Misinterpretation and the Meaning of Signs in Old English Poetry

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Abstract

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This thesis investigates how Old English poets understood the processes of signification and interpretation through analysis of depictions of poor interpreters and the use of 'sign terms' such as *tacen* and *beacen* in the longer Old English poems. The first chapter deals with the Beowulf Manuscript, the second and third chapters consider *Elene* and *Andreas* within the network of related poems found in the Vercelli Book and the beginning of the Exeter Book, the fourth chapter is on the Junius Manuscript, and the conclusion looks at the use of the 'bright sign' motif across all four major poetic codices. I suggest that there is a 'heroic sign-bearing interpreter' character-type which several of the poems utilize or ironically invert, and that poor interpretation is nearly always associated with hesitation, which often resembles *acedia*. I also argue that there is greater nuance in the poems' depictions of modes of understanding than has previously been acknowledged: Eve in *Genesis B* does not stand for the senses which subvert the mind, but rather models the limits of rational thought as a means of understanding God, and *Elene* does not depict a simple opposition of letter and spirit, but a threefold mental process of learning about the Cross with analogues in exegesis and Augustine's Trinity of the Soul. Finally, I argue that there is a 'bright sign' motif which functions within a brightness-sign-covenant concept cluster, whose evocation as a traditional poetic unit is not identical to the denotation and connotation of its constituent parts. These strands of inquiry taken together demonstrate how Old English poems invest signs with significance by tapping into a specifically poetic network of allusion.

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Abbreviations

ASE	*Anglo-Saxon England*
ASPR	Anglo-Saxon Poetic Records
B-T	Bosworth and Toller Dictionary (online edition)
DOE	*Dictionary of Old English*
DOEC	*Dictionary of Old English Web Corpus*
DOR	*Dream of the Rood*
EETS o.s.	Early English Text Society original series
EETS s.s.	Early English Text Society second series
ELH	*English Literary History*
JEGP	*Journal of English and Germanic Philology*
MS	Manuscript
NM	*Neuphilologische Mitteilungen*
OE	Old English
OED	*Oxford English Dictionary* (online)
OS	Old Saxon
OUP	Oxford University Press
PL	*Patrologia Latina*
PLL	*Papers on Language and Literature*
RES	*Review of English Studies*

INTRODUCTION

Old English poetry has highly traditional, allusive ways of signifying, such that words acquire connotations in poetry which they do not have in prose, and collocations establish networks of allusion that emphasize thematic parallels between different scenes. This is true generally, and it is true specifically of the language of signs.

In Anglo-Saxon literate culture, there was widespread knowledge of exegetical methods of interpreting biblical material, and some limited awareness of patristic sign theories such as Augustine's.[1] However, even where a semiotic theory is widely known, the non-specialist's conception of signs rarely reflects the theory precisely. To bridge this gap between theory and practice, I explore Old English poets' *de facto* conception of the process of interpretation by examining their use of the language of signs and their depictions of acts of interpretation performed within the narratives of Old English poetry. Depictions of failures of interpretation are especially revealing, because a fault in the process draws attention to the mechanisms which are invisible when the process works correctly. For this reason, I pay particular attention to characters who are mistaken, and to signs whose function is disrupted because they are false, misread, rejected, or unresolved.

The two most widely used words for 'sign' in Old English are *tacen* and *beacen*. There are different patterns in the usage of each term—for example, the sun is more likely to be called a *beacen* (emphasizing the visibility of the sign) and a miracle

[1] Discussed below, from p. 8.

is more likely to be called a *tacen* (emphasizing the communicative intent of the sign).[2] However, the two terms are also frequently used as effectively equivalent synonyms. *Genesis A* calls the circumcision both a *tacen* and a *beacen*, and *Daniel* uses both words for variation in one sentence, referring to the youths' miraculous survival of the fiery furnace (ll. 486-488a).

Tacen, also spelt *tacn*, is the antecedent of the modern English 'token' and is usually translated as 'symbol' or 'sign,' though in many circumstances 'portent' or 'miracle' is more appropriate. The phrase *tacna & foretacna* regularly glosses the Latin *signa et prodigia*. *Tacen* is closely related to the noun *(ge)tacnung*, which is found only in prose. A *(ge)tacnung* is usually a sign, token, or type, sometimes specifically one used as an indication, evidence, proof, or prognostic. The word is sometimes applied to specific categories of signs such as symptoms,[3] and signs of the zodiac.[4] Its cognate verb is *(ge)tacnian* ('to signify').[5] There are also several closely related words with an 'æ' instead of an 'a' in the first syllable, which all have denotations to do with showing, proving, and directing.[6]

Close relatives of *beacen* (also spelled *becn*) and *(ge)beacnian* include the verb *(ge)bicnan,* the noun *(ge)bicnung*, and various related forms such as *(ge)bicnendlic.*

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[2] For more on *beacen* see Elizabeth Okasha, '"Beacen" in Old English Poetry', *Notes and Queries* 23:5-6 (1976), 200–207.

[3] 'Tacnung' in *An Anglo-Saxon Dictionary* ed. Joseph Bosworth and T. Northcote Toller (London, 1898).

[4] 'Getacnung' in *An Anglo-Saxon Dictionary Supplement: Enlarged Addenda* ed. Alistair Campbell (Oxford, 1972).

[5] The Bosworth and Toller Dictionary has separate entries—one under 'g' the other under 't'—for *getacnian* and *tacnian*. Joseph Bosworth, *An Anglo-Saxon Dictionary Online*, ed. Thomas Northcote Toller and Others, comp. Sean Christ and Ondřej Tichý (Faculty of Arts, Charles University in Prague, 21 Mar. 2010, Web 5 Nov. 2013) <http://www.bosworthtoller.com/>. More recent dictionaries, such as *A Concise Anglo-Saxon Dictionary* ed. J.R. Clark Hall, 4th edn (Toronto, 1960), take them as essentially two forms of the same word. The situation is analogous for *tacnung* and *getacnung.* There is not yet an entry for *(ge)tacnian* in the Toronto *Dictionary of Old English: A to G* online ed. Angus Cameron, Ashley Crandell Amos, Antonette diPaolo Healey et al. (Toronto, 2007), which suggests that the editors of that dictionary also intend to include both versions under the letter 't'. References to the *Dictionary of Old English* will henceforth be abbreviated to *DOE*. References to the Bosworth and Toller dictionary will be abbreviated to B-T when the online edition is indicated.

[6] These are (*ge)tæcan* ('to shew' or 'teach'), *tæcend* ('one who prescribes or orders'), *tæcing* ('the pointing out of a course to be followed' or 'teaching, doctrine'), *tæcnan* ('to shew, present', or 'point out'), *tæcnend* ('one that shews or points out'), *tæcnian* ('to shew, prove'), and *tæcning* ('proof'). Definitions as given in B-T.

Bicnung appears in the Paris Psalter but otherwise the various *bicn-* words are not typically used in poetry. They cover similar ground as the *tæc-* words: mute signals and gestures, pointing out, indicating. They are also used for grammatical and interpretive categories, but in a fairly *ad hoc* manner, glossing different Latin terms in the works of different authors; *(ge)bicnung* is used of tropology, and *(ge)bicniendlic* is used both to mean 'allegorical' and (the verbal mood) 'indicative'.[7]

Tacen is a fairly common word. Some of the more common compounds formed with *tacen* include *foretacen* ('portent')*, rodetacen* ('sign of the cross'), and *wundortacen* ('wondrous sign', i.e., 'miracle'). Rare and unique compounds, which are primarily poetic, include:

andgiettacen	'a sign through which something is known,' used of the rainbow (*Genesis A*, l. 1539b).[8]
facentacen	'sign of guilt', referring to the ugliness which marks out the damned at Judgement Day (*Christ III*, l. 1565a).[9]
friðotacen	'mark of peace', used of circumcision (*Genesis A*, l. 2371a)—see also the mark of Cain, which *Genesis A* calls a *tacen* and a *freoðobeacen*, ll. 1044b–1045a.
luftacen	'tokens of friendship' which Hrothgar says will be exchanged between the Geats and the Scyldings (*Beowulf*, l. 1863a).[10]
soþtacen	glosses *prodigia* ('wonder, marvel') in the *Rituale Ecclesiae Dunelmensis*.[11]
weatacn	'sign of woe' (*Phoenix*, l. 51b), 'signal for an evil act' (*Andreas*, l. 1119a).[12]
wedertacen	'sign of good weather' (*Guthlac B*, l. 1293a).[13]

[7] See the *DOE* entries for 'bicnan', 'ge-bicnan', 'ge-bicnod', 'bicnend', 'ge-bicnend', 'bicnendlic', ge-bicnendlic', 'bicnol', 'bicnung', and 'ge-bicnung'.

[8] As defined in the *DOE* entry for 'andgyt-tacen'. Quotations of *Genesis A* are from *Genesis A: A New Edition, Revised* ed. A.N. Doane (Tempe AZ, 2013).

[9] Quotations of Christ III are from *The Christ of Cynewulf* ed. Albert S. Cook (Boston, 1909).

[10] Quotations of *Beowulf* are from *Klaeber's Beowulf* ed. R.D. Fulk, Robert E. Bjork, and John D. Niles, 4th edn (Toronto, 2008).

[11] *Rituale Ecclesiae Dunelmensis: The Durham Collectar* ed. U. Lindelöf, Publications of the Surtrees Society, vol 140 (Durham, 1927), p.43, l. 20.

[12] Quotations of *The Phoenix* are from *The Exeter Book* ed. George Philip Krapp and Elliot Van Kirk Dobbie, ASPR III (London, 1936); quotations of *Andreas* and *The Fates of the Apostles* are from *Andreas and The Fates of the Apostles* ed. Kenneth R. Brooks (Oxford, 1961). As is often the case, the manuscripts, editions, and dictionaries are not always consistent in whether they render compounds such a these as single words or separate the components. I have followed B-T for the rendering of each lemma in this list.

[13] Quotations of *Guthlac B* are from *The Exeter Book*, ASPR III.

Among the poems, only *Elene*, *The Dream of the Rood*, and the Paris Psalter use *beacen* more often than *tacen* (and only *The Dream of the Rood* uses *beacen* but never *tacen*).[14] There are also fewer poetic compounds using *beacen* than *tacen*. Five of *Elene'*s nineteen uses of *beacen* are in the compound *sigebeacen* ('victory-beacon'), which is also found in homilies. Three of the Paris Psalter's eight uses of *beacen* are in the compound *forebeacen* ('portent'), which also appears once in *Judgement Day II*, but otherwise appears only in prose.[15] Rare and unique poetic compounds containing *beacen* include:

freoðobeacen	'sign of peace, sign granting safety', used of the Mark of Cain in *Genesis A* (l. 1045a).
heofonbeacen	'heavenly beacon', used of the pillar of fire in *Exodus* (l. 107a).[16]
wundorbeacen	'wondrous sign', used in the Paris Psalter, Psalm 73, to associate a reference to the military insignia of the Israelites' enemies with the construction of the Cross by Christ's enemies.[17]

In modern semiotics, a sign is "something which stands to somebody for something in some respect or capacity."[18] This is not the case in Old English poetry, which applies the words *tacen* and *beacen* to a much narrower range of objects and events. Unlike both modern and patristic semiotics, the poems do not speak of ordinary language as a system of signs.[19] Whenever *tacen* is used for words, they are words that are a component of a miraculous event. Words are called a *tacen* in line 717a of *Daniel*, which refers to the writing on the wall—which is not a sign because it is words, but be-

[14] The close relationship of subject matter and manuscript context between *Dream of the Rood* and *Elene* may account for their similarity in this regard. On Cynewulf's possible use of *The Dream of the Rood* in composing *Elene*, see p. 90 in Chapter 2.
[15] See the *DOE* entry for 'fore-bēacen'.
[16] Quotations of *Exodus* are from *The Junius Manuscript* ed. George Philip Krapp, ASPR I (London, 1931).
[17] *The Paris Psalter and the Meters of Boethius* ed. George Philip Krapp. ASPR V. (New York, 1932).
[18] Charles Sanders Peirce, *Collected Papers of Charles Sanders Peirce* ed. Charles Hartshorne and Paul Weiss, 8 vols (Harvard, 1931–1958), II *Elements of Logic* (1932), 2.228, p. 135.
[19] As well as Peirce, see Ferdinand de Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics* trans. Wade Baskin, ed. Perry Meisel and Haun Saussy (New York, 2011), esp. p. 67. For Augustine, see *De Doctrina Christiana,* ed. and trans. R.P.H. Green (Oxford, 1995), esp, p. 70. For Boethius, see the discussions of his commentary on Aristotle's De Interpretatione / Peri Hermeneias by John Magee in *Boethius on Signification and Mind* (Leiden, 1989), p.2, and Taki Suto in *Boethius on Mind, Grammar and Logic* (Leiden, 2012), p. 95.

cause of the manner in which the words appear.[20] In *Andreas* a stone pillar breaks to release the flood after Andreas reminds it of its kinship to the tablets on which God *ryhte æ / getacnode on tyn wordum* ('marked the righteous law in ten decrees', ll. 1511b-1512). This, like the writing on the wall, is writing by God (and in this case, the sense of *(ge)tacnian* is closer to the meaning "*make a mark on* a material object" than 'signify').[21] There is also a stone statue in *Andreas* which comes to life and *septe sacerdas sweotolum tacnum, / witig werede ond worde cwæð* ('instructed the priests by clear signs, wisely hindered [them] and spoke these words,' ll. 742–743). Here, it is not really the words that are the signs but the fact that they are spoken by a statue. The figurative and miraculous are both invoked by *Christ II*, which says of Christ: *him tacna fela tires brytta / onwrah, wuldres helm, wordgerynum* ('the dispenser of honour, helm of glory, revealed to them many signs in word-mysteries'—i.e., parables, ll. 462–463).[22] Albert Cook notes that these lines refer to Luke 24:22 and 44-48, in which Christ opens the minds of his disciples so that they become able to understand the figurative meaning of the scriptures as prophecies of His coming.[23] A more ambiguous instance of language (possibly) being referred to as a sign is in *Genesis B*, where Eve persuades Adam to eat the fruit. The poet says that Eve *tacen oðiewde and treowe gehet* ('showed a sign and promised good faith', l. 714).[24] If it were necessary to identify the specific sign offered, a description of her vision or some other verbal shibboleth would be the most plausible options. However, the poet may not have had any firm idea of what signs Eve

[20] *Daniel and Azarias* ed. R. T. Farrell (London, 1974). No equivalent of the word *tacen* appears at this point in the Vulgate text (Daniel 5:5).
[21] 'Getacnian' in *An Anglo-Saxon Dictionary: Supplement* ed. T. Northcote Toller (Oxford, 1921). The Latin analogue has Andreas making the sign of the cross on the column, and commanding it in the name of Christ, but does not mention the stone tablets. See Robert Boenig, *The Acts of Andrew in the Country of the Cannibals: translations from the Greek, Latin, and Old English* (London, 1991), p. 51.
[22] *The Christ of Cynewulf* ed. Albert S. Cook (Boston, 1909). Translations of Old English texts are mine except where otherwise stated. For all Old English texts, I have silently accepted emendations which the editors mark out by italics or brackets, and I have modernized punctuation where necessary for the sake of simplicity and consistency.
[23] Cook, *Christ of Cynewulf*, p. 119.
[24] *The Saxon Genesis: An Edition of the West Saxon Genesis B and the Old Saxon Vatican Genesis* ed. A.N. Doane (Madison, 1991).

could be showing at this point: the associations arising from the cluster of collocations may have been more important to his meaning than the literal denotation of the words or a 'realistic' envisioning of the scene.[25] Even in this ambiguous instance the rule holds, however. Whenever words are referred to as signs in Old English poetry, it is an *act* of writing or speaking that signifies, more than the words themselves.

Neither do Old English texts systematically differentiate between sign, signifier, and signified. The word *tacen* is used for all three concepts, even in the writing of Ælfric, who writes particularly extensively, explicitly, and creatively (he is our source for all three recorded instances of the adjective *getacnigendlice:* 'symbolic') about signs and signification. *Tacen* is occasionally applied to something that is recognized as a signifier, even while the signified remains unknown, as in Ælfric's homily 'Dominica II in Adventum Domini':

> Sind eac sume steorran leohtbeamede færlice arisende 7 hrædlice gewitende 7 hi symle sum þing niwes mid heora upspringe gebicniað, ac ne mænde drihten þas tacna on þære godspellican witegnunge, ac þa egefullan tacna þe ðam micclan dæge forestæppað.[26]

> [There are also certain bright-beamed stars arising suddenly and hastily departing, and they always signify some new thing with their up-springing, but the Lord did not mean to indicate those signs by the biblical prophecy, but the terrible signs which precede that great day.]

Ælfric's meteors are signifiers with unknown signifieds. He cautions against reading shooting stars as signs of the Apocalypse, while still leaving open the possibility that they are signs *of something*. On the other hand there are also signifieds with unspecified signifiers. One example is the mark of Cain, which is called a *tacen* and a *freoðobeacen* ('sign of peace/protection' ll. 1044–5) in *Genesis A*, and a *tekean* ('sign' l. 73a) and *frithu* ('peace' or 'protection' l. 72b) in the Vatican *Genesis*. It may be some sort of bodily mark, but that is not made clear in the description of the sign. It is described only as a 'peace'—that is, by what it signifies, rather than what the signifier is. Similarly,

[25] This is discussed further in Chapter 4.

[26] *Ælfric's Catholic Homilies: The First Series* ed. Peter Clemoes, EETS s.s. 17 (OUP, 1997), p. 525, ll. 42–46.

where the word *tacen* appears in *Genesis B,* the poem makes the signified clear (the *tacen* communicates or ratifies a confirmation of trust between two parties) without bothering much about consistently identifying the signifier. The *tacen* which the Tempter shows Eve is usually identified as her vision of God's throne, but the poet uses the same expression containing the word *tacen* in Eve's petition to Adam. There is no critical consensus on what the signifier she shows Adam actually *is,* though it is clear that it is meant to communicate her good faith.

Like the everyday, non-specialist use of the words 'sign' and 'signify' today, the words *tacen* and *(ge)tacnian* (and *beacen* and *(ge)beacnian*) tend to be applied to signs which draw attention to themselves as signs, such as miracles and crosses. Whether they are miracles, crosses, or something else, signs in the poetry invariably command attention for one or more of the following reasons:

(1) they communicate an instruction non-verbally
(2) they require specialist knowledge to relate or interpret
(3) they make plain something that was otherwise hidden or unknowable
(4) they serve as proof of a relationship or contract.

The first category applies particularly to those rare signs which are auditory rather than visual signals, such as the sound of trumpets in *Exodus* l. 219b.[27] Examples of signs which come under the second category include the Cross in *Elene*, which must be understood through the application of textual knowledge, and the dreams and miracles in *Daniel*, which Nebuchadnezzar is unable to understand without assistance. Signs that make plain something hidden include Grendel's severed arm, which publicly communicates and confirms the monster's demise (which would otherwise have been hidden because he conceals his body in the mere), and the *beorht beacen Godes* ('bright beacon of God', l. 570a) (i.e., the sun) which allows *Beowulf* to see the water monsters he has

[27] See also the discussion of the Mermedonians' signals to each other in *Andreas* on p. 101. The verb *(ge)bicnan* (and related noun *bicnung*) are more commonly used for making non-verbal (usually mute) summonses and gestures, but these words are rare in poetry. See the *DOE* entries for 'bicnan', 'gebicnan', and 'bicnung'. See also Okasha, '"Beacen" in Old English Poetry', p. 200 for the theory that OE *beacen* is related to Latin *būcinum* 'sound of a trumpet'.

been struggling against through the night. Also in this category are the signs which mark out the saved from the damned in *Christ III*.

Signs which act as proof of a relationship are the most important category for understanding the connotations of sign words in Old English poetry. More of the signs in the poems fall into this category than is apparent at first glance, and they include some of the uses of the word *tacen* whose referents are most disputed (as in the case of *Genesis B*). This category includes several of the poetic compounds listed above: the *andgyttacen* ('rainbow'), *friðotacen* ('circumcision'), and *luftacen* ('signs of friendship'), are all signs of a personal relationship that includes some type of covenant or promise. The rainbow is the sign by which God promises mankind that He will never again flood the world, circumcision is a reminder of God's covenant with Abraham, and the tokens of friendship which Hrothgar promises Beowulf are a sign of the alliance between their peoples.

Some bodily signs, like circumcision, continue to signify a relationship with God even when they are not actively viewed and read, but other signs of relationships require public observation. Though there are private visions (like Guthlac's or Cædmon's), miracles often occur for the purpose of publicly confirming God's power or a person's sanctity. Similarly, both Grendel's arm and his head only become signs of the fact that Beowulf has held up his end of the relationship he has established with Hrothgar when they are publicly displayed. This notion of signs as emblems of relationships is particularly important to understanding the way *tacen* and *beacen* are used in Old English poetry.

PATRISTIC BACKGROUND

Patristic ideas about semiotics, exegesis, and discernment underpin Anglo-Saxon learning, and influence the way signs are depicted in the poetry. Martin Irvine addresses the

classical and patristic intellectual inheritance of the Early Medieval period as aspects of *grammatica* in his book *The Making of Textual Culture: 'Grammatica' and Literary Theory 350–1100.* He argues that "the texts and genres produced in Anglo-Saxon England reflect a bilingual cultural library that presupposes the orientation to texts, writing, and textual knowledge promoted in grammatical studies."[28] Irvine posits glossing as a type of interpretation, and argues for reading certain Old English texts (including "the works of Cynewulf, [and] the biblical epic poems of the Junius Manuscript") as glosses, which add to and build upon their sources.[29]

Patristic semiotic systems and vocabularies such as Augustine's constitute part of that culture of *grammatica*.[30] The work in which Augustine gave clearest expression to his semiotic theories was *De Doctrina Christiana*—one copy from Salisbury exists,[31] there is evidence that Anglo-Saxon missionaries brought a copy to Würzburg, and allusions are made to it by Bede, Abbo of Fleury, and Ælfric.[32] Ideas explored in *De Doctrina* are implicit in the ways later homilists explain the signification of sacred texts, and liturgical objects. For example, Ælfric's explanation of the way that the words *word,*

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[28] Martin Irvine, *The Making of Textual Culture: 'Grammatica' and Literary Theory 350–1100* (Cambridge, 2006), p. 405.
[29] Irvine, *Textual Culture*, p. 248.
[30] The other pillar of medieval semiotics was Boethius, but there is little evidence that his works on interpretation were read in Anglo-Saxon England. Most histories of the transmission of Boethius' translations and commentaries on Aristotle begin with Alcuin, but at the court of Charlemagne, not at York. Although they argue for extensive use (including copying, glossing, translating, and quoting) of these works on the continent in the period between 800 and 1150, they identify no copies of or allusions to *De Interpretatione / Peri Hermeneias* in England prior to the time of Anselm of Canterbury and the turn of the 12th century. See John Patrick Casey, 'Logic in the Middle Ages' in *A Companion to Boethius in the Middle Ages* ed. Noel Harold Kaylor, Jr. and Philip Edward Philips (Leiden, 2012), pp. 193–219; John Marenbon, 'Medieval Latin Glosses and Commentaries on Aristotelian Logical Texts, Before c. 1150 AD' in *Glosses and Commentaries on Aristotelian Logical Texts: The Syriac, Arabic and Medieval Latin Traditions* ed. Charles Burnett (London, 1993), pp. 77–127; John Marenbon *From the Circle of Alcuin to the School of Auxerre: Logic, Theology and Philosophy in the Early Middle Ages* (Cambridge, 1981); Osmund Lewry, 'Boethian Logic in the Medieval West' in *Boethius: His Life, Thought, and Influence* ed. Margaret Gibson (Oxford, 1981), pp. 90–134. Lapidge and Gneuss similarly find scant evidence of *De Interpretatione / Peri Hermeneias* being read in Anglo-Saxon England. Michael Lapidge, *The Anglo-Saxon Library* (Oxford, 2006), pp. 140–141 and 242–244; and Helmut Gneuss, *A Handlist of Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts* (Tempe AZ, 2001), p. 55.
[31] Salisbury, CL, 106 (Salisbury, s. xi^{ex}). See entry 717 in *Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts: A Bibliographical Handlist of Manuscripts and Manuscript Fragments Written or Owned in England up to 1100* ed. Hemut Gneuss and Michael Lapidge (Toronto, 2014).
[32] Lapidge, *Anglo-Saxon Library,* p. 285.

lamb, and *leo* are used to refer to Christ is in the same tradition as Augustine's explanation of the symbolism of the ox in Book II Chapter 10 of *De Doctrina*:[33]

> *Sicut dicimus bovem et per has duas syllabas intellegimus pecus quod isto nomine appellari solet, sed rursus per illud pecus intellegimus evangelistam.*
>
> [We say *bovem* and not only interpret these two syllables to mean the animal normally referred to by that name but also understand, by that animal, 'worker in the gospel.'][34]

However, there is no attempt in Old English prose or verse to establish a vocabulary of semiotics equivalent to the system Augustine lays out in *De Doctrina Christiana.* Augustine divided signs into *signa data* ('given signs'), which are used intentionally for communication, and *signa naturalia* ('natural signs'), *quae sine voluntate atque ullo appetitu significandi praeter se aliquid aliud ex se congnosci faciunt, sicuti est fumus significans ignem* ('which without a wish or any urge to signify cause something else besides themselves to be known from them, like smoke, which signifies fire').[35] Old English writers do not make a sharp distinction betweent the two in their terminology. *Tacen* is sometimes used of things Augustine would call *signa naturalia*—for example, the signs of disease in *Bald's Leechbook*—but it is also used of signs deliberately generated by God or men, such as miracles and the *luftacen* exchanged between the Scyldings and the Geats (*Beowulf*, l. 1863a).[36]

Augustine further distinguishes between literal signs and *signa translata* ('figurative signs'), where the sign is both a real object and a sign for something else: *hae namque ita res sunt, ut aliarum etiam signa sint rerum* ('these are things, but they are at the same time signs of other things').[37] In most cases, this is what is meant when Old

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[33] Ælfric, 'Nativitas Sancti Iohannis Baptistae' in *Catholic Homilies: The First Series,* p. 384, ll. 140–148.
[34] Augustine, *De Doctrina* pp. 70/71. All translations of *De Doctrina* are by R.P.H. Green.
[35] *De Doctrina Christiana,* pp. 56/57.
[36] *Bald's Leechbook* uses the same collocation that *Beowulf* applies to Grendel's severed arm for the external symptoms of diseases of internal organs, as in: *her sint tacn sweotol be wambe coþum & adlum* ('here are clear signs of diseases and illnesses of the stomach'). 'Bald's Leechbook' in *Leechdoms, Wortcunning, and Starcraft of Early Medieval England: being a collection of documents, for the most part never before printed, illustrating the history of science in this country before the Norman Conquest* ed. Oswald Cockayne, 3 vols (London, 1865), II, p. 216. See also pp. 82, 160, 162, 196, and 216.
[37] *De Doctrina,* pp. 14/15.

English writers talk about signs or say that something signifies, though there are notable exceptions, such as explanations of Latin language and numerals (as in Ælfric's *Grammar* and Byrhtferth's *Enchiridion*) and treatises on prognostics and on 'natural signs' like symptoms (as in Bald's Leechbook). Similarly in the poetry, most things that are called a *tacen* or *beacen* are either objects that are also signs for something else, or miracles, which are events that are also signs for something else (God's protection and power). In the biblical poetry these *signa translata* often have dual signification. The circumcision in *Genesis A* is a sign of God's covenant with the Jews, but also a prefiguration of His covenant with the Church. The pillar of fire as it is depicted in *Exodus* has threefold signification as it points the way, and signifies the covenant, and prefigures the Cross.

Exegetical principles are inherent in the way that the things the poems use the word *tacen* for signify. The complex signification of the pillar of fire in *Exodus* relies more on readers' familiarity with the exegetical principle of typology than any theory of semiotics. R. A. Markus explains how semiology and the interpretation of scripture were concerns that went hand in hand:

> Some early Christian writers were very conscious of the theoretical links between these two themes. Again, Augustine is our archetypal example of a writer who went to considerable pains to formulate the principles which underlay his exegetical practice; and he did so in terms of a theory of signs.[38]

A key intersection between semiotics and exegesis is in the relationship between allegorical and typological signification. As Markus explains it, "allegorising was a means of making a text say something other than what it was obviously saying" whereas in *signa translata*, "a text can be taken in its strictest literal meaning and may nevertheless have, indirectly, a further reference."[39] In other words, in allegorical signification, the mind is directed away from the thing normally indicated by the sign, to a meaning alter-

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[38] R. A. Markus, *Signs and Meanings: Word and Text in Ancient Christianity* (Liverpool, 1996), p. 2.
[39] Markus, *Signs and Meanings*, pp. 9–10. See also Irvine, *Textual Culture*, p. 263.

native to the literal one, whereas in typology, the sign directs the mind to a thing which in turn is a sign directing the mind to another thing. This, Markus claims, "was the foundation of a clear distinction between 'typological' and other kinds of 'figurative' or allegorical senses."[40]

Writers of Old English prose tend to use the verb *(ge)tacnian* when discussing typological, rather than allegorical, signification. Ælfric uses the verb *(ge)tacnian* hundreds of times, almost universally when he is discussing typological signification. By contrast, it does not appear in his explanation of the figurative meaning of the epithets *word, lamb,* and *leo* which refer to Christ), which is allegorical signification.[41] The only thing Ælfric consistently uses *(ge)tacnian* for besides typological signification is translation between languages—to say what a Latin word 'signifies' in English.[42] The usage of other prose writers follows a similar pattern. They tend to use *(ge)tacnian* when discussing typological meanings of scripture, or *signa data* such as those used in the Mass:

> Se mæssepreost getacnað Crist sylfne, and þæt altare getacnað Cristes rode, and seo oflete getacnaþ Cristes lichaman, and win and wæter on ðam calice geswutelað þa halinessa, þe of Cristes sidan ut fleowan, þæt wæs blod and wæter.[43]
>
> [The mass-priest betokens Christ himself, and the altar betokens Christ's rood, and the wafer betokens Christ's body, and the wine and water in the chalice manifests the holiness, which flowed out of Christ's side, which was blood and water.]

Whereas homilies such as Ælfric's explain typological relationships, the poems (as critics have long recognized, especially since T.D. Hill and others applied Robertsonian principles of reading medieval texts to Old English poetry in the late 1960s) generate meaning by establishing and emphasizing new ones. Irvine offers an example of this in his analysis of the way that *The Dream of the Rood* and *Elene* "imply and instruct a reader trained in grammatical *lectio* and *enarratio*". He writes that:

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[40] Markus, *Signs and Meanings,* p. 11.
[41] *Catholic Homilies: First Series*, p. 384, ll. 140–148.
[42] E.g., throughout *Aelfric's Grammatik und Glossar* ed. Julius Zupitza (Berlin, 2003).
[43] Wulfstan, *Institutes of Polity*, p. 236.

> In these poems, the Cross functions as a typological sign, a referent in the narrative of sacred history capable of shifting from the level of a signified object to that of signifier. The interpretation of this literary sign depends on the code *allegoria* and the overlapping discourses of exegesis and *grammatica*, the model for which had been supplied in Augustine's *De doctrina christiana* and Bede's *De schematibus et tropis.*[44]

Typological reading is just one aspect of the fourfold method of Biblical exegesis (or *enarratio*) which is articulated in texts such as Bede's *De schematibus et tropis.* The four levels of exegesis are the literal, typological, tropological, and anagogical. The typological deals with resemblances between narratives that cause them to allude to one another (especially the prefiguring of the New Testament in the Old Testament), the tropological deals with the lessons of a narrative, and the anagogical with the ways a narrative gestures forwards in Christian history to future events. The four levels are alternatively referred to as the literal, allegorical, moral, and anagogical. However, this system creates the potential for confusion because of the diversity of ways the term 'allegory' is used. Irvine, in his disambiguation of the term 'allegory' writes that "in the terms of post-Augustinian Christian exegesis, a biblical text may have three 'levels' of allegory, one of which was called allegory,"—and neither of these types of 'allegory' is the same as that which is meant by both Irvine and Markus in their explanations of how Augustine differentiates between allegory and typology.[45] To avoid confusion, I have adopted the set of terms which will not require repeated clarification of the word 'allegory', and which best approximates Bede's terminology.[46]

Benedictine practices that developed under the influence of Cassian also form part of the network of ideas about exegesis and interpretation that underlie Old English poetry. We should not assume that these ideas only reached England with the Benedictine Reform and could only have influenced late poetry—Susan Gillingham argues that

[44] Irvine, *Textual Culture*, p. 438.
[45] Irvine, *Textual Culture*, p. 245.
[46] See *De Schematibus et Tropis II* in *Bedae Venerabilis Opera Pars I Opera Didascalica* Corpvs Christianorvm Series Latina 123 A,B (Turnholt, 1975), p. 166, and see also Irvine on Bede: *Textual Culture,* p. 295.

the Christianity that Augustine brought to Canterbury was Benedictine.[47] Joseph Dyer traces the development of the fourfold method of reading through the role the psalms played in early Christianity—he describes how the Gospels used the psalms in a way that converts them from lyric to prophecy about the coming of Christ, and patristic exegesis of the psalms followed suit, viewing the psalms in Christological terms. This approach to the psalms was extended to the rest of the Old Testament and, through Origen and the Alexandrian school, developed into the fourfold method of reading, in which:

> Allegory interprets much of the Hebrew Scriptures through a Christological lens: the central event of human history, the coming of Christ, is seen to be prefigured on almost every page of the Hebrew Bible. Moral (or tropological) exegesis sought in the text a guide to Christian behavior here on earth, while the anagogical interpretation probed future, eschatological realities.[48]

Cassian brought these and other Eastern ideas about prayer, monasticism, and interpretation to France, where they formed the basis for the Benedictine rule.

Benedictine practices also ensured that patristic texts continued to be read. The Benedictine Rule recommends that monks should hear Cassian's *Conferences* read out after supper, and stresses the importance that all the monks should come together to hear the reading, regardless of the other responsibilities they may have at that time.[49] Dyer writes:

> Those who followed the liturgical prescriptions of Benedict's Rule had frequent exposure to patristic thought […] Long readings from the homilies and scriptural commentaries by the Fathers were thus established as an essential component of the monastic night office.[50]

The rule again recommends Cassian's *Conferences* and *Institutes* as *instrumenta virtutem* ('tools of virtue') at the conclusion of the Rule.[51]

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[47] Susan Gillingham, *Psalms Through the Centuries: Volume One* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), pp. 53–54.

[48] Joseph Dyer, 'The Psalms in Monastic Prayer', *The Place of the Psalms in the Intellectual Culture of the Middle Ages* ed. Nancy Van Deusen (Albany, 1999), pp. 59–90, p. 69.

[49] Chapter 42 of *The Rule of Saint Benedict* ed. and trans. Bruce L. Venarde. Dumbarton Oaks Medieval Library. (Harvard University Press, 2011), pp. 144/145.

[50] Dyer, 'Psalms in Monastic Prayer', pp. 67–68.

[51] Chapter 73, *Rule of Saint Benedict*, pp. 228/229. Translation Venarde's.

The relevance of this reading of Cassian's *Institutes* and *Conferences*, (which, Dyer says, "were normative texts for centuries")[52] is that few things that are called a *tacen* or *beacen* in the poems are not miracles, portents, or the Cross, so we cannot divorce Anglo-Saxon ideas about signs and semiotics from their ideas about religious perception. Cardinal sins such as pride and gluttony are essentially a misplacement of values stemming from a misunderstanding of one's place in the universe, so we should be on the lookout for reflexes of patristic ideas about sin in the misinterpretation of characters in Old English poems—one which has not previously received the attention it deserves is the sin of *acedia*, which I will discuss in subsequent chapters. Conversely, good interpreters in Old English poems are people who have clear spiritual perception—what Cassian calls *discretio* ('discernment'). In Cassian's second *Conference*, the character Abbot Moses says, of this quality:

> Est enim non mediocris quaedam virtus, nec quae humana passim valeat industria comprehendi, nisi divino fuerit munere gratiaque collata. Siquidem inter nobilissima Spiritus sancti dona, hanc quoque ita legimus ab Apostolo numerari:[53]
>
> [This is no minor virtue, nor one which can be seized anywhere merely by human effort. It is ours only as a gift from God and we read in the apostle that it is to be numbered among the most outstanding gifts of the Holy Spirit.][54]

This is one of the themes that often appears in Old English poems (such as *Elene* and *Christ II*) that address issues of discernment—the paradox that good interpretation is something people must strive for, but that is ultimately a gift of the Holy Spirit and cannot be achieved by human effort alone.

Cassian's discussion of discernment also touches on other ideas that continued to interest Christian writers, including those who composed the Old English poems. He addresses the dangers of concealment, as do *Judith* and *Elene*. He also addresses the possibility that well-intentioned, even over-zealous men may still fall victim to *illusione*

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[52] Dyer, 'Psalms in Monastic Prayer', p. 71.
[53] *Collatio Secunda*, *PL* 49.524B–524C.
[54] Translations of Cassian are by Colm Luibheid. *John Cassian: Conferences* trans. Colm Luibheid (Mahwah NJ, 1985), p. 60.

diabolica ('diabolical illusion'), a theme which also interests the author of *Genesis B*.[55] He advocates humility and submission to the wisdom of ancient texts and one's elders, while also making the caveat that grey hair alone is not a guarantee of virtue. Despite the radically different context, both the *Beowulf* poet's depiction of the grey-haired Danes abandoning the mere and the *Andreas* poet's depiction of the unbelieving Jewish elders accord well with Cassian's assertion that:

> Divitiae enim senum non sunt canitie capitis, sed industria juventutis ac praeteritorum laborum stipendiis metiendae.[56]
>
> [It is not white hair which constitutes the riches of old men but the zeal they showed in their youth and the toils which they undertook.][57]

This is not to suggest that every Old English poet was directly responding to Cassian, but rather that they were developing ideas and discussions which were part of the Latinate cultural background Irvine calls *grammatica*, and can only be understood thoroughly when that context is acknowledged, but not assumed to dominate or preclude systems of thought that are particular to Old English poetry, or the inventiveness of individual poets.

ORGANIZATION OF CHAPTERS

I have chosen to organize my chapters by manuscript because manuscript context tells us a good deal about how texts were understood and used. Martin Irvine describes compilation (a term he applies both to the creation of new texts from passages taken from other texts, and to the gathering together of texts in a manuscript) as an interpretive act: "the main principle of a *compilatio* was the selection of materials from the cultural library so that the resulting collection forms an *interpretive* arrangement of

[55] *PL* 49.529A; Luibheid, *Conferences*, p. 64.
[56] *PL* 49.543A.
[57] Luibheid, *Conferences*, p. 71.

texts."[58] He further argues, of the Vercelli and Exeter Books and Junius Manuscript in particular, that "material facts have an important bearing on the meaning of the poems when considered in their contexts of reception and cannot be ignored when considering the levels of intertextuality at work in Old English texts."[59]

The following table shows the distribution of occurrences of the nouns *tacen* and *beacen* (as simplexes or in compounds) in the poetry:[60]

	tacen	*beacen*	total
Genesis B:	4	-	4
Genesis A:	7	4	11
Exodus:	1	4	5
Daniel:	4	3	7
Christ and Satan:	1	-	1
Andreas:	8	3	11
Dream of the Rood:	-	4	4
Elene:	11	19	30
Christ I:	1	-	1
Christ II:	2	-	2
Christ III:	4	2	6
Guthlac A:	1	-	1
Guthlac B:	2	1	3
Phoenix:	6	1	7
Juliana:	1	-	1
Riddle 55:	1	-	1
Riddle 59:	1	-	1
Beowulf:	4	3	7
Paris Psalter:	6	9	15
Rune Poem:	1	-	1
Judgement Day II:	1	1	2
Seasons:	2	2	4

Totals by Manuscript	
Junius Manuscript:	28
Vercelli Book:	45
Exeter Book:	23
Beowulf Manuscript:	7
Paris Psalter:	14
Others:	6

[58] Irvine, *Textual Culture*, p. 428.
[59] Irvine, *Textual Culture*, p. 429.
[60] I have gathered the information in this table, and information about other patterns of usage, using the *Dictionary of Old English Web Corpus*, compiled by Antonette diPaolo Healey with John Price Wilkin and Xin Xiang. (Toronto, 2009).

I will be looking in turn at the depictions of signs and acts of interpretation in the poems of the Beowulf Manuscript, the Vercelli Book with reference to related material in the Exeter Book, and the Junius Manuscript. The Paris Psalter stands apart—many Old English poems can be linked to each other by common use of otherwise rare lexis, collocations, or formulas, but the Paris Psalter rarely participates in these relationships. Neither does it share strong links with other poems by reason of authorship (as the poems of Cynewulf) or established by compilation (as the poems of the Junius Manuscript). It also stands apart in its relative faithfulness to the wording of its source material by the standards of Old English poetic adaptations, and its frequent use of vocabulary that is more usually found in Old English prose than poetry. Its difference makes it worth individual attention in light of the present findings at a later date, but the limitations of space compel me to exclude it from the present study.

Although *Beowulf* contains relatively few references to signs, and *Judith* none at all, the few signs *Beowulf* does name as such come at key moments in the career of the poem's enigmatic central character, and also at moments which have narrative parallels in *Judith*. For these reasons among others, I have devoted one short but important chapter to the poems of the Beowulf Manuscript.

