

A close fitt: reading *Beowulf* fitt II with the *Andreas*-poet
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ABSTRACT

Connections between *Andreas* and *Beowulf* have been the subject of much scholarly discussion. This article contributes to this discussion by arguing that the account of the Mermedonians' discovery of and response to the loss of their prisoners in *Andreas* fitt X, which corresponds to chapters 22–3 of the poet's putative Latin source, has been deliberately recast in ways intended to recall the account in fitt II of *Beowulf* of Grendel's first attack on Heorot and the reactions of the Danish community. The connection argued for here is based not on verbal correspondences, but on embedded structural and thematic parallels. The *Andreas*-poet emerges as a careful and sophisticated reader, notable for their specifically literate and textual engagement with *Beowulf*. This observation has implications not only for our appreciation of the *Andreas*-poet's art, but also for the transmission of *Beowulf* and for our understanding of Old English poetic practices more generally.

One of the more obscure moments in the text of *Beowulf* is the infamous *ġifstōl*-passage that follows the account of Grendel's initial attacks against Heorot and its inhabitants and his occupation of the hall by night. The lines in question read as follows in the standard critical edition of the poem:

Nō hē þone ġifstōl grētan mōste,
māþðum for metode, nē his myne wisse.¹

The editors of *Klaeber's Beowulf* identify no fewer than eight interpretative difficulties that impede critical understanding of these two lines of verse:

(1) whether *ġifstōl* refers to Hrōðgār's throne or God's, (2) whether *grētan* means 'approach' [...] or 'attack' [...], (3) whether *mōste* means 'was permitted to' or 'had to,' (4) whether *māþðum* refers to the throne or some other treasure, (5) the meaning of *for*, (6) whether *metode* refers to God or to Hrōðgār, (7) the reference of *his* (God, Hrōðgār, Grendel, *ġifstōl*, *māþðum*), and (8) the force of *myne wisse*.²

An elegant and concise solution to problems (4)–(8) has been suggested by Alfred Bammesberger. Writing in 1992, Bammesberger revived and elaborated upon the earlier proposal of A. Pogatscher, published almost a century previously, that the manuscript reading for line 169a should be interpreted *māþðum formatode*, with *formatode* understood as a preterite form of an otherwise unattested verb **formatian*, 'to despise', for which Bammesberger provides a convincing philological justification.³ If this interpretation is

¹ *Beowulf* 168–9. The poem is cited from *Klaeber's Beowulf: Fourth Edition*, ed. R. D. Fulk, R. E. Bjork, and J. D. Niles (Toronto, 2008). Textual emendations and expansions of abbreviations have been silently accepted throughout. The meaning of these disputed lines is discussed further below, but for convenience I give here the translation offered in *The Beowulf Manuscript*, ed. and trans. R. D. Fulk, Dumbarton Oaks Medieval Library 3 (Cambridge, MA, 2010), p. 97: 'He was not permitted to approach the throne or valuables on account of Providence, nor did he gain satisfaction.' Hereafter, translations are my own unless otherwise stated.

² *Klaeber's Beowulf*, ed. Fulk *et al*, p. 126, n. to lines 168 f. (emphasis original). In enumerating this list, the editors note further the possibility of construing *hē* in line 168a not as Grendel, but as Hrothgar, an interpretation which, they suggest, 'seems now to have been abandoned almost entirely' (*ibid*). But cf. J. Roberts, 'Understanding Hrothgar's Humiliation: *Beowulf* Lines 144–74 in Context', *Text, Image, Interpretation: Studies in Anglo-Saxon Literature and its Insular Context in Honour of Éamonn Ó Carragáin*, ed. A. J. Minnis and J. Roberts, Studies in the Early Middle Ages 18 (Turnhout, 2007), pp. 355–67.

³ A. Bammesberger, 'Five *Beowulf* Notes', *Words, Texts and Manuscripts: Studies in Anglo-Saxon Culture presented to Helmut Gneuss on the Occasion of his Sixty-Fifth Birthday*, ed. M. Korhammer with K. Reichl and H. Sauer (Cambridge, 1992), pp. 239–55, at 243–8. For the original suggestion, see A. Pogatscher, 'Zu *Beowulf*

accepted, then the force of line 169 becomes clear: Grendel repudiates worldly wealth in his vendetta against the community of Heorot. In such a reading, the pressure to interpret *māþðum* as a notably loose and unsatisfactory variation for *þone ġifstōl* disappears, whilst both the problem of identifying the nature and extent of any divine intervention suggested in the phrase *for metode* and the resultant ambiguity about the ownership of the *ġifstōl* itself (difficulty (1) in the above quotation) are removed.⁴ The interpretation of line 169b also becomes less problematic. Bammesberger suggests the following translation for the line as a whole: ‘he despised treasure, nor did he feel its (= the treasure’s) love (= he felt no love for treasure)’.⁵

Bammesberger’s interpretation of line 169, which has had relatively little impact upon subsequent discussion of these lines, deserves further consideration.⁶ It is, in effect, a non-emendation: it does not involve the alteration of any of the letter forms found in the sole surviving manuscript witness of the poem, but rather a reinterpretation of those existing forms. The reading in question is split across the end of the ninth and beginning of the tenth line of text on folio 133v of London, British Library, Cotton Vitellius A.xv, with *for meto* appearing at the end of line nine and *de* at the beginning of line ten.⁷ A small space appears in the manuscript between *for* and *meto* at the end of line nine, but it is by no means unusual for scribe A to separate the verbal prefix *for-* from the stem to which it is attached.⁸ Manuscript spacing is, moreover, only at best an imperfect guide to word division.⁹ Determining whether the string of letters found in the manuscript represents one word or two requires, on either

168’, *BGDSL* 19 (1894), 544–5. See also, G. J. Engelhardt, ‘*Beowulf*: A Study in Dilation’, *PMLA* 70 (1955), 825–52, at 832, n. 20.

⁴ J. R. R. Tolkien notes that, whilst *māþðum* is not appropriate as a variation for the *ġifstōl* itself, it does develop the notion of gift-exchange implied by the first element of that compound (*Beowulf: A Translation and Commentary together with Sellic Spell*, ed. C. Tolkien (London, 2014), p. 183).

⁵ Bammesberger, ‘Five *Beowulf* Notes’, 248.

⁶ The suggestion is not discussed in the extensive commentary on this passage in *Klaeber’s Beowulf*, although the editors do note the suggested reading *formetode* in the critical apparatus. G. Jack notes but rejects the reading on the grounds that the resulting sense of the line ‘does not seem apt contextually’ (*Beowulf: A Student Edition* (Oxford, 1994), p. 38, n. to lines 168–9). Elsewhere, the reading has been endorsed, at least in passing, by A. Orchard (*Pride and Prodigies: Studies in the Monsters of the Beowulf Manuscript*, rev. ed. (Toronto, 2003), p. 62, n. 21) and S. Gwara (*Heroic Identity in the World of Beowulf*, Medieval and Renaissance Authors and Texts 2 (Leiden, 2008), p. 80, n. 52). F. C. Robinson, rightly insisting upon the need to interpret lines 168–9 in relation to the context in which they appear, has called the reading an ‘attractive’ solution (‘Why is Grendel’s Not Greeting the *Gifstol* a *Wræc Micel*?’, *Words, Texts and Manuscripts: Studies in Anglo-Saxon Culture Presented to Helmut Gneuss on the Occasion of his Sixty-Fifth Birthday*, ed. M. Korhammer with K. Reichl and H. Sauer (Cambridge, 1992), pp. 257–62, at 261). R. M. Liuzza’s parallel-text edition of *Beowulf* cites Robinson in offering the translation ‘he scorned the treasures; he did not know their love’ for line 169, without, however, adopting the proposed emendation (*Beowulf: Second Edition*, ed. and trans. R. M. Liuzza (Peterborough, Ontario, 2013), pp. 64–5).

⁷ Damage to the left edge of the folio has partially obscured the *d*, but the reading, which is supported by the ‘Thorkelin A’ transcription, is not in doubt. For a facsimile of ‘Thorkelin A’, see *Electronic Beowulf: Fourth Edition*, ed. K. Kiernan (2015) <<http://ebeowulf.uky.edu/ebeo4.0/CD/main.html>>. I here cite the older foliation employed by both *Klaeber’s Beowulf* and the *Electronic Beowulf*.

⁸ Cf. Bammesberger, ‘Five *Beowulf* Notes’, 246. For examples of scribe A’s treatment of the *for-* prefix in the folios immediately preceding 133v, see *forġeaf* (17b; 129r16), *forscrifen* (106b; 132r14), *forwræc* (109b; 132r18), *forġeald* (114b; 132v2). Compare also R. P. Tripp, Jr.’s argument for the restoration of a putative original reading *hāt ne forhogode* (for the corrected reading *hātne for horde*) at 2781a (‘The Restoration of *Beowulf* 2781a: *Hāt ne forhogode* (“Did not Despise Heat”)’), *Modern Philology* 78 (1980), 153).

⁹ Compare, for example, the words *eardode* and *sweartum*, which occur on the preceding two manuscript lines on 133v, each of which shows a similar (or perhaps larger) space following the internal *r*. Cf. *Klaeber’s Beowulf*, ed. Fulk *et al*, p. xxxii. It is of incidental interest that that the transcriber of ‘Thorkelin A’, who knew no Old English and who was working purely on the basis of what they could see in the manuscript, apparently interpreted ‘formeto’ as one word. I am grateful to Dr Rachel Burns for discussion on the interpretation of manuscript spacing.

hand, a degree of interpretative licence. On the one hand, we can accept the traditional reading of the otherwise-attested prepositional phrase *for metode*, which is linguistically straightforward but poses interpretative problems in context; on the other hand, we can interpret the same string of graphemes as a preterite form of the verb **formetian*, otherwise unattested but offering good sense.¹⁰ Grendel's disdain for treasure and his inability or unwillingness to approach the *ġifstōl*, especially when read in the light of the earlier reference to his refusal to make peace with the Danes (to which I will return below), emphasizes his alterity by placing him outside of established social mechanisms.¹¹ Understood in this way, lines 168–69 provide clear context for the poet's subsequent reference to Hrothgar's despair in the face of Grendel's implacable hatred:

Ʒæt wæs wræc miċel wine Scyldinga,
mōdes brecða.¹²

These lines, the implications of which have been addressed from different perspectives by both Robinson and Jane Roberts, seem perfectly reasonable if the antecedent of *Ʒæt* is understood as the powerlessness of the Danes, implicit in the immediately preceding lines, in the face of Grendel's threat.¹³

Taken on its own terms, a strong case can thus be made for the reading *māpðum formetode* at line 169a. Support for the viability of this reading might be adduced, moreover, by comparison with a passage from the Old English poem *Andreas* – a hagiographical poem detailing the adventures of SS Matthew and Andrew amongst the devil-worshipping cannibals of the land of Mermedonia preserved uniquely in the late tenth-century Vercelli Book (Vercelli, Biblioteca Capitolare, CXVII).¹⁴ The passage in question describes the cannibalistic fervour of the Mermedonians, driven to distraction by oppressive hunger following the loss of the prisoners on whom they had intended to feast. Long accustomed to capturing, imprisoning, and, ultimately, consuming unwary visitors to Mermedonia, the cannibals are frustrated in their habitual practices by Andrew's mission to save his fellow apostle Matthew, in the course of which Andrew infiltrates the prison and frees all of those incarcerated within. Faced with this sudden loss of provisions, the despairing cannibals first

¹⁰ The prepositional phrase *for metode*, with variant spellings, appears otherwise five times with the sense 'before God' (*Genesis A* 1956a, *Christ and Satan* 83a, *Andreas* 924a, *Christ III* 1559b, *The Rhyming Poem* 86b). The meaning 'because of, on account of God' is not attested elsewhere. The closest parallel for this meaning, noted by the editors of *Klaeber's Beowulf*, is *Genesis B* 359, Satan's lament over his and his followers' loss of their heavenly home: *wē hine for þām alwaldan āgan ne mōston* ('we could not possess it because of the all-ruler [i.e. God]').

¹¹ Cf. E. B. Irving, Jr., *A Reading of Beowulf* (New Haven, 1968), pp. 19–20; Robinson, 'Wræc Miċel', 261; J. Neville, *Representations of the Natural World in Old English Poetry*, CSASE 27 (Cambridge, 1999), 76–7. On the issue of whether Grendel could not or would not approach the *ġifstōl*, see Robinson, 'Wræc Miċel', 259–61; S. Ono, 'Grendel's Not Greeting the *Ġifstol* Reconsidered – with Reference to **Motan* with the Negative', *Poetica* 41 (1994), 11–17. For a recent reading of these lines as a divine prohibition, see F. Leneghan, *The Dynastic Drama of Beowulf*, Anglo-Saxon Studies 39 (Cambridge, 2020), pp. 162–76.

¹² *Beowulf* 170–71a, 'That was great sorrow, distress of mind, for the lord of the Scyldings.'

¹³ For Robinson, the *wræc miċel* referred to here is Hrothgar's sorrow that 'Grendel was under no obligation to pay respect to' the throne ('Wræc Miċel', 262); Roberts, following her interpretation of *hē* in 168a as a reference to Hrothgar, sees in these lines a reference to the humiliation of a king prevented from accessing his own throne ('Hrothgar's Humiliation', 358).

¹⁴ Gneuss–Lapidge 941 (pp. 682–85), 's. x², SE England (Canterbury StA? Rochester?)'. D. G. Scragg dates the manuscript to 'c. 975' ('The Compilation of the Vercelli Book', *ASE* 2 (1973), 189–207, at 201), while E. Treharne argues that the palaeographical evidence suggests that the manuscript was copied 'earlier rather than later in the period 950–75' ('The Form and Function of the Vercelli Book', *Text, Image, Interpretation: Studies in Anglo-Saxon Literature and its Insular Context in Honour of Éamonn Ó Carragáin*, ed. A. J. Minnis and J. Roberts, Studies in the Early Middle Ages 18 (Turnhout, 2007), pp. 253–66, at 254).

resort to consuming the corpses of the prison-guards, struck dead by divine agency on Andrew's approach, before casting lots amongst themselves to decide who should be sacrificed to the communal hunger. The lot falls upon an old man, who immediately offers his son to the host of cannibals in his place. Accepting the substitution, the Mermedonians greedily prepare to devour the youth:

þēod wæs oflysted,
metes mōdgeōmre, næs him tō mādme wynn,
hyht tō hordgestrēonum; hunger wæron
þearle geþrēatod, swā se ðēodsceaða
rēow rīcsode.¹⁵

The emphasis in this passage on the Mermedonians' lack of interest in treasure and hoarded wealth might be seen to offer a general parallel to Grendel's disdain of treasure in the lines from *Beowulf*. In both cases, the rejection of treasure, and of all that it signifies, implies a rejection of civilized values in the face of an overmastering desire. Both passages come at a moment when societal expectations are strained to breaking point. In *Beowulf*, Grendel's refusal to engage in the social mechanisms surrounding gift giving and conflict resolution leads to a debilitating stasis in the community of Heorot, forcing the Danes to turn to extreme measures (namely, heathen observances) in an attempt to manage their unruly guest. In *Andreas*, the reference to a lack of interest in treasure marks the point at which the Mermedonian society literally turns upon itself, breaking down the defining opposition between native Mermedonians and the foreign outsiders on whom they feast.¹⁶

The parallel may, however, be more specific than general. At first glance, the most striking thing about the reference to treasure in these lines from *Andreas* is its apparent irrelevancy. The precise contents of the *Andreas*-poet's presumed source – a lost Latin version of the apocryphal *Acts of Matthew and Andrew amongst the Cannibals* – are ultimately unknowable, but comparison with closely related Latin and Greek versions of the same legend reveals no analogue for the reference to the compelling need of the Mermedonians at this point.¹⁷ Nothing in these texts suggests that the specific reference to treasure was prompted by the poet's lost source. Treasure has not figured at all prominently in the account of the society of Mermedonia up to this point, so that the contrast between the

¹⁵ *Andreas* 1112b–16a, 'The despairing nation was longing for food, there was no joy in treasure for them, no desire for hoarded wealth; they were severely oppressed by hunger, as the cruel enemy of the people ruled.' Cited from *Andreas: An Edition*, ed. R. North and M. D. J. Bintley (Liverpool, 2016).

