, enraged, threatened him with the terrible surge of fire. They stood by him in bands of foot-soldiers

The intercessory work of angels again stands in hypermetrical lines, stating that in the midst of the demonic assault, nevertheless an angel stood by, strengthening Guthlac with his words. Just as the proper action of the poem begins, this pair of hypermetrical lines reveals spiritual activity and emphasizes the presence of angelic support, which helps Guthlac stand against many demonic foes. Hence, in this summary prologue of the poem (1a–191a), the poet has elucidated how God dispenses his wisdom through angels, setting their work in hypermetrics, and how Guthlac himself shares his gifts with others.

As a result of his angelic aid, Guthlac becomes renowned for his wisdom, which was evidently remembered, shared, and celebrated at the time of the poem's composition: *He gecostad wearð / in gemyndigra monna tidum / ðara þe nu gena* […] *his wisdomes / hlisan healdað* ('He was tested in the times of mindful men who still now […] hold the renown of his wisdom', 153b–57a); and which he evidently shared with others: *oft þurh reorde abead /* […] *godes ærendu, þa him gæst onwrah / lifes snyttru* ('Frequently he announced God's tidings in speech when the spirit disclosed to him the wisdom of life', 160b–63a).[97] The poet desired to highlight the role of angels in this process, who bear souls to heaven at death, and gifts from God, but just as the angel brought wisdom to Guthlac, demons, who are ('strong in cunning-skills', 142) bring evil to Guthlac (140b–44a):

> Oft þær broga cwom, 140

[96] Compare pp. 171–72 above.
[97] Compare Dubs, 'Acquisition of Wisdom', pp. 609–11.

egeslic ond uncuð, eald-feonda nið,
searo-cræftum swiþ; hy him sylf hyra
onsyn ywdon ond þær ær fela
setla gesæton.

A horror regularly came there, terrible and unheard of, hostility of ancient-foes, strong in cunning-skills. They showed their very faces to him, and previously occupied many settlements there.

Not only do the demons bring false 'instruction' to Guthlac; they show their very faces. In contrast to the demon's visitations, Guthlac is confident that 'an angel brings all things to [him], thriving success in words and deeds' (*me engel to ealle gelædeð / spowende sped spreca ond dæda*, 253–54). There are several important facets to this passage. Firstly, we notice the presence of the angel 'leading' something to Guthlac, highlighting the role of angels in divine aid. Secondly, the pleonastic phrase *spowende sped* clearly highlights the 'substance' of words and deeds.[98] The phrase *spowende sped* is used only once more in extant Old English poetry, in *Daniel* 478a, where Nebuchadnezzar, marvelling that the Three Youths had survived the furnace, says that the Youths, who bear God's message (*his spel berað*, 478b), are invested with *spowende sped* (478a), sharing the emphasis on success in words though using a different word for speech. In the very next line of *Guthlac A*, Guthlac begins a command by using Christ's own words: *Gewitað nu, awyrgde, werig-mode / from þissum earde þe ge her on stondað / fleoð on feor-weg* ('"Depart ye cursed", miserable in mind, from this earth where you stand; flee on a distant road', 155a–57a). Just as Christ will banish the damned at the last judgment, saying *discedite a me maledicti in ignem aeternum*, Guthlac banishes the demons from his new territory.[99] The success of his command rests on its spiritual authority; because Guthlac is 'in Christ', he can have successful speech by using Christ's authority and his very words, brought to him as wisdom by the angel.

[98] According to a *DOE Corpus* search, *sped* and its variants are glossed most frequently as *substantia* and *opes*, though it is also used to gloss *facultas*, *prosperare*, *copiosa*, *proventus* ('growth'), *successus*, *glaucoma* ('cataract, covering'), all of which have the sort of general meaning 'substance', 'growth', or 'increase'
[99] Matthew 25. 41.

The next use of the word *spowendre* again comes in conjunction with 'leading': here success of words is explicitly related to the words–deeds theme, a theme which Bjork notes is initiated in the prologue and occurs at least six times in the poem (618–22):[100]

> Ic þone deman in dagum minum
> wille weorþian wordum ond dædum,
> lufian in life, swa is lar ond ar 620
> to spowendre spræce gelæded,
> þam þe in his weorcum willan ræfnað.
>
> I will honour the Judge in my days with words and deeds, love him in life, as instruction and honour are brought to thriving speech for the one who works [God's] will in deeds.

I discuss this passage in more detail below, but for now it is enough to say that it is not enough to speak well—speech must be successful, fulfilled to be of any value. This is another instance of a widespread heroic theme which is appropriated by the poet to Christian usage.[101] The boast was evidently part of Germanic heroic culture, and as Dwight Conquergood has argued, it was probably conceived of not as bragging but as a staged public speech act, a vow that one will perform a deed, be it loyalty to a lord in battle (as in Offa's fulfilled vow in *The Battle of Maldon* 288–94) or an individual feat of strength (as in Beowulf's vow to kill the dragon in *Beowulf* 2510–37).[102] Conquergood demonstrates that Beowulf's enumeration of his own accomplishments is not aimed merely at individual glory but at substantiating his authority to make the boast he does: that is, Beowulf's past accomplishments are evidence that he can indeed fulfil his present boast.[103] Orchard calls these accomplishments Beowulf's 'credentials': Beowulf enumerates his history, which lends credence to his boast.[104] But whereas in the heroic words–deeds theme a speaker must prove

[100] Bjork, *Verse Saints' Lives*, pp. 28 and 30–31, cites lines 60–61, 252b–54b, 579–81, 618–19, 720a–21a, and 790a–94a.
[101] On the words–deeds theme, see Orchard, *Critical Companion*, pp. 203–37, and further Chapter Five, *passim*.
[102] Conquergood, 'Boasting in Anglo-Saxon England', pp. 25–26, *et passim*. See also Einarsson, 'Old English *Beot*', pp. 975–80 and 991–93.
[103] Conquergood, 'Boasting in Anglo-Saxon England', pp. 27–29.
[104] *Critical Companion*, p. 212.

his character by bringing about the effect of his words by his own strength, in *Guthlac A* the hero must do God's work first and then he will receive thriving speech: as Kathleen Dubs notes, wisdom is only brought to Guthlac after he endures a trial.[105] The words–deeds theme in Guthlac is not about authenticating trustworthiness with mettle, but about spiritual power and the trustworthiness of God's words: because Guthlac remains rooted in the truth he is able to command the demons, and they must obey because he receives authority from the author of truth.

In contrast to the success of Guthlac's words, the words and powers of demons are called *idel*, 'empty' or 'vain'. Indeed, being *idel* seems to be something of their speciality: the poet says that they have two powers, *egesan* and *idel wuldor* (84b–88a):[106]

> Oft him brogan to
> laðne gelædeð, se þe him lifes ofonn,
> eaweð him egsan, hwilum idel wuldor,
> brægd-wis bona hafað bega cræft,
> eahteð an-buendra.
>
> Often [a demon] brings a hateful horror to [an anchorite], he who begrudges [the anchorite] life, shows him terror, at times empty glory; the artful slayer has the skill in both, persecutes anchorites.

Guthlac's responses to their threats reveals his disbelief (307b–09a):

> Nu ic þis lond gestag,
> fela ge me earda þurh idel word
> aboden habbað.
>
> Now that I entered this land, you have proclaimed much about lands to me through empty words.

And towards the poem's end he again highlights their unfulfilled words (658–62):

> ðær eow næfre fore nergende
> leohtes leoma ne lifes hyht
> in godes rice agiefen weorþeð,
> for þam ofer-hygdum þe eow in mode astag
> þurh idel gylp ealles to swiðe.

[105] Dubs, 'Acquisition of Wisdom', pp. 610–11.
[106] See further Hill, 'The Middle Way', pp. 183–85.

> [in heaven] before the Saviour you will never be given the light of light nor the hope of life in God's kingdom, on account of the unmeasured thought that entered your mind all too strongly through empty vaunting.

Furthermore, as long as the *beorg* is under the demons' possession, it too is called *idel* by the poet (215–17):

> Stod seo dygle stow dryhtne in gemyndum 215
> idel ond æmen, eþel-riehte feor,
> bad bisæce betran hyrdes.
>
> The concealed place stood in the Lord's remembrance, empty and desolate, far from a rightful homeland; it awaited the approach of a better guardian.

Everything the demons do is characterised by emptiness: their words are untrustworthy, they have no power, and they are not rightful holders of territory.[107] Ultimately, it becomes clear that the demons, who are permitted to bring Guthlac to the gates of hell, only have the power that God has granted them, as the poet specifies at 205–17 and 590a–651a. The poet thus depicts a world surrounded and permeated by God's sovereign power and order, demonstrating the rightful way and source of strength for humans and making the presence of evil and its power seem miniscule. Having demonstrated the thematic importance of authority, hierarchy, and truth in *Guthlac A*, I now turn to how these themes come together in the formal patterning of direct speech in the poem.

Form, Truth, and Power: *Guthlac A* 191b–726a

Guthlac's citation of Christ's words brings up another important dimension of the text. Theologically speaking, God's words are a form of his intercessory presence given to his messengers who speak his words in his name, that is, as his representatives.[108] Guthlac's act of biblical citation appears to share in the power of this Word, 'the Sword of the Spirit',

[107] On the legal aspect of this land dispute, see pp. 207–09 and 225–27 below.
[108] See Edwards, *Image, Word, and God*, pp. 1–40, for a more nuanced discussion of this conception in Judaism and Christianity.

fighting against the spiritual word-weapons of demons.[109] Guthlac's use of Scripture is a feature of Felix's vita as well, where the saint is well-versed in the Psalms, regularly quoting them to put demons to flight.[110] Using God's words is drawing on God's authority, and because God is the only one with true authority, all power in the world must therefore have been delegated by God or by one who has already been delegated power. In a battle of words, only God's word can have ultimate power, because it alone is the truth: the poet of *Guthlac A* makes the battle between Guthlac and the demons entirely a matter of truth and rhetoric, highlighting God's sovereignty. As Angela Abdou notes, the demons can never have any true power because they are not founded in the truth.[111] Therefore, the demons's words, which at times seem to employ eloquent poetic patterning, are in the end empty and powerless, and the poet develops this truth in interesting ways.

The action of the poem begins with Guthlac's conquest of the *beorg* (177a–81a) which is immediately followed by the demons' retaliation, as we saw in the hypermetrical pair above (190–91). These demons threaten that Guthlac will burn (192–93) unless he returns to the joys of man (195b–97a) and *his sibbe ryht / mid mon-cynne maran cræfte / willum bewitigan, lætan wræce stille* ('care willingly for his familial inheritance among mankind with greater zeal and leave his exile in peace', 197b–99b). The demons encourage Guthlac to be with his own kind, attempting to use God's established order against the saint, even suggesting that Guthlac grieved God by taking their land from them (206–11). But the poet points out the artifice of these words: he calls the demons *teon-smiðas* ('injury-smiths', 205a), who *lige-searwum / ahofun hearm-stafas* ('with lying-cunning raise up harm-staves', 228b–29a) and *sægdon sar-stafum, swiþe geheton* ('spoke injury-staves and swore strongly', 234) an empty threat of vicious reinforcements (235–38). Stanley notes that *smið*-compounds

[109] Ephesians 6. 17.
[110] Colgrave, *Life of Saint Guthlac*, pp. 84–85 and 94–111 (Chapters 22, 29–31, and 33–34).
[111] 'Speech and Power', pp. 203–10.

in poetry are more often metaphorical than literal; here the metaphor evokes an image of demons as forging an artful rhetorical armament, like the weapon-words discussed above.[112] Based on the evidence so far this armament is constructed by lies, artful constructions that threaten with seeming credibility but which will ultimately fail to deliver a blow, if the saint keeps up his defences.

Guthlac's first response to the demons comes in a direct speech, and this direct speech is introduced by hypermetrical lines (239a–43a):

> Guðlac him ongean þingode, cwæð þæt hy gielpan ne þorftan
> dædum wið dryhtnes meahtum. 'Þeah þe ge me deað gehaten,
> mec wile wið þam niþum genergan se þe eowrum nydum wealdeð.
> An is æl-mihtig god, se mec mæg eaðe gescyldan;
> he min feorg freoþað.
>
> Guthlac took up his case against them, said that they had no need to boast about deeds against the Lord's strengths: 'Though you promise me death, he who controls your needs will save me from your malice. Almighty God is one, he who can easily protect me; he cares for my life.

The poet chooses his words carefully: as the legal verb *þingian* suggests, Guthlac's first speech takes up the form of a legal or official deliberation, as he and the demons are in a territorial dispute.[113] Furthermore, the verb *gylpan* suggests a traditional ostentatious vow which needs substantiation in deeds, but the demons do not have the power to match their words with deeds, and Guthlac takes up his claim against them in hypermetrics.[114] In fact, as Guthlac specifies, the demons' very 'needs' are controlled by God, and so Guthlac has no need to fear them. The saint uses assonance to make God's sovereignty over the demons' actions stand out: God will save Guthlac from their *niþum* ('hostilities') and in fact he controls their *nydum* ('needs, duties, sufferings'); that is, both their active *niþ* and passive *nyd*

[112] 'Wonder-Smiths and Others', pp. 293–94.
[113] See further pp. 207–09 and 225–27 below.
[114] The 'legal' implications of hypermetrics here are discussed further at pp. 225–27 below and throughout Chapter Five. Of course, the hypermetrics are also part of the speech-boundary, indicating that hypermetrics are not conceived of as discourse tailored novelistically to each character (see further Introduction, pp. 1–3); they rather introduce Guthlac's speech and are set in his mouth to emphasize the status of his speech.

are in his control. Guthlac then states that God is one, suggesting all power lies in his hands alone; perhaps this attribution of God's oneness is also meant to strike fear into the demons, for as James 2. 19 states, 'Thou believest that there is one God. Thou dost well: the devils also believe and tremble.' The hypermetrical set of these first four lines gives another comforting spiritual revelation: even demons are ultimately in God's control, and a believer has no reason to fear them or their threats.

Guthlac continues (243b–52a and 57b–61b):

Ic eow fela wile
soþa gesecgan. Mæg ic þis setl on eow
butan earfeðum ana geðringan.
Ne eam ic swa fea-log, swa ic eow fore stonde,
monna weorudes, ac me mara dæl
in god-cundum gæst-gerynum
wunað ond weaxað, se me wraþe healdeð.
Ic me anum her eaðe getimbre
hus ond hleonað; me on heofonum sind
lare gelonge.
Ic me frið wille
æt gode gegyrnan; ne sceal min gæst mid eow
gedwolan dreogan, ac mec dryhtnes hond
mundað mid mægne. Her sceal min wesan
eorðlic eþel, nales eower leng.

I will tell you many truths. I can subdue this settlement from you alone without hardships. I am not thus destitute of the host of men as I stand before you; rather, in me a greater share of divine [literally 'God-born'] spirit-mysteries dwells and flourishes, which holds my support. I easily build a house and refuge here for myself alone. The teachings in me are derived from heaven.

I will seek peace from God. My spirit will not work error with you; rather, the Lord's hand protects me with strength. Here the earthly home is to be mine, no longer yours.

Note that from God's oneness Guthlac will tell many truths, and that *an* (242a) and *fela* (243b) are the initial alliterative elements in these successive sentences, as if suggesting God's unity is a fountain of many truths. Given Guthlac's emphasis on authority in word, an important part of his speech is his use of parallel diction and citation. Just as the demons claimed that Guthlac would suffer *earfeþu* (194a–95a) and that he, alone (*ana*), worked the *earfeþa mæst* against God (206–07), Guthlac states that he will claim the *beorg* without

earfeðum (245a). While these first two uses of *earfoþ* are admittedly indirect discourse, the demons' speech as reported by the poet, they are part of the texture of one poem and the audience would probably recognize the cross-reference.[115] Guthlac even parallels his own diction to show the source of his authority: just as he claimed that God, who is one (*an*, 242a) could easily (*eaðe*, 242b) protect him, he claims that he alone (*ana*, 245b) can wrest the *beorg* from the demons and easily (*eaðe*, 250b) build a dwelling for himself alone (*anum*, 250a). He does not consider himself 'destitute' because God's spirit-mysteries (*god-cundum gæst-gerynum*) dwell in him, brought to him by his angel. This work of these mysteries, which are evoked in two homoioptoton-patterned poetic compounds, is rhetorically highlighted by two verbs and a verb phrase which alliterate and employ homoioteleuton in an example of tricolon abundans: *wunað*, *weaxað*, and *wraþe healdeð*. The heightened register and *amplificatio* emphasize the firm, productive, and protective presence of the mysteries with expansive and encompassing repetition. Line 249 also precisely mirrors the structure of line 24, and the 'rhyme' of homoioptoton in line 248 perhaps recalls the rhyme of line 25.[116] It is noteworthy that very similar poetic devices are used in 24–25, where the deeds of the righteous are enumerated, and 248–49, where the works of Godly mysteries are emphasized by repetition.

As we have already seen, after claiming to have God's word inspiring him, Guthlac uses Christ's words to dismiss the demons (252b–57a). Guthlac then states that he will see *friþ* ('peace, protection', 257b) from God, another term with legal connotations, guaranteeing God's backing of his cause.[117] Guthlac usually expresses futurity in this speech with the auxiliary *willan*, but at the close of his speech he uses *sculan*, with its sense of debt, habit, and what must be, declaring with finality that the *beorg* is rightfully his as though by divine

[115] Louviot, *Direct Speech*, pp. 178–96, notes the narratorial voice is most dominant in all diegetic levels of Old English verse; even distinct voices within a poem are still enunciated by the 'narrator'.
[116] See pp. 193–94 above.
[117] *DOE*, 'friþ' (senses 2–4).

dictate.[118] Clark notes that the poet's use of legal language evokes real-world notions of land-tenure, and I would add that the use of citation and legal terminology is part of the general work of the poem in conveying a sense of God's rightful order, which encompasses both spiritual and physical worlds.[119]

After this speech, the demons are reduced from their artful eloquence to mere noise (262–65):

> Ða wearð breahtm hæfen. Beorg ymbstodan
> hwearfum wræc-mægas. Woð up astag,
> cear-fulra cirm. Cleopedon monige,
> feonda fore-sprecan, firenum gulpon 265
>
> Then was a clamour raised. The wretch-men stood around the *beorg* in bands. The sound rose up, the wailing of the sorrowful. Many called out, spokesmen of fiends, vaunted in sins.

The sheer volume of noise-words here highlights not merely the demons' frustration, but also their bestial nature. The noise-words *breahtm* and *cirm* can refer to voice and noises made by inanimate objects, and the passage evokes a chaotic clamour of frustration rising into the air. As Adin Esther Lears argues, this clamour highlights a contrast between sense (represented by Guthlac, whose speech is connected with the divine Logos) and sound (represented by the demons, whose speech is untrue and reduced to noise) in language, sense clearly taking the privileged position.[120] We have seen that *woð* in particular had some bestial associations: while meaning song or voice, it is the poetic reflex of an etymon which begets the prose word *wod*, which denotes madness, especially bestial madness and demonic possession.[121] Although the poetic word especially refers to song, it is possible that the song here would

[118] On the association of *sculan*, gnomes, and divine mandate, see Chapter Five, pp. 253–55 and 269–72. Bjork, *Verse Saints' Lives*, p. 37, notes *sculan* occurs eighteen times (twice in the narrator's voice, tenfold in Guthlac's, thrice in Bartholomew's, twice in the demons', and once in Guthlac's angel's) and most strongly expresses 'obligation and moral resolve'.
[119] Clark, 'Permanent Homeland', pp. 84–91, *et passim*.
[120] 'Soð and Sense', pp. 70–76.
[121] See Chapter One, pp. 47–49.

remind the poem's audience of bestial or demonic fury in this instance.[122] If this connotation were intended, it is important to note that in Felix's *Vita* the demons are said to assail Guthlac in the forms of many animals (among other forms), and Felix details the sounds they make, a point indicated by the *Guthlac B*-poet (894–912, even using the word *woð* to describe their sounds at 899b), who certainly consulted (at least) Chapter 50 of Felix's *Vita*.[123] Demons, which Rosemary Woolf notes are 'unnatural' in their disobedience, are also said to shapeshift in *Solomon and Saturn I* 152–66; and not only does Aldhelm describe vices in monstrous and bestial terms, calling Gluttony a dragon and Pride a leviathan or whale (*balaena*), but pagan deities such as Óðinn, whose name comes from the same root as *woð*, were frequently described as shapeshifting.[124] When the demons regain composure enough to speak, it is also notable that they speak as one, in contrast to their previous practice of using a single spokesman (at line 200b, the poet notes that one demon *for ealle spræc*, 'spoke for all'), and Louviot suggests such indistinction is a mark of a group's low status.[125] Their standing melts away at Guthlac's speech: rather than keeping rank and dignified composure, they all cry out in a chaotic sound.