The Vercelli Book contains by far the most references to signs of any manuscript of Old English poetry, even though it contains fewer than half the number of lines of verse the Exeter Book does. Sign terms in The Exeter Book are restricted almost exclusively to the manuscript's initial sequence of longer, narrative poems, which, like the three poems of the Vercelli Book that contain sign terms, were once considered 'Cynewulfian'. Although it is no longer plausible to assign authorship of all of these poems to Cynewulf himself or to a 'school of Cynewulf', it remains the case that for various reasons (including common themes, common sources, borrowings, scribal interventions, and manuscript context) there are relationships among these poems which cause them to

speak to each other in interesting ways. *Elene* and *Andreas* between them account for two thirds of all occurrences of *tacen* and *beacen* in the Cynewulf group. For these reasons and others, rather than writing separately about the Vercelli Book and the Exeter Book, I have devoted one chapter to *Elene* and another to *Andreas*, situating both poems within the context of the 'Cynewulfian' poems of the Vercelli and (secondarily) Exeter Books.

Finally, the Junius Manuscript's clear principle of compilation (it contains four poems based on Biblical narratives, arranged chronologically) argues for taking it as a unit. As most of the language of signs in the manuscript appears in *Genesis A* and *B*, the chapter on the Junius Manuscript devotes more time to these poems than to the others, and particularly to *Genesis B*, due to its unusual origin, the importance of the *tacen* in its narrative, and the importance of the Fall as the originary cause of all subsequent events in the salvific narrative conveyed by the manuscript as a whole.

Chapter 1 takes as its starting point the similarities in the nature and function of the objects offered as signs by the heroes of *Beowulf* and *Judith*. The title characters of these two poems enact the same character type: the heroic sign-bearing interpreter whose ability to present and explain synecdochic signs (severed heads, fragments of treasure) is predicated on their boldness in venturing into a dark and dangerous space hidden from the view of their society. Their correct account of events and their significance is contrasted with the incorrect assumptions of fearful characters: the Danes who stand outside the mere and misinterpret the bloody water, and the Assyrians who stand outside Holofernes' tent and misinterpret his silence.

Chapter 2 considers *Elene* in the contexts of the Cynewulfian canon and the poems of the Vercelli Book. The conventional critical interpretation of Cynewulf's *Elene* as requiring and advocating figural reading at the expense of literal reading is a result less of the evidence of the poem itself than of the dominance of typological read-

ing in later 20th century scholarship. Cynewulf is in fact concerned with the process by which people come to a mature and holistic interpretation of the Cross. Far from being thin allegories, his characters are psychologically realistic according to the standards of the time, in that they enact something universal about human experience. Each of the four major characters ultimately achieves a holistic tripartite understanding of the Cross founded upon (1) learning about texts and memories of the past, (2) experience of the Cross' power in the present, and (3) receptivity or patience which is rewarded by the Holy Ghost. This three-part pattern maps well onto Augustine's tripartite model of the soul comprised of *memoria, intelligentia,* and *voluntas* ('memory, intelligence, and will')*,* and also onto exegetical methods of reading which consider what a text reveals about the past (the literal and typological), present (the tropological), and future (the anagogical).

Chapter 3 considers *Andreas* in the context of the Vercelli Book, its borrowings from *Beowulf*, and its thematic similarities to *Christ III*. It argues that in *Andreas* depictions of signs and the theme of covenant are intimately bound up with one another, and that the poet links poor interpretation to flawed patronage relationships and the sin of *acedia*. It also argues that the blindness motif in the poem is executed in such a way as to instruct the reader to read the poem typologically, while also offering a tropological lesson in not putting too much faith in one's own interpretive abilities.

Chapter 4 takes up the close association between the concepts of 'sign' and 'covenant' established in the previous chapters, and considers the function of this association in the Junius Manuscript. It argues that the way the *Genesis A* poet uses the terms *tacen* and *beacen* means that the use of the word *beacen* to describe the Tower of Babel subtly conveys the arrogance of the builders, that *Daniel* applies the lexis of signs only to signs that communicate through a failure to communicate, and that the collocation *tacen sweotol* is frequently used for ironic effect. In also argues that the Tempter in

Genesis B inverts the model of heroic messenger/interpreter discussed in Chapter 1, and sets the repeated collocation of the *tacen* ('sign'), *oðiewan* ('to show'), and *treow* ('good faith', 'pledge') in *Genesis B* against the cognate collocation of *tekean* ('sign'), *togean* ('to show') and *treuwa* ('pledge', 'security') in the Vatican *Genesis* fragments in order to clarify exactly what *tacen* means in *Genesis B*. It answers the question 'what was Eve's sin?' by arguing that in both *Genesis B* and the Vatican *Genesis*, sin is conceived as originating in willingness to distance oneself from God and control one's communication with him—and that this sin is punished by further distance from God. It argues (against the common allegorical reading) that the strength of the Tempter's deception is in his assault on Eve's intellect, not her senses, and that her fall illustrates the limitations of reason as a means to access God. And finally, it argues that the language used of Eve's promise of good faith implies that it is a false promise, and that this shows that the poem is working within an ethical framework which ultimately judges the result, not the intention, of her actions.

And finally, my conclusion explores the unity of the presentation of signs across the texts which form the core of this study. It adopts the term 'conceptual cluster' from Britt Mize's 2013 book *Traditional Subjectivities*, and uses it to explain the consistent coincidence of the concepts of signs, brightness, and covenant in the poems.[61] It argues that this cluster functions as a unit with its own associations and connotative meaning, and demonstrates that while, taken literally, it makes far more sense for the golden military standard among the dragon's treasure (in *Beowulf*) than Abraham's circumcision (in *Genesis A*) to be described as 'bright' it is actually the former which is an anomaly. Having established the prevalence of the concept cluster, and the consistency of the purpose for which it is employed, I turn finally to consider the implications of *Beowulf*'s apparent deviance from and the Saxon *Genesis*' adherence to the rules of this

[61] Britt Mize, *Traditional Subjectivities: the Old English Poetics of Mentality* (Toronto, 2013).

device. There is a remarkable degree of consistency across the poems of these four manuscripts in how they depict misinterpretation, and what sorts of imagery and themes accompany the mention of signs. The closest thing we have to a distinctly Anglo-Saxon semiotics is the way signs are used in the poetry: as part of a highly allusive system of character types, collocations, and concept clusters.

CHAPTER 1: *BEOWULF* AND *JUDITH*

Beowulf and *Judith* are the two poetic texts in the Nowell Codex portion of what is now British Library, Cotton MS Vitellius A xv.[1] Although *Judith* may have once occupied a different position in the manuscript, it is copied in the same hand as the second half of *Beowulf,* as part of what appears to be a coherent project.[2] Kenneth Sisam was the first to suggest that the manuscript would have been understood as a "*liber de diversis monstris*", the presence of monsters being one motif that unites its otherwise dissimilar contents.[3] Critics have argued that *Judith* and the *Passion of St Christopher* do not belong with the rest of the Beowulf Manuscript on paleographical, linguistic, and thematic grounds, but Andy Orchard has argued that there are strong thematic links among all the texts in the Beowulf Manuscript as it now exists, and that *Judith* participates in developing not only the theme of monstrosity (in the behaviour of Holofernes) but themes of martial valour, lost civilizations, and the dangers of pride.[4]

Judith is, in terms of its origins and aims, a very different type of poem to *Beowulf*. The dating of *Beowulf* is much disputed, but it certainly must be earlier than *Judith*, which is considered a 'late' poem.[5] Whereas *Beowulf* is a story about an otherwise unknown character, set against a backdrop of a northern, pagan world, populated by fig-

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[1] See entry 399 in Gneuss and Lapidge, *Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts*.
[2] See Peter J. Lucas, 'The Place of *Judith* in the *Beowulf*-Manuscript', *The Review of English Studies* New Series 41:164 (1990), 463–478.
[3] Kenneth Sisam, *Studies in the History of Old English Literature* (Oxford, 1953), p. 96.
[4] Andy Orchard, *Pride and Prodigies: Studies in the Monsters of the Beowulf-Manuscript* (Cambridge, 1995), pp. 4–6.
[5] See the discussions of the dating of *Judith* in *Judith* ed. Mark Griffith (Exeter, 1997), pp. 44–47 and Megan E. Hartman, 'The Limits of Conservative Composition in Old English Poetry' *The Dating of Beowulf: A Reassessment* ed. Leonard Neidorf (Cambridge, 2014), pp. 79–96.

ures of Germanic myth and legend, *Judith* is a retelling of an Old Testament narrative. The moral world of *Beowulf* is complex and ambiguous, while *Judith* simplifies the narrative of its source in order to foreground its moral meaning—Ann W. Astell argues that "the *Judith* poet systematically allegorizes the tale as he tells it *literaliter*—a procedure which displaces allegory as the story's spiritual (hidden or unstated) meaning and leads the reader into its tropological dimension."[6] Despite these differences, the poems have similarities of plot and theme which could explain their placement together. Both depict solitary heroes who go out alone to defend a pre-Christian populace, and both depict the downfall of arrogant pagan kings (Heremod and Holofernes).

In this chapter, I examine the use of the lexis of signs in the two poems, and the implications of the parallels in their narratives. The lexis the two poems use about matters of signs and signification is very different, but they have multiple parallels in their depictions of the actions undertaken by good interpreters and the inaction that characterizes bad ones. Their similarities are very much on the level of scene and narrative rather than arising from formulaic language. By taking the poems together, we can establish the basic characteristics of—and narrative progression associated with—the character type of the heroic sign-bearing interpreter.

John D. Niles' survey of *Beowulf* scholarship prior to 1997 divides mid-twentieth century *Beowulf* criticism into three major categories: "the aesthetic, the patristic, and the oral-formulaic."[7] He defines the interests of the first group as the poem's effects, the second as the poem's sources, and the third as the cultural context in which such a poem could come into being. Andy Orchard's *A Critical Companion to* Beowulf is organized around seven different aspects of the poem: manuscript context, style and structure, sources and analogues in Germanic myth and legend, the influence of Latinate

[6] Ann W. Astell, 'Holofernes's Head: *tacen* and teaching in the Old English *Judith*', *ASE* 18 (1989), 177–133, p. 121.
[7] John D. Niles, 'Introduction: *Beowulf*, Truth, and Meaning' *A Beowulf Handbook* ed. Robert E. Bjork and John D. Niles (Exeter, 1997), pp. 1–12.

Christian learning, the poem's social morality and values, the role of speeches in the poem, and the ambiguity and complexity of the poet's world-view.[8] My approach to *Beowulf* and *Judith* is most strongly influenced by the approach Orchard calls 'style and structure' and Niles calls 'aesthetic'. This is the approach employed in articles such as Stanley Greenfield's 'Grendel's Approach to Heorot' and Katherine O'Brien O'Keeffe's 'Transformations and the Limits of the Human'.[9] My examination of the diction of signs, and the way patterns are made and broken across the poem (and between the two poems) uses essentially the same, well-established methods of analysis. My approach to *Beowulf* and *Judith* is also indebted to, and in the tradition of, the criticism that Orchard presents under the heading 'religion and learning' and Niles calls 'patristic'. However, I am not engaged in this chapter in what Niles pejoratively describes as "source hunting".[10] I am writing not about the poem's composition, but its reception: the way that the habit of reading typologically makes certain aspects of *Beowulf* stand out when it is placed alongside *Judith.* In fact, what stands out is not Christian allegory but an archetypal pattern of events which has analogues in Germanic myth and legend.[11]

Twenty years on since Niles completed his survey of *Beowulf* scholarship, the biggest change in *Beowulf* scholarship is how much of it is not about *Beowulf.* The International Medieval Bibliography database hosted by the publisher Brepols gives an incomplete but telling glimpse at what is being published. Of the 50 entries from the years 2012 and 2013 which turn up as their most recent results (as of 26 March 2015) for the search term 'Beowulf', a full 32 address contemporary culture. Half of these en-

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[8] Andy Orchard, *A Critical Companion to* Beowulf (Cambridge, 2003).

[9] Stanley B. Greenfield 'Grendel's Approach to Heorot: Syntax and Poetry' *Old English Poetry: Fifteen Essays* ed. Robert P. Creed (Providence, 1967), pp. 275–285; Katherine O'Brien O'Keeffe, '*Beowulf,* Lines 702b–836: Transformations and the Limits of the Human', *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* 23:4 (1981), 484–494.

[10] Niles, 'Truth and Meaning', p. 6.

[11] I hope to avoid the blinkered perspectives of some 20th century criticism, in which Beowulf can either be a perfectly pagan iteration of the Bears' Son folk motif or a Type of Christ but never both. See Edward B. Irving Jr., 'Christian and Pagan Elements' *A Beowulf Handbook* ed. Robert E. Bjork and John D. Niles (Exeter, 1997), pp. 175–192.

tries are reviews of or responses to Seamus Heaney's translation of *Beowulf*, but the other half demonstrate the diversity of *Beowulf's* influence: they range from Japanese poetry, through Czech translation, to cinema and gaming. Of the remaining results, five entries promise to make philological or codicological points—the unglamorous foundational work on which all the flashier theoretical approaches to medieval texts rest. Four explore aspects of the society depicted in the poem. The intersection of literary and historical inquiry is inevitable in medieval scholarship, but Tolkien would be gratified to note that, almost 90 years since he delivered his famous lecture on 'The Monsters and The Critics', scholars are still heeding his advice and tend rather to use history to illuminate the "poem as a poem" than the poem to illuminate history.[12] Three entries are on issues of performance, which seems to be a new metamorphosis of the old oral-formulaic school. Two are about genre, and one is a note in a book about monsters. There is also an article by Daniel Anlezark which considers Beowulf's three swimming feats in light of analogues in Norse sagas and *Solomon and Saturn II*.[13] The terms have changed since 1997 but the broad categories of effects, sources, and society still cover much of the work being done on *Beowulf*.

The remaining result that comes up in the International Medieval Bibliography is Antonina Harbus' monograph *Cognitive Approaches to Old English Poetry*.[14] This book takes up a critical trend that has been gaining momentum recently. Cognitive Approaches take the psychology of the poems seriously, countering the rejection of psychological realism found in much allegorical criticism of the Robertsonian school but also avoiding Freudian vocabulary, instead drawing on the methods of cognitive linguistics and cognitive psychology. Leslie Lockett's 2011 book *Anglo-Saxon Psychologies*

[12] J.R.R. Tolkien, '*Beowulf*: The Monsters and The Critics' (Oxford, 1958) [reprint], p. 3.
[13] Daniel Anlezark, 'All at Sea: Beowulf's Marvellous Swimming' *Myths, Legends, and Heroes: Essays on Old Norse and Old English Literature in Honour of John McKinnell* ed. Daniel Anlezark (Toronto, 2011), pp. 225–241.
[14] Antonina Harbus *Cognitive Approaches to Old English Poetry* (Cambridge, 2012).

and Mize's 2013 book *Traditional Subjectivities* are also in this tradition.[15] The question of misinterpretation is in the same spirit as these cognitive approaches in the sense that it foregrounds what the poems express about the workings of the mind. My larger question, however, is an essentially philological and literary one—what were the connotations and subauditions of sign terms in poetry, and what is their effect?

TACEN AND *BEACEN*

In *Beowulf*, *beacen* and cognates of *beacen* appear three times. The verb *(ge)beacnian* appears in line 140b, which is discussed below. The noun *beacen* appears first in line 570a, where the phrase *beorht beacen Godes* ('bright beacon of God') refers to the sun, and again in line 2777a, where a military standard in the dragon's horde is described as *beacna beorhtost* ('brightest of beacons'). Both are discussed more extensively in my concluding chapter.

The word *tacen* appears four times in *Beowulf.* The first instance comes in the description of the results of Grendel's raids on Heorot, which also contains the poem's only use of the verb *(ge)beacnian*. The narrator says that many of the Danes took to sleeping elsewhere:

Ða him gebeacnod wæs,
gesægd soðlice sweotolan tacne
healðegnes hete.[16] (*Beowulf*, ll. 140b–142a)

[When it was signalled to them, told truly by clear signs, the hall-thegn's hate.]

In the second instance, the *tacen* is Grendel's severed arm, and *tacen* is again collocated with the adjective *sweotol*:[17]

Þæt wæs tacen sweotol
syþðan hildedeor hond alegde,
earm ond eaxle —þær wæs eal geador
Grendles grape— under geapne hrof. (*Beowulf,* ll. 833b–836)

[15] Leslie Lockett, *Anglo-Saxon Psychologies in the Vernacular and Latin Traditions* (Toronto, 2011).
[16] As stated in the introduction, quotations of *Beowulf* are from *Klaeber's Beowulf* ed. R.D. Fulk, Robert E. Bjork, and John D. Niles, 4th edn (Toronto, 2008).
[17] This collocation is discussed in more detail in Chapter 4, on p. 210.

[That was a clear sign, after the battle-brave one laid the hand, arm and shoulder—there was all together Grendel's grip—under the curve of the roof.]

The third time the word appears, it is applied to the things Beowulf brings back from the mere—Grendel's head and the sword-hilt. Beowulf says:

Hwæt, we þe þas sælac, sunu Healfdenes,
leod Scyldinga, lustum brohton
tires to tacne, þe þu her to locast. (*Beowulf,* ll.1652–1654)

[Lo, with pleasure we brought to you this sea-offering, son of Healfdane, prince of the Scyldings, as a sign of glory, which you here look at.]

And finally, when Beowulf prepares to depart from Heorot, Hrothgar describes the lasting peace that has been established between the Danes and the Geats, and predicts that they will send one another *lac ond luftacen* ('offerings and tokens of friendship', l. 1863a).

While the circumstances in which signs are read in *Judith* are very similar to those in *Beowulf,* the vocabulary the poem uses to talk about signs is different. The one similarity is that *Judith* links the verbs *(ge)swutelian* ('to make clear') and *(ge)tacnian* ('to signal'), while *Beowulf* links the cognate adjective and noun *sweotol* ('clear') and *tacen* ('sign'). But Judith is unusual in never using the noun *tacen*. Out of the 19 Old English poems of 300 lines or more, only *Solomon and Saturn II* and *The Battle of Maldon* do not use any form of *tacen* or *(ge)tacnian*, and only *Judith* uses only the verb but not the noun.[18] *Judith* also uses a *hapax legomenon*, *behþ* ('token, proof', l. 174a), where the narrator describes how Judith commanded her handmaiden to uncover Holofernes' head to show to the Bethulians as proof of *hu hyre æt beaduwe gespeow* ('how she prospered at battle', l. 175b).[19] There is no immediate prompt for this unusual term in the Vulgate; as Samantha Zacher has pointed out, the poem introduces allusions to

[18] In *Judgement Day II tacn* is supplied based on the phrases *signa minantia mortem* and *deað beacnigende tacen* in the analogous Latin poem and Napier Homily respectively to make sense of line 112a, *deaðbeacnigende* <*tacn*> ('sign threatening death'); see the notes on the poem on p. 179 of *The Anglo-Saxon Minor Poems,* ed. Elliot Van Kirk Dobbie, ASPR VI (New York, 1942).
[19] Quotations of *Judith* are from *Beowulf and Judith* ed. Elliot Van Kirk Dobbie, ASPR IV (New York, 1953, repr. 1965).

signification through its use of "conventional language of miracle and revelation" where this is not modelled in the biblical text, so this less conventional language of revelation may be introduced on a similar principle.[20]

The first use of the verb *(ge)tacnian* in the poem comes when Judith returns to Bethulia with the head of Holofernes, and declares:

> Fynd syndon eowere
> gedemed to deaðe, ond ge dom agon,
> tir æt tohtan, swa eow getacnod hafað
> mihtig dryhten þurh mine hand. (*Judith,* ll. 195b–198)
>
> [Your enemies are condemned to death, and you will have dominion, glory at battle, as the mighty Lord has betokened to you through my hand.]

The other use of *(ge)tacnian* is in a scene in the Assyrian camp which parallels Judith's arrival in Bethulia. A warrior who has looked inside Holofernes' tent and seen his headless body tells his companions: *Her ys geswutelod ure sylfra forwyrd, / toweard getacnod* ('here our own destruction is made clear, betokened to be imminent,' ll. 285–286b).

There are only a handful of occurrences of *(ge)tacnian* in poetry, but as I mentioned above, it is very common in prose, especially homilies. Ælfric often uses it when explicating typological correspondences. However, the signification that takes place *within* the narrative—the way the characters within the poem read the signs of Holofernes' head and body—is not typological. Of themselves, without further explication, the heads of both Holofernes and Grendel signify in a way that resembles synecdoche in that the condition of the part expresses the condition of the whole (i.e., dead). This much is communicated by the dismembered bodies apart from any intention to signify, like Augustine's *signa naturalia*. However when Grendel's arm and head are read within formal acts of display, they also become signs that Beowulf has fulfilled his *æfenspræce* ('evening-speech', l. 759a): thus they are simultaneously natural and given

[20] Samantha Zacher, *Rewriting the Old Testament in Anglo-Saxon Verse: Becoming the Chosen People* (London, 2013), pp. 141-145, p. 144.

signs. Similarly, Holofernes' head's most important function is not to convey the present circumstance (that he is dead) but a future one: that God commands the Jews to attack and promises them victory. The meaning of Holofernes' head is not 'fixed' the way the wafer symbolizes Christ's body but contingent on both the context and Judith's inspired ability to reveal what God intends to communicate by it.

SIGN-BEARING HEROES

As Judith gives the head new significance through her exposition, so too Beowulf acts to control how Grendel's arm and head will be read. He does not let either speak for itself, but—repeatedly—tells the story of how he came by them.

Beowulf's adventure in the mere could be read archetypally as an iteration of the underworld journey common in the narratives of many cultures, but it is also possible to read elements of Beowulf's story typologically, within a discourse of Old Testament allusions. In his *Critical Companion to Beowulf*, Orchard sets out several possible Old Testament analogues for Beowulf, including David's decapitation of Goliath, and Judas Maccabeus' decapitation of Nicanor. He finds a larger number of general narrative parallels with the story of David, but notes that the particular language around the display of Grendel's arm is suggestively similar to the language of II Maccabees, which says that Judas returns with both the arm and head of his vanquished enemy, which he displays as signs. Orchard notes that "the phrase 'manifest sign' (*manifestum signum*) calls to mind the description of how Beowulf made a similarly 'clear token' of Grendel's arm (lines 833b–836)."[21]

Beowulf and Judith (as she is depicted in the poem) are typologically or archetypally similar to one another. They are iterations of the same character type: a socially

[21] Orchard, *Critical Companion*, p. 147. See also Rolf H Bremmer Jr., 'Grendel's Arm and the Law' in *Studies in English Language and Literature: 'Doubt wisely' Papers in honour of E.G. Stanley* (London, 1996), pp. 121–132.

liminal figure who goes into concealed places, then displays and explicates signs on returning, thus mediating between a society and a dangerous (often supernatural) sphere of the unseen. They have many analogues, in multiple traditions. Moses is of this type, and the lycanthropy of Sigmundr and Sinfjötli in the *Völsunga saga* also hints at the existence of such figures in pre-Christian Germanic narratives.

The stories of Beowulf and Judith had certain similarities to begin with, but the resemblance between the two heroes is increased by some of the alterations the *Judith* poet made to the biblical narrative. Some are small details, such as having Judith order her handmaid to display Holofernes' head instead of displaying it herself, just as Beowulf has his men bear Grendel's head to Heorot before him. Other changes increase the thematic resonances between the stories: Astell notes that in the depiction of Holofernes' *fleohnet* ('curtain' l. 47a), the poet has deliberately reinterpreted an emblem of opulence as an emblem of concealment, a "representation of Holofernes's inner state, [which] reflects not so much his *luxuria* as his self-delusion."[22] The poet's conversion of Holofernes' curtain from a symbol of luxury which Judith carries away with her to a symbol of obscurity that remains in place greatly increases the thematic resemblance between Beowulf's adventure beneath the mere and Judith's adventure behind the curtain. Regardless of why and when such changes to the biblical narrative were introduced, once *Beowulf* and *Judith* are placed side-by-side in the manuscript it becomes easy for a reader trained to think typologically to see similarities between them.

Other than Hrothgar's promised *luftacen* ('signs of friendship', l. 1863a), each sign called a *tacen* or said to *(ge)tacnian* in both poems is a dismembered body, and in each case (even the *luftacen*) the *tacen* provides information about an unseen potential enemy. The severed heads are the most obviously similar, not only because they are

[22] Astell, 'Holofernes's Head', p. 125. See also C.T. Berkhout and J.F. Doubleday, 'The Net in *Judith* 46b–54a', *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen* 74 (1973), 630–634.

heads, but because they are presented by the heroes to signify or promise *tir* ('glory'), and to authenticate a victory that took place out of sight.

The enemies Beowulf and Judith confront are characterized by obscurity. Much has been written on the symbolism of Holofernes' *fleohnet*, and his sense-dulling indulgences.[23] He is a creature of concealment, who hides himself behind his curtain, unseen unless he calls one of his thegns to *rune* ('secret counsel', l. 54a). He is suspicious, and feels compelled to spy on his followers without being observed by them. The poet explains the purpose of the *fleohnet*:

> Þæt se bealofulla
> mihte wlitan þurh, wigena baldor,
> on æghwylcne þe ðær inne com
> hæleða bearna, ond on hyne nænig
> monna cynnes. (*Judith,* ll. 48b–52a)

> [So that the baleful one might look through, lord of warriors, on anyone, children of heroes, who came therein, and on him none of mankind [might look].]

Likewise, Grendel spies on Heorot from the dark, and is never seen clearly while he is alive. It is said that *men ne cunnon* ('men do not know', l. 162b) about his movements. He comes only on *sweartum nihtum* ('dark nights', l. 167b), and by day he and his mother are never seen except at a distance. They are known through hearsay (see ll. 1345–1382) and through their tracks and tokens: Grendel's hatred is made known through the *sweotolan tacne* ('clear signs', l. 141b) of his violence in the hall, and after his encounter with Beowulf, men inspect the *laþes lastas* ('loathed one's footprints', l. 841a), and the *tirleases trode* ('inglorious one's track', l. 843) to learn what they can about his fate.

The monstrous enemies in both poems wish not only to hide themselves but also to drag their victims out of sight. In *Beowulf* the sea monsters try to drag Beowulf down under the water, Grendel devours his victims even down to their *fet ond folma*

[23] See for example, Jackson J. Campbell, 'Schematic Technique in *Judith*', *ELH* 38:2 (1971), 155–172, p. 163; and Astell, 'Holofernes's Head', p. 124.

('feet and hands', l. 745a), and Grendel's mother drags Æschere's body away to the mere. In *Judith,* Holofernes attempts to conceal Judith by bringing her into his tent, and his intentions towards her are expressed in a metaphor of filth covering brightness: *þohte ða beorhtan idese / mid widle ond mid womme besmitan* ('he thought to soil the bright maid with defilement and sin', ll. 58b–59a). The heroes counter this movement by dragging the monsters into sight. When the monster can be seen clearly, through visual proof of his death, he ceases to be dangerous.

The heroes act openly, and the lexis of brightness accumulates around them. The description of Judith's appearance—she is *beagum gehlæste / hringum gehrodene,* ('adorned with arm-bands, ornamented with rings', l. 36b–37a)—emphasizes her state as a visual object even as she goes behind Holofernes' *fleohnet,* where she is hidden from those outside, and also hidden from Holofernes, once his overburdened senses fail him. The source of her strength is the *torhtmod* Lord (l. 6a); *torhtmod* is frequently translated as 'glorious', but the element *torht*—a poetic word meaning clear, radiant, or resplendent—has definite connotations of brightness that the modern English word 'glory' has only in certain contexts. Judith is described as a *torhtan mægð* ('radiant maid', l. 43a); her holiness reflects the glory of the *torhtmod* Lord, illuminating for the Hebrews the promise of a *torhtlic* ('splendid', l. 157a) victory. Paul Beekman Taylor considers the language of brightness used of Judith in his analysis of the vocabulary of beauty in Old English poetry and concludes that brightness terms such as *torht* convey not only beauty but power.[24] Judith's brightness connotes beauty, strength, and blessedness.

Similarly, Beowulf's first approach to Heorot is observed and announced, and he declares at the outset that the matter of his business with Hrothgar must not be *dyrne* ('hidden', l. 271b). Throughout this scene there is a motif of reflected light: the build-

[24] Paul Beekman Taylor, 'The Old English Poetic Vocabulary of Beauty', in *New Readings on Women in Old English Poetry*, ed. H. Damico and A. Hennessey Olsen (Bloomington IN, 1990), pp. 211–21.

ing shines brightly, and the helmets of the Geats gleam back. Since Beowulf is neither female (and therefore beautiful) nor a saint (and therefore blessed) it is not surprising that Beowulf himself is not described as 'bright'; instead, he acquires his illumination by association with reflective or glowing objects, until at last his pyre provides illumination for seafarers.

For all their bright visibility however, both heroes perform their defining deeds out of sight and alone. When Beowulf goes into the mere and Judith goes into the tent, they cross into a space of darkness and concealment. Their heroic deeds are performed solo—not always literally alone, but without witnesses, or at least without useful support.

As many critics (including Orchard and O'Brien O'Keeffe) have noted, the poet links Beowulf, Grendel, and Sigemund to one another through echoes in lexis and phrasing.[25] They are united in particular by their complex relationships to fame and obscurity. The word *an* used in the sense of 'alone' is applied to *Beowulf* eight times,[26] and also to Grendel (l. 145a), Sigemund (l. 888b), and Heremod (l. 1714b). Both Beowulf and Sigemund are highly visible and widely celebrated figures, but both earn their fame through an act (or acts) which they perform in obscurity, in the dark, below the water, or *under harne stan* [...] *ana* ('under the boundary stone...alone', ll. 887b–8).[27] The poet emphasizes the enigma that surrounds Sigemund, speaking of his *ellendædum, uncuþes fela*, ('brave deeds, largely unknown', l. 876) and his *wide siðas, / þara þe gumena bearn gearwe ne wiston* ('wide travels, about which the sons of men did not entirely know', ll. 878–888). The same word, *uncuþ,* which complicates Sigmund's rela-

[25] O'Brien O'Keeffe, 'Transformations and the Limits of the Human'.

[26] At ll. 425, 431, 1377, 2498, 2533, 2643, 2657, 2876. In half of these cases, it is Beowulf who is characterizing himself. In one (l. 1377) it is Hrothgar who is speaking, and in the final three it is Wiglaf.

[27] For the translation of *harne stan* as boundary stone I am following William Cooke's analysis of the term in relation to law codes and place names: 'Two Notes on *Beowulf* (with Glances at *Vafþruðnismál,* Blickling Homily 16, and *Andreas*, lines 839-846)' *Medium Aevum* 72:2 (2003), 297–301. The expression also appears in *Andreas* and is discussed below on p. 161.

tionship to fame complicates Grendel's. His reputation is *undyrne cuð* (literally 'known un-hidden', l. 150b) in distant lands, yet it is the obscurity of his attacks, which are described as 'unknown' or 'uncanny' (*uncuðne nið*, l. 276b), which makes him fearsome. Orchard observes this use of the term *uncuþ* with reference to Sigemund, and notes additional correspondence in the language used for Sigemund and Grendel.[28]

Beowulf also achieves the deeds which make him famous alone and out of sight. His youthful swimming feat is concluded in solitary circumstances, though it begins as a joint endeavour, forming a mirror-image with his final dragon-fight, which is concluded jointly though begun alone. (Even that joint fight proves the rule that heroes are solitary because only one of the two human participants survives to communicate the event.) Beowulf's fight with Grendel is the closest he comes to having witnesses, but it still occurs in the dark of night; it is not until the following morning that the warriors are able to clearly see and contemplate the severed hand. And of course, he ventures into the mere to fight Grendel's mother entirely alone.

Judith is also unique, isolated, and concealed when she performs her heroic deed, doubly hidden inside the tent within the enemy camp (like Beowulf inside the cave within the mere). Judith is accompanied by her maid, but the poet's treatment of the handmaid minimizes her presence. In the biblical narrative, Judith interacts with her maidservant several times before Holofernes falls into his drunken stupor, speaks to her immediately before she kills Holofernes, and immediately afterwards hands her the head to place in her pouch. In what survives of the poem, the handmaid is never mentioned until after Judith's deed is complete, when Judith hands her the head, already in the pouch. Her presence at Holofernes' death can only be known in retrospect, after the scene has already been read. The reduction of the handmaid's role is part of the general trend of simplification of the narrative to the point that, in Campbell's analysis, "only

[28] Orchard, *Critical Companion*, pp. 18 and 109–110.

two massive, opposing characters remain, archetypal in their simplicity and their incompatibility."[29]

This style of adaptation is not exclusive to *Judith*; Doane makes a similar observation of the Saxon *Genesis*, highlighting "its tendency to work in terms of dualistic concepts."[30] It is a technique which suits both the Christian emphasis on typological reading, and also a vernacular aesthetic observed by J.M. Evans:

> Germanic epic was distinguished from Classical by its emphasis on situation as opposed to action; [...] The real centre of interest in Hildebrand, for instance, is the predicament of the father and son who are forced to fight each other, not the fight itself. [...] The story unfolds not in a continuous action but in a series of vivid 'stills'.[31]

Fundamental to both the allegorizing technique and the vernacular aesthetic is the pitting of two *wills* against one another. The presence of additional characters does not always equate to the presence of additional wills; sometimes one voice may represent the uniform will of multiple characters. Modern literature tends to value a different aesthetic, in which "every character should want something, even if it is only a glass of water,"[32] but for the *Judith* poet, this would disrupt the poem's fundamental structure. Therefore the poet transforms the handmaid from a character into a prop by removing desire from her—she is assigned no speech or independent action, and her will is entirely subsumed within Judith's will. Thus the poet is able to emphasize Judith's exceptionality and isolation without contradicting the facts of the biblical narrative with regard to the handmaid's presence in the camp.

Beowulf and Judith must pass out of sight to perform their defining deeds: Judith's confrontation with Holofernes takes place in darkness, *binnan anre nihte* ('within a night', l. 64), as do Beowulf's fights with the sea-monsters and with Grendel. However, both frame their deeds in terms of a return to light and visibility. Judith promises

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[29] Campbell, 'Schematic Technique', p. 156.
[30] Doane*, Saxon Genesis,* p. 91.
[31] J.M. Evans, 'Genesis B and its background' (conclusion), *RES* 14:54 (1963), 113–123, p. 17.
[32] Kurt Vonnegut, *Bagombo Snuff Box: Uncollected Short Fiction* (London, 1999), p. 9.

that the head signifies that victory will come when God *eastan sende / leohtne leoman* ('sends bright light from the east', ll. 190–191). Similarly, according to his own description of the event, Beowulf's fight with the sea monsters concludes in the *mergenne* ('morning', l. 565a)*,* when:

> Leoht eastan com,
> beorht beacen Godes, brimu swaþredon,
> þæt ic sænæssas geseon mihte,
> windige weallas. (*Beowulf,* ll. 569b–572a)
>
> [Light came from the east, God's bright beacon, the waves subsided so that I might see the promontories, the windy walls.]

Later, Beowulf expresses his hopes for a positive outcome in his confrontation with Grendel in similar terms, speaking of a time when:

> […] morgenleoht
> ofer ylda bearn oþres dogores,
> sunne sweglwered suþan scineð. (*Beowulf,* ll. 604b–606)
>
> [The morning light of another day, the sun heaven-clothed, shines from the south over the children of men.]

Because it takes place during daylight hours (though out of the sun) the fight with Grendel's mother is resolved using different imagery. Instead of the coming of day, the increase of clarity is expressed through the clearing of the water: *wæron yðgebland eal gefælsod* ('the waves were all cleansed', l. 1620).[33]

Beowulf's reputation relies on the visibility of his heroic deeds. Since those deeds tend to take place out of sight, he must make them visible through stories and signs. Following his battles with the sea-monsters, although the monsters' carcasses are *on mergenne[...] / be yðlafe uppe lægon* ('in morning […] washed up by waves', ll. 565–566), there are no witnesses to this and there is no scene of public inspection as there is after each of Beowulf's other victories. The resulting lack of corroboration allows Unferð to propose an alternative version of the event which does not acknowledge

[33] This term, *gefælsod*, is also used of Heorot after Grendel's defeat (ll. 825a and 1176a). It also appears in *The Fates of the Apostles*, which says that *land wæs gefælsod / þurh Matheus mære lare* ('the land was cleansed through Matthew's famous teaching', ll. 67b–68).

Beowulf's success. The result of Beowulf's next battle cannot be similarly questioned; in wrenching Grendel's arm off, Beowulf gains an impressive artefact. However, his words to Hrothgar indicate that he is not satisfied with it. He says:

> Uþe ic swiþor
> þæt ðu hine selfne geseon moste,
> feond on frætewum fylwerigne. (*Beowulf,* ll. 960b–962)
>
> [I wished rather that you might see him himself, the fiend in adornments wearied to death.][34]

Even in death Grendel has hidden himself beneath the bloodied waters, so he is still seen only partially, through a sign. And in fact, although it is a good enough sign that Grendel is dead, the Danes also take it as a sign that they are now safe from further attacks, which turns out not to be the case.

From the fight beneath the mere, Beowulf brings back not one, but two synecdochic tokens: Grendel's head without his body, and a hilt without its blade. The hilt has no worth as a weapon, and while it is made of precious materials, its value must be negligible compared to the many *maðmæhta* ('treasures', l. 1613a) Beowulf left behind. Its primary worth is as a signifier of stories: in its decoration, design, and brokenness it conveys the story of the Flood, the nature of its ancient makers, and the strangeness of Beowulf's adventure. It, along with Grendel's head, serves as an illustration and aid to help Hrothgar envision the place where Beowulf has been, and to understand something of the identity of the monsters who have plagued him.

So it is ironic that when Beowulf finally kills a monster in such a way that its corpse is in full view and its defeat does not have to be communicated through signs and stories, this victory does not have the clear meaning and consequences of Grendel's mother's hidden defeat. The head and the hilt retrieved from Grendel's mere could only

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[34] Tolkien comments on the frequent misattribution of the reflexive to Hrothgar in translations of these lines, and explains that Beowulf "means (depreciatingly): 'I am very sorry only to have an arm to show you; I should have preferred to have presented you with Grendel himself complete—and dead.' " J.R.R. Tolkien *Beowulf: A Translation and Commentary* (London, 2014), p. 295.

gesture towards a corpse and treasure, and yet they are far more beneficial than the actual corpse and hoard produced by the dragon fight, because they bring about security for two peoples: for the Danes because they no longer must fear the Grendel-kin, and for the Geats because they now have a future leader who has established a strong reputation and has formed a firm alliance. When Beowulf dies, he can no longer control the meaning of this defeat of the monster. The treasure becomes useless and the dragon's body becomes less significant than Beowulf's own body.

Beowulf's display of Grendel's arm is a sign that he has fulfilled his boast and therefore his half of the reciprocal relationship he has established with Hrothgar. Rolf Bremmer sees this in relation to the "tendency in Germanic customs to visualize meaning in legal matters." He argues that "the emphasis on the visibility of [Grendel's] arm makes it clear that the exhibited limb fulfils a function as signal and testimony."[35] However, such legalistic use of an object to confirm a relationship has more in common with Carolingian than Anglo-Saxon traditions. M.T. Clanchy's examination of the use of symbolic objects such as horns and knives in the conveyance of land concludes that:

> The important conclusion to note is that the use of symbolic objects in conveyances did not reach back to an age-old oral culture in Anglo-Saxon England. On the contrary, it was an innovation of the Normans which took the paradoxical form of deliberately importing an archaism.[36]

This preference for sealed charters over other signs is evident in Alfred's version of Augustine's *Soliloquies* where, in a departure from the original's proof by geometry, Reason asks Augustine whether his *hlafordes ærendgewrit and hys insegel* ('lord's written message and his sign') would be sufficient evidence of his lord's will.[37] So the legalis-

[35] Bremmer, 'Grendel's Arm', pp. 127 and 128.
[36] M.T. Clanchy, 'William the Conquerer's Symbolic Knife' in *From Memory to Written Record* (Oxford, 2013), pp. 38–41, p.41. See also Scott Kleinman's discussion of the laws of Edgar in '*Frið* and *Grið:* Laȝamon and the Legal Language of Wulfstan' in *Reading Laȝamon's* Brut: *Approaches and Explorations* ed. Rosamund Allen, Jane Roberts, and Carole Weinberg, DQR Studies in Literature 52 (Amsterdam/New York, 2013), pp. 391–417, p. 413.
[37] *König Alfreds des Grossen Bearbeitung der Soliloquen Augustinus* ed. W. Endter (Hamburg, 1922), p. 24 l. 2.

tic display of symbolic objects depicted in *Beowulf* may be consciously archaic and foreign.

In both *Beowulf* and *Judith,* the role of hero is not complete when they defeat the monster, but only when they display a sign proving that defeat and guide their audience in interpreting that sign correctly. Judith's role in communicating and interpreting her deeds is very similar to Beowulf's. The Hebrews were not saved by her brightness or bravery, but by her *gleawe lare* ('wise teaching', l. 333b): it is not her decapitation of Holofernes that rescues them, but her returning to display the head *to behðe blodig ætywan / þam burhleodum* ('as a sign, to show the people of the burh', ll. 174–175a) and explain that it promises *tir æt tohtan* ('glory in battle', l. 197a) if the Bethulians will attack immediately, before the Assyrians have time to understand that they have lost their leader and reorganize.