¹⁶ On the implications of cannibalism for the construction of Mermedonian identity, see especially S. N. Godlove, 'Bodies as Borders: Cannibalism and Conversion in the Old English *Andreas*', *SP* 106 (2009), 137–60 and F. L. Michelet, 'Eating Bodies in the Old English *Andreas*', *Fleshly Things and Spiritual Matters: Studies on the Medieval Body in Honour of Margaret Bridges*, ed. N. Nyffenegger and K. Rupp (Newcastle, 2011), 165–92.

¹⁷ The most relevant analogues are the early Greek text (*Praxeis*) and a Latin adaptation of the legend known as the *Recensio Casanatensis*. Both texts are cited (with occasional minor changes) from *Die lateinischen Bearbeitungen der Acta Andreae et Matthiae apud Anthropophagos*, ed. F. Blatt, Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für neutestamentliche Wissenschaft 12 (Giessen, 1930). See also, *The Acts of Andrew in the Country of the Cannibals: Translations from the Greek, Latin, and Old English*, trans. R. Boenig, Garland Library of Medieval Literature 70 (New York, 1991). An Old English prose adaptation of the *Acts* survives in two manuscript copies: a more complete text in Cambridge, Corpus Christi College 198 (311v–316r) and a fragment preserved in the Blickling collection (Princeton, University Library, Scheide Library 71, 136r–139v). This adaptation, which seemingly draws upon a Latin version of the legend less closely related to the putative source of *Andreas* than either the *Recensio Casanatensis* or *Praxeis*, omits almost entirely the section of the legend with which I am concerned here, moving directly from the discovery of the open prison to the appearance of the devil (*Bright's Old English Grammar and Reader*, ed. F. G. Cassidy and R. N. Ringler, 3rd ed. (New York, 1971), pp. 203–19, at 213). For more details concerning the relationship between the various analogues, see *Andreas*, ed. North and Bintley, pp. 4–6.

people's lust for meat and their lack of interest in treasure does not seem to carry much weight. Why, then, does the poet choose these terms to describe the situation of the Mermedonians at this point in the narrative? One possibility – which will be explored in this article – is that the *Andreas*-poet knew the *ġifstōl*-passage in *Beowulf* and that the presentation of the Mermedonians was directly influenced by the *Beowulf*-poet's statement that Grendel *māþðum formetode*.

That the *Andreas*-poet was familiar with *Beowulf* and drew upon it in the process of transforming the hagiographic legend into traditional Old English verse is now widely, though perhaps not universally, accepted. An impressive weight of scholarship suggests that the *Andreas*-poet not only knew *Beowulf*, but knew that poem very well – and may have counted upon at least some of the audience of *Andreas* being likewise familiar with the older poem.¹⁸ The evidence for the relationship between the two poems depends in large part upon the observation of extensive verbal parallels – including uniquely shared compounds, formulaic phrases, and whole- and half-line parallels. In the past, critical debate has focused on the question of whether the undoubted similarities in the language of the two poems result from direct borrowing or from shared participation in a formulaic tradition.¹⁹ More recent studies have, however, demonstrated more clearly than ever before the remarkable extent of these parallels, strongly suggestive of direct influence from one poem to the other.²⁰ The strength of this lexical evidence clears the way for the literary-critical analysis of compelling similarities in the treatment of episodes in each poem and to a more detailed consideration of the meaningful relationship between the two poems.²¹

In the current instance, the possibility that the *Andreas*-poet is influenced by the *ġifstōl*-passage in this reference to the Mermedonian disinterest in treasure is strongly supported by close comparison of the wider contexts in which the passages occur in each poem. One fact to emerge from recent studies of the relationship between the two poems is that apparent borrowings from *Beowulf*, whilst often widely spread throughout the text of *Andreas*,

¹⁸ Here and throughout I accept the arguments for the priority of *Beowulf* both on the grounds of the relative chronology established by R. D. Fulk (*A History of Old English Meter* (Philadelphia, 1992), pp. 348–92) and on the grounds of the oft-made observation that the parallel phraseology is often metrically, grammatically, or (more subjectively) contextually problematic in *Andreas*, but not so in *Beowulf* (see, for example, A. M. Powell, 'Verbal Parallels in *Andreas* and its Relationship to *Beowulf* and *Cynewulf*' (unpubl. PhD dissertation, University of Cambridge, 2002), pp. 7, 167 and 233–4).

¹⁹ The literature on this topic is vast, but see especially *Andreas and The Fates of the Apostles*, ed. G. P. Krapp (Boston, 1906), pp. li–lviii; C. Schaar, *Critical Studies in the Cynewulf Group*, Lund Studies in English 17 (Lund, 1949), esp. pp. 235–56 and 291–5; L. J. Peters, 'The Relationship of the Old English *Andreas* to *Beowulf*', *PMLA* 66 (1951), 844–63; *Andreas and The Fates of the Apostles*, ed. K. R. Brooks (Oxford, 1961), pp. xxii–xxvii; E. G. Stanley, 'Beowulf', *Continuations and Beginnings: Studies in Old English Literature*, ed. E. G. Stanley (London, 1966), pp. 104–41, at 110–14; P. Cavill, 'Beowulf and *Andreas*: Two Maxims', *Neophilologus* 77 (1993), 479–87; A. R. Riedinger, 'The Formulaic Relationship between *Beowulf* and *Andreas*', *Heroic Poetry in the Anglo-Saxon Period: Studies in Honor of Jess B. Bessinger*, ed. H. Damico and J. Leyerle, *Studies in Medieval Culture* 32 (Kalamazoo, MI, 1993), pp. 283–312.

²⁰ Especially A. Riedinger, 'The Poetic Formula in *Andreas*, *Beowulf*, and the Tradition' (unpubl. PhD dissertation, New York University, 1985); Powell, 'Verbal Parallels'; B. Friesen, 'Visions and Revisions: The Sources and Analogues of the Old English *Andreas*' (unpubl. PhD dissertation, University of Toronto, 2008); A. Orchard, 'The Originality of *Andreas*', *Old English Philology: Studies in Honour of R. D. Fulk*, ed. L. Neidorf, R. J. Pascual, and T. Shippey, *Anglo-Saxon Studies* 31 (Woodbridge, 2016), pp. 331–70.

²¹ Cf. F. J. Rozano-García, 'Hwær is wuldor þīn?': Traditional Poetic Diction and the Alien Text in the Old English *Andreas*, *Peritia* 28 (2017), 177–94; R. North, 'Meet the Pagans: On the Misuse of *Beowulf* in *Andreas*', *Aspects of Knowledge: Preserving and Reinvention Traditions of Learning in the Middle Ages*, ed. M. Cesario and H. Magennis, *Manchester Medieval Literature and Culture* 18 (Manchester, 2018), pp. 185–209; F. Leneghan, 'The Departure of the Hero in a Ship: The Intertextuality of *Beowulf*, *Cynewulf* and *Andreas*', *Selima* 24 (2019), 105–32; I. Dumitrescu, 'Beowulf and *Andreas*: Intimate Relationships', *Dating Beowulf: Studies in Intimacy*, ed. D. C. Remein and E. Weaver, *Manchester Medieval Literature and Culture* 30 (Manchester, 2020), pp. 257–78.

frequently seem to ‘cluster’ within relatively discrete passages in the older poem – the implication being that the *Andreas*-poet was particularly familiar with (or particularly attracted to) specific relatively short passages of *Beowulf*.²² The discussion that follows will likewise argue for the demonstrable influence on the *Andreas*-poet of a particular, identifiable passage in *Beowulf*. The evidence for this influence is different in kind, however, from the ‘cluster’ parallels identified previously in that the *Andreas*-poet’s engagement with *Beowulf* is, in this instance, both more extended and essentially structural and thematic rather than formulaic in nature. In offering such an argument, this article builds upon the important foundations laid by studies of the language of the two poems, but simultaneously seeks to help extend the discussion of the intertextuality of Old English poetry beyond the merely verbal.

Specifically, I will argue that the episode in *Andreas* concerning the Mermedonian response to the escape of their captives – from the moment Andrew leaves the prison in line 1058 up until the appearance of the devil in line 1168 – differs from other known versions of the legend in ways that seem designed to recall the *Beowulf*-poet’s account of Grendel’s campaign of violence and the response to it of the Danish community. Reading the former passage in the light of both the surviving analogues to *Andreas* and the account of Grendel’s persecution of the Danes strongly suggests that the poet of *Andreas* is modelling the adaptation of this section of the hagiographic legend on *Beowulf*. I will suggest that the correspondences between these passages are neither fortuitous nor the result of *ad hoc* or pragmatic borrowing on the part of the *Andreas*-poet. On the contrary, strategic and systematic allusions to *Beowulf* are both productive of meaning in this passage of *Andreas* and also sensitive to the nuance and art of the passage from *Beowulf* on which they draw. In particular, both fitts display a thematic concern with the opposition of literal and non-literal conceptions of wealth based around the development of a body-as-treasure motif. In each case, the prioritization of bodily over literal treasure causes the frustration or perversion of established social processes. The results, in each fitt, are, firstly, a disintegration of society and a shift to personal rather than communal interest, and, secondly, a despairing recourse to idolatrous practices.

I shall argue, moreover, that the picture that emerges from an examination of the relationship between these passages is of a specifically textual engagement with *Beowulf* on the part of the *Andreas*-poet, organized around discrete textual units marked out as such in the surviving copies of each poem. The portion of *Beowulf* with which we are concerned here centres upon fitt II of the poem as delineated in the only extant manuscript (lines 115–88 of the edited text). This section of the poem seems to have provided a comprehensive model on which the *Andreas*-poet drew for the depiction of the Mermedonian response to the loss of their prisoners contained in the unnumbered tenth fitt of *Andreas*, marked out by the spacing and capitalization of the text in the Vercelli Book (lines 1058–1154).²³ The implications of this observation for our reading of both poems, and for our understanding of Old English poetic composition and transmission more generally, will be outlined in the conclusion to this article.

LĪFES TŌ LISSE: SYMBOLIC WEALTH AND CORPOREAL CURRENCY

²² First proposed by Riedinger (‘Poetic Formula’, pp. 190–244; ‘*Beowulf* and *Andreas*’, *passim*), this notion was accepted (cautiously) by Powell (‘Verbal Parallels’, pp. 47–9, 324) and (enthusiastically) by Friesen, who identifies ten passages in *Beowulf* which appear to have been a particular target for the *Andreas*-poet’s borrowing (‘Sources and Analogues’, pp. 118–19, 122–41).

²³ On the sectional divisions of *Andreas*, cf. Scragg, ‘Compilation of the Vercelli Book’, 192. I here follow the numbering imposed by North and Bintley in their edition of the poem.

Both fitt II of *Beowulf* and fitt X of *Andreas* are concerned with the discovery and aftereffects of violent invasion. Both poets also develop a contrast within these respective fitts between the expected social valence of material wealth and a more gruesome metaphorical currency. The similarities of structure and theme between the two passages are evident from the beginning of each fitt. In *Beowulf*, the violent invasion with which the fitt is concerned is constituted by Grendel's first raid on Heorot, depicted at the beginning of fitt II in a narrative unit marked out by the use of envelope patterning.²⁴ This eleven-line passage describes Grendel approaching Heorot to discover how the Danes occupy the hall after their feasting (*hū hit Hring-Dene / æfter bēorþege gebūn hæfdon*, 116b–17), whereupon he finds within the hall (*fand þā ðær inne*, 118a) a host of prospective victims and departs home again bearing fifteen corpses.²⁵ The remaining 63 lines of the fitt then focus upon the aftereffects of this first raid, describing Grendel's continued attacks and the increasingly desperate reactions of the persecuted Danes.

In *Andreas*, the violent invasion the consequences of which we see in fitt X is, properly speaking, Andrew's entry into the prison and the release of St Matthew and the other captives described in the previous fitt. Fitt X begins immediately after this release, and the first nine lines of the fitt describe Andrew venturing out into the city to discover what violent fate might await him there (*hwæt him gūðweorca gifede wurde*, 1066). This passage is followed immediately, however, by an account of an armed host of Mermedonians approaching the prison in which they expect to find their prisoners:

| | |
|-------------------|-------------------------------|
| Þā gesamnedon | sīde herigeas |
| folces frumgāras; | tō þām fæstenne |
| wærlēasra werod | wæpnum cōmon, |
| hæðne hildfreca, | tō þæs þā hæftas ær |
| under hlinscūwan | hearm þrōwedon. ²⁶ |

The *Andreas*-poet seems to have had a particular fondness for depicting the gathering of people, often in seemingly inappropriate martial terms, in scenes for which little or no warrant is to be found in the analogues, but the transformation of the expedition to the prison – so matter-of-factly described in the Latin and Greek texts – into a pseudo-militaristic raid is of particular importance here.²⁷ The Mermedonian expedition to the prison, undertaken in the

²⁴ The description of Grendel's raid in lines 115–25 is circumscribed by the repetition of the verb *nēos(i)an*, first when Grendel 'seeks' Heorot (115a) and subsequently when he 'seeks' his fenland home once more (125b).

²⁵ The initial account of Grendel's raid tells us that he seized thirty sleeping Danish thanes (*on ræste ġenam / þritig þegna*, 122b–3a). We later learn, however, that he ate fifteen of these men within the hall before departing with the other fifteen corpses (1580–4a), presumably contained in his mysterious *glōf* (2085b–92).

²⁶ *Andreas* 1067–71, 'Large companies gathered then, leaders of the people; the troop of the faithless, the heathen warriors, came with weapons to the prison, to where the captives had previously suffered pain in the prison-darkness.'

