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## THE BOOK OF ISAIAH AS AN INFLUENCE ON ANDREAS

The Old English poem Andreas, found in a unique copy in the Vercelli Book, tells of the passion of St Andrew in the land of the Mermedonians, a cannibalistic, heathen people whom he ultimately converts to Christianity. Andreas is generally agreed to be based on a close Latin translation of the Greek Praxeis Andreou, the Apocryphon describing Andrew's mission to Mermedonia, although the recension apparently used is now lost.<sup>1</sup> The poet of Andreas borrows many of his images and phrases from sources other than the apocryphal narrative. Andreas's use of Beowulf as a source for imagery and entire lines was first noted by A. Fritzche in Anglia in 1879, and continues to be debated, but less effort has been devoted to identifying borrowings from other sources.<sup>2</sup> Although the typological richness of Andreas has been much discussed, the search for more direct verbal parallels with scripture has been neglected.<sup>3</sup> Given the poet's extensive knowledge of scripture, attested by the

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<sup>1</sup> Marie M. Walsh, 'St Andrew in Anglo-Saxon England: The Evolution of an Apocryphal Hero', Annuaire Mediaevale, 20 (1981), 110; Robert Boenig, The Acts of Andrew in the Country of the Cannibals: Translations from the Greek, Latin, and Old English (New York, 1991), 61. The idea of a Latin intermediary was first suggested by Richard Lipsius in 1883, who stated that 'Wie aber "Elene" eine Bearbeitung der lateinischen Acta Cyriaci, so ist auch "Andreas" wol aus einer lateinischen Bearbeitung geschöpft und nicht wie Grimm urtheilt aus griechischen Acten unmittelbar'. Richard Adelbert Lipsius, Die apokryphen Apostelgeschichten und Apostellegenden (Braunschweig, 1883-1887), I, 547.

<sup>2</sup> A. Fritzche, 'Das angelsächsische Gedicht Andreas und Cynewulf', Anglia, 2 (1879). Further work includes Leonard J. Peters, 'The Relationship of the Old English Andreas to Beowulf', PMLA, 66 (1951); Hans Schabram, 'Andreas und Beowulf. Parallelstellen als Zeugnis für literarische Abhängigkeit', Nachrichten der Giessener Hochschulgesellschaft, 24 (1965); Andy Orchard, A Critical Companion to Beowulf (Woodbridge, 2003), 163-6.

<sup>3</sup> See for example: Thomas D. Hill, 'Figural Narrative in Andreas: The Conversion of the Mermedonians', Neuphilologische Mitteilungen, 70 (1969); Constance B. Hieatt, 'The Harrowing of Mermedonia: Typological Patterns in the Old English Andreas', Neuphilologische Mitteilungen, 77 (1976); Marie M. Walsh, 'The Baptismal Flood in the Old English Andreas: Liturgical and

preponderance of scriptural paraphrase and typological detail in Andreas, and the evidence of direct borrowing from other sources provided by the Beowulf quotations, it seems probable that poem also contains more instances of Biblical borrowing.

Andreas is obviously indebted to the Praxeis, but makes a number of departures from the Greek narrative, not all of which are shared with the other surviving treatment of that Apocryphon from Anglo-Saxon England, an Old English homily. The homily, which is thought to depend upon the same Latin recension as Andreas, survives in two manuscripts: complete in the early eleventh-century Cambridge, Corpus Christi College 198; and a fragment consisting of about a third of the text in the slightly earlier Blickling MS. The Blickling text appears to have been a more complete version, whereas CCC198 presents the homily in a slightly abridged form.<sup>4</sup> There is a Latin fragment (the Bonnet fragment) surviving in an eleventh-century palimpsest, the Codex Vallicellensis, which appears to belong to the same recension as the Old English works' lost Latin exemplar. Because the Bonnet text is so fragmentary, and the only complete Latin version (the twelfth-century Casanatensis) is from a different recension, the Greek text, in conjunction with the Old English homily, remains the best comparison to establish discrepancies between Andreas and its source.<sup>5</sup> The Old English Homily is closer to the Greek text, suggesting that many of Andreas's idiosyncrasies do not derive from the Old English works' common Latin source, but result from alterations made by the poet. It is in some of these idiosyncrasies that scriptural borrowings may be identified.