But as they begin to speak, they take up their cunning again, saying they have never seen greater pride in 'one man' (*anes monnes*, 269b) and setting the word *an* in the head-stave of 269 to ironically highlight Guthlac's isolation and confidence, which they attempt to spin as overweening pride.[126] After noting his vow that he can take the land (271–72), the demons attempt to instill doubt in Guthlac about his provisions and they compare him to a

[122] See further p. 216 below.
[123] Colgrave, *Life of Saint Guthlac*, pp. 114–17 (Chapter 36). On *Guthlac B*'s relationship to Felix's *vita*, see Roberts, *Guthlac Poems*, pp. 36–43.
[124] See further Woolf, 'Devil in Old English', pp. 2–4, and Dendle, *Satan Unbound*, pp. 16–17. On the bestial vices, see Bloomfield, *Seven Deadly Sins*, p. 78. On Óðinn's shapeshifting, see for example *Ynglinga Saga* (Chapter 7).
[125] Louviot, *Direct Speech*, pp. 77 and 79–80.
[126] *An* is a fairly common word in the head-stave in this poem, occurring eleven times; but seven of eleven times are in the narrator's mouth, three in Guthlac's, and only two in the demons' mouths, and one of these is indirect discourse (207b), making the usage here look intentionally reminiscent of Guthlac's language.

wild beast for dwelling ‘alone away from home’ (*ana from eþele*, 277a) as they give him their advice (*ræd*) and suggest they can teach (*gelæran*) him best. Hence, the demons attempt to use God’s order against Guthlac again, suggesting he has transgressed it not by divine impetus but out of his own brutish pride, and they suggest he submit to their authority in a boast of their own, employing special poetic patterning of their own (280–91; standard mark-up):

We þe beoð **h**olde gif ðu us **h**yran wilt,
oþþe þec **u**ngearo **e**ft gesecað
maran mægne, þæt þe **m**on ne þearf
hondum h*r*in*an*, ne þin **h***r*a feall*an*
wæpna wund*um*. We þas **w**ic mag*un*
fotum a**f**yllan; **f**olc in ðriceð
meara þreat*um* ond **m**on-far*um*.
Be*oð* þa ge**b**olgne, þa þec **b**reodwi*að*,
tred*að* þec ond **t**erg*að*, ond hyra **t**orn wrec*að*,
to**b**er*að* þec **b**lodgum lastum; gif þu ure **b**idan þencest,
we þec **n**iþa ge**n**æg*að*. Ongin þe ge**n**eres wilnian,
far þær ðu **f***reo*nda we*ne*, gif ðu þines **f***eor*es r*ecce*.

> We will be gracious to you if you will heed us, or a greater strength will seek you out again, when you are unready, so that none needs to touch you with hands, nor fell your body with the wounds of weapons. We can raze this settlement by feet; a people will force their way in with bands of horses and human-entourages. They will be swollen with anger, those who strike you down, tread you and tear you, and avenge their grief, bear you away leaving bloody tracks; if you think to endure us, we will assault you with hostility. Start asking for refuge for yourself, go where you expect to find friends, if you care for your life.

Immediately after beginning their threat (which recalls Chapter 34 of Felix’s *Vita*),[127] the demons employ seven consecutive a-verses with Sievers–Bliss A-types including artful alliteration in every line, double-alliterating in six of seven and end-rhyming on four of seven, giving these verses a weighty and commanding sense of stress and control and giving their threats an emphatic thrust.[128] The demons then engage in a litany of violent finite verbs featuring homoioteleuton (*beoð* […], *gebolgne*, *breodwiað*, *tredað*, *tergað*, *wrecað*, *toberað*,

[127] There Guthlac is attacked by demons in the form of Britons, who burn his settlement and lift him up on spears, and it may be that in the text’s missing folio (see n. 134 below) something similar to the *Vita*’s episode once existed, highlighting the demons’ powers of illusion. Compare Chernis, *Ingeld and Christ*, pp. 230–31.
[128] Four verses are 2A1a, 285a and 287a are the very similar 1A*1a, and 288 is 1A*1b.

genægað). Indeed, line 288 employs Guthlac's strategy of *amplificatio* at line 249, using three alliterating verb-phrases in the same case, expanding the horrific description. Their speech also ends with a final threat and counsel in hypermetrics, reforming the pattern of lines 24–25: threefold repeating verbs followed by further repetition in a hypermetric line. It seems clear that this poetic strategy, used by the narratorial voice and Guthlac, represents the poet's sense of poetic skill and closure, and here he puts this special form in the devils' mouths. Hypermetric sets have hitherto been associated with angelic support in the poem, so, although Guthlac (as a character inside the narrative frame) could not be privy to this information, this could represent a subversion of this hypermetric strategy. The demons, who offer their 'advice' and 'teaching', subvert the didactic device to give Guthlac a counsel of their own.[129] Just as the devil poses as 'an angel of light' (II Corinthians 11. 14), it seems the demons attempt to usurp the role of angelic guides and offer crooked teaching in an angelic form.

Threatening as their words may have been, Guthlac 'did not waver because of their discourse' (*ne wond he for worde*, 294a); rather, God 'made him strong in answer and in courage' (*hine god fremede / on ondsware ond on elne strong*, 292b–93b). He 'spoke sorrow to his adversaries, made enough truth known to them' (*his wiþer-breocum / sorge gesægde, cuðe him soð genog*, 294b–95b). In contrast to the demons, 'pledge-breakers' (*wær-logan*) who speak *idel word* ('empty speech'), Guthlac points to his protector (315a–25a):

> 'Ic eom dryhtnes þeow,
> he mec þurh engel oft afrefreð.
> Forðon mec longeþas lyt gegretað,
> sorge sealdun, nu mec sawel-cund
> hyrde bihealdeð. Is min hyht mid god,
> ne ic me eorðwelan owiht sinne,
> ne me mid mode micles gyrne,
> ac me dogra gehwam dryhten sendeð
> þurh monnes hond mine þearfe.'

[129] The repetition of *gif þu* in these hypermetrics (see further Bjork, *Verse Saints' Lives*, pp. 42–43, who also notes verses 276a and 280b) resembles what I have elsewhere called the 'stanzaic' structure of hypermetric lines. See Coker, 'Function of Hypermetric Lines', pp. 12–19.

Swa modgade, se wið mongum stod,
awreðed weorðlice wuldres cempa
engla mægne. 325

'I am the Lord's servant; he continually comforts me by his angel. Therefore, longings hardly touch me, seldom do sorrows, now that a spiritual [literally 'soul-born'] guide keeps me. My hope is in God; neither do I care a bit for earthly goods for myself, nor do I desire much for myself in mind; rather, every day the Lord sends me my needs through a man's hand.' Thus he exulted who stood against many, the warrior of glory, supported worthily by the strength of angels.

In this excerpt, Guthlac points to his defender, Christ, the angel Christ sent to protect him, and the support he receives from men, reaffirming how he fits into God's hierarchy and taking the attention off himself in answer to the demons' threat. Guthlac's speech is not based on citation as it was before, but it does feature end-rhyming pairs (*widor s**æce***, *torn-wr**æce***, 300b and 301b; ***eow***, ***þeow***, 312b and 314b), and, in this boast-excerpt, something close to isosyllabism with liturgical, sequence-like parallelism and rhyming cadence (repeated unstressed particles indicated in brackets; cadence-words indicated in parentheses; assonance indicated in bold):[130]

315	x[mec]xSx	| SxSx	(*frē**fre**ð*)
316	xx[mec]xSx	| SxSx	(*grē**ta**ð*)
317	SxSx	| xxSxs	(*sāwel-cun**d***)
318	Sx(x)Sx	| xxSxs	(*hyht mid go**d***)
319	[ne]x[me]Ssx	| SxSx	(***sinne***)
320	[ne][me]xSx	| SxSx	([***m**icles*] g***yrne***)
321	x[me]Sxxs	| SxSx	(***se**ndeð*)
322	xSxs	| SxSx	([***m**īne*] *þea**rfe***)

The origin of the musical form known as 'the sequence' is debated, and indeed I am not aware of any specific psalm with these exact sentiments, but it is tempting to see in Guthlac's response a hymnic order and composure as well as a parallel to Felix's *Vita*, in which Guthlac frequently quotes the Psalms to put demons to flight.[131] The final four lines of his speech especially form a neat rhetorical catalogue: two stichic clauses with line-initial *ne* diminish

[130] On the structure of the sequence, see Crocker, *Early Medieval Sequence*, pp. 2–7.
[131] On the origin of the sequence, see Dronke, 'Beginnings of the Sequence'.

the emphasis on Guthlac's desires and the things of the world and line-initial *ac* answers with what Guthlac *does* trust, ascribing all the power to God's aid through his ministering servant. Hence, whereas the demons answered Guthlac's high speech with emphatic rhythmic patterning, homoioptoton, and repetition, Guthlac in return moderates stress in exchange for isosyllabic cadence, assonance, and gentle parallelism in his response, giving a restrained, rhetorically-balanced, and perhaps musical statement of the truth.[132] Although we have witnessed different styles in Guthlac's speeches, as Bjork suggests, the stability of saints' discourse reflects the stability of their spirituality, and already a pattern of 'truth over form' is emerging in the dialogues.[133]

At this, the demons depart, and the poet discusses how Guthlac did not abandon humankind but prayed for all in his solitude (331a–34a) and that he stood up to the demons whenever they attacked, 'as a warrior must' (*swa sceal oretta*, 344a) 'bear his spirit continually against' (*his gæst beran / oft on ondan*, 345b–46a) the devil. In contrast to the *wær-logan*, the poet states that an angel gave Guthlac a gift so that he desired God and remained in the covenant of his teacher (*on þæs lareowes / wære gewunade*, 359b–60a). Guthlac then speaks, sharing something of the angelic teaching he has received (361–68; standard mark-up):

> **H**uru, þæs bi**h**ofað, se ðe him **h**alig gæst
> **w**isað on **w**illan ond his **w**eorc trymað,
> **l**aþað hine **l**iþum wordum, gehateð him **l**ifes ręste,
> þæt he þæs **l**atteowes **l**arum hyre,
> ne lete him **e**ald-feond **e**ft oncyrran
> **m**od from his **m**eotude. Hu sceal **m**in cuman
> **g**æst to **g**eoce, nemne ic **g**ode sylle
> **h**yrsumne hige, þæt him **h**eortan geþonc
>
> Indeed, it behoves the one whom a [or possibly 'the'] holy spirit guides in his will and whose work it strengthens, calls on him with gentle words, promises him life's rest, [and] that he heed the leader's teaching, not let the ancient foe turn his mind back

[132] Compare the *Phoenix*-poet's use of assonance in descriptions of song (Chapter Two, pp. 111–15 and 119).
[133] *Verse Saints' Lives*, p. 22.

> from his Measurer. How should my spirit come to support if I do not render God obedient thought, so that my heart's deliberation…

A folio was cut from the manuscript, leaving this monologue unfinished, but there are salient formal features even in this fragment.[134] The monologue begins with a gnomic statement, one which is built around a hypermetric digression on angelic words, reaffirming the connection between this form and angels. Similar to the structure of lines 24–25 and 288–89, the hypermetrical line is preceded by repeated alliterating finite verbs (*wisað*, *trymað*), although *willan* fills the space where a second verb would be in lines 24 and 288. The digression is linked back into the maxim by continued *l*-alliteration. As we have already seen in part, hypermetrics have some associations with gnomic speech, and so it is natural both that a maxim and hypermetrics would coincide and that angelic teaching would be associated with gnomic wisdom.[135] It seems likely therefore that the hypermetrical expansions of this poem are statements of wisdom intended to stand out from the standard verse-form.

Potentially to vary his words, avoiding repetition of *lareow* and *lar*, the poet has used the word *latteow* ('leader, commander') on 364a, but this is in fact a felicitous conglomeration of Christian-warrior ethos and teaching, a fitting combination for the 'heroic' or even martial character of some Old English gnomes.[136] Who this commander is, whether an angel or the Holy Spirit, is unclear, but in this respect, the words of Gregory the Great are again apposite:[137]

> It is hence that the Angel who is described to have appeared to Moses, is now mentioned as an Angel, now as the Lord; an Angel in truth, in respect of that which was subservient to the external delivery; and the Lord, because He was the Director within, Who supplied the effectual power of speaking. Therefore as the speaker is inwardly directed, by virtue of his obedience to instructions, he receives the name of Angel, by virtue of his inspiration, that of Lord. Hence David exclaims, *Give ear, O my people, to my law; incline your ears to the words of my mouth* [Psalm 78. 1]. For it was neither David's law, nor David's people, but he, assuming the character of Him from whom He spoke, speaks with His authority with Whose inspiration he was filled.

[134] Roberts, *Guthlac Poems*, pp. 13 and 141–42 (n. to line 368), suggests 60 or 70 lines could be missing.
[135] See Chapter Two, p. 70. See further Chapter Five, pp. 269–73.
[136] See, for example, Orchard, 'Word Made Flesh', pp. 294–97, and *Maxims I* 192–204.
[137] Parker, *Morals on the Book of Job*, I, 15–16 (Preface. 3).

Thus it seems likely that in *Guthlac A* the angel is intended here literally, but that nevertheless the Holy Spirit is the one ultimately inspiring the teaching. Adding to this warrior-diction, Guthlac claims the Christian warrior must 'bear his spirit against' the devil, not allowing the devil to 'turn his mind back from his lord', but must 'render God obedient thought'. That this sententious passage is intended as a heightened rhetorical piece is further suggested by the fact that every single a-verse employs double- or continued-alliteration. It is important that this rhetorical heightening occurs in a monologue rather than in verbal contest with the demons: the poet so far has left most poetic patterning to summative statements of wisdom (real or counterfeit) rather than adorning whole speeches, and while Guthlac emphasizes truth over form in his debates with the demons, this everyman-style maxim is fittingly set in memorably-patterned form for the audience.

After the gap in the manuscript, the poem resumes with Guthlac in verbal contest against the demons.[138] Stating that his body, like the earth, must die, Guthlac then boasts again (374–79):

> Ðeah ge minne flæsc-homan fyres wylme
> forgripen grom-hydge gifran lege,
> næfre ge mec of þissum wordum onwendað þendan mec min gewit gelæsteð.
> Þeah þe ge hine sarum forsæcen, ne motan ge mine sawle gretan,
> ac ge on betran gebringað. Forðan ic gebidan wille
> þæs þe me min dryhten demeð. Nis me þæs deaþes sorg.
>
> Though you, fierce-minded, seize my flesh-covering with the surge of fire, the greedy flame, you will never turn me back from these words as long as my sense remains. Though you afflict it with wounds, you are not permitted to touch my soul, but you will bring it to better things. Therefore, I will endure what my Lord judges for me. I have no grief of this death.

Using 'light hypermetrics', Guthlac's boast sets rhetorically-charged particles like conjunctions and pronouns in the opening dip, twice repeating a threefold structure: 1) *Ðeah*

[138] Given the references to fire and injury, perhaps Guthlac is responding to a demonic threat or attack as in Chapter 34 of Felix's *Vita* (see n. 127 above); but Roberts, *Guthlac Poems*, pp. 141–42 (n. to line 368), suggests that this speech and the previously-interrupted speech may be one and the same, although this seems unlikely given that, if so, Guthlac would have to move from a seemingly private gnomic monologue to addressing new demonic threats in one speech.

ge […] (374a; 377a), 2) a negative clause (*næfre ge*, 376a; *ne* […] *ge*, 377b), and 3) a subordinate clause (*þendan* […], 376b; *ac* […] 378a).[139] This structure I have elsewhere called the 'stanzaic' structure of hypermetrical lines, arguing that hypermetrics are a cousin of Old Norse *ljóðaháttr* lines.[140] As Judy Quinn has demonstrated with regard to *ljóðaháttr* stanzas, their bipartite structure (three verses each half) is often used as evidentiary in function, the first half presenting evidence and the second half drawing a conclusion based on that evidence.[141] It is therefore noteworthy that Guthlac draws a conclusion (*Forðan ic* […]) based on the 'evidence' of this 'stanzaic' hypermetrical structure. Although the parallel is not precise, it seems to be the case thus far that hypermetrics, like maxims, are intended to encode transcendent truth, and often give what we might call 'judgments' drawn from evidence.[142] Louviot notes that maxims, alongside legal and scientific statements, are enunciated in an 'epistemic' or 'proverbial' (rather than, say, 'historical') mode, providing tried-and-true generalizations for a culture; and it would seem that such evidentiary function is at times engrained in the very verse-form of hypermetrics.[143] If this is the case, it seems clear that powerful utterance in *Guthlac A* is more a matter of well-informed lore than of poetic skill *per se*, a point we have seen the demons attempt to subvert.

At the end of Guthlac's speech, the demons are again reduced to noise (390a–94a):

> ða wæs eft swa ær ealdfeonda nið, 390
> wroht onwylled; woð oþerne[144]
> lyt-hwon leoðode, þonne in lyft astag
> cear-gesta cirm.
>
> Then again, as before, was the hostility of ancient-enemies, their slander, welled up. They released a while another song when the clamour of care-spirits arose into the air.

[139] On the structure of light hypermetrics, see Hartman, 'Hypermetric Line in Germanic', pp. 31–52. Bjork, *Verse Saints' Lives*, pp. 39–42, notes that the concessive nature of *þeah*-clauses throughout the poem loses significance as it becomes clearer that Guthlac cannot be swayed.
[140] 'Function of Hypermetric Lines', pp. 12–19.
[141] 'Verseform and Voice', pp. 104–05.
[142] I develop this idea further in Chapter Five, pp. 246–73.
[143] On enunciation modes, see Louviot, *Direct Speech*, pp. 108–14. Louviot notes that proverbs have even had legal status in some African cultures.
[144] Following Roberts, *Guthlac Poems*, p. 143 (n. to lines 390–92a), I accept the manuscript *oþerne* rather than ASPR's unmetrical *oþer*.

Two words, *woð* and *cirm*, are repeated from the previous demonic outburst, but it is interesting that the demons' noise is this time described as a song. The *Beowulf*-poet similarly describes Grendel's scream (after having his arm torn off) as a *gryre-leoð* ('terror-song', 786a) and *sige-leasne sang* ('victory-less song', 787a), the monstrous sound making an ironic contrast to human song in the hall of Heorot; and 'the devil's lament' itself is a recurrent Old English motif, depictings demons as lamenting exiles and at times as worldly poets.[145] A certain taste for irony and *Schadenfreude* informs these motifs, but while it is difficult to say what the *Guthlac*-poet's particular aim here might have been in invoking it (perhaps the textual lacuna could inform the situation), it would be safe to conclude with Lears that in *Guthlac A* demons are associated with empty noise (and empty forms in general) in contrast to Guthlac's sensible composure, and the poet wishes to draw attention to this point.[146]

But the *edwit-sprecan* ('disgrace-speakers', 447a) carry on with their *teon-cwidum* ('vexation-sayings', 448a), this time taking up accusations primarily rather than threats (which, we should note, were left unfulfilled). After the demons have lifted Guthlac into the air to see the actions of sinful monks (412a–34a), the demons point out that Guthlac would not 'heed his friends' instruction' (*freonda larum / hyran*, 453b–54a) *ða þu gehete þæt þec halig gæst / wið earfeþum eaðe gescilde* ('when [he] vowed a holy spirit would easily protect [him] from hardships', 456–57). Here the demons pick up on Guthlac's diction, using the words *halig gæst*, *earfeþum*, and the head-stave *eaðe* which we have already discussed, again contrasting his own language in evidentiary function against him. They then accuse monks of hypocrisy, using repeated line-final finite verbs as intensifying evidence of their actions (*lifgað*, 460b; *þigað*, 461b; *cwemað*, 462b; and *gieldað*, 464b). This verbal repetition, as we might predict, leads them into one summative hypermetrical judgment (465–69):

Fela ge fore monnum miþað þæs þe ge in mode gehycgað; 465

[145] See further Dendle, *Satan Unbound*, pp. 40–43, and Battles, 'Art of the Scop', pp. 40–43.
[146] 'Soð and Sense', pp. 73–76. See also Abdou, 'Speech and Power', p. 204 (and p. 201 for the same effect in *Andreas*).

ne beoð eowre dæda dyrne, þeah þe ge hy in dygle gefremme.
We þec in lyft gelæddun, oftugon þe londes wynna,
woldun þu þe sylfa gesawe þæt we þec soð onstældun.
Ealles þu þæs wite awunne; forþon þu hit onwendan ne meahtes.