²⁷ Compare the equivalent passage in the *Recensio Casanatensis*: 'Et ecce habierunt carnifices ad carcerem ut producerent quemquam hominem ad escam sibi portandam. Cum autem invenissent eam apertam, et custodes mortuos totidem vero septem, statim abierunt ad principes suos, dixeruntque ad eos, domine, carcerem apertum invenimus, ingressi vero in ea non invenimus quemquam, custodes vero carceris mortui sunt ibi' ('And, behold, the executioners had to go to the prison that they might bring forth some person to be carried off as food for them. But when they had found it open, and the self-same seven guards dead, they went at once to their leaders, and said to them: "Lord, we have found the prison open. Truly, entering in we found no one and, truly, the prison guards were there, dead."', *Bearbeitungen*, ed. Blatt, pp. 73–5). For other depictions of gathering forces in *Andreas*, cf. 41b–7, 125–8, 652–4, 1123b–5, 1201–05, 1269b–71, 1636–8. For a 'mock-heroic' reading of these passages, see N. Furuta, 'The Devaluation of Germanic Heroic Tradition in the Old English Poem *Andreas*', *Multiple Perspectives on English Philology and History of Linguistics: A Festschrift for Shoichi Watanabe on his 80th Birthday*, ed. T. Oda and N. Eto, *Linguistic Insights* 129 (Bern, 2010), pp. 125–56, at 127–34.

expectation of a cannibalistic feast, stands in the design of fitt X in an equivalent position to Grendel's raid on Heorot in *Beowulf* fitt II. The parallel is, however, antithetical: unlike Grendel, the Mermedonians are frustrated in their search for victims, finding only an empty prison, the doors of which stand open (*carceres duru ... opene fundon*, 1075b–6).²⁸ The dramatic reversal of expectations experienced by the Mermedonians at this point (especially as expressed in lines 1072–7) recalls the heavy emphasis on similar reversals throughout *Beowulf* and specifically during the account of Grendel's final visit to Heorot, but the frustration of their desires also stands in inverse relationship to the success of Grendel's first raid.²⁹

This antithetical parallel is pointed up, moreover, by two minor details in the account of the discovery of the empty prison which seem to have been introduced by the poet. In both the Latin and Greek texts, the Mermedonians are said to depart from the prison to find their leaders in order to announce their discovery. In *Andreas*, however, the poet specifies that the Mermedonians *return* from the prison to make this announcement, adding that they do so without the 'booty' they had expected to find in the prison: *Hīe þā unhȳðige eft gecyrdon* ('They turned back then without booty', 1078). This more specific account emphasizes a sense of parallel journeys to and from the prison, recalling the description of Grendel's journey to and return from Heorot. In contrast to the returning Mermedonians, however, Grendel departs exulting in his booty: *þanon eft gewat / hūðe hrēmig* ('he went back from there, exulting in booty', 123b–4a).³⁰

The Mermedonians' empty-handed return from the prison not only establishes a distinct antithetical parallel to Grendel's exultant return to the mere, but it also demonstrates the *Andreas*-poet's thematic engagement with fitt II. In each poem, the actual or potential victims of cannibalism are linguistically equated to the material riches which might normally have been carried off in the aftermath of a violent raid. In each case, this equation establishes a metaphorical body-as-treasure motif and a thematic concern with the opposition of literal and non-literal wealth which accrues significance as the respective fitts progress.³¹

In *Beowulf*, Grendel's greed for the corporeal currency represented by his unwholesome booty stands in opposition to his disavowal of (actual) treasure. Grendel's rejection of the social value of material wealth is expressed not only in his exclusion from the gift economy of the hall, but also in his refusal to engage in customary mechanisms for dispute settlement. Following his first attack, the poet emphasizes at some length that Grendel is neither willing to settle his feud with the Danes in exchange for money nor prepared to pay the expected *wergild* for the men he slays:

sibbe ne wolde
wið manna hwone mægenes Deniga,
feorhbealo feorran, fēa þingian,
nē þær nāniġ witena wēnan þorfte
beorhtre bōte tō banan folmum,

²⁸ On the prominence of 'antithetical variation' in the *Andreas*-poet's allusions to *Beowulf*, see Friesen, 'Sources and Analogues', pp. 107–241.

²⁹ R. N. Ringler, 'Him Sēo Wēn Gelēah: The Design for Irony in Grendel's Last Visit to Heorot', *Speculum* 41 (1966), 49–67.

³⁰ Cf. *Elene* 148–52. A. Riedinger identifies both Grendel's return from Heorot and Constantine's return from battle in *Elene* as examples of a formulaic theme "the victor returns home with his reward", which she also detects in *Andreas* 1698–1701a ('The Old English Formula in Context', *Speculum* 60 (1985), 294–317). The apparent allusion to *Beowulf* in the Mermedonians' empty-handed return is, it seems to me, notably non-formulaic.

³¹ On the widespread use of bodily metaphors in these poems (and in the work of Cynewulf), see H. E. Jagger, 'Body, Text and Self in Old English Verse: A Study of "Beowulfian" and "Cynewulfian" Rhetoric' (unpubl. PhD dissertation, University of Toronto, 2002).

ac se æglæca ēhtende was,
deorc dēapscua, duguþe ond geogoþe³²

The essence of the threat that Grendel poses to the Danish community is, as this passage shows, that his violence is both disproportionate and impossible to contain. Unlike that of Scyld Scefing in the opening lines of the poem, Grendel's violence cannot be bought off with tribute, nor can the Danes compel him to pay compensation for his actions. Grendel's refusal to allow his behaviour to be governed by social conventions and his preference for corporeal rather than material wealth places him outside the value system of Heorot.

In *Andreas*, the representation of prospective victims as plunder in the account of the raid on the prison anticipates both the Mermedonians' stated lack of interest in material treasure (in the passage cited above) and also the further development of the body-as-treasure motif throughout the poet's account of the episode of the old man and his son. The poet's treatment of this episode differs significantly from that in both the Greek and Latin analogues. In both of these texts it is, in the first place, a group of seven elderly people that is destined by lot to become a meal for the Mermedonian community, one of whom then offers his son to the executioners in his place. In the Latin text, a particularly grotesque scene follows, in which the leaders of the people agree to accept the substitution provided that the son weighs no less than his father. Having weighed the two men in a balance, the executioners discover that the son is lighter than his father, whereupon the old man proffers his daughter also to make up the shortfall.³³ The more outlandish elements of this scene are not found in the Greek text of the legend, in which the executioners, after consultation with their superiors, are content to accept the son in place of the father (who, however, subsequently offers them his daughter as well, presumably in relief at being spared himself).³⁴ In both of these versions of the legend, the father appears again later in the narrative when, together with fourteen Mermedonian executioners, he is condemned by Andrew to be sucked down into the abyss with the receding waters of the flood.³⁵ By contrast, the equivalent episode in *Andreas* appears to have been radically simplified. In the poem, the old man alone is nominated to be eaten; no weighing takes place, the offer of the daughter, common to both the Latin and Greek texts, is omitted, and only the fourteen executioners are said to be swallowed up in the watery abyss.³⁶

These changes may reflect a sense of narrative economy or, perhaps, dissatisfaction with the unnecessarily spectacular and macabre course of events, particularly as depicted in the Latin text. But the simplified treatment of the episode also imbues it with greater and more specific significance in the Old English poem. The adaptations were, most likely, driven in part by the poet's typological imagination. As has been frequently observed, the presentation of this episode in *Andreas* seems designed to bring into relief the latent inverted Eucharistic connotations of the underlying narrative: the father who sacrifices his son for purely selfish gain within the world is set in ironic counterpoint to God the Father, who gives his Son to bring salvation to all with the promise of the life of the world to come.³⁷ In the light of the *Andreas*-poet's well-documented interest in figural narrative, these Eucharistic resonances

³² *Beowulf* 154b–60, 'He did not wish for peace with any man of the Danish force, nor to remove the deadly peril, to settle with money, nor did any counsellor need to expect bright compensation there at the hands of the slayer, but the adversary, the dark death-shadow, continued to persecute the veterans and the youths.'

³³ *Bearbeitungen*, ed. Blatt, p. 77; *Acts of Andrew*, trans. Boenig, pp. 46–7.

³⁴ *Bearbeitungen*, ed. Blatt, p. 76; *Acts of Andrew*, trans. Boenig, pp. 15–16.

³⁵ *Bearbeitungen*, ed. Blatt, p. 88–91; *Acts of Andrew*, trans. Boenig, p. 21.

³⁶ *Andreas* 1093–1125. For the drowning of the executioners, see *Andreas* 1591–5a.

³⁷ D. Hamilton, 'The Diet and Digestion of Allegory in *Andreas*', *ASE* 1 (1972), 147–58; J. Casteen, '*Andreas*: Mermedonian Cannibalism and Figural Narration', *NM* 75 (1974), 74–78; Godlove, 'Bodies as Borders', pp. 151–3; North, 'Meet the Pagans', pp. 196–7.

cannot be ignored.³⁸ At the same time, however, critical focus on this aspect may have obscured other significant features of the poet's treatment of this scene. In particular, the poet's presentation of the man's son specifically as a treasure or object of exchange – without precedent in the Latin or Greek texts – has gone unacknowledged.

The *Andreas*-poet recasts the father's selfish actions by presenting the intended sacrifice of his son in terms of the social practice of gift giving. In a recent discussion of the application of gift theory to Old English and Anglo-Latin literature, Stephanie Clark has emphasized the differences in social terms between commodity exchange, which is based on the logic of transaction, and gift exchange, which depends on a logic of reciprocity.³⁹ Clark cites the work of the economic anthropologist C. A. Gregory, who argues that commodity exchange 'establishes objective quantitative relationships between the objects transacted', while gift exchange 'establishes personal qualitative relationships between the subjects transacting'.⁴⁰ The distinction between these two modes of exchange is a helpful one, accurately defining the difference between the account of the offer of the youth in *Andreas* and that in the surviving analogues. In the Latin text in particular, the offer of the son is clearly driven by the logic of transaction: the old man gives his children to the executioners explicitly in order to save his own life; father and son (and daughter) are equally understood as commodities subject to quantitative comparison (a fact demonstrated in strikingly literal fashion, as their 'dead weight' is subjected to very explicit testing).⁴¹ In the Old English poem, however, the offer is presented as an instance of gift giving by means of which the old man establishes a friendly and beneficial relationship between himself and the Mermedonian crowd:

Cleopode þā collenferhð cearegan reorde,
cwæð hē his sylfes sunu syllan wolde
on æhtgeweald, eaforan geongne,
līfes tō lisse; hīe ðā lāc hraðe
þēgon tō þance.⁴²

The old man offers to gift (*syllan*) the child into the Mermedonians' possession. The rare compound *æhtgeweald* – which literally denotes the power of a possessor over a valuable object – construes the child metaphorically as a treasure or gift object.⁴³ Tellingly, and in contrast to the treatment of the episode in the analogues, the implicit motivation behind the man's actions (to save his own life) is expressed only in the most oblique and ambiguous

³⁸ On the poet's interest in narrative typology, see, for example, T. D. Hill, 'Figural Narrative in *Andreas*: The Conversion of the Mermedonians', *NM* 70 (1969), 261–73; C. B. Heatt, 'The Harrowing of Mermedonia: Typological Patterns in the Old English *Andreas*', *NM* 77 (1976), 49–62; M. M. Walsh, 'The Baptismal Flood in the Old English *Andreas*: Liturgical and Typological Depths', *Traditio* 33 (1977), 137–58; J. W. Earl, 'The Typological Structure of *Andreas*', *Old English Literature in Context: Ten Essays*, ed. J. D. Niles (Cambridge, 1980), pp. 66–89; F. M. Biggs, 'The Passion of *Andreas*: *Andreas* 1398–1491', *SP* 85 (1988), 413–27; A. Reading, 'Baptism, Conversion, and Selfhood in the Old English *Andreas*', *SP* 112 (2015), 1–23.

³⁹ S. Clark, *Compelling God: Theories of Prayer in Anglo-Saxon England*, Toronto Anglo-Saxon Series 26 (Toronto, 2018), pp. 22–37.

⁴⁰ Clark, *Compelling God*, p. 28. Cf. C. A. Gregory, *Gifts and Commodities*, 2nd ed. (Chicago, 2015), p. 39.

⁴¹ Cf. *Bearbeitungen*, ed. Blatt, p. 77: 'dabo inquit vobis **pro me** filium meum, ad occidendum' ('"I will give my son to you," he said, "to be killed **instead of me**."'); 'habeo inquit filiam meam, et ipsam si vultis dabo vobis, et occidite, **tantum** dimittite me' ('"I have my daughter," he said, "and, if you wish it, I will give her to you, and you kill her, **so long as** you release me."') [emphasis added].

⁴² *Andreas* 1108–12a, 'The bold-hearted man then cried out with sorrowful voice, said that he would give his own son, his young offspring, into their possession for enjoyment of life; at once, they gratefully received that gift.'

⁴³ The compound *æhtgeweald* otherwise occurs only in *Azarias* 26b. Old English poetry other than *Beowulf* and *Andreas* is cited from the relevant volume of ASPR.

fashion in the Old English text. The poet states that the man offers his son to the Mermedonians *līfes tō lisse*. This is a phrase which defies easy translation. In their recent edition, North and Bintley render the half-line ‘in exchange for enjoying life’ – a translation that offers a perfectly reasonable interpretation of the situation but which adds a sense of explicit *quid pro quod* transactionality at odds with the more subtle sense of reciprocity inherent in the original.⁴⁴ It is, in fact, far from clear to whose enjoyment of life the half-line refers. Read in relation to social practices associated with gift giving, the statement could very easily be taken to mean that the precious gift of the man’s own son, his direct descendant (*sylfes sunu ... eaforan geongne*), is made to the Mermedonians for the sake of their own enjoyment of life (or even for the enjoyment they can derive from the youth’s life).⁴⁵ The phraseology may even hint at a sort of graciousness on the part of the man offering such a significant gift: the noun *liss* can connote not just delight or enjoyment but more specifically the enjoyment of a favour bestowed through benevolent condescension.⁴⁶

An instructive parallel for the language of gift exchange in this passage can be found in *Genesis A* in the accusations of ingratitude made by Abimelech in his rebuke of Abraham:

We þe arlice
gefeormedon, and þe freondlice
on þisse werþeode wic getæhton,
land to lissum. Ðu us leanast nu,
unfreondlice fremena þancast!⁴⁷

Abimelech’s words provide a context for understanding both the old man’s largess in gifting his son for the people’s enjoyment (*tō lisse*) and the crowd’s response to this significant gift. Abimelech’s complaint to Abraham highlights, in Gregory’s terms, a failure of reciprocity, whereby benevolence is rewarded with perceived hostility and the ideal intended personal relationship between Abraham and the king is undermined. By contrast, the Mermedonians reciprocate the apparent benevolence of the old man in an appropriate manner, receiving the offered youth ‘gratefully’ (*tō þance*). Again, language associated with gift giving is prominent. The crowd accept the child as a *lāc*, a noun which means ‘gift’ but which can also mean ‘sacrifice’ (the significance of which will be discussed further below). Similarly, the preterite form of the verb *þicgan* in the phrase *þēgon tō þance* can mean either ‘received’ or ‘consumed’. The implications of a sacrificial meal contained in the punning phrase *lāc ... þēgon* – here suggestive of the Eucharistic sacrifice – is paralleled closely, though not exactly, in the much-discussed opening lines of *Wulf and Eadwacer*.⁴⁸ But since the Mermedonians are subsequently prevented (by divine intervention) from feasting upon the child, the primary meaning is clearly ‘received’. The verb *þicgan* is well-attested in the Old

⁴⁴ Andreas, ed. North and Bintley, p. 177. In another recent translation, M. Clayton give a similarly explicit translation: ‘in order to save his life’ (*Old English Poems of Christ and His Saints*, ed. and trans. M. Clayton, Dumbarton Oaks Medieval Library 27 (Cambridge, MA, 2013), p. 257).