As Beowulf answers to the shore-guard as he approaches the bright Heorot, Judith must answer to the guards when she approaches the bright city of Bethulia. When she speaks from beyond the wall she is at first only heard, not seen, professing but not proving her story. To complete the communication of her message, Judith must display the object she has won, and encourage the Bethulians to examine Holofernes' head *sweotole* ('openly', l. 177a). In this scene of display (just as in similar scenes in *Beowulf*) the subject and object of seeing are inverted from their previous state—the monster who used to peer out unseen from behind his curtain is now the object of examination.

FEAR AND MISINTERPRETATION

Both poems frame the retrieval of the severed head as an interpretive act. When Beowulf presents Grendel's head and the hilt, Hrothgar's first response is to praise not his bravery, but the fact that he acts with *modes snyttrum* ('wisdom of mind', l. 1706a). When the watch-men perceive Judith returning to Bethulia, she is described as

searoðoncol ('cunning', l. 145a) before she is called *ellenrof* ('very brave', l. 146a), and then *gleawhydig* ('wise of thought', l. 148a). The actions of Beowulf and Judith thus constitute a successful act of interpretation which is contrasted with an unsuccessful act of interpretation by characters who examine the barriers the heroes passed through, but are too fearful to follow them.

In *Judith*, the failure of interpretation comes when the Assyrians misunderstand what is happening behind the *fleohnet* when they cannot awaken Holofernes. The episode does occur in the Vulgate text, but there the space from the Assyrians' initial desire to wake Holofernes to Vagao's stepping forward to lift the curtain takes 93 words (Judith 14:8–13), whereas the poem takes 168 words (ll. 241b–274) to cover the same ground. Given that the poet more often simplifies and reduces the Vulgate text, the fact that this scene is expanded is an indication of its importance to the poet's overall theme.

The Assyrians' frantic blindness and indecision forms a pointed contrast with the clarity of purpose granted to the Hebrews by their open viewing of the head Judith brought them as a token. The thegns gathered outside the tent enact a broken imitation of Judith's approach to Bethulia. They wish to communicate but they are at a loss for words. They do not attempt to rouse Holofernes with speech but with wordless, meaningless noise: *ongunnon cohhetan cirman hlude / ond gristbitian* ('they began to cough, to cry out loudly, and gnash their teeth', ll. 270–271a).

Finally, in a parody of the solitary hero, a single thegn dares to look into the tent. At this point, Holofernes' head (in its absence) finally becomes a *tacen* for the Assyrians. Judith had asked the Hebrews to look *sweotole* ('openly', l. 177a), at the head and told them that God had *getacnod* ('betokened', l. 197b) their victory. The Assyrian now uses the same language in his speech to his companions: *her ys geswutelod ure sylfra forwyrd, / toweard getacnod* ('here our own destruction is made clear, betokened to be imminent,' ll. 285–286b).

In *Beowulf*, a similar scene of misreading occurs when the Scyldings attempt to interpret the meaning of the bloody water while Beowulf is beneath the mere, and conclude that Beowulf must be dead. This is not unreasonable, since the Scyldings have twice experienced bad things connected to bloodied water already: they let their guard down after taking the bloody mere as confirmation of Grendel's death and were attacked again the next night, and they also took bloodied water as a confirmation of Æschere's demise. In both *Judith* and *Beowulf*, bravery trumps the wisdom of experience. Holofernes' retinue, who fail to judge correctly who has fallen victim to whom behind the curtain, are described as *ealle ðe yldestan ðegnas* ('all the eldest thegns', l. 10a). Similarly in *Beowulf,* while the young Geats wait for Beowulf, the Scyldings—pointedly described as *blondenfeaxe* ('grey-haired', l. 1594b), *gomele* ('old', l. 1595a), and *snottre* ('wise', l. 1591b)—give up hope and return home.

Beowulf has long been studied alongside *Grettis saga* because there are analogous scenes and series of events in the two narratives. One of the strongest parallels between *Beowulf* and *Grettis saga* is the resemblance between Beowulf's adventure beneath the mere and Grettir's adventure behind the waterfall. Like the Scyldings in *Beowulf,* the priest who has promised to wait for Grettir mistakes the monster's gore for Grettir's and so he abandons the watch. Scholars in the 19th and early 20th centuries theorized that either *Beowulf* was translated from a Scandinavian original or *Grettis saga* was derived from *Beowulf,* but the current consensus is that the Anglo-Saxon and Icelandic texts each independently draw on an older narrative or folklore motif.[38] J. Michael Stitt has evaluated these and similar scenes in medieval Scandinavian narrative and Indo-European myth more generally, and his conclusion is that "the motif of non-treacherous abandonment because of blood and gore in the water, [is] a motif too specif-

[38] See Theodore M. Anderson, 'Sources and Analogues' in *A* Beowulf *Handbook,* ed. Robert E. Bjork and John D. Niles (Exeter, 1997), pp. 125–148, pp. 129–130.

ic likely to be of independent invention."[39] If Beowulf were a saint, we could read Beowulf as a Christ figure, the Geats as the faithful apostles, and the Scyldings as the priests and elders who did not believe. But Beowulf is not a saint, and Grettir even less like one. What can be said definitely of both versions of the scene is that authority and learning fail where boldness succeeds. Though Beowulf returns triumphantly to the crowded hall while Grettir returns unnoticed to the empty church, they each act to correct the misunderstanding that led to their abandonment. Beowulf meets the Scyldings and offers the head and a story. Grettir does not meet the priest at the church, but leaves behind the collection of bones and a song carved on a rune-staff, which can tell his story in his absence. In both scenes, and also in *Judith,* a dismembered body is used as an authenticating sign, but a narrative (spoken or written) is required to control its meaning.

CONCLUSIONS

There is more that connects *Beowulf* and *Judith* than just the fact that the heroes decapitate monsters. Beowulf and Judith are two iterations of the same character type: the heroic sign-bearing interpreter. They share the characteristic of brightness, and a motif of literal and social visibility that has a counterpoint in the obscurity of the monsters and of the solitary act of defeating them. Each goes through a boundary into a concealed place and returns with a story and an object which, through the combination of display and explication, reveals what has been hidden.

A common conceptualization of signs and interpretation is evident when the poems are placed beside each other. Both refer to the dismembered bodies of enemies as signs or as signifying. Both feature heroes who boldly cross boundaries others will not, perform brave deeds in solitude, and then return to advertise and interpret these

[39] J. Michael Stitt, *Beowulf and the bear's son: epic, saga, and fairytale in northern Germanic tradition* (London, 1992), p. 206.

deeds. Both poems also feature misinterpretation by characters described in terms which suggest the authority of age who are blinded by their fear.

Beowulf and *Judith* both link poor interpretation to fear and complacency, and clarity of vision to bold action by a singular and favoured individual. If, as Astell argues, *Judith* makes its allegorical meaning plain in order to lead the reader onward to the tropological meaning, the function of the depictions of fearfulness and boldness in the poem is to encourage its readers to respond with faith and fortitude to those things in their lives which most resemble Holofernes—which might be military invasion if they are men of the world, or the attacks of the devil if they are men of the church.[40]

The importance of the theme of *sapientia et fortitudo* to *Beowulf* has long been recognized.[41] Fortitude is the virtue that overthrows the vice of *acedia*—the sin that distracts monks from their vigils, confuses their minds about what is right, and leads them to despair.[42] *Beowulf* is unusually specific about the time of day when the Danes leave off waiting for Beowulf beneath the mere, give up, and wander away home. It happens at *non* (l. 1600a), the ninth hour, which sets the Danes' preceding vigil between noon and mid-afternoon—precisely the time associated with *acedia*, which is called the *meridianem daemonem* ('noonday demon') by Cassian.[43] When Beowulf returns (carrying a text of sorts that makes reference to events of the Old Testament), he explains that he was guided by *ofost* ('haste', l. 1663), which is the antithesis of the torpor associated with *acedia*. He also—for the first and only time in the poem—explicitly attributes his survival to God (l. 1658). These details hint at the way the values illustrated in what probably (given the evidence of *Grettis saga*) was a pre-existing, secular Germanic

[40] Astell, 'Holofernes's Head', p. 121.
[41] It was first proposed by R. E. Kaske in '"Sapientia et Fortitudo" as the Controlling Theme of "Beowulf"', *Studies in Philology* 55:3 (1958), 423–456.
[42] See *Two Ælfric Texts: The Twelve Abuses and The Vices and Virtues* ed. and trans. Mary Clayton (Cambridge, 2013), p. 73. Clayton offers an overview of the development of the tradition of the Vices and Virtues from Evagrius Ponticus to Ælfric, with particular attention to *acedia*, in section 4 of the introduction to *Two Ælfric Texts* (pp.71–81).
[43] *Opera Omnia Joannis Cassiani, PL* 49.365A. For a more detailed discussion of the tradition of patristic writing on *acedia* and its reception in Anglo-Saxon England, see below, p. 127.

storyline that associates bravery with clear intelligence and fearfulness with misperception, are actually another iteration of the same values Christianity presents in superficially different terms. This simultaneously dignifies the characters of *Beowulf* as being not unlike their Christian descendants, and heightens the tragedy of their not knowing Christ.

Neither *Judith* nor *Beowulf* presents the hero's adventure as a straightforward typology (of say, the Harrowing of Hell), though both seem to encourage links to other narratives (*Judith* by its simplifying and universalizing trends, *Beowulf* by its allusions to other legends). Setting *Judith* next to *Beowulf* emphasizes the way that the poet has cast Judith not simply as an unlikely war hero, but as a teacher—a revealer of hidden meanings. This brings her more in line with contemporary depictions of Saints (such as the forceful, perceptive, and loquacious heroine of Cynewulf's *Juliana*), who are at once warriors and evangelists of Christ. The strength of the similarities between *Beowulf* and *Judith* also makes plainer the similarities the story of *Beowulf* already has with the biblical Book of Judith. As I mentioned above, Orchard has already proposed parallels between Beowulf and David, Moses, Samson, and Judas Maccabaeus.[44] The equation of Beowulf with yet another Old Testament figure adds further weight to reading Beowulf not as a type of Christ, but as a type of Old Testament hero—which equates the ancestors of the Anglo-Saxons to the Israelites: imperfect, unsaved, often unsavory, but unwittingly refracting images of God's salvific plan in their actions.

[44] Orchard, *Critical Companion*, pp. 145-146.

CHAPTER 2: CYNEWULF'S *ELENE* IN ITS VERCELLI BOOK CONTEXT

Elene is a verse retelling of the apocryphal story of the Invention of the Cross which appears in the Vercelli Book (Vercelli, Biblioteca Capitolare CXCII), and is one of the four poems signed by Cynewulf.[1] The long-standing critical habit of reading *Elene* figuratively has come to obscure the interest of the poem's literal level. Such criticism has tended to assume that the major players on the narrative are intended as strictly allegorical figures, not characters whose thought processes resemble those of real people. But Cynewulf *is* interested in the minds of his characters, who model the process by which every mind may come to know the Cross. Cynewulf thus transforms a narrative about conversion into a meditation on *conversio:* the Christian's daily process of turning towards the cross. I will argue in this chapter that Cynewulf envisions the mental process of *conversio* as having a threefold form similar to Augustine's trinity of *memoria, intellegentia*, and *uoluntas* (memory, intelligence, and will): it requires what I will call learning, experience, and grace.

Although *Elene* is the central text of this chapter, I also consider how it relates both to other works by Cynewulf and, particularly, to the other poems of the Vercelli Book. Three other poems in the Vercelli Book—*Fates of the Apostles*, *Andreas*, and *The Dream of the Rood*—share more with *Elene* than just the circumstance of being found in the same manuscript. All four were included in what was once called the

[1] See entry 941 in Gneuss and Lapidge, *Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts.*

'Cynewulf Group'.[2] Although Cynewulf's authorship of *The Dream of the Rood* and *Andreas* is no longer considered plausible, the similarities of theme and diction that led early scholars to consider that attribution still suggest possible borrowing between the poems and certainly imply that their inclusion together in the Vercelli Book was purposeful and intended to encourage comparison between them.

Cynewulf is one of the two Old English poets whose names are known (the other being Cædmon).[3] He wrote in an Anglian dialect, possibly in the ninth century. His longest and shortest signed poems are both found in the Vercelli Book. The former is *Elene*, and the latter is *Fates of the Apostles,* which, in the course of just 122 lines, runs briefly through the death of each Apostle and a petition for prayer. His other signed poems, *Juliana* and *Christ II*, are both found near the beginning of the Exeter Book (Exeter Cathedral Library MS 3501).[4] *Juliana* tells the story of that saint's martyrdom. *Christ II* is based on material found in several Ascension homilies and is placed in between *Christ I* and *Christ III* to form a sequence of poems on the Annunciation, Ascension, and Second Coming at the start of the Exeter Book. Other poems lacking the runic signature that can definitively connect them to Cynewulf have at various times been considered his compositions, or of his 'school', but the only one which has sustained serious consideration as a composition of Cynewulf is *Guthlac B*, which is also found in the Exeter Book.[5]

Cynewulf states in the epilogue to *Elene* that he learned about the Cross *on bocum* ('in books', l. 1254b). At least one of these books must have been some form of

[2] See Claes Schaar, *Critical Studies in the Cynewulf Group* (Lund, 1949). The other poems of the Vercelli Book, *Soul and Body I* and *Homiletic Fragment I*, are less closely related to the other four.
[3] See R.D. Fulk 'Cynewulf: Canon, Dialect, Date' in *Cynewulf: Basic Readings* ed. Robert E. Bjork (New York, 1996), pp. 3–22.
[4] See entry 257 in Gneuss and Lapidge, *Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts.*
[5] The Dumbarton Oaks Medieval Library has included *Guthlac B* in the volume *The Old English Poems of Cynewulf* ed. and trans. Robert E. Bjork, Dumbarton Oaks Medieval Library (Harvard, 2013).

the *Acta Cyriaci.*[6] There is also an Old English prose homily on the Finding of the True Cross, preserved in Oxford Bodleian MS Auctarium F.4.32 and Cambridge, Corpus Christi College MS 303, which probably derives from a related (but likely abbreviated) Latin source.[7] The relationships between the homily, the presumed Latin exemplar, and *Elene* are discussed in great detail in Mary-Catherine Bodden's edition *The Old English Finding of the True Cross*.[8] The plot of *Elene* does not deviate significantly from the extant version of the *Acta Cyriaci*, but the poem is fleshed out with details about the thoughts and emotions of the characters which transform it from an account of the literal search for the Cross to a meditation on the internal search for the Cross, in which the journeys of the main characters echo Cynewulf's own process of contemplation as he relates it in the epilogue.

Cynewulf writes about the interpretation of the Cross by Elene, Constantine, and himself, but the interpreter whose process of learning is explored in greatest detail is Judas. In many ways, Judas fits into the same mould of questing revealer and interpreter of signs that Beowulf and Judith do, though he comes to that role reluctantly. Like Beowulf and Judith, he is uniquely able to retrieve a hidden sign and make it known to his community. Like Beowulf and Judith, he is singled out for his virtues and separated from his community for a period of trial. He is alone, enclosed, and in mortal danger when he gains his new understanding of the Cross as Beowulf and Judith are

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[6] Jackson J. Campbell summarizes the problems of taking any extant version of the *Acta Cyriaci* as we have it now as Cynewulf's model in 'Cynewulf's Multiple Revelations' in *Cynewulf: Basic Readings* ed. Robert E. Bjork (London, 1996), 229–250, p. 230 (first appeared in *Medievalia et Humanistica* 3 (1972), 257–277). My references to the *Acta Cyriaci* are not intended as an analysis of Cynewulf's treatment of his source material, but rather demonstrate the effect of particular details in the Old English poem by contrasting it with a version in which these details are absent. For this reason most of my comments refer to the *Acta Cyriaci* tradition generally rather than to a particular manuscript or edition. I occasionally refer to Alfred Holder's edition *Inventio Sanctæ Crucis* (Leipzig, 1889) because this version is considered to be more similar to Cynewulf's model than others, but the more widely accessible version of the legend in the *Acta Sanctorum* ('Iudas, alias Quiriacus, Episcopus Martyr Hierosolymis (S.)') is usually sufficiently similar to illustrate my point. A translation of the latter is available in *Sources and Analogues of Old English Poetry: the Major Latin Texts in Translation* trans. Michael J.B. Allen and Daniel G. Calder (Cambridge, 1976), pp. 60–67. For more on the development of the legend, see Stephen Borgehammar, *How the Holy Cross Was Found* (Stockholm, 1991).

[7] For the former, see entry 538.5 in Gneuss and Lapidge, *Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts.*

[8] Mary-Catherine Bodden, *The Old English Finding of the True Cross* (Cambridge, 1987).

when they obtain the heads that they will display as signs. He does not actually retrieve a sign at this point, but it is his experience in the pit which transforms him into a messenger able to lead the way to a sign. Until Judas reveals it, the concealed Cross is as inaccessible to Elene as the sword hilt and monstrous corpse are to Hrothgar. When it is revealed, its significance is in some ways self-evident but in other ways far from obvious: just as Hrothgar must explain the images on the hilt and Judith must explain the action the sight of Holofernes' head demands of the Hebrews, Judas must demonstrate which of the three crosses is the Lord's Rood and make a defence against the *helledeofol* ('hell-devil', l. 900b). His is a personal conversion completed through a public sign, just as Beowulf's solitary battles are validated by the public scrutiny of Grendel's severed arm and head. Likewise, it is not the existence of the Cross itself but the dramatic manner of its discovery which compels the public gaze, just as Grendel's head is all the more shocking because the Danes believed Beowulf to be dead, and Holofernes' head indicates the favour of God all the more clearly for its being presented by an unlikely hero.

Some of Judas' qualities which make him stand out are similar to those possessed by Beowulf and Judith. One such quality is nobility: he is *æðeles cynnes* ('of noble kin', l. 591b) and furthermore, a *witgan sunu* ('son of a wise man', l. 592b). What makes Judas different from Beowulf and Judith is that the virtues which set him apart, unlike Beowulf's bravery or Judith's beauty, naturally apply to a teacher or interpreter. He is *sundorwis*, ('set apart by wisdom', l. 588a) and is not just learned but a skilled speaker: *wordcræftes wis* ('wise in word-craft', l. 592a) and *bald in meðle* ('confident in speech', l. 593a).[9] He has both the capacity to understand and the eloquence to share that understanding. Beowulf and Judith derive their status as interpreters from their bravery and their willingness to venture into places which are inaccessible to oth-

[9] Robert DiNapoli argues that Judas' characteristics are those of a vernacular poet. 'Poesis and Authority: Traces of an Anglo-Saxon *Agon* in Cynewulf's *Elene*', *Neophilologus* 82:4 (1998), 619–630.

ers. Judas' ability as an interpreter is derived in part from the assistance of the Holy Ghost, but more prominently and more prosaically, from his education. He is therefore more accessible as a model a reader might aspire to follow.

THE LITERAL LEVEL

Since the early 1970s it has been common practice to read *Elene* figuratively. Critics such as T.D. Hill, Varda Fish, and Manish Sharma see in *Elene* an enactment of standard binary conflicts between letter and spirit, Old Testament and New, Jews and Christians.[10] Hill, who pioneered typological approaches to Old English poems in the 1970s, reads in the poem the "confrontation of two types of wisdom" and the "contrast between the letter that kills and the spirit that gives life."[11] Another persuasive figural reading from the same era that is less dualistic is Catharine A. Regan's article 'Evangelism as the Informing Principle of Cynewulf's "Elene" ', which argues that Elene "dramatizes the function of the Church Militant," while Judas enacts the role of Catechumen.[12] More recently, Christina Heckman has offered a novel figurative reading of *Elene* which equates the invention of the cross to "the dialectical process of *inventio*, seeking truth and wisdom by discovering arguments."[13] She cites Anselm of Canterbury (who lived later than the period of the poem's composition, but whose relevance she defends on the grounds that he is himself following Boethius) for his definition of an argument as "a reason that produces belief regarding a thing in doubt,"[14] and claims that in this

[10] T.D. Hill, 'Sapiential Structure and Figural Narrative in the Old English "Elene" ' in *Cynewulf: Basic Readings,* ed. Robert E. Bjork (London, 1996), pp. 207–228 (first appeared in *Traditio* 27 (1971), 159–177); Varda Fish, 'Theme and Pattern in Cynewulf's "Elene" ', *NM* 76 (1975) 1–25; Manish Sharma 'The Reburial of the Cross in the Old English *Elene*' in *New Readings in the Vercelli Book* ed. Samantha Zacher and Andy Orchard (Toronto, 2009), pp. 280–297.
[11] Hill, 'Sapiential Structure', p. 212.
[12] Catharine A. Regan, 'Evangelism as the Informing Principle of Cynewulf's "Elene" 'in *Cynewulf: Basic Readings* ed. Robert E. Bjork (London, 1996) 251–280, p. 254 (first appeared in *Traditio* 29 (1973), 27–52).
[13] Christina Heckman, 'Things in Doubt: *Inventio*, Dialectic, and Jewish Secrets in Cynewulf's *Elene*', *JEGP* 108:4 (2009), 449–480, p. 450.
[14] Heckman, 'Things in Doubt', p. 453.

sense the Cross is not just a symbol of Christ but the central argument for Christianity which must be discovered—invented—through dialectic. She describes in detail how Elene's dispute with the Jews enacts the "limits of reason,"[15] drawing out particularly the dependence of Christianity on the old knowledge of the Jews, and the uselessness of secret and hidden knowledge. Though couched in different terms the readings by Hill and Heckman are similar in that they see the poem as pitting two ways of understanding against each other. Both see the poem as interrogating the limits of a certain category of rational knowledge—identified by Heckman as reason or dialectic and by Hill as the literal interpretation of Jewish law.

One thing all these figural readings have right is that if we are going to understand Anglo-Saxon texts, we must think like Anglo-Saxon readers, and Anglo-Saxon readers were used to thinking typologically. However, this cannot be our only reading of the poem. We cannot reduce the text to its figural meaning *only* any more than a medieval exegete could restrict themselves to an exclusively typological understanding of scripture. This is a danger particularly with narratives which, on a literal level, confound the expectations of modern readers. Many modern readers of *Elene* find the characters' behaviour and thought-processes confusing and improbable—most saliently, the fact that Elene decides that torture would be a good way to extract a genuine conversion from Judas, and, bizarrely, that it works. Regan acknowledges that "When Cynewulf relates the story of Judas' conversion he is describing a soul's spiritual ascent in Augustinian terms, i.e., in terms of intellectual growth,"[16] but she is the exception; most readings of *Elene* assume that because the characters do not behave in ways we find psychologically plausible, Cynewulf is *only* interested in the figural meaning of the text.

[15] Heckman, 'Things in Doubt', p. 469.
[16] Regan, 'Evangelism', p. 256.

Hill goes so far as to claim that Cynewulf "makes virtually no attempt to depict the psychology of either Judas or any of the other main protagonists."[17]

The trouble with this type of reading is that it interprets *Elene*'s way of signifying as *allegorical* rather than *typological.* The difference, as R.A. Markus explains with reference to Augustine, is that:

> Types, on this usage, will be events, persons or episodes in sacred history which point to a future 'antitype'; allegories, or other figures, lack such a historical foundation in facts; they are based only on words. Typological interpretation always presupposes a literal sense; allegory can by-pass it.[18]

By turning to the topic of diegetic interpretation—interpretation performed by characters within the narrative—I hope to rehabilitate the literal level of the text. As Augustine says:

> Et hoc significationis gratia factum est, sed tamen factum, sicut illa, quae significationis gratia dicta sunt, sed tamen dicta sunt [...] Siue enim figurate siue proprie dictum sit, quod dictum esse narratur, dictum tamen esse non debet putari figuratum.[19]
>
> [This too was done in order to signify something, but still it was done, like those things that were said in order to signify something, but were still said. [...] What we are told was said may have been meant to be taken metaphorically or literally, but its actually being said ought not to be taken as a metaphor.][20]

This poem offers a detailed narrative of how an individual comes to understand the Cross, manifested through the characters of Constantine, Judas, Elene, and Cynewulf himself. The literal informs, rather than obstructs, the spiritual—both in the experience of the characters, and in the reading of the poem.

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[17] T.D. Hill, 'Bread and Stone, Again: *Elene* 611–18', *NM* 81 (1980), 252–257, p. 256.
[18] Markus, *Signs and Meanings*, p. 11.
[19] 'De Genesi ad Litteram Liber XI' in *Sancti Aureli Augustini opera,* ed. Josephus Zycha, Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum vol 28 pt 1 (Vienna, 1894), §39, pp. 373 and 374.
[20] Translation Edmund Hill's. *On Genesis*, trans. Edmund Hill, ed. John E. Rotelle, *The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century* (New York, 2002), pp. 459 and 460. Markus contrasts Gregory's preference for the figurative over the literal with Augustine's more even attention to the two in *Signs and Meanings*.

DISCERNMENT

When we talk about interpretation of signs in *Elene*, what we are really talking about is the interpretation of the Cross—the great majority of the many occurrences of *tacen* or *beacen* in the poem refer to the Cross, or to miracles which point to the Cross.

Just a few of the uses of *tacen* in the poem are unusual. Elene asks the Jews to send her someone who can give an answer about *tacna gehwylces* ('each sign', l. 319a) that she sets, and later asks Judas how he can know so little about Christ and so much about *tacna gehwylc* (l. 645a) of the Trojan War.[21] Bosworth and Toller uses the former instance as an example for sense VIIa of '*tacen*': "a signal event, remarkable circumstance." Martin Irvine quotes this line in his discussion of the way that "Helen's encounter with the recalcitrant Jews is constituted as an exegetical debate."[22] He seems to imply, I think rightly, that the term is used to suggest that *Elene* is not actually inquiring about the Jews' knowledge of the texts she proceeds to ask them about, but about their ability to understand them typologically. Later, Elene uses *tacen* to refer to the contents of the Gospels, saying:

> Hwæt, we þæt hyrdon þurh halige bec
> tacnum cyðan, þæt twegen mid him
> geþrowedon, ond he wæs þridda sylf
> on rode treo. (*Elene,* ll. 852–855)
>
> [Lo, we heard it told through symbols in the holy Gospels that two men suffered with him, and he himself was the third on the rood tree.][23]

This is a very unusual construction, but is consistent with the previous two examples in that it posits historical events, known through texts, as signs which must be studied to be properly understood.

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[21] Quotations of *Elene* are from *The Vercelli Book* ed. George Philip Krapp, ASPR II (New York, 1932).
[22] Irvine, *Textual Culture*, p. 443.
[23] Translation by Olga Timofeeva. This is an unusual construction. It is discussed in: Olga Timofeeva, 'Hearsay and lexical evidentials in Old Germanic languages, with focus on Old English' in *Comparative Studies in Early Germanic Languages: With a Focus on Verbal Categories* ed. Gabriele Diewald, Leena Kahlas-Tarkka, and Ilse Wischer (Amsterdam, 2013), pp. 169–194, p. 184 (3.4.2).

However, the rest of the many appearances of *tacen* and *beacen* in the poem are basically conventional in that they refer to miracles or holy objects. *Tacen* is used in ll. 1104a and 1120b of the miracle that reveals the location of the holy nails, and *beacen* is used in l. 1193b of the horse's bridle that is shaped from those nails. All six of the remaining instances of the word *tacen,* and all eleven remaining instances of the word *beacen,* refer to the Cross or to a miracle that reveals the Cross.[24] Thus, when we look for the poem's ideas about the interpretation of signs, in effect what we see are its ideas about the interpretation of one sign—the one at the centre of the Christian narrative. Because the poem is so invested in the Cross as a sign, all of the characters' psychological struggles to comprehend the Cross are in effect, a depiction of how the mind processes signs. For that reason, questions to do with the psychological realism of the poem are directly relevant to the question of how Anglo-Saxon poets conceptualized the idea of 'signs'.

Judas' struggle to comprehend the Cross is in effect a struggle to achieve the type of *discretio* ('discernment') that Cassian discusses in his *Conferences*. Like Cassian, Cynewulf depicts discernment as something which people must strive and study for, but which is ultimately the gift of the Holy Ghost. This is not only true in *Elene*, but in Cynewulf's other poems as well. The Holy Ghost is the source of Juliana's wisdom. (This word appears only twice in the corpus—here, and in *Andreas* l. 861b). When she is in prison, just before the demon appears and she correctly questions his identity, Cyn-

[24] First, the heavenly messenger tells Constantine to look up and see the *tacen* (l. 85a), which is inscribed with a message saying that Constantine will have victory through this *beacen* (l. 92a). Having seen that *beacen* (l. 100b), Constantine orders his troops to make a *tacen* (l. 100b) and to bear that *beacen* (l. 109a) into battle. After the battle, Constantine asks whose *beacen* (l. 162b) that *tacna torhtost* (l. 164a) is. The troops can't tell him whose *beacen* (l. 168b) it is, but the wisest man can says that it is the *tacen* (l. 171b) of the king of heaven. The Christians then explain that Christ harrowed Hell with that *tacen* (l. 184b) of victory. Later, Judas prays to God and asks for a miracle, called a *beacen* (l. 783b), to help him locate the Cross. This leads to his seeing the Cross, called a *beacen* (l. 841b), in the ground. That *beacen* (l. 887a) is raised over a dead man, and revives him. Subsequently, news spreads that the *beacen* (l. 974a) has been found, and messengers set off to tell Constantine about the *beacen* (l. 984b). The citizens of Jerusalem finally confess that they can see the *tacen* (l. 1120b) when the nails are exhumed. Finally, Cynewulf says in the epilogue that he read many books about that *beacen* (l. 1256a).

ewulf says *hyre wæs Halig Gæst / singal gesið* ('the Holy Ghost was her constant companion', ll. 241b–242a).[25] As she interrogates the demon, Cynewulf reiterates that she does so *þurh gæstes gife* ('through grace of the Holy Spirit', l. 316a). This wisdom is associated with figural reading and spiritual insight. The bravery and eloquence which allow Juliana to stand up to her father come through her *gæstgehygd* ('spiritual thoughts' or 'thoughts of the soul', l. 148a). In her final speech before her martyrdom, Juliana encourages the pagans to *eower hus / gefæstnige* ('secure your house', ll. 648b–649a). In order to understand what she means, they must have knowledge of ancient texts (also the prerequisite of *discretio*), and be able to understand that she is speaking figuratively, but in contrast to Juliana, who has *gæstgehygd*, the pagan Eleusius is *hygeblind* ('blind in heart', l. 61a); he and the other pagans only see literal facts without perceiving the truths beyond them. Juliana's characterization of their idols as *dumb* and *deaf* in line 150a calls to mind the many scriptural passages on such idols, several of which equate the insensibility of the idols to the insensibility of their worshippers; the same equation is clearly intended in *Juliana.*[26]

The wisdom and discernment proceeding from the Holy Ghost is also associated with figural reading in *Christ II*—through two explicit references and one subtle allusion.[27] As Oliver Grosz has demonstrated in his work on signs, misreading, and figural interpretation in *Christ II*, Cynewulf invites the reader again and again to seek with *gæstgerynum* ('spiritual insights', l. 440b) to understand all things, including the poem

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[25] Quotations of *Juliana* are from *The Exeter Book,* ASPR III.
[26] These scriptural passages are discussed further in Chapter 3. See p. 127.
[27] As stated in the Introduction, quotations of *Christ II* are from *The Christ of Cynewulf* ed. Albert S. Cook (Boston, 1909). *Christ II* has long been acknowledged to be indebted to Ascension Day homilies by Gregory and Bede, and Peter Clemoes has argued that it is also consciously shaped by liturgy. Gregory: *Forty Homilies on the Gospels: Homily 29* (*Patrologia Latina*, 76.1218–9). Bede: *On the Lord's Ascension* (*Corpus Christianorum,* 122.419–23). (These texts are translated in *Sources and Analogues*, pp. 78–83.) Peter Clemoes, 'Cynewulf's Image of the Ascension' in *Cynewulf: Basic Readings* ed. Robert E. Bjork (London, 1996), pp. 109–132, p. 115 (first appeared in *England Before the Conquest* ed. Peter Clemoes and Kathleen Hughes (Cambridge, 1971), pp. 293–304). D.R. Letson considers it to be a highly allusive poem which "is so specific as to require more than the general familiarity one might expect of the churchgoing populace." D.R. Letson, 'The Homiletic Nature of Cynewulf's Ascension Poem', *Florilegium* 2 (1980), 192–216, p. 194.

itself.[28] He also pushes the reader towards reading figuratively through the negative model of the Jews who fail to do so, and the positive model of the Ascension which, in Grosz words, "provides the analogue for the journey which the Christian must make in his mind to discover truth."[29] The phrase *þurh Gæstes giefe* ('through the grace of the Holy Spirit') appears twice in *Christ II*: in l. 649a, where Cynewulf describes how the bird, symbolic of Christ, flies from heaven to earth, and in l. 710a, where he describes how the Church emerged triumphant after persecution. Cynewulf says that this victory of the Church over the evildoers who *soþes ne giemdon* ('had no regard for truth', l. 706b) is the hidden subject of Solomon's account of the Lord's leaps. Both the flight of the bird and the leaps of Christ are images of the Ascension, which itself is a metaphor for the mental leap of reading spiritually. Thus, the image of the Holy Ghost assisting in the flight and the leaps conveys the role of the Holy Ghost in figural reading and seeking after wisdom. The third allusion to the Holy Ghost in *Christ II* is not explicit. Just before the passage about the 'gifts of men', which Grosz has demonstrated may be read figurally as "gifts enabling man to interpret signs in their true sense and thereby to penetrate spiritual mysteries,"[30] Cynewulf says:

> Ða us geweorðade   se þas world gescop,
> Godes Gæstsunu,   ond us giefe sealde.   (*Christ II*, ll. 659–660)
>
> [Then he honoured us, he who shaped the world, the spiritual son of God, and gave us gifts.]

So *Gæst* and *gyfu* are linked by alliteration in l. 660. Then, the list begins with these lines:

> Sumum wordlaþe   wise sendeð
> on his modes gemynd   þurh his muþes Gæst,
> æðele ondgiet.[31]   (*Christ II*, ll. 664–666a)

[28] Oliver J.H. Grosz, 'Man's Imitation of the Ascension: The Unity of *Christ II*' in *Cynewulf: Basic Readings* ed. Robert E. Bjork (London, 1996), pp. 95–108 (first appeared in *Neophilologus* 54 (1970), 398–408).

[29] Grosz, 'Imitation of Ascension', p. 98.

[30] Grosz, 'Imitation of Ascension', p. 103.

[31] Cook's choice to capitalize Gæst here indicates that he also perceives an allusion to the Holy Ghost in these lines. The ASPR edition of the Exeter Book never capitalizes *gæst*. The Dumbarton Oaks (Bjork)

> [To some he sends wise eloquence in his heart's mind, through his mouth's spirit, noble understanding.]

The word *gyfu* does not appear here, but the concept of giving does. The word *gæst* appears, but in the expression *muþes Gæst,* which, in the context, can be read literally as 'the breath of the mouth'. Breath of the mouth is clearly a necessary physical component of eloquence (in fact, this line is the Toronto *DOE*'s first example of the use of 'gast, gæst' in the sense 'breath'). But Cynewulf is counting on his reader's familiarity with Gregory. The passage in Gregory which is equivalent to ll. 664–666a of Christ II is:

> Dedit vero dona hominibus, quia, misso desuper Spirtu, alii sermonem sapientiae...[32]
>
> [Truly he gave gifts to men, wherefore, the Spirit having been sent from above, to one the speech of wisdom…]

Cynewulf does not have to say explicitly that these gifts, which allow for spiritual interpretation, are the grace of the Holy Ghost, because he trusts his reader to be able to work this out for himself.

Similarly, in *Elene*—as we will see—the Holy Ghost grants discernment, understanding and wisdom, but not spontaneously. The application of the intellect and knowledge of authoritative texts are also required.

LEARNING: A THREE-PART MODEL

Cynewulf's plot does not deviate substantially from his probable exemplar (some form of the *Acta Cyriaci*), but he is considerably more descriptive, and many of his additions deal with thoughts and feelings. When we say that an author writing today is interested in the psychology of their characters, we mean that they emphasize the distinct individuality of each human personality. But for a person trained in exegetical reading as Cyn-

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edition does not capitalize *gæst* in this line, though it does capitalize it when the reference is unambiguously to the Holy Ghost.

[32] 'Homilia XXIX: Lectio S. Evang. Sec. Marc. XVI, 14–20', *Patrologia Latina* 76.1218–9.

ewulf must have been, there is no coincidence, only providence—and so patterns and formulas are far more interesting than distinctions. When Cynewulf sets out to explore the minds of his characters, he emphasizes the patterns of thought and experience which he believes are universal.

When Hill and Heckman look for evidence that reason is depicted as an inferior mode of understanding, they are implicitly suggesting that the poem follows a hierarchical model of modes of perception such as is found in the writings of Boethius and Augustine. C.S. Lewis summarizes the distinction between reason and direct perception:

> Boethius, it will be remembered, distinguishes *intellegentia* from *ratio*; the former being enjoyed in its perfection by angels. *Intellectus* is that in man which approximates most nearly to angelic *intellegentia* […] Its relation to reason is thus described by Aquinas: 'intellect (*intelligere*) is the simple (i.e. indivisible, uncompounded) grasp of an intelligible truth, whereas reasoning (*ratiocinari*) is the progression towards an intelligible truth by going from one understood (*intellecto*) point to another. […]' We are enjoying *intellectus* when we 'just see' a self-evident truth; we are exercising *ratio* when we proceed step by step to prove a truth which is not self-evident.[33]

Lewis takes this to be *the* medieval understanding of perception, but it is not a given that it was universally accepted in the Anglo-Saxon period. The Old English text which does most clearly express this hierarchy is the Old English *Consolation of Philosophy*, which makes statements like *þeah we fela smean we habbað litellne gearowitan buton tweon* ('though we ponder many things we have little full understanding without uncertainty') about the limits of reason.[34] Malcolm Godden summarizes the translator's treatment of the hierarchy of reason as follows:

> Like Alcuin, Alfred attributes a very high status to the mind. In this he follows Boethius, but he sometimes takes the argument further. In bk V Boethius distinguishes four levels of understanding: *sensus*, or the physical senses, which the lowest animals have; *imagination* (a limited ability to recognize and understand shapes and identities),

[33] C.S. Lewis, *The Discarded Image* (Cambridge, 1964), p. 157.

[34] Translations of Boethius are by Godden and Irvine. *The Old English Boethius: an Edition of the Old English versions of Boethius' De Consolatione Philosophiae* ed. and trans. by Malcolm Godden, Susan Irvine, et al, 2 vols, (Oxford, 2009), B text Chapter 41 ll.150–151 [equivalent to C Text, Prose 32, ll. 141–2], Vol I p. 379 (original) and Vol II p. 94 (translation). There is also a brief allusion to a similar hierarchy in Vercelli Homily IV, which states that *we sindon nyðor þon[n]e Godes englas 7 gewisran þonne nytenu* ('we are lower than God's angels and wiser than the cattle'). *The Vercelli Homilies and Related Texts* ed. by D. G. Scragg, EETS o.s. 300 (Oxford, 1992), pp. 76–77.

> which is found in higher animals; reason, which is found in men; and *intelligentia*, a direct perception of ultimate truth and forms, which is the divine understanding. Alfred follows him on *sensus,* [...] has doubts over *imaginatio,* [...] agrees in ascribing reason (*gesceadwisnes*) to men; but then attributes *intelligentia*, translated as 'gewis andgit', certain or direct understanding, to angels and wise men, not just to God.[35]

This is near enough to Lewis' model in its general shape, if not its lexis. However, Lewis tends to overlook the Anglo Saxon period entirely in his generalizations; at that time this model, while fairly widely available, was far from universally accepted.

In responding to a similar discussion of forms of perception in Augustine's *Soliloquies,* the Old English translator's treatment of the concepts is entirely different; he praises reason (*gesceadwisnes*) beyond the original and avoids the idea of *intellectus* entirely. These alterations have recently been analyzed by Lockett, who observes that the "epistemological hierarchy of *sensus-cogitatio-intellectus* is replaced by opposition of 'inner' and 'outer' senses," and notes that the "use of geometry to demonstrate that *intellectus* apprehends incorporeals is replaced by use of the letter and seal from the *hlaford* to demonstrate belief in things unseen."[36]

Although he no longer attributes the Boethius and the *Soliloqiues* to King Alfred or even necessarily to his circle,[37] Godden maintains that there is a close relationship between these two texts. In 'Did King Alfred Write Anything?' he observes that "The *Consolation* uses the Latin *Soliloquies* as a source occasionally, while the Old English *Soliloquies* seems to draw on ideas developed in the course of translating Boethius."[38] He concludes that the *Soliloquies* "is so closely aligned, in style and concerns

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[35] Godden, 'Anglo-Saxons on the Mind', p 276. The relevant passage in the *Consolation* is in Chapter 41 of the Old English B text [equivalent to Prose 32 in the C Text], which can be found on pp. 374–380 of Vol I esp. p. 378–379 ll. 127–162 and translated on pp. 91–94 of Vol 2 of Godden and Irvine's *Boethius.* It can also be found in *King Alfred's Old English Version of Boethius,* ed. Walter John Sedgefield (Oxford, 1899), pp. 141–147.