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Typological Depths', Traditio, 33 (1977); James W. Earl, 'The Typological Structure of Andreas', in Old English Literature in Context, ed. John D. Niles (Cambridge, 1980); Frederick M. Biggs, 'The Passion of Andreas: Andreas 1398-1491', SP, 84 (1988).

<sup>4</sup> 'The Acts of Matthew and Andrew in the City of the Cannibals', in Bright's Old English Grammar and Reader, ed. Frederic G. Cassidy and Richard N. Ringler (New York, 1971), 204-5.

<sup>5</sup> 'The Acts of Matthew and Andrew in the City of the Cannibals', in Bright's Old English Grammar and Reader, ed. Frederic G. Cassidy and Richard N. Ringler (New York, 1971), 204; Robert Boenig, The Acts of Andrew in the Country of the Cannibals: Translations from the Greek, Latin, and Old English, (New York, 1991), 61.

In his 1906 edition of Andreas George Philip Krapp noted an image taken from the description of the seraphim in Isaiah 6:1-3.<sup>6</sup> The correspondence occurs in Christ's account of a stone carving that he has animated and sent forth to preach. The Greek Apocryphon features a stone sphinx which Jesus addresses, but Andreas, in common with the Latin text of the Codex Casanatensis, has stone angels, and uniquely in Andreas, Jesus offers a brief description of two of the orders of angels and their duties (717-24a):

‘Ðis is anlicnes      engelcynna  
þæs breместan      <þe>mid þam burgwarum  
in þære ceastre is;      Cheruphim et Seraphim  
þa on swegeldreamum      syndon nemned.  
Fore onsyne      ecan dryhtnes  
standað stiðferðe,      stefnum herigað,  
halgum hleoðrum,      heofoncyniges þrym,  
meotudes mundbyrd.’<sup>7</sup>

[‘This is a likeness of angel-kin, the most illustrious of the inhabitants who are in the city. Cherubim and seraphim, as they are named in heavenly joy. Before the sight of the eternal lord they stand strong-minded, praise with voices, with holy noise, the heaven-king's glory, the Lord's patronage.’]

The borrowing is not shared with the Old English homily, strongly suggesting that the echo of Isaiah in Andreas is an innovation of the Anglo-Saxon poet, rather than an inheritance from his source.

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<sup>6</sup> George Philip Krapp, ed., Andreas and the Fates of the Apostles: Two Anglo-Saxon Narrative Poems (Boston, 1906), 116.

<sup>7</sup> All quotations from Andreas are taken from Kenneth R. Brooks, ed., Andreas and the Fates of the Apostles (Oxford, 1961). Translations are my own.

In this section of Andreas the correspondence to Isaiah is more extensive than the passage Krapp cites and suggests how the borrowing arose. The seraph of Isaiah brings a hot coal to cleanse the prophet's lips to allow him to preach to the people, but they will neither heed him nor believe the vision (Isaiah 6:5-10). The stone seraph of Andreas takes a similar role, berating the priests of the temple who refuse to recognize the miracle. The poet of Andreas has perceived a likeness between an incident in his source and the narrative of Isaiah, and taken a biblical image to ornament his work.

The importance of Isaiah as an influence on Andreas is suggested by another direct echo of Isaiah at the moment when a devastating flood is sent by God to punish the Mermedonians and to persuade them to convert to Christianity. As the waters rise several Mermedonians attempt to shield themselves by hiding in holes in rocks and earth (1536-40a):

Weox wæteres þrym.      Weras cwanedon,  
ealde æsberend;      wæs him ut myne,  
feon fealone stream,      woldon feore beorgan,  
to duns-cræfum      drohtað secan,  
eorðan ond wist.

[The water's power grew. Men lamented, old spear-bearers. It was to them in mind to flee the fallow stream, they would save their lives; they sought to dwell in mountain caves, an earth habitation.]