⁴⁵ The emphasis on the familial relationship between the man and his son may serve to enhance the symbolic value of the father’s gift. Clark notes that ‘[t]o be truly valuable, gift objects are non-alienable – a high-status gift object carries the identity of its past owners and gains value from that identity’ (*Compelling God*, p. 29).

⁴⁶ See, for example, *Beowulf* 2149b–50a; *Christ I* 373b–7; *Exodus* 269b–72; *Genesis A* 1485–7a, 1754–8, 2920b–2.

⁴⁷ *Genesis A* 2686b–90, ‘We graciously welcomed you and, in friendly manner, offered you a dwelling-place amongst this people, land for your enjoyment. You now reward us, thank us for these kindnesses, in an unfriendly manner.’

⁴⁸ *Leodum is minum swylce him mon lac gife; / willað hy hine aþecgan, gif he on preat cymeð* (*Wulf and Eadwacer* 1–2, ‘It is to my people as if someone had given them a gift; they intend to welcome/kill him, if he comes amongst the host’). For discussion of these lines, see P. S. Baker, ‘The Ambiguity of *Wulf and Eadwacer*’, *SP* 78 (1981), 39–51 and now F. J. Rozano-García, ‘*Wulf and Eadwacer*, Eddic Verse, and Aural Aesthetics’, *The Explicator* 79 (2021), 60–8.

English poetic corpus in the context of receiving treasure and a direct parallel for the phrase *þēgon tō þance* can be found in *Guthlac A* in the context of the gifts with which God will reward the faithful.⁴⁹ The metaphorical presentation of the youth as a treasure is developed yet further in the following passage, in which the Mermedonians organize the division and distribution of the precious gift. In a construction that parallels the earlier account of the old man's intention to offer the gift for the crowd's benefit (*syllan wolde...līfes tō lisse*), the Mermedonians decree 'that old and young should receive their share for the support of life' (*duguðe ond eogoðe dæl onfēngon / līfes tō lēofne*, 1122b–3a).⁵⁰

The language of this passage, by invoking the practice of gift exchange, accomplishes a remarkable transformation. In the analogues, the father is presented as a desperate supplicant begging for his life; in these texts it is the Mermedonian people – and specifically their leaders – who occupy the position of authority, who dictate the terms of the exchange, and who ultimately determine the man's fate. The changes wrought by the *Andreas*-poet present the old man instead, however illogically, as a gracious benefactor; the gift of his son, presented metaphorically as a valuable treasure, is gratefully received by a seemingly-dependent population, establishing a relationship of reciprocal good will between the two parties. So complete is this transformation that the father's status as prisoner and prospective victim seems to be entirely forgotten in the Old English poem, so that the release and reprieve of a man who, moments before, had been depicted as bound in chains (*fetorwrāsnūm fæst*, 1107a) and despairing of life (*fēores ōrwēna*, 1107b), is passed over in silence.⁵¹

Taken at face value, the poet's distinctive presentation of this episode is difficult to account for, running as it does counter to both the narrative logic of the situation and, we can assume, the treatment of the episode in the poet's source. It is, I think, only when the episode is read against the account of Grendel's first attack in fitt II of *Beowulf* that the rationale behind the poet's adaptation of the underlying legendary material becomes apparent. In the first place, the metaphorical depiction of the youth as a precious gift builds upon the body-as-treasure motif established through the earlier reference to the 'booty' denied the Mermedonians in their raid on the prison. The thematic parallel with Grendel's more successful raid is extended to incorporate the *Beowulf*-poet's grimly ironic contrast between literal and non-literal currencies: the Mermedonian preference for the metaphorical treasure represented by the man's son over the literal treasure for which they have no use (*næs him tō mādme wynn*) reflects Grendel's disdain of treasure (*māþðum formetode*) in favour of the more gruesome levy that he exacts each night in the form of human plunder.⁵²

The use of the body-as-treasure motif in these respective fitts, and the opposition between literal and corporeal treasures, generates irony when viewed in a wider context. In *Beowulf*, the wryly ironical payoff for the development of these themes in fitt II comes later

⁴⁹ [*H*]e him dæda lean / georne gielded, þam þe his giefe willað / þicgan to þonce (*Guthlac A* 123b–5a, 'he will gladly grant a reward for their deeds to those who wish to receive his gifts gratefully'). See also *Fortunes of Men* 75b–6.

⁵⁰ The half-line *duguþ ond geoguþ* occurs earlier in *Andreas* in a similar context, referring to the Mermedonians' intention to slaughter Matthew and then distribute his body amongst old and young (*ond þonne tōdælan duguðe ond geogoðe*, 152). Elsewhere, this half-line occurs only in *Beowulf*: first, in a passage from fitt II describing Grendel's persecution of the community of Danes (160b); second, in alliterative collocation with the noun *dæl*, as Wealhtheow gives a portion of the treasure-cup to young and old at the feast following Beowulf's arrival (*duguþe ond geogoþe dæl æghwylcne, / sincefato sealde*, 621–2a); third, after Beowulf's victory over Grendel's Mother, when the hero assures Hrothgar that he and all his men might sleep peacefully in Heorot henceforth (1674a).

⁵¹ The Latin text, by contrast, specifically states that, after handing over his children, the man is dismissed unharmed (*ipsum vero dimiserunt inlesum*, *Bearbeitungen*, ed. Blatt, p. 77).

⁵² On the representation and signification of treasure more generally in Old English poetry, see A. Faulkner, 'The Language of Wealth in Old English Literature: From the Conversion to Alfred' (unpubl. DPhil dissertation, University of Oxford, 2019), esp. pp. 31–80. I am indebted to Dr Faulkner for discussion on this point.

in the poem, when the poet applies the same body-as-treasure motif to Grendel's own (dismembered) body following his defeat by Beowulf. Grendel's body is linguistically associated with treasure when, after the battle in Heorot, the hero regrets that he was unable to present Hrothgar with the spectacle of his enemy dead amongst the ornaments of the hall (*fēond on frætewum*, 962a).⁵³ The reference to hall-treasures here in fact recalls the description in fitt II, immediately before the *ġifstōl*-passage, of how Grendel occupied by night the treasure-adorned hall (*sinċfāge sel*, 167a). From disdaining the social function of treasures within Heorot, Grendel is here imaginatively reduced to the status of one of those treasures. Beowulf goes on, moreover, to figure Grendel's severed arm as a sort of deadly payment, a futile and ruinous parody of dispute settlement paid in the only currency that Grendel acknowledges: *Nō þær ænige swā þēah / fēasceaft guma frōfre ġebohte* ('nevertheless, the destitute man by no means bought any comfort there', 972b–3).⁵⁴

In a similar way, the poet again alludes to the idea of corporeal currency when, following the defeat of Grendel's mother, Beowulf beheads her son's corpse. Specifically recalling the description of Grendel's initial raid in fitt II (*on ænne sīð*, 1579b), the poet recalls the body-as-treasure motif by referring to the fifteen Danish corpses with which Grendel leaves the hall, rather incongruously, as *lāðlicu lāc* ('horrific gifts', 1584a). In the following passage, Grendel's own body is again implicitly connected to hall-treasures when the poet tells us that, despite the riches on display in the underwater hall, Beowulf did not take any more treasures (*māðmæhta mā*, 1613a) than the head and the hilt of the giants' sword. Paralleling Grendel's own booty-laden departure from Heorot, Beowulf removes the head specifically to 'repay' Grendel's previous assaults (*forgylðan*, 1577a, 1584b), and head and hilt are subsequently twice described using the unique compound *sælāc* ('sea-gifts', 1624a and 1652a), first when Beowulf leaves the mere and again when he presents them to Hrothgar in token of glory.⁵⁵

In *Andreas*, too, the concern with corporeal over literal wealth developed in fitt X produces irony, but the irony is in this case both intratextual and also specifically intertextual. At the intratextual level, the use of the body-as-treasure motif in fitt X recalls the earlier account of Andrew's departure for Mermedonia. As the saint and his disciples embark upon the divinely-piloted boat which will ferry them to their destination, the poet remarks upon the nobility of the cargo the ship will carry:

æfre ic ne hȳrde
þon cymlicor cēol gehladenne
hēahgestrēonum. Hæleð in sǣton,
þēodnas þrymfulle, þegnas wlitige.⁵⁶

⁵³ On the meaning of *on frætewum* here, see A. Bammesberger, 'The Half-Line *Feond on Frætewum* (*Beowulf* 962a)', *NM* 99 (1998), 237–9.

⁵⁴ L. Lockett, 'The Role of Grendel's Arm in Feud, Law, and the Narrative Strategy of *Beowulf*', *Latin Learning and English Lore: Studies in Anglo-Saxon Literature for Michael Lapidge*, ed. K. O'Brien O'Keeffe and A. Orchard, 2 vols. (Toronto, 2005) I, 368–88, at 372–5.

⁵⁵ Here, and at 1584a, the element *(-)lāc* is sometimes translated 'booty' (see, for example, *Klaeber's Beowulf*, ed. Fulk et al, p. 462 s.v. *sæl-lāc*; *The Beowulf Manuscript*, ed. and trans. Fulk, pp. 192–3; *Beowulf*, ed. and trans. Liuzza, 148–51). Such a translation captures well the body-as-treasure motif employed by the poet, but does not capture the poet's grimly humorous allusion to gift exchange – an allusion that recalls and might conceivably have motivated the *Andreas*-poet's own parodic invocation of gift exchange. Beowulf's willingness to engage in this unnatural form of exchange might be seen as further evidence of the poet's exploration of 'the limits of the human and the monstrous' (K. O'Brien O'Keeffe, 'Beowulf, Lines 702b–836: Transformations and the Limits of the Human', *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* 23 (1981), 484–94, at 491).

⁵⁶ *Andreas* 360b–3, 'I never heard of a ship more choicely laden with high-treasures. The heroes, glorious princes, fair thanes, sat within.'

As has been often noted, these lines – which have no equivalent in the analogues – appear to have been modelled upon the *Beowulf*-poet's account of the ship-funeral of Scyld Scefing near the beginning of that poem:

þær wæs mādma fela
of feorwegum frætwa gēlāded.
Ne hȳrde ic cȳmlicor cēol gēgyrwan
hildewæpnum ond heaðowædum,
billum ond byrnum; him on bearme læg
mādma mænigo, þā him mid scoldon
on flōdes æht feor gēwītan.
Nalæs hī hine lāssan lācum tēodan,
þēodgēstrēonum, þonne þā dydon
þē hine æt frumsceaft forð onsendon
ænne ofer yðe umborwesende.⁵⁷

But while the passage in *Beowulf* sees the narrator praise at length the royal treasures which accompany Scyld on his solitary voyage, in *Andreas* it is the disciple and his companions who are metaphorically described as 'high-treasures'.⁵⁸ This use, early in the poem, of the body-as-treasure motif to describe the ship's holy cargo provides a counterpoint to the later use of this same motif in the context of the Mermedonians' cannibalistic lusts. At the same time, however, the *Andreas*-poet's engagement with fitt II of *Beowulf* provides a more pointed, intertextual irony for the use of this motif in fitt X. In *Beowulf*, Grendel's preference for somatic riches over material treasure frustrates, as noted above, customary mechanisms for avoiding violent conflict (specifically compensation, tribute, and gift exchange). In *Andreas*, by contrast, the same preference on the part of the Mermedonian people in fact facilitates the old man's successful attempt to divert a similar threat of violence (from himself, at least) through the custom of gift giving. The metaphorical depiction of the youth as a gift object represents a perverse inversion of the Danish concern with *wergild*, signalling the fact that for the pre-conversion Mermedonians, as for Grendel, violent death is the only currency of exchange.

METOD HĪE NE CŪPON: SOCIAL DISINTEGRATION AND RECOURSE TO IDOLATRY

In the Latin and Greek texts of the apocryphal legend on which *Andreas* is based it is stated quite simply that, following the loss of their prisoners, the Mermedonians draw lots to determine who should be the first to die in order to feed the people. In the Latin text in particular, this process is presented in terms of a civic assembly:

⁵⁷ *Beowulf* 36b–46, 'Many a treasure, an ornament, was carried there from far-ways. I never heard of a ship more choicely decked-out with battle-weapons and war-clothing, swords and mailcoats; a multitude of treasures lay on his breast, which had to travel far with him into the flood's possession. By no means did they furnish him with fewer gifts, royal treasures, than did they who sent him forth in the beginning, alone over the waves, as a child.'

⁵⁸ On this parallel, see especially Leneghan, 'Departure of the Hero', pp. 120–8 and *passim*. Leneghan points out that the detail discussed here is part of a more extensive thematic formula which he calls 'the departure of the hero by ship' found not only in *Beowulf* and *Andreas*, but also in the poems of Cynewulf. See also Dumitrescu, 'Beowulf and Andreas', p. 264.

Collecti autem omnes seniores civitatis, quasi ducentos septem, et duxerunt eos in concilio, ut super quem sors deveniretur, esset eorum in cibum, et sang[ul]is ipsius in potum. Mittentes vero sor[tem], et cecidit sors super septem seniores.⁵⁹

The *Andreas*-poet similarly describes the assembly of the Mermedonians, translating the civic assembly of the Latin text in familiar cultural terms. The meeting is presented in *Andreas* as a traditional *gemōt* ('assembly', 1059b) located by a boundary path (*be mearcpaðe*, 1061b) – a description that reflects the realities of early medieval England, where such assemblies were often held on significant territorial boundaries.⁶⁰ The use of the participial adjective *mæðelhēgende* ('assembly-holding', 1096b), which, outside *Andreas*, occurs only in Cynewulf's *Elene* (279a), describes the Mermedonians' actions in terms that play into a particular emphasis on communal agency in the first half of fitt X. The account of the expedition to the prison in lines 1067–71, quoted above, is notable for the piling up of appositive noun phrases indicating the collective action of the Mermedonians (*side herigeas, / folces frumgāras; wārlēasra werod...hæðne hildfrecan*), and we see the same thing in the subsequent description of the assembly of the people (*lēode ... burgwara*, 1093b–4a; *beornas ... wīggendra prēat*, 1094b–5a). This emphatic depiction of collective activity stands in strong contrast, however, to the individuality of the old man subsequently selected by lot to be sacrificed to their communal hunger:

Ðā was eall geador
tō þām þingstede þēod gesamnod,
lēton him þā betwēonum taan wīsian
hwylcne hira ærest oðrum sceolde
tō foddurþege fēores ongyldan;
hluton hellcraftum, hæðengildum
teledon betwinum. Ðā se tān gehwearf
efne ofer ænne ealdgesīða,
sē was ūðweota eorla dugode,
heriges on ore; hraðe siððan wearð
fetorwrāsum fast, fēores orwēna.⁶¹

In this carefully controlled narrative sequence attention shifts for the first time in the poem from the Mermedonians as a group to an individual member of that group. Collective agency is fragmented when the focus of communal violence turns from the outsiders represented by the foreign prisoners and is redirected against members of the community itself.