[36] Lockett, *Anglo-Saxon Psychologies*, pp. 313–373, especially "How can Agustinus see God without *intellectus*?" on pp. 340–342 and Figure 1 on p. 336. See also Milton McC. Gatch, 'King Alfred's Version of Augustine's *Soliloquia*: Some Suggestions on its Rationale and Unity' in *Studies in Earlier Old English Prose* ed. Paul E. Szarmach (Albany, 1986), pp.17–46.

[37] See *The Old English Boethius* Vol I, pp. 140–151.

[38] Malcolm Godden, 'Did King Alfred Write Anything?', *Medium Ævum* 76:1 (2007), 1–23, p. 9.

and sources, with the *Consolation* that the two works stand together."[39] If two texts so closely related to each other do not agree either with each other or with their Latin originals about the relative value of reason, we cannot assume that Cynewulf would have taken a hierarchical model of perception for granted.[40]

Cynewulf's model of knowledge is not a simple criticism of reason (as Heckman suggests), or conflict between reason and spirit (as Hill argues), or a positioning of reason as an intermediary stage of understanding between sense and perception following Boethius. What Cynewulf critiques is not reason, but incomplete understanding. There are several instances in the poem where a character exhibits only partial understanding: Constantine perceives the cross with his senses but does not know what it stands for; Judas understands what the cross stands for historically but does not understand it spiritually. However, there is no suggestion that Constantine's sensory perception of the Cross is inferior to Judas' rational knowledge of Christian history—only that both modes of understanding are incomplete. Neither is Cynewulf's model an opposition of letter and spirit: Constantine's need for education in the Old Law and Judas' repeated use of his book-learning after his conversion demonstrate that these two ways of reading are complementary, not opposed.

Cynewulf's model of intellectual progress is neither dualistic nor hierarchical, but tripartite and holistic. Each character must approach the Cross through the lenses of learning, experience, and grace before they understand it fully. These three categories of understanding correspond with Augustine's trinity of the soul: learning, experience, and grace belong respectively to *memoria, intellegentia,* and *uoluntas* (memory, intelli-

[39] Godden, 'Did King Alfred Write Anything?', p. 17.
[40] Or even that he was aware of it at all—Cynewulf has been described by Greenfield and Calder as "not a great scholar" and by Fulk as "not profoundly learned." Stanley B. Greenfield and Daniel G. Calder, 'The Christian Saint as Hero' in *A New Critical History of Old English Literature* (New York, 1986), pp. 158–182, p. 164; R.D. Fulk, 'Cynewulf: Canon, Dialect, Date' in *Cynewulf: Basic Readings* ed. Robert E. Bjork (London, 1996), pp. 3–22, p.3.

gence, and will).[41] 'Learning' and 'experience' are self-explanatory, but 'grace' requires some further definition: this the term I am using for those moments in the poem when a character is filled with joy and wisdom as a reward for openness, receptivity, or patient desire. It is a gift, because it ultimately comes from outside—the Holy Ghost is nearly always cited as the source of the joy and wisdom the character experiences when their perspective on the Cross expands. However, for grace to be given, one must be receptive to it: this grace only comes in response to a character's will and desire.[42] As such, this way of understanding the Cross fits within Augustine's concept of *voluntate*, which he frequently equates with *amoris* (love) in the final chapters of *De Trinitate.*

De Trinitate was known in Anglo-Saxon England, but Cynewulf need not necessarily have encountered the trinity of the soul directly in Augustine's writings.[43] Malcolm Godden and Susan Irvine identify this trinity as a "patristic commonplace" which appears in the writings of Alcuin and Isidore, and eventually in the Old English Boethius, which says:[44]

> Hwæt, ge þonne þeah hwæthwega godcundlices on eowerre saule habbað, þæt is andgit and gemynd and se gesceadwislica willa þæt hine þara twega lyste.[45]
>
> [Indeed, *you* have something godlike in *your* soul, that is understanding and memory and the rational will that takes pleasure in those two things.][46]

The three-part structure of understanding through learning, experience, and grace also has analogies in terms of interpretive practice: Augustinian exegetical read-

[41] *Sancti Aurelii Augustini: De Trinitate Libri XV* ed. W.J. Mountain, Corpus Christanorum Series Latina 50 and 50A; Aurelli Augustini Opera 16 (1) and 16 (2) (Turnhout, 1968). Augustine mentions this trinity of the soul in Book 4 Chapter 21, and develops the idea further in Books 10, 14, and 15. In Book 14 Chapter 8, he also describes a trinity of memory, sight, and love.
[42] This idea is also illustrated elsewhere in the corpus—for instance, in The Wanderer's progression from one who *are gebideð* ('awaits mercy', 1b) at the beginning of the poem to one who *are secað* ('seeks mercy', 114b) by the end. *The Exeter Book,* ASPR III. See Francis Leneghan, 'Preparing the Mind for Prayer: *The Wanderer* and *Theosis*' (forthcoming).
[43] Lapidge locates the work in two inventories, three insular manuscripts and two associated with the Anglo-Saxon mission on the continent, and in allusions made by Bede, Alcuin, Ælfric, and Byrhtferth. Lapidge, *Anglo-Saxon Library,* p. 287.
[44] *Boethius* Vol. II, p. 304.
[45] *Boethius* (B Text Ch. 14, ll. 76–78) Vol. I, p. 269 [equivalent to C Text, Prose 7, ll. 125–127].
[46] *Boethius* Vol. II, p. 21. Godden and Irvine italicize 'you' to indicate the plural. Godden has elsewhere identified Alcuin's adaptation of Augustine as a source for this chapter of the translation of *Boethius*. Godden, 'Anglo-Saxons on the Mind', p. 274.

ing is fourfold, but it slots easily into past, present, and future. Perception of the literal and typological senses of a text requires knowledge of scripture and history—that is, memory of the past. Perception of the tropological or moral sense of a text requires the intelligence to discern how it applies to the reader's society and personal experience—that is, understanding of its relevance to the present life. Perception of the anagogical sense of a text requires a hopeful acceptance of what is to come—that is, a will oriented towards the future. We may therefore think about learning, experience, and grace in terms of past, present, and future; of the Old Law, the New Law, and the Heavenly Kingdom; of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.

In *Elene* the 'text' that is being read is a sign—the Cross—and each of the four main characters must learn to read it in a similarly threefold manner before they achieve spiritual maturity. In Cynewulf's depiction, the categories experience, learning, and grace are mutually dependent.

THE EDUCATION OF CONSTANTINE

Constantine is the first character whose spiritual education is portrayed. He begins at the end, as it were, with the third category of understanding—the one I call 'grace' or rewarded receptivity. When Constantine sees the cross he *hreðerlocan onspeon, / up locade* ('unlocked his breast-locker, looked up', ll. 86b–87a), a metaphor of opening which, as Sharma observes, is absent in the Latin text and has connotations of "spiritual receptiveness".[47] Constantine's willingness to accept the sign of the cross causes him joy: it leaves him *bliðra* ('more happy', l. 96b) and *sorgleasra* ('more free from sorrow', l. 97a). But grace alone is not sufficient to produce mature understanding. Each character must also experience the Cross with their senses and learn about its history from texts or teachers.

[47] Sharma, 'Reburial', p. 283.

The vision is Constantine's sensory encounter with the Cross, and the victory it brings him is proof of its power in the present. The battle is described at some length, with emphasis laid by repetition on both the visibility of the image of the cross and the thoroughness with which Constantine's army eviscerates the army which had previously caused them so much terror and threatened to destroy the empire. The battle concludes with lines which reiterate the visible proof of the Cross's power:

> Þa wæs gesyne   þæt sige forgeaf
> Constantino   cyning ælmihtig
> æt þam dægweorce,   domweorðunga,
> rice under roderum,   þurh his rode treo.   (*Elene,* ll. 144–147)

> [Then it was seen that the Almighty King gave victory to Constantine at that day's work, glory, kingdom under heaven, through his rood tree.]

Although Constantine has experienced grace, and proof of the Cross' power, his understanding of the sign is still not sufficient. The clearest evidence that Cynewulf is not presenting a dichotomy, in which spirit or faith is *superior* to reason or learning, is that in his initial encounter with the Cross, Constantine lacks precisely what Judas possesses, and possesses precisely what Judas lacks, and Constantine's perception of the Cross is *also* depicted as incomplete. He understands by the messenger's words the Cross's immediate significance (that he will have victory) and he grasps its essential emotive truth in his joy, but because he does not know the Cross' history, he does not understand the most important thing about it: whose sign it is. What he lacks is not reason or faith, but information. Hence he does not seek the most reasonable men to deduce the sign's meaning, or the most pious, but the most learned:

> Þa þe snyttro cræft
> þurh fyrngewrito   gefrigen hæfdon
> heoldon higeþancum   hæleða rædas.   (*Elene,* ll. 154b–156)

> [Who that wise craft had found out through ancient writings and who held men's counsels in their memories.]

In Constantine's education, Cynewulf gives us a glimpse of the process of learning: beyond the essentials enumerated by Constantine's teachers in their initial speech, Constantine does not receive his knowledge of Christianity passively and quick-

ly by being told, but by studying scripture for himself. Neither does he study alone; his reading is guided and mediated by *larsmiðas* ('teachers', l. 203b). Those teachers are charaterized as speaking to Constantine with *gastgerynum* ('spiritual insights'; literally 'spiritual mysteries', l. 189b). Martin Irvine argues that " 'gastgeryne' is an exegetical term, referring to allegory and typology, a Latin equivalent of which is not found in the source but is introduced by Cynewulf."[48] We may infer from this that another thing Constantine learns from his teachers is the skill of exegetical reading—the ability to read beyond the literal.

Once Constantine's understanding of the Cross is deepened and diversified by his education in scripture, his spiritual maturity is signalled by the new pleasure he takes in this knowledge: *wæs him niwe gefea / befolen in fyrhðe* ('a new joy was granted in his heart', ll. 195b–196a). Constantine becomes a devout believer *þurh gastes gife* ('through the Ghost's gift', l. 199a). In the Latin *Inventio Sanctae Crucis,* the Holy Ghost tends to be an instigator of actions: references to the Holy Ghost occur as Helena sets out on the quest for the Cross, inquires after the nails, and seeks a use for the nails.[49] *Elene* does something different. In *Elene*, the Holy Ghost is always mentioned at moments when an action or episode is concluded and a character's understanding and increases.

These moments of increasing understanding also feature increasing joy. Regan has argued that where the Holy Ghost is granted to Judas along with *fyrhat lufu* ('fire-hot love', l. 936b) and wisdom, this is "Augustinian *sapientia*" (as opposed to more purely rational *scientia*) because this type of wisdom "involves the affective as well as cognitive faculties."[50] She argues that this type of wisdom is necessary in the conver-

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[48] Irvine, *Textual Culture*, p. 442.
[49] References to the Holy Spirit appear in ll. 49, 54, 299, 320–21, and 358 of Holder's edition of the *Inventio Sanctæ Crucis.*
[50] Regan 'Evangelism', p.274

sion "from Law to Love."[51] She only attributes such a transformation to Judas, but affect and grace are present in Constantine's mature knowledge as well: once Constantine's understanding of the Cross is deepened and diversified by his education in scripture, he becomes a devout believer *þurh gastes gife* ('through the Ghost's gift', l. 199a), and his spiritual maturity is signalled by the new pleasure he takes in his knowledge: *wæs him niwe gefea / befolen in fyrhðe* ('a new joy was granted in his heart', ll. 195b–196a).

THE EDUCATION OF JUDAS

The second character whose spiritual education we are shown is Judas. The Jews, and particularly Judas, possess far more information about Christ than Constantine does—the group of Jews who appear before Elene are selected for being well-versed in the holy books which foretold Christ's coming, and Judas is aware of the circumstances of the Crucifixion. Cynewulf says, without irony, that the Jews and Judas are wise: it is clear from the context that what he means by wisdom in this case is familiarity with certain texts rather than, say, ability to reason.[52] Judas himself is described as *gidda gearosnotor* ('very wise in songs') in line 417a and again in line 586a. The word *gearusnotor* appears only three times in the corpus, and exclusively in the poems of Cynewulf; the third occurrence, as I mentioned above, is in *Christ II*, where Solomon is called *giedda gearosnottor* ('very wise in songs', l. 713a). We cannot know which poem was composed first, but if the use of the term for Judas is intended to connect him to Solomon, there is both praise and subtle criticism in this, since Solomon is proverbially wise, but

[51] Regan, 'Evangelism', p. 260. See also pp. 274–275.
[52] See ll. 276–284 and ll. 585–590. Cynewulf uses repeated imagery (e.g. of the Holy Ghost) and rare compounds (e.g. *gearusnotor*) to qualify particular types of wisdom, but there is little to be gained from classifying different 'wisdom' simplexes he employs. For example, forms of *snotor* are used both of the wisdom of the Jews who know the Law (*snoterestum*, l. 277) and the wisdom of Judas when he is filled with the Holy Ghost (*snyttro*, l. 937). Cynewulf often uses different terms for wisdom for the sake of variation within a single sentence (e.g., ll. 934–938).

the Song of Solomon was always read figuratively as a book about Christ.[53] The Jews have *memoria*, memory, knowledge of the past, knowledge of God the Father through the old laws and prophets. What they lack are the openness to and experience of the Cross which would move them to use their knowledge correctly. This is what Elene means in her first speech to the Jews, where she calls them *modblinde* ('blind in spirit', l. 306a).[54]

Judas understands what Elene seeks and deliberately chooses to conceal it in case this doctrine should overturn his other learning. Because he is aware of the Cross but does not act in the way that would be expected of someone who has a full understanding of its implications, we can say that he misunderstands the central sign of Christianity.

In the *Acta Cyriaci* Judas is stubborn, but in *Elene* he appears genuinely confused. Hill finds the fact that Judas accepts the information his father has given him about Christ and yet resists Elene a "strikingly unrealistic detail" which argues for a figural interpretation of the poem.[55] He is absolutely right that Judas is a "typal figure representing the Jewish nation outside the church,"[56] but at the same time, Judas' behaviour is not unrealistic. Irrational and inconsistent behaviour is just what we might expect of a man who is confused, and struggling with the cognitive dissonance produced when what he has been told by someone he trusts does not match what he has experienced. He can repeat his father's words, but he cannot make sense of them or believe them: he has *memoria,* but not *intellegentia* and *uoluntate.* When he says to Elene, *Ic ne can þæt ic nat, / findan on fyrhðe þæt swa fyrn geweard,* ('I cannot find in my heart what I do

[53] Ælfric, who never passes up an opportunity to explain how something in scripture *getacnode* ('betokened') something else, is so anxious that people not read the Song of Songs literally that in his letter to Sigeweard he abandons his usual habit of explaining how one thing 'betokens' another and describes the contents of the book in purely figural terms as *be Criste and be Cristes circean* ('about Christ and Christ's church'). *Ælfric, 'Libellus',* in *The Old English Heptateuch and Ælfric's Libellus de Veteri Testamento et Novo* Vol. I, ed. Richard Marsden, EETS o.s. 330 (Oxford, 2008), pp. 201–230, p. 211, l. 310.
[54] C.f. Juliana's description of her tormentors as *hygeblind* ('blind in heart', l. 61a).
[55] Hill, 'Sapiential Structure', p. 210.
[56] Hill, 'Sapiential Structure', p. 211.

not know, which happened so long ago', ll. 640b–641), he is dissembling, but he is also telling a truth—he does not hold the Cross in his *fyrhðe,* and he cannot find it there.

Similarly, while Elene claims that the location of the Cross is basic historical knowledge which is being deliberately withheld (ll. 642–654), the exchange among the Jews in her absence reveals that in fact most of them do not understand what it is she wants of them (ll. 411–416), and even Judas does not know the exact location of the Cross (ll. 789b–792). This is not sloppy writing, or evidence that Cynewulf does not care about the literal level of the narrative, but a depiction of how the mind becomes confused and clouded by sin. The location of the Cross *should* be as well-known as the facts of the Trojan War, but the Jews have buried that knowledge and hidden it even from themselves.

Judas further demonstrates his confusion when he unwittingly acts out a misinterpretation of his own parable of the bread and stone.[57] To Elene's question of whether he will choose life or death, he asks: what starving man who came upon a loaf and a stone in the desert would choose the stone? His subsequent indecision demonstrates that he does not understand his own parable. The irony of the scene extends beyond this matter of interpretation, to the very fact that Judas chooses a parable as his medium of expression: the use of a rhetorical technique associated above all with Christ's own ministry foreshadows Judas' future career as a Christian teacher. The root of his interpretive impasse is his inability to perceive the applicability—the moral—of his parable. To him the parable is, as Whatley puts it, "mere rhetoric."[58] Judas can understand only the past, not the present: he is not capable of reading tropologically.

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[57] There is a debate about exactly which scene in the Gospels this might allude to. See E.G. Whatley, 'Bread and Stone: Cynewulf's *Elene* 611–18', *NM* 76 (1975) 550–560; Hill, 'Bread and Stone, Again'; and also DiNapoli, 'Poesis and Authority', p. 625. The language of signs is sometimes used in the discussion of parables, as in *Christ II* ll. 462–463 and in homiletic explications, as discussed in the introduction.

[58] Whatley, 'Bread and Stone', p. 552.

Ironically, while critics agree upon the figural meaning of Judas' failure to relate his life to his parable (he does not choose Christ), there is disagreement over whether it is the bread or the stone that represents Christ. The most common reading of the parable is that when Judas fails to choose Christ and the New Law, represented by the bread, he chooses the Old Law, which cannot sustain him. Whatley believes that Cynewulf's audience would have understood the parable this way: "the Christian reader, blest with the grace to perceive the spirit behind the letter, knows that Judas answers his own rhetorical question in the negative."[59] Regan reads the scene differently however, and says that Judas' mistake is in *not* choosing the stone: she believes that readers would "remember how Christ resisted Satan's taunting challenge to change the stone into a loaf. Thus the contrast is obvious: Judas is still a sinner, he does not yet imitate Christ's acts, and he cannot voluntarily seek the more difficult path."[60] It doesn't really matter whether we read the bread or the stone or both as Christ; the point is not that Judas makes the wrong choice, but that he fails to make the right choice in attempting to avoid having to choose at all. He perceives only *gehwæðres wa* ('woe in either', l. 628b), so (like the poor readers in *Beowulf* and *Judith*) he hesitates, and is lost.[61]

The aspect of the poem which most often strikes modern readers as psychologically implausible is Judas' conversion as a result of his imprisonment. We cannot believe that a conversion elicited through torture could be genuine. For that reason, critics attend primarily to the allegorical readings of this scene: Judas' imprisonment is an enactment of Christ's kenosis or his entombment, or Joseph's captivity in the well, or the preparatory fasts of the Catechumen, or of concepts such as exile and penitence.[62] Re-

[59] Whatley, 'Bread and Stone', p. 559.
[60] Regan 'Evangelism', p. 264.
[61] Hesitation is also Andreas' fatal flaw; *acedia* is discussed further on p. 127.
[62] Hill convincingly argues for the appropriateness of seeing Judas as a type of Christ in this scene because it evokes Joseph's captivity in the dry well, which is a type of the Harrowing of Hell which is itself a typological allusion to baptism. See Hill, 'Bread and Stone', p. 255.

gan says Judas' hunger is his "subconscious yearning for truth."[63] All of these readings make sense and may well have occurred to Anglo-Saxon readers. However, Judas' suffering and his response to it also make psychological sense within the logic of the poem and, most likely, the experiences of its contemporary audience.

Cynewulf tells us that during his dialogue with Elene, Judas *gnornsorge wæg* ('bore miserable sorrow', l. 655b), and that he *cwæð þæt he þæt on gehðu gespræce / ond on tweon swiðost, wende him trage hnagre* ('said that he in anxiety spoke and in fiercest doubt, he expected for himself more abject affliction', ll. 667–668). There are no such mental agonies alluded to in the *Acta Cyriaci,* but they do have a parallel in the way Cynewulf describes his own experience of grappling with the Cross in the epilogue. These agonies of Judas' therefore seem to be a deliberate commentary on the physical and emotive consequences of the intellectual process of comprehending the full signification of the Cross. The heart and mind were not contrasted in Old English as they are in Modern English; the breast was the seat of both emotion and intellect. As Lockett has demonstrated, mental distress of any sort was thought to be felt in the breast, as heat and tightness.[64] Because he has attempted to hide from Elene and from himself what cannot be hidden, Judas experiences intellectual distress, which manifests as physical distress: *him wæs geomor sefa, / hat æt heortan* ('his mind was troubled, hot at heart', ll. 627b–628a). Intense spiritual suffering *is* physical suffering, so Judas' suffering in the pit serves as an escalation of the psychological suffering he has already undergone. Like the Wanderer and the Seafarer, and like the wise men and prophets of the Old Testament who, according to Vercelli Homily VII *wæron þurh geswinc gebyrhte,* ('were enlightened through affliction,' l. 24), Judas must endure physical hardship, both as a

[63] Regan, 'Evangelism', p. 268.
[64] Lockett, *Anglo-Saxon Psychologies.*

metaphorical extension of his mental suffering, and as a crucible which will ultimately clarify his mind.[65]

It is also likely that Cynewulf and many of his contemporaries would have seen spiritual advancement through the means of enforced fasting as entirely plausible, based on their own experience.[66] Fasting was an important aspect of religious life, and assuming that people who engaged in it did not feel that they benefitted from the experience would be a kind of cultural arrogance. The Vercelli compiler certainly considered fasting an efficacious means of spiritual advancement; it is an important element of the manuscript's Rogation homilies, as well as Homily III (which Scragg describes as a "penitential homily for Lent").[67] In Éamonn Ó Carragáin's early work on the Vercelli Book, he suggests that "the Guthlac excerpt complemented *Elene* just as much as *The Fates of the Apostles* complemented *Andreas*" because of their common interest in fasting.[68] He argues that Guthlac's dwelling in a pit (*seaþe*, l. 4) is intended to be read against Judas' incarceration in a pit (*seað*, l. 693a), and that the story of Guthlac's resisting the temptation of incorrect fasting is offered as a counter against excessive asceticism which might be inspired by Judas' forced fasting under Elene's direction.[69] The obvious objection is that a Christian chooses to fast, whereas Judas was forced to fast. But not all Christians were Guthlac; many people who fasted for reasons of social convention or regulation must have done so under the direction and guidance of others.[70]

[65] *Vercelli Homilies,* pp. 133–138.

[66] Although they almost certainly engaged in some form of fasting, they may not have actually engaged in the type of catechumenical fasting Regan describes—M. Bradford Bedingfield argues that the catechumenical period of fasting was only occasionally practiced in Anglo-Saxon England due in the early period to the practicalities of missionary work and in the later period to the prevalence of infant baptism but other forms of fasting were practiced by monks, clergy, and lay people. M. Bradford Bedingfield, 'Baptism in Anglo-Saxon England' in *The Dramatic Liturgy of Anglo-Saxon England* (Woodbridge, 2002), pp. 171–190.

[67] *Vercelli Homilies*, p. 70.

[68] Éamonn Ó Carragáin, 'How did the Vercelli collector interpret *The Dream of the Rood*?' in *Studies in English Language and Early Literature in Honour of Paul Christopherson,* ed. P. M. Tilling, Occasional Papers in Linguistics and Language Learning 8 (Coleraine, 1981), pp. 63–104, p. 69.

[69] 'Homily XXIII', *Vercelli Homilies,* pp. 381–394.

[70] Fasts undergone as penance for a specific transgression were undertaken under the direction of a confessor, and the customary monastic fasts determined by the calendar would have to have been learned by

People whose experience has told them that fasting is beneficial and that it sometimes requires stern direction to carry it out successfully would be far more likely to accept the plausibility of Judas' conversion than a modern audience whose experience has told them that no spiritual or intellectual progress is possible if there is no tea.

After his suffering, and as a result of it, Judas understands that his learned and rational understanding is not sufficient. He asks for a miracle, not just to locate the crosses, but to confirm his belief: he says that if God will grant this *beacen* (l. 783b),

> Ic gelyfe þe sel
> ond þy fæstlicor ferhð staðelige
> hyht untweondne, on þone ahangnan Crist. (*Elene,* ll. 795b–797)
>
> [I will the better believe in you and the more steadfastly found my heart, my undoubting hope, on the crucified Christ.]

The word *untweo(ge)ndne* appears twice in the Vercelli Book and does not occur elsewhere in the poetry (though Christ III uses the related word *untweo*, 'certain', l. 960a). As well as this occurrence in *Elene*, where Judas is responding to his bodily suffering, it appears at line 1242b in *Andreas*, where the saints is said to have *ellen untweonde* ('undoubting courage') during his torture by the Mermedonians. Like Judas, Andreas finds, during his torture, that his mind is unusually clear.[71]

What Judas' suffering illustrates is that the mind does not operate exclusively of the body in interpreting signs. As Lockett has shown, the body and the mind were conceived of as parts of the same system by Anglo-Saxon writers. Boethius also explicitly connects the physical form of man to his interpretive abilities. Book 5 Meter 5 recounts the myriad forms of motion animals exhibit, then draws this conclusion:

> Quae variis videas licet Omnia disrepare formis, prona tamen facies hebetes valet ingravare senus; unica gens hominum celsum levat altius cacumen atque levis recto stat

each new generation under the direction of their teachers. The *Dialogue of Egbert* describes of a period of fasting which became a firm custom among both monks and laity and was kept *quasi legitima*—as if it were law—which suggests some degree of compulsion, if only that of social pressure. A.W. Haddan and W. Stubbs, *Councils and Ecclesiastical Documents Relating to Great Britain and Ireland* III (Oxford, 1871) p. 413. See also Henry Mayr-Harting, *The Coming of Christianity to Anglo-Saxon England* (London, 1991), pp. 254–261.

[71] See pp. 120 and 122 below.

> corpore despictque terras. Haec, nisi terrenus male desipis, admonet figura: qui recto caelum vultu petis exserisque frontem, in sublime feras animum quoque, ne gravata pessum inferior sidat mens corpore celsius levato.[72]
>
> [But all these curious creatures with their diverse forms and habits turn their faces downward, their senses confined and dull, while only the race of men can hold their heads up high and stand with upright bodies, lords of the earth they look down on. Unless you, too, are drawn downward by the lures of earth and flesh, you may turn your face above and gaze at heaven as your body's posture allows and even commands you to do, letting your mind soar high, free of the earths' mire to the depths of which you can at any moment sink back.][73]

The state and perceptions of the body are as important as those of the mind in the interpretation of signs. The emergence from the pit is a first step, but Judas also requires a sensory experience of the power of the Cross to help him to perceive its purpose in the present life, so he asks God to send a *beacen* (l. 783b) to confirm his faith and locate the crosses. Only when he has seen (or smelled)[74] the miracle for himself does he say: *nu ic þurh soð hafu seolf gecnawen / on heardum hige þæt ðu hælend eart / middangeardes* ('now I through truth have known for myself in [my] hard heart that you are the saviour of middle earth', ll. 807–809a). This expression, 'to know for oneself', is used both when Judas witnesses the miracle, and also when Judas emerges from the pit and says: *ic ær mid dysige þurhdrifen wære / on ðæt soð to late seolf gecneowe* ('I was earlier driven through with folly and knew that truth for myself too late', ll. 707–708). It indicates distinct moments of progress in Judas' changing perception: before these experiences he knew intellectually but had not sensed the fact of Christ's divinity.

This experience of the Cross in the present does not *replace* Judas' memory of the cross in the past. He continues to use his textual knowledge (for example, about the three crosses and about the ranks of angels in heaven) to great effect in his new role as a Christian teacher. Judas' actions when he emerges from the pit show that he has come

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[72] *Boethivs: De Consolatione Philosophiae & Opvscvla Theologica* ed. Claudio Moeschini (Munich, 2000), pp. 154–155.

[73] Boethius, *Consolation of Philosophy* trans. David R. Slavitt (Cambridge MA, 2008), pp. 167–168.

[74] The smoke is called *rec* (ll. 794b, 803a) and *steam* (l. 802b). The former is cognate with Modern English reek, and may imply the smoke of incense. Certainly this is what the author of the prose homily on the Invention of the Cross had in mind in describing the smoke as *se swetesta stænc ealra diorwurþesta wyrtgemanga* ('the sweetest smell of all the dearest perfumes'); see Bodden's edition, p. 87, l. 206.

to understand that although the Jews may now lose their earthly kingdom, the importance of their learning has not diminished. In Judas' address to God (ll. 725–801) he demonstrates the extent of his learning. First, he recites cosmological knowledge which cannot come from experience, because *ne mæg þær manna gecynd / of eorðwegum up geferan / in lichoman* ('mankind may not travel there in body away from the paths of earth,' ll. 734b–736a).[75] Next he enunciates rational proof of Christ's divinity using 'if' statements (e.g., *gif he þin nære / sunu synna leas, næfre he soðra swa feala / [...] wundra gefremede*: 'if he were not your sinless son, he would never have worked so many miracles,' ll. 776b–778). His learning and his reason are still relevant, and have not diminished in importance with his new ability to read spiritually.

But now that Judas has confirmed that the Cross has power and meaning in the present, expanding his understanding of the Cross to include an experiential as well as a rational aspect, both his wisdom and his pleasure in that wisdom are increased: he is described as *eadig ond ægleaw* ('blessed and wise in the law', l. 805a) and *gleaw in geþance* ('wise in thought', l. 806b), and when he finally sees the crosses for himself is he described as *myclum geblissod* ('greatly gladdened', l. 839b).

It is then only left for Judas to achieve the grace that comes through rewarded humility. Discovering which of the three crosses is the True Cross is not a matter of learning or intelligence but of receptive, expectant waiting. The 'experiment' of testing to see which cross would restore the dead man does not follow immediately after their exhumation. Instead, Judas counsels patience. The assembled crowd sit and *sang ahofon* ('raised up song', l. 867b) and wait until the ninth hour. In this they enact in microcosm the essential function of the Christian liturgy in which song and prayer mark

[75] He particularly notes those angels (*ceruphin,* l. 749b) who approach God most closely, behold His face, and praise Him (a state which man cannot achieve but towards which he should aspire), and those who have been cast furthest from Him. Judas says of the devil chained in the darkness that *þær he þin ne mæg / word aweorpan* ('there, he may not reject your word', ll. 769b–770a)—even as Judas could no longer resist God's word when Elene cast him down into the pit.

time in the vigil of the faithful who expect the return of Christ. The act of waiting is important enough that the time they are awaiting—the *nigoðe tid* ('ninth hour')—is noted not once but twice within five lines (ll. 869a, 873b).[76] This emphasis on the ninth hour is likely derived from the tradition of Anglo-Saxon prayer on the passion. Henry Mayr-Harting describes the origin and context of such prayers:

> To take the theme of the Passion for daily prayer was in accordance with some of the oldest traditions of the fathers. In the *Apostolic Tradition*, for instance, Hippolytus of Rome says 'If thou art at home, pray at the third hour and praise God; but if thou art elsewhere and that time comes pray in thy heart to God.' At this hour he recommended the Christian to think of Christ nailed to the Cross. 'Pray likewise at the sixth hour,' he writes, 'for at that hour when Christ had been hanged upon the wood of the cross the daylight was divided and it became darkness.' At the ninth hour prayer should be protracted, 'for in that hour Christ was pierced in his side and shed forth blood and water.' The passion on the cross, the darkness, the piecing of Christ's side—each is also the subject of one of the Nunnaminster prayers.[77]

After the vigil, the True Cross is revealed, and Judas must face down the devil. At this point, the narrator says of Judas:

> Him wæs halig gast
> befolen fæste, fyrhat lufu,
> weallende gewitt þurh witgan snyttro. (*Elene*, ll. 935b–937)
>
> [In him was the Holy Ghost firmly granted, fire-hot love, fervid understanding through the wise one's wisdom.]

The Holy Ghost has not been with Judas before this point—not in his emergence from the pit, not at the miracle of the smoke, not at the exhumation of the crosses. It is only now that Judas' spiritual maturation has been completed—by the combination of knowledge, experience, and hopeful patience—that the Holy Ghost is with him, contributing to his wisdom.

THE EDUCATION OF ELENE

Robert DiNapoli claims that "Elene never changes at all. [...] In a sense she departs profoundly unchanged, while Judas, still retaining the truths he'd inherited from his forefa-

[76] The *Acta Cyricaci* also says that they must wait for the ninth hour, but it does not say that this was at Judas' instigation, or mention singing.
[77] Mayr-Harting, *Coming of Christianity*, p. 188.

thers' esoteric tradition, has had his spiritual horizons vastly widened."[78] Elene does not undergo as dramatic a transformation as Judas does, but it is not fair to say she is unchanged—she completes her own spiritual journey as well. Like Judas, she begins with learning and memory: when she arrives in Jerusalem, she knows the Old Laws well enough to debate them with the Jews. However, she does not yet have first-hand experience of the Cross, and her desire and expectation have not yet been rewarded. She certainly is patient in her expectation: it is not until over 1000 lines into the poem that Judas (now Cyriacus) hands her the nails. It is only then, when she obtains the final piece of the Cross, that *wuldres gefylled / cwene willa* ('the queen's desire was fulfilled by glory', ll.1134b–1135a), and her understanding is completed when the *halig heofonlic Gast* ('holy heavenly Ghost', l. 1144a) fills her with wisdom. In this moment, she kneels in *leohte geleafan* ('bright belief', l. 1136a). Although she has been described as *eadig* ('blessed') throughout the poem, this is the first time she is directly associated with the sort of light imagery which is so often used of holy women such as Judith and Juliana (and, as I will argue in the final chapter, is associated with the idea of covenant).

It is also the first time her faith and wisdom have been described in affective terms. As I mentioned above, Regan makes a case for Judas' receiving *sapientia*, but only attributes such a transformation to Judas. *Sapientia* is, she says, a type of wisdom which "is distinct from the wisdom he possesses when the scene opens, yet includes that wisdom" which "enables Judas to comprehend God's salvific plan for man."[79] She identifies *sapientia* as an affective type of wisdom, necessary in the conversion "from Law to Love."[80] If Judas' being granted, in one moment, wisdom, the Holy Ghost, and *fyrhat lufu* indicates the onset of *sapientia*, the same must be true of Elene's new wis-

[78] DiNapoli, 'Poesis and Authority', p. 625.
[79] Regan, 'Evangelism', p. 257.
[80] Regan, 'Evangelism', p. 260. See also pp. 274–275.

dom, which is marked by *wopes hring* (the 'sound of weeping' l. 1131b) and *hat heafodwylm* ('hot tears', l. 1132a). It is the first time her faith and wisdom have been described an affective terms.

Elene falls to her knees, weeps, and thanks God because now she has seen for herself the proof of what she has read:

> Gode þancode,
> sigora dryhtne, þæs þe hio soð gecneow
> ondweardlice þæt wæs oft bodod
> feor ær beforan fram fruman worulde,
> folcum to frofre. Heo gefylled wæs
> wisdomes gife, ond þa wic beheold
> halig heofonlic gast, hreðer weardode,
> æðelne innoð. (*Elene,* ll. 1138b–1145a)
>
> [She thanked God, Lord of victories, because she knew truly in the present that which was oft foretold far earlier before from the beginning of the world, as a comfort to people. She was filled with wisdom's gift, and the Holy heavenly Ghost occupied that dwelling-place, guarded the breast, noble interior.]

These lines allude to all three modes of understanding: learning, experience, and grace. The half-line *þæt wæs oft bodod* ('that which was oft foretold') alludes to knowledge of prophecy and scriptural learning. The word *onweardlice* means 'presently', or 'actually' and indexes experience. And finally, the *halig heofonlic gast* ('Holy Heavenly Ghost') filling Elene's breast with wisdom shows the grace that is the fulfillment of her will and desire. Elene is not content when she achieves her stated mission of unearthing the True Cross—it is only when she achieves an understanding of the Cross which has a three-part structure combining first-hand experience, validation of her learning, and the support of the Holy Ghost that she experiences joyful wisdom.

After all the trouble of exhuming the Cross so it will no longer be concealed, it seems strange to many critics that Elene should then have it encased in gold and gems. Sharma sees the bejewelling of the Cross as a "regressive movement back towards the bondage of the letter" forced by shape of the narrative Cynewulf was adapting but run-

ning contrary to his thematic interests.[81] But the literal is not a regression; it is always the foundation of the figural. The ability of teachers like Cyriacus to bring people to a spiritual knowledge of the Cross is predicated on the earthly power of the Church. Thus the Cross is encased in treasure, and the nails are literally, not metaphorically, sent to the *avant garde* of Christendom.

Whatley argues that Constantine's battle, which takes up a substantial proportion of the poem, is more than a diverting prologue: "Cynewulf's version celebrates more explicitly than the Latin original the transfer of the covenant from the Jews to the Christians, and the *reuniting* of divine and earthly power behind the sign of the cross" (emphasis mine).[82] So it is at the end of the poem as well: divine and earthly power unite, and so do literal and figural meaning. The adornment of the Cross also invests it with a new figural significance: the presence of the Cross enthroned at the centre of Christendom while the nails which pierced its extremities are now at the extremities of Christendom creates a new, powerful symbol of temporal power, and causes the physical, literal, visible world to express spiritual truths.

THE EDUCATION OF CYNEWULF

Cynewulf himself is the fourth protagonist in *Elene.* The epilogue aligns his experience with that of the major players in the narrative, particularly Judas. Living in a time when the New Law is firmly established, he understands and experiences the relevance of the Cross in the present life, yet, he says, *nysse ic gearwe / be ðære rode riht* ('I did not know clearly about the true Cross', ll. 1239b–1240a). What he must explore further in order to fully understand the Cross are its past and future: its role in history, and the direction it will lead him after death. He tells us that he sought information about the

[81] Sharma, 'Reburial', p. 290.
[82] Whatley, E.G. 'The Figure of Constantine the Great in Cynewulf's *Elene*' *Traditio* 37 (1981), 161–202, p. 202.

Cross recorded *on bocum*, ('in books', l. 1254b). In order to make use of that knowledge, Cynewulf withdraws into solitude, like Judas going into the pit, to contemplate the Cross by night. He does not undergo a mortification of the flesh on a par with that which Judas suffers, but the pressing awareness of his own mortality occasioned by his departed friends causes mental agony sufficient for the purpose of turning his thoughts forward, towards his end and the world's end, in anagogical contemplation.

For Cynewulf as for Judas, study and rumination are not sufficient in themselves. As Cynewulf says in the poem's famous rhyming passage, once learning, experience, and patient desire are aligned, wisdom at last comes from outside the self:

> Nysse ic gearwe
> be ðære rode riht ær me rumran geþeaht
> þurh ða mæran miht on modes þeaht
> wisdom onwreah. (*Elene,* ll. 1239b–1242a)
>
> [I did not know clearly about that true cross before wisdom revealed to me in more ample thought, through that glorious might, in my mind's thought.]

Cynewulf calls this wisdom a *gife unscynde* ('honourable gift', l. 1246b) describes how God *bancofan onband, breostlocan onwand* ('unbound [his] bone-coffer, unwound [his] breast-locker', l. 1249); the imagery is similar to that at the start of the poem, when Constantine *hreðerlocan onspeon* ('unlocked his heart-locker', l. 86b) upon receiving the vision of the Cross.

Like each of his protagonists, Cynewulf must apply his memory, his intelligence, and his will to the task of understanding the Cross fully in his soul, before he is granted the consolation of wisdom.

THE THREE-PART MODEL: CONCLUSIONS

Contrary to Hill's assertion, psychology is precisely what this poem is about: it illustrates the process by which a mature understanding of the Cross is attained. By viewing the narrative in terms of three characters' complementary spiritual journeys, we have seen that *Elene* is not just exploring the limits of dialectic or contrasting the letter with

the spirit: the poem demonstrates that, in a thorough reading of the Cross, learning is not sufficient without sensory perception, sensory perception is not sufficient without learning, and neither can proceed without patient desire. I have referred to these factors as learning, experience, and grace, and suggested an analogy to Augustine's trinity of the soul, but as I have previously suggested, they could equally well be put in exegetical terms: knowledge of the Cross in history (the literal and typological) must be combined with experience of the Cross in the present life (the tropological) and the acceptance of its salvific and eschatological implications (the anagogical). The Holy Ghost is strongly associated with the third of these ways of understanding the Cross, and also with the affective wisdom which is granted to each character when they unite these three ways of contemplating the Cross. Constantine, Judas, and Elene are filled with joy, and Cynewulf with consolation, upon learning that the Cross means more, and means in more ways, than they once thought it did.

TEACHING

The process does not end here in private wisdom, however; understanding must be followed by teaching. When Elene approaches the Jews she asks not just for knowledgeable men but for qualified speakers—*þa ðe Moyses æ / reccan cuðon* ('those who could narrate/explain/interpret the law of Moses,' ll. 283b–284a). When she culls the group, she insists on this characteristic, that those who remain be *wordes cræftige* ('skilful with words', 314b). Judas' capacity as a teacher is confirmed even before his conversion, by the Jews' praise of his speaking abilities, and through the resemblance established between him and Paul, whose teaching Judas' father praises, saying: *ond him nænig wæs / ælærenda oðer betera* ('and there was no other law teacher better than him', ll. 505b–506). These are only a few examples; I will not go line by line through all the frequent

allusions to teaching in the narrative as others have commented on this motif previously.[83]

Elene characterizes Christians as eager to share their knowledge, while both implicitly and explicitly criticizing the uselessness of knowledge that is hidden.[84] When Constantine's Christian subjects realize that the time has come to instruct Constantine in their faith, *him wæs leoht sefa, / ferhð gefeonde* ('their souls were light, their hearts rejoiced', ll. 173b–174a). By contrast, Judas and his father possess accurate learning about the events of the crucifixion and their cosmic significance, but they have kept it to themselves. This is expressed several times: Judas' father only imparts his knowledge to Judas on his deathbed *þurh leoðorune* ('through a recitation of confidences', l. 522b), and the other Jews speak of their surprise at what Judas tells them, which suggests that he has not spoken of it before.[85] Judas and his father, who are equipped with the gifts that would make them good teachers, have not shared their knowledge. The fact that they conceal it shows that they do not fully understand it.