Much of what you think in mind you hide in front of men; your deeds will not be concealed, though you do them in secret. We led you through the air, took you from the land's joys, desired that you yourself saw that we truly accused you. You completely earned that punishment; therefore you cannot turn it back.

The demons, too, use light hypermetrics, incorporating a rhetorical use of particles to form a bipartite evidentiary hypermetrical set. The first half consists of the deeds of monks and the judgment that their deeds will be brought to light. Here the demons too use Christ's words, that all concealed things will be brought to light, as a judgment against the monks,[147] like Satan used Scripture against Christ as he tempted him.[148] Then the second part of the hypermetrics highlights the deeds of the demons, asserting their power over Guthlac and the truth of their words, which they conclude he earned and cannot therefore (*forþon*) be saved from. This juridical use of hypermetrics, paired with scriptural quotation, gives the demons' case considerable rhetorical weight.

But they cannot fulfil their threat. In response, God 'gave [Guthlac] wisdom in his heart's thoughts, a strength-fast remembrance' (*sealde him snyttru on sefan gehygdum, / mægen-fæste gemynd*, 474a–75a), and he retorts to the demons that they must (*sceoldan*) give up the territory. His first statement to the demons is an accusation of his own, referencing their fall from heaven:[149] *Ge sind forscadene, on eow scyld siteð*! ('You are scattered; guilt rests on you!', 478). Guthlac then catalogues all of the sins of the demons across six rhetorically-balanced end-stopped lines (with one enjambed)—besting the demons' use of four end-stopped lines (with one enjambed) in the last excerpt—each line consisting of a complete clause using complex subordination (*Ne*, 479a; *ne*, 480a; *þeah*, 481a; *þæt*, 482a; *ne*,

[147] Matthew 10. 26; Mark 4. 22; Luke 12. 2.
[148] Matthew 4. 1–11; Luke 4. 1–13.
[149] The poet earlier specified that the demons were scattered from heaven and looking for a place of rest in lines 209b–25b.

483a; *ac*, 484a; *þæt*, 485a–86a) in contradistinction to the usual Old English poetical habit of enjambment, giving these lines a sense of orderly restraint.[150] Guthlac then points to the demons' flawed judgment (491–94):

> woldan þy gehyrwan haligra lof,
> sohtun þa sæmran, ond þa sellan no
> demdan æfter dædum. Ne beoð þa dyrne swa þeah.
> Ic eow soð siþþon secgan wille.
>
> You desired thereby to disparage the saints' praise, sought the weaker ones, and did not judge the better according to their deeds. Nevertheless, they will not remain secret. I, then, will tell you the truth.

Picking up on the demons' quotation of Scripture, Guthlac answers that he will reveal more of the truth, not simply the sins of the young, but the good deeds of the old. He then points out that 'God made youth and the joy of men' (495), stating that wisdom comes after youthful rashness.[151] He subsequently calls their judgment into question again (505–12):

> Þæt ge ne scirað, ac ge scyldigra
> synne secgað, soþ-fæstra no
> mod ond mon-þeaw mæran willað.
> Gefeoð in firenum, frofre ne wenað,
> þæt ge wræc-siða wyrpe gebiden.
> Oft ge in gestalum stondað; þæs cymeð steor of heofonum.
> Me þonne sige sendeð se usic semon mæg,
> se þe lifa gehwæs lengu wealdeð.
>
> You do not perceive that; rather you proclaim the sins of the guilty, do not desire to make known the mind and habit of the truth-fast. You rejoice in sins, expect no comfort, that you will ever receive respite for your exile-journeys. Often you stand in accusations; for that discipline comes from heaven. He who can settle our dispute, then, sends me victory, he who controls the length of each life.

Recounting the deeds of the demons with repeated finite verbs (*scirað*, *secgað*, *willað*, *gefeoð*, *wenað*, *stondað*), Guthlac accuses them in his own pair of rhetorical, light hypermetric lines, mirroring previous rhetorical structures in the poem. The first hypermetric verse draws the litany of their deeds to a conclusion and the second states the judgment that

[150] See Fulk, Bjork, and Niles, *Klaeber's Beowulf*, pp. clxi–clxii, on Old English verse's propensity towards enjambment.
[151] Hill, 'Age of Man', pp. 15–21, discusses this theme in depth.

will come on account of (*þæs*) all their aforementioned deeds. The judgment that comes from heaven is perhaps also evocative of Satan's fall from heaven, because angels were associated with stars in heaven (Job 38. 7) and Satan was identified with the Prince of Tyre, the fallen morning star (Isaiah 14. 7): judgment (*steor*) coming from heaven on demons might evoke the first star (*steorra*) coming out of heaven after he sinned.[152] As for himself, Guthlac concludes briefly with two syntactically chiastic verses (*sendeð*, *se*; *se*, *wealdeð*), saying that God is the one who can settle the dispute (*semon mæg*), and that because the demons will be judged, he therefore (*þonne*) will be given the victory. His speech is relatively plain and contains only two hypermetric lines, but these have the same dual structure of evidence and conclusion, subordinating eloquence to truth, and the poet states that Guthlac *hleoþrade* ('resounded', 513a) these words, giving them booming power.

The demons are then allowed to bring Guthlac to the gates of hell (557–76), but their final speech and shortest at only eleven lines is without power and spoken mournfully (*cearfulle*, 577a). A sequence of seven A-type a-verses featuring double alliteration stands out in their speech, giving their words about Guthlac's character a forceful and emphatic structure. But the limp and patternless threat at the speech's end suggests that the devils are losing steam (579–89; standard mark-up):

> Ne eart ðu ge**d**efe, ne **d**ryhtnes þeow
> **c**læne ge**c**ostad, ne **c**empa god,
> **w**ordum ond **w**eorcum **w**el gecyþed,
> **h**alig in **h**eortan. Nu þu in **h**elle scealt
> **d**eope ge**d**ufan, nales **d**ryhtnes leoht
> **h**abban in **h**eofonum, **h**eah-getimbru,
> **s**eld on **s**wegle, forþon þu **s**ynna to fela,
> **f**acna ge**f**remedes in **f**læsc-homan.
> We þe nu **w**illað **w**omma gehwylces
> **l**ean forgieldan, þær þe **l**aþast bið
> in ðam **g**rimmestan **g**æst-gewinne.
>
> You are not fit, not a servant of the Lord, pure and tested, not a good warrior, well-known in words and deeds, holy in heart. Now you must plunge deeply into hell, not

[152] See also Luke 10. 18.

> at all have the Lord's light in heaven, high-buildings, a seat in heaven, because you performed too many sins, crimes in the flesh-covering. We will now render you payment for each sin, where it is most grievous to you, in the direst spirit-strife.

The demons have moved from specific accusations to general disparaging, citing only one vague crime as grounds for this judgment. Their message is simple and direct, as there is little left in their rhetorical arsenal beyond a threefold *ne*-catalogue of lies and one empty threat. Despite asserting that Guthlac is not valid in word and deed and that his sins have earned him punishment in hell, the demons, leaning on the terror of hell, no longer attempt to give evidence for their claims.

Guthlac, conversely, answers them 'in spirit with God's strength' (*in gæste mid godes mægne*, 591) in his longest speech, the longest of the poem, spanning ninety-three lines (592a–684a). That he speaks with God's strength points back to the *sped* ('substance') of God's own words discussed above.[153] Guthlac answers first with a challenge: 'Do it, if the Lord Christ, life's light-author, will allow it!' (*Doð efne swa*, *gif eow dryhten Crist, / lifes leoht-fruma lyfan wylle*, 592–93). He points out that all things are in God's power, using the example of how Christ brought the demons into slavery (596–98), and that he belongs to Christ (599–607). Guthlac then states that he sings praise (*lof singe*, 609) to Christ, something that the demons are not allowed to do (614b–17b):

> ac ge deaðe sceolon
> weallendne wean wope besingan,
> heaf in helle, nales herenisse
> halge habban heofon-cyninges.

> rather, in death you must sing a surging woe with wailing, captive in hell, not at all have the holy praise of the Heaven-King.

Guthlac is now taunting the demons, gesturing to the lament-motif, contrasting the demonic miseries with the joyful praise that the faithful can enjoy, perhaps even punning on their

[153] See pp. 219–20.

suffering song in hell (*hell*) as a terrible hall (*heall*).[154] Guthlac then reasserts in response to the demons' accusation that he *does* honour God, the judge, in words and deeds (*Ic þone deman in dagum minum / wille weorþian wordum ond dædum*, 618–19), just 'as instruction and honour are brought to flourishing speech, for the one who works [God's] will in his deeds' (*swa is lar ond ar / to spowendre spræce gelæded, / þam þe in his weorcum willan ræfnað*, 620b–22b). Guthlac sets a doubled emphasis on the fact that his deeds are as good as his words, saying that, rather than speaking empty words as the demons do, the one who does God's will has 'flourishing speech' with teaching and honour added in.

Although I have argued that poetic skill is not as important to Guthlac's speeches as the truth is, we have seen Guthlac and the demons using repetitions and hypermetrics to drive home their points, and as if to authenticate his claim that 'instruction and honour are brought to flourishing speech', in the immediately following lines Guthlac engages in a seven-verse catalogue emphasizing the demons' sorry estate (623–28; catalogue indicated in italics):

> Sindon ge wær-logan, swa ge in wræc-siðe
> longe lifdon, *lege bisencte*,
> *swearte beswicene*, *swegle benumene*, 625
> *dreame bidrorene*, *deaðe bifolene*,
> *firenum bifongne*, *feores orwenan*,
> þæt ge blindnesse bote fundon.
>
> You are pledge-breakers, as you lived long in exile, *sunken in flames, dark and deceived, taken from heaven, fallen from joy, committed to death, gripped with sins, despairing of life*, that you might find a remedy for blindness.

Six of the seven verses use the same form of dative nominal + past participle beginning in *bi-/be-*, resulting in a litanic repetition which rehearses, emphasizes, and expounds the doom of the demons. This use of what Orchard calls the 'serial past participle' is present in judgment-contexts in Old English poems (for example the judgment of the damned in *Christ C* 1559–65 and in Cynewulf's self-evaluation before recounting his inspiration in *Elene* 1242b–44b) and

[154] Similar paronomastic similarity might have caused Thorkelín's amanuensis to confuse *healle* for *helle* in *Beowulf* 588b (see Fulk, Bjork, and Niles, *Klaeber's Beowulf*, p. 154 [n. to lines 588b ff.]). On hell as a hall, see for example Magennis, *Images of Community*, pp. 82–84.

a homiletic Judgment Day scene which is particularly apposite to *Guthlac A*.[155] The scene is repeated with subtle variations in four homilies, but I follow the piece as it appears in *Vercelli X*: after recounting how the devil speaks 'boldly' (*bealdlice*) to Christ and accuses spirits of misdeeds (*misdæda stæleð*), Christ speaks the 'grimmest of words' (*worda grimmost*) to Satan:[156]

> Nelle ic eow habban on minre gefer-rædenne, ac ge fram me gewitað, wuldres bedælede, freondum afyrde, feondum betæhte, [in þam] hatan wylme helle fyres
>
> I will not have you in my company; rather, depart from me, separated from glory, distanced from friends, committed to foes, in the hot surge of hell-fire.

From *ac* to *fyres* these words constitute perfect Old English poetry, and in the other three homilies the poetic lines continue, though the serial past participle ends in at *betæhte* in each homily. It is striking that Guthlac himself has referenced this scriptural scene (as demonstrated above) and that he uses the same poetic effect, which seems to have been of considerable rhetorical weight in a variety of contexts. These are the grimmest words in their meaning, and they are delivered with authoritative power and emphatic repetitions, a technique Guthlac, whose speech has both *lar ond ar*, uses to drive his point home to the demons.

Furthermore, Guthlac displays a knowledge of his opponents' historical failures—not dissimilarly to the rhetorically-charged use of past failures in the flyting between Beowulf and Breca—as well as their current status as exiles and pact-breakers.[157] Whereas Guthlac's words are 'flourishing' because of their truth, backed up by knowledge and grace, the demons's words are completely ineffectual because they are empty of substance, merely terrifying form with no authoritative power. As Bjork argues, this triumphant speech is a

[155] Orchard, 'Embedded Verse Micro-Texts'.
[156] The four homilies are given in Napier, *Wulfstan: Sammlung*, pp. 250–65 (Homily XLIX), and Scragg, *Vercelli Homilies*, pp. 201–02 (Homily X), and unpublished in CCCC MS 421 (pp. 170–208), and CCCC MS 302 (pp. 221–30).
[157] See Parks, *Verbal Contest*, pp. 27 and 45–50, and Baker, 'Beowulf as Orator', p. 13.

turning point in the poem, a sign of Guthlac's victory and his powerful unification of words and deeds.[158] Guthlac then rehearses their future punishment in hell for giving up heaven (635–36):

> ðær ge sceolon dreogan deað ond þystro, 635
> wop to widan ealdre; næfre ge þæs wyrpe gebidað.
>
> [in hell] you must endure death and darkness, life-long wailing; you will never receive a reversal of that.

Expanding from the variation of 'death and darkness', Guthlac adds a hypermetrical expansion of the suffering, even echoing his point at 508–09 (before a hypermetrical boast) that the demons need not expect *wyrpe*, a reversal of their fortunes. Given the gnomic qualities of the verb *sculan* and hypermetrics, it would appear that Guthlac adds this hypermetrical line as a painful reminder that the demons' fate is sealed.

Guthlac goes on to state his confidence that the demons cannot, in fact, throw him into hell, because he serves Christ and he does not believe Christ would allow this. Guthlac states that he does not believe God would betray him since he has fought for God *þurh monig-fealdra mægna gerynu* ('through mysteries of manifold strengths', 644). The inspiration that God has given Guthlac gave him strength, and because of this pledge he need not despair. Guthlac again points to his inspiration, saying that he is 'filled with the love of God' (*mid lufan dryhtnes /* […] *gefylled*, 652b–53a) and 'spurred in his breast to a better home' (*breostum inbryrded to betran ham*, 654), and that the devils should not expect to bring Guthlac into hell with *searo-cræftum* ('cunning-skills', 674b).[159] Here, the battle of wisdoms is made explicit, and Guthlac's inspiration is contrasted with the demons' cunning. In the final lines of his speech, Guthlac states his confidence that it is the demons who will

[158] Bjork, *Verse Saints' Lives*, pp. 43–44.
[159] On the collocation *breostum inbryrded* see Chapter Two, n. 208.

suffer in hell while he will be received in heaven (679b–84a), a boast that we shall see is authenticated by the poet in the end.

This ninety-three-line speech at the gates of hell is strikingly different from the speech recorded in Felix's *Vita*:[160]

> Vae vobis, filii tenebrarum, semen Cain, favilla cineris. Si vestrae potentiae sit istis me tradere poenis, en praesto sum; ut quid falsivomis pectoribus vanas minas depromitis?
>
> Woe to you, sons of darkness, seed of Cain, ash of ash. If it is in your power to bear me over into those punishments of yours, lo, I am ready. Why draw these vain threats from your lie-spewing hearts?

Even without suggesting that the vernacular poet knew of Felix's *Vita*, there is something to be said about the disparity in length between these accounts. From the brevity of Guthlac's speech in the *Vita*, it could be said that Guthlac is even dismissive of the demons, that he does not waste his breath on them, although Felix notably adorns the passage with a great deal of alliteration on bilabial *p* and labio-dental *f* and *v* (*f* and *v* alliterated in Anglo-Latin verse).[161] The poet of *Guthlac A*, however, clearly had some purpose in this, the longest of speeches. Guthlac does not waver in his speech but specifically addresses the reasons for his confidence, and it seems likely that the poet wished to encourage his audience in that same confidence by addressing the threats, accusations, and claims of the demons summatively at the end of the poem, preparing them to battle the devil's arsenal themselves.

In the final direct speech of the poem, St Bartholomew arrives to deliver God's judgment *þurh hleoþor* ('through resounding', 685b), and fear falls on the demons (691b–92a).[162] Bartholomew is described as *meahtum spedig* ('substantial in powers', 695b), reminding us of the true power and success of godly words, and with this power he is said to 'bind' the demons 'with punishment-restraints' (*þrea-niedlum bond*, 696b) and to 'impose a

[160] Colgrave, *Life of Saint Guthlac*, pp. 106–07 (Chapter 31).
[161] See further Orchard, *Poetic Art*, pp. 46–47.
[162] Compare Guthlac's inquit at verse 513a (p. 220 above).

necessity' (*nyd onsette*, 697a) on them. The binding of his speech has an almost magical quality, and Bartholomew's authority clearly gives his words power.[163] He begins with commands:

> Ne sy him banes bryce ne blodig wund,
> lices læla ne laþes wiht,
> þæs þe ge him to dare gedon motan, 700
> ac ge hine gesundne asettaþ þær ge hine sylfne genoman.
> He sceal þy wonge wealdan, ne magon ge him þa wic forstondan.
>
> Let there be to him no breaking of bone, nor bloody wound, bruise of body, nor anything grievous, which you are permitted to do to him in injury; rather, set him down sound where you took him himself. He will control the field; you cannot defend the place against him.

The enumeration and attention to detail in the first two lines of this command are reminiscent of a charm or a lorica, in which the utterer must enumerate specifically what he or she wants so that no loopholes can be found.[164] Guthlac cannot be broken internally, have his skin broken, receive a bruise or indeed anything harmful, although it is evidently in the demons' power to do so (*motan*). Of course, such magical charms primarily function not on the efficacy of linguistic form, *per se*, but on authority (whether of the speaker or of a poetic form) of a legal nature, with narratives of precedent and the authority of Christ's name frequently invoked.[165] The power of this speech functions in the same way: Bartholomew's power derives from divine authority. After stating what the demons cannot do, Bartholomew ends his commands in two lines of hypermetrics stating what they must do. The final line of this excerpt brings together all the aforementioned didactic and juridical functions of gnomic speech: in the context of this poem, this speech teaches the demons what to do, and in a broader context, this line, using the word *sceal*, becomes a law, a permanent authoritative statement.[166]

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[163] Compare Chapter Three, pp. 150–51.
[164] See Hill, 'Lorica in Old English', pp. 263–67.
[165] See, for example, Frankfurter, 'Curses, Blessings, and Ritual Authority' (esp. pp. 174–84), and *Metrical Charms 2* ('The Nine Herbs Charm') and *4* ('Against a Sudden Stitch').
[166] Compare Clark, 'Permanent Homeland' (esp. pp. 93–94).

After these initial commands, Bartholomew states who he is and where he has received the authority to make these commands (703–06):

> Ic eom se dema, se mec dryhten heht
> snude gesecgan, þæt ge him sara gehwylc
> hondum gehælde, ond him hearsume 705
> on his sylfes dom siþþan wæron.
>
> I am the judge, he whom the Lord commanded to quickly proclaim that you spare him each wound by hands and then be obedient to him according to his own judgment.