As noted above, the emphasis on the individual victim singled out by the casting of lots appears to be an innovation on the part of the *Andreas*-poet. The shift from seven prospective victims to one – and, subsequently, from son and daughter to simply son – heightens the sense of the fragmentation of the Mermedonian community following the loss of the captives, but it also mirrors the prominent movement from communal life to individualized self-interest that stands at the heart of fitt II of *Beowulf*. One of the prime effects of Grendel's raids is the social disintegration of the formerly united Danish community. As a result of his

⁵⁹ *Bearbeitungen*, ed. Blatt, p. 77, 'Then all the elders of the city, some two-hundred and seven of them, were gathered together and they brought them to council, in order that whichever one upon whom the lot should fall might be their food, and the blood of that same man their drink. Truly, they cast the lot, and it fell upon seven elders.'

⁶⁰ *Andreas*, ed. North and Bintley, p. 83.

⁶¹ *Andreas* 1097b–1107, 'When the nation was all gathered at the assembly place, they let the lot determine between them which one of them first had to give up life as a meal for the others; they cast lots through hellish arts, with heathen practices they determined between themselves. Then the lot turned straight towards one old companion. He was a counsellor to the troop of warriors, at the forefront of the host; quickly then he was fast in fetter-chains, despairing of life.'

attacks, the noble company (*æpelinga gedriht*, 118b) which had previously occupied the hall together is divided, each man seeking for himself a safer resting place elsewhere (138–43). The significance of this movement from collective action to individualism is marked out, moreover, through the poet's stylistic technique. Lines 126–54a of *Beowulf* represent an excellent example of the sort of chiasmic patterning sometimes called 'ring composition'.⁶² At the heart of this extended pattern stands the prominent reference to Danish individualism:

| | |
|--|---|
| <p> Dā wæs on ūhtan mid ærdæge Grendles gūðcræft gumum undyrne; þā wæs æfter wiste wōp up āhafen, micel morgenswēg. </p> | <i>a</i> ¹ |
| <p> Mære þēoden, æpeling ærgōd, unblīde sæt, þolode ðrȳðswȳð, þeġnsorge drēah, syðþan hīe þæs lāðan lāst scēawedon, werġan gāstes; wæs þæt ġewin tō strang, lāð ond longsum. </p> | <i>b</i> ¹ |
| <p> ac ymb āne niht Næs hit lengra fyrst, morðbeala mære, eft ġefremede fæhðe ond fyrene; ond nō mearn fore, wæs tō fæst on þām. </p> | <i>c</i> ¹ |
| <p> Þā wæs ēaðfynde þē him elles hwær ġerūmlicor ræste sōhte, bed æfter būrum, ðā him ġebēacnod wæs, ġesæġd sōðlīce sweotolan tæcne healðeġnes hete; hēold hyne syðþan fyr ond fæstor sē þām fēonde ætwand. </p> | <i>d</i> ¹ <i>a</i> [*] <i>d</i> ² |
| <p> Swā rīxode ond wið rihte wan, āna wið eallum, oð þæt īdel stōd hūsa sēlest. </p> | <i>c</i> ² |
| <p> twelf wintra tīd Wæs sēo hwīl miçel: wine Scyldinga, torn ġeþolode sīdra sorga. wēana ġehwelcne, </p> | <i>b</i> ² |
| <p> ylða bearnum, Forðām [ġesȳne] wearð ġyddum ġeōmore undyrne cūð hwīle wið Hrōþġār, þætte Grendel wan fyrene ond fæhðe hetenīðas wæg, singāle sæce.⁶³ fela missera, </p> | <i>a</i> ² |

⁶² J. D. Niles has defined 'ring composition' as 'a chiasmic design in which the last element in a series in some way echoes the first, the next to the last the second, and so on'; he further notes the tendency for such patterns to centre upon 'a single kernel, which may serve as the key element' ('Ring Composition and the Structure of *Beowulf*', *PMLA* 94 (1979), 924–35, at 924).

⁶³ *Beowulf* 126–54a, 'Then before dawn in the early hours Grendel's war-craft was revealed to men; then was weeping raised up after the feast, a great morning-song. The illustrious leader, the proven noble, sat, unhappy, the powerful one suffered, endured thane-sorrow, after they examined the tracks of the enemy, of the cursed spirit; that conflict was too harsh, hostile and lasting. It was not a longer space of time, but after one night he again performed more slaughter, feud and crime, and did not regret it. Then that one was easily found who sought a bed for himself amongst the sleeping quarters, a more distant resting place elsewhere, when the hall-thane's hate was made clear to him, declared truly with a clear sign; he kept himself thereafter further off and safer, who escaped that enemy. So [Grendel] reigned and strove against justice, alone against all, until the best

The opening section of this chiasmic pattern (*a*¹) describes the immediate aftereffects of Grendel's first raid: his hostility is made manifest to the surviving Danes, whose weeping is metaphorized as a 'great morning-song'.⁶⁴ In the following section (*b*¹), attention focuses upon Hrothgar, identified by epithets that stress his responsibilities as ruler, emphasizing the sorrow he endures. After a statement of Grendel's continued aggression (*c*¹), the central portion of the passage focuses on the individual, rather than societal, response to Grendel's attacks. There is a repetition here of what might be seen as the governing background motif of the passage – the manifestation of Grendel's enmity (*a*^{*}) – but here in the context of an individual response, contained within the twofold description of the (hypothetical) Dane seeking for himself a safer resting place (*d*¹, *d*²). The self-interest of this individual response is stressed by the repeated third-person singular pronouns, notably in those constructions employing, firstly, the dative of personal advantage (*him ... sōhte*) and, subsequently, a reflexive pronoun (*hēold hyne*). The second half of the passage completes the chiasmic structure. Following a second statement of Grendel's continued tyranny of the Danish society (*c*²), attention turns again to 'the lord of the Scyldings' and the sorrow that he suffers (*b*²). In the concluding section of the passage (*a*²), there is a third and final reference to how Grendel's hostility was revealed, as word of his depredations spreads among 'the children of men'. In these final lines, the grimly ironic reference to 'a great morning song' in section *a*¹ is literalized in the 'sorrowful songs' by means of which the Danish plight is conveyed to the wider world.

This chiasmic structure, together with the repeated vocabulary and synonymous phrases that link the various movements of the passage (highlighted here in bold), masterfully suggests the stasis afflicting the helpless Danes.⁶⁵ It is impossible to say whether or not the *Andreas*-poet recognized the *Beowulf*-poet's use of ring composition in this passage, although it represents a demonstration of poetic skill and narrative control which we might reasonably expect to have commended itself to another poet. What is clear, however, is that the underlying thematic concern of the passage – the demonstration of how violence from without disrupts the normal operations of society – is reflected in the emphasis on the conflict between the individual and the collective in the account of the Mermedonian response to the hunger with which they are oppressed. As Grendel, acting alone against the community (*āna wið eallum*, 145a), brings about the fragmentation of the community of Heorot, so too the lots that determine between the Mermedonians, distinguishing the individual (*ēnne*) from the rest (*ōðrum*), signal the introduction of an individualized self-interest at odds with the good of the community. In this context, the Mermedonian councillor's determination to save his own

of houses stood empty. That was a long time; for the space of twelve winters the lord of the Scyldings suffered hardship, each type of misery, of great sorrows. Therefore it became evident to the children of men, revealed and known through sorrowful songs, that Grendel fought with Hrothgar for a long time, carried out acts of hateful violence, crime and feud, for many a season, continuous strife.'

⁶⁴ The noun *swēg* is used in the poem to describe the characteristic sounds of the hall – either the background noise of feasting (644a, 1214b, and in the compound *benčswēg* at 1161a) or, more specifically, music and song (89b, 1063a, 2458b, and 3023b). Its use here in the unique compound *morgenswēg* appears to draw metaphorically on the latter connotations. A comparable usage occurs at line 782b (*swēg up āstāg*), where Grendel's cries of anguish are described metaphorically and parodically as a 'song of terror' (*gryrelēoð*, 785a) and a 'victoryless song' (*sigēlēasne sang*, 787a).

⁶⁵ Irving likewise notes the 'state of helpless inaction' afflicting the Danes in this passage, 'conveyed through many images of sitting, suffering, enduring, looking, thinking' (*Reading*, p. 96). The inverted repetition of line 137a (*fēhðe ond fyrene*) at 153a (*fyrene ond fēhðe*) does not seem to form a part of this pattern, unless perhaps it is intended to link the ending of the two chiasmically arranged sections which surround the central movement of the passage. The half-line is recalled later in the poem, first during the account of the adventures of Sigemund and again during Beowulf's own account of the feud between the Geats and the Swedes (2480a). Cf. A. Orchard, *A Critical Companion to Beowulf* (Cambridge, 2003), p. 109.

skin, even at the cost of his son's life, reads like an extreme reflection of the self-interest of the hypothetical Dane who abandons the communal life of the hall for his own security.

In a further significant development of the presumed source, the *Andreas*-poet infuses the account of the casting of lots, so matter-of-factly presented in the Latin and Greek analogues, with clear ritualistic significance: the Mermedonians cast their lots through hellish arts (*hellcræftum*) and in accordance with heathen practices (*hæðengildum*).⁶⁶ Following the old man's gift of his son, the preparations for the youth's death are further presented in terms that suggest not just slaughter, but specifically sacrifice. As has already been noted, the boy is described as a *lāc* when presented by his father to the bloodthirsty crowd. Although the primary meaning of the word in this context is clearly 'gift', the more specific meaning 'sacrifice' is also relevant. The blood-thirsty Mermedonians who subsequently apprehend the youth are said to be compelled *tō þām beadulāce* (1118b): the rare compound *beadulāc*, found elsewhere only in *Beowulf*, may have originally meant 'battle-play', but in context in *Andreas* the interpretations 'battle-gift' or 'warlike-sacrifice' are equally appropriate. Following his capture, arrangements for the boy's death are directed by heathen temple-guardians (*hæðene herigwardas*, 1124a) and he is subsequently bound before the idol (*gehæfted for herige*, 1127a) to await his fate.⁶⁷

There is nothing in either the Latin or the Greek text to suggest that the poet's source inspired the ritualistic treatment of this episode. But the transformation of the practice of drawing lots into a heathen observance redolent of human sacrifice again aligns the episode in *Andreas* with the aftermath of Grendel's assaults on Heorot. A further outcome of Grendel's hostility is a resort to idol-worship on the part of the persecuted Danes, who are said to offer sacrifices to the 'slayer of souls' in an attempt to secure help against their enemy:

Hwīlum hīe gehēton æt hærgtrafum
wīgweorþunga, wordum bædon
þæt him gāstbona gēoƿce gefremede
wið þēodþrēaum.⁶⁸

The language of this passage is particularly striking, including four poetic compounds in as many lines, three of which occur only here (*hærgtraef*, *gāstbona*, *þēodþrēa*) and one of which (*wīgweorþung*) is found elsewhere only once, in the work of Cynewulf (*Juliana* 180a). Of quite what the sacrifices consisted is left tantalizingly vague; comparison with the preparations for the death of the youth in *Andreas* suggests, however, that at least one early medieval reader connected the Danish idolatry with the practice of human sacrifice.⁶⁹ At any

⁶⁶ The alliterative linking of *hell(-)* and *hæþen(-)* within a single line is, perhaps surprisingly, rare in Old English verse, being restricted to this example from *Andreas* and two examples in *Beowulf* (179 and 852), the first of which occurs during the account of Danish idolatry discussed below.

⁶⁷ Here and elsewhere, the poet appears to pun upon the nouns *hearh* ('idol') and *here* ('armed force'). Cf. *Andreas*, ed. North and Bintley, p. 274, n. to line 1124. On Mermedonian idol worship, cf. lines 1687–94.

⁶⁸ *Beowulf* 175–8a, 'At times they offered sacrifices in idol-shrines, asked with words that the slayer of souls should offer them assistance against the affliction of the nation.'

⁶⁹ The editors of *Klaeber's Beowulf* note that the *Beowulf*-poet's depiction of the pre-Christian Germanic societies 'makes no mention of the more lurid aspects of Germanic paganism, such as human sacrifice' (p. lxxiv). The *Andreas*-poet's introduction of such a motif apparently in response to the account of Danish idolatry thus offers a surprising parallel to the reception of the poem in modern cinema, in which human sacrifice is a near-ubiquitous feature. Cf. N. Haydock, 'Making Sacrifices', in N. Haydock and E. L. Ridsen, *Beowulf on Film: Adaptations and Variations* (Jefferson, NC, 2013), pp. 81–118. The same impulse has been evident in some scholarly responses to *Beowulf*, such as A. Hardy's suggestion that Unferth's role in the society of Heorot is that of a pagan priest, sacrificing his brothers in an attempt to propitiate Grendel ('The Christian Hero Beowulf and Unferð Pyle', *Neophilologus* 53 (1969), 55–69).

rate, the populace in each poem responds to persecution with recourse to heathen observances. Where the Danes of *Beowulf* are beset by a national affliction (*þēodþrēaum*) in the form of Grendel's attacks, the Mermedonians are afflicted by a hunger personified by the poet as a *ðēodsceaða* ('oppressor of the nation', 1115b). There is no parallel in the analogues to *Andreas* for this striking personification. Here, as elsewhere, the poet's departure from the presumed source seems to point up connections between the situation of the Mermedonians and that of the Danes in *Beowulf*. The word *ðēodsceaða* itself is used in *Beowulf* to describe the dragon (2278a and 2688a) and its appearance in *Andreas* recalls the frequent use of *-sceaða* compounds in descriptions of both the dragon and Grendel.⁷⁰ Moreover, personified hunger is presented as tyrannizing (*rīcsode*, 1116a) the Mermedonian people in much the same way that Grendel is depicted as tyrannizing the Danes in fitt II (*rīxode*, 144a).⁷¹ Hunger reigns over Mermedonia just as Grendel reigns by night in Heorot, and on both occasions the tyranny serves as a catalyst for heathen worship.

Following the account of Danish paganism, the *Beowulf*-poet goes on to explain that Hrothgar's people did not know God, the judge of deeds, before shifting to the present tense to offer a gnomic contrast between the fate of the damned, who commit their souls to the fires of hell, and that of the righteous, who seek the Lord and entreat for the protection of the Father's embrace:

Swylc wæs þēaw hyra,
hæþenra hyht; helle ġemundon
in mōdsefan, metod hīe ne cūþon,
dāda dēmend, ne wiston hīe drihten God,
nē hīe hūru heofena helm herian ne cūþon,
wuldres waldend. Wā bið þām ðe sceal
þurh sliðne nīð sāwle bescūfan
in fýres fæþm, frōfre ne wēnan,
wihte ġewendan; wēl bið þām þe mōt
æfter dēaðdæġe drihten sēcean
ond tō fæder fæþmum freoðo wilnian.⁷²

The contrast established here between the false assistance sought by the heathen Danes in their idolatrous worship and the true succour to be found only in God is again reflected in the

⁷⁰ Grendel is termed a *dolsceaða* (479a), a *hearmsceaða* (766a), a *lēodsceaða* (2093b), a *mānsceaða* (712a and 737b), a *scynsceaða* (707a), and a *synsceaða* (801b). The dragon is an *āttorsceaða* (2839a), a *gūdsceaða* (2318a), a *mānsceaða* (2514b), and an *ūhtsceaða* (2271a). Additionally, Grendel's Mother is called a *mānsceaða* (1339a) and the sea-monster that attacks Beowulf in the Breca episode a *fēondsceaða* (554a). Elsewhere in *Andreas*, the unique compounds *folcsceaða* (1593a) and *fyrnsceaða* (1346a) are used to describe the Mermedonian executioners and the devil respectively, while *lēodsceaða* (80a) is used to describe the Mermedonian people as a whole. In both poems, the use of *-sceaða* compounds apparently serves to demonize the individual(s) thus described. The word *þēodsceaða* appears in other verse and prose texts as well, but whereas the first element usually serves to magnify the second ('arch-oppressor'), in both *Beowulf* and *Andreas* the full meaning 'oppressor of the nation' is required. Cf. *Andreas*, ed. North and Bintley, p. 273, n. to line 115.