In *Elene*, we can see by details of the language that Christianity is conceived as a course of action, not a state of being. Constantine does not just receive baptism, he *fulwihte onfeng ond þæt forð geheold / on his dagana tid* ('received baptism and held it afterwards all his days', ll. 192–193a). He does not just once gladly witness to the Lord's law, but does so *dæges ond nightes* (i.e., repeatedly, l. 198). Likewise when the devil threatens Judas (in a confrontation which has parallels in the baptismal liturgy)[86]

[83] Notably, Ellen F. Wright, 'Cynewulf's *Elene* and the *sinȝal sacu*', *NM* 76 (1975), 583–549 p. 540, and Leneghan, 'Teaching the Teachers'. Catharine A. Regan draws a distinction between the preaching (Kerygma) Elene does to the Jews and the teaching (Didache) she does to Judas: Regan, 'Evangelism', p.260.
[84] The coincidence of the ideas of uselessness and treasure must make modern Anglo-Saxonists (though perhaps not actual Anglo Saxons) recall *Beowulf* l. 2277. Sharma explores this resemblance ('Reburial', p. 287).
[85] Krapp notes that "the MS. reads clearly *leoðo* at the end of a line, followed by *rune* in the next line" and that the first element has attracted many attempts at emendation, as its meaning within this compound is unclear. See Krapp, *ASPR II*, pp. 139–140. Whatever solution is found for *leoðo*, it is at least clear that *rune* suggests a private conversation, since the word is used elsewhere within the poem (ll. 333b, 411a, 1261a) to mean both 'counsel' and 'secret'.
[86] Regan, 'Evangelism', p. 274 and Hill, 'Sapiential Structure', p. 220.

he says that he will raise up another king, who will *forlæteð lare þine / ond manþeawum minum folgaþ* (‘abandon your teaching and follow my habits’, ll. 928–929). Where modern English expresses Christianity as a category (“the king is a Christian”), here it is expressed as an action (“the king follows Judas’ teaching”). The call to teach is all the more important when Christianity is not something people must *be* but something they must continually *do.* The same idea is expressed by Vercelli Homily XI, which cautions against beginning good works only to abandon them: *nales se man se ðe onginneð gode dæde 7 eft forlæteð, ac se þe þurhwuniaþ on godum dædum, se bið hal geworden* (‘not at all is it the man who begins good works and afterwards abandons them, but he who perseveres in good deeds, who will be made whole’, ll. 23–24).[87] Heaven can only be reached through constant striving. *Doing* Christianity means constantly interpreting and reinterpreting its central sign: for oneself in private contemplation and for the benefit of others through teaching and preaching.

Francis Leneghan argues that “*Elene* engages deeply with the principles of homiletics, presenting the teacher as a determined explicator of signs.”[88] His recent reevaluation of the manuscript suggests that an interest in Christian teaching and teachers is in fact the organizing principle behind the collection:

> The Vercelli Book is mostly comprised of homiletic texts, regularly supplemented by hagiographic and devotional narratives on the lives of religious teachers […] It is therefore likely that the collection was made for someone deeply, and perhaps professionally, interested in the art of preaching.[89]

He argues that behind the selection of texts for the Vercelli Book lie the philosophies of Gregory’s *Cura Pastoralis,* which contains “the classic portrait of the life of the ideal pastor, in equal parts teacher and contemplative.”[90] Periods of contemplation and reflection are imperative in the Gregorian mixed life, but so too is the duty to teach; Leneghan sees “distinctly Gregorian” warnings about the seriousness of that duty in the

[87] A Rogation homily. *Vercelli Homilies,* pp. 219–226.
[88] Leneghan, ‘Teaching the Teachers’, p. 646.
[89] Leneghan, ‘Teaching the Teachers’, p. 632.
[90] Leneghan, ‘Teaching the Teachers’, p. 633.

Vercelli Book, and points to a passage in Homily X—*7 þam bið wa æfre geworht þe secgan can 7 nele*, ('and woe will be made forever for him who knows how to speak and will not')—which makes this quite explicit.[91]

Approaching the poem in Gregorian terms as Leneghan does helps to clarify the poem's depiction of conversion. Readings of *Elene* which emphasize the theme of conversion often make little allowance for ways that idea might be useful outside an actual missionary context. Ellen Wright argues that the poem is about the "difficulty of converting" and that it depicts not only Judas' but also Elene's conversion. She says, "it is only the cumulative effect of the evidence which brings her to the point of absolute conviction."[92] It is true that Elene is not a static and unchanging character (a point many critics overlook), but 'conversion' may not be the best term to describe her character arc, since there is no mention of her ever having been anything other than Christian (which, though historically true, could pose problems for reading Elene as a figure of the Church) or even of her having any doubts. Speaking about *Andreas*, Angela Abdou uses the terms *macro-conversion* and *micro-conversion* to distinguish between the "instantaneous moment in which often an entire group converts" and the "individual process of constant re-evaluation and reconversion".[93] It is the latter which Elene undergoes. Elene's journey is not a conversion from non-Christian to Christian identity any more than Cynewulf's own contemplations described in the epilogue are. Ó Carragáin expresses the idea of micro-conversion in the more traditional phrase '*conversio morum*', and argues that this may be the value which the life of St Martin (Homily XVII), *Andreas*, and *Elene* (each of which depicts conversion) had for the Vercelli compiler:

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[91] Translation Leneghan's. 'Teaching the Teachers', p. 639.
[92] Wright, 'Cynewulf's Elene', pp. 539 and 541.
[93] Angela Abdou, 'Speech and Power in Old English Conversion Narratives', *Florilegium* 17 (2000), 195–212, p. 195.

> They provided him with motivation for the conversion of his own moral life […] he would have known that in the Benedictine rule the second of the three solemn vows taken by monks was one of 'conversio morum,' conversion of the moral life to God.[94]

This *conversio morum* is part of the contemplative practices which are the counterpart of good teaching. Cynewulf's solitary withdrawal to ruminate on the Cross is obviously a model for the contemplative life of the Christian teacher, but so too is the process of learning Constantine, Judas, and Elene go through.

Wright asks, "why did Cynewulf emphasize so strongly the difficulty of perceiving truth?" and offers two possible explanations, one being that "Cynewulf was employing a rhetorical strategy for a very definite purpose, the persuasion or conversion of the possibly still unconvinced reader."[95] Intention is difficult to prove, but the poem's sophistication and its emphasis on the call to teach strongly suggest that it is pitched rather at preachers of Christianity than at the doubtful or unconverted. We can at least say this about the poem's reception: its inclusion alongside the homilies in the Vercelli Book suggests that it was appreciated by someone whose occupation was preaching. If we read the text as a meditation on *conversio* rather than conversion, and a quest for a holistic and mature comprehension of Christianity's most significant object rather than for the object itself, the spiritual development of Elene and Constantine makes more sense.

The speed of Constantine's conversion in particular has bothered critics; Sharma for example, writes, "the question might be legitimately posed as to whether his conversion is truly an 'experience' at all."[96] However, it is only Constantine's initial decision which is quick: his spiritual progress towards full understanding is in fact slower than Judas' because he does not possess Judas' learning. Judas takes longer to embrace Christianity, but once he makes that decision, he becomes a spiritual leader in

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[94] Ó Carragáin, 'Vercelli Collector', p. 67.
[95] Wright, 'Cynewulf's *Elene*', p. 547.
[96] Sharma, 'Reburial', p. 281.

short order because he has more substantial knowledge to build upon. Judas is articulate, highly knowledgeable about the Holy Books and Christian history, and respected in his community. He is endowed with talents and circumstances which would make him an effective teacher, as he becomes in the end, once he has taken care of his own soul.

Cynewulf's postscript presents him in the role of an active Christian pursuing deeper knowledge of the Cross, and the poem is how he answers the duty to share his knowledge. It is also how he reminds others of that duty; the poem both argues that the call to teach must be answered and demonstrates the techniques of a teacher. Leneghan says that "Helen is not presented as a model teacher in any literal sense."[97] This is true, but Cynewulf does model the techniques of a good teacher *through* her by the cumulative effect of the speeches of the Roman Christians, Elene, and Judas. The first reference to Christian teaching comes when the Christians of Rome understand by the identification of the cross in Constantine's vision that the time has come when they may reveal to Constantine the essentials of Christian doctrine. In describing this instruction, Cynewulf offers the same instruction to the reader. In this first of many passages in the poem which recite Christian learning (ll.176–188), he offers the absolute fundamentals of Christian belief, covering almost the same ground as the Apostles' Creed except that he omits reference to Mary and explicitly makes reference to the Harrowing of Hell. The speeches Elene makes to the Jews are a very indirect way of finding out the location of the Cross. Wright sees this as a "ritualistic" exchange because "Elene simply chastizes the first two groups, obviously not expecting answers from them."[98] Elene's accusations (ll. 288–410), and also Judas' cosmological monologue on his emergence from the pit (ll. 725–801), might seem like tedious delay of the narrative, but they do serve a purpose in guiding the reader's understanding of the plot and characters: Elene's

[97] Leneghan, 'Teaching the Teachers', p. 647.
[98] Wright, 'Cynewulf's *Elene*', p. 546. Samantha Zacher discusses examples of distinctly "homiletic idioms" in the Vercelli Book poems, including *Elene* in *Preaching the Converted: The Style and Rhetoric of the Vercelli Book Homilies* (Toronto, 2009), pp. 273–4.

speech helps the audience to perceive that the Jews are reasonably well-informed yet still misunderstand, while Judas' speech demonstrates his realization that the Old Law is still relevant and is enriched rather than overthrown by his new faith. And finally, Cynewulf presents eschatological material in his own voice at the end of the poem. The overall effect of these speeches by multiple characters is a lesson in Christian doctrine which begins with the basics, progresses through more complex ideas, and concludes at the end of the poem with a description of the end of time.

The didactic speeches embedded within *Elene* also guide the reader through a spiritual journey resembling those made by the three major characters. Elene's first exchange with the Jews sets out the precedent within Hebrew (Old Testament) Law according to which they should have expected and accepted Christ. Martin Irvine describes her speech as "an exegetical discourse on the narratives in the Hebrew Scriptures, from Isaiah and the Psalms, which the Christians consider prophetic of the life of Christ."[99] This is followed by Judas' long exchange with the Jews in which he recounts his father's teaching sets out the more recent (New Testament) history of Christ and the early church. Taken together, these speeches prompt the reader to recall scriptural learning from the Old and New Testaments about Christ in history. Upon this foundation of knowledge of the past Judas adds the argument for why Christ matters in the present: he describes in detail to the Jews *hu arfæst is ealles wealdend* ('how merciful is the ruler of all', l. 512), for his willingness to forgive each sin. Then, when Judas gives his cosmological speech on emerging from the pit, this turns the thoughts of the reader upward towards the mystical. This anagogical direction of thought is reinforced by the eschatological conclusion in the epilogue. Cynewulf cannot give his readers learning, experience, and desire as he can his characters, but he can guide them on a parallel journey of contemplating past, the present, and future.

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[99] Irvine, *Textual Culture*, p. 443.

Some of Cynewulf's other poems follow a similar pattern. *Christ II* also takes the reader on a course through past, present and future: the poem begins with a meditation on the circumstances of the Advent and Ascension, proceeds to the choice of salvation presently available to men as a result of those past events, and finally underscores the urgency of that choice by turning to eschatological material. *Christ II* encourages the faithful to contemplate both scripture and the gifts of God they have personally received or witnessed as part of the patient vigil which will continue until Judgement Day—so it unites learning, experience, and desire in the pursuit of wisdom. Similarly, Juliana's final address to the people who are about to kill her alludes to the threefold understanding which must be achieved before the wisdom of grace is received. First, she *him frofre gehet* ('promised them grace', l. 639b), and then she says:

> Forþon ic, leof weorud, læran wille,
> æfremmende, þæt ge eower hus
> gefæstnige, þy læs hit ferblædum
> windas toweorpan. Weal sceal þy trumra
> strong wiþstondan storma scurum,
> leahtra gehygdum. Ge mid lufan sibbe,
> leohte geleafan, to þam lifigendan
> stane stið-hydge staþol fæstniað,
> soðe treowe ond sibbe mid eow
> healdað æt heortan, halge rune
> þurh modes myne. Þonne eow miltse giefeð
> fæder ælmihtig. (*Juliana,* ll. 647–658a)
>
> [Therefore, dear people, I wish to teach you, fulfilling the law*,* that you should secure your house, lest the sudden blasts of wind throw it down. A wall must be the firmer, strong to withstand the showers of storm, the thoughts of vices. You, with love of peace, light of belief, secure a foundation upon the resolute living stone, a true pledge of loyalty*,* and hold peace among you at your hearts, holy secrets, through the mind's intent. Then the Father almighty will give you mercy.]

Juliana's speech alludes to the way that the old covenant has been fulfilled in the new, in the word *æfremmende* ('fulfilling the law'). With this reference to the Old Law, her speech begins with its foundation in learning, the past, and memory. She then proceeds to describe the action the faithful must take in the present. (The fact that she speaks these words immediately after miraculously surviving the fire demonstrates the power of Christian belief in the present life.) The speech then leads on through *lufan* ('love) to-

wards the *modes myne* ('mind's intent') which is as close to an equivalent to Augustine's *uoluntate* or *amoris* ('will' or 'love') as one might hope to find in Old English—*myne* is 'purpose', 'desire', or 'love'.[100] Understanding Juliana's speech requires memory, intelligence, and will. For someone to understand her speech, they must have memory to recognize her words as an allusion to scripture, intelligence to understand that she is speaking figuratively, and the will to apply her advice. Only *þonne* ('then') will the Father give them mercy.

THE VERCELLI BOOK POEMS

Not only is *Elene* the longest and therefore the central text among the signed poems of Cynewulf, it is also at the centre of a network of relationships between the poems of the Vercelli Book. It is related to *The Fates of the Apostles* not only by Cynewulf's authorship but also by shared themes (discussed below). *Fates* in turn is related to *Andreas* by the manuscript's employment of it as a sort of coda to the longer poem. *Elene* also connects *The Dream of the Rood* to *Andreas.* There are uncommon words and turns of phrase shared between *Elene* and *The Dream of the Rood*, and others shared between *Elene* and *Andreas*, and also expressions shared uniquely between all three poems. Orchard has argued that Cynewulf drew on *The Dream of the Rood* in composing *Elene*, and that the *Andreas* poet in turn echoed *Elene.*[101]

Both *Elene* and *Fates* are about the spread of the reputation of the Cross. In *Fates* Cynewulf emphasizes the geographical spread of the Apostles eastward into Asia and India, and the repetition of *we [...] gehyrdon* and *hyrde we* ('we have heard', ll. 23a, 63a, 70a) is a reminder of the spread of their reputations westward to England.[102]

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[100] B-T, senses II and III
[101] Andy Orchard, '*The Dream of the Rood:* Cross-References' in *New Readings in the Vercelli Book* ed. Samantha Zacher and Andy Orchard (Toronto, 2009), pp. 225–253, especially pp. 248–253. See below, p. 89 and see also the discussion of the description of the word *untweonde* on p.70 above.
[102] As stated in the introduction, quotations of *The Fates of the Apostles* are from Brooks' edition.

In *Fates* the Apostles make signs of themselves: their deaths as martyrs imitate, and so signify, the death of Christ. They proclaim God's law *fore rincum* ('before men, l. 11a), then suffer public deaths in the presence of disbelieving authority figures: Andrew *for Egias* ('before Ægias', l. 17a), one James *fore Herode* ('before Herod', l. 36a), and the other James *fore sacerdum* ('before the priests', l. 71b). We might compare this to *Andreas*' insistence that Christ performed miracles where *bisceopas ond boceras / ond ealdormenn*, ('bishops and scholars and ealdormen', ll. 606–607a) were present, as well as to the very public acts of display by Beowulf and Judith. Finally, Cynewulf makes a sign of himself by encouraging readers to puzzle out his name, which he has rendered in runes and scrambled among the final lines of the poem.[103]

Of all the poems in the Vercelli Book, *Elene* has the strongest thematic links to *The Dream of the Rood. The Dream of the Rood* has an unusually rich transmission history for on Old English poem, in that fractionally more than one copy is preserved—it is recorded in part, in a Northumbrian dialect, on the Ruthwell Cross, and in full, in a West Saxon dialect, in the Vercelli Book.[104] Leneghan likens the solitary and watchful dreamer of the poem to "the exemplary prophets and teachers of Christian tradition who remain 'watching' in the middle of the night for Christ (Homily II), as well as the other visionaries of the codex, such as Matthew, Andrew, Cynewulf, Martin […] Constantine and Guthlac."[105] There are many basic similarities in the circumstances and content of the visions in *The Dream of the Rood* and *Elene.* The words *gim, swefen,* and *bliðe* are used by both poems in their descriptions of how the Dreamer and Constantine are each alone by night when they see a golden cross covered in gems (*Elene* l. 90b, *DOR* l. 7b)

[103] The description of the apostles as *torhte* ('bright', l. 4a) conveys their holiness (see above, the discussion of *Judith* on p. 32). The lines about Matthew's mission in Ethiopia—d*æges or onwoc, / leaohtes geleafan, land wæs gefælsod* ('the day-spring awoke, bright belief, the land was cleansed', ll. 65b-66)—resonate with *Beowulf,* in which Heorot is *gefælsod* (l. 825a) (and a sign is shown) at dawn (see above, p. 36).
[104] Quotations from *The Dream of the Rood* revised edition*,* ed. Michael Swanton (Exeter, 1987).
[105] Leneghan, 'Teaching the Teachers', p. 644.

in a dream (*Elene* l. 71b, *DOR* l. 1a), which ultimately makes them happy (*Elene* l. 96b, *DOR* l. 122b) once the full message has been delivered. Cynewulf's description of his own sinful state before 'wisdom revealed' to him a deeper understanding of the Cross is similar to the Dreamer's assessment of himself: Cynewulf says that *ic was weorcum fah / synnum asæled sorgum gewæled* ('I was stained by my works, bound by sins, afflicted by sorrows', ll. 1242b–1243) while the Dreamer says that he was *synnum fah* ('stained by sins', l. 13b) and *mid sorgum gedrefed* ('disturbed by sorrows', l. 20b). Both poems explore ideas of speaking and teaching, themes which Leneghan has demonstrated were of particular interest to the Vercelli Book compiler. Both poets use the word *reordber-end* ironically of people who are not speaking—the *Rood* poet uses the word of men who are sleeping, while Cynewulf uses it of the men who must listen as their words and deeds are recounted to them on Judgement Day (l. 1282a).[106] In *Dream of the Rood,* as in *Elene,* the gift of knowledge of the Cross is a conditional one which comes with the obligation to teach: *nu ðu miht gehyran, hæleð min se leofa* ('now you might hear, my beloved man', l. 78) becomes *nu ic þe hate, hæleð min se leofa, / þæt ðu þas gesyhðe secge mannum* ('now I command you, my beloved man, that you speak of this sight to men', ll. 95–96). The poem is itself a fulfilment of the command to teach, just as *Elene* is.

Such common interests and imagery, along with the fact that they were record-ed in the same manuscript, are sufficient to invite a comparison of the depictions of the process of knowing the Cross in these two poems. The relationship between the poems may be even more immediate than that, however—as Orchard has pointed out, the ex-pression *nu ðu miht gehyran, hæleð min se leofa* [alternatively, in *Andreas: hyse leofes-ta*] is unique to the Vercelli Book, and shared between *The Dream of the Rood, Elene,*

[106] Martin Irvine suggests that "the term 'reordberend' has the sense of 'language-user-as-interpreter' in the sense suggested by Augustine in his discussion of language in *De ordine.*" Irvine, *Textual Culture*, p. 447.

and *Andreas*.[107] In each poem, the phrase is uttered in a context which links the privilege of witnessing or hearing of Christ's death or miracles to the responsibility of acting in response to that knowledge. In *Elene*, these are words spoken by Judas' father, which he repeats at a time when he is still reluctant to take up his destined role as Christian teacher (l. 511). Andreas speaks these words to the disguised Christ at both the beginning and end of his dialogue with the ship's Captain (ll. 595 and 811), in which he demonstrates his ability to preach, but also his persistent inability to correctly interpret the situation as a result of his initial reluctance to go and teach the Mermedonians.

Although the *Rood* poet more frequently plays with dual structures than tripartite ones, *The Dream of the Rood* shares with *Elene* some three-part structures.[108] Like *Elene* it makes use of the structure of past-present-future, though this is expressed in the content of the Rood's exposition rather than the Dreamer's experience of this knowledge. Leneghan alludes to this structure when commenting on the exegetical progression of *The Dream of the Rood*:

> In Gregorian terms, together with the talking Cross, the dreamer lays the historical foundations for his exegesis (that Christ died on the Cross), before proceeding to the allegorical level (that Christ died for our sins) and finally the moral level (that through suffering with Christ and penance we can bring about our salvation).[109]

For all its complexity of wordplay and allusion, the Cross's speech to the Dreamer has overall a very simple outline—it describes first past, then present, then future. This progression is not incidental, but a fundamental structural principle of the poem. I follow Carol Braun Pasternack's division of *The Dream of the Rood* into five sections with distinct stylistic features.[110] The Cross's speech constitutes the second and third sec-

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[107] See Orchard, 'Cross-References' pp. 248–253 and also below, on p. 89.
[108] These dual structures include oppositional pairs (e.g., the heavenly and the fallen in l. 13 and the fear and hope at Judgement Day in ll. 110–119) and typological and liturgical pairs (e.g., Crucifixion and Annunciation, Advent and Passion, in ll. 90–94). For more on the latter, see Éamonn Ó Carragáin, 'Vision transfigured into prayer: the Crucifixion narrative in *The Dream of the Rood*' in *Ritual and Rood* (Toronto, 2005), pp. 308–338.
[109] Leneghan, 'Teaching the Teachers', p. 645.
[110] Carol Braun Pasternack, 'Stylistic Disjunctions in *The Dream of the Rood*' in *Old English Literature: Critical Essays* ed. R. M. Liuzza (Yale, 2002), pp. 404–424.

tions of the poem, which Pasternack, following others, describes as a *narratio* and accompanying *explanatio*. The *narratio* is all about the past: what happened *geara iu* ('formerly of old', l. 28a). It is the Rood's eyewitness account of its own experience, from the time it was a tree hewn down at the edge of the wood, up to the Invention of the Cross. The Invention concludes that section of the poem; it also marks the end of the past, and the beginning of the present of Christendom. The third section of the poem can be divided in terms of its subject matter into 3a and 3b, which begin respectively at the key lines *nu ðu miht gehyran…* (l. 78) and *nu ic þe hate…* (l. 95) (quoted fully above). The first half of this homiletic section is all about the effect of the passion on the present: the word *nu* appears three times in the first seven lines. The second half—part 3b—is all about the future. The Cross instructs the Dreamer to preach his dream to men, and then for the rest of the section (ll. 103b–121) explains the urgency of such instruction through a detailed description of mankind's fate at the second coming.

The poet also plays with past, present, and future in more subtle ways at various points in the poem, such as in the image of the Cross which is *on lyft* ('in the air', l. 5a) and *mid wætan bestemed* ('wet with moisture', l. 22a). This is a vision of the Cross in the present which alludes to its bloody past, but also to the future, since *dryhtnes rod blode flowende betweox wolcnum* ('the Lord's Rood flowing with blood among the clouds,' ll. 7–8) is, as Vercelli Homily II says, a sign of Judgement Day. We also see the interactions of past, present, and future when the Cross transitions from speaking about the present to warning about Doomsday:

> Nu ic þe hate, hæleð min se leofa,
> þæt ðu þas gesyhðe secge mannum,
> onwreoh wordum þæt hit is wuldres beam,
> se ðe ælmihtig God on þrowode
> for mancynnes manegum synnum
> ond Adomes ealdgewyrhtum.
> Deað he þær byrigde; hwæðere eft dryhten aras
> mid his miclan mihte mannum to helpe.
> He ða on heofenas astag. Hider eft fundaþ
> on þysne middangeard mancynn secan
> on domdæge. (*Dream of the Rood,* ll. 95–105a)

> [Now I command you my dear man that you speak of this sight to men, disclose with words that it is the tree of glory on which Almighty God suffered for mankind's manifold sins and Adam's ancient works. Death he there tasted; nevertheless the Lord rose afterwards with his great might as a help to mankind. He then ascended to heaven. Hither he will afterwards hasten, to this middle earth, to seek mankind on Doomsday.]

Lines 99 and 100 link mankind's sins, which continue in the present, to man's first sin, as joint causes of the Crucifixion. The wordplay of line 101 (explained in detail by Susan Irvine) links the Fall with the Crucifixion.[111] Line 103 then contrasts the Ascension with the second coming—*heofon* with *hider*. By the time the word *mancynn* is repeated in line 104, the narrative has moved from the present to Old Testament history to New Testament history to Doomsday, with *mancynnes manegum synnum* the driving cause behind it all.

The experience of knowing the Cross in *The Dream of the Rood* has three parts, as it does in *Elene.* The Dreamer's encounter with the Cross begins with sensory experience, progresses to historical education, and concludes with acceptance of the sign's moral and eschatological significance. The first section (again following Pasternack's divisions) consists of the Dreamer's report of the vision as a sensory experience. The sentence structure in this section is predominantly subject-verb-object, and in the few instances of deviation, Pasternack notes, "the verb is the first word in the sentence and it expresses perception: 'þuhte me þæt ic gesawe' (4a), 'beheoldon' (9b) and 'geseah ic' (14 and 21b)."[112] The second and third sections contain the Rood's speech to the Dreamer, which begins with information about the past and progresses to formal instruction about the significance of the Cross. Like *Elene, The Dream of the Rood* concludes with a personal comment by the narrator—this fills the fourth and fifth sections of the poem. Both the Dreamer and Cynewulf begin their comments by relating a personal response to their revelation which contains thoughts about their own mortality:

[111] Susan Irvine, 'Adam or Christ? A Pronominal Pun in *The Dream of the Rood*', *Review of English Studies* 48:192 (1997), 433–447.
[112] Pasternack, 'Stylistic Disjunctions', p. 410.

Cynewulf speaks of his old age, and the Dreamer of departed friends. The personal leads on to the doctrinal and both describe a fiery and triumphant mass emigration to the Heavenly Kingdom: Cynewulf speaks of Judgement Day, while the Dreamer speaks of a typologically related episode, the Harrowing of Hell. The personal journey of solitary revelation, personal response, and doctrinal response is common to both narrators.

The Dreamer of *The Dream of the Rood* clearly applies his memory, intelligence, and will to the task of understanding the Cross in the past, present, and future. However, the *Rood* poet does not share Cynewulf's interest in the trinities of Old Testament, New Testament, and Heavenly Kingdom, or Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. *The Dream of the Rood* does not interrogate ideas of text and memory in the way *Elene* does—there is scarcely any mention of the Old Testament. There is also no invocation of the Holy Ghost as a giver of wisdom. In fact, there is no mention of the Holy Ghost anywhere in the poem (the closest are some plural *halige gastas* in l. 11b, and a reference to the Cross itself as a messenger—*engel*—as the Rood is called in l. 9b). The *Rood* poet is interested in the nature of Christ, and the resonances of his nature in the Rood and in mankind. The poet is not interested in the Trinity, except in so far as it informs the exploration of the nature of Christ.[113] The absence of these motifs in *The Dream of the Rood* can help us perceive the extent of their function in *Elene:* Cynewulf's depiction of coming to know the Cross incorporates an exploration of the Trinity through the relationships among the prophecies dictated by God the Father in the Old Testament, the events lived by Christ in the New Testament, and the interventions of the Holy Ghost in the lives of his characters. Whereas in *The Dream of the Rood,* knowledge of the nature of the Cross is a route to Christ, in *Elene* the structure of the Trinity shapes the nature of knowledge of the Cross. *The Dream of the Rood* portrays a

[113] Ó Carragáin explains the background of theological controversies which led the Ruthwell version of the poem to refer to Christ as "Almighty God" and the Vercelli version to clarify that it is God the Son in question. See *Ritual and Rood* p. 80 and p. 262.

character learning about a sign's referent through the sign; *Elene* portrays characters who learn about a sign through its referents.

CONCLUSIONS

In *Elene*, nearly everything that is called a *tacen* or a *beacen* is a means of knowing Christ—the words are applied to texts, to miracles, and to the Cross. Thus the poem's depiction of its characters' struggles to come to know Christ are also depictions of how people relate to signs.

Far from being a poem that can only be understood allegorically, *Elene* is invested in depicting the psychology attaining a mature understanding of the Cross through the faculties of memory, intelligence, and will. Similar ideas are present in Cynewulf's other poems, but they are most fully developed in *Elene.* Whether one begins to seek the grace of affective wisdom as a heathen like Constantine, a Jew like Judas, or a Christian like Cynewulf, the process requires threefold understanding of the Cross' role in the past, its power in the present, and its salvific and eschatological implications for the future. These modes of understanding are not hierarchical or oppositional: they can be achieved in any order, and, as in the homiletic metaphor of society as a stool held up by the legs of *laboratores, bellatores, oratores*, they are mutually dependent upon each other.[114] As the characters approach the Cross, so we should approach the poem—seeing beyond the literal meaning, but not discounting it.

The wisdom each character achieves is sapiential in that it involves not only the rational but the affective faculties. Judas' internment in the pit also illustrates how the body participates with the mind in processes of interpretation—a theme we will see again in *Daniel* in Chapter 4, and which particularly links *Elene* to *Andreas,* which is

[114] Used, for example by Ælfric in the 'Libellus', *Old English Heptateuch,* p. 228. See also Thomas D. Hill, 'A Riddle on the Three Orders in the *Collectanea Pseudo-Bedae*?', *Philological Quarterly* 80:3 (2001), 205–212.

the subject of the next chapter. The outline of Judas' experience—going away out of sight in a pit and then returning a better interpreter, ready to show signs—aligns him with Beowulf and Judith. However, Beowulf and Judith do not hesitate. Judas does, and so does Andreas. Judas and Andreas must suffer alone before coming into their own as explicators of signs.

Another thing which connects the Vercelli Book poems is their exploration of the ways that a sign can establish or alter a covenant-relationship. The events of the Crucifixion recounted by the speaking *beacen* (l. 6b) in *The Dream of the Rood* alter the terms of the covenant God had with the Jews. While the process of learning Judas undergoes in *Elene* is not exclusively allegorical in the sense of being devoid of psychological realism, he does *also* represents the Jews—so in grappling with the idea of the Cross he is also grappling with the idea that a sign can alter a covenant. The Apostles in *The Fates of the Apostles* die in the service of spreading the message of *Dryhtnes æ* ('the law of the Lord', l. 10a) because the consequence of the Cross is that that covenant is now open to anyone who will follow God's law. As I will discuss in the next chapter, *Andreas* also explores this idea of a sign altering a covenant, not only through Andreas' lengthy descriptions of the Jews, or the Mermedonians' allegorical relationship to them, but more pervasively through the careful deployment and accumulation of the lexis of covenant in connection with the lexis of signs. Thus the Vercelli Book poems work in concert, and complement one another's explorations of the themes of signification and interpretation.

CHAPTER 3: *ANDREAS*

Andreas, like *Elene*, has been the subject of many convincing typological readings, beginning with T.D. Hill's 1969 article 'Figural Narrative in *Andreas*'.[1] The list is long, but the emphasis on typology is justified; Daniel Anlezark describes the *Andreas* poet as "almost obsessed by it."[2] The hermeneutic demands the poet makes of the reader are intricately related to the interpretation performed by the characters within the poem. Through the interpretive mistakes of the characters, and the motif of blindness running through the poem, the poet conveys a tropological or moral lesson on the limits of perception and the importance of looking beyond what one thinks one sees. The application of this lesson back onto the text makes a reader more receptive to its typological resonances. Closer typological reading then reinforces the blindness motif. Thus a feedback loop is established.

Andreas and *Beowulf* share many parallels of diction, of which the crux *ealuscerwen/meoduscerwen* (*Beowulf* l. 769a and *Andreas* 1526b) has attracted the most crit-

[1] These include: Thomas D. Hill, 'Figural Narrative in *Andreas*: The Conversion of the Mermedonians', *NM* 70 (1969), 261–272; Joseph Trahern, 'Joshua and Tobias in the Old English Andreas', *Studia Neophilologica* 42:2 (1970), 330–332; Penn R. Szittya, 'The Living Stone and the Patriarchs: Typological Imagery in Andreas, lines 706– 810', *JEGP* 72 (1973), 167–74; John Casteen, '*Andreas* : Mermedonian Cannibalism and Figural Narration', *NM* 75 (1974), 74–78; Constance B. Hieatt, 'The Harrowing of Mermedonia: Typological Patterns in the Old English "Andreas" ', *NM* 77 (1976), 49–62; Marie Michelle Walsh, 'The Baptismal Flood in the OE "Andreas" Liturgical and Typological Depths', *Traditio* 33 (1977), 137–158; James W. Earl, 'The Typological Structure of *Andreas*' in *Old English Literature in Context*, ed. John D. Niles (Cambridge, 1980), pp. 66–89; Lisa J. Kiser, '*Andreas* and the *Lifes Weg*: Convention and Innovation in Old English Metaphor', *NM* 85 (1984), 65–75; Frederick M. Biggs, 'The Passion of Andreas: *Andreas* 1398–1491', *Studies in Philology* 85 (1988), 413–427; Robert Boenig, *Saint and Hero: Andreas and Medieval Doctrine* (Lewisburg, 1991); Daniel Anlezark, *Water and Fire: The Myth of the Flood in Anglo-Saxon England* (Manchester, 2006), pp. 210–240 and 346–367; Shannon Godlove, 'Bodies as Borders: Cannibalism and Conversion in the Old English *Andreas*', *Studies in Philology* 106:2 (2009), 137–160; Alexandra Bolintineanu, 'The Land of Mermedonia in the Old English *Andreas*', *Neophilologus* 93 (2009), 149–164.

[2] Anlezark, *Water and Fire*, p. 351

ical attention.[3] More generally, criticism on the poems' parallels of diction, phrasing, and theme is moving away from the mid-twentieth century idea that these are the accidents of oral-formulaic composition towards a consensus that they are deliberate borrowings. The 1997 edition of *A Beowulf Handbook* asserts that studies of the relationship between the two poems are inconclusive, but Orchard's *Critical Companion* to *Beowulf*, published in 2003, reviews the key developments in the debate from Brooks' edition of *Andreas* onwards, and argues that given their extent and nature, the parallels between *Beowulf* and *Andreas* "link these two poems perhaps more closely than any others in the extant corpus".[4] Anlezark has subsequently elucidated the function and effect of these parallels through reference to the biblical legend of the Flood.[5]

Andreas also has close links to the poems of Cynewulf, as discussed in the previous chapter. In terms of their ideas about signs and interpretation, *Elene* and *Andreas* share the correlation of reluctance with poor interpretation, an insistence on reading beyond the literal, and—as I will discuss below—an association of the idea of signs with the idea of covenants which is expressed, among other ways, through the rare word *friþleas*.

I will also be considering some of *Andreas*' similarities to *Christ III,* the final instalment in the sequence of poems about Christ at the start of the Exeter Book. Critics have in the past connected *Andreas* and *Christ III* as members of the 'Cynewulf Group', but the actual links between *Christ III* and the poems of the Vercelli Book are indirect and uncertain. Christopher Chase asserts that *Christ III* is related to *The Dream of the Rood* in that they have similar motifs and structures, which derive from the same theo-

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[3] See, for example, R.M. Lumiansky, 'The Contexts of O.E. "Ealuscerwen" and "Meoduscerwen"', *JEGP* 48:1 (1949), 116–126; F. J. Heinemann, '*Ealuscerwen-Meoduscerwen*, the Cup of Death, and *Baldrs Draumar*', *Studia Neophilologica* 55 (1983), 3–10; Hugh Magennis, 'The Cup as Symbol and Metaphor in Old English Literature', *Speculum* 60 (1985), 517–536; J. Rowland, 'OE *Ealuscerwen/Meoduscerwen* and the Concept of "Paying for Mead"', *Leeds Studies in English* 21 (1990), 1–12; Stephen O. Glosecki, '*Beowulf* 769: Grendel's ale-share', *English Language Notes* 25:1 (1987), 1–9.

[4] Theodore M. Anderson, 'Sources and Analogues', *A Beowulf Handbook* ed. Robert E. Bjork and John D. Niles (Exeter, 1997), pp. 125–148, p. 144. Orchard, *Critical Companion* pp. 163–166, esp. p. 165.

[5] Anlezark, *Water and Fire, pp.* 347–359.

logical background.[6] There are critics who believe that Cynewulf's *Christ II* was composed expressly to connect *Christ I* to *Christ III*,[7] which would make the closest link between *Christ III* and *Andreas* the fact that Cynewulf read *Christ III* and the *Andreas* poet read at least one poem by Cynewulf (*Elene*).[8] These are tenuous connections. What is certain is that *Christ III* and *Andreas* deal with similar themes and imagery: *Christ III* treats End Times explicitly as its main subject-matter, while *Andreas* incorporates eschatological subtext into its narrative. Both poems share an interest in seeing and perception. In this area in particular, the poems have interesting parallels of diction. The word *modblind* ('spiritually blind') appears only in *Andreas, Christ III,* and *Elene,* and the phrase *open, orgete* ('openly, clearly') appears only in *Andreas* and *Christ III*. Both poems depict architecture that reads better than men, and both use this idea to challenge readers to reconsider whether they are in fact good interpreters of texts, and to become better interpreters as a result of this reflection.

Andreas, like *Elene,* is found in the Vercelli Book. A single definite source text for *Andreas* has not been identified, but the major analogues are the Greek *Praxeis*, the Latin *Casanatensis* and the Old English Blickling Homily 19.[9] One of the clearest ways to see how the poet is shaping the narrative to bring out particular themes is by comparing it to these analogues, so I will refer to them throughout the chapter.

This chapter begins with a survey of the poem's lexis of signs, followed by a survey of its lexis of covenant. When the poem uses words like *tacen* and *beacen* it is

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[6] Christopher L. Chase, '"Christ III," "The Dream of the Rood," and Early Christian Passion Piety' *Viator* 11 (1980) pp. 11-33.

[7] Notably Colin Chase, 'God's Presence through Grace as the Theme of Cynewulf's *Christ II* and the Relation of this Theme to *Christ I* and *Christ III*' *Anglo-Saxon England* 3 (1974), 87–101. Roy Liuzza also finds this scenario plausible, although his larger point is that likely scribal alterations to poems in the *Exeter Book* work to create unity between adjacent texts. Roy M. Liuzza, 'The Old English *Christ* and *Guthlac* Texts, Manuscripts, and Critics', *Review of English Studies* 41:161 (1990), 1–11.

[8] See Orchard, 'Cross-References'.

[9] All three, along with the Bonnet Fragment, are translated by Robert Boenig in *The Acts of Andrew in the Country of the Cannibals: translations from the Greek, Latin, and Old English* (London, 1991). Other analogues are discussed in a doctoral dissertation by Bill Friesen: 'Visions and Revisions: The Sources and Analogues of the Old English *Andreas*' (Doctoral Dissertation, University of Toronto 2009), <http://hdl.handle.net/1807/16759>.

usually with reference to events (such as miracles) rather than objects, but these signs often act upon a body or bodies. The association of *tacen* with 'covenant' words such as *treow* and *friþ* in the poem is the result of a pervasive implied association of God's covenant with visible signs (an idea explored more fully in the following chapter). This relates to the wider exploration of interpretation in the narrative, since most of the interpretive mistakes characters make in the poem are *about* patronage relationships, and the poor interpretive ability that leads them to make such mistakes is *caused by* flawed patronage relationships. Following the survey of the lexis of signs and covenant, I place the poem's association of inaction with poor understanding in the context of the tradition of thought about sloth and *acedia*, and also in the context of the values *Andreas* shares with *Beowulf*. Finally, I propose that the dialogue between Andreas and the ship's Captain alludes to Psalm 134, and that this allusion illustrates the way in which the poem encourages a certain interpretive approach.

My reading of the poem is indebted to the tradition of typological scholarship, but what I hope to stress is the interdependence of the literal, typological, and tropological messages of the poem, and particularly to highlight how the poem's tropological messages can be re-applied to the poem. Alvin A. Lee describes tropological reading as:

> The phase or level of understanding in which listeners or readers recognize that they are being addressed and that an active response is being elicited from them. Allegory tells what is to be believed as truth, the *quid credas*. Tropology is concerned with the *quid agas*, what is to be done.[10]

To read tropologically is to seek information and lessons in the text that are applicable to the present life. In the case of *Andreas,* one of the things "to be done" is to read well: to be humbly receptive to and actively seek out the spiritual meaning of texts and events, including this text.