The details of the Mermedonians' attempted escape appear to be another addition by the Andreas poet, as they are found in neither the Old English homily nor the Greek

text.<sup>8</sup> The image of impious heathens hiding from the wrath of God in caves is a direct echo of Isaiah 2, where the motif of idol worshipers hiding in rocks and caves is repeated; for example the Vulgate text of Isaiah 2:19: ‘et introibunt in speluncas petrarum et in voragine terrae a facie formidinis Domini et a gloria maiestatis eius cum surrexerit percutere terram’ [‘And they shall go into the holes of rocks, and into the caves of the earth from the face of the fear of the Lord, and from the glory of his majesty, when he shall rise up to strike the earth’].<sup>9</sup> This parallel has not been noted by previous editors. Neither of the earliest editors of Andreas, Jacob Grimm in 1840 and William Baskerville in 1885, make any remarks on these lines.<sup>10</sup> George Krapp, who edited the text in 1906 and again in 1932, list parallels in his 1906 edition between these lines and other descriptions of flight in Old English poetry, including one from Beowulf (so often identified as the source for Andreas’s imagery), but not to examples from beyond the corpus.<sup>11</sup> A more recent editor of the poem, Kenneth Brooks, sees a correspondence to Beowulf, as Krapp does, but to a different passage.<sup>12</sup> The Beowulf lines that Krapp and Brooks select describe the desire for flight, but make no specific reference to earth or caves so they are not the source for this image in Andreas. The insertion of an image from Isaiah characterises the Mermedonians’ flight as one of an unrighteous people from God’s power and creates typological parallels between the events of Andreas and those of Isaiah, which are

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<sup>8</sup> The homily simply states (l271-2): ‘and hie ealle woldon fleon of þære ceastre’ [‘and they all wished to flee from the city’], but makes no mention of them attempting to do so. All quotations from the homily are taken from ‘The Acts of Matthew and Andrew in the City of the Cannibals’, in Bright’s Old English Grammar and Reader, ed. Frederic G. Cassidy and Richard N. Ringler (New York, 1971), 203-19. Translations are my own.

<sup>9</sup> Other examples are at Isa. 2:10 and Isa. 2:21. All biblical quotations taken from R. Weber, ed. Biblia Sacra Iuxta Vulgatam Versionem (Stuttgart, 1994) Translations are from Swift Edgar, ed., The Vulgate Bible: Douay-Rheims Translation (London, 2010-13).

<sup>10</sup> William Baskerville, ed., Andreas: A Legend of St Andrew (Boston, 1885); Jacob Grimm, ed., Andreas und Elene, (Cassel, 1840).

<sup>11</sup> George Philip Krapp, ed., Andreas and the Fates of the Apostles: Two Anglo-Saxon Narrative Poems (Boston, 1906), 152; George Philip Krapp, ed., The Vercelli Book (New York, 1932).

<sup>12</sup> Kenneth R. Brooks, ed., Andreas and the Fates of the Apostles (Oxford, 1961), 115.

themselves a type of Christ's salvation of mankind. These direct verbal echoes of Isaiah reveal a pattern of influence that can be traced throughout Andreas, tying together the poem's typological allusions.

A second example of correspondence between Isaiah and Andreas is in the characterisation of Andrew as a figura Christi. The tradition of reading the narrative of Isaiah as a type of the New Testament may have led to the Andreas poet's use of the text to enhance the already extant typological parallels between Andrew's passion in Mermedonia and the Passion of Christ: Isaiah's narrative of sin and redemption is traditionally read as foreshadowing the New Testament, while similar events in Andreas recall it. The fourth of the Songs of the Suffering Servant, Isaiah 53, is traditionally understood as prophesying Christ, an interpretation found in Anglo-Saxon texts.<sup>13</sup> Isaiah 53:5 says: 'ipse autem vulneratus est propter iniquitates nostras adtrit'us est propter scelera nostra disciplina pacis nostrae super eum et livore eius sanati sumus' ['but he was wounded for our iniquities; he was bruised for our sins: the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and by his bruises we are healed'], an image of redemptive suffering linked to Christ's Passion. The emphasis on Andrew's suffering in Andreas likens him to the figura Christi of the Suffering Servant, suggesting a further connection with Isaiah. The likeness is particularly clear in God's speech to Andrew about the suffering that the apostle must undergo in Mermedonia: Andrew's fate is described, followed by an account of the suffering on the cross, as in the Greek text, but only in Andreas does God explicitly state that he has set an example for Andrew to imitate, which should be passed onto the Mermedonians (970b-6):

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<sup>13</sup> For example, Ælfric quotes Isaiah 53:7 as a reference to Christ in his second series homily 'De Natale Domini' (CHom II.i, 191-3). M. R. Godden, ed., Ælfric's Catholic Homilies: The Second Series (Oxford, 1979), 8.