⁷¹ The verb *rīcsian* occurs only here in *Andreas* and in *Beowulf* only to describe Grendel's unjust rule in Heorot and the dragon's tyranny, the latter placed in direct opposition to Beowulf's just rule (2208b–13a).

⁷² *Beowulf* 178b–88, 'Such was their custom, the hope of heathens; they remembered hell in their hearts. They did not know the creator, the judge of deeds, nor did they comprehend the lord God, nor indeed did they know to praise the protector of heaven, the ruler of glory. It will be woe for those who, through cruel enmity, must shove their soul into the fire's embrace, expect no comfort, any reversal; it will be well for those who might seek the Lord after the day of death and entreat for protection in the Father's embrace.' The *Andreas*-poet apparently borrows the reference to Danish habitual paganism in line 178b when first describing the equally habitual cannibalism of the Mermedonians (*swelc wæs þēaw hira*, 25b). Cf. North, 'Meet the Pagans', pp. 187–8; Ronzano-García, 'Traditional Poetic Diction', p. 185.

account of the persecution of the Mermedonian youth. In the Latin legend, the condemned children beg for mercy, citing their tender years as a reason why they should be spared:

Cum autem ducerent illos ad locum, ut interficerent, ceperunt infantul[i] ill[i] flere amarissime, suppl[ices] volutabantur pedibus carnificum, obsecrantes illos ac dicentes. Rogamus et obsecramus vos, miseremini adolescentie nostre, ne interficiatis nos modo quia infantul[i] sumus, dimictite nos aliquantulum, maxime ut crescamus, et tu[n]c nos interficite.⁷³

The Greek text contains the same scene, with an additional aside to the effect that it was the Mermedonian custom to consume, rather than to bury, their dead.⁷⁴ In neither text do the executioners pay any attention to the youths' pleas. By comparison, the equivalent scene in *Andreas* seems more pointed:

Da se geonga ongann geōmran stefne,
gehæfted for herige, hearmlēoð galan,
frēonda fēasceaft, friðes wilnian;
ne mihte earmsceapen āre findan,
freoðe æt þām folce, þe him fēores wolde,
aldres geunnan.⁷⁵

Again, the treatment of this episode serves the *Andreas*-poet's well-documented interest in Christological typology. The description of the youth's plight juxtaposes two well-defined lexical sets. In the first place, the youth is associated with sorrow (*geōmran stefne*), captivity (*gehæfted*), pain (*hearmlēoð galan*), deprivation (*fēasceaft*), and wretchedness (*earmsceapen*). In the context of Old English religious poetry, this terminology is strongly suggestive of the lamentations of the captives of hell, a popular poetic motif. This connection seems to be confirmed later in the poem, when the devil is similarly described as a captive singing a song of pain (*helle hæftling*, *hearmleoð galan*, 1342), and the spokesman of his demonic retinue is, like the youth, termed an *earmsceapen* (1345a).⁷⁶ At the same time, however, the poet appropriates the language of Christian prayer, foregrounding the concept of salvation: the boy seeks grace (*āre*), protection (*freoðe*), and, in a half-line that closely echoes the *Beowulf*-poet's gnomic pronouncement, peace (*friðes wilnian*), with life represented as a gift to be granted (*geunnan*). In a poem marked by such dense typological referentiality, the combination of lamentation and petition in these lines evokes, I suggest, the situation of the prophets and patriarchs in hell awaiting the coming of Christ at the Harrowing (and, more generally, that of the penitent Christian anticipating release from the worldly prison).⁷⁷ The connection is, however, parodic, in the sense that the youth's petition is misdirected: his pleas for grace are addressed not to God, but to his persecutors (*æt þām folce*).⁷⁸

⁷³ *Bearbeitungen*, ed. Blatt, pp. 77–9, 'But when they led them to that place in order to kill them, the children began to cry most bitterly, writhing in supplication at the feet of the executioners, entreating them and saying: "We beg you and entreat you, that you take pity on our youth. Do not kill us now, for we are children. Send us away for a while, so that we may grow fully, and then kill us."'

⁷⁴ *Bearbeitungen*, ed. Blatt, pp. 76–8; *Acts of Andrew*, trans. Boenig, pp. 15–16.

⁷⁵ *Andreas* 1126–31a, 'Then the youth, bereft of friends, bound before the idol, began to sing a harm-song with a sorrowful voice, to implore peace; the wretch could not find in that people the grace, protection, that would grant him life, his existence.'

⁷⁶ The poet's choice of vocabulary may have been influenced by Cynewulf's description of the devil who accosts the imprisoned saint in *Juliana* (cf. lines 244b–6, 418a, 615 and 629).

⁷⁷ On the importance of the Harrowing as a touch-point for the typological structure of the poem, see Hieatt, 'Harrowing of Mermedonia'.

⁷⁸ The presentation of the youth's pleas invites comparison with two other moments in the poem, likewise imbued with typological significance, in which first Matthew and then Andrew (both, like the youth, held captive by the Mermedonian people) offer up a petition for help. During his initial incarceration, Matthew,

Like the devil-worshipping Danes, then, the youth seeks help from an ironically inappropriate source and, as in *Beowulf*, the contrast is pointed up by the *Andreas*-poet in a moment of self-conscious narratorial commentary. In all versions of the hagiographic legend, God intervenes at this point in the narrative to prevent the slaughter of the youth(s): in the Latin text, as in the Old English poem, the executioners' swords miraculously melt; in the Greek legend, the swords simply fall from their hands. In both the Latin and Greek texts, however, this miraculous reprieve is the direct result of Andrew's prayers on behalf of the youths, whereas in *Andreas* the saint pities the youth but does not explicitly intercede for him.⁷⁹ The salvific agency comes from God alone, and where in the analogues Andrew is said to have praised the Lord following the miracle, in *Andreas* it is the poet who undertakes this act of thanksgiving:

Gode ealles þanc,
dryhtna dryhtne, þæs ðe hē dōm gifeð
gumena gehwylcum, þāra þe gēoce tō him
sēceð mid snytrum; þær bið symle gearu
frēod unhwīlen, þām þe hīe findan cann.⁸⁰

The language of this moment of explicitly didactic commentary clearly refers back to the description of the youth's pleas, establishing God as the true source of the help (*gēoce*) and peace (*frēod*) which the youth could not find amongst his own people. But the sudden interjection of the narrative voice, the move to a universalizing present tense, the emphasis on the Lord's role as judge, the use of the gnomic construction with *bið*, and the promise of salvation to those who seek it all bring this moment in *Andreas* into line with the equivalent narratorial intervention in *Beowulf*.⁸¹

This passage from *Andreas* not only recalls the similarly didactic passage in fitt II of *Beowulf*, but also fulfils a similar structural role. In *Beowulf*, the dramatic intrusion of the narratorial viewpoint occurs at the end of fitt II, providing an effective conclusion to the account of Grendel's twelve-year reign of terror contained in this section of the poem.⁸² In *Andreas*, the lines praising God as the source of all true security occupy a similar position as

awaiting the 'harrowing' of the Mermedonian prison, weeps weary tears (*wēregum tēarum*, 59b) and, speaking with a sorrowful voice (*sārgan reorde*, 60b; *geōmran stefne*, 61b), asks grace from God (*forgif mē tō āre*, 76a); in response, Matthew receives a pledge of peace (*sybbe under swegle*, 98a) from a heavenly voice. In a later section of the poem, following three days of torture at the hands of the cannibals that represent his own *imitatio Christi*, Andrew calls to God from captivity with a holy voice (*heard of hæfte, hālgan stefne*, 1399); weeping (*wēop wērigferð*, 1400) and sad at mind (*geōmormōd*, 1398a), he is likewise promised peace (*frīde*, 1432b) and protection (*mundbyrde*, 1433a). The comparison of these similar situations — pointed up by verbal echoes — reinforces the point that the youth, unlike the saints but like the pagan Danes, does not know where his true succour lies.

⁷⁹ Cf. *Bearbeitungen*, ed. Blatt, pp. 78–9; *Acts of Andrew*, trans. Boenig, pp. 16 and 47.

⁸⁰ *Andreas* 1150b–4, 'Thanks be to God, the Lord of lords, for all things, because he gives justice to every person who wisely seeks assistance from him; unending peace is always ready there for the one who knows how to find it.'

⁸¹ The *Beowulf*-poet's emphasis on Danish ignorance also finds a pointed parallel in fitt X of *Andreas*. Whereas in *Beowulf* the Danes are said to consider what counsel might be best for them in the face of Grendel's persecution (*ræd eahtedon, / hwæt swīðferhðum sēlest wære*, 172b–3), the starving Mermedonians know no better counsel (*nyston beteran ræd*, 1088b) than to consume the bodies of the dead gaolers. This half-line from *Andreas* closely resembles the statement in the Old English *Daniel* that the people of Babylon 'knew no better counsel' (*ne wiston wræstran ræd*, 182b) when they undertook to worship the idol of Dura. On the similarities between the *Daniel*-poet's account of Babylonian idol worship and the account of Danish paganism in *Beowulf*, see P. G. Thomas, 'Beowulf' and 'Daniel A', *MLR* 8 (1913), 537–9; A. Orchard, 'Beowulf', *The Cambridge Companion to Old English Literature*, ed. M. Godden and M. Lapidge, 2nd ed. (Cambridge, 2013), pp. 137–58, at 152–4.

⁸² Cf. P. Cavill, *Maxims in Old English Poetry* (Woodbridge, 1999), pp. 22, 104–5 and 184–5.

the conclusion of fitt X, bringing to an end the account of the attempted sacrifice of the youth. Fitt X is not the only fitt in *Andreas* that ends on a specifically didactic note, sometimes including a present-tense narratorial comment.⁸³ The parallels with the end of *Beowulf* fitt II are compelling, however, not least because of the conspicuous way in which the transition from fitt X to fitt XI in *Andreas* seems to imitate the transition between fitts II and III in *Beowulf*.

Fitt XI of *Andreas* begins by depicting a seemingly protracted period of widespread grief and confusion caused by the continued hunger of the Mermedonian people:

þā wæs wōp hæfen in wera burgum,
hlūd heriges cyrm; hrēopan friccan,
māendon metelēaste, mēðe stōdon
hunger gehæfte. Hornsalu wunedon
wēste, wīnræced; welan ne benohton
beornas tō brūcenne on þā bitran tīd.
Gesæton searuþancle sundor tō rune,
earmðu eahtigan; næs him tō ēðle wynn.⁸⁴

Once again, the focus of these lines is on the social ramifications of the Mermedonians' distress: the poet stresses the debilitating effects of the people's hunger and again highlights their lack of interest in worldly wealth. Perhaps the most striking feature of this passage, however, is the way in which it seems again to allude directly to the situation of Hrothgar's Danes. The combination of images of weeping, empty feasting halls, and men at counsel once more recalls details from fitt II of *Beowulf*, reading, in fact, very much like a condensation of three separate passages describing the implications of Grendel's raids:

þā wæs æfter wiste wōp up āhafen,
micel morgenswēg.⁸⁵

Swā rīxode ond wið rihte wan,
āna wið eallum, oð þæt īdel stōd
hūsa sēlest.⁸⁶

Monig oft gesæt,
rīce tō rune; ræd eahtedon,
hwæt swiðferhðum sēlest wære
wið færgryrum tō gefremmanne.⁸⁷

Taken individually, the similarities with these passages might not seem unduly significant and might be explained in terms of conventional poetic depictions of grief. In view of the evidence presented here for the *Andreas*-poet's sustained engagement with *Beowulf* fitt II,

⁸³ E.g. the end of fitts I (118–21), II (225–9), and IX (1053b–7). Several fitts end with similar didactic comments voiced by one or other character within the narrative: e.g. fitts V (595–600), VIII (947b–9), and XV (1717–22).

⁸⁴ *Andreas* 1155–62, 'Then was weeping raised up in the dwellings of men, the loud tumult of the army; the messengers shouted, decried the lack of food, they stood, weary, constrained by hunger. The gabled-buildings, the wine-halls, stood desolate; men did not enjoy the use of wealth in that bitter time. Men of cunning thought sat apart in council, pondered their misery; there was no joy in that homeland for them.'

⁸⁵ *Beowulf* 128–9a, 'Then was weeping raised up after the feast, a great morning-song.'

⁸⁶ *Beowulf* 144–6a, 'So [Grendel] reigned and strove against justice, alone against all, until the best of houses stood empty.'

⁸⁷ *Beowulf* 171b–4, 'Often many a powerful one sat in council; they pondered a course of action, what might be best for the stout-hearted ones to do against the sudden assaults.'

however, such an explanation does not stand up, especially when the passage from *Andreas* is compared to other versions of the underlying legend.

In both the Latin and Greek analogues, the despair of the Mermedonians following the reprieve of the youth is expressed briefly and perfunctorily, before the narrative continues, with no apparent change of time or scene, with the appearance of a disguised devil.⁸⁸ There is no warrant in either text for the extended lamentations described in the Old English poem. Noting the suspension of ‘temporal unities’ at this point in the poem, North and Bintley explain the divergence from the presumed source by suggesting that the poet is ‘measuring time by the emotions of depressed Mermedonian cannibals’.⁸⁹ This may be so, but it is perhaps more significant that the reference to *þā bitran tīd* experienced by the Mermedonians finds a precise analogue in the reference to the long-lasting *mǣlcēaru* (‘sorrow of that time’) endured by Hrothgar and his followers at the beginning of fitt III of *Beowulf*:

Swā ðā mǣlcēare maga Healfdenes
singāla sēað; ne mihte snotor hǣleð
wēan onwendan; wæs þæt ġewin tō swyðð,
lāþ ond longsum, þē on ðā lēode becōm,
nȳdwracu niþgrim, nihtbealwa mǣst.⁹⁰

In both cases, the beginning of a new fitt is marked by means of a summative passage which recapitulates and elaborates the narrative situation. This recapitulation is particularly evident in *Beowulf*, as the reference in this passage to Hrothgar’s powerlessness in the face of overwhelming hostility (*wæs þæt ġewin tō swyðð, / lāþ ond longsum*) echoes the account of the king’s reaction to Grendel’s first attack in lines 133b–4a (quoted above).⁹¹ In each poem, moreover, the conclusion of one fitt on a moment of didactic present-tense narratorial comment is followed at the beginning of the next fitt by a retrospective account of a period of protracted sorrow and helplessness. In the case of *Andreas*, this sequence is, as we have seen, highly unlikely to have been inspired by the poet’s source. It is far more likely that the transition between fitt X and fitt XI was directly modelled upon the transition between fitts II and III in *Beowulf*. The comparison of these two transitions also points up a further example of the sort of antithesis so often evident in the *Andreas*-poet’s allusions to *Beowulf*. In *Beowulf*, the recapitulation of Danish sorrow at the beginning of fitt III immediately precedes the introduction of a saviour in the form of the poem’s (initially nameless) hero (194–8a). In a disconcerting parallel, the recapitulation of Mermedonian distress which begins fitt XI is followed by the first appearance of the devil in the poem, a much less certain answer to the people’s need (1168–9).