[10] Alvin A. Lee, *Gold-Hall and Earth-Dragon: Beowulf as Metaphor* (Toronto, 1998), p. 191.

SIGNS

Most of the instances of the words *beacen*, *tacen*, and *wundor* ('beacon', 'sign', and 'wonder') in *Andreas* refer to miracles, which is not unusual. There are also some other conventional applications of the terms, as in line 242a, where the sun is called *beacna beorhtost* ('brightest of beacons').[11] The use of *tacen* in line 29b is more unusual—here it is modified by the adjective *freoðoleas*. This is a rare word, and one which links *Andreas* to *Elene*—outside the Laws of Cnut, it only appears in these two texts. The *DOE* classes the legal meaning of *friþ-lēas* ("outlawed"), as a sub-sense of the sense in which it is used in *Elene* ("without security or protection") but lists the occurrence in *Andreas* as a separate sense, ("hostile"). This line is discussed below in the context of the poet's use of the term *friþ*, where I argue that the use of the word in *Andreas* is actually more similar to that in *Elene* than the *DOE* suggests. Another unconventional use of *tacen* is in the compound *weatacen* (l. 1119a), which refers to the call that goes out to the Mermedonians, communicating the decision to murder the youth whose father lost in the lottery. It is unusual for being an audible sign—*beacen* and *tacen* are rarely applied to strictly auditory signals.[12] The word *beacen* is used in a similar way in l. 1201a, where it refers to the call that goes out for the rest of the Mermedonians to join in the attempted murder of Andreas. The related word *bicnung* means a "mute signal" or "gesture"; the *beacen* of the Mermedonians is not a *mute* gesture, but like a *bicnung* may be wordless—inarticulate. This tendency to communicate by signs rather than statements can be seen as an aspect of "the Mermedonians' lack of intelligent speech prior to their conversion" which has been discussed recently by Shannon Godlove.[13]

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[11] As stated in the introduction, quotations of *Andreas* are from *Andreas and The Fates of the Apostles* ed. Kenneth R. Brooks (Oxford, 1961).
[12] One other example is *Exodus* l. 219b, where *beacen* is used of trumpet-calls.
[13] Godlove, 'Bodies as Borders', p. 147. Cf. the wordless noise of the Assyrians outside Holofernes' tent—see above, p. 40.

Andreas' story about the speaking statue encapsulates many of the poem's concerns about interpretation, and illustrates the poet's thinking on signs and signification, particularly the relationship between 'signs' in the sense of anything with a referent beyond itself, and 'miracles'. This episode, in which Christ commands a statue of a Seraph or Cherub to come to life and speak (ll. 706–810), is one of two episodes in which stone architecture is called upon to express its understanding. (In the second, Andreas calls upon a marble column to remember that God created and wrote his laws upon stone, and to show its understanding by releasing a deluge—ll. 1491–1521.) By the definitions of patristic and modern semioticians, a statue depicting an angel is certainly a sign. Saussure might say it is an icon, Augustine that it points to something beyond itself. However, in Andreas, the words *tacen* and *beacen* tend to be used of miracles and messages that are part of a distinct, singular act of communication (the one exception is the *freoðoleas tacen*). Unsurprisingly then, the *Andreas* poet never calls the statue itself a sign. Instead, it is called a 'likeness'. The poet seems to be quite certain in the choice of this term, as it is used three times in short succession (*anlicnesse*, l. 713a, *anlicnes*, l. 717a and *onlicnes*, l. 731a).

To the poet, the statue is not a sign, but its actions are. The fact that it comes to life is called a *tacen* (l. 711a), a *beacen* (l.729b), and a *wundor* (l. 730a). It is also said that the statue *septe sacerdas sweotolum tacnum* ('instructed the priests with clear signs' l. 742). The line has attracted some attempts at emendation, but Brooks points to a parallel construction in line 530a of *Elene*, which reads *septe soðcwidum*, ('instructed with true words').[14] The context in *Elene* is similar to that in Andreas—in *Andreas* the construction appears in an account of how Christ attempted to instruct the Jews, who refused to believe, and in *Elene* it appears in Judas' account of how his father instructed him about Christ, and differentiated himself from the Jews who perpetrated the Cruci-

[14] Brooks, *Andreas*, p. 87.

fixion. At this point in *Andreas*, it is unclear precisely what the signs are that the statue is instructing the priests with. The phrase could mean that the statue performed additional miracles in order to instruct the priests, or that it instructed them 'about' clear signs (i.e., the miracles and other evidence of Christ's divinity—cf. the use of *tacen* to refer to scripture in *Elene*), or even that it instructed them, and that in itself was miraculous.[15]

Things to which the word *tacen* is applied in the poem are usually events or habits rather than objects or images, yet those events tend to result in some bodily manifestation or consequences. The *weatacen* discussed above calls for an action which will be performed on the youth's body. In line 88b, *tacen* refers to the bright light which appears in Matthew's cell; what makes this light a *tacen* is the fact that it is a message promising Matthew's bodily rescue (so it relates to covenant and protection), and that Matthew seems to perceive it despite having been blinded (so it is miraculous). In line 711a, where Andreas is speaking about Christ's life and teaching, he uses the plural *tacna* to refer to the miracles Christ performs before the priests. The specific Gospel miracles Andreas has identified previous to this point have all been ones that relate to the body: healing (especially of the senses), resurrecting, and feeding (miracles which precisely prefigure Andreas' own actions in Mermedonia). The reference to miracles in line 711 may include these ones mentioned in the lines above, and it certainly refers forward to the miracle by which a statue which has the 'likeness' of an angel is granted the bodily powers of speech and movement. Finally, in line 1338b, the word *tacen* refers to an image of the cross which miraculously appears on Andreas' face, protecting him from the demons. In this case, the words *Cristes rode* ('Christ's cross', l. 1337b) refer to sign of the cross, while *tacen* refers to the fact of its miraculous appearance, inscribed upon Andreas' body.

[15] See p. 52 in the previous chapter. See also the discussion of ll. 445-446a of *Daniel* below on p. 203.

The close relationship signs and miracles have with the body in *Andreas* follows from the more general notion that the state of one's relationship to God is inscribed on the body. We see it in *Juliana*, for example, where both Juliana's father and Eleusius attempt to persuade her by praising her brightness, unaware of the origin and significance of her radiance. Eleusis even praises her grace (*giefe*, l. 168a), oblivious to the irony of his choice of terms. Juliana's appearance is emblematic of her inner state, and her inner state can be read on her body: she is devoid of vices and without guilts (*leahtra lease*, l. 583a; *butan scyldum*, l. 584a) and so she emerges from the fire with *ungewemde wlite* ('uninjured form' or 'immaculate beauty', l. 590a). The literal and figural are united in the body of the saint.

Christ III explores the reading of bodies more explicitly than *Andreas* does, using similar language of signs and seeing. The objects of the verb *sceawian* in *Christ III* are nearly all bodily signs—the bright body of Christ (l. 914a), the wounds of Christ (l. 1206b) (also referred to as *tacen* […] *orgeatu on godum*—'signs plainly manifest upon God', ll. 1214b–1215a), and the blemishes of guilt the Devil sees on the damned (l. 1276b).[16] The *hapax legomenon facentacen* (which bears some semantic and aural resemblance to *Andreas*' *freoðoleas tacen*, discussed below) refers to the sin written upon the face of the damned man: *hafað werges bleo / facentacen feores* ('he has a criminal's countenance, the sign of his fault/deceit', ll. 1564b–1565a).[17] *Christ III* also says that there will be *þreo tacen somod* ('three signs together', l. 1235b) which identify the saved—the first relates to their appearance and the other two to what they are able to perceive.[18] The saved are bright (four lines, ll. 1237–1241, are devoted to their brightness), they perceive themselves to be in heaven, and they perceive the suffering of the

[16] The exception—the object of *sceawian* that is not bodily—is the temple curtain in line 1136b, which is discussed further below.
[17] As stated in the introduction, quotations of *Christ III* are from *The Christ of Cynewulf* ed. Albert S. Cook (Boston, 1909).
[18] See Frederick M. Biggs, *The Sources of Christ III: A Revision of Cook's Notes* in the *Old English Newsletter* (1986), pp. 26–27.

damned. The subsequent description of the three features of the damned similarly emphasizes that on Doomsday everything is laid plain. This is contrasted with the present, in which all men must *gleawlice þurhseon* ('shrewdly look through', l. 1327b) themselves with their *heortan eagum* ('heart's eyes', l. 1328b). This inner sight is contrasted with the limitations of what can be perceived by the *heafodgimmum* ('jewels of the head', l. 1330a)—a rare kenning used for eyes which is also used in *Andreas* (l. 31b).

The remaining instance of *tacen* in *Andreas* is in the half-line *treowe tacen*, which appears in God's reprimand for Andreas' slowness to obey His command to go to Mermedonia:

> Ne meaht ðu þæs siðfætes   sæne weorðan,
> ne on gewitte to wac,   gif ðu wel þencest
> wið þinne waldend   wære gehealdan,
> treowe tacen.   (*Andreas,* ll. 211–214a)
>
> [You may not be slow about this journey, nor too weak of intellect, if you think to hold a covenant well with your Lord, a token of loyalty.]

Treowe tacen appears in apposition with *wære* (covenant) and refers to God's promise to protect Andreas. It is not immediately clear (to Andreas or the reader) that this promise is visible upon Andreas' body, but it eventually becomes visible in the fact that no degree of torture can permanently damage a single *loc of heafde* ('hair of [his] head', l. 1472b). Here, as elsewhere in the poem, the word *wær* (covenant/protection) refers to a reciprocal relationship, in which Andreas is obliged to *gehealdan* ('hold') his covenant *wið* ('with') God, not merely receive it from Him. A *treow tacen* is a 'token of loyalty/good faith' or more precisely, 'a sign that confirms the mutual loyalty inherent in our covenant relationship'. As I will discuss below in Chapter 4, in *Genesis B* and the *Vatican Genesis* there is a consistent collocation of *treow* and *tacen*. In those poems, *treow* is never an adjective modifying *tacen*, but a noun meaning 'good faith' or 'protection'; it is the thing which the *tacen* proves, or the reason a *tacen* is offered. It seems that although *treow* refers to the abstract notion of a covenant, it carries with it a (possibly anachronistic, and certainly poetic) subaudition of the visual representation of that ab-

stract notion, which is reinforced by collocation with *tacen*. We see something similar in the use of the word *friþ*, discussed below.

PATRONAGE

Much of the interpretation that goes on in the poem is about proving identity, and identity is nearly always defined in terms of a person's relationship to a lord, or the Lord. The Mermedonians at first cannot see Andreas at all, then see him but do not understand who he is, and finally understand that he is an apostle of God. The Mermedonians themselves are designated thegns of the devil at the start of the poem (l. 43b),[19] and later when they convert, the way they phrase their new belief is in terms of God's lordship and Andreas' relationship to Him. They declare that they can see clearly that God rules, and that Andreas is His messenger (ll. 1601–1606).

As Edward Irving observes in his reading of *Andreas*, "the theme of recognition centres very clearly on Jesus' special identity as King's Son (*wealdendes bearn,* 576b; *godbearn on grundum,* 640a) and his royal (*cynerof,* 585a) nature."[20] Similarly, the Jews who do not acknowledge Christ misconstrue his identity in terms of his relationships. The elder priest who tells the apostles they are mistaken in following Christ frames Christ's identity in terms of his immediate family, not his ancestors and true Father. Christ does not command the seraph statue simply to prove that he is powerful, but more specifically to prove *hwæt min æðelo sien* ('what my lineage may be', l. 734b). Neither the Latin nor the Greek analogue contains this detail; in both the statue's task is to show, simply, whether Christ is God or man.[21]

Significantly, the statue who bears this message is one of the Seraphim, who are described in terms of their role of praising God for his *mundbyrd* (l. 724a). The

[19] See Brooks *Andreas*, p. 64 for an assessment of the difficulties of the manuscript here.
[20] Edward B. Irving, 'A Reading of *Andreas*: the Poem as Poem', *ASE* 12 (1983), 215–237, p. 225.
[21] For this scene in the Greek and Latin versions, see pp. 8, 38.

words *mundbyrd, sib, wær,* and *friþ* are especially important to the poet's exploration of who is or is not protected and favoured.

Mundbyrd

When the Mermedonians are baptized, they enter into God's *mundbyrd* (l. 1632a)—his patronage or protection. This was originally a legal term. David Day explains that "*Mund* was an ancient concept in Germanic law and referred essentially to a householder's power of possession and protection over both the persons of the household and its physical space" and that "disturbances within the precinct of the house required compensation not only to the party directly injured but to the householder as well."[22] As Carole Hough elaborates, "the value of the *mund* depends on the rank of the person entitled to receive compensation, not on the value of property or rank of dependants under that person's protection."[23] The related term *mundbyrd* is frequently used in descriptions of God's protection, in both homilies and poetry. In *Andreas,* as well as being used at the baptism of the Mermedonians, it is used in Andreas' description of the Seraphim in heaven who praise God's *mundbyrd* (l. 724a) and again when God demonstrates to Andreas that despite the torture he has endured, he is uninjured (l. 1433a).

Sib

Matthew is an exile, deprived of his homeland (*eðelleassum*, l. 74b), but is not lordless—he faithfully promises to endure whatever his *drihten* ('lord' l. 73b) decrees for him in his exile. For this loyalty, God promises Matthew *sybbe* (l. 98a). The poet takes

[22] David Day, 'Hands Across the Hall: the Legalities of Beowulf's Fight with Grendel', *JEGP* 98:3 (1999), 313–324, pp. 315–316.
[23] Carole Hough, 'The Widow's Mund in Æthelberht 75 and 76', *JEGP* 98:1 (1999), 1–16, p. 7.

advantage of the dual definitions of *sib*—it can mean peace, including peace of mind or freedom from fear (for example, in l. 1568a: *sybb æfter sorge* ‘peace after sorrow’) but it can also mean ‘a relationship’.[24] Freedom from fear is the result of a relationship with God.

Of the seven places where the poet uses the word *sib*, two refer to literal or metaphorical sibling relationships (ll. 690b and 1013b). Andreas also uses it of the friendship shown to him by the Ship’s Captain (l. 358b), and the converted Mermedonians express a hope for *sybb æfter sorge* (‘peace after sorrow’, l. 1568a). There are also three places where the poet collocates *sib* and *swegl* (‘heaven’). The first is in God’s promise to Matthew, where He says: *Ic þe, Matheus, mine sylle sybbe under swegle.* (‘I give to you, Matthew, my peace under heaven’, ll. 97–98a). The second is when the resurrected Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob have completed their mission of witnessing Christ’s divinity to the Jews and are allowed to *secan mid sybbe swegles dreamas* (‘seek with peace the joys of heaven’, l. 809). The third is when the angels lay the sleeping Andreas down beside the road to the Mermedonian city *swefan on sybbe under swegles hleo*, (‘to sleep in peace under heaven’s shelter’, l. 832). Thus the collocation of *syb* and *swegl* links those figures in the poem who benefit from an uncommonly close relationship to God.

Wær

There are four places where the simplex *wær* (‘protection/covenant’) appears in *Andreas*. The first is when God reprimands Andreas for resisting the mission to the Mermedonians (l. 213b—quoted above). As Irving observes, this reference to reciprocal obli-

[24] ‘Sib’, B-T.

gation is not present in the Latin Casanatensis analogue; neither is it present in the Greek Praxeis analogue, which simply insists on obedience.[25] Another is the narrator's statement that Andreas is *on fæder wære* ('in the Father's protection', l. 824b) while he is carried by angels to Mermedonia. The two others link Andreas' state of being protected to others' perception of him: the Captain says that the reason the waves have calmed is that *hie ongeton þæt ðe God hæfde / wære bewunden* ('they understood that God had wound protection around you', ll. 534–535a), and Andreas is able to safely walk through the streets of Mermedonia *wære betolden* ('surrounded by protection', l. 988b), because the sinful Mermedonians *ongitan ne mihte* ('could not perceive [him]', l. 985b). *Wær* also appears in compounds: *wærfæst* ('faithful/loyal') is used of Andreas in lines 1273b and 1310a and of the ship's Captain (in the expression *wærfæst cyning,* which indicates that he is in fact God) in line 416a; *wærleas* ('faithless' or 'without covenant/protection') is used of the Mermedonians at line 1069a; *wærloga* ('evil-doer', but more literally, 'treaty-breaker') is used twice of the Mermedonians in lines 71a and 108a, and twice of the devil, in lines 613a, and 1297a; and *freoðowær* ('covenant of peace') appears in line 1630b, which is discussed below. The poem's theme of covenant, particularly as expressed by the term *wær*, has been treated thoroughly by Anlezark, but this short summary suffices to demonstrate that the poem's frequent use of *wær* and *wær* compounds emphasizes the point that faith is a reciprocal relationship.[26]

Juliana offers an interesting counterpoint to *Andreas* in its use of themes of covenant and perception. Unlike Andreas, Juliana is never in any doubt that she is in God's protection. Her persecutors, on the other hand, show their misunderstanding of the situation through their use of the language of covenant. Eleusius presses Judith to seek *mundbyrd* ('protection', l. 170b) from the idols, not realizing that Juliana is the on-

[25] Irving, 'Poem as Poem', p. 7; Boenig, *Acts of Andrew*, p.3.
[26] Anlezark, *Water and Fire*, pp. 220–223.

ly *wærfast* ('faithful', but more literally 'firm in a covenant' l. 238a) character in the poem. There is also a pun on *wær* ('covenant') in his accusation that she has spoken *unwærlicra worda* ('incautious words', l. 193). Juliana employs lexis of covenant (*sibbe* and *treowe* in l. 665) in her final speech, implicitly countering Eleusius' mistaken ideas.

Friþ

Unlike Juliana, Andreas has to learn about God's protection. Andreas' interpretive journey across the poem is about coming to understand what it means to be in God's *friþ*. God's lesson to Andreas about the nature of their relationship begins in His reprimand for Andreas' hesitation. It continues with his instruction of Andrew in the guise of the ship's Captain, particularly in his assertion that the safety of the vessel is evidence that Andreas is a thegn of God.[27] It proceeds to demonstration, first when God shows Andreas that his deliverance to the Mermedonian shore is evidence that he is in God's protection, and then after Andreas has been tortured, when God turns his blood into flowering trees, as evidence that he has not truly been injured.

The Toronto *DOE* gives five main senses of *friþ* among a total of 35 senses, sub-senses, and sub-sub-senses. It is a word that does very different work in different periods and genres. There may be an additional subaudition of *friþ* which we see at work in certain circumstances, including several instances in *Andreas.* Specifically,

[27] Some critics consistently refer to the divine person in the boat as 'Christ' while others, including T.D. Hill, refer to him as 'God' ('Two Notes on Patristic Allusion in *Andreas*', *Anglia* 84 (1966), 156–162, p. 156). The Blickling Homily consistently refers to the character as *Drihten Hælende Crist* (the Holy Lord Christ) *The Blickling Homilies,* ed. and trans. Richard Morris, EETS o.s. 58 63 and 73 (London, 1880), pp. 228–249. However, the *Andreas* poet refers to Him as *ælmihti God* ('almighty God,' l. 260b) and uses epithets like *scyppend* and *metod* that tend to apply to God the creator. This is in keeping with the trinitarian tendencies Boenig observes in the Greek and Latin versions, in which God/Christ tends to speak in plural pronouns and to be addressed as 'Father' and 'Jesus' in the same breath (Boenig, *Acts of Andrew*; see esp. p. 49). The poet occasionally refers to Christ by name, but only in general phrases describing the apostles as 'dear to' or 'champions of' Christ, and in reference to events in the life of Christ as recounted in the Gospels, never as the name of the divine person who speaks in the narrative present. For the sake of clarity, I have chosen to follow the poet's lead and use the term 'God' for the divine person who appears in the narrative present, and 'Christ' for the incarnate deity who features in Andreas' stories.

when *friþ* is used in the *DOE*'s fourth sense ("protection / security from harm / injury"), and the person granting or withholding this *friþ* is God, the concept of *friþ* is very often linked to a visual, if often unspecified, marker of personal or group identity.[28] Sometimes, therefore, even when the link is not made explicit, *friþ* means 'God's protection' but carries the subaudition 'the sign by which that protection is conveyed'.

Anglo-Saxon culture and law tended to convey legal rights through written documents, not symbolic objects, so this is not a reflection of contemporary culture.[29] The association of *friþ* with signs seems to occur only when the *friþ* comes from God, and probably arises from the tendency of Biblical covenants to be expressed by signs. In the poem *Genesis A,* around half of all occurrences of the word *friþ*, alone or in compounds, refer specifically to the protection of God, but in no case where *friþ* means anything but 'the protection of God' is there a suggestion that the *friþ* in question is conveyed by means of a visible sign.

Whenever *friþ* appears in the same sentence as *tacen, frið* refers to a marker which expresses a character's (or group's) identity in terms of their relationship to the security or protection offered by God. *Genesis A* collocates *friþ* and *tacen* in the context of the story of Cain, linking *tacen* and *freoðobeacen* as objects of *sette:*

Hine waldend on,
tirfæst metod, tacen sette,
freoðobeacen, frea þy læs hine feonda hwilc
mid guðþræce gretan dorste
feorran oððe nean.[30] (*Genesis A,* ll. 1043b–1047a)

[The Ruler, Glorious Maker, set on him a sign, the Lord a peace-beacon, lest any enemies dared to greet him with a war-force far or near.]

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[28] I have so far only identified this usage in poetry. For more on the development of the word, particularly its use in legal texts, see Scott Kleinman, *'Frið* and *Fredom*: Royal Forests and the English Jurisprudence of Laȝmon's *Brut* and Its Readers', *Modern Philology* 109:1 (2011), 17–45, and Kleinman, '*Frið* and *Grið'*.

[29] See Kleinman's discussion of the laws of Edgar (Kleinman, '*Frið* and *Grið*', p. 413), and also p. 38 above.

[30] As stated in the introduction, quotations of *Genesis A* are from *Genesis A: A New Edition, Revised* ed. A.N. Doane (Tempe AZ, 2013).

Like *Genesis A,* the Vatican *Genesis* also collocates *frið* and *tacen* in reference to the mark of Cain. God says:

> Tho uuillik thi frithu settean,
> togean sulic tekean so thu an treuua maht
> uuesan an thesero uuerolde.[31] (Vatican *Genesis,* ll. 72b–74a)
>
> [I will set a *frithu* on you, show such a sign, so you might be in security in this world.]

Here, the blurring of signifier and signified in the fact that God sets *frithu*, not a sign of *frith*, on Cain creates an even stronger link between 'protection' and 'the sign which conveys that protection' than we find in *Genesis A*.

The compound *freoðobeacen* (a beacon or sign of peace) which *Genesis A* uses of the mark of Cain, is similar to another compound used later in the poem: the circumcision of Abraham and his descendants, which is called a *friðotacen* (l. 2371a).[32] In almost all cases of pairs such as *wundorbeacen* and *wundortacen*, *forebeacen* and *foretacen*, and *sigorbeacen* and *sigortacen*, the *–tacen* and *–beacen* versions have the same meaning, and gloss the same Latin words, or refer to the same objects. There is no significant semantic difference indicated by the replacement of *beacen* by *tacen* in such compounds.[33] So *freoðobeacen* and *friðotacen* are near-perfect synonyms, and both refer to bodily markers of an identity conceived in terms of a security offered by God. We might contrast this with another sign of a covenant which *Genesis A* does not refer to as a *frið:* the rainbow after the Flood. *Genesis A* calls the rainbow an *andgiettacen* (l. 1539a), which the *DOE* defines as "a sign through which something is known". It is a visible sign of a promise from God, and it does appear in close proximity to the cove-

[31] This passage is analyzed in more detail on p. 163. As stated in the introduction, quotations of *Genesis B* and the Vatican *Genesis* are from *The Saxon Genesis: An Edition of the West Saxon Genesis B and the Old Saxon Vatican Genesis* ed. A.N. Doane (Madison, 1991).

[32] For more on the terms Genesis A uses for circumcision, see Samantha Zacher, 'Views on Circumcision in Old English Literature' *Old English Literature and the Old Testament* ed. Michael Fox and Manish Sharma (Toronto, 2012), pp. 89–118, esp. pp. 111–113.

[33] *Wundorbeacen* is a reference to the Cross in Psalm 73 in the Paris Psalter. *Wundortacna* and *forebeacna* gloss *signorum* and *prodigiorum* in Psalm 104 of the Paris Psalter. *Forebeacen* and *fortacen* both mean fore-token and can gloss *portentum*. *Sige-* (or *sigor-*) *beacen* and *tacen* both mean 'victory-sign' and are applied to the Cross. There are also 8 words which form compounds with *tacen* but not with *beacen* (*andgiet*, *ef*[*tacennedness*], *facen*, *luf*, *rode*, *soþ*, *weder*, and *wer*), and 2 words which form compounds with *beacen* but not with *tacen* (*heofon* and *here*). *Dictionary of Old English Web Corpus*.

nant-terms *treow*, ('pledge of loyalty', l. 1535b) and *wær*, ('covenant', l. 1542a), but it is not itself called a *friþ* because it does not describe a patronage relationship. God's promise never again to flood the whole earth does not imply immunity from other forms of harm, applies equally to those outside his protection as those inside it, and is not contingent on the good behaviour of those who benefit from the promise. *Friþ* is contingent, as we see when God withdraws his *friþ* permanently from the fallen angels (l. 57a) and temporarily from the deviant sons of Seth (l. 1262b). *Friþ* requires reciprocity: God helps those who help themselves by serving Him. This is why, when Andreas describes how Christ performed *wundor aefter wundre* ('wonder after wonder', l. 620a) before men, as well as in secret, he says that he *to friðe hogode* ('intended protection', l. 622b).[34]

In *Andreas* as in the two Genesis poems, identity is conceived of in terms of a relationship with God as protector, and *friþ* has connotations of signification. The terms *frið* and *tacen* appear together early in *Andreas*, in line 29:

> Swylc wæs þæs folces freoðoleas tacen,
> unlædra eafoð, þæt hie eagena gesihð,
> hettend heorogrimme, heafodgimm*as*
> agetton gealgmode gara ordum. (*Andreas,* ll. 29–32)
>
> [Such was that folk's *frið*-less sign, violence of the miserable ones, that they, furious, sword-grim enemy, destroyed the sight of the eyes, gems of the head, with the points of spears.]

The *DOE* defines *friþleas* as "without peace or security," and in this particular case defines the word as: "of an abstraction: hostile." But another sense of *friþleas* the dictionary offers is "in a legal context: outlawed (cf. *freondleas* [...])." Outlawry is a fair analogy for the condition of the Mermedonians. An outlaw is one who has acted outside the law, and therefore is no longer protected by it—the Mermedonians commit atrocities against God's law and do not have God's protection. But the poem doesn't say that

[34] Or as Brooks renders it, he 'was anxious to protect them' Brooks, *Andreas*, p. 83.

they are *like* outlaws—it identifies the sign by which it can be seen that they are outlaws.

The term *friþleas* is also used of pagan enemies in *Elene*: the ones Constantine easily cuts down in battle at the beginning of the poem. Here *friþleas* (l. 127a) means 'without protection'—hence the outcome of the battle. But this occurrence of the term also comes enveloped between two descriptions of the raising up of the sign of the cross: *þa wæs þuf hafen / segn for sweotum,* ('then was a standard lifted, a banner for the troops', ll. 123b–124a) and *swa þæt halige treo / aræran heht Romwara cyning* ('so the king of the people of Rome ordered that holy tree be raised up', ll. 128b–129). Thus it is clearly implied by the context that the pagans lack both a protector and a *sign* of protection. The Romans by contrast, have forged a new identity for themselves under a new banner, and that is sufficient to secure their victory. So in both *Andreas* and *Elene* the term *friþleas* is used in a way that alludes to the notion of visible signs which indicate whether a group is inside or outside of God's *friþ.*

There is a character in Andreas who begs for *friþ* from God because a *tacen* produced by men threatens his body: the Mermedonian youth chosen to be sacrificed. The signal that this youth has been selected to be eaten is a *weatacen* ('sign of woe', l. 1119a) which becomes *wide gefrege* ('widely known', l. 1119b) among the Mermedonians, who rush in to kill him. In response, the youth, who is *freonda feasceaft* ('lacking friends', l. 1128a) begins to *friðes wilnian* ('beg for protection' l. 1128b). Andreas observes that the youth's request is answered and the Mermedonians are unable to kill him. The scene ends with the lines:

Gode ealles þanc,
dryhtna dryhtne, þæs ðe he dom gifeð
gumena gehwylcum, þara þe geoce to him
seceð mid snytrum; þær bið symle gearu

freod unhwilen, þam þe hie findan cann.[35] (*Andreas,* ll. 1150b–1154)

[All thanks to God, Lord of lords, for he grants the request of each man, of those who wisely seek comfort from him; there is endless friendship ever prepared for those who can find it.]

Where in the analogues the youth is saved because Andreas prays for him, in the poem, although Andreas pities the youth, it is only the youth himself who cries out for help. The change is small but significant: it illustrates the lesson expressed in these final lines, that God's *friþ* and his *freod* are universally available to anyone who will seek them, and not exclusive to His apostles.

Andreas' spiritual development across the poem occurs as he learns to *see* that he is within God's *friþ*. His belief and understanding increase with the visibility of the evidence. The first mention of the word *friþ* connected to Andreas himself is in God's instructions: *Ðu scealt feran ond frið lædan* ('you must journey and carry protection,' l. 174). I am open to Kenneth Brooks' argument that this *friþ i*s a variant of *feorh* so this line may simply mean 'you must journey and venture'.[36] However, since the Praxeis version has, at exactly this point in the narrative, the statement by God: 'peace to you, Andrew, together with those who are with you', and the Blickling Homily has *sib mid þe & mid eallum þinum discipulum* ('peace be with thee and with all thy disciples') it is also worth considering a hypothesis that line 174 responds to some reference to peace in the poet's source.[37] The Casanatensis is the nearest extant text to the source of *Andreas*, but not identical to it—there may have been a Latin version of the legend which preser-ved the Greek text's reference to peace, which was translated as *sib* in the Blickling Homily and *friþ* in *Andreas*. If so, it establishes the theme of covenant at the very start of Andreas' mission.

[35] *Freod* (friendship) is an emendation of the MS *freond* (friend). Brooks attributes this emendation to C.W.M. Grein, *Bibliothec der angels. Poesie,* vol. ii, Göttingen, 1857-8. Krapp makes this emendation without comment (*ASPR II*).
[36] Brooks, *Andreas*, p. 67.
[37] Translation by Morris, *Blickling Homilies*, pp. 230, 231.

Regardless of what we do with this line, Andreas does make it clear not long after that he does know, intellectually at least, that he is in God's protection. He uses the term when he repeats to the ship's Captain the instructions God initially gave his apostles—God had said to them, *ic eow freoðo healde* ('I hold you in protection', l. 336b). Andreas *knows* this, but the complaints he offers up when God first assigns him his mission suggest that he doesn't entirely believe it. He is like the elder priest in his own story, who *on gewitte oncneow* ('knew in his intellect', l. 672b) about Christ's divinity, but fails to act in accordance with that knowledge. It is this initial reluctance which prompts the lesson in the interrelatedness of seeing and believing which God dispenses in disguising Himself.

When Andreas asks the Captain how he is able to steer so smoothly through the storm, the Captain says it is evidence that Andreas is a thegn of God. He does not attribute the miracle to God's power, but to the power of the *relationship* between Andreas and God. The emphasis on the relationship is important enough that he states it three times. First he says that *ðu cyninges eart / þegen geþungen* ('you are the distinguished thegn of God', ll. 527b–528a), then *ðu gife hæfdes / haliges gastes* ('you have the favour of the Holy Ghost', ll. 530b–531a), and finally, that the waves fell back when *hie ongeton þæt ðe God hæfde / wære bewunden* ('they understood that God had wound protection around you', ll. 534b–535a). (Note the presence of the covenant word *wær* in this last iteration, as well as the way it echoes the description of Matthew in lines 57b–58: *him wæs Cristes lof / on fyrhðlocan fæste bewunden*—'Christ's love was firmly wound in his breast').

The word *orgete* ('evident, clear') punctuates revelatory moments of the text. It is used in line 759a by the speaking statue, and later in line 1569b when Andreas realizes that the Mermedonians have finally had a change of heart, and it is time for him to call back the rising flood and demonstrate mercy. The half-line *soð orgete* ('truly evi-

dent', l. 526b) appears where the Ship's Captain interprets the safety of the ship as evidence that Andreas is a thegn of God. That half-line is repeated at 851b when Andreas awakens on the shore and reinterprets his experience, deciding that it is 'truly evident' that the Ship's Captain was in fact God. In both cases, what is truly evident (and evidently true) is the fact that Andreas is in God's protection to a greater extent than he realized.

When Andreas finally understands, through the miracle of his transportation from the ship and the testimony of his followers about their dream-vision, that it was God who protected him and brought him safely through the stormy sea voyage, at that precise moment (*in þa ilcan tid,* l. 911b) God reveals Himself. He allows Andreas to see Him clearly *fore eagum* ('before his eyes', l. 910a), and reminds him: *ic þe friðe healde* ('I hold you in protection', l. 915b). As Andreas walks into Mermedonia, he is described as *meotude getreowe* ('faithful/loyal to the Lord', l. 984b). He is both trusty and trusting, and the two are necessary to one another: to demonstrate his loyalty to God he must march into Mermedonia without concern for his safety, but in order to do that he must have faith that God is loyal to him, and will protect him.

But Andreas has to be told, and *shown* that he is in God's *friþ* one more time before he fully believes it. Other critics, including James Earl, have remarked on the fact of Andreas' spiritual education reaching its climax in this scene, but not on the lexical patterning that underscores the point.[38] After Andreas is tortured by the Mermedonians, he accuses God of not protecting him sufficiently. God replies, *ic þe friðe healde, / minre mundbyrde mægene besette* ('I hold you in *frið*, and set you in my mighty *mundbyrd*,' ll. 1432b–1433) and instructs Andreas to look back at his bloody tracks, which have miraculously blossomed into flowering trees, proving that despite his torture he has not come to any lasting harm. For the third time, God tells Andreas directly: you

[38] Earl, 'Typological Structure', p. 86.

are in my protection. This time He uses the term *mundbyrd* as well, to put the point more forcefully, and the abstract notion of *frið* is rendered tangible by signs—the blood turned blossoms and the healing of Andreas' wounds—marked by and on Andreas' body.

By tracking the play of these terms across the poem, we see several misinterpretations of God's patronage relationships resolved—the Mermedonians come to understand that Andreas is God's thegn, while Andreas comes to understand that being God's thegn is a reciprocal relationship in which there is no end to the benefit he can receive from God's protection, so long as he fulfils his obligations of swift obedience. In the end, a new patronage relationship is inaugurated between God and the Mermedonians. Three of the terms (*friþ, wær*, and *mundbyrd*) which are the building-blocks of the poem's exploration of faith (and understanding) as a relationship come together in the lines when the Mermedonians receive baptism:

> Onfengon fulwihte ond freoðuwære,
> wuldres wedde witum aspedde,
> mundbyrd meotudes. (*Andreas,* ll. 1630–1632a)
>
> [They received baptism and a covenant of protection, promise of glory, escape from torment, the Lord's patronage.]

POOR INTERPRETERS

In this section, I will examine the psychological underpinnings of poor understanding as depicted in the poem. Fear can cause characters to go wrong in their reading, but it can also instigate conversion. Doubt is linked to motifs of death, but it does not explain all the poor understanding in the poem, since Andreas professes his belief in God even as he fails to recognize Him. His failures of perception originate in his failures to act; conversely, action and clarity are closely linked.

Just as much of the misinterpretation in *Andreas* is *about* patronage relationships, the misinterpretation in *Andreas* is almost exclusively *caused by* flaws in patron-

age relationships. The Jews fail to understand Christ because their covenant relationship with God has broken down, and the Mermedonians *nyston beteran ræd* ('knew no better counsel', l. 1088b) than to eat people because they are thegns of the devil, while Matthew sees clearly because he is faithful to God. But as Andreas' misunderstanding illustrates, this is not a simple binary; being one of God's chosen does not in itself guarantee superior perception and understanding. Just as the poem depicts faith as a patronage relationship rather than a unilateral virtue, it also depicts interpretive ability as a matter of both will and grace: God can grant or withhold it, but man must actively seek it, and arrange his inner life so as to be receptive to it.

It is true that fear is correlated with poor understanding, and lack of fear with clarity of perception. The *Andreas* poet has a broad vocabulary of fear. The word *acolmod* ('fearful in mind') appears just three times in the corpus: twice in *Andreas* and once in *Azarias.* The first component of the compound, *acol*, is exclusively poetic.[39] In lines 456b–457 of *Andreas* there is a different word for terror in each half-line—*forht, egesa*, and *wæterbroga. Forht* ('afraid') and *egesa* ('terror') are common terms in poetry. The simplex *broga* ('terror', 'horror') is common in prose and poetry, but the compound *wæterbrogan* ('terrible waters') appears only twice, and only in *Andreas* (in ll. 456b and 197b)—though *Genesis A* uses the genitive phrase *wætres brogan* (l. 1395b) of Noah's Flood.[40] Some have seen Andreas' initial refusal to travel to Mermedonia as motivated by fear: Boening, for example, writes that "since Andrew's sin is disobedience because of fear, his penance must be the opposite, obedience through the dangers he has feared to confront".[41] The fear experienced by Andreas' thegns when they encounter the storm is explicitly linked to the fact that they don't fully grasp the situation:

Þegnas wurdon
acolmode; ænig ne wende

[39] See 'ācol' in the *DOE*.
[40] See 'brōga' in the *DOE*.
[41] Boenig, *Saint and Hero,* p. 50.

þæt he lifgende land begete,
þara þe mid Andreas on eagorstream
ceol gesohte. Næs him cuð þa gyt
hwa þam sæflotan sund wisode. (*Andreas,* ll. 376b–381)

[The thegns were fearful in mind; none expected that he would reach land alive, of those who with Andreas had sought the ship on the ocean current. It was not known to them yet who guided the sea-floater's course.]

But fear can also motivate obedience. The fear of the apostles who endure a storm while sailing with Christ becomes translated onto the landscape, effectively ending the storm (this is one of several instances of natural elements taking on human characteristics, which are discussed further below):

Ða ure mod ahloh
syððan we gesegon under swegles gang
windas ond wægas ond wæterbrogan
forhte gewordne for frean egesan. (*Andreas,* ll. 454b–457)

[Then our hearts laughed, when we saw under heaven's circuit the winds and waves and terrible waters become afraid for terror of the Lord.]

The use of the word *wæterbrogan* here answers the first appearance of the word, where Andreas protests that he cannot go to Mermedonia because he fears the *wæterbrogan, / wegas ofer widland* ('terrible waters, waves over the face of the earth', ll. 197b–198a).[42] Here the *wægas on wæterbrogan* that Andreas feared are themselves fearful of—and therefore obedient to—Andreas' Lord. The lesson is that there is nothing Andreas should fear more than the Lord, and so, like the waves, he should be obedient to Him.

Fear is also a powerful tool for conversion. When the Mermedonians begin to understand who Andreas is, and that they were wrong to incarcerate him, they become first joyful (*bliðe on mode*, 'joyful in mind', l. 1583b), then fearful (*acolmod, / forhtferhð*, 'fearful in mind, afraid at heart', ll. 1595b–1596a). It is their fear which prompts them to declare that they see now that God is powerful, and that it was He who sent An-

[42] The half line *wegas ofer widland* has an almost exact parallel in *Genesis A*'s description of the Flood in l. 1538a as *wæter ofer widland.* Even if this is not a direct borrowing, it is likely that the expression was meant to evoke the Flood, which is (as Hill first proposed) the key to understanding Andreas' use of typology to generate meaning, and also (as Anlezark has argued) the key to understanding the *Andreas* poet's use of *Beowulf.* Hill, 'Figural Narrative'; Anlezark, *Water and Fire,* pp. 347–359.

dreas to them.[43] However, fear of the Lord is only the beginning of wisdom; Andreas immediately responds by instructing the Mermedonians: *ne beoð ge to forhte* ('do not be too fearful, l. 1609a). He promises them great enlightenment if they arrange their thoughts well:

Eow is wuldres leoht
torht ontyned, gif ge teala hycgað.[44] (*Andreas,* ll. 1611b–1612)

[For you is the radiant light of glory opened, if you think rightly.]

So fear is not inherently bad; it depends on who experiences the fear, and what action it inspires. As a source of doubt and hesitation, it blinds, but as a jolt to conversion, it enlightens.