Because Bartholomew was commanded by God, he has authority to do the task, a model of authority which occurs in various parts of the Gospels.[167] Furthermore, authority is conferred by Bartholomew to Guthlac by Christ's command, and the demons are made to obey him, settling the territorial dispute. After recounting his identity as one of the apostles and enumerating the deeds the demons committed against Guthlac, Bartholomew adds that Guthlac is his brother (714a) and that he will protect him henceforth. In a final judgment, he says (719–21):

> Nu ic his geneahhe neosan wille;
> sceal ic his word ond his weorc in gewitnesse 720
> dryhtne lædon. He his dæde conn.
>
> Now I will continually seek him out. I must bring his words and his deeds in testimony to the Lord. He knows his deeds.

The words–deeds theme has now reached a sense of completion: Guthlac has an arbiter who will watch over him, personally bringing a legal account of his actions to God.

Having delivered God's 'tidings' (*ærendu*, 724a), with a final emphatic gesture towards learning, the poet states that the demons *lyt oferleordon* ('hardly transgressed', 726a) the saint's speech. Sin has been characterized in this poem as an over-stepping of the measure God has allotted, and the similarity between *leoran* ('pass, depart') and *læran* ('teach')

[167] See for example John 10. 18: 'I have authority to lay it down and take it up again. This charge I received from my father', and Matthew 8. 5–13.

suggests by paronomasia that the demons are done with their sinful lessons.[168] With that, the conflict of the poem is resolved.

Word and Spirit: *Guthlac A* 726b–818b

Given the association between birds and spirits we have seen in previous chapters, it is probably no coincidence that birds bless the return of Guthlac with their voices (733b–36a).[169] This poet and Felix both note Guthlac's kindness to animals, but since the poem began with an angel welcoming a blessed soul to heaven, it seems significant that at the end the animals most often likened to angels greet Guthlac when he is returned to his earthly homeland, showing the divine harmony that should exist between nature and men.[170] The poet continues (760–68):

> Swa se æl-mihtiga ealle gesceafte
> lufað under lyfte in lic-homan,
> monna mægðe geond middan-geard.
> Wile se waldend þæt we wisdom a
> snyttrum swelgen, þæt his soð fore us
> on his giefena gyld genge weorðe,
> ða he us to are ond to ondgiete
> syleð ond sendeð, sawlum rymeð
> liþe lif-wegas leohte geræhte.
>
> So the Almighty loves all creations in the body-covering under the sky, human families throughout the earth. The Ruler desires that we always swallow wisdom, so that his truth might become prevalent before us in recompense for his gifts, which for honour and understanding he gives and sends us, makes roomy for souls the gentle life-paths obtained by light.

[168] Sharma, 'Extremes of Saintliness', pp. 186–89.
[169] See Chapter Two, p. 108.
[170] On the prolific bird–soul allegory, see further Henry, *English and Celtic Lyric*, pp. 19–27 and 137–51, Toswell, 'Bede's Sparrow', and Godman, *Carolingian Renaissance*, pp. 69–71, for example.

Just as the birds were fed by Guthlac (736b–38b), humans ought to swallow the wisdom God sends, which will lead to increased truth in the world, just as Guthlac supplanted the demons by wisdom and truth: the authority given to the angels and saints is available for all. Just as *lar ond ar* ('teaching and honour') are given to the faithful, the poet again states that God gives gifts for our *ar and ondgiete* ('honour and understanding'); and to highlight the freeing work of this gift, the poet again uses tricolon abundans in one line (*syleð*, *sendeð*, *sawlum rymeð*).[171] Just as Guthlac is styled as a builder, the poet goes on to say that God's love 'builds in the mind a spirit-born gift' (*mode getimbreð / gæst-cunde gife*, 770b–71a). Completing this theology of speech, the work of the word from heaven to earth, the poet finishes, describing how Guthlac's prayers continually arose to God (775b–80b), and finally that Guthlac's own spirit was led up to heaven (781a–84a). From 790–818, the final twenty-nine lines of the poem are permeated by twenty-one finite verbs (all of which with *að*-homoioptoton) which clearly enumerate the deeds of those who attain to the heavenly reward, giving in the poet's favoured, emphatic style the answer to the question posed at the beginning, how a soul should ascend to heaven.[172]

Conclusions

As a poem so deeply concerned with the coincidence of terrestrial and celestial matters, *Guthlac A* is instructive not simply regarding how to perceive body and soul, but on how to perceive the form and spirit of language. As Abdou has noted, the coincidence of truth and authority is what gives speech its power, whereas form can lie empty.[173] But just because the

[171] See p. 206 above.
[172] They are: *ræfnað* 792b, *earniað* 795a, *beoð* 796b, *berað* 798a, *weorðiað* 800a, *habbað* 800b, *gearwaþ* 802a, *oferfeohtað* 803a, *forberað* 804a, *bigongað* 805a, *swencað* 806a, *frætwað* 806b, *fremmað* 808a, *lufiað* 808b, *beorgað* 809a, *secað* 809b, *swincað* 810a, *healdað* 810b, *hweorfað* 812a, *gongað* 813a, *wunað* 816b.
[173] 'Speech and Power', pp. 208–10.

power of language lies in its authority does not mean that true speech cannot be delivered with special poetic patterning. In fact, it seems clear that the *Guthlac A*-poet viewed formal repetition as emphatic and perhaps carrying some rhetorical weight, and angels, Guthlac, the demons, and Bartholomew all use various poetic patterns to bring their points home. We have seen how angels use hypermetrics, for example, to reassure, the narrator to teach, demons to mislead, and Guthlac and Bartholomew to state the authority of their claims. Generally speaking, it does not seem that any character has a formal style of his own which is distinctly used throughout the work, but it does seem to be the case that these characters employ different forms at various points in the narrative in keeping with their rhetorical goals, and that some characters are continually associated with certain kinds of speech, hypermetrics associated with divine helpers and emphatic alliterative prosody especially used by the demons. Thus, while simple truth may be the form with the most power and the one most easily associated with Guthlac, even he uses rhetorical tools, and by the end of the poem, the demons' empty eloquence is reduced to nothing, while the central theme of authoritative language stands. In *Guthlac B*, it is said that Guthlac's speech seemed *þæt hit ufan-cundes engles wære / … swiþor micle /* […] *þonne æniges monnes lar* ('that it was a supernal [literally 'above-born'] angel's much more than any man's teaching', 1124–26; see further 1123b–33b), and in *Guthlac A* this skill seems to be the wisdom and authority of speech based on the Word of God.[174] In the next chapter we will examine this Word further, especially in the direct speech of God in *Genesis A*.

[174] See further Clemoes, 'King Alfred's Debt', pp. 233–35.

Chapter Five

Divine Poetics: Words and Deeds, Poetry and Law in *Genesis A*

þeos woruld-gesceaft
þurh word gewearð wuldor-cyninges

Genesis A, 110b–11b[1]

Having examined representations of divine inspiration, living words, mythic birdsong, heavenly praise, ghostly speech, a speaking Cross, the teaching of angels and demons, and saintly discourse, it is appropriate to conclude at the beginning, as it were, with the voice of God himself, namely in Genesis. *Genesis A*, the first poem of Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Junius 11 (occupying pages 1–11 and 41–142), is the second-longest narrative poem in Old English at 2,320 lines and retells the story of Genesis from the creation of the world to Abraham's near-sacrifice of Isaac (Chapters 1. 1–22. 13).[2] Genesis, the foundational first text in Scripture for understanding God's relationship with the world, offers a unique perspective on God's communication, and *Genesis A*, likely among the earliest Old English poems, happily contains more divine direct discourse than any other Old English poem.[3] As I will demonstrate, *Genesis A* is particularly concerned with God's words: after foregrounding the poem's action with a prologue permeated by the words–deeds theme, the poet uses a special metrical form in nine key episodes throughout the poem in order to demonstrate the enduring significance of these words for his audience.

[1] See pp. 233–34 for a translation and discussion of this excerpt.
[2] The poem is traditionally lineated together as one with *Genesis B* (lines 235–852), which is now considered a separate poem, concluding at line 2936. On the manuscript and a brief history of scholarship on the two Genesis-poems, see Doane, *Genesis A*, 1–41, 56–61, and 65, and *Saxon Genesis*, pp. 3–8 and 28–42.
[3] On the date of the poem, see Fulk, *History of Old English Meter*, pp. 391–92; Doane, *Genesis A*, pp. 42–55.

þurh his word: Creation and Loyalty

The Prologue: *Genesis A* 1–111

'In the beginning God created heaven, and earth' (Genesis 1. 1); 'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God' (John 1. 1). We are so familiar with these primal prologues that they scarcely warrant citation, but the poet of *Genesis A* begins his creation narrative in an entirely different way from these first verses. In words reminiscent of the Preface to the Canon of the Mass (*Vere dignum et justum est* […] *nos tibi* […] *gratias agere*, 'It is truly fitting and right for us to give you thanks'), the poet begins by drawing attention to our own role as an audience (1a–3a):[4]

> Us is riht micel ðæt we rodera weard,
> wereda wuldor-cining wordum herigen,
> modum lufien
>
> For us it is great justice that we praise in words, love in mind the Keeper of the heavens, the Glory-King of hosts.

The significance of the first word, *us*, must not be ignored. In place of *hwæt* or a place-marker such as *her* or *nu* characteristic of many Old English poems, the first word of the poem emphasizes our own role in response to the story of God, that is, to praise and love him.[5] It is not a poem reworking traditional Germanic legend, as *Beowulf* for example purports to be—it is more directly didactic: the first half-line tells what is incumbent on *us* (indirect object) while *we* (subject; the second word of *Beowulf*) is relegated to the second verse.

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[4] Doane, *Genesis A*, pp. 287–88 (n. to lines 1–3a), and McBrine, *Biblical Epics*, p. 282, note that Holthausen (*Die ältere Genesis*, p. 91) first suggested that the opening of Cædmon's *Hymn* resembles the preface of the Canon of the Mass, and Huppé (*Doctrine and Poetry*, pp. 134–35) extended the argument to the beginning of *Genesis A*. Latin cited in Doane, *Genesis A*, p. 287.

[5] See Liuzza, '*Christ* and *Guthlac*', pp. 7–9, on the use of *nu*, and Wright, '*Genesis A ad litteram*', pp. 70–71 (citing Clemoes, 'Language in Context', pp. 27–36), on *her*.

The poet, as if the celebrant of the mass, thus draws the audience into this story, building it around them with his words, simultaneously instructing them on the just use of words and minds and justifying his own poem as an act of worship. This participatory feeling is effected further by the use of deictic markers (which give the poem the feeling of direct speech) throughout the prologue: the phrases *drihten* ***ure*** (40b), *scyppend* ***ure*** (65b), *þeoden* ***ure*** (92b), ***her*** (103a), ***þes*** *wida grund* (104b), ***þeos*** *woruld-gesceaft* (110b), ***her*** (112a), and ***þis*** *rume land* (114b) all draw the audience into this creation story at its onset.[6] After this prologue such deictic markers occur approximately 3.5 times less frequently (outside of direct speech), so, like the prologues of *Beowulf* or *Guthlac A*, it seems that this prologue lays valuable thematic groundwork for the following narrative, demonstrating that we are a part of the story.[7]

The prologue is roughly demarcated by an envelope pattern on lines 1a–3a and 110b–11b. Roberta Frank has discussed the w-, r/l-, d/ð- assonance in *weard*, *wereda*, and *wordum* in lines 1–2 (though *wuldor* should also be noted) and similar paronomasia in 110b–11b (*þeos* ***woruld****-gesceaft* / *þurh* ***word*** *ge****wearð*** ***wuldor****-cyninges*, 'this world-creation came about through the Word of the Glory-King'), which, she concludes, emphasize the presence of God's word in the world at the beginning.[8] The sonic repetitions of *weard*, *wereda wuldor-cining*, and *word* create a paronomastic association between the divine King and the Word;

[6] On deixis, see Louviot, *Direct Speech*, pp. 11–13.

[7] Outside of direct speech, such deictic markers occur once every 14.43 lines in the first 115.5 lines (8 times total) and once every 51.27 lines in the latter 2204.5 lines (43 times total). The latter are mostly confined to a genealogical catalogue (1117a–1242a, indicated here in bold), formulaic epithets for God (7 of 13 of which seem used only to alliterate with Noah's name; I indicate these seven here by underlining), and variations of the 'I-heard formula', but include: *her* (**1122a**, **1139a**, **1146b**, **1147b**, **1176b**, **1189b**, **1206b**, 2093a, 2741b), *heonon* (**1203b**), *heononweard* (1431a), *her-buendra* (1279a), *mine gefræge* (**1173b**), *nergend usser* (855b, 903b, 1295a, 1329b, 1367a, 1483b, 1504a, 2634a), *scyppend usser* (942a, 1391a), *þisses lifes* (**1120b**, 1600b, 2452b), *þissa / woruld-dreama* (**1219b–20a**), *us cyðað bec* (969b), *us secgað bec* (227b, 1723b), *us gewritu secgað* (**1121b**, 1630b, 2565b, 2612b), *us* (939b, 997b), *ussum* (1575a), *waldend usser* (1771a, 2587a, 2762a), *we* (939a, 995b, 2013b). On *Beowulf*'s 'prologue', see Fulk, Bjork, and Niles, *Klaeber's Beowulf*, p. 110 (n. to lines 1–52).

[8] 'Some Uses of Paronomasia', p. 212. I will generally not capitalize 'word' in this chapter, in keeping with the text's ambiguity.

and furthermore the similar sounds of *word* and *weorþan* associate what happens with its ordainment in God's Word, with *wuldor* enforcing the divine glory of this Word.[9] Within this prologue, as we shall see, the poet recounts the rebellion of Satan and his satellites, their punishment, and the creation of human beings to fill their now vacant seats.[10] In effect, the poet has contained the rebellion of fallen angels within the bookends of God's powerful word, and moreover has presented us with our rightful place within that story.

In the first three lines, syntactically, the verbs of the *ðæt*-clause are deferred across two half lines from their object, building anticipation and therefore emphasizing the arrival of the verb phrase *wordum herigen*, with *word* at its head; occurring after two verses of variation on God's name, *wordum* at first sounds like it too will signify God. Furthermore, in the variation *wordum herigen* / *modum lufien*, both phrases have the same accentual-syllabic patterns (Sx|Sx), equating these actions syntactically and metrically, and suggesting their semantic equivalence as actions which constitute 'great justice'. This emphasis on righteousness in word and thought acts as a rubric for the audience and characters within the narrative, in which the demons boast and turn from God while the righteous angels cling to him. The idealised scene of heaven which follows is filled with vocal communication: the angels *hæfdon gleam and dream* ('had illumination and joyful song', 12b), and they *þeoden heredon / sægdon lustum lof, heora lif-frean / demdon* ('praised the King, said praise with desire, esteemed their Life-Lord') (15b–17a). Here *demdon* means 'praised', but the word is literally related to judgment and evaluation; the angels are celebrating God based on his valour.[11] In their singing and praising, they are described as *swiðe gesælige* ('very blessed').

[9] See for example the alliterative connection between God's words (*word*) and fate (*wyrd*) at 2355–57 and 2390a–97a; Frank, 'Uses of Paronomasia', p. 214.
[10] On the doctrine of replacement, see Haines, 'Vacancies in Heaven'.
[11] On this sense of judgment (*dom*), see Liuzza, 'Monuments, Memory, History', pp. 94–100; *DOE*, 'deman' (senses I and II).

Subsequently, the fallen angels' rebellion is summed up in an unfounded *gielp micel* ('great boast', 25b) rather than in evaluative praise, and God's anger is first made evident immediately after Satan brings his senseless plan into words (31b–34b):

> þa he worde cwæð,
> niþes ofþyrsted, þæt he on norð-dæle
> ham and heah-setl heofena rices
> agan wolde. Þa wearð yrre god
>
> when he spoke in word, driven by hostility, that he wished to own the home and high seat of the kingdom of heaven in the north-region. Then God became angry

Thereafter, the new demons were locked away in hell, *dreama leas* ('without joyful songs', 40a). The poet continues (47a–54a):

> Cwædon þæt heo rice, reðe-mode,
> agan woldan, and swa eaðe meahtan.
> Him seo wen geleah, siððan waldend his,
> heofona heah-cining, honda arærde,
> hehste wið þam herge. Ne mihton hyge-lease,
> mæne wið metode, mægyn bryttigan,
> ac him se mæra mod getwæfde,
> bælc forbigde.
>
> They, fierce-minded, said that they wished to own the kingdom, and could just as easily. That expectation deceived them, after the Ruler, the High-King of heaven, the Most High, lifted his hands against the war-band. The thoughtless, mean against the Measurer, could not handle the strength; rather, the Renowned took away their boldness [literally 'mind'], humiliated their swelling pride.

The poet says on lines 51b–52b that the demons could not 'handle' (literally 'distribute') the strength: God's strength is something that they could not hold themselves, much less resist when used against them, and their boast is proven vain, their overweening minds set aside.[12] The poet uses sequential past participles to demonstrate the demons' failure to fulfil the vaunt and God's judgment, as we saw Guthlac do in the previous chapter: *Wæs him gylp forod, / beot forborsten, and forbiged þrym, / wlite gewemmed* ('their boast was broken, their promise destroyed, and their force humiliated, their beauty sullied', 69b–71a).[13]

[12] Compare Chapter Four, pp. 201–03, on demons' empty words.
[13] See pp. 222–23.

Significantly, the same poem that begins with this emphasis on obedience to God's words ends with the same emphasis, finishing with the story of Abraham's stunning obedience to God's command to sacrifice Isaac, and throughout the poem, God's friends and enemies are identified by the degree to which they stand by his word: his friends are the *wær-fæst*, 'pledge-fast', and his enemies are *wær-leas*, 'pledge-less' or *wær-logan*, 'pledge-breakers'.[14] As Peter Lucas has shown, even creation is said to obey God's words in this poem inasmuch as it endures in its created order, and obedience, or, better, loyalty to God's word, is one of the primary themes of the poem.[15] The prologue of *Genesis A* establishes the thematic importance of words, both God's Word and our response to it with our words, and this theme is completely in keeping with what we have observed of the rights and responsibilities inherent in the compound *reord-berend*.[16] The poet maintains this focus on words throughout the poem, demonstrating especially the authority of the divine Word in its power and veracity and also the various human responses to this word and their respective consequences.

The Creation: *Genesis A* 112–234

As Doane notes, the *Genesis A*-poet mentions the Word in each day of creation (though only three days are recorded due to one or more missing leaves in the manuscript between pages 8 and 9);[17] and here the poet makes especially emphatic use of the phrase *þurh* […] *word*, which is used almost exclusively of God's word in the poem (repeated words in bold):[18]

[14] Among the *wær-fæst* are Abel (1011b), God (1320b, 1549a, and 2901a), Terah (1740a), Abraham (1819a, 1897a, 2026a, 2169a, and 2587b), and Lot (1897a and 2598a). The demons are called *wær-leas* at 67a, and the giants (1266a) and Sodomites (2411b, 2505b, and 2532a) are called *wær-logan*.
[15] Lucas, 'Loyalty and Obedience' (esp. pp. 123–27). I owe the distinction between obedience and loyalty to an insightful comment by Dr Hannah Bailey.
[16] See Chapter Three (esp. pp. 136–40).
[17] Doane, *Genesis A*, pp. 5–10 and 295 (n. to lines 110b–12).
[18] While it has been observed that the *Genesis A*-poet makes ready use of Old English poetic formulism (Doane, *Genesis A*, pp. 98–115, for example, gives a thorough review of the poet's tradition and innovations), these

1) 110b–11b (a summary of God's creative works):

þeos woruld-gesceaft
þurh word gewearð wuldor-cyninges.

this world-creation came about through the word of the Glory-King.

2) 129b–31a (the naming of light):

Leoht wæs ærest
þurh drihtnes **word** dæg genemned,
wlite-beorhte gesceaft.

Light was first named 'day' through the Lord's word, beauty-bright creation.

3) 148b–49b (the separation of heaven and earth):

þæt se rica ahof
up from eorðan **þurh his** agen **word**

The Lord raised [heaven] up from earth through his own word.