CONCLUSIONS

The correspondences identified here are mostly not the sort of verbal parallels on which arguments for the influence of *Beowulf* on *Andreas* have typically focused. Whilst there is, as has been indicated above, some overlap in the diction of the two fitts, this does not, for the most part, consist of the sorts of rare terms, distinctive compounds, and repeated collocations which have been the main subject of scholarly attention to date. Fitt X of *Andreas* does, in

⁸⁸ *Bearbeitungen*, ed. Blatt, pp. 78–9; *Acts of Andrew*, trans. Boenig, pp. 16 and 47.

⁸⁹ *Andreas*, ed. North and Bintley, p. 275, n. to line 1160b.

⁹⁰ *Beowulf* 189–93, ‘So then the son of Healfdene continually brooded over the sorrow of the moment; the wise man could not remove that woe; that conflict was too great, hostile and lasting, which came upon the people, the cruel persecution, the most severe of nocturnal attacks.’

⁹¹ The editors of *Klaeber’s Beowulf* note the tendency, here and elsewhere in the poem, to begin a fitt with what they call a ‘resumptive paragraph’ (*Klaeber’s Beowulf*, p. xxxv).

fact, like the rest of the poem, display a veneer of ‘Beowulfian’ phraseology, but the phrases in question are not in this instance drawn from the account of the Danish response to Grendel’s attacks; conversely, the *Andreas*-poet does indeed seem to borrow formulaically from material in fitt II of *Beowulf*, but these borrowings are not found in the section outlining the Mermedonian response to the captives’ release.⁹² Despite this lack of conspicuous verbal parallels between the two passages, however, the above analysis strongly suggests that the *Andreas*-poet’s account of the discovery of the empty prison and the subsequent despair of the Mermedonian people, which differs significantly in matters of detail from the Latin and Greek analogues, has been systematically modelled upon the passage in *Beowulf* describing Grendel’s first attack on Heorot and the helplessness and sorrow of the Danes.

Several implications follow from this suggestion, as regards both the *Andreas*-poet’s engagement with *Beowulf* and our understanding of the textual history of the earlier poem. One such implication concerns the starting point of this essay: the interpretative difficulties of *Beowulf* 168–9 and the various attempts that have been made to resolve or alleviate them. It has been suggested above that the reading *māþðum formetode* for *Beowulf* 169a provides a reasonable interpretation of these troublesome lines and that, understood in this way, the lines can be seen to participate in the development of a body-as-treasure motif in fitt II more generally. No more definitive statement than this seems possible, but in assessing the pros and cons of the reading supported here we must, I suggest, take into account the efforts of not one, but two early medieval readers whose interpretations of the poem, very different as they are, remain available to us.

The first of these readers is the figure known as scribe A, who was responsible for copying these lines in the surviving manuscript. This individual read the poem in an older (perhaps much older), possibly faulty exemplar, which they reproduced more or less faithfully in the course of their work.⁹³ While the work of scribe A, together with that of scribe B, is the basis of almost all that we know about the poem which they collaboratively reproduced, their evidence is, in this instance, decidedly ambiguous. It is impossible to say whether scribe A intended this sequence of letter forms to be read as one word or as two. Even if it were possible to determine with any confidence what the scribe intended to write in this instance, a more fundamental problem would still remain concerning the degree to which early medieval scribes were alert to the wider sense of the texts that they copied. Recent work by Leonard Neidorf has advanced a compelling argument that patterns of apparent ‘corruptions’ in the text of *Beowulf* support a ‘lexemic’ model of scribal copying according to which the scribes who produced our copy of the poem in (probably) the early eleventh century are held to have processed their exemplar lexeme by lexeme with a view ‘to modernize and Saxonize the orthography of the text, not to discern its formal qualities or interpret its deeper meaning’.⁹⁴ This theory of scribal practice could account for a hypothetical situation in which a scribe faced with a rare and unfamiliar verb form like **formetode* in their exemplar might, through a process of trivialization, rationalize the difficult reading as the familiar prepositional phrase *for metode*.⁹⁵ In this case, however, such scribal misinterpretation would not be reflected in any substantive alteration of the

⁹² For full details, see Powell, ‘Verbal Parallels’, pp. 325, and 273, 276 and 279–80. The only parallel identified by Powell which appears in both passages under consideration here is the echo of *Beowulf* 128b in *Andreas* 1155a (discussed above).

⁹³ Cf. M. Lapidge, ‘The Archetype of *Beowulf*’, *ASE* 29 (2000), 5–41.

⁹⁴ L. Neidorf, *The Transmission of Beowulf: Language, Culture, and Scribal Behaviour* (Ithaca, 2017), p. 157.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.* pp. 62–8. On the phrase *for metode*, see above, p. 00/3, n. 10. Cf. *Beowulf* 489b, where the scribal form *meoto* has been variously understood as either an error for **meota* (‘think’), an imperative form of the same rare verb stem found in **formetian*, or as a form of a related and equally rare noun **me(o)tu* (‘thought’). See further, Bammesberger, ‘Five *Beowulf* Notes’, p. 274, n. 31; Klaeber’s *Beowulf*, ed. Fulk *et al.*, pp. 147–8, n. to lines 489bf.; Tolkien, *Beowulf*, p. 251.

transmitted text. In fact, Neidorf's conclusions regarding the lack of scribal attention to the deeper-than-lexemic meaning of a text would tend to suggest that the interpretative difficulties of lines like *Beowulf* 168–9 which have so exercised modern editors and textual critics might have been virtually invisible to the individuals who copied them.

Eric Stanley, writing in opposition to what he saw as injudicious emendation of Old English poetical texts, famously declared in 1984 that even the most inattentive of scribes 'knew his living Old English better than the best modern editor of Old English verse'.⁹⁶ Stanley's dictum, represented as an abdication of editorial responsibility in the face of difficult textual readings, has become something of a target in recent years.⁹⁷ To place this gloss on Stanley's statement is, however, to misrepresent his argument. Stanley's paper, taken as a whole, is manifestly not (as it has sometimes been presented) either a defence of the accuracy of scribal readings or a rejection of critical editing *per se*.⁹⁸ It is not the need to identify passages of seeming corruption that Stanley challenges, but rather the certainty of scholars who believe that they can reconstruct more surely a supposed authorial original. In making this argument, Stanley draws a double distinction: between early medieval scribes and modern editors on the one hand, but also between scribes and poets on the other, pointing out that 'most scribes may not have been the equals in Old English of the best Old English poets'.⁹⁹ This distinction is relevant in the case of the *gīfstōl*-passage, where we have available to us not only the ambiguous evidence of scribe A, but also, I believe, indications of how this passage was understood by an accomplished poet who was also a careful reader of a (lost) scribal text of *Beowulf*.

The poet of *Andreas* appears to have read the poem as a poem with careful attention to its many nuances. Our ability to reconstruct the interpretations of such a reader will, of course, remain subjective and open to challenge; such inferences as we might draw cannot, moreover, be taken as a sure indicator of definitive or authorial readings. In the overwhelming majority of cases, early medieval readers encountering Old English poetry in manuscript form must have constituted imperfect readers of imperfect texts in the same way, though perhaps not always to the same degree, as modern editors and textual critics. But the *Andreas*-poet's understanding of these lines must presumably have arisen from a concern with the meaning of the passage beyond that required of a scribe engaged in 'lexemic' reproduction of an exemplar. In this sense, their testimony, contentious as it might be, is valuable. If the argument expressed above is accepted – if, that is, the account of the Mermedonian response to the loss of their prisoners has been redrawn in *Andreas* in a way intended deliberately and meaningfully to recall the Danish response to Grendel's attacks in *Beowulf* fitt II – then there is good reason to think that the poet of *Andreas* saw in line 169 of *Beowulf* a statement to the effect that Grendel did not care for treasure, not a divine

⁹⁶ E. G. Stanley, 'Unideal Principles of Editing Old English Verse', *PBA* 70 (1984), 231–73, at 257.

⁹⁷ See, for example, M. Lapidge, 'Textual Criticism and the Literature of Anglo-Saxon England', *Textual and Material Culture in Anglo-Saxon England: Thomas Northcote Toller and the Toller Memorial Lectures*, ed. D. Scragg (Woodbridge, 2003), pp. 107–36, at 129–30; L. Neidorf, 'Scribal Errors of Proper Names in the *Beowulf* Manuscript', *ASE* 42 (2013), 249–69, at 267–8 and *Transmission of Beowulf*, pp. 31–2; R. J. Pascual, 'On a Crux in *Beowulf*: The Alliteration of Finite Verbs and the Scribal Understanding of Metre', *SN* 87 (2015), 171–85, at 181–2 and 'Bliss's Rule and Old English Metrics', *ANQ* 32 (2019), 209–12, at 210.

⁹⁸ Neidorf, for example, suggests that Stanley's comments on the linguistic competence of scribes 'effaces diachronic and dialectal variation' and that '[a] modern editor trained in historical linguistics, metrics, and dialectology could be in a much better position to understand the language of *Beowulf* than a late scribe whose knowledge of Old English was synchronic, provincial, and unaided by scholarly resources' (*Transmission of Beowulf*, p. 32). Compare, however, Stanley's observation that justifiable instances of textual emendation 'arise from the fact that the editor goes first to his grammar, his dictionary, and now his concordance, as well as to similar aids for the related languages' and that '[t]he editor's peculiar learning may give him greater knowledge of idiom no longer current in the scribe's time' ('Unideal Principles', p. 257).

⁹⁹ Stanley, 'Unideal Principles', p. 257.

prohibition against his approaching Hrothgar's throne. In view of the increasing awareness of the interconnections between surviving Old English poems, scholars may in the future be more inclined to consider intertextual evidence of this kind in their interpretations of imperfect manuscript witnesses.¹⁰⁰

The mere presence of these lines in the copy of the poem available to the *Andreas*-poet is also significant. Both the *ġifstōl*-passage itself and the so-called 'Christian excursus' in lines 175–88 have been treated with considerable suspicion by modern scholars. In a published appendix to his seminal British Academy lecture, J. R. R. Tolkien expressed doubts about the authenticity of both lines 168–9 ('probably a clumsily intruded couplet') and the references to Danish ignorance and the didactic present-tense passage in lines 180b–8 ('unless my ear and judgement are wholly at fault, they have a ring and measure unlike their context, and indeed unlike that of the poem as a whole').¹⁰¹ The former passage was viewed with distrust by both Frederick Klaeber ('[o]ne might suspect an inept interpolation here') and by C. L. Wrenn, who believed the lines to have been displaced from their proper place between lines 110 and 111 and read them as an 'amplification' of the account of God's punishment of Cain composed 'by the poet himself or a later interpolator'.¹⁰² Doubts about the authenticity of the excursus have also been raised by Dorothy Whitelock and, more recently, Thomas D. Hill, and while several critics have argued forcibly for the integrity of the passage, a persistent uneasiness characterizes much of the critical discussion of these lines.¹⁰³ The apparent engagement with and repurposing of this material in the later hagiographical poem suggests, however, that these passages were present in the text of *Beowulf* known to the *Andreas*-poet – which is to say, at an earlier stage in the manuscript transmission of the poem than that represented by Cotton Vitellius A.xv.

The poet of *Andreas*, widely thought to have been working in the ninth century, seems to have accepted these lines as an integral part of fitt II, and of the poem generally.¹⁰⁴ This suggestion does not, of course, constitute an argument for the ultimately authorial status of the excursus passage. The possibility remains that some or all of these lines constitute a skilful addition by a poet other than the one responsible for the shape of the poem as a

¹⁰⁰ In addition to the studies cited above, see particularly the following studies by A. Orchard: 'Rereading *The Wanderer*: the Value of Cross-Reference', *Via Crucis: Essays on Medieval Sources and Ideas in Memory of J. E. Cross*, ed. T. N. Hall with T. D. Hill and C. Wright, Medieval European Studies 1 (Morgantown, 2002), pp. 1–26; 'Both Style and Substance: the Case for Cynewulf', *Anglo-Saxon Styles*, ed. C. E. Karkov and G. H. Brown (New York, 2003), pp. 271–305; 'Computing Cynewulf: the *Judith*-Connection', *The Text in the Community: Essays on Medieval Works, Manuscripts, Authors, and Readers*, ed. J. Mann and M. Nolan (Notre Dame, Ind., 2006), pp. 75–106; 'The Dream of the Rood: Cross-References', *New Readings in the Vercelli Book*, ed. S. Zacher and A. Orchard (Toronto, 2009), pp. 225–53.

¹⁰¹ J. R. R. Tolkien, 'Beowulf: The Monsters and the Critics', *PBA* 22 (1936), 245–95, at 284, n. 34 and 288.

¹⁰² *Beowulf and the Fight at Finnsburg*, ed. F. Klaeber, 3rd ed. with first and second supplements (Boston, 1950), p. 135, n. to lines 168f; *Beowulf*, ed. C. L. Wrenn, 3rd ed. rev. by W. F. Bolton (London, 1973), pp. 103–4, n. to lines 168–9 (see also pp. 64–5).

¹⁰³ D. Whitelock, 'The Audience of *Beowulf*' (Oxford, 1951), pp. 77–8; T. D. Hill, 'The Christian Language and Theme of *Beowulf*', *Companion to Old English Poetry*, ed. H. Aertsen and R. H. Bremmer (Amsterdam, 1994), pp. 63–77, at 68–9. In defence of the integrity of the excursus, see especially A. G. Brodeur, *The Art of Beowulf* (Berkeley, LA, 1959), pp. 186–208; A. P. Campbell, 'The Time Element of Interlace Structure in *Beowulf*', *NM* 70 (1969), 425–35; K. P. Wentersdorf, 'Beowulf: The Paganism of Hrothgar's Danes', *SP* 78 (1981), 91–119; Cavill, *Maxims*, pp. 99–105. For examples of uneasiness concerning the tone of the excursus, see E. B. Irving Jr., 'Christian and Pagan Elements', *A Beowulf Handbook*, ed. R. E. Bjork and J. D. Niles (Exeter, 1997), pp. 175–92, at 178 and *Reading*, 97–8; Orchard, *Critical Companion*, pp. 152–3; D. Anlezark, 'Old English Epic Poetry: *Beowulf*', *A Companion to Medieval Poetry*, ed. C. J. Saunders (Oxford, 2010), pp. 141–60, at 142.