We might also characterize Andreas' initial fault as doubt, or lack of faith. Certainly, his initial expression of disbelief that he was equipped to accomplish the task God set him looks like doubt about the extent of God's power, but this is equivalent to the innocent, wondering doubt of Abraham and Zacharias, not the deadly hard-heartedness of Pharaoh. (Earl puts Andreas in the "distinguished company" of Jonah and Habacuc.[45]) In fact, the poet never uses the word *tweogan* (to doubt) of Andreas (though he does use the term *untweonde,* 'undoubting', l. 1242a, to describe Andreas' courage—more on this below). The term *tweogon* is only applied to the eldest—and therefore, in theory, wisest and most respected—of the Jews, who watch Christ call a statue down from the wall to address them, and dismiss the miracle as sorcery (l. 771b). Even the murderous Mermedonians are partially excused for their cannibalism by the narrator's comment that they *nyston beteran ræd* ('knew no better counsel', l. 1088b), but the Jewish elders who refuse to believe are unreservedly condemned for a 'two-

[43] The risen patriarchs also inspire great fear in the people who witness them, but Andreas ends his story without stating whether or not this effected their conversion (ll. 804b–810).
[44] The half-line *torht ontyned* is one of the expressions that appears in both *Andreas* (here, and at l. 105a , where God promises Matthew that Andreas will come to his aid) and *Elene* (at l. 1248a, in the epilogue). It also appears in *Christ and Satan* (at ll. 556a and 593a), *Guthlac A* (at ll. 9a and 487a), SolSat (at l. 38a).
[45] Earl, 'Typological Structure', p. 83

mindedness' which amounts to duplicity, as they must deceive themselves about what they have seen. Their doubt is deadly:

> Þær wæs orcnawe
> þurh teoncwide tweogende mod,
> mæcga misgehygd morðre bewunden. (*Andreas,* ll. 770b–772)
>
> [There was evident through their damaging/accusing/blasphemous speech, a doubting mind, perverse thought of men, wound about by deadly crime.]

So while in our terms Andreas doubts, in the poet's lexis there seems to be a distinction between the incredulity of believers who wonder that all things really are possible with God, and the doubt of unbelievers who reject the evidence that all things are possible with God.

Andreas' most damning fault is not that he doubts, but that he is slow. Of course, swift action is not inherently good—the Mermedonians *nalas late wæron* ('were not at all slow', l. 46b) when they seized and blinded Matthew. But when action is taken for God, swiftness is correlated with clear perception. The Mermedonian spokesman who first expresses their change of heart advises swift action resulting from their newfound clarity. He says to his people: *ofost is selost* ('swiftest is best', l. 1565b). Matthew stands as a counterpoint to Andreas, demonstrating correct behaviour, which includes swift action. When he is imprisoned, he takes no time to dwell on fear or doubt, but immediately takes the only course of action available to him: he begins to pray and asks for help, yet accepts what ever God *deman wille* ('will decree', l. 75b). As a result of this swift and purposeful action, he receives a sign which grants him clarity about his future (and possibly, the return of his literal sight).

Correlation is the best word for the relationship between action and understanding, because the poem depicts causation working in both directions. Matthew's swift action results in his clarity of perception, but Andreas' new clarity of perception after he is transported to Mermedonia results in swift action. In their discussion on the road to Mermedonia, God points out to Andreas that he knows better now the extent to

which God can help each of his *freonda* ('friends', l. 934b). Once Andreas clearly perceives that God is loyal to him, he demonstrates his loyalty to God and enters Mermedonia *meotude getreowe* ('true to the Lord', l. 984b)—which contrasts with his earlier failure to hold a *treowe tacen* with God in l. 214a. Secure in his new clarity of understanding, Andreas strides into the city *hraðe* ('quickly', l. 982b) and *elne* ('bravely', l. 983b). Sometimes bravery and clarity are mingled—almost equated. When Andreas is being tortured, his *ellen* ('courage') is described as *untweonde* ('undoubting', l. 1242a).[46] Afterwards, Andreas sees his blood turned to flowers, thus receiving his last lesson from God confirming His promise not to forsake any man man *gif his ellen deah* ('if his courage be good', l. 460b). In that moment of perception, Andreas is called a *dædfruma* ('doer of deeds', l. 1455a).

It takes Andreas a long time to become a *dædfruma* and a good interpreter though, because of his earlier failure to respond correctly to God's instructions. Andreas' fault is a specific variety of disobedience: the disobedience of inaction. Like Hamlet, he hesitates. Andreas reacts to God's command to rescue Matthew with a list of increasingly feeble reasons why he is not suited to the task: he cannot get there quickly enough, an angel could do it more easily, he has no friends there, he doesn't know the way. Andreas' complaint is far longer in the poem than in the analogues, which focus on the question of how he can get there quickly enough (though the Blickling Homily also includes the statement that he does not know the way). Andreas' response to God in the Casanatensis version even begins with the words: *presto sum, domine* ('I am ready, Lord!').[47]

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[46] This term is also used of Judas in *Elene* in similar circumstances; see p. 70 above.

[47] *Die latineinischen Bearbeitungen der Acta Andreae et Matthiae apud anthropophagos* ed. Franz Blatt, *Zeitschrift für die Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft* 12 (Giessen, 1930), p. 39. Boenig, *Acts of Andrew,* pp. 3, 30, 59. Earl quotes Habacuc's words: "Lord, I have not seen Babylon, and know not the den," ('Typological Structure', p. 83) implying that they are similar to Andreas' words, but stopping short of explicitly suggesting that they could be a source of the additional excuses offered by Andreas in the poem version.

God immediately responds, lamenting Andreas' hesitation or slowness (italics mine):

> Eala Andreas,   þæt ðu a woldest
> *þæs siðfætes   sæne weorþan*!   (*Andreas,* ll. 203–204)
>
> [Alas, Andrew, that you ever would be slow/reluctant/hesitant about this journey!]

And again, further on in the same speech, He says,

> Ne meaht ðu *þæs siðfætes   sæne weorðan*,
> ne on gewitte to wac,   gif ðu wel þencest
> wið þinne waldend   wære gehealdan,
> treowe tacen.   (*Andreas,* ll. 211–214a)
>
> [You may not be reluctant about this journey, nor too weak of intellect, if you think to hold a covenant well with your Lord, a token of loyalty.]

With these words God frames Andreas' slowness as a serious impediment to the proper functioning of their covenant relationship. This also sets Andreas in contrast to Elene—the only other appearance in the corpus of the expression italicized above is in *Elene*, where she receives Constantine's instructions to set out on a journey over the sea to recover the Cross in the land of the Jews. When Andreas is instructed to recover Matthew from the land of a people who are allegorically representative of the Jews, he hesitates. Elene, on the other hand, *ne wolde / þæs siðfætes sæne weorðan* ('did not wish to be reluctant about this journey', ll. 219b–220), and *sona* ('immediately', l. 222b) obeys.

Robin Waugh has written persuasively about the stone pillar in Mermedonia as a speaker*,* presenting the flood that emanates from it as a type of speech. She characterizes the city in *Andreas* as a "speaking body", but does not address the prerequisite that it must also be a *thinking* body.[48] Interpretation and understanding must come before speaking (as in the Gregorian mixed life), so the pillar is not just a speaker, but a model interpreter. It is perceptive, obedient, and—above all—quick to act. After Andreas instructs it in its origins as part of God's created world, and its typological relationship to

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[48] Robin Waugh, 'The City as Speaker of the Old Testament in *Andreas*', in *Old English Literature and the Old Testament* ed. Michael Fox and Manish Sharma (Toronto, 2012), pp. 253–265, p. 259.

the slabs on which the Ten Commandments were written, he tells the pillar: if you understand, you will show it immediately (italics mine):

> ‘Þu scealt *hræðe* cyðan
> gif ðu his ondgitan ænige hæbbe.’
> Næs þa wordlatu wihte þon mare
> þæt se stan togan. (*Andreas,* ll. 1520b–1523a)
>
> [‘You must immediately make it known if you have any understanding of Him.’ There was not a whit the more delay in obeying the command, so that the stone split open.]

Compared to this stone pillar, Andreas is a poor reader. Andreas’ hesitation is given as the reason for his failure to perceive God on the ship. When God reveals himself outside Mermedonia, Andreas asks, of his inability to recognize Him: *hu geworhte ic þæt* [...] *synnig wið seolfne* (‘how did I bring it about, by sinning against yourself’, ll. 920a, 921a)? These words make it clear that Andreas realizes that he has brought about his own poor perception of God by his sin against God. He accepts that perception is given as reward and withdrawn as punishment; hence his ability to see God clearly is simultaneously his own responsibility and outside his power to control. God’s answer confirms that Andreas’ fault was his hesitation and reluctance to act. He says:

> No ðu swa swiðe synne gefremedest
> swa ðu in Achaia ondsæc dydest. (*Andreas,* ll. 926–927)
>
> [Never did you commit so great a sin as when you refused in Achaia.]

This is very different from the treatment of this scene in the analogues. All three agree that God/Christ concealed himself from Andrew in order to answer his initial question of whether he could arrive in Mermedonia in time with a demonstration that with God all things are possible. However, no version other than the poem says that Andreas sinned by asking that question. In the Casanatensis and the Blickling Homily, Andrew believes he has sinned in speaking to the Captain without due deference, but Christ dismisses this; in both the Praxeis and the Homily, Christ explicitly

states that Andreas did not sin.[49] The damage caused by Andreas' slowness is an interest particular to the poem.

Andreas' concern with bravery and the cost of hesitation makes sense in terms of the values it shares with *Beowulf*. Of course a hero, whether he is a warrior of God or a warrior of Hygelac, should be brave and active, but when Beowulf acts where others don't, he also sees things others don't, such as the inside of the mere and the dragon's cave. He also has better foresight than most characters, and tells us more than any voice in the poem besides the narrator's about what will happen to various characters in the future. The *Andreas* poet could well have seen in *Beowulf* a familar ethic which associates swiftness and bravery with clear sight and hesitation with poor understanding. *Andreas*' expression *ofost is selost* ('swiftest is best', l. 1565b) may be a borrowing from *Beowulf*—it appears in only two other places in the corpus: in *Beowulf* l. 256b (where the Danes' shore-guard asks Beowulf and his men to identify themselves) and in *Exodus* l. 293b (where Moses leads the crossing of the Red Sea).[50] The poor interpreters in *Beowulf* are the Scyldings, who loiter uncertainly at the edge of the mere, and give Beowulf up for dead when they see the blood in the water. They are wise, grey, and old (*snottre* l. 1591b, *blondenfeaxe* l. 1594b, *gomele* l. 1595a); like the elder Jews they possess the social qualifications to be considered good interpreters, but they fail to understand the signs they witness, because like the Mermedonians, they lack hope.

Bruce Redwine has demonstrated that in *Beowulf*, haste "serves as a signalling device, a method of demonstrating the sincerity of one's intentions and showing a willingness to act in a forthright manner".[51] The same might be said of the function of haste in *Judith* and the poems of Cynewulf. Juliana models the incorruptible interpreter in her interrogation of the demon. The demon urges Juliana to act *hraþre* ('quickly', l.254b),

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[49] Boenig, *Acts of Andrew*, pp. 12, 41, 61.
[50] See also *Beowulf* l. 3007a: *nu is ofost betost.* On *Exodus*, see p. 197 below.
[51] Bruce Redwine, '"Ofost is selest": The Pragmatics of Haste in *Beowulf*', *Studia Neophilologica* 54:2 (1982), 209-216, p. 210.

and she does, but not in the way the demon intended—instead of quickly sacrificing to idols, she *fromlice* (‘bravely’ or ‘swiftly’ l. 258a) starts asking questions. Conversely, if haste signals sincerity, lack of haste might signal uncertainty, if not outright duplicitousness, so perhaps it is in this light that we should take Judas’ misreading of his own parable as a result of his reluctance to commit to a course of action in *Elene*, and the description of the Assyrian going to peer behind Holofernes’ curtain *sið ond late* (‘after some time and late/slowly’, l 275a) in *Judith*. Haste and zeal are also correlated in *The Fates of the Apostles*, which says, of Andrew’s martyrdom, that he *ne þeodode* (‘did not hesitate/deliberate,’ l. 18a). This fits in with the poem’s general tendency to emphasize the apostles’ rapid action: James was not *læt* (‘slow’, 33b) or *sæne* (‘reluctant’, l. 34a), Philip sought death *ricene* (‘straightaway’, l. 39b), and Simon and Thaddeus were not *sæne* (‘reluctant’, l. 75b). However, when *Fates* is read in its present manuscript context following on from *Andreas* in the Vercelli Book, the choice of this particular way of describing Andrew’s determined action also has a hint of irony about it. If both *Beowulf* and the poems of Cynewulf with which *Andreas* is most closely associated use haste as a marker of sincerity, we shouldn’t be surprised to see motifs of haste and hesitation used to similar ends in *Andreas*.

Redwine sees the concern with haste in *Beowulf* as a value “based on the exigencies of battle”.[52] However, the equation of brave action with clarity of vision also fits into the patristic tradition, in which the virtue of fortitude is the counterpart of the vice of *acedia.* In many of the poems (particularly *Andreas* and *Juliana*) we should take the motif of hesitation as simultaneously interacting with patristic ideas about *acedia* and fortitude, and making use of connotations of sincerity which are specific to Old English poetry.

[52] Redwine, ‘Ofost is selest’, p 212.

Much of the tradition on the sin of *acedia* derives from the writings of Evagrius of Pontus. There is some evidence that the writings of Evagrius of Pontus were known in Anglo-Saxon England, at least in the time of Theodore of Tarsus in the 7th century.[53] However, his ideas were more widely disseminated in the West through John Cassian, who brought the traditions of the desert fathers to France and influenced the formulation of the Benedictine Rule (as discussed in the Introduction). The association of slowness with disobedience and lack of spiritual understanding finds its way into Benedictine values even beyond the explicit allusions to Cassian—for example, the opening lines of the Benedictine Rule in Old English are:

> Hlyst eala bearn beboda lareowes & ahyld eare heortan þinre & myneguncge arfæstes fæderes lustlice underfoh & fremfullice gefyll þæt þu to him þurh gehyrsumnesse geswince gehwyrfe for þam þurh ungehyrsumnesse asolcenesse þe þu aweiggewite.[54]
>
> [O listen child, to your teacher's commands, and incline the ear of your heart and gladly undertake the instructions of the gracious father and beneficially fulfill [them so] that you turn to him through the labour of obedience from whom through the disobedience of sloth you departed.]

The 'disobedience of sloth' is certainly a fair description of what it is God laments in Andreas' reaction to His initial command.

Cassian deals with *acedia* in Book 10 ('*De Spiritu Acediae*') of the *Institutes* (one of the texts highly recommended for reading aloud by the Benedictine Rule). He largely follows St Paul in his conception of the vice in terms of its concrete, external symptom of idleness. However, the first few chapters of Book 10 owe more to Evagrius than Paul, and it is here that the sin is described in terms which apply to *Andreas*.[55]

In the second chapter of '*De Spiritu Acediae*', Cassian describes the ways that *acedia* prompts monks to think of apparently reasonable, good, and even holy reasons to be doing anything other than what they should be—not unlike Andreas' excuses for not

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[53] Lapidge, *The Anglo-Saxon Library,* pp. 31–33.
[54] *The Rule of St. Benet*, ed. H. Logeman, EETS o.s. 90 (London, 1888), p. 1, ll. 3–6.
[55] *Opera Omnia Joannis Cassiani, PL* 49.359. Mary Clayton points out that Vercelli Homily XX also "preserves the monastic bias of the tradition" of *acedia*. Clayton, *Two Ælfric Texts*, p. 92.

visiting Mermedonia.[56] Some of the ways monks act under the influence of *acedia* as described by Cassian and Evagrius sound very much like the behaviour of Andreas in his least noble moments. *Acedia* compels monks to leave their cells prematurely to fulfil their spiritual duties elsewhere. Likewise, Andreas tries to leave Mermedonia too soon when his job there is only half done, and God has to send him back to finish instructing the people he has just baptized.[57]

Acedia also makes monks despair, so that, as Evagrius says, "the soul that has succumbed to listlessness and sadness and in its heart reckons that it has been handed over to the punishment of demons."[58] This is just what Andreas does when he complains that he has suffered far longer than Christ did on the Cross, so God must have abandoned him. Furthermore, *acedia* can darken the eyes, as Evagrius explains in *Antirrhêtikos*:

> Against the intellect that does not know that, when thoughts of listlessness persist in it, they trouble its stability, and at the time of prayer they obscure the holy light in its eyes—concerning this light, I and God's servant Ammonius wanted to know where it comes from, and we asked the holy John, the seer of Thebes, whether it is the nature of the intellect to be luminous and thus it pours forth the light from itself or whether it [the light] appears from something else outside and illumines it [the intellect]; but he answered us and said, 'No human being is able to explain this, and indeed, apart from the grace of God the intellect cannot be illumined in prayer by being set free from the many cruel enemies that are endeavouring to destroy it':
>
> My heart is troubled; my strength has left me; and the light of my eyes is not with me (Ps 37:11).[59]

In Cassian's '*De Spiritu Acediae*' the same idea comes through in his description of the way that acedia prevents *contemplatione virtutum et intuitu spiritalium* ('contemplation of virtue or spiritual insight').[60]

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[56] *PL* 49.365A. See also the descriptions of *acedia* in 'The Monk: A Treatise on the Practical Life' and 'On the 8 Thoughts' in *Evagrius of Pontus: The Greek Ascetic Corpus* ed. Robert E. Sinkewicz (Oxford, 2003) p. 99 and 83–95; see also Evagrius of Pontus, *Talking Back (Antirrhêtikos): A Monastic Handbook for Combating Demons*, trans. David Brakke (Collegeville MN, 2009), pp. 133–146.
[57] Despite the gap in the manuscript at this point, it is apparent that this episode plays out in a similar manner in *Andreas* as it does in the analogues.
[58] *Talking Back,* p. 145.
[59] *Talking Back,* p. 137.

In *Juliana*, the demon is forced to describe the many ways in which he deceives people and clouds their minds—Simon, for example, is in *deopne gedwolan* ('deep error/ignorance', l. 301a) when he persecutes Christians. The demon describes his deceptions in terms of obscuring men's eyes, saying that *often ic syne ofteah, / ablende bealo-þoncum* ('often I took away sight, blinded [men] with evil thoughts', ll. 468b–469a). When he explains how he persuades a man to lapse into such blindness, the way his temptation is initiated sounds very much like *acedia* in that it begins with turning him away from prayer:

> Ic hine þæs swiþe synnum onæle
> þæt he byrnende from gebede swiceð,
> stepeð stronglice, staþolfæst ne mæg
> fore leahtra lufan lenge gewunian
> in gebed-stowe. (*Juliana,* ll. 372–376a)
>
> [I so greatly inflame him with sins that he, burning, abandons prayer, steps boldly, may not for long dwell steadfast in the place of prayer, for his love of vices.]

The Mermedonians in *Andreas* may also be suffering from *acedia*—the boredom and disillusionment of *acedia* is dangerous precisely because it leads on to other sins such as gluttony. *Andreas* uses the word *maðm* ('treasure') twice, first in line 309b, then in line 1113b. In line 309b God accuses Andreas and his disciples of being *maðmum bidæled* ('deprived of treasure'). Anlezark writes, of this first reference to *maðm*:

> Their discussion develops the theme of treasure metaphorically: the only treasure they have is the *wordhord* (316b), the gospel which the disciples were sent to carry across the world (331b, 337–9), which fuses with the notion that the companions themselves are the treasure (359–69a).[61]

When we see the word *maðm* again, it is in the context of a description of how the Mermedonians are frantic to eat the unlucky youth:

> Þeod wæs oflysted
> metes modgeomre, næs him to maðme wynn,

[60] *PL* 49.369A (Chapter 4). Translations of Cassian's *Institutes* by Jerome Mertram: St John Cassian, *The Monastic Institutes: On the Training of a Monk and The Eight Deadly Sins* trans. Jerome Mertram (London, 1999), p. 147.
[61] Anlezark, *Water and Fire,* p. 213

> hyht to hordgestreonum; hungre wæron
> þearle geþreatod, swa se ðeodsceaða
> reow ricsode. (*Andreas,* ll. 1112b–1116a)
>
> [That people was possessed with a strong desire, sad at heart, for meat, there was for them no joy in treasures, hope in accumulated wealth; by hunger they were sorely oppressed, as the destroyer of people ruled cruelly.]

There is no reason why literal treasure would be relevant to the story at this juncture; it makes more sense to see this instance of *maðm* as another reference to spiritual treasures. The Mermedonians are not sufficiently fired with love of God and gospel; their *acedia* and lack of hope blind them, and lead them to gluttony.[62] This is, in fact, one of the dangers of *acedia* described by Cassian: *acedia* leads on to other evils via gluttony, *mens enim otiosi nihil aliud cogitare novit, quam de escis ac ventre* ('for the slothful mind sees no other goal than food and drink').[63]

BLINDNESS MOTIF

The section of *Christ III* which has the most in common with *Andreas* is Fitt XIII (ll. 1081–1198), which makes explicit the contrast between the spiritually blind men who rejected Christ and the blind and voiceless created things which demonstrate that they interpret the crucifixion correctly. Like *Andreas*, which refers to the Jews as *modblinde menn* ('spiritually blind men', l. 814a), *Christ III* describes those who denied and tormented Christ as *blinde on geþoncum* ('blind in thoughts', l. 1126b), and *modblinde men* (l. 1187a). According to *Christ III*, at the end of time, the sinful men (especially the Jews, by the implication of the preceding lines) will see *open, orgete* ('openly, clearly', l. 1116a) for themselves that Christ suffered for mankind. Cook draws attention to the appearance of the same half-line at 759a in *Andreas*, where the speaking statue ad-

[62] I am grateful to Francis Leneghan for pointing out that the first use of the word *maðm* in *Beowulf* (in the compound *maðmæht,* l. 1613a) is in the description of the sword Beowulf retrieves from Grendel's mere, which is decorated with a text referring to scripture, and which the man-eating Grendel does not use.
[63] *PL* 49.370A (Chapter 6); *Monastic Institutes* p. 147.

dresses the Jews and tells them that they *should* be able to *open, orgete* see the divinity of Christ, though in fact they will not perceive this until Judgement Day.[64]

In contrast to the spiritually blind men, *Christ III* says that *dumban gesceaft* ('mute creation', l. 1127b) understood Christ's identity, and that *þeah hi cwice næron* ('though they were not living', l. 1130b), these created things demonstrated their understanding by mourning Christ.[65] The list in *Christ III* of things that recognized Christ is based upon that in Gregory's Homily 10. Unlike the homily, which includes responses by nature to Christ from various points in His life, the poem focusses on the Crucifixion. It adds dimming of the stars and overflow of the seas in order to relocate Gregory's references to actions of the stars and sea which took place in earlier parts of Christ's life as events relating to the Crucifixion. Such revisions also emphasize eschatological imagery. The poet expands Gregory's discussion of water and stars to include the floods and the dimming of celestial bodies that are associated with end times, and adds bodily resurrection and bleeding trees, which are ultimately derived from the apocryphal Apocalypse of Ezra (2 Esdras).[66]

It happens that some of these alterations of Gregory—particularly the flooding and resurrection of the dead—introduce events which are very similar to episodes in *Andreas* which are intended to convert *modblinde menn*. The theme of flooding is (as critics from Hill to Anlezark have demonstrated) fundamental to *Andreas*' typological

[64] *Christ of Cynewulf*, p.195.

[65] The things which are included under the heading of *dumban gesceaft* are, in order: the earth (l. 1128a), the heavens (l. 1128b), the sun (l. 1132b), the temple curtain (l. 1138), walls and stones (l. 1142a), the sea (by flooding) (l. 1144b), the stars and heaven (ll. 1147b/1149a), the earth (in giving up the bodies of the dead) (l. 1155a), Hell (l. 1159b), the sea again (because it previously supported Christ when he walked on water) (l. 1163b), the trees (l. 1169a). Of the 48 lines from 1127b to 1176a, 19 are direct responses to Gregory's Homily 10, which lists evidence that nature recognized Christ both from earlier moments in Christ's life (heaven sent a star at the nativity, Christ walked on water) and also from the Crucifixion (the earth trembled, the sun darkened, walls and stones broke apart, Hell gave up its captives in the Harrowing). Cook quotes the relevant passage from Gregory, and two homilies by Ælfric which also respond to Gregory. *Christ of Cynewulf,* p. 195. Other Homiletic parallels to the poem have long been acknowledged; there are several listed in *Sources and Analogues*, pp. 84–107.

[66] See Biggs, *The Sources of Christ III*, p. 24. This sign of Judgement Day is more common in later medieval material—see for example, the sixth sign on the Pricke of Conscience Window in All Saints, North Street, York.

programme. The witnessing of the resurrection of the dead by the *scyldge men* ('guilty men', l. 1152b) in *Christ III* is paralleled by the witnessing of the resurrection of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob by the unpersuaded Jews in *Andreas*. Both poems link motifs of blindness so closely to eschatological imagery in order to underline the urgency of good reading: it is a matter of eternal life or death.

The motif of blindness in *Andreas* has been remarked upon often, most frequently to relate the Mermedonians' physical blinding of their enemies to their own spiritual blindness and thence to the blindness of the Jews who do not believe in Christ.[67] To this, I would add that the emphasis laid on the blindness motif exists not only to *allow* such lines of interpretation but to *prompt* them. It is a warning against purely literal reading.

The manner in which the poet instructs the audience in how to read the poem has been touched on only briefly by previous critics. Earl identified three major "indications in *Andreas* itself that we are intended to read the story as a figural narrative."[68] The three he lists are: 1) the inconsistency of the narrative is typical of allegorical writing, 2) the living stone episode is not Gospel history, so it must be read as allegory, and 3) when the narrator interrupts the narrative to point out his own failings as a storyteller, the narrator's comments emphasize intuitive understanding of spiritual truths over knowledge. There is patristic precedent for the idea that an inconsistent narrative demands allegorical reading: Martin Irvine notes that Rufinus' translation of Origen

> Expands on this idea by stating that these impossibilities were inserted so that the interruption of the narrative might set up a barrier preventing the reader from proceeding along the path of ordinary meaning. One of the traditional marks or tests of allegorical meaning is precisely the absurdity of the ordinary or literal sense.[69]

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[67] Most recently by Godlove, 'Bodies as Borders'. Some other approaches to blindness include Constance B. Hieatt's commentary on the purpose of the allusion to Tobias in l.1516b ('Harrowing of Mermedonia', p. 51), and Lisa Kiser's commentary on the connections between Andreas' concealed approach along the road to Mermedonia, Isaiah 42:16, and Jerome's commentary on Isaiah ('Lifes Weg', pp. 69–70).
[68] Earl, 'Typological Structure', p. 67.
[69] Irvine, *Textual Culture*, pp. 256–257.

More recently, Nathan Breen has considered the narrator's interruption in *Andreas* and argued that:

> In short, the narrator presents himself as an imperfect model of cognition, and he invites his audience to perfect the narrative through the same recursive process that he has undergone to present the story of Andrew 'from the beginning.'[70]

This late-stage interruption has a disruptive, alienating effect; it is a reminder that the text is a text. However, we don't have to wait until so late in the narrative to see such nudges from the poet—there are other important indications which begin much earlier in the poem. In particular, the way the poet develops the blindness motif sets up the reader to start thinking about interpretive issues from the start.

The poem sets the scene with the information that Matthew is the first gospel writer, and that the Mermedonians are cannibals. Their grisly habit of putting out their victims' eyes with the point of a spear is described as *þæs folces freoðoleas tacen* (l. 29). The *DOE* renders this line as 'that folk's hostile sign', but in the context of what we have seen about the poet's use of the word *friþ* 'the sign of that folk's outcast state' might be more accurate. Spiritual blindness is such a pervasive motif in Old English texts that this image of the Mermedonians attacking the literal *eagena gesihð* ('sight of the eyes', l. 30b) and *heafodgimmas* ('gems of the head', l. 31b) juxtaposed with the language of signification in line 29, ought to begin to alert the reader to the idea of reading beyond the literal.

Close on the heels of this image of literal blinding, the poet describes the Mermedonians' other unsavory habit of poisoning their captives such that their minds (called *gewit, ingeþanc, heorte,* and *hyge* in ll. 35–36) are turned and changed. Thus the outer sensory state and the inner intellectual state are brought into alignment. The im-

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[70] Nathan A. Breen, ' "What a long, strange trip it's been": Narration, Movement and Revelation in the Old English *Andreas*', *Essays in Medieval Studies* 25 (2008), 71–79, p. 75. For an alternative reading of the narrator's interruption which looks at the passage in terms of theories of register, translation, and reception, see John Miles Foley, 'The Poet's Self-Interruption in *Andreas*', *Prosody and Poetics in the Early Middle Ages: Essays in Honour of C.B. Hieatt* ed. M.J. Toswell (Toronto, 1995), pp. 42–59.

plication that an animal-like state is associated with blinkered spiritual perception was commonplace. It appears, for example, in Boethius, which places animals below men in a hierarchy of perception (Book V Prose 4) and describes how evil men lose their human nature and behave like wild beasts (Book IV Prose 3).[71] Nebuchadnezzar becomes like an animal as a result of his failures of interpretation in *Daniel*, and *Solomon and Saturn I* says that one who is unable to worship Christ *weallað swa nieten, / feldongende feoh butan gewitte* ('meanders like a beast, like field-going cattle without understanding', ll. 22b–23).[72] What makes animals lower than humans is that they cannot reason, and so rely too much on their senses—so the images of men behaving like animals is a signal to the reader not to passively accept what they hear, but to apply their intellect to the narrative.

When Matthew arrives in the city he is blinded and given the *atres drync* ('poison drink', l. 53a). However, where the other victims' *heortan* ('hearts', l. 36a) were affected by the poison, Matthew maintains his spiritual sight and is still able to praise God in his *heortan* (l. 52a) and pray for aid. Lexis of light and clarity clusters in Matthew's prayer and God's response. The initial stresses of lines 77 and 78 juxtapose Matthew's request for *leoht* ('light') with his state of being *ablended* ('blinded'). In response to Matthew's prayers, a *wuldres tacen* ('sign of glory', l. 88b) appears in the cell. The *tacen* is described only vaguely but in distinctly visual terms. It is called a *hadre sigel* ('clear sun', l. 89b), which echoes the language at Matthew's blinding, when his eyes are described as *his heafdes segl abreoton* ('his head's bright sun', ll. 50b–51a).[73] The poet is deliberately ambiguous about the point at which Matthew's sight is restored, if it

[71] *De Consolatione Philosophiae*, pp. 149–150 and 108–111. These passages are equivalent to B text Ch. 41/C text Prose 32 and B text Ch. 37/C text Prose 26 of the Old English Boethius.
[72] Translation Anlezark's. *Solomon and Saturn,* pp. 60 and 61.
[73] Brooks notes that both in these instances and in l. 1456, where the reference is clearly to the literal sun, "the MS gives forms of *segl* 'sail', but the sense demands *sigel*." He hypothesizes that perhaps "in an earlier MS of *Andreas* the word was expressed in all three places by the rune, which was afterwards wrongly expanded by a copyist." *Andreas,* p. 64. This scene also resembles the moment in *Beowulf* when Beowulf spies the ancient sword in Grendel's mother's cave, which is said to shine *hadre* (brightly) like the sun (there called *rodores candel* 'sky's candle', l. 1571b).

is at all, and both the visual description of the sign, and the explanation of its significance (that *þær gecyðed wearð / þæt halig God helpe gefremede*, 'there it was made known that holy God would provide help', ll. 90b–91) come *before* the narrator describes the voice that spoke to Matthew. This tells us something about how the poet conceives of signs—the meaning of the miracle is fixed, regardless of whether Matthew can perceive it, or whether it is intended to communicate to Matthew or to the reader.

The analogues treat this scene differently. The Latin and Greek versions make it explicit that Matthew is not affected by the poison, while the Old English homily says that he refused to eat it. All three also make it clear that Matthew's sight is restored when the miraculous light appears. Irving, who is interested in the aesthetic qualities of the poem, praises its version as the more "dramatically effective" one because the contrast between the violence of the Mermedonians and the quiet strength of Matthew is "purely paratactic, not causal; Matthew does not feel thus merely because the poison has not worked."[74] What this difference between the poem and its analogues also does is emphasize the victory of the spiritual over the physical. Matthew is so holy that although the poison assaults his body, his mind remains clear. When Matthew laments that he must *dæde fremman swa þa dumban neat* ('perform the actions of the mute animals', l. 67), it is not clear whether he is mimicking the other prisoners so as not to attract the attention of the guards, or if the poison really has forced his body, but not his mind, into these behaviours. In either case, his inner and outer states are at odds: he does not *think* like an animal, because *him wæs Cristes lof / on fyrhðlocan fæste bewunden* ('Christ's love was firmly wound in his breast', ll. 57b–58). Although he is blind he retains his mental faculties, and although he is mute he is still able to address God through silent prayer. He therefore models a way of understanding and communicating that goes beyond words and senses.

[74]Irving, 'Poem as Poem', p. 217.

The description of how mindful God is of Matthew's plight equates Matthew's suffering among the bloodthirsty yet bureaucratic Mermedonians to Christ's suffering among the Jews. Christ *galdorcræftum / wiðstod* ('withstood the enchantment', ll. 166b–167a) just as Matthew withstands the poison of the Mermedonian magicians. Irving finds the image of writing slaughter-wolves contradictory, but it suits the alignment of the Mermedonians with the Jews, whose two defining characteristics, as far as Old English depictions go, are their obsessive attachment to the written word and their murder of Christ.[75]

The actions of the Mermedonians often mimic those of the Apostles. For example, the Apostles disperse to spread the word of God according as God *hlyt getæhte* ('assigned [them] lots', l. 6b), and the Mermedonians let the *taan wisian* ('twigs show the way' l. 1099b) in determining who of their party must die as food for the others. In addition, Waugh has observed that "the cannibals enact a kind of parody bible from a location next to the prison (they regulate their dietary practices and decide upon the death day of their victims, write it down, and, rather absurdly, stick to their established schedule so that the deaths of their victims amount to a kind of doomsday [lines 134–7])."[76] Their most transgressive actions are typologically related to Christian history and ritual, but in the versions they perform, the meaning of the ritual is perverted by excessive literalism.

This is most apparent in the episode in which the man chosen by lots to die to feed the others fearfully offers up his *sylfes sunu* ('his own son', l. 1109a) in his place.[77] As Godlove has pointed out, the Mermedonians' cannibalism in general is "a parodic version of the Christian ritual of the Eucharist," and in this particular sacrifice we

[75] Irving, 'Poem as Poem', pp. 218–219. For more on how the literalism and carnality of the Mermedonians relates to contemporary Christian depictions of the Jews, see Godlove, 'Bodies as Borders'.
[76] Waugh, 'City as Speaker', p. 260
[77] John Casteen argues, based on the episodes of the Old Testament which allude to parents eating their children, that this act is not the sin, but the punishment for the sin of rejecting "God and his designated agents." Casteen, 'Mermedonian Cannibalism', p. 78.

should see resonances of "the typological tradition that sees Abraham's sacrifice of his own son Isaac as a prefiguration of Christ's sacrifice for mankind".[78] The Mermedonians seek to literally eat the son in order *lifes to leofne* ('to sustain their life', l. 1123a), whereas Christians figuratively eat the Son in order to maintain their spiritual lives. The blindness of the Mermedonians, like the blindness of the Jews, is excessive literalism. What readings like Godlove's don't engage with is how—and why—the poem guides its readers to this typological reading. This episode departs significantly from its source material, and is reshaped in a way that emphasizes the typological resonance. Both the Greek and Latin versions say that there were seven elders chosen to die, of whom one offered both his son and his daughter in his place. (The Blickling homily omits the entire episode.) Linking Abraham's interrupted sacrifice of Isaac to the Crucifixion is elementary typological reading. It would be possible for a reader already thinking in typological terms about the text to connect the seventh Mermedonian's sacrifice of two children to the binding of Isaac, but the poet has altered the narrative to make this reading much easier—almost unavoidable. What the poet seems to be doing here is teaching the reader how the poem should be read. He offers an easy, unmissable typology, in the context of a narrative about blindness and excessive literalism. Its effect is to alert the reader to their own blindness if they take texts (and their spiritual lives more generally) too literally. The consequence of applying that lesson to the text is greater awareness of the potential for typological signification elsewhere in the narrative.

DIALOGUE BETWEEN ANDREAS AND GOD

The central manifestation of blindness in the poem is Andreas's failure to recognize God as a result of his doubts about the extent to which he is protected by God. These

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[78] Godlove, 'Bodies as Borders', pp. 140, 152.

themes are developed in the section of the poem in which Andreas converses with God during the journey to Mermedonia.

Motifs of seeing and knowing permeate the entire conversation on the boat. Forms of *(ge)cyðian* ('to reveal, make known') appear 14 times in the 352-line stretch of the poem that runs from the time Andreas lulls his followers to sleep with his story of Christ on the boat until Andreas falls asleep himself (ll. 469–821).[79] Even after the Captain asks Andreas about miracles performed *on digle* ('in secret', l. 626a), Andreas is intent on continuing his catalogue of public miracles, and goes on to talk about miracles wrought *fore þam heremægene* ('before the multitude', l. 728b), *on wera gemange* ('in the company of men', l. 730b), and *fore weorodum* ('before the crowds', l. 736a).

The theme of the entire conversation appears to be *oculos habent, et non videbunt* ('they have eyes, *but* they *see not*', Psalm 134:16).[80] This idea—in various iterations—comes up again and again in the Bible: in Psalms 113 and 134 the subject of this expression is the idols of the Gentiles, and by extension, the Gentiles themselves. In Isaiah 6:10 and 42:20, Jeremiah 5:21, and Ezekiel 12:2 the subject of the expression is the Israelites. Matthew 13:14 says that Christ speaks in parables in order to fulfil Isaiah: *Et adimpletur in eis prophetia Esaiae, dicens, "Auditu audietis et non intellegetis, et videntes videbitis et non videbitis"* ('and the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled in them, *who* saith: "By hearing you shall hear and shall not understand, and seeing you shall see and shall not perceive" ').[81] In Mark 8:18 Christ admonishes the apostles themselves: *Oculos habentes non videtis, et aures habentes non auditis, nec recordamini*? ('having eyes see you not, and having ears hear you not, neither do you remember?'). The two Gospel

[79] There are a total of 24 instances of the word across the poem. See ll. 564, 571, 575, 585, 606, 625, 680, 700, 704, 711, 784, 796, 803, and 812.

[80] Biblical quotations and translations are from the Dumbarton Oaks Medieval Library editions of the Vulgate and Douay Rheims, edited by Swift Edgar and Angela M. Kinney. I follow the numbering of the Psalms found there. In some traditions, Psalm 113 is numbered 115, and 134 is numbered 135.

[81] There are several other resonances with Matthew—see Earl 'Typological Structure', p. 84 and Gayle Henrotte, 'Jesus Asleep in the Boat: a Thrice-told Tale' in *De Gustibus: Essays for Alain Renoir* ed. John Miles Foley, J. Chris Womack and Whitney A. Womack, Albert Bates Lord Studies in Oral Tradition 11 (London, 1992), pp. 250–265, p. 252.

quotations obviously speak to the poem, as the apostle Andrew demonstrates that he does indeed 'see not' even as he tells the story of how the Jews saw and did not perceive. The iterations in Isaiah are relevant as the source for Matthew, and also because the ultimate source for the depiction of the Seraphim in *Andreas* is Isaiah 6. Nancy Porter has argued that the specific half-line 719b in which they Saraphim are named is more immediately of liturgical origin, but more recently Helen Appleton has demonstrated that the Book of Isaiah was a major source of the imagery in *Andreas*.[82] Appleton writes, of this particular parallel:

> The seraph of Isaiah brings a hot coal to cleanse the prophets' lips to allow him to preach to the people, but they will neither heed him nor believe the vision (Isaiah 6:5–10). The stone seraph of *Andreas* takes a similar role, berating the priests of the temple who refuse to recognize the miracle.[83]

Isaiah's need to be purified by the burning coal in order to become a fit messenger also resonates both with Andreas' transformation into a fit messenger through his suffering and with the baptismal fires in Mermedonia.

There are additional thematic parallels between this particular chapter of Isaiah and *Andreas.* Verse 8 models the response Andreas should have offered God in the first place:

> Et audivi vocem Domini dicentis, "Quem mittam? Et quis ibit nobis?"
> Et dixi, "Ecce: ego sum; mitte me."
>
> [And I heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send? And who shall go for us?" And I said, "Lo: here am I; send me."]

Verses 9 and 10 contain God's instructions to *excaeca cor populi huius* ('blind the heart of this people', 6:9) that is, to prevent them from seeing and believing, and therefore from converting and seeking salvation. Isaiah asks: *usquequo, Domine?* ('how long, O

[82] Nancy A. Porter, 'Wrestling with loan-words: poetic use of "engel", "seraphim" and "cherubim" in *Andreas* and *Elene*', *NM* 89 (1988), 155–170, pp. 159–160; Helen Appleton, 'The Book of Isaiah as an Influence on *Andreas*' *Notes and Queries* 62:1 (2015), 1–6. Appleton also argues that *Andreas* depicts the Mermedonians' cannibalism as a consequent of the barrenness of their land, which signifies their exclusion from covenant. This further helps to explain the poet's use of the term *freoðoleas*, discussed above on p. 100.

[83] Appleton, 'Book of Isaiah', p. 2.

Lord?', 6:11) and God answers, *donec desolentur civitates absque habitatore* ('until the cities be wasted without inhabitant', 6:12). This exchange also has a clear analogue in *Andreas*, where the Mermedonians remain blind to the truth, despite all evidence, until their city is wasted.