4) 157b–58b (the gathering of the primordial waters):

Frea engla heht
þurh his word wesan wæter gemæne

The Lord of angels commanded waters to be gathered through his word.

5) 897a–99a (Eve blames the Serpent):

Me nædre beswac and me neodlice
to forsceape scyhte and to scyld-frece,
fah wyrm **þurh** fægir **word**

The serpent deceived me and zealously urged me to fault and to guilt-greed, the guilty worm through a fair word.

6) 1359–62 (the animals gather in Noah's ark):

and eall þæt to fæsle frea æl-mihtig
habban wolde under hrof gefor
to heora æt-gifan, **swa him** æl-mihtig
weroda drihten **þurh his word** abead.

instances of the phrase are certainly not idle, as their context shows, but associative and in keeping with the primary poetic theme. Compare Chapter One, pp. 26–28, on such formulism.

and everything which the Almighty Lord would have for descendants went under the roof [of Noah's ark] to their food-giver, just as the Almighty, Lord of Hosts, declared [to Noah] through his word.

7) 1767–71 (Abraham leaves Haran for Shechem):

Him þa Abraham gewat ǽhte lædan
of Egipta eðel-mearce,
gum-cystum god, golde and seolfre
swið-feorm and gesælig, **swa him** sigora weard, 1770
waldend usser **þurh his word** abead

Abraham left, leading possessions from the Egyptians' homeland-borders, good in man-virtues, very substantial and blessed with gold and silver, just as the Keeper of Victories, our Ruler, declared through his word.

8) 1793b–97b (Abraham leaves Shechem for Bethel mindful of the Promised Land):

Him þa gyt gewat
Abraham eastan eagum wlitan
on landa cyst, lisse gemunde 1795
heofon-weardes gehat, þa **him þurh** halig **word**
sigora self-cyning soð gecyðde

Abraham then went further from the east to lay eyes on the best of lands—he remembered the grace, the promise of the Heaven-Guardian, when the Self-King of victories made the truth known to him through his holy word.

9) 2301b–03b (Ishmael matures healthily):

Sunu weox and ðah,
swa se engel ær **þurh his** agen **word**,
fæle freoðo-scealc, fæmnan sægde.

The son grew and thrived, just as the angel had said to the woman through his own word, faithful peace-servant.

10) 2476–77 (the Sodomites respond to Lot's offer of his daughters):

Him þa seo mænigeo **þurh** gemæne **word**,
ar-lease cyn, andswarode

The many—honourless people—then answered him through common word.

11) 2775b–77b (Abraham waits for the fulfilment of God's promised son, Isaac):

He þæs ðrage bad, 2775
siððan **him** ærest **þurh his** agen **word**
þone dæg-willan drihten bodode.

> He waited for the time, after the Lord first announced the day-desire through his own word.

By comparison with *Genesis B*, where the phrase does not occur at all, and the rest of the poetic corpus, where the phrase occurs no more than twice in one poem, the *Genesis A*-poet clearly had an interest in emphasizing the work of words, especially God's.[19] The phrase has a notable pattern of distribution: it occurs with special frequency in the creation account (1–234), where it emphasizes the creative and ordering power of God's Word, and in the 2,000-odd lines after the interpolation of *Genesis B* (852–2936) the phrase occurs more sporadically, usually emphasizing the reliability of God's providential commands. The angel's word is described with the same phrase used of God's word in excerpts 3 and 11 (*þurh his agen word*), and, as we have seen in Chapter Four, a good angel can be expected to be relaying God's own words.[20] But the 'fair word' of the Serpent and the 'common word' of the Sodomites point to the vanity of words uttered against God's word: the Serpent's deceitful words are appealing but deceptive, and the Sodomites' words demonstrate their persistence in wickedness and readiness for judgment.[21]

When the poet conceives of God as creating through his word, he appears to conceive of this activity as God issuing commandments which are to be obeyed.[22] The first time God explicitly creates using his voice in the poem, the activity is treated as a command, one that is emphasized because it is couched in the first hypermetrical set of the poem: *Heht þa geond þæt ræd-lease hof / weaxan wite-brogan* ('He commanded punishment-horrors to grow throughout that solution-less court', 44b–45a).[23] In this scene, God calls on horrors to grow,

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[19] The phrase occurs in *Daniel* 360/*Azarias* 71; *Andreas* 632 and 1418; *Fates of the Apostles* 50; *Elene* 988; *Christ I* 119; *Christ III* 820; *Guthlac A* 54 and 307; *Guthlac B* 1197; *Paris Psalter* 58. 11, 104. 15, 111. 5, and 144. 21; *The Gloria* 46; and *Seasons for Fasting* 1.
[20] See pp. 192–203.
[21] See further Jager, *Tempter's Voice*, pp. 99–142, on the Serpent's deceptive eloquence and pp. 264–66 below on the judgment of the Sodomites.
[22] For a similar usage, compare the growth of nature in *The Gloria I* 34b–35b, and the arrival of night in *The Order of the World* 68a–73a.
[23] According to the *DOE*, *hatan* always takes an accusative object.

horrors which we must assume did not previously exist and yet somehow obeyed his voice by coming into existence.[24] The same phenomenon occurs several more times, for instance when God creates light (121b–24a):

> Metod engla **heht**,
> lifes brytta, leoht forð **cuman**
> ofer rumne grund. Raþe wæs gefylled
> heah-cininges hæs.
>
> The Measurer of angels, the Keeper of life, called on light to come forth over the spacious ground. Quickly was the High-King's command fulfilled.

After this God separates light from darkness, and 'they ever after bore and performed the Lord's will' (*siððan æfre / drugon and dydon drihtnes willan*, 141b–42b). God then creates the sky (144b–46a and 148b–53b):

> **Heht** þa lifes weard
> on mere-flode middum **weorðan**
> hyhtlic heofon-timber.
> […]
> þæt se rica ahof
> up from eorðan þurh his agen word
> frea ælmihtig. Flod wæs adæled
> under heah-rodore halgum mihtum,
> wæter of wætrum, þam þe wuniað gyt
> under fæstenne folca hrofes.
>
> The Keeper of life then commanded a pleasing heaven-building to be in the midst of the sea-flood.
>
> The Powerful One lifted it up from earth through his own word, Almighty Lord. The flood was parted under the high-firmament with holy strength, water from waters, those which still dwell under the fastness of peoples' roofs.

Enduring obedience appears again when God commands the waters (157b–63a):

> Frea engla **heht**
> þurh his word **wesan** wæter gemæne,
> þa nu under roderum heora ryne healdað,
> stowe gestefnde. Ða stod hraðe
> holm under heofonum, swa se halga bebead,
> sid ætsomne, ða gesundrod wæs
> lago wið lande.

[24] See further Lucas, 'Loyalty and Obedience', pp. 125–26, for other instances of God's commandments (especially to people).

> The Lord of Angels called waters to be gathered through his word, those which now hold their course under the skies, fixed in place. Then the sea quickly stood under heaven as the Holy One ordered, broad and gathered, when water was separated from land.

In each of these scenes, God commands something to happen and his commands are fulfilled, continuing to obey. While the Vulgate and Old Latin translations of Genesis exclusively use the jussive subjunctive ('let there be', for example) rather than imperative ('be!') to render God's creative words presumably because there was not yet anything for him to command, the Old English poet apparently preferred to conceive of these utterances as direct commands to things, even things which do not yet exist.[25]

In Anglo-Saxon England there was no systematic exegesis of the entire book of Genesis, and chapters 4–50 received only piecemeal commentary;[26] but the creation account received relatively capacious treatment in hexaemeral works by a variety of authors.[27] But the *Genesis A*-poet's emphasis on creation's obedience seems relatively independent of exegetical works. Bede, for example, following Augustine, elides the obedience of creation to focus on Christ: 'Rather, it should be understood more profoundly that God said that creation be made, because he made everything by his Word, that is, by his only-begotten Son.'[28] The only hint of creation's obedience I can find in his Creation account lies in the following comment:[29]

> we should understand that, when the creation and arrangement of heaven and the waters were done, they did not exceed the limits prescribed for them in the Word of God, according to the verse of the Psalmist, *he has made a decree, and he will not exceed it*.

[25] In the Vulgate the verbs are (sequentially by verse) *fiat* (3), *fiat* (6), *congregentur* (9), *germinet* (11), *fiant* (14), *luceant* (15), *illuminent* (15), *producant* (20)—once the beasts are created, God commands them *crescite*, *multiplicamini*, *replete*, *multiplicentur* (22)—*producat* (24), *faciamus* (26), *praesit* (26)—once humans are created, God commands them *crescite*, *multiplicamini*, *replete*, *subjicite*, *dominamini* (28).
[26] Doane, *Genesis A*, pp. 66–69. See Fox, 'Augustinian Hexameral Exegesis', for the works of Bede, Alcuin, and Ælfric on Genesis.
[27] The standard work on hexaemeral exegesis is Robbins, *Hexaemeral Literature*.
[28] Kendall, *Bede: On Genesis*, p. 73 (Genesis 1. 3; see also p. 76).
[29] Kendall, *Bede: On Genesis*, pp. 76–77 (Genesis 1. 6–8).

While acknowledging that God does indeed create by command, this comment is really focused on the power of the Word rather than creation's obedience.

Basil, however, whom Bede cites throughout his own hexaemeral account, make more of creation's obedience in his *Hexaëmeron*.[30] In the fifth sermon he says, regarding God's creation of plants on earth,[31]

> Nam vox quae tunc emissa est; et prima illa praeceptio veluti lex quaedam naturae fuit, et inhaesit terrae […]. Igitur in brevissimo temporis momento, a germinatione tellus incipiens, ut legem Creatoris impleret
>
> For the voice that was then sent out, even that first precept was like a certain law to nature, and inhered in the land. Therefore in the shortest moment of time, the earth beginning from germination, so that it might fulfil the Creator's law…

In the ninth sermon, Basil draws out the implications of this creation by the Word further in terms of the reproduction of animals:[32]

> Adverte igitur Dei verbum currens per omnem creaturam […]. Sicut enim pila cum ab aliquo fuerit impulsa, […] ita natura rerum Dei praeceptione commota. Haec praeceptio mansit in terra, et nullatenus famulando desinit Conditori
>
> Mind, therefore, the word of God running through every creature. For just as when a ball is impelled by someone, so [is] the nature of things moved by God's precept. This precept remained in the earth, and by no means desists in obeying the Creator.

Thus, for Basil, God's creative speech becomes the laws of nature, inhering in and continually compelling natural phenomena to obey: the divine Logos is in a very real sense present in every aspect of creation, holding it to its course.

Ambrose, also consulted by Bede for *In Genesim*, wrote a hexaëmeron largely derivative of Basil's, but elides his source's focus on obedience,[33] and Augustine's prolific

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[30] On Basil's *Hexaëmeron*, see Robbins, *Hexaemeral Literature*, pp. 42–52. Lapidge, *Anglo-Saxon Library*, pp. 204 and 292, cites Bede as the only author who clearly references the work (though Aldhelm mentions it in *Carmen de virginitate* 670–76 [Lapidge and Rosier, *Poetic Works*, pp. 117–18] and Lapidge notes that Alcuin may allude to it in his poem *On the Bishops, Kings, and Saints of York* 1536–62 [esp. 1542]). The fact that Bede claims to have composed his commentary on Genesis to bring together the most important information from less-accessible sources (see Kendall, *Bede: On Genesis*, pp. 65–67 [Preface]) may indicate that this work was rare indeed.

[31] *Hexaemeron S. Basilii*, cols. 909C and 914B (Sermon V. 1 and 5).

[32] *Hexaemeron S. Basilii*, cols. 957B–57C (Sermon IX. 2).

[33] On Ambrose's *Hexaemeron libri sex*, which Robbins, *Hexaemeral Literature*, pp. 58–59, claims 'has little value' 'as an independent work', see Savage, *Ambrose: Hexameron*, pp. v–ix. Ambrose's *Hexaemeron*, though

hexaemeral oeuvre is similarly unwilling to attribute a sort of obedience to insentient creatures.[34] Useful though the comparison to exegetical works may be, there does not seem to be any direct influence here between Basil's account and *Genesis A*. Indeed, the poet would have needed to look no further than Scripture for the conception of God's word as law.[35] Rather, the poet's emphasis on creation's obedience and loyalty is not veridical but artful, styling the Word as more of a speech act to highlight God's heroic-kingly character, the goodness of his commands, and the loyalty of his subjects.[36] A notable parallel can be found in Hrothgar's commands for Heorot to be built: 'It ran into his mind that he wished to command a hall-palace [be built]' (*Him on mod bearn / þæt heal-reced* ***hatan*** *wolde*, 67b–68b); 'Then I heard he decreed the work widely' (*Ða ic wide gefrægn weorc* ***gebannan***, 74); and 'He appointed the name Hart for it, he who held the power of his word widely' (***scop*** *him Heort* ***naman*** */ se þe his wordes geweald wide hæfde*, 78b–79b; compare *Genesis A*'s ***Sceop*** *þa bam* ***naman***, '[God] made names for both [light and darkness]'), just as Scyld, too, 'ruled with words' (*he wordum weold*, 30a).[37] God's goodness and his speechless creations' loyalty are later paralleled in the speech-bearing patriarchs' obedience to his Word.[38] It is clear that words and loyalty are of the deepest thematic importance in *Genesis A*, establishing God as the rightful king over a good cosmos, and in the following section I demonstrate how one poetic feature of God's speech in the poem, namely hypermetrics, highlights these themes at key episodes in the Genesis narrative, giving the audience words to live by.

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by no means common, appears to have been more available than Basil's, appearing in three late Anglo-Saxon manuscripts and cited extensively by Bede and Ælfric. Byrhtferth, too, consulted the work. See further Lapidge, *Anglo-Saxon Library*, pp. 194, 252, 267, and 279.

[34] On Augustine's hexaemeral works (of which Bede cites *De Genesi ad litteram* and *De Genesi contra Manichaeos* in *In Genesim* [Kendall, *Bede: On Genesis*, p. 65]), see Robbins, *Hexaemeral Literature*, pp. 64–72. Lapidge, *Anglo-Saxon Library*, pp. 282–90, lists Anglo-Saxon references to the relevant works.

[35] See for example Psalm 32(33). 9: 'For he spoke and they were made: he commanded and they were created', and Psalm 148. 5 which shares the exact wording. Psalm 148. 8 adds that elements and weather 'fulfil his word'.

[36] On loyalty in the heroic ethos, see Cherniss, *Ingeld and Christ*, pp. 30–59.

[37] Fulk, Bjork, and Niles, *Klaeber's Beowulf*, pp. clxxiv–clxxv (esp. n. 2), note a number of parallels between *Genesis A* and *Beowulf* pointed out by Klaeber, who cautiously suggested that *Beowulf* was influenced by *Genesis A*.

[38] Compare Chapter Three, n. 66.

Hypermetrics in Genesis A: The Word's Power Displayed

As Griffith has demonstrated, the voice of God is continually represented in an elevated register in *Genesis A*, regularly employing heavy verses, hypermetrics, and ornamental alliteration, among other poetic patterns.[39] Perhaps the most obvious example of God's eloquence is the presence of hypermetrics in the poem, almost all of which occur in God's speeches (77.78%) or in relation to them, and I will focus on this poetic effect largely to the exclusion of others, both for concision and continuity with the previous chapters.[40] There are nine episodes which include hypermetrics in the poem, and in the remainder of this chapter, I examine these with a twofold approach: I first describe some of the formal similarities between these hypermetrical occurrences and elucidate how they demonstrate the power of God's word; then, I suggest what significance these lines have in their context and why the poet should have used them. But this second aspect of my approach requires some justification.

An Extra-Literal Interpretation? The Nine Hypermetric Episodes of *Genesis A*

Commentators have often seen in *Genesis A* allusions of extra-literal significance. Huppé and Doane, for example, have suggested that allegorical significance lies behind several of the poem's episodes, such as in the following excerpt: on the second day of creation, 'the Measurer of angels commanded […] light to come forth' (*Metod engla heht* […] *leoht forð cuman*, 121b and 123a). Doane suggests here a reminiscence of the notion that the creation of

[39] See 'Register of Divine Speech'.
[40] 49 of the 63 verses Bliss, *Metre of Beowulf*, pp. 192–98, lists as hypermetric occur in God's direct or indirect discourse or in an inquit to his direct discourse. As we shall see, 4 occur between two of God's commands, and the remaining 10 occur in relation to Abraham's responses to God.

angels was signified by the creation of light.[41] But Wright has cautioned against an overly allegorical reading of the poem, noting that simply because allegorical allusions can be read into the text does not mean the poet intended them.[42] Wright, with most of the poem's critics, notes *Genesis A*'s consistently literal and sequential rendering of Scripture by comparison with, say, *Genesis B* or *Exodus*, and argues that extra-literal readings must be elicited by the text itself if we wish to demonstrate that the poet intentionally emphasizes them:[43]

> A persuasive extra-literal reading will normally be supported by textual details that resist or are not adequately accounted for by a literal reading – that is, by something cryptic, incongruous, or supererogatory in the verbal or structural fabric of the text that is more satisfactorily captured by recourse to an extra-literal reading.

Wright gives only two examples of what he sees as convincing echoes of the New Testament in *Genesis A*, both cited here: the operation of the Logos as attested on lines 110b–11b (echoing John 1. 1), and the notion that Adam and Eve were 'like angels' (185b) before the fall (echoing Luke 20. 36); but he notes that even these echoes of the New Testament are literal, that is, concerned with historical truth, rather than allegory, which relies on typology or transference of the literal.[44]

Wright cites the *word*-paronomasia on lines 1a–3a and 110b–11b as a good example of such 'supererogatory' 'verbal' cues which allude to extra-literal meaning, and hypermetrics, too, appear to have been used by the poet to highlight not only the Word's virtues but also extra-literal senses, mostly moral but at times allegorical. Rather than referring to the four senses scheme of exegesis (literal, allegorical, tropological, anagogical), which came to predominate later than *Genesis A*,[45] I refer (however sparingly) to Gregory the Great's threefold scheme (historical, allegorical, moral), which is both temporally relevant to

[41] Doane, *Genesis A*, p. 297 (n. to 121b–23a).
[42] '*Genesis A ad litteram*', pp. 121–27.
[43] Doane, *Genesis A*, pp. 77–87, notes that the poet, wherever possible, kept close to his source texts' language and sequence, but that his variations are usually for the sake of clarity and elucidation; McBrine, *Biblical Epics*, pp. 274–49.
[44] '*Genesis A ad litteram*', pp. 146–56.
[45] Lobrichon, 'Senses of Scripture'.

this poem and has the advantage of combining all extra-literal allusions to Christ (in Gregory's terms the concern of allegorical interpretation) and his Body (the concern of moral interpretation), whether past, present, or future, in only two categories.[46] It is imperative to treat these hypermetrical episodes with care, for they were used with care by the poet: of God's 25 direct speeches in *Genesis A*, 18 do not include any hypermetrics, and, as we will see, these expanded verses occur at important (and relatively consistent) portions of the narrative.[47]

1. The Creation of Hell

We have already seen in the preceding two chapters how hypermetric lines can be used by poets to disclose special revelations of spiritual truth. The *Genesis A*-poet employs these lines in the same way but to surprising effect. We have already noted that the first set of hypermetrics in the poem comes in God's first speech, which is in indirect discourse (36b–46b; standard mark-up):

Sceop þam **w**er-l̲ogan
wræclicne h̲am **w**eorce to l̲eane,
helle-**h**eafas, **h**earde niðas.
H̲eht þæt **w**ite-h̲us **w**ræcna bidan,
deop, **d**reama leas, **d**rihten ure,
gasta w̲eardas, þa he hit **g**eare w̲iste,
sy*n-n*ihte be**s**eal*d*, **s**usle gei*nn*o*d*,
geond**f**o*l*en **f***yre* and **f**æ*r*-c*yle*,
rece and **r**eade lege. H̲eht þa geond þæt **r**æd-lease h̲of
weaxan **w**ite-brogan. Hæfdon hie **w**roht-geteme
grimme wið **g**od ges*om*nod; him þæs **g**rim lean bec*om*!