¹⁰⁴ Brooks (*Andreas and Fates of the Apostles*, pp. xviii–xxii), R. Boenig (*Saint and Hero: Andreas and Medieval Doctrine* (London, 1991), pp. 21–3), and North and Bintley (*Andreas*, pp. 97–115) all argue for a date of composition in the second half of the ninth century. Fulk (*Old English Meter*, esp. pp. 61–4, 348–51) would place the composition of the poem before the middle of the ninth century.

whole.¹⁰⁵ But there is good reason to think that, at the very least, these lines had a venerable history as part of the poem long before they were copied into our surviving manuscript. In particular, the *Andreas*-poet's familiarity with these lines would seem to argue against the idea that they draw specifically upon the rhetoric of a tenth-century vernacular homiletic tradition – either as a late interpolation into an early poem or as an intrinsic part of a late *Beowulf*.¹⁰⁶ Indeed, the *Andreas*-poet's recognizable engagement with a text of fitt II apparently very similar to that available to us today, but which apparently predated the surviving manuscript copy by more than a century, tends to support a model of the transmission of the poem involving minimal alteration to a text that remained more or less stable across a significant passage of time.¹⁰⁷

This stability may have extended to the structural divisions of the poetic text. The numbered fitts of *Beowulf* have received considerable scholarly attention. On the basis of inconsistencies in the numeration of the fitts in Cotton Vitellius A.xv, it has been suggested that these numbers were not present in the exemplar but were added by scribe A and scribe B during the copying process.¹⁰⁸ The more fundamental question of the origin and rationale of the sectional divisions themselves has been the subject of a study by R. D. Fulk.¹⁰⁹ Discerning an apparent 'lack of congruence with the structure of the narrative' in the placement of several of the divisions, Fulk argues that 'the divisions were made by someone other than the poet'.¹¹⁰ Noting a particular confusion in the divisions in the work of scribe B, Fulk further argues that 'the two scribes of the *Beowulf* manuscript are themselves responsible for the sectional divisions' and that 'the first scribe was considerably better attuned to the structure of the narrative'.¹¹¹ Fulk's wider argument concerning the supposed clumsiness of the division of the poem deserves fuller consideration than can be offered here. I would suggest, however, that the analysis above provides reasons to doubt his conclusion that the sectional divisions in *Beowulf* originated with the scribes of Cotton Vitellius A.xv.

¹⁰⁵ Tolkien, for example, seems to have favoured the view that at least part of the excursus, together with lines 168–9 and 'Hrothgar's Sermon' (on which, see the following note), were interpolations or expansions made to the text by the poet Cynewulf (*Beowulf*, pp. 311 and 185). Though highly speculative, the suggestion does highlight the possibility that the poem that survives today may contain alterations or additions to the original text which were nevertheless part of the text known to the *Andreas*-poet. If these passages do indeed represent the work of Cynewulf, their presence in the text known to the *Andreas*-poet would not be altogether surprising, given the poet's evident affinity with the Cynewulf canon.

¹⁰⁶ For an argument that these lines support instead a late date for the composition of the poem as a whole, see J. D. Niles, *Beowulf: The Poem and its Tradition* (Cambridge, MA, 1983), pp. 93–5 and *Old English Heroic Poems and the Social Life of Text*, *Studies in the Early Middle Ages* 20 (Turnhout, 2007), p. 33. For a related argument about the poet's presentation of 'virtuous' pagans, see R. Frank, 'The *Beowulf* Poet's Sense of History', *The Wisdom of Poetry: Essays in Early English Literature in Honor of Morton W. Bloomfield*, ed. L. D. Benson and S. Wenzel (Kalamazoo, MI, 1982), pp. 53–65, at 60–1. Lapidge ('Archetype', pp. 38–40) has similarly argued that parts of Hrothgar's 'sermon' (particularly lines 1761–68) incorporate tenth-century homiletic interpolations; in response, see Leonard Neidorf, 'The Language of Hrothgar's Sermon', *SN* 91 (2019), 1–10. Recently discovered evidence for an Old English homiletic text dating to the ninth century has, in any case, thrown into question the assumption that the vernacular homiletic tradition flourished only from the tenth century: see D. Scragg, 'A Ninth-Century Old English Homily from Northumbria', *ASE* 45 (2016), 39–49.

¹⁰⁷ L. Neidorf, 'The Archetype of *Beowulf*', *ES* 99 (2018), 229–42 and *Transmission of Beowulf*, *passim*. See also, N. Goering, 'Metrics, Scribes, and *Beowulf*: A Response to Neidorf (2017)', *The Transmission of Beowulf*, *Neophilologus* 103 (2019), 115–27, at 121.

¹⁰⁸ *Klaeber's Beowulf*, ed. Fulk *et al*, pp. xxxiii–xxxv.

¹⁰⁹ R. D. Fulk, 'The Origin of the Numbered Sections in *Beowulf* and in Other Old English Poems', *ASE* 35 (2006), 91–109. See also, S. C. Thomson, *Communal Creativity in the Making of the Beowulf Manuscript: Towards a History of Reception for the Nowell Codex* (Leiden, 2018), pp. 239–43.

¹¹⁰ Fulk, 'Numbered Sections', pp. 108 and 104.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.* p. 105.

That fitt II of *Beowulf* constitutes an impressively coherent narrative unit has been noted by several critics.¹¹² The coherence of these lines is inherent to the structure of the poem and does not depend upon their formal demarcation in any given manuscript copy. It is by no means unthinkable, therefore, either that a scribe seeking to divide the poem meaningfully into discrete sections should choose to demarcate precisely these lines or that an attentive reader (such as the *Andreas*-poet) should also have recognized the integrity of the account of Grendel's tyranny and its effect upon the Danes. That the *Andreas*-poet, reading an undivided text of *Beowulf* in (probably) the ninth century, should choose to engage with precisely the same passage that scribe A, copying an undivided exemplar in (probably) the early eleventh century, would identify as fitt II of the poem would be a coincidence, but within the scope of the imagination. Credulity is stretched to breaking point, however, when the sectional divisions of *Andreas* itself are taken into account.

North and Bintley argue that the fitt-divisions of *Andreas*, like those of *Beowulf*, tend to be 'speech-oriented'; in contrast to the more 'bookish' construction of Cynewulf's *Elene*, in which fitt-divisions tend to match closely the chapter divisions of the Latin source, they note that the sections of *Andreas* sometime, but not always, seem to correspond more or less closely to two chapters of the presumed source.¹¹³ This is the case with fitt X, which corresponds to the portion of the narrative covered in chapters 22–3 of the Latin and Greek texts. When the parallels with *Beowulf* are taken into account, however, the correspondences between the respective fitts indicate the structural and thematic influence of fitt II on the composition of *Andreas* fitt X. This emerges particularly clearly from comparison of the beginnings and ends of the respective fitts. I have suggested above that the end of *Andreas* fitt X and the transition to fitt XI mirrors the end of fitt II and the transition to fitt III in *Beowulf* in ways that cannot be accounted for by comparison with other versions of the hagiographical legend and which respect the fitt-divisions in each poem so closely as to suggest deliberate design on the part of the *Andreas*-poet. A similar point can be made about the beginning of the respective fitts. Fitt II of *Beowulf* begins with a clear sequence of cause and effect, in which Grendel's initial act of violence is followed by a lengthy account of the consequences of this event. In *Andreas*, fitt X apparently follows chapter 22 of the presumed source by beginning with an account of Andrew leaving the prison (lines 1058–66). In the lines that follow, however, the reworking of the Mermedonian 'raid' on the prison as a parallel to Grendel's attack on Heorot brings the overall structure of the fitt into alignment with that of *Beowulf* fitt II, the majority of the fitt concerning the consequences of the discovery of the loss of the prisoners. The logic of this structural parallel is, however, somewhat destabilized by the fact that while Grendel's attack on Heorot is the ultimate cause of Danish despair, the 'raid' on the prison is only the proximate cause of the misery of the Mermedonians. For an audience alive to the parallels with *Beowulf*, the reworking of the expedition to the prison divorces the effect of the loss of the prisoners from its true cause – the release of the captives by Andrew – and presents a double-vision of the Mermedonians as simultaneously perpetrators and victims, re-enacting both Grendel's initial raid on Heorot and the despair and helplessness suffered by the Danes on account thereof. This double-vision could possibly be taken as an example of the sort of confused logic sometimes held to

¹¹² E. Carrigan, 'Structure and Thematic Development in *Beowulf*', *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy* 66C (1967), 1–51, esp. 4–6; Roberts, 'Hrothgar's Humiliation', *passim*; H. Damico, *Beowulf and the Grendel-kin: Politics and Poetry in Eleventh-Century England*, Medieval European Studies 16 (Morgantown, 2015), pp. 102–51. Damico, arguing for the origins of *Beowulf* in the early eleventh century, reads fitt II as a poetic response to the Danish attacks of the 1003–16. Her argument is thus at odds with my own understanding of the likely origins of *Beowulf* and its relationship to *Andreas* – though it is not impossible, of course, that an eleventh-century audience might have seen potential for political allegory in the early part of *Beowulf*.

¹¹³ *Andreas*, ed. North and Bintley, pp. 62–3.

characterize the *Andreas*-poet's engagement with *Beowulf*. It seems more likely, however, that in this case the poet's intention of replicating the structural design of fitt II has overridden more strictly logical concerns.

On the evidence presented here, it cannot be definitively stated that the fitt-divisions of *Beowulf* are authorial, but the evidence does suggest that they are considerably older than the surviving copy of the poem. In the case of *Andreas*, however, there is good reason to believe that the divisions did indeed originate with the poet, and that sectional divisions featured significantly in that individual's understanding of the composition of Old English narrative poetry, both as reader and as writer.¹¹⁴ To date, discussions of the *Andreas*-poet's debt to *Beowulf* have tended to suggest that this influence can best be explained by the assumption that the poet's memory retained the impression of specific well-known passages and formulas encountered in their reading of *Beowulf* which were then recycled in the composition of *Andreas*.¹¹⁵ To my mind, however, the precise engagement with fitt II of *Beowulf* discussed here suggests instead a directly textual influence.¹¹⁶ Throughout this article, I have been talking about the presumed Latin source of *Andreas*. It is important to recognize, however, the 'copresence' of *Beowulf* as a second, written source for more than just a verbal patina overlaid upon the hagiographical narrative.¹¹⁷

The account of the helplessness of the Danes in fitt II describes an obvious moment of crisis in *Beowulf*. It is one of many such moments described in the poem, including Beowulf's fight with Grendel, the subsequent attacks of Grendel's Mother and the Dragon, and other reported events such as the death of Hygelac, the fate of Hildeburh, or the hints at future crises in the Danish royal dynasty. What distinguishes fitt II, however, is the poet's simultaneous emphasis on the ever-present spiritual crisis which faces all of the characters within the poem.¹¹⁸ In drawing upon this fitt as an intertext for the account of the loss of the Mermedonian prisoners, the *Andreas*-poet notably reflects this doubled social and spiritual crisis, echoing the key themes of the *Beowulf* passage through the introduction of the opposition of literal and non-literal wealth, through the emphasis on the fragmentation of the Mermedonian society, and through the description of a partisan recourse to pagan observances in the face of an overmastering threat. The parallels between the two episodes are, however, typically and essentially antithetical. The Danes in *Beowulf* are saved from the social crisis with which they are afflicted by the actions of the poem's hero, but the spiritual crisis which threatens them is not resolved. In *Andreas*, by contrast, the spiritual crisis of the Mermedonians subsumes the social crisis, as their literal hunger is met, ultimately, with the spiritual nourishment of Christian teaching.¹¹⁹

It seems very likely that the *Andreas*-poet would have expected at least some of the audience of the poem to pick up on these parallels. In the course of a discussion of the traditionality of Old English poetic art, Britt Mize has argued that observable verbal

¹¹⁴ Fulk, by contrast, identifies three occasions in *Andreas* in which the placement of the sectional divisions seems to him 'clumsy' or 'obscure' and suggests that the existing fitt-divisions of *Andreas* may be non-authorial ('Numbered Sections', p. 107).

¹¹⁵ Powell, 'Verbal Parallels', p. 234; Friesen, 'Sources and Analogue', pp. 125–6, 235–6; Orchard, 'Originality', pp. 347–8.

¹¹⁶ The *Andreas*-poet's use of a written text of *Beowulf* has been argued, on different grounds, by both Riedinger, ('*Beowulf* and *Andreas*', esp. pp. 285, 304–5) and C. B. Kendall ('Literacy and Orality in Anglo-Saxon Poetry: Horizontal Displacement in *Andreas*', *JEGP* 95 (1996), 1–18).

¹¹⁷ My use of the term 'copresence' draws upon G. Genette's discussion of transtextuality (*Palimpsests: Literature in the Second Degree*, trans. C. Newman and C. Doubinsky (Lincoln, NA, 1997), pp. 1–2). I am grateful to Francis Leneghan for drawing my attention to this useful term (cf. 'Departure of the Hero', p. 107).

¹¹⁸ For a robust statement of this spiritual crisis, see E. G. Stanley, 'Hæthenra Hyht in *Beowulf*', *Studies in Old English Literature in Honor of Arthur G. Brodeur*, ed. S. B. Greenfield (Eugene, 1963), pp. 104–41.

¹¹⁹ Cf. Hamilton, 'Diet and digestion of allegory', p. 154.

connections between *Andreas* and *Beowulf* should be viewed as ‘imitative acts’ which signal the *Andreas*-poet’s ‘participation in an ongoing tradition of poetic discourse’, rather than as deliberately intertextual allusion:

The *Andreas* poet was not citing *Beowulf*, I would maintain, or quoting from or alluding to it, but borrowing from it: more precisely, borrowing aspects of its language, or more precisely yet, attempting to redirect and use that language’s tried-and-true rhetorical ability to operate in desirable ways within a highly marked poetic register.¹²⁰

Whilst Mize’s suggestion that traditional and formulaic poetic language was learned through imitation is surely correct, we should not therefore discount the possibility that verbal borrowing between Old English poems might indeed constitute meaningful allusion. More particularly, the connections between *Andreas* and *Beowulf* which have been the subject of this study – connections which manifest in structural and thematic parallels rather than in shared lexical elements – strongly imply a more deliberate and calculated form of intertextual referentiality. The close replication of the structure of *Beowulf* fitt II in fitt X of *Andreas* cannot, in view of the latter poet’s reliance on another, more immediate textual source, be explained in purely functional terms. The apparently deliberate deviation from this primary source might, on the contrary, be viewed as an invitation to cross-textual comparison at the level of theme and imagery.

The poet’s own attitude towards this source material must, however, remain a matter for speculation. In a recent article, Richard North has suggested that the parallels between the situation of the Mermedonians and that of the Danes in *Beowulf* comprise ‘mock-epic ridicule’ and a ‘Cervantesque parody’ of the older heroic poem.¹²¹ But the target of this ridicule, North argues, is not only the pagan cannibals, but also the *Beowulf*-poet’s own nostalgic ‘evocation of pathos for the pre-Christian condition’.¹²² It is possible, however, to view the connection between the poems in less antagonistic terms. By placing the major crisis of Mermedonian life in juxtaposition with the major crisis afflicting Hrothgar and his people, the poet of *Andreas* glorifies through comparison the gift of grace afforded to the Mermedonians through their conversion; as a corollary, the pathos inherent in the situation of the Danes is only increased.

¹²⁰ B. Mize, *Traditional Subjectivities: the Old English Poetics of Mentality*, Toronto Anglo-Saxon Series 12 (Toronto, 2013), pp. 27–8.

¹²¹ North, ‘Meet the Pagans’, pp. 185, 205.

¹²² *Ibid.* p. 198.