However, it was the Psalter which was, as George Brown puts it, "the most studied text of the Middle Ages".[84] Susan Gillingham has likewise emphasized the extent of the use of the Psalms:

> In whichever tradition, no other biblical book was as widely used as the Psalms. Even outside monastic communities, by the tenth century – in the eastern churches as well as in the west – the Psalter was so well known through its offices that it became a 'reading primer' for monks and nuns, and indeed for anyone who could afford to pay for lessons in literacy.[85]

She also offers more detail about the Benedictine use of the Psalter in particular:

> The Rule of Benedict promoted the recital of the whole Psalter once a week and so influenced the way in which some psalms became more prominent than others through liturgical use. Psalms 3, 4, 15, 34, 51, 63, 67, 70, 91, 95, 118, 134, 143 and 148–50 are repeatedly used.[86]

If the Psalms were the most regularly read and recited of Biblical texts, and Psalm 134 among those that were used most frequently, it is likely that it would have been Psalm 134 which would have sprung to mind first for a medieval reader contemplating the poem's treatment of the theme of having eyes and seeing not. This psalm begins and ends with praise of the Lord. In between, it discusses His power over the sea and the weather (verses 6–7), the *signa et prodigia* ('signs and wonders') He showed in Egypt in the time of Moses (verse 9), His smiting foreign nations and kings and turning their land over to Israel (verses 10–12), and the insensible idols of the Gentiles (verses 15–18).

In this psalm's subject matter, there are many parallels with *Andreas,* particularly with the conversation on the boat. These parallels become even more apparent when we take the psalm in the context of Cassiodorus' exegesis of it. The presence of

[84] George Brown, 'The Psalms as the Foundation of Anglo-Saxon Learning' *The Place of the Psalms in the Intellectual Culture of the Middle Ages* ed. Nancy Van Deusen (Albany, 1999), pp. 1-24, p. 3.
[85] Gillingham, *Psalms Through the Centuries: Volume One,* p. 53.
[86] Gillingham, *Psalms Through the Centuries: Volume One,* p. 53.

Cassiodorus' *Expositio psalmorum* in Anglo-Saxon England is attested by its appearance in two inventories, four manuscripts, and citations by seven different authors. Bede's use of the *Exposito psalmorum* is particularly extensive. Among psalm commentaries that circulated in Anglo-Saxon England, there is more evidence for Cassiodorus' than for any other apart from Augustine's.[87] Cassiodorus' commentary is a useful index for how the *Andreas* poet might have been thinking about Psalm 134 because his exegesis is fundamentally typological, as *Andreas* is. Augustine by contrast dwells rather on *what* the psalm means than *how* it means: his reading articulates how the psalm expresses something of the nature of God, His unknowability in this world (except refracted through his created things), and the promise of clear sight of Him in heaven.[88] These are all themes which have relevance to *Andreas*, but Cassiodorus' approach to the psalm is more useful for demonstrating its relationship to *Andreas* at the level of the individual verse.

Verse 4 of Psalm 134 refers to the Lord's choosing Jacob. Cassiodorus explains the symbolism inherent in naming Jacob, rather than Abraham, in this verse as follows:

> *Iacob* siquidem supplantatorem […] Quod ad euocatam uniuersitatem gentium competenter aptatur, quae aduentum Domini Saluatoris ad se credulitate trahens, Synagogae munera promissa percepit et priorem populum religiosa festinatione superauit. […] *Elegit* itaque *Iacob,* dum Ecclesiae populum diuersarum gentium congregatione subadunauit.[89]
>
> [Jacob means supplanter [...] and this is fittingly associated with the summons delivered to the mass of the Gentiles. By their belief they arrogated to themselves the Lord Saviour's coming, obtained the gifts promised to the synagogue, and outdid in their religious urgency the people who preceded them [...] So He chose Jacob when He united the peoples of different nations in the assembly of the Church.][90]

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[87] See Lapidge, *The Anglo-Saxon Library* pp. 288 and 296. For a history of Cassiodorus' influence on Western Churches, see Gillingham, *Psalms Through the Centuries: Volume One,* pp. 57–58.
[88] *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers First Series: Volume VIII. St Augustine: Expositions on the Psalms* ed. Philip Schaff and Arthur Cleveland Coxe (New York, 2007), pp.624-627. [Originally published in 1888.] The psalm is listed here as number CXXXV.
[89] *Magni Aurelii Cassiodori: Expositio Psalmorum LXXI–CL,* Corpus Christianorum Series Latina 98: Cassiodorus 2.2: Expositio Psalmorum 71–150 (Turnhout, 1958), p. 1215.
[90] Translations of Cassiodorus are by Walsh. *Cassiodorus: Explanation of the Psalms* Vol. III, Psalms 101–150, trans. P.G. Walsh, Ancient Christian Writers: The Works of the Fathers in Translation No. 53, ed. by Walter J Burghardt and Thomas Comerford Lawyer (Mahwah NJ, 1991), p. 343.

This interest in the supplanting of the old, exclusive covenant by the new, inclusive one, is paralleled in *Andreas:* the saint's story about the unbelieving Jews prefigures his experience with an unbelieving gentile people who eventually are united in the assembly of the Church, thereby supplanting the Jewish people.

Psalm 134 also explores themes of seeing God and the limitations of physical sight, as *Andreas* does. Verse 4 refers to Jacob both as Jacob and as Israel, which Cassiodorus glosses as *uir uidens Deum* ('the person who sees God').[91] Cassiodorus states that the words *quia ego cognovi quod magnus est Dominus* ('for I have known that the Lord is great') in the next verse indicate that the prophet knows this to be true *non aliqua uisione carnali, sed in illa altitudine scientiae positus, ibi magnum contemplates est Dominum* ('not through any vision of the flesh, but through his eminence on the height of knowledge where he has beheld the mighty Lord')—in other words, through his spiritual sight.[92]

Verses 6–7, on God's control of sea and storms, are particularly relevant to the sea-journey in *Andreas* because the plot device that sets up the private conversation between Andreas and the Ship's Captain relies upon God's power over the weather in calling up the storm and controlling the ship's movement through it. (Boenig points out that "the storm is absent in both the Greek romance and the Old English homily."[93] There is a storm in the Latin analogue, though it is not described with such relish as the storm in *Andreas*.[94]) Certainly the poem does demonstrate the Lord's power *in caelo, in terra, in mare et in omnibus abyssis* ('in heaven, in earth, in the sea, and in all the deeps', Psalm 134:6). Furthermore, Cassiodorus offers a reading of these lines in which the wind refers to the apostles, and *praedicationes itaque prophetarum* fulgara *sunt,*

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[91] *Expositio Psalmorum,* p. 1215; *Cassiodorus: Psalms*, p. 343.
[92] *Expositio Psalmorum,* p. 1215; *Cassiodorus: Psalms*, p. 344.
[93] Boenig, *Saint and Hero*, p. 50.
[94] Boenig, *Acts of Andrew*, p. 33.

cum percutiunt inimicos; pluuiae, *com deuotos a peccatis diluunt, et imbrem eis salutis infundunt* ('the preachings of the prophets, then, are *lightnings* when they shatter enemies, and *rain* when they cleanse committed persons from their sins and pour showers of salvation upon them.')[95] This combination of violence and mercy attributed to the prophets is equally applicable to Andreas' dealings in Mermedonia.

Verses 8–9 relate the *signa et prodigia* shown in Egypt which failed to persuade Pharaoh. In *Andreas,* the subject of the dialogue on the boat (and the driver of later events in Mermedonia) is the failures of *signa et prodigia* to persuade, such as when Christ preached in the temple but *synnige ne swulgon þeah he soðra swa feala / tacna gecyðde þær hie to segon* ('the sinful men did not take it in though he made known truths to many by signs there where they could see', ll. 710a–711). Just as Pharaoh was unpersuaded by the sequence of plagues because God hardened his heart, so neither the Jews Andreas describes in the boat nor the Mermedonians he will encounter later are converted by the miracles they witness until God's larger plans and patterns are fulfilled. Cassiodorus elucidates these lines by giving an Augustinian definition of a sign, then describing the role that signs have in conversion in the present day. He says that Aegyptus *hic mundus est* ('*Egypt* stands for this world') and equates the signs shown in Egypt with those signs that appeared *palam atque visibiliter* ('openly and clearly') at the crucifixion (including, significantly, that *saxa dirupta sunt,* 'rocks were cleft asunder').[96] There are then clear parallels between the unbelieved signs in Egypt, those in the life of Christ (as described by Andreas), and those performed by saints and apostles (such as Andreas).

The psalm's account, in verses 10–12, of God's driving out Gentile nations so Israel may have their land as an inheritance prefigures the displacement of the Old Law by the New in Israel, and also the missions of the apostles, which increase the territory

[95] *Expositio Psalmorum,* p. 1216; *Cassiodorus: Psalms*, p. 345.
[96] *Expositio Psalmorum,* p. 1217; *Cassiodorus: Psalms*, pp. 345–346.

of Christendom and bring new nations into the Christian inheritance. Cassiodorus confirms this:

> Versus iste declarant priora illa non ad litteram debere suscipi, sed spiritali exposition sentiri. Nam terra promissionis israelitico populo non est hereditas data, quia eam suis offensionibus amiserunt; sed sub illorum praefiguratione terra repromissionis datur sine dubio Christianis, quam aeterna pace possideant. Nam ut istam deberes aduertere, repetit, hereditatem Israel populo suo. Israel enim interpretatur (sicut saepe iam dictum est) uir uidens Deum.[97]
>
> [This verse [12] makes clear that the previous passage is not to be interpreted literally, but taken in the spiritual sense. The land of promise was not given as an inheritance to the people of Israel, for they lost it through their transgressions. Undoubtedly behind this prefiguration of the Jews, the land of promise is being awarded to Christians for them to possess in eternal peace. So that you should grasp this prefiguration, he repeated: *For an inheritance to his people Israel*; for Israel, as we have often said, means "one who beholds God."][98]

In Cassiodorus' interpretation, even verse 14, *quia iudicabit Dominus populum suum* ('for the Lord will judge his people'), has a clear relevance to the subject of the conversation between Andreas and the Captain, for he sees this as an allusion to the *detestabili obstinantione* ('accursed obstinancy') of the Jewish people who did not believe, even when they observed miracles, prophets, and Christ Himself.[99]

And finally, the psalm's dwelling on the insensible idols and the blindness of the Gentiles in verses 15–18 not only fits the poem's themes of spiritual blindness, but resonates with the peculiar inversions of the poem, in which Matthew cannot see or speak, but stones can:

> 15 Simulacra Gentium argentum et aurum, opera manuum hominum. 16 Os habent, et non loquentur; oculos habent, et non videbunt. 17 Aures habent, et non audient, neque enim est spiritus in ore eorum. 18 Similes illis fiant qui faciunt ea et omnes qui confidunt in eis.
>
> [15 The idols of the Gentiles are silver and gold, the works of men's hands. 16 They have a mouth, *but* they *speak not*; they have eyes, *but* they *see not*. 17 They have ears, *but* they *hear not*, *neither* is there any breath in their mouths. 18 Let them that make them be like to them and every one that trusteth in them.]

In proposing these links to Psalm 134, I am offering yet another typological reading of *Andreas*. However, what I would like to emphasize is the mutual reinforce-

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[97] *Expositio Psalmorum,* p. 1218.
[98] *Cassiodorus: Psalms*, p. 347.
[99] *Expositio Psalmorum,* p. 1220; *Cassiodorus: Psalms*, p. 348.

ment between the different levels of meaning which this particular scriptural allusion illustrates. Reading the poem typologically leads to scriptural allusions which contain motifs of seeing and not seeing, which reinforce the same motif found at the literal level of narrative and lexical patterning in the poem. The reinforcement of themes of seeing, revealing, and understanding at both the literal and typological levels leads to the moral lesson that anyone—Jew, Gentile, and even Apostle—can be afflicted with spiritual blindness. A reader who applies that tropological lesson to their own life might consider their own blind spots, and the possibility that they are not perceiving the full spiritual meaning of things. A reader who returns to the poem with that lesson in mind is likely to pay more attention to both the motif of blindness, and to the poem's potential to signify typologically, so the cycle continues.

David Hamilton argues that the function of the strange situation on the boat is to convey a message to the reader about figural reading:

> Andreas's inability to identify his Lord despite all the knowledge he is able to summon brings the ironic structure to its highest pitch and dramatizes the profound mystery of revelation [...] since any ironic passage must be interpreted so that first it contradicts and then it transcends its surface meaning, irony urges us past the literal sense of the text and directs us towards allegory.[100]

Hamilton is right: the irony of the situation directs the reader towards allegory. But so does the content of the conversation—over and over again. The poem's dialogue in general, but especially in the scene on the boat, serves a complementary purpose to the narrative action. The *actions* of the poem are meant to be read typologically. The *dialogue*, however, is the location of many of the messages to the reader that such typological reading is necessary. The content of the conversation between Andreas and God is all on the theme of not seeing what is before your eyes, and it therefore signals to the reader that it is necessary to look beyond surface appearances.

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[100] David Hamilton, 'The Diet and Digestion of Allegory in *Andreas*', *ASE* 1 (1972), 147–158, p. 157.

The journey episode has received less critical attention than the events in Mermedonia, but most of that attention has been in the same tradition as Hill's 'Figural Narrative in *Andreas*'. Abdou's recent examination of speech and power in the poem sets to one side the tradition of typological reading and asks what the narrative purpose of this episode is; she concludes that it is a chance for Andreas to fill himself with the sorts of words and stories which will be useful to him in Mermedonia.[101] Most other scholarship on this episode focusses on typological resonances. Hamilton offers a brief (his word is "glib") summary of the episode: "Christ [...] brings Andreas across the Water of Life aboard the Vessel of the Eucharist."[102] Earl breaks the poem into three 'plots' (the rescue of Matthew, the conversation on the boat, the torture of Andreas) and explores the resonances between them, including the way that "Andrew's mission itself is a sub-fulfillment of Christ's mission to the Jews; and within the typological framework of the poem the conversion of the Mermedonians is a prefiguration of the final gathering of the Jews into the faith."[103] Most recently, Anlezark has written that "the rest given to the disciples by Christ recalls both Noah in the ark and Christ's typological association with him, and together these associations leave little doubt that the boat in which Andrew and his companions travel symbolizes the ship of the Church."[104]

Constance Hieatt's article 'The Harrowing of Mermedonia' is the earliest scholarship I am aware of to catalogue the several ways in which the stories Andreas tells on the ship prefigure the events in Mermedonia, and it is still one of the most thorough typological readings of this episode. Her article is persuasive in many of its details, but unconvincing in its larger argument that the primary typological purpose of the sea journey is that it signifies the death of Andreas. She finds indications of imminent death in the phrasing of God's command to undertake the journey, and in the similarity

[101] Angela Abdou, 'Speech and Power'.
[102] Hamilton, 'Diet and Digestion', p. 152.
[103] Earl, 'Typological Structure', p. 85.
[104] Anlezark, *Water and Fire,* p. 213.

to metaphorical sea voyages in Old English poetry (such as *The Seafarer*). However, it makes more sense to see such voyages as journeys *to* death than journeys that *are* death. The underlying assumption in Hieatt's reading is that: "logically, Andrew's symbolic 'death' should precede the three days in the grave."[105] However, it is not necessary for the poem to have a single typological thrust, or for a typological scheme to proceed chronologically in order to be unified.

In observing how the poem guides the reader towards an attitude conducive to figural interpretation, it is essential to bear in mind the typological resonances Hieatt observes within the poem, as well as the links to Psalm 134 proposed above. The tropological level of reading does not only spring from the literal independently of the typological; typological reading can give rise to tropological readings contingent on the previous interpretive step.

When the storm comes up, Andreas comforts his men by telling a story about an analogous situation when he was in a boat with Christ, without realizing quite how perfectly alike the situations are (ll. 438–460). When he says, *ic þæt sylfa wat, / þæt us gescyldeð scyppend engla* ('I know for myself that the creator of angels shields us', ll.433b–434), the reader cannot help but realize that Andreas is more right than he knows. The way that the reader derives meaning beyond what Andreas could have intended from his words is analogous to the poem's relationship to its source material. The poet has taken a basic framework of potential typological associations present in the Greek and Latin analogues and expanded upon them greatly—for example, in the insertion of allusions to Old Testament figures, and in details such as the emphasis on the material of the stone statue, which makes it more clearly a figure for the Church. The poet has uncovered typological resonances in the legend which were unknown to its

[105] Hieatt, 'Harrowing of Mermedonia', p. 57.

authors. This is possible because, as the poem illustrates on several occasions, God can cause man's works to signify in ways man did not expect.[106]

Normally it is man who interprets God's words, but early on in the sea-voyage, the roles are reversed. God performs a miracle by guiding the ship calmly through the storm, and also acts as interpreter of that miracle, 'reading' the situation for Andreas. He tells him:

> Forþan is gesyne, soð orgete,
> cuð oncnawen, þæt ðu cyninges eart
> þegen geþungen þrymsittendes. (*Andreas,* ll. 526–8)
>
> [Therefore it is seen, the truth evident, recognizable acknowledged, that you are the distinguished thegn of the king, of the one who sits in glory.]

Jonathan Wilcox is one of the few scholars to argue that there is deliberate humour in scenes such as this. (Many critics are uncomfortable with the idea that Andreas could be both comic and holy—Hamilton, for example, tentatively says that Andreas "threatens to become a comic figure" and follows it up quickly with a "nevertheless...".[107]) Wilcox highlights several ways in which the *Andreas* poet takes moments of dramatic irony two steps beyond what was present in his source material, and draws attention to the ironies in a series of epithets Andreas uses for God in this scene, not least that "the *lifes leohtfruma* (light-giver of life) is taking Andrew to a land where visitors lose sight of the light through blinding and then are deprived of life."[108] He argues persuasively that this piling up of irony is done for the sake of comic effect.

There is humour here, but there is also a challenge in that humour. Wilcox argues that as a genre "saints' lives are fundamentally ironic, being premised upon a dual-

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[106] C.f. Martin Irvine on Augustine: "For Augustine, conflict among interpretations remains unproblematic at the level of signification: God, who inspired the author, foresaw that various meanings would be understood, and polysemy is regarded as a mark of God's generosity. Furthermore, the process of interpreting signs through further signs reveals that the production of meaning does not depend on the intentions of a writer." Irvine, *Textual Culture,* p. 258.

[107] Hamilton, 'Diet and Digestion', p. 157.

[108] Jonathan Wilcox, 'Eating People is Wrong: Funny Style in *Andreas* and its Analogues' in *SUNY Series in Medieval Studies: Anglo-Saxon Styles* ed. Catherine E. Karkov and George Hardin Brown (Albany, 2003), 201–222, p. 202.

ity of vision. The tormentors and the worldly see things one way, the saint and the saved (and the perceptive audience) see them in another." However, this duality is destabilized in *Andreas* when the reader finds that their own vision is in fact, clearer than the saint's—we know that the ship's Captain is God long before Andreas does. As in many of the Exeter Book riddles, amusement and instruction come together. When Andreas puts his foot in his mouth on the boat, it is an entertaining farce, but it also conveys a serious message: if the hero of the tale can misread a situation this badly, so can you. Don't assume that only bad people (i.e., the Mermedonians, the Jews) can misread, or fail to read deeply.

Likewise, when Andreas relates how the statue tells the doubting priests, *magan eagum nu / geseon sigores God* ('you may now see with your eyes the God of victory', l. 759b–760a), the dramatic irony of Andreas' repeating these words to the Captain when he cannot see that the Captain is God draws the reader in as a participant in making meaning from the narrative. The reader is then left to take the next step, and realize that the lesson Andreas needs to learn is one they should learn too: if you are taking this story at face value, you are not as clever as you think you are. Even Apostles can be mistaken if God allows it, so read humbly, open to the spiritual message.

In response to the Captain's reading of the situation, Andreas praises God, and praises the ship's Captain—in the process emphasizing the unknowable:

> Nænig manna is
> under heofonhwealfe hæleða cynnes,
> ðætte areccan mæge oððe rim wite
> hu ðrymlice, þeoda baldor,
> gasta geocend, þine gife dælest. (*Andreas,* ll. 544b–548)
>
> [Nor is there any man under the vault of heaven, of mankind, who may relate or at all recount how gloriously, ruler of nations, comforting spirit, you deal out favour.]

The truth of this lesson is underlined by the circumstances in which it is spoken: by a man who does not recognize God in front of his eyes, and who will have to be reminded

several more times over the course of several hundred lines of the extent to which he is in receipt of God's favour before he finally understands.

From Andreas' exclamations about what is unknowable about God, God turns the conversation to the Jews who rejected Christ although he performed miracles before them. The poet emphasizes the importance of this theme by stating it twice in only a few lines—first the Captain wonders if it is true that the Jews did not believe *þeah ðe he wundra feala weorodum gecyðde / sweotulra ond gesynra* ('though he revealed many wonders to the multitude, evident and seen', ll. 564–565a), then reiterates that Christ *frætre þeode beforan cyðde* ('revealed [wonders] before that obstinate people', l. 571). Andreas responds with a list of Christ's miracles reported in the Gospels, including healing the blind—but giving the prominent first position on the list to: *sealde he dumbum gesprec, deafe gehyrdon* ('he gave speech to the dumb, hearing to the deaf', l. 577). Neither the Greek or Latin analogue mentions giving speech to the dumb at all. Healing the deaf is third on the list in the Greek analogue, and omitted entirely in the Latin.[109] The version of the list of miracles in *Andreas* brings to mind Matthew, who through prayer to Christ is able to overcome the obstacles of his blindness and dumbness, even before his sight is actually restored.

Appropriately, the Ship's Captain is less interested in the restored literal vision of the beneficiaries of such miracles than the spiritual understanding of the witnesses to said miracles. His response to Andreas' account of the Gospel miracles is to ask whether it is true that:

> Beforan cyðde
> þær bisceopas ond boceras
> ond ealdormenn æht besæton,
> mæðelhægende? (*Andreas,* ll. 606b – 609a)
>
> [He revealed [these miracles] in the presence of the bishops and scholars and ealdormen who sat deliberating at council.]

[109] Boenig, *Acts of Andrew,* pp. 7, 36.

He does not ask: 'did he really perform these miracles' but 'did he really perform them in the correct forum, before those people who should have been wise enough to interpret them correctly?' Now, instead of the race of the people who saw the miracles, he emphasizes their status in society—these are people who should be leaders, readers, decision-makers. It is not uncommon for Old English writers to apply the term 'bishop' to non-Christian religious leaders: it is applied to King Edwin's pagan priest in the Old English translation of Bede's *Historia Ecclesiastica*,[110] and to an Indian priest in *The Letter of Alexander to Aristotle*.[111] However, there were other terms available—for example, in line 670b of *Andreas* a Jewish priest is called *ealdorsacerd* (elder-priest). The choice in this case to use familiar terms like 'bishop' and 'ealdorman' that apply as much to Anglo-Saxon society as to Jewish society allows readers more easily to align themselves with the Jews, and so find a moral in the scene which they can apply to themselves.

Andreas confirms that it is true that Christ performed *wundor æfter wundre* ('wonder after wonder', l. 620a) before the *folces ræswum* ('leaders of the people', l. 619b) and *on wera gesiehðe* ('in the sight of men', l. 620b). The Captain then turns the conversation to wonders performed *on digle* ('in secret', l. 626a). The reference to secret knowledge makes Andreas question—and begin to understand—the nature of his interlocutor: he responds by stating that the Captain clearly must know something about the subject already and wondering why, therefore, he is inquiring about it. Andreas comments upon his own increased knowledge in line 644, where he says that he can now truly know how wise the ship's Captain is. With characteristic lack of self-awareness, Andreas then proceeds to tell a story about someone who saw Christ but

[110] Cefi is called an *ealdorbisceop* in Book 2 Ch.X. *Bede's Ecclesiastical History Pt. 1* ed. and trans. Thomas Miller, EETS o.s. 95 and 96 (London, 1890), p. 134.
[111] The 'Bishop' appears in sections 35–40. Orchard, *Pride and Prodigies*, pp. 248–252.

could not recognize his divinity. He thus illustrates the pitfalls of over-confidence in one's reading—that a little learning is a dangerous thing.

His story is about one *ealdorsacerd* ('elder-priest', l. 670b) who *on gewitte oncneow* ('knew in his intellect', l. 672b) but refused to spiritually acknowledge the truth of Christ's divinity. Like the Jews in *Elene* he knows Christ's identity but only in a strictly literal way. He tells the apostles: you listen to an *ellþeodiges* ('foreign man's', l. 678b) teaching, but we know who he really is. He tries to dispel the mystique of the exotic by giving a history of Christ's upbringing and family relations. (Shortly thereafter, the speaking statue tells Christ's lineage much more thoroughly than the elder-priest did, speaking not of his immediate family but his great ancestors, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.) The elder priest intends the implication of his information to be: Christ is just a man, and therefore not God. Andreas evaluates the priest's intentions thus: *dyrnan þohton meotudes mihte* ('he thought to conceal the maker's might', l. 693b–694a). What the priest says is not false—but he is trying to conceal the spiritual truth of Christ's identity behind the literal truth of his identity. He does not understand that his information in fact validates and confirms the truth of Christ's message, because the literal and figural will always be seen to reinforce one another in the end.

This is one of several places (most of which are noted by Hieatt, though this one is not) where the stories Andreas relates on the boat prefigure events in Mermedonia. The mistake of the elder priest in Andreas' story is also the mistake of the devil who visits Andreas on his second night in the dungeon. He offers a misleadingly literal interpretation of Christ's life, and Andreas' motives:

> Hafast nu þe anum eall getihhad
> land ond leode, swa dyde lareow þin;
> cyneþrym ahof, þam wæs Crist nama,
> ofer middangeard, þynden hit meahte swa.
> Þone Herodes ealdre besnyðede
> forcom æt campe cyning Iudea,
> rices berædde, ond hine rode befealg,
> þæt he on gealgan his gast onsende. (*Andreas,* ll. 1320–1327)

> [Now you alone have claimed all land and people, as did your teacher whose name was Christ, raised up in royal majesty middle-earth, as long as it might be so. Then Herod deprived him of life, overcame at battle the king of the Jews, took away his kingdom, and consigned him to the Cross, so that he on the gallows sent forth his spirit.]

This depiction of Christ as a worldly king who died on a gallows, and his follower as winning land and subjects, has much literal truth in it but still fundamentally misunderstands Christ and his apostles. It is answered by a miracle in which a cross appears as a glorious sign (*mære tacen*, l. 1338b) on Andreas' face. This miracle signifies that the crucifixion signifies. It demonstrates that the devil's reading, in which the crucifixion points to nothing beyond itself, is wrong. The Cross is not an object, but a sign of itself, and the event is not as the devil describes it, but a text which points to meaning beyond itself.[112]

The episode of the speaking statue which follows on from the conflict with the elder-priest also emphasises the idea that man's creative works (including texts) can be animated to a deeper meaning than its author intended by God's will. The statues are created not by God's, but by man's *handmægen* ('hand-power', l. 725b). The language describing the creation of these likenesses of Seraphim and Cherubim is that of writing. They are described as being *amearcod* ('marked', l. 724b), which is the same verb used with reference to marble sculpture in *The Phoenix* (l. 333a), but then they are also said to be *awriten on wealle* ('written on the wall', l. 726a). This second phrase nods towards the poem's interest in texts, particularly the way things written by man can reveal spiritual truths beyond the author's (or sculptor's) intention if they are read with what Ælfric might call the *gastlic andgit* 'spiritual understanding'.[113]

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[112] Friesen notes that "in the Casanatensis account, the sign of the cross is consistently used against the pagans, first to kill the guards (XIX, 11–16), then to drive back the mob (XVII, 1–2). The Andreas-poet alters its depiction so that it is used, more in line with tradition, to drive back demons. On the present evidence, however, it remains unclear whether the Latin author is demonising pagans or the Old English author is redeeming heathens." ('Visions and Revisions', p. 84, f. 62)

[113] Ælfric uses this expression dozens of times. A useful example is in Homily 12 '*Dominica in Media Quadragessima*' of the first series of *Catholic Homilies*: *Ac we secgað eow þæt god sylf hi dihte & moyses hi awrat to steore & to lare þam ealdan folce israhel, & eac us on gastlicum andgite. Þa bec wæron*

The use of the lexis of writing also emphasizes the resemblance (noted by Hieatt) between this episode in Christ's life, and the episode in Andreas' conversion of the Mermedonians when he asks one of the stone pillars to remember that it was a stone on which God *ryhte æ / getacnode on tyn wordum* ('betokened his righteous law in ten statements', ll. 1511b–1512). The pillar's response (releasing a flood) confirms that it has *ondgitan* ('understanding', l. 1521a) of God. In both episodes, a stone architectural feature which should not be able to see, hear, or speak, demonstrates greater understanding than that shown by men who do have eyes and ears but do not believe. In the Greek analogue the pillar is surmounted by a statue, and the water comes out of its mouth. Marie Walsh argues that the change to a simple pillar emphasizes the typological link to Moses, who calls water from a rock at Horeb. Anlezark has taken this even further, demonstrating that the columns both "evoke a series of Old Testament types," and contribute to the resonances between this scene and the one leading up to the dragon fight in *Beowulf*.[114] The change from statue to bare pillar does two other things as well. Firstly, by rendering the pillar just a pillar, not a statue as the Seraph was, the poet makes the reader work a little harder to draw the connection between the two scenes. Secondly, it furthers a shift in emphasis to the architectural features' essential material over man's moulding of it. This can also be seen in the poet's treatment of the statue in the earlier scene: Penn Szittya identifies and explains the increased typological potential arising from the "surrealistic and unanticipated shift from the *anlicnes engelcynna* to *stan* in describing this curious object." He points out that "once it has leaped from the wall, no mention is made again of any angels nor indeed of any characterizing feature

awritene be criste ac þæt gastlice andgit wæs ðam folce digle oð þæt crist sylf com to mannum & geopenade þæra boca diglnysse ('But we say to you that God himself dictated them and Moses wrote them as rules and instructions for the old folk of Israel, and also for us with spiritual senses. The books were written about Christ and that spiritual understanding was hidden from that folk, until Christ himself came to men and opened the hiddenness of those books', ll. 79–83). *Catholic Homilies: First Series*, p. 278.

[114] Walsh, 'Baptismal Flood', p. 141; Anlezark, *Water and Fire*, pp. 215, 352.

except that it is a *stan*."[115] Both scenes express the potential of man's created things to signify, but move increasingly towards another point, which is the potential of God's created things to understand. This theme is also apparent in the Captain's explanation of why the waves fell back—he says: *hie ongeton þæt ðe God hæfde / wære bewunden* ('they understood that God had wound protection around you', ll. 534–535a). Both the stone pillar and the waves that quieten at Andreas' words—earth and sea—show that they have understanding (*ondgitan,* ll. 534a and 1521b) of their creator, and therefore that blind and mute nature can be a more accurate interpreter than human beings.

This is a paradox which is not fully developed in the analogues to *Andreas*, though it is explicitly addressed in some patristic texts. For example, Gregory tells a story in his *Dialogues* about a flood that happened in the time of Bishop Venantius. Venantius orders his deacon to instruct the flood to recede in his name, but the deacon just laughs. Venantius then writes the command and sends his servant to cast the written message into the flood waters, which immediately obey and recede. Gregory concludes the story by asking (in the words of the Old English translation):

> In þære wisan, Petrus, hwæt oðres magon we ongytan, buton þæt þær wæs onscynded manna heortena heardnes & heora unhyrsumnes, þa þæt unandgytfulle gesceaft þæs wætres wæs hyrende þam halgan were in his mægne?[116]
>
> [In that manner, Peter, what else may we understand, except that there was put to shame the hard-heartedness of men and their disobedience, that the unintelligent creation of the water was obedient to the holy man in his power?]

Andreas' statement to the pillar that God *ryhte æ / getacnode on tyn wordum* ('betokened his righteous law in ten statements'. ll. 1511b–1512) is the only occurrence of the verb *(ge)tacnian* in *Andreas*. Clearly, here it is used in the relatively rare sense of 'make a mark on a material object', but it is possible that the poet may be taking ad-

[115] Szittya, 'Living Stone', p. 172.
[116] *Bischof Waerferths von Worcester Uebersetzung der Dialoge Gregors des Grossen* ed. by Hans Hecht, Bibliothek Angelsächsischen Prosa 5 (Leipzig: Georg H. Wigand, 1900), ch. 10, p. 194, ll. 5–8. The Old English is faithful to the Latin here—*Grégoire le Grand: Dialogues v.1–2* ed. Adalbert de Vogüé (Paris, 1978), pp. 289–290 (Book III Chapter 10).

vantage of the fact that its more common senses relate to figural signification.[117] This scene sets up the typological connections (identified by Hieatt, Walsh, and Anlezark) which are available to the reader, but Andreas' address to the stone also effectively asks the stone itself to think in typological terms. In this, the poem is distinct from its analogues. In the Latin Casanatensis version, Andreas simply makes a sign of the cross and the statue obeys. The Greek Praxeis version does allude to the ten commandments as an example proving that the stone is not unworthy to praise God, but there Andrew does not ask the statue to *gecnawan* ('recognize', l. 1517a) or *ongitan* [...] *hæbbe* ('have understanding', l. 1521) as he does in *Andreas*, only to obey, out of fear of the Cross.[118] By portraying the stone pillar as a capable typological reader, the poet takes the blindness motif in this scene further than the analogues do, and also further than the earlier scene with the speaking statue, since a pillar, unlike a statue, does not have even the likeness of eyes.

In addition to their concerns with End Times and the blindness of the Jews, one of the things that *Andreas* and Fitt XIII of *Christ III* have in common is their folding of nature and architecture together into a single category, and their depiction of members of that category as good readers. In the homily which is the model for *Christ III*, Gregory lists ways that nature responds to Christ and only mentions architectural features incidentally as another way of talking about stone, in the phrase *saxa et parietes* ('stones and walls'). He says nothing about the walls that could not apply just as well to raw stone—and when Ælfric borrows the passage, he refers only to *stanas* ('stones').[119]

[117] The entry for 'ge-tácnian' in the 1921 Bosworth and Toller supplement (print edition) reads: "*Add:* I. *to mark.* (I) *make a mark on* a material object".
[118] "And looking up, Andrew stretched out his hands seven times, and he said to the pillar and the statue upon it, 'Be afraid of the image of the cross at which the heavens and the earth tremble, and let the statue resting upon the pillar bring up water through its mouth, until all the ones in the city are taught. And you will not say, "I am a stone, and I am not worthy to praise the Lord"; for the Lord molded us from earth, but you are clear of dirt; because of this, from you was given the tablets of the Law.' " Boenig *Acts of Andrew*, p. 20; see p. 51 for the Latin.
[119] 'VII Idvs Ianvarii Epiphania Domini', in *Catholic Homilies: First Series* p. 235, ll. 92–104. See also 'XV Dominica Pascae' pp. 305–306, ll. 171–182.

Christ III takes Gregory's whole phrase *saxa et parietes* as *muras ond stanas* ('walls and stones', l. 1142a), and prefaces it with a comparatively lengthy discourse on the rending of the temple curtain, probably inspired by Gregory's comment that the Jews do not wish to *scindi* 'be rent apart' for the sake of repentance. Between the curtain and the walls, *Christ III* spends 9.5 sequential lines discussing architectural features under the heading of *duman gesceaft* ('mute nature'). In this, we see the same willingness to exploit architecture's dual signification as a thing crafted by man and an element created by God that we have seen in *Andreas*.

Both *Andreas* and *Christ III* devote much attention to the depiction of poor interpreters, against whom readers can see themselves as good interpreters. The danger with this technique is that it can lead to complacency, and complacency leads to poor interpretation.[120] By using nature as an example of a better reader than the Jews, *Christ III*, like *Andreas*, suggests that although the reader is by implication a better interpreter than the Jews, there are still spiritual mysteries which the reader is not aware of. The means by which inanimate nature understood Christ are hidden from men, who cannot understand *þurh frod gewit* ('through experienced/wise intellect', *Christ III* l. 1177b) how created things perceived the significance of the crucifixion despite their lack of *ferðgewit* ('spiritual understanding', *Christ III* l. 1183b).

In *Andreas*, mystery and humour work together to deliver this lesson in humility. As well as using wonders such as the depiction of blind pillars performing a typological reading to warn the reader not to be too proud of their interpretive abilities, *Andreas* also uses the persistent misunderstanding of the saint himself to the same end. Andreas concludes his stories of Christ's miracles not with 'and so they saw and believed' but with a statement addressed, ironically, to the ship's Captain (and by extension, the reader) that 'now *you* have heard and may believe':

[120] See Graham D. Caie, 'The Old English *Daniel:* A Warning Against Pride', *English Studies* 59:1 (1978), 1–9, p. 4, for the link between complacency and pride.

Nu ðu miht gehyran, hyse leofesta,
hu he wundra worn wordum cyðde,
swa þeah ne gelyfdon larum sinum
modblinde menn. (*Andreas,* ll. 811–814a)

[Now you may hear, most beloved young man, how he revealed a great many wonders by his words, although the spiritually blind men did not believe his teaching.]

Line 811 is (as mentioned in the previous chapter) a Vercelli-specific formula which links this moment in *Andreas* to a moment in *Elene* which is about the recognition of Christ and the truth and significance of the Crucifixion.[121] Hieatt observes that the line closes an envelope pattern opened at line 595, near the beginning of the dialogue, thus signalling the end of the section.[122] Lines 811–814 recapitulate the motifs of the dialogue: wonders, revealing, blindness, words, and teaching. But the poet is not done with Andreas yet—to underscore his failure of perception and interpretation one last time, the poet has him tell the Captain that he knows much more besides, but that *ðu aræfnan ne miht* ('you might not bear it', l. 816b). Andreas' claim to be able to tell stories that the Ship's Captain 'could not bear', made just before he finally falls asleep, demonstrates that he does not understand the identity of his interlocutor even at the very end of their conversation.

Only when Andreas miraculously awakens safely on shore does he finally become a better reader. Now, he observes more carefully and reassesses what he has heard. He finally *examines* rather than simply *looks:* the narrator says that he *sceawode* ('examined', l. 839b) the landscape. This is the only occurrence of this verb in *Andreas*. *Sceawian* is the verb that *Christ III* uses for the contemplation of such indexes of salvation and damnation as Christ's body and wounds, the marks on the damned, and the rent temple curtain. It is also, as Orchard notes, the verb which is used throughout *Beowulf* when when something "monstrous, uncanny, or otherworldly" attracts attentive inspec-

[121] See above, p. 89.
[122] Hieatt, 'Harrowing of Mermedonia', p. 59.

tion.[123] In this case in *Andreas*, it is not the landscape itself, but Andreas' miraculously changed location that is supernatural.[124] It is an index of God's favour, and a prompt to reevaluation. Now Andreas reconsiders what he saw and heard before, and claims he knew God by his words: *ic his word oncneow / þeh he his mægwlite bemiðen hæfde* ('I knew his speech, though he had hidden his countenance', ll. 855b–856). He didn't, of course, but at least he has at last learned to judge by words, not appearances. Once Andreas understands God's power to make things seen or unseen, and to be unseen but present, he is able to benefit from that power, and walk unseen into Mermedonia.

CONCLUSIONS

The *Andreas* poet uses the poem's dialogue to encourage a certain interpretive approach. The poem does not simply demand typological reading, as many critics have assumed, but rather creates space for literal, typological, and tropological readings to reinforce one another. The blindness motif explored at the literal level, particularly through the dialogue, leads to a tropological lesson in humility: if Andreas can be wrong in his reading of the Ship's Captain, and if architecture can be a better reader than man, the reader can be wrong if they take the text at face value. A reader who applies this lesson will expect the text to mean more than it appears to at first and so will be primed to identify its typological resonances and allusions to scripture. Some of those scriptural allusions, such as Isaiah 6 and Psalm 134, are also on the theme of blindness, which further emphasizes the blindness motif in the poem. Thus a loop of mutual reinforcement is set up among three different ways of reading.

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[123] Orchard, *Critical Companion*, p. 27.

[124] The *Andreas* poet seems to have borrowed the formula [preposition] + *harne stan* from *Beowulf*, which uses it several times. Here, *ymbe harne stan* (l. 841b) describes Mermedonia. Although Swisher ('Beyond the Hoar Stone', *Neophilologus* 86 (2002), 133–136) argues that this is a formula which signals a boundary between the ordinary world and the supernatural, Cooke argues with reference to law codes and place-name evidence that the expression simply refers to "a monumental standing stone serving as a boundary marker" ('Two Notes on *Beowulf*, p. 298). See above, p. 33.

Andreas illustrates several paradoxes around the process of interpretation which are also explored in other poems. Like *Elene, Andreas* demonstrates that whether or not man understands is fully within God's power, but that that does not absolve man of the responsibility to *seek* understanding. The poem depicts faith as a patronage relationship, and interpretive ability as the result of that relationship. Inaction and spiritual blindness are correlated, and conversely swift obedience and clarity of understanding are correlated. The punishment for inaction (which is caused by spiritual blindness) is greater spiritual blindness, and the reward for swift obedience (which is caused by clarity of understanding) is enhanced clarity of understanding.[125]

Most of the misinterpretation in *Andreas* is about patronage relationships. Clear sight is associated with a good patronage relationship with God, which is one in which the reciprocity of such a relationship is clearly understood. *Acedia* is the sin which undermines this relationship by offering shortcuts and excuses in place of diligence and action.

I have argued in this chapter that in the context of discussions of patronage relationships with God, 'covenant' terms such as *treow* and *friþ* carry a subaudition of 'visible or bodily sign'. The intimate relationship between the language of signs and the language of covenant, which influences the connotations of both, is also one