> He created for the pledge-breakers a wretch-like home as a payment for their work, hell-lamentations, hard afflictions. Our Lord commanded that punishment-house to endure the wretches, keepers of spirits, deep, without joy, when he knew it was ready, surrounded with perpetual darkness, stocked with torment, completely filled with fire and sudden-chill, smoke and red flame. He commanded punishment-horrors to grow

[46] Parker, *Morals on the Book of Job*, I, 1–11 ('Epistle').
[47] Compare Griffith, 'Register of Divine Speech', pp. 66–67.

> throughout that solution-less court. They had grimly gathered up a crime-swarm against God; a grim payment came to them for it!

This passage, enveloped by the notion of repayment (*lean*), includes a catalogue of variations (serial past participle: *beseald*, *geinnod*, *geondfolen*) with end-assonance (*beseal**d***, *geinno**d***; ***fyre***, *c**yle***) culminating in hypermetrical lines. Not only this sequence (variation leading to hypermetrics) but the use of the serial past participle in a judgment context are both used in *Guthlac A*, as we have seen.[48] Furthermore, *heht* is repeated twice in this speech, mirroring the bipartite 'evidentiary' structure I noted in hypermetrics in *The Dream of the Rood* and *Guthlac A*, and it is noteworthy that this passage also culminates in the statement of a summative judgment.[49] The serial past participle, hypermetrics, double command, and conclusive judgment highlight the authoritative power of God's word, and the repetition of *grim-* in verses 46a and 46b creates equative parallelism between the crime and the verdict. I return to these lines below in the context of Sodom's judgment, but suffice it to say here that God's word as set in hypermetrics already has juridical associations.

2. The 'Famous Third Morning'

The second hypermetrical set also occurs in the creation-account at lines 154a–57a, describing the state of the world at the beginning of the third day of creation. This set is unlike most of the others in the poem, and needs careful consideration here (standard mark-up):

> Þa com ofer **f**old*an* **f**us siði*an*
> **m**ære **m**ergen þri*dda*. Næron **m**etode ða g*yta* 155
> **w**id-lond ne **w**egas n*ytte*, ac stod be**w**rigen fæs*te*
> **f***olde* mid **f***lode*. **F**rea engla heht

[48] Chapter Four, pp. 192–95.
[49] Coker, 'Function of Hypermetric Lines', pp. 13–17; Chapter Four, pp. 215–16.

> Then, eager, the famous third morning came venturing over the land. The broad-land and paths were not yet useful to the Lord; rather, the earth stood concealed by the sea. The Lord of angels commanded

It is unclear from this passage what is particularly famous about the third morning among the other days and why it should be praised in hypermetric patterning. Based on my examination of their works, none of the major hexaemeral authors for Anglo-Saxon England (Basil, Ambrose, Augustine, Bede, and Ælfric) seems to grant any special significance to the third day, and Doane, the poem's most recent editor, makes no comment on this statement.

Yet these hypermetrics are not likely to have been accidental, as they are prompted again by two standard verses linked by verse-final *an*-assonance, and the passage comes at the core of a series of loosely-chiastic enveloping diction which is grouped around two commands:

> [Day Two] ***heht*** […] *weorðan* (144b and 145b; command that there be an expanse separating the waters above and below, 144b–46a), *holmas* (146b), *roderas* (148a), *þurh his agen word* (149b), *frea* (150a), *flod* (150b), *halgum* (151b), *wæter*, *wætrum* (152a), *fæstenne* (153a)
>
> [Day Three] *foldan* (154a)
>
> Pattern repeated back as *fæste* (156b), *folde* (157a), *flode* (157a), *frea* (157b), ***heht*** […] *wesan* (157b and 158a; command that waters below be gathered, 157b–60a), *þurh his word wesan* (158a), *wæter* (158b), *roderum* (159a), *holm* (161a), and *halga* (161b).

This 'chiastic' structure fuses the second and third days, with continued alliteration preceding the hypermetrics on lines 153–54, ending the second day and beginning the third in poetic grandeur.[50] Some of these enveloping words may appear out of necessity, but, by analogy with the first hypermetric set, the generally chiastic pattern of diction, continued alliteration, end-assonance, and hypermetrics suggest that the poet intentionally couched the hypermetrics at the core of this creation scene between two commands and two repetitions of the phrase

[50] There is also repeated diction in this account which does not follow the generally-chiastic structure of the above repetitions as neatly: *heah-**rodore*** (151a), *wid-**lond*** (156a), *stowe* (160a), *lande* (163a), *stowe* (164a), *flode* (167b).

þurh his […] *word*. The motivations behind this set are the obscurest of all hypermetrics in *Genesis A*, but I suggest they set a precedent for a deeper association between 'thirds' and redemption found elsewhere in the poem.

In the first place, the phrase 'the famous third morning' would without a doubt remind the audience of Christ's resurrection. No hexaemeral authors draw this typological connection, because there was no traditional exegetical connection between the third day of creation (Tuesday) and Christ's resurrection (Sunday): eight was the number of resurrection, according to Bede, for example, as seen in the presence of eight people in Noah's ark, that circumcision was received on the eighth day after birth, and in Christ's resurrection on a Sunday (the eighth day from the beginning of the week).[51] But given that on the third day God 'fettered' (*gefetero[de]*, 168a) the waters and gave them their rightful place which they are not to exceed, this episode recalls the first hypermetric set, in which God makes hell as a punishment to restrain the demons, and it also foreshadows Noah's Flood, which, according to St Peter (1 Peter 3. 18–22), was a type of baptism, and the coming judgment.[52] On the third day the chaotic waters are restrained and dry land appears, allowing earth to sustain life.

Without textual evidence of this connection, the point is moot, but in fact there is good reason to believe the poet desired to make this connection. Firstly, in the Flood episode, the poet specifies that *ymb wucan þriddan* ('after the third week', 1477a) in the ark, Noah's dove did not return, for the waters had completely subsided. Afterwards, when God addresses Noah he curiously calls either the sea upon which Noah's kin dwelt or the newly dry earth the *þridda eðyl*, in a passage which has stumped its editors (1485–92):

> Þe is eðel-stol eft gerymed, 1485
> lisse on lande, lago-siða rest
> fæger on foldan. Gewit on freðo gangan
> ut of earce, and on eorðan bearm
> of þam hean hofe hiwan læd þu

[51] Kendall, *Bede: On Genesis*, pp. 173–74 (Genesis 6. 13–14a) and 283–84 (Genesis 17. 12a).
[52] Compare Anlezark, *Water and Fire*, pp. 175–95.

and ealle þa wocre þe ic wæg-þrea 1490
on hliðe nerede þenden lago hæfde
þrymme geþeahte þriddan eðyl.[53]

A homeland-settlement is again cleared for you, mercy on land, rest from sea-journeys, fair on land. Leave to go out of the ark in peace, and in the earth's embrace from the high court lead your household and all the offspring that I saved from wave-punishment on a hillside while the sea had covered the third homeland with might.

The sense that earth is the 'third homeland' relies on textual emendation of *þridda* to *þriddan*, because as the text stands, *þridda* parallels *lago*, the subject. However, the sea is an unlikely candidate for a homeland since they dwelt in the ark, especially when God just called the newly dry earth Noah's *eðel-stol* in the first verse of his same speech (1484a). Furthermore, the manuscript gives no object of what the *lago* is said to cover, so I follow ASPR in reading *þriddan*, supplying 'the homeland' as the grammatical object and, with the sense 'earth', completing God's envelope pattern with *eðyl* in the final verse. Earlier in the poem, God tells Adam he must seek a 'second homeland' (*oðerne eðel*, 927) when he is exiled from Eden. The connection between Adam and Eve's first homeland (Paradise) and, as L. N. McKill notes, the third homeland of Noah is driven home by the parallel language of God's blessings of Adam and Eve and Noah in Scripture, which the *Genesis A* poet replicates (but with some artful variations).[54]

But still more significant than these 'thirds' are lines 2873–79, when Abraham approaches the mountain on which he will sacrifice Isaac in that most Christological of episodes (repeated diction from 154a–57a in bold):

Efste þa swiðe and onette
forð **fold-wege**, swa him **frea** tæhte
wegas ofer westen, oðþæt wuldor-torht, 2875
dæges **þriddan** up ofer deop **wæter**
ord aræmde. Þa se eadega wer
geseah hlifigan hea dune

[53] ASPR emend the manuscript's *hliðe* to *liðe* 'mercifully', *geþeahte* to *geþeahtne* (a hypercorrect and unnecessary emendation, as Doane notes that *Genesis A* uses only uninflected past participles with *habban*), and *þridda* to *þriddan* (Doane, *Genesis A*, pp. 340–41 [n. to 1490–93]).
[54] McKill, 'Noah Episode', pp. 129–31.

swa him sægde ær swegles aldor.

> [Abraham] hurried greatly then and rushed forward on the land-way, as the Lord indicated to him paths through the desert, until glory-bright, the beginning of the third day rose up over deep water. Then the blessed man saw a high mountain towering, just as the Ruler of heaven had spoken to him.

This passage is steeped in messianic diction, unsurprisingly given that Abraham's sacrifice of Isaac was perceived to figure God's sacrifice of Christ.[55] There is the *ord*, or beginning, a common name for Christ based on John 8. 25 ('They said therefore unto him: Who art thou? Jesus said to them: The beginning, who also speak unto you'), which rises up on the third day over the waters (the waters are an extra-biblical detail).[56] The third day of creation has clear verbal parallels with this account: on the 'third' (*þridda*) day of creation, the 'ways' (*wegas*) on the 'land' (*fold*) were not yet useful to the 'Lord' (*frea*) because 'water' (*wæter*) covered them, but God made these waters sink and then *geseah* […] *drige stowe* ('saw dry places', 163b–64a, perhaps reminiscent of how Abraham saw [*geseah*, 2878a] the mountain on which to sacrifice Isaac). Other than these 'thirds', the word *þridda* is used only four other times in *Genesis A*, each time in enumerations of names.[57]

Hence there is a prominent association between thirds with overcome waters, and it seems possible that the third morning was suggestive of Christ's resurrection. Firstly, Christ is figured in the other two episodes: just before Peter's comparison of the Flood to baptism he references Christ's harrowing of hell (1 Peter 3. 18–19), and the sacrifice of Isaac was typologically associated with Christ, as we shall see. Secondly, McKill notes '(the Creation, the Fall, the Flood, the Sacrifice of Isaac) form the major readings of the Paschal vigil', and this would provide very concrete reasons for an association between resurrection, thirds, and

[55] See further pp. 260–63 below.
[56] On Christ as the beginning, see Doane, *Genesis A*, p. 295 (n. to 110b–12), and Wright, '*Genesis A ad litteram*', p. 129, who notes that the interpretation of Christ as beginning was not unanimously accepted among patristic writers.
[57] See 231a (referring to the Tigris), 1242a and 1552a (Japheth), 2027b (Eshkol), and 2869b (Isaac).

these three episodes.[58] At line 168 there is a break in the manuscript, and so any definite conclusions about this episode cannot be drawn, but these 'thirds' certainly seem suggestive.

3. The Protoevangelium?

The next hypermetrical line occurs in the midst of God's curse of the Serpent (906–17; standard mark-up):

> Þu scealt **w**ide-ferhð, **w**erig, þinum
> **b**reostum, **b**earm tred*an* **b**radre eorð*an*,[59]
> **f**aran **f**eðe-leas þenden þe **f**eorh wunað,
> **g**ast on inn*an*. Þu scealt **g**reot et*an*
> þine **l**if-dagas swa þu **l**aðlice 910
> **w**rohte onstealdest, þe þæt **w**if feoð,
> **h**atað under **h**eofnum and þin **h**eafod tredeð
> **f**ah mid **f**otum sinum. Þu scealt **f**iersna sætan
> **t**ohtan niwre; **t**uddor bið gemæne
> **i**ncrum **o**rleg-nið **a** þenden standeð 915
> **w**oruld under **w**olcnum. Nu þu **w**ast and canst,
> **l**að **l**eod-sceaða, hu þu **l**ifian scealt.
>
> You shall forever, accursed, on your breast, tread the lap of broad earth, travel footless while life dwells in you, spirit inside. You shall eat dust in your days because you established blame; the woman hates you, despises under the heavens, and treads your head, guilty, with her feet. You shall lie in wait for her heel with a new assault; there will ever be common battle-hostility between the offspring of you two, as long as the world stands under heaven. Now you know and understand, hateful people-harmer, how you must live.

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[58] 'Offering of Isaac', p. 7.

[59] These verses could usefully be lineated to reflect isolated half-lines found throughout *Genesis A* and discussed by Bliss, 'Single Half-Lines', which would allow the manuscript's *werg* and *brade* to be maintained (905–07):

> …wide siðas and þa worde cwæð:
> Þu scealt wide-ferhð, werg,
> þinum breostum, bearme tredan
> brade eorðan

Although this lineation requires emendation of the manuscript's *bearm*, the sense (varying *breostum* with *bearme*) would be natural enough, and Doane emends the word so, citing 2376a and 2652a as having similar metrical types to *bearme tredan*. This proposed lineation accounts for continued alliteration between 905–06 and makes for more satisfactory metrics throughout with minimal emendation, not to mention evidencing a potential parallel between these verses and *ljóðaháttr* verse, especially poignant because this is a curse (see Bliss, 'Origin and Structure', p. 245, and Coker, 'Function of Hypermetric Lines', p. 11 [esp. n. 24]). See further Doane, *Genesis A*, pp. 291 and 308 (nn. to 44–46 and 906a–07).

This hypermetric line, like other hypermetrics we have seen, is introduced by variation, specifically threefold verbal parallelism (*feoð*, *hatað*, *tredeð*). Griffith notes that this speech of twelve lines is one of only three divine speeches of twelve lines in the poem and that all three are curses (of the Serpent, Adam, and Cain).[60] Griffith indicates striking parallels between God's curse of the Serpent and his curse of Adam, including shared structure, phrasing, and diction (including repetition of *scealt*), and, noting that the element *lað* ('hateful') is present in each of these three curses—Cain, who acted *laðlice* (910b), and the Serpent are called *lað* (917a and 1021b), and God speaks a *lað* message (926b) to Adam, who also acted *laðlice* (921b)—Griffith concludes that the poet constructed these speeches consciously along generic lines. We should also note that the two maledicts who are called *lað* are cursed with hypermetrics.

The curse of the Serpent contains four uses of the verb *sculan*, and, given that the hypermetrics again come in the centre of repeated 'command'-verbs, it seems that *hatan* in indirect speech is effectively replaced by *sculan* in direct speech. Louviot has shown that divine speech in *Genesis A* features a gnomic or proverbial arrangement of syntax, especially in moments of prediction and cursing.[61] This 'pseudo-proverbial mode', as she terms it, favours passive constructions, such as *Þe is gedal witod* ('Separation is ordained for you', 930b), which efface the agent and give the speech itself a 'fated' force in the same way that maxims appear to encode transcendent truth. Louviot also compares the predictions of lines 2281–95 (where the Angel of the Lord comforts Hagar) to maxims for their use of *sculan* and *beon*, and furthermore Griffith, too, has pointed out God's recurrent use of *sculan* in *Genesis A*, which repeatedly forms envelope patterns in divine curses.[62] *Sculan* and *beon* have the force of futurity and transcendent truth, and Louviot therefore suggests that this proverbial

[60] 'Register of Divine Speech', pp. 71–72.
[61] *Direct Speech*, pp. 116–26.
[62] 'Register of Divine Speech', pp. 72–73.

mode perhaps savoured of divine truth.[63] It is noteworthy, then, that God should speak in hypermetrics in a gnomic manner and that the Old English maxims themselves are also replete with hypermetricity.[64] *Sculan* also has the force of a command, expressing what is due or owing, and I believe that we should think of the gnomes as poetic encodings of divine truth, yet I would add that these are truths established by God's commands.

Sculan and *hatan* are of course of very different character; *sculan* does not command an individual as an object, but prescribes actions for individuals as subjects, like legal sentencing or prophecy, as though the actions were 'just true', as Louviot notes. On the other hand, *hatan* commands individuals as objects and highlights the commanding agent, the relationship between speakers, and therefore the arbitrary (in the sense that they are the result of personal action) nature of the command. Nevertheless, three of the four commands in indirect discourse using *hatan* that we have noted do not command an existent object, and, in the hypermetric 'commands', perhaps God is not as much telling individuals what to do so much as effecting their fates with his word.

If hypermetrics do represent such transcendent ordinance of fates, it may be significant that the poet employs it in passage based on Genesis 3:15, which has been called the Protoevangelium: 'I will put enmities between thee and the woman, and thy seed and her seed: she shall crush thy head, and thou shalt lie in wait for her heel'.[65] According to Dominic Unger, he passage was widely considered to intimate the crucifixion but ultimate victory of Christ (Eve's seed) over Satan by numerous patristic sources, among them Irenaeus, Ambrose, Leo the Great, and Isidore; but others considered it to intimate Mary's conception of Christ; and still others, Augustine and Bede among them, take this passage allegorically to

[63] *Direct Speech*, p. 125.
[64] *Maxims I*, for example, is 33% hypermetric, the second highest percentage next to *The Dream of the Rood* lines 1–77, which come in at 42% (see further Coker, 'Function of Hypermetric Lines', n. 32). On the metrical character of the *Maxims*, see Bliss, 'Single Half-Lines', pp. 443–44.
[65] See further Unger, 'Interpretation of the Protoevangelium'.

mean that the Church will conquer the devil though he lies in wait to tempt men.[66] Yet it seems possible that the poet did not consider this a 'protoevangelium' at all, because other than this hypermetric line, there is nothing particularly unusual in the episode, although the majority of commentators did see in this verse a prophecy of Christ's (or his Body's) victory. Whatever the case, given the poet's taste for emphasizing God's judgments, we can be certain that this hypermetric expansion was intended to convey the intensity of this sentence; indeed, Doane notes the poet's emphasis that the footless (*feðe-leas*, 908a) Serpent will be crushed by Eve's feet (*fotum*, 913a), and again we see a hypermetrical verdict fitting the crime.

4. The Curse of Cain

These conclusions hold in the next hypermetrical set, which comes when God *gean þingade* Cain ('spoke against', 1009b; note the legal connotations of *þingian* as 'pleading' or 'setting terms'), cursing him (1010–21; standard mark-up):[67]

> Hwæt, be**f**ealdest þu **f**olmum þinum 1010
> **w**raþum on **w**æl-bedd **w**ær-fæstne rinc,
> **b**roðor þinne, and his **b**lod to me
> **c**leopað ond **c**igeð. Þu þæs **c**wealmes scealt
> **w**ite **w**inn*an* and on **w**ræc hweorf*an*,
> a**w**yrged to **w**idan al*dre*. Ne seleð þe **w**æstmas eo*rðe* 1015
> **w**litige to **w**oruld-nytte ac heo **w**æl-dreore swealh
> **h**alge of **h**andum þinum. Forþon heo þe **h**roðra oftihð,
> **g**læmes **g**rene folde. Þu scealt **g**eomor hweorfan,
> **a**r-leas of **e**arde þinum swa þu **A**bele wurde
> to **f**eorh-banan. Forþon þu **f**lema scealt 1020
> **w**id-last **w**recan, **w**ine-magum lað.
>
> Lo, with your hands you wrathfully laid the pledge-fast man low onto his death-bed, your brother, and his blood cries out and calls to me. For that slaying, you shall receive punishment and turn into exile, cursed forever. Earth will not give you fruits, beautiful, for world-use; no, she swallowed the holy death-blood of the slain from your hands. Therefore she withdraws from you her comforts, the green earth her

[66] See Kendall, *Bede: On Genesis*, p. 133 (Genesis 3. 15), for Bede's interpretation.
[67] See further *B-T*, 'þingian'.

> radiance. You shall turn from your land, sad, without honour, as you became a life-slayer to Abel. Therefore, a fugitive, you shall travel a long way, hateful to your kin.