‘wolde ic eow on ðon

þurh bliðne hige      bysne onstellan,

swa on ellþeode      ywed wyrðeð.

Manige syndon      in þysse mæran byrig,

þara þe ðu gehweorfest      to heofonleohte

þurh minne naman,      þeah hie morðres feala

in fyrndagum      gefremed habban.’

[‘I would, with a happy heart, set an example for you through that, as it will be shown in the foreign nation. There are many in this well-known city whom you will turn to the heavenly light through my name, though they have committed much murder in days of old.’]

The conclusion of God’s speech reminds Andrew and the reader of the redemptive power of suffering and the effect that Andrew’s torture will have in saving the Mermedonians. Andrew in Andreas is specifically told to act in imitatio Christi, enhancing his role as a figura Christi, like the Suffering Servant of Isaiah 53:5.

A third example is the similarities between Isaiah’s rich imagery and the representation of events in Andreas, such as the use of plants as a sign of God’s covenant. In Andreas groves of trees spring forth from the trail left by Andrew’s blood during his torture procession, appearing as a sign that God has not forsaken him (1446-54):

Ða on last beseah      leoflic cempa

æfter wordcwidum      wuldorcyninges;

geseh he geblowene      bearwas standan

blædum gehrodene, swa he ær his blod aget.

Ða worde cwæð wigendra hleo:

‘Sic ðe ðanc ond lof, þeoda walend,  
to widan feore wuldor on heofonum,  
ðæs ðu me on sare, sigedryhten min,  
ellþeodigne an ne forlæte.’

[Then the dear champion looked on the track, according to the words of the Glory-King. He saw blossoming groves standing, adorned with fruit, where his blood poured out. Then the protector of warriors spoke a word: ‘Thanks and praise be to you, ruler of peoples, glory in heaven forever, that you, my victory lord, did not forsake me, alien and alone, in torment.’]

The imagery of Isaiah 53:2, conventionally interpreted as referring to Christ, is similar to this passage of Andreas: ‘et ascendet sicut virgultum coram eo et sicut radix de terra sitienti’ [‘And he shall grow up as a tender plant before him, and as a root out of a thirsty ground’]. The vision of the restored creation in Isaiah 35:1-4, which is a reassurance that God has not forsaken the righteous, is also analogous to the appearance of the trees in Andreas:

laetabitur deserta et invia et exultabit solitudo et florebit quasi lilium  
germinans germinabit et exultabit laetabunda et laudans gloria Libani data est  
ei decor Carmeli et Saron ipsi videbunt gloriam Domini et decorem Dei nostri  
confortate manus dissolutas et genua debilia roborate dicite pusillanimis  
confortamini nolite timere ecce Deus vester ultionem adducet retributionis  
Deus ipse veniet et salvabit vos.



[The land that was desolate and impassable shall be glad, and the wilderness shall rejoice, and shall flourish like the lily. It shall bud forth and blossom, and shall rejoice with joy and praise: the glory of Libanus is given to it: the beauty of Carmel, and Saron, they shall see the glory of the Lord, and the beauty of our God. Strengthen ye the feeble hands, and confirm the weak knees. Say to the fainthearted: Take courage, and fear not: behold your God will bring the revenge of recompense: God himself will come and will save you.]

Like the groves of trees in Andreas, the flourishing vegetation in this passage reveals God's power and provides reassurance to his followers. However, the Greek text and the Old English homily (253-5) both describe the appearance of a single fruiting tree to Andrew as a token of God's power and support, and there is a correspondence of idea in this instance, rather than an exact verbal parallel.<sup>14</sup>

A further correspondence can be found in the focus on sin, covenant and the land in Andreas. Isaiah describes the importance of the covenant to prosperity: keeping covenant is rewarded with abundance, but betrayal results in the land becoming waste; these themes are echoed in the depiction of Mermedonia in Andreas. Unlike all the other versions of the narrative, Andreas describes Mermedonia as a barren land (21b-23a): 'Næs þær hlafes wist | werum on þam wonge, ne wæteres drync | to bruconne' ['There was not a loaf of food for the men in that plain, nor drink of water to partake of']. The Mermedonians' cannibalistic consumption of travellers is established as necessary for their survival. The essentialness of their anthropophagy is emphasized again when Andrew frees the prisoners, as the Mermedonians fear famine (1085b-90a):

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<sup>14</sup> Robert Boenig, The Acts of Andrew in the Country of the Cannibals: Translations from the Greek, Latin, and Old English (New York, 1991), 19.

þa wearð forht manig  
for þam færspelle folces ræswa,  
hean, hygegeomor, hungres on wenum,  
blates beodgastes; nyston beteran ræd,  
þonne hie þa belidenan him to lifnere  
deade gefeormedon.

[Then many of the people's leaders were fearful because of the news, abject,  
sad in mind, prepared for hunger, the pallid dinner guest. They knew no better  
course than that they feed on the departed, turn the dead to sustenance.]

That the Mermedonians' cannibalism is a necessity rather than a custom is a striking innovation, and the poet makes further alterations to his source material throughout the poem to emphasize this. The Andreas poet makes none of the references to the Mermedonians' plants, animals and provisions found in other versions of the narrative; their land is barren. The homily, in common with the Greek text, mentions the Mermedonians as having herds that are destroyed in the flood sent by God to cleanse the land (269-71):<sup>15</sup>

Mid þi he þus cwæþ, se eadiga Andreas, hraþe sio stænene onlicnes sendde  
mycel wæter þurh hiora muþ swa sealt, and hie æt manna lichaman. And hit  
acwealde heora bearn and hyra nytenu. And hie ealle woldon fleon of þære  
ceastre.

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<sup>15</sup> Robert Boenig, The Acts of Andrew in the Country of the Cannibals: Translations from the Greek, Latin, and Old English (New York, 1991), 20.

[When he had thus spoken, the blessed Andrew, immediately the stone likeness sent out a great amount of water through its mouth like brine, and it ate the men's bodies. And it killed their children and their cattle.]

In contrast, Andreas only mentions the men and children drowned (1530b-32a): 'Fæge swulton, | geonge on geofene guðræs fornam | þurh sealtne weg' ['Fated they died, the young seized by the violent attack of the ocean, by the salty way'], removing the reference to other sources of food. The Mermedonians of the Praxeis feed their prisoners on bread, but in Andreas 'hie hig ond gærs | for meteleaste' ['They had hay and grass for want of food'] (38b-9a).<sup>16</sup> The Andreas poet also omits the fig tree that feeds the departing Matthew in all the other versions, showing his great care on this point. In the Old English homily Andrew tells Matthew and the other freed prisoners about the food and shelter afforded by the tree (155-7): 'Se haliga Andreas him to cwæþ: 'Gangað on þas niþeran dælas þisse ceastre and ge þær gemetað mycel fichtreow: sittað under him and etað of his wæstmum oð þæt ic eow to cyme.' ' [The holy Andrew said to him: 'go to the lower parts of this city and you will find there a great fig tree: sit under it and eat of its fruit until I come to you.']. Andreas merely states that Matthew is 'on gehyld Godes' ['In God's protection'] (1044).

In Andreas the barren space of Mermedonia is inhabited by a people who, like the sinful people of Isaiah, have broken covenant with God. The Mermedonians are twice described as wærlogas 'covenant breakers' (71a, 108a), suggesting a connection between their sinful nature and the barrenness of their land.<sup>17</sup> Through the process of conversion Andrew must bring covenant to the land of Mermedonia by teaching its

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<sup>16</sup> Robert Boenig, The Acts of Andrew in the Country of the Cannibals: Translations from the Greek, Latin, and Old English (New York, 1991), 13.