These hypermetrics, which are again initiated by two verses of parallelism with end-assonance, are bound together by a three-line sequence of *w*-alliteration.[68] Once again hypermetrics come in the centre of a diptych: twice repeating *þu* […] *scealt* and *forþon* (1013b and 1017b; 1018b and 1020b), God presents his judgment as a sequence cataloguing Cain's punishment, crime, and punishment twice, again creating a sense of fittingness between punishment and crime.[69]

This is the longest consecutive cluster of hypermetric verses in the poem, and it seems likely that this curse was of particular importance to the poet's message. The Cain and Abel story seems to have been an important one in the Anglo-Saxon world and was also given poetic treatment in *Maxims I* and *Beowulf*, in addition to the Old Saxon Genesis.[70] The association between Cain and what Augustine called the City of Man, which includes giants, monsters, and all those who rebel against God, held wide currency, and *Beowulf* 102–14 even attests to a widespread apocryphal belief that various monsters were descended from Cain.[71] Wright notes that *Genesis A* is concerned with 'generation of all kinds', and I would add that Cain, as one of the founding fathers of the human race, seems to have been associated with all sorts of generation himself.[72]

In one of his few asides to the audience, the poet notes that by slaying Abel this tiller of earth cultivated not a race of giants but a tree of woe (*wea*, 987b) which has afflicted humanity ever since (982b–1001b).[73] The trees of vice and virtue had since Cassian and Gregory the Great appeared in Christian writings, and vices and virtues had also long been

[68] See Griffith, 'Register of Divine Speech', pp. 73–75.
[69] See also Coker, 'Function of Hypermetric Lines', pp. 17–18, on the structure of the cluster.
[70] See further Emerson, 'Legends of Cain'.
[71] See further Orchard, *Pride and Prodigies*, pp. 58–85.
[72] 'Blood of Abel', p. 17.
[73] Doane, *Genesis A*, pp. 93–94, describes the poet's 'homiletic' asides.

associated with spiritual warfare, as we have seen.[74] Boniface combines the arboreal and *Psychomachia*-imagery in his riddles on the virtues and vices, and the association between violence and a tree's generation seems satisfyingly familiar within this context.[75] *Maxims I* also describes the generative effects of Cain's crime as violence, and with two sets of hypermetrics (192–204; standard mark-up):

> Wearð **f**æhþo **f**yra cynne, siþþan **f**urþum swealg
> **e**orðe **A**beles blode. Næs þæt **a**n-dæge nið,
> of þam **w**roht-drop*an* **w**ide gesprung*on*,
> **m**icel **m**on æld*um*, **m**onegum þeod*um*
> **b**ealo-**b**londen niþ. Slog his **b**roðor swæsne
> **C**ain, þone **c**wealm nerede; **c**uþ wæs wide siþþan,
> þæt **e**ce nið **æ**ldum scod, swa **a**þol-warum.
> Drugon **w**æpna ge**w**in **w**ide geond eorþan,
> a**h**ogodan ond a**h**yrdon **h**eoro sliþendne.
> **G**earo sceal **g**uð-bord, **g**ar on sceafte,
> **e**cg on sweorde ond **o**rd spere,
> **h**yge **h**eardum men. **H**elm sceal cenum,
> ond a þæs **h**eanan hyge **h**ord unginnost.
>
> There was a strife among mankind after the earth first swallowed Abel's blood. That was not a day-long hostility; from those crime-drops great evil among men, a bale-blended hostility between many peoples spread widely. He slew his own brother, Cain, performed the slaying. Afterwards it was widely known that an eternal hostility harmed men, citizens alike. They endured the strife of weapons widely throughout the earth, plotted and hardened the injuring sword. Ready shall be the battle-board, spear on shaft, edge on sword, and tip on spear, mind in hard men. A helmet shall be on the bold, and ever the mind of the lowly a most un-spacious hoard.

This poet thrice repeats the words *nið* (193b, 196a, and 198a) and *wide* (194b, 197b, and 199b) in succession, emphasizing the wide-ranging consequences of the crime, and the poem closes with these maxims on the warrior ethos, necessitated by Cain's crime, in two *sceal* sequences (201a–03a and 203b–04b). Brockman suggests that the *Genesis A*-poet's concern in the story of Cain is particularly the 'heroic' and social aspect, noting that the end of Cain's

[74] Bloomfield, *Seven Deadly Sins*, pp. 79–81.
[75] Ed. Glorie, *Aenigmata*, pp. 279–343.

farming career is bracketed by parallel phrasing of his exile (*Þu scealt* […] *hweorfan*, 1013b–14b and 1018b).[76] The juridical and moral elements of this hypermetric scene are strong enough that they eclipse the need for allegorical interpretation, but it is worth mention that Abel's murder and blood were typologically associated with Christ's and (subsequently) the martyrs' death and blood, and perhaps the wider implications of this first murder lie behind the hypermetric form.[77]

5. A Postdiluvian Contract

To be compared with the Cain episode is the next hypermetrical line in God's speech to Noah, which comes in the middle of a blessing (following the biblical sequence) and mirrors Adam and Eve's in structure and diction (1518–31; standard mark-up):[78]

> Næfre ge mid **b**lode **b**eod-gereordu
> un**a**rlice **e**owre þicgeað,
> be**s**miten mid **s**ynne **s**awl-dreore.
> *Æ*lc hine selfa **æ**rest begrindeð
> **g**astes dugeðum þæra þe mid **g**ares orde
> **o**ðrum **a**ldor oðþringeð. Ne ðearf he þy **e**dleane gefeon
> **m**od-geþance, ac ic **m**onnes feorh
> to **s**lagan sece **s**wiðor micle,
> and to **b**roðor banan, þæs þe **b**lod-gyte,
> **w**æll-fyll **w**eres **w**æpnum gespedeð,
> **m**orð mid **m**undum. **M**onn wæs to godes
> **a**nlicnesse **æ**rest gesceapen.
> *Æ*lc hafað **m**æg-wlite **m**etodes and engla
> þara þe **h**ealdan wille **h**alige þeawas.
>
> Never consume your table-meals with blood, dishonourably, stricken by sin with soul-gore.
>
> Each one first deprives [literally, 'grinds'] himself from spirit's favour [literally 'the tested (and, by extension, favoured) troop'], [each] of those who, with the spear's tip, wrest life from another. He has no reason to rejoice for that reward in his heart-thoughts; rather, I will seek out a man's life much more severely from a slayer and from a brother-murderer, from the one who advances bloodshed, the slaughter-fall of man with weapons, murder with hands. Man was first made in God's image. Each has

[76] '"Heroic" and "Christian"', pp. 122–23.
[77] See again Kendall, *Bede: On Genesis*, pp. 145–46 (Genesis 4. 10), for example.
[78] On the structure of these blessings, see Griffith, 'Register of Divine Speech', pp. 68–70.

> the resemblance of the Measurer and angels, [each] of those who will keep holy customs.

Lines 1521–31 are a discrete unit, clearly bracketed by enveloping repetitions (*Ælc* […] *þæra*, *ærest*, *monnes*; *monn*, *ærest*, *Ælc* […] *þara*), but I have included lines 1518–20 merely for the sake of contrast: God's direct command in 1518–20 is meagrely represented in terms of poetic patterning, but when God pronounces the maxim of the fate of all killers, lines 1521–23 all come with continued alliteration and include a hypermetric line. Here again there is an audible contrast between direct commands and the pronunciation of a decree: it is the gnomic judgment which takes hypermetrics, and a proscription against killing seems particularly fitting just after the Flood, which was understood to have saved Noah's kin from the monstrous kin of Cain.[79] Notably, the poet adds an extra-biblical sentiment in the final two lines to give a sense of gnomic closure: reflecting views of mankind (which must 'hold' God's word) we have seen throughout this dissertation, God claims that the divine image is only present in man as long as he holds divine customs.[80] Both statements headed by *Ælc* simultaneously give the speech legal and gnomic flavour, as God establishes provisos for his relationship with man, and the fact that the latter *Ælc*-phrase has no scriptural warrant suggests that the poet might have desired to emphasize the contractual aspect of this speech. As Anlezark argues, here God re-establishes a covenant which the sons of Seth broke by mixing with Cain's kin.[81]

[79] See n. 52 above.
[80] Compare Chapter Three (esp. n 66).
[81] *Water and Fire*, pp. 185–89.

6. A Promised Son

The next set of hypermetrics comes when the word of the Lord appears to Abraham, just after he has rescued Lot, defeating the King of Sodom in battle (2165–72; standard mark-up):[82]

Þa gen **A**brahame **e**owde selfa 2165
heofona **h**eah-cyning **h**alige spræce,
trymede **t**il-modigne and him **t**o reordode:
'**M**eda syndon **m**icla *þin*a! Ne læt þu þe þin **m**od asealc*an*,
wær-fæst **w**illan *min*es! Ne þearft þu þe **w**iht ondræd*an*,
þenden þu mine **l**are **l**æstest, ac ic þe **l**ifigende her 2170
wið **w**eana gehwam **w**reo and scylde
folmum minum; ne þearft þu **f**orht wesan.'

Then the High-King of heavens showed himself to Abraham again with holy speech, strengthened the good-hearted man and spoke to him:
'Great are your rewards! Do not let your heart slacken, faithful to my will! You have no need to fear anything as long as you stand by my instruction; rather I will cover and protect you, living here, against each woe with my hands. You have no need to be afraid'.

After two hypermetric verses of chiastic verbal parallelism (*trymede*, *reordode*), the first hypermetric lines of this speech create a striking parallelism by their cadences: 2168a and 2169a share a cadence of Sx|Sx with rhyme on the final stress, creating parallelism between Abraham's rewards (***þin**a*) and God's will (***min**es*), and 2168b and 2169b give two admonitions headed by the phrase *Ne* (…) *þu þe* and sharing a cadence of S|xSx with homoioteleuton, doubly encouraging Abraham to stay strong. While lines 2168b–69a do contain a command, it is more of an encouragement and is bracketed by pronunciations of what God will do. As in the last hypermetrical speech, the poet inserts an extra-biblical proviso: Genesis 15. 1 has, 'Fear not, Abram, I am thy protector, and thy reward exceeding great', but the *Genesis A*-poet has placed the reward at the beginning and added the qualification that God's benefits are only there for Abraham as long as he stands by God's

[82] On the heroic flavour of this battle, see Orchard, 'Conspicuous Heroism', pp. 120–31.

teaching.[83] Given that this speech begins the dialogue in which God promises Abraham a son, it seems the poet wished to establish an economy in which God stands by his word as long as his servants do, giving these words a contractual feeling.

This speech also repeats the previous speech's use of negative + *þurfan*, reiterating that Abraham need not be afraid, but here it is used twice to give the speech a bipartite structure (2169b and 2172b), doubly emphasizing by litotes the reassurance and glory of God's promise. This is not God's first speech to Abraham, but it is his first hypermetrical speech to the patriarch, and so the rhetorical heightening of hypermetrics must suggest some special significance to this episode. As if in keeping with this heightened dialogue, even the inquit to Abraham's despondent response to God is set in a hypermetric line: *Abraham þa andswarode, / dæd-rof drihtne sinum, frægn hine dæg-rime frod* ('Abraham then answered, the deed-strong to his Lord, asked him, old and wise in day-count', 2173b–74b). There is little to say about this line beyond than the fact that it represents Abraham's response to this contract, but I offer an interpretation in my discussion of lines 2866–69 below. Here, the patriarch asks what reward he can receive since he has no son to inherit it, and I argue more fully in the following subsection that this dialogue's hypermetrics come because of God's promise of a son.

7. The Covenant of Circumcision and the Promise of Isaac

This seventh use of hypermetrics occurs shortly after the previous one, with the Hagar and Ishmael episode intervening between them, in the midst of God's dialogue with Abraham, where the Covenant of Circumcision is established and Isaac's birth is promised. This speech is too long to quote in full, but it is rich in terms of contractual significance (*treow-rædenne*,

[83] Compare Chapter Four, pp. 187–92.

'pact-condition' 2307a; *wære*, 'pledge' 2309b; *soðe gelæste*, 'stand by truly' 2310a; *wedde*, 'guarantee' 2311a; and *tacn*, 'token' 2313a, for example), highlighting the covenantal nature of this and the previous dialogue.[84] Here God repeats *Þu scealt* (2312a and 2327b) and *sceal* (2319b and 2332b) in sequence; the first sequence (2306–25) states what Abraham must do, ending with a command, but the second (2326–37) states what God will do, and it is this section that receives hypermetrics (2326a–34a; standard mark-up):

> Ic eow **t**reowige, gif ge þæt **t**acen gegaþ
> **s**oð-geleafan. Þu scealt **s**unu agan,
> **b**earn be **b**ryde þinre, þone sculon **b**urh-sittende
> **e**alle **I**saac hatan. Ne þearf þe þæs **e**aforan sceomigan,
> ac ic þam **m**ago-rince **m**ine sylle 2330
> **g**od-cunde **g**ife **g**astes mihtum,
> **f**reond-sped **f**remum. He on**f**on sceal
> **bl**isse minre and **bl**etsunge,
> **l**ufan and **l**isse.
>
> I will be true to you if you observe that token of true-belief. You shall have a son, a child by your bride, whom city-dwellers shall all call Isaac. You have no need to be ashamed of that boy; rather, I give my God-born gift of spirit's mights to that son-man, friend-prosperity with advantages. He shall receive my joy and blessing, love and favour.

It appears to be the promise of a son that causes God's verses to swell into hypermetrics here. Like the previous two speeches, the presence of a condition (*gif ge*), the verb *sculan*, and another *ne þurfan* phrase mark this covenantal passage, giving a clear sense of what God has ordained through his word and the conditions both parties must stand by.

Now, Isaac is called the son of the promise by St Paul, who compares Christians to him because they are all children of the promise: just as God's promises were carried out through Isaac, not Ishmael, Christ is the son through whom all can receive sonship.[85] Isaac was also considered a type of Christ by early exegetes, such as Ambrose in his *De Abraham* or *De Isaac vel anima*, on account of his promised birth and near-sacrificing.[86] When God

[84] Compare Anlezark, *Water and Fire*, pp. 185–89.
[85] Galatians 4. 21–31.
[86] Both works were used by Bede in *In Genesim* and are attested in manuscripts of late Anglo-Saxon provenance (see Lapidge, *Anglo-Saxon Library*, pp. 276–77). See also McKill, 'Offering of Isaac', pp. 4–6.

answers Abraham's dejected question, the *Genesis A*-poet again expands on a brief scriptural account ('so shall thy seed be', Genesis 15. 4), adding seven additional verses without scriptural warrant about the son who will be born (2197b–2200b), and Doane concludes that this expansion is intended to remind us of Christ (2195–2200; overlap with Genesis 15. 4 underlined):[87]

> Swilc bið mæg-burge menigo þinre 2195
> folc-bearnum frome. Ne læt þu þin ferhð wesan
> sorgum asæled. Gien þe sunu weorðeð,
> bearn of bryde þurh gebyrd cumen,
> se ðe æfter bið yrfes hyrde,
> gode mære. Ne geomra þu! 2200
>
> Such will be the multitude of your family, bold among nation-children. Do not let your heart be fettered by griefs. Still a son will come to you, a child from a bride come through birth, he who will afterwards be the keeper of inheritance, renowned in good. Do not sorrow.

While this passage is not explicitly linked to Christ, it is, speaking impressionistically, reminiscent of advent songs, for example, and it is probably not a coincidence that God speaks hypermetrically in two speeches which announce a covenant to Abraham and foretell the birth of a son. The second hypermetric passage is even more messianic in tone than the previous: the child of whom Abraham has 'no need to be ashamed' (2329b) receives the 'God-born gift … with spirit's strengths' (2331) and God's 'joy and blessing, love and favour' (2333a–34a). The son's gifts seem particularly evocative of Christ, in whom God declares his pleasure after the Holy Spirit descends on him like a dove, and the sixth and seventh hypermetric sets emphasize both the 'legal' aspects of God's word (insofar as it is contractual) and their allegorical significance.[88]

[87] See also Doane, *Genesis A*, p. 373 (n. to 2196b–2200). Doane suggests that the traditional etymology of Isaac's name ('laughter' or 'joy') is alluded to in God's repeated admonitions not to sorrow.
[88] Matthew 3. 17.

8. The Weighing of Sodom

The eighth hypermetrical set comes in the episode directly after God's promise of Isaac. Having left the *hleoðor-stede* (literally 'sound-place', but *hleoðor* often has the sense of 'prophecy', the prophecy referring of course to the promise of Isaac),[89] Abraham comes to Sodom with God and two angels (2405–18; standard mark-up):

Ge**s**awon ofer **s**ince **s**alo hlifian, 2405
reced ofer **r**eadum golde. Ongan þa **r**odera waldend,
ar-fæst wið **A**braham sprecan, sægde him **u**nlytel spell:
'Ic on þisse **b**yrig **b**earhtm gehyre,
synnigra cyrm **s**wiðe hludne,
ealo-galra gylp, **y**fele spræce 2410
werod under **w**eallum habban; forþon **w**ær-logona sint,
folces **f**irena hefige. Ic wille **f**andigan nu,
mago Ebrea, hwæt þa **m**en don,
gif hie swa **s**wiðe **s**ynna fremmað
þeawum and ge**þ**ancum, swa hie on **þ**weorh sprecað 2415
facen and inwit; þæt sceal **f**yr wrecan,
swefyl and **s**weart lig **s**are and grimme,
hat and **h**æste **h**æðnum folce.'

They saw over the treasure a hall towering, a building over the red gold. The Ruler of heavens, grace-fast, then began to speak with Abraham, said to him un-little tidings:
'I hear a noise in this city, sound of the sinful, exceedingly loud, boast of the ale-drunk, a troop under the walls have wicked speech; wherefore the sins of the peace-breakers, the people may be heavy. I will test now, son of the Hebrews, what the men do, whether they work sins so greatly in their customs and thoughts as they speak perversely deceit and malice. Fire shall avenge that, brimstone and dark fire, sore and grim, hot and violent against the heathen folk.'

This speech, which has both a hypermetric inquit and hypermetrics in its core, is a striking example of the words–deeds theme: with a fourfold variation of sound- and speech-words (*bearhtm*, *cyrm*, *gylp*, *spræce*; and *hludne* does not vary the others, but still describes noise) God catalogues Sodom's grievances with building emphasis before announcing that he will investigate whether the wicked words of the Sodomites are fulfilled in their deeds. If they are, in four verses of variation (2417a varying 2416b, 2418a varying 2417b) featuring three verses

[89] Compare *DOE*, 'hleoþrian' and 'hleoþor-cwide'; Chapter Four, pp. 220 and 225.

of lexical pairs (*swefyl and sweart lig sare and grimme*, / *hat and hæste*), he promises destruction will avenge their sins in a menacing enumeration of coming doom.

This speech is reminiscent of God's prior judgments: in the inquit, the hall of Sodom is described as *reced ofer readum golde*, and this great hall rising out of worldly treasures is probably meant to remind the audience of the hypermetric *rece ond reade lege* (44a) of the 'punishment-house' of hell. This resonance of God's judgment on ungrateful rebels in the hypermetric inquit prepares the audience for another weighty judgment, and the poet calls this speech *unlytel spell*. Rather than by lexical repetitions, this speech is divided into two by other poetic features, namely hypermetrics followed by elaborate variation, and the *unlytel spell* is concluded with one ominous doom of what shall be (*sceal*) if the Sodomites' words are true. Paradoxically, while the Sodomites' words are, in fact, aligned with their deeds, their characterization as braggarts is clearly meant to recall the demons of earlier lines, whose boasts were put to shame, and we are reminded that it is God's words, rather than our own, that must be stood by.[90] The Sodomites' pride is mentioned alongside their wealth and stinginess in Ezekiel 16. 49–50 ('pride, fulness of bread, and abundance … they did not put forth their hand to the needy … and they were lifted up [*elevatae*, that is, 'haughty']'), and the poet clearly designed this episode to highlight their pride in terms of the words–deeds theme.