<sup>17</sup> The word is also used of the priest in the temple who refuses to acknowledge Christ and thereby rejects God's covenant (613a) and of the Devil himself (1297a). In every instance it carries alliteration.

people and transforming them from wærlogan to Christians. The final image of Mermedonia as a wederburg ‘city of [good] weather’ (1697a) perhaps suggests that the conversion of the Mermedonians is also reflected in a transformation of their environment, as in Isaiah.<sup>18</sup>

The island setting of Mermedonia, which is unique to Andreas, provides a further connection to Isaiah. The Greek and extant Latin versions of the legend, as discussed by Robert Boenig, both begin by describing Mermedonia as a city, and make no mention of islands.<sup>19</sup> That the Latin recension which served as Andreas’s source also simply described Mermedonia as a city is suggested by the opening of the Old English homily (3-4): ‘Segþ þæt se eadiga Matheus gehleat to Marmadonia þære ceastre’ [‘It is said that the blessed Matthew was allotted to the city of Mermedonia’]. In contrast Andreas says (14-16a):

Pam halig god    hlyt geteode  
ut on þæt igland,    þær ænig þa git  
ellþeodigra    eðles ne mihte,  
blædes brucan.

[Holy God appointed that fate, out in that island where as yet any foreigners might not partake of prosperity of the native land.]

This remarkable description transforms Mermedonia into an island nation, an image repeated when Mermedonia is referred to as ‘þæt ealand’ (l. 29a) when the poet details its inhabitants’ cannibalistic practices.

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<sup>18</sup> Bosworth Toller defines wederburg as ‘town exposed to storms, a weather-beaten city’, but in other compounds weder has positive connotations, and the context requires a more positive depiction of Mermedonia. J. Bosworth and T. Northcote Toller, An Anglo-Saxon Dictionary (Oxford, 1898), 1182.

<sup>19</sup> Robert Boenig, The Acts of Andrew in the Country of the Cannibals: Translations from the Greek, Latin, and Old English (New York, 1991), 1, 27.

Andreas reconfigures the Apocryphal narrative into a text about bringing God's law to an island, an image recurrent in Isaiah.<sup>20</sup> In Isaiah 42:4 the prophet is sent to the island dwellers that are in need of him as 'legem eius insulae expectabunt' ['The islands shall wait for his law']. In Isaiah 49:1 the islands and the people of distant lands are commanded to listen to the word of God: 'audite insulae et attendite populi de longe' ['Give ear, ye islands, and hearken, ye people from afar']. As Charles Wright has noted, in the commentary tradition the insulae of Isaiah are frequently interpreted as being references to the conversion of the gentiles by the apostles; by echoing the language of Isaiah and making Mermedonia an insula, the Andreas poet constructs the perfect setting for Andrew's Apostolic mission.<sup>21</sup>

The addition of images taken directly from Isaiah, and unparalleled in the Greek Apocryphon or the other Old English version of the Mermedonian narrative, shows that the Andreas poet was influenced by the biblical text, and used it as a source of imagery for his poem. It is likely that the poet of Andreas was very familiar with scripture and, having perceived a likeness between the figura Christi of Isaiah and Andrew's role in Mermedonia, enhanced the correspondences between his source narrative and the scriptural text in order to augment pre-existing typological echoes.

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<sup>20</sup> The word insula is used seventeen times in Isaiah; it only occurs 38 times more in the rest of the Vulgate. Both iglonde and ealand are used to gloss insula, for example compare the glosses to Psalm 96:1 in the Vespasian and Lambeth Psalters. See Sherman M. Kuhn, ed. The Vespasian Psalter (Ann Arbor, 1965), 94; U. Lindelöf, ed., Der Lambeth-Psalter : Eine altenglische Interlinearversion des Psalters in der Hs. 427 der erzbischöflichen Lambeth Palace Library (Helsinki, 1909), I, 153.

<sup>21</sup> Charles D. Wright, "'Insulae Gentium': Biblical Influence on Old English Poetic Vocabulary", in Magister Regis: Studies in Honor of Robert Earl Kaske, ed. Arthur Groos (New York, 1986), 19-21.