Regarding the creation of Hell (36b–46b), we are reminded of Christ's words in Matthew 25. 41, that hell-fire 'was prepared for the devil and his angels', but given the parallel diction between verse 44a and the description of Sodom at 2406a, more relevant are the words of Jude verses 6–7:

> And the angels who kept not their principality, but forsook their own habitation, he hath reserved under darkness in everlasting chains, unto the judgment of the great day. As Sodom and Gomorrah, and the neighbouring cities, in like manner, having

[90] Compare Chapter Four, pp. 192 and 201–227.

given themselves to fornication, and going after other flesh, were made an example, suffering the punishment of eternal fire.

Jude uses demons and the citizens of these doomed cities as parallel examples, evoking Doomsday and hell-fire, and the *Genesis A*-poet seems aware of this connection, associating the transitory riches of Sodom with coming flames.[91] Bede, for example, suggests that God's judgment of Sodom foreshadows the final destructions of Judgment Day and hell.[92] It is of course Christ who will judge on the final day (as *Christ III* so vividly demonstrates in hypermetrics at 1381–85 and 1512b–14b, the beginning and end of his speech to the damned), but there is little in the verbal fabric of these judgment-episodes to evoke Christ explicitly. Rather, the emphasis must have been on the coming judgment as an event.

9. The Weighing of Abraham

The final sets of hypermetrics also form a diptych as a natural contrast with the judgment of Sodom: rather than highlighting Sodom's disloyalty, these two highlight Abraham's loyalty. The diptych occurs when the disembodied voice of God speaks to Abraham (*spræc him stefne to*, 2849b—seemingly in a dream, according to 2863a–64a): 'the king began to try, to eagerly test of what sort the noble's courage might be' (*ongan / cyning costigan*, *cunnode georne / hwilc þæs æðelinges ellen wære*, 2846b–48b). This is the final instance of the words–deeds theme as Abraham's faith will be put to the test (2850–72; standard mark-up):

'Gewit þu **o**festlice, **A**braham, feran, 2850
lastas lecgan and þe **l**æde mid
þin **a**gen bearn. Þu scealt **I**saac me
on**s**ecgan, **s**unu ðinne, **s**ylf to tibre.
Siððan þu ge**st**igest **st**eape dune,
hrincg þæs **h**ean landes, þe ic þe **h**eonon getæce, 2855
up þinum **a**gnum fotum, þær þu scealt **a**d gegærwan,

[91] Compare *Beowulf*'s Heorot, which, no sooner than built, awaits flames (81b–85b), and the elegiac recurrence of the destruction of earthly buildings (Hume, 'Concept of the Hall', pp. 66–69).
[92] Kendall, *Bede: On Genesis*, pp. 226 (Genesis 10. 29–30) and 301–02 (Genesis 19. 17).

bæl-fyr **b**earne þinum, and **b**lotan sylf
sunu mid **s**weordes ecg*e*, and þonne **s**weartan lig*e*
leofes **l**i*c* forbærn*an* and me **l**a*c* bebeod*an*.'

Ne for**s**æt he þy **s**iðe, ac **s**ona ongann
fysan to **f**ore. Him wæs **f**rea[93] engla,
word ondrysne and his **w**aldend leof.
Þa se **e**adga **A**braham sine
niht-reste ofgeaf. Nalles **n**ergendes
hæse wið**h**ogode, ac hine se **h**alga wer
gyrde **g**rægan sweorde, cyðde þæt him **g**asta weardes
egesa on breostum wunode. Ongan þa his **e**solas bætan
gamol-ferhð **g**oldes brytta, heht hine **g**eonge twegen
men **m**id siðian. **M**æg wæs his agen þridda
and he **f**eorða sylf. Þa he **f**us gewat
from his **a**genum hofe **I**saac lædan,
bearn unweaxen, swa him be**b**ead meotod.

'Get going hastily, Abraham, making tracks and lead your own child along with you. You shall offer Isaac to me, your own son as a sacrifice, after you climb the steep hill, the round of high land, which I will point out to you from here, up with your own feet. There you shall ready a pyre, a pyre-flame for your son, and you yourself [shall] sacrifice your son with the sword's edge, and then with black fire burn his life's body and offer me a sacrifice'.

He did not delay in the journey, but immediately began to hurry on. The Lord of angels, the word was fearful to him and his Ruler dear. Then the blessed Abraham gave up his night rest. Not at all did he despise the command of the Saviour; rather, the holy man readied himself with grey sword, made known that the fear of the Keeper of spirits dwelled in his heart. He began then to bridle his asses, the old-hearted dealer of gold, commanded two young men to journey with them. His own kinsman was third, and he himself fourth. Then he eagerly departed from his own court leading Isaac, his ungrown son, as the Measurer commanded.

Again, hypermetrics appear in God's speech, but here they also occur in Abraham's response to God's speech just as one isolated line did at 2174. In God's speech there is another double use of *sculan*, this time as commands for what Abraham must do to sacrifice his son, and the final two lines are connected to the previous by continued alliteration, and their cadences are linked densely by assonance (***sweordes ecge***, ***swearta**n **lige*** [Sx|Sx]; ***lic forbærnan***, ***lac bebeodan*** [S|xSx]), emphasizing the horror of the sacrifice in a formidable poetic display.

[93] ASPR emend *frean*, but if the manuscript reading is retained there is a clear equation of God with his word.

Strikingly, although this set twice uses *sculan* it does not declare something God performs by his words; rather, these are direct commands.

Given the relatively consistent context of highlighting God's judgments or covenants in hypermetrics, I suggest that the power of God's word still underlies Abraham's actions in this final set. These lines are clearly permeated by a sense of God's (impending) judgment as were the previous, but moreover this set demonstrates the power of God's word as it works within Abraham. The poet makes a point to state explicitly that the word of the Lord was fearful to Abraham (2862a) and his Lord dear to him. Moreover the poet specifies that Abraham did not ignore God's command (2864b–65a), but 'made known' that the fear of the Lord 'dwelled in his breast' (2866b–67a) by doing as God commanded (2872b; see also 2874b, *swa him frea tæhte*). That is, it seems that the poet demonstrates the power of God's word here not merely in its fearsomeness—that has already amply been demonstrated—but for its power to move those in whom it dwells. Abraham's obedience is further emphasized by a repeated rhetorical structure of negative (*ne* and *nalles*; saying what Abraham did not do) + *ac* (saying what Abraham did do) at 2860a–61a and 2864b–66a. Perhaps, then, the isolated hypermetric line at 2174 (Abraham's inquit) is intended to suggest that Abraham has received the Lord's word and is moved by it, however despairingly.

The word ennobles Abraham, who even issues a command of his own (*heht*, 2868b), possibly drawing on the authority of God's command to him,[94] and the hypermetric description of his obedience depicts him as a warrior off to battle, again highlighting the words–deeds theme. Here Abraham (trusting God to be true to his word even if Isaac dies, as the epistle to the Hebrews tells us) and God fulfil their covenants to one another, allowing Abraham's blessing Isaac to live on, and with great rewards.[95] As I have already suggested,

[94] Compare Chapter Four, pp. 199–201.
[95] Hebrews 11. 17–19.

this hypermetrical episode also foreshadows the sacrifice of God's own son. Abraham's steadfastness to God's word reminds us of the steadfastness of God the Father; and Isaac's obedience to Abraham's command, even unto death, reminds us of Christ. For the audience, these final hypermetrical sets not only literally emphasize the importance of fearing the Word of the Lord and of holding to it in their covenant, they also betoken the ultimate fulfilment of God's words in Christ.[96] By analogy with these hypermetrics, an oft-noted verse—*wudu bær sunu*, 2887b—is all the more convincing as a Messianic echo: this verse, which means 'the son bore the wood', but also naturally reads 'the wood bore the son', 'seems almost too good not to be true' as a Christological parallel according to Wright, and perhaps this parallel is strengthened by the poet's use of hypermetrics.[97]

Hypermetrics and Law

It will be helpful here to reiterate the function of hypermetrics in *Genesis A* thus far: hypermetrics seem to enforce the poem's general concern with words and deeds, demonstrating the power and steadfastness of God's Word and the importance of abiding by it in our own words and deeds. In highlighting the pre-eminence of God's words, the poet also seems to have chosen episodes which are evocative of the coming judgment and of the promised Son, Christ, thereby allowing him to deliver a relatively literal translation of Genesis while still demonstrating the relevance of the text for a contemporary Christian audience, both in its moral value and for its Christological resonances.[98] Most instances of hypermetrics describe God delivering a judgment, appointing a new order in the world, or

[96] Compare the poet's repeated description of Abraham, discussed by Mize, *Traditional Subjectivities*, pp. 55–56, as *are*, *lare*, and *wære gemyndig* ('mindful of honour', 'teaching', and '[his] pledge').
[97] '*Genesis A ad litteram*', p. 153.
[98] On the priority of translating the scriptural narrative over other artistic concerns in *Genesis A*, see Doane, *Genesis A*, p. 87, and Wright, '*Genesis A ad litteram*', pp. 156–71, who suggests the work might fit into the 'world chronicle' genre.

creating a new covenantal relationship, and whether these speeches change the world for all people or for specific individuals, they all seem intended to teach the audience a clear lesson. All of these lines feature the verbs *hatan*, *sculan*, or *þurfan*, and senses of cosmic order and legal deliberation are usually also a feature of the speeches. Given that bipartite logical structures or repetitions feature in most of these lines, it seems likely that, as in *Guthlac A*, there is an evidentiary and even juridical function to these verses, which demonstrate the evidence for the judgments or truths expressed in hypermetrics.

The legal or contractual nature of hypermetrics observed in *Guthlac A* and *Genesis A* may have an important analogue in Anglo-Saxon law. T. M. Charles-Edwards argues that whereas *æ* and *riht* refer to law as a complete idea, *dom* can encompass two Latin words: *decreta*, 'edict of lawgiver', and *iudicium*, 'judgment of court'.[99] He argues that the two meanings come together in one word because, to put things briefly, Anglo-Saxon laws were deliberated upon by a king with his wisemen before publication and passed with the support of both, and therefore any edict issued was also acknowledged as a judgment passed.[100] Yet Tom Lambert, citing Lisi Oliver's persuasive analysis of King Æthelberht of Kent's lawcode, argues that the earliest Anglo-Saxon codification of law (that is, Æthelberht's) actually repurposed what was originally oral law in the hands of the old and wise in order to set himself in league with European kings, who had also issued law codes—that is to say, in Lambert's view, law was not necessarily always in the purview of Anglo-Saxon kings, but of the community.[101] Whether or not this is true, God the King is the ultimate authority in *Genesis A*, and it is striking that his hypermetrics are usually quite near what we might then call *domas*, in that they are in essence new laws set by his deliberation.

[99] 'Law in the Western Kingdoms', pp. 265–69.
[100] For an introduction to Anglo-Saxon Kingship, see Yorke, *Kings and Kingdoms*, pp. 9–19.
[101] Lambert, *Law and Order*, pp. 27–34.

The legal context is perfectly in keeping with the words–deeds theme and indeed with the first verse of the poem, which stresses justice (*riht*) in words and thoughts. The *Genesis A*-poet also displays certain legal sensibilities in calling Noah's flood a *þing* ('matter, case', 1318a, but perhaps also 'judgment' or 'settlement', just as God *þingade* against Cain, cursing him, in the poem's only other use of the root) and in his use of the verbs *maðelian* and *mæðlan* (related to the Frankish Latin *mallare*, 'to plead a court case'), which essentially means 'to speak at court or assembly'.[102] These latter verbs are used only when Abraham lays out a case and petitions Sarah to call herself his sister (1820a and 1824–43), when Sarah lays out a case and petitions Abraham for Hagar's surrogacy (2220b and 2221–33),[103] and, perhaps less juridically, when Abraham, having resolved to follow through with God's command to sacrifice Isaac, tells his son that God will provide the sacrificial victim (2893a and 2895–96).

Liuzza argues that an individual's *dom* (in the sense of 'glory', or, perhaps better, 'esteem') was derived from commemoration of his or her words and deeds, which would then be reflected on and judged—positively, if they were to receive *dom*—by the community.[104] If audiences of Old English poetry were already listening to verse with an ear for judgment, God's *domas*, especially those in hypermetrics, would be a moral key to the audience, clearly distinguishing God himself and those who hold to his word as good. In a Christian context, God's hypermetric judgments of the wicked and covenants with the righteous would probably remind the audience of the coming judgment and of Christ as the new covenant of God's peace. Therefore, I argue that *Genesis A*'s hypermetrics are especially moral in nature, giving the audience ethical instruction, but are also allegorical insofar as these hypermetrical events bespeak the greater Christian narrative. By this strategy, the poet could deliver a relatively

[102] Charles-Edwards, 'Law in the Western Kingdoms', pp. 266–69.
[103] Compare Mize, *Traditional Subjectivities*, pp. 67–72.
[104] See 'Monuments, Memory, History'. Compare Thornbury, *Becoming a Poet*, pp. 115–19.

literal translation to impart the Genesis-narrative to his audience while alluding to the place of this story within the larger narrative of salvation history.

Conclusions

Perhaps especially in *Genesis A*, where God is king, issuing hypermetric commands—indeed creating the world—and frequently speaking in a gnomic fashion, a real sense of cosmic order is present. Paul Cavill observes that, in narrative poems, gnomes often take structural function, beginning or ending fitts or episodes—something we have also seen hypermetrics do—and so they are clearly important to the ethical fabric of Old English poetry.[105] I would like to suggest that the hypermetrics in *Genesis A* represent a similar feature in their emphatic eloquence. Though unlike gnomic speech in their situational specificity, these hypermetric speeches are not simply specific statements of historical facts: rather, like the hypermetric dramatizations of *The Dream of the Rood* or the revelations of spiritual truths in *Guthlac A*, they look beyond the surface of particulars to give a deeper, more general significance to events, whether that significance is highlighting God's judgment or his covenant of salvation. In the hypermetric episodes, these specific stories from the distant past are offered up as moral exempla and figures through which to discern deeper truths.

These features of *Genesis A*, which was once attributed to Cædmon, bring to mind one of Bede's statements about Cædmon's verse: besides giving the narrative of sacred history, Bede claims Cædmon said much about 'divine mercies and judgments' (*beneficiis et iudiciis diuinis*).[106] By comparison with the legal flavour of hypermetrics in *Genesis A* (and, at times, in *Guthlac A*) and the similarities between divine speech in the poem and the

[105] *Maxims in Old English*, pp. 22–24.
[106] Colgrave and Mynors, *Ecclesiastical History*, pp. 418–19.

Maxims, it is perhaps fitting to consider maxims as divine mercies and judgments. These pronouncements of the order of the world, the laws by which humans and nature abide, include many great mercies and severe judgments. Whatever the case, the poet of *Maxims I* has left us fitting conclusory words which bring together several key points of this dissertation, linking divine judgments to wisdom poetry and hypermetrics to *ljóðaháttr* (164):[107]

> Fela sceop meotud þæs þe fyrn gewearð
> het siþþan swa forð wesan.
>
> The Measurer ordained many things which happened of old, commanded afterwards that they be so into the future.

[107] I follow the lineation suggested by Bliss, 'Single Half-Lines', p. 444.

Beyond Words

Throughout this dissertation, we have seen that poets do not represent their characters with completely unique and consistent styles—indeed, such would ask too much of an artist in so traditional and demanding a poetic medium—but poets do, in fact, make a concerted effort to associate characters with certain discursive styles, adapting poetics to reflect a sense of character. These styles are not what we might call 'specific' to their characters; rather, they are traditional styles associated with archetypal modes, genres, and characters, and these traditional associations, in turn, help us to understand characterization in these poems.

We have seen how the poet of *Solomon and Saturn I* sets gnomic statements, cataloguing repetitions, and assonance in the mouth of Solomon, giving his discourse a sense of capacious wisdom matched with honeyed eloquence, whereas the way-weary Saturn uses variations as 'elegiac' expressions of his dejected internal state. We have seen the *Phoenix*-poet deftly navigate the poles of sound and sense, setting descriptions of sonorous song in richly assonant verse, complete with parades of rhetorical variation, anaphora, and homoioteleuton, yet abstaining from such opulent patterning when 'quoting' Job's inspired prophecy and the host of heaven's praise, which, like *Cædmon's Hymn*, makes conspicuous usage of variation and epithets. In *Guthlac A*, we have seen heavenly helpers associated with hypermetrics, devils using fierce-sounding, heavily rhythmic prosody, and the narrator using rhyme and repetition to drive home his didactic points. And in *Genesis A*, the most obvious example of sustained characterization in this dissertation, we have seen that the divine voice is regularly represented not only with heightened poetic patterning, but with gnomic syntax and hypermetrics, delivering a sense of not only the kingly but the cosmic power of God's speech. Even in Chapter Three, where we did not observe any concerted efforts at

characterization in direct discourse, we saw the poet of *V1* using emphatic patterns to drive home the fate of a damned soul, the *V2*-poet parroting verses from *V1* to create a companion piece—reminding the audience of the benefits of excelling where the damned soul failed—and the *D1*-poet using hypermetrics to deliver the wondrous and shocking revelations of the *Dream* in an especially rich and emotive style.

A number of intertextual trends have also emerged from this study. For example, poets continually allude to the importance of authority in poetic composition, as the source of one's words affects their veracity, poetic quality, and significance. No doubt linked to this concern with authority is the equally pervasive notion of the heart as an enclosure for words; however 'poetic' this conception might have been, it seems likely that it had some currency in a society where songs seem to have been memorized customarily. The close thematic relationships between many texts, such as *Genesis A* and *Guthlac A*, *Genesis A* and *Beowulf*, and *The Dream of the Rood*, *Elene*, and *Daniel*, for example, suggest that these songs were, in fact, well-received, remembered, and retold, their wise words remixed and set to new subjects; and Orchard's Consolidated Library of Anglo-Saxon Poetry (CLASP) project is already illuminating a number of striking new correspondences between poems and is sure to transform our understanding of the communities within which these texts circulated.[1]

One recurrent point in this dissertation has been the importance of liturgical elements in Anglo-Saxon poems, from the Pater Noster of *Solomon and Saturn I* and the *Sanctus* and *Alleluia* of *The Phoenix*, to the Cross and Passion of *The Dream of the Rood*, the *Benedicite* canticle of *Daniel* and *Azarias*, and the Preface to the Canon of the Mass (and perhaps also Paschal liturgical readings) in *Genesis A*. While there is little clarity regarding the specific practice of these ancient forms of worship in Anglo-Saxon England, it is certain that further breakthroughs in our understanding of the liturgies of this time will enhance our knowledge

[1] See Orchard, 'Alcuin and Cynewulf', for a few examples.

of these poems; and perhaps the reverse is also true, that a deeper knowledge of these poems will inform us on the practices of Christian worship in this time. While the strikingly material Pater Noster of *Solomon and Saturn I* has disturbed some modern readers, it may reflect a genuine belief in the apotropaic and ennobling spiritual power of liturgical verbal forms *per se*, and the convergence of Solomon's wisdom and poetic skill perhaps suggest this may be true. *The Dream of the Rood*-poet's use of hypermetrics to transmute a narrative about the Cross into a veritable experience of the Crucifixion, a sort of Passion-drama, perhaps attests to the longstanding ceremonial significance of this verse-form, whose Old Norse cousin is used in supernatural dialogues of supposed ritual significance. While *Guthlac A* and *Genesis A* use hypermetrics in a more didactic or legal manner than the *Dream*'s drama, it is nevertheless telling that hypermetrics are used for representing authoritative, cosmic, and indeed supernatural utterances in those poems, and doubtless further study of this form will richly reward our understanding of Old English verse and spirituality.

It has never been doubted that Old English verse is highly traditional in its form and ethos, and likewise it should never be doubted that Old English poets were doing truly unique things with their received traditions. I hope to have demonstrated several of the ways poets adapted conventional forms and characterizations in an attempt to bring the Christian worldview to life, giving voice to the heights and depths of the Christian cosmos and giving these songs to their audiences to carry with them. This logocentric cosmos found a natural home in Old English poetry, where there seems to have been a pervasive sense that words—those treasures of thought and wisdom to be hoarded—ennoble those who bear them, providing some stability in a way worldly riches cannot, and not only they, but we, are the richer for the words they have left us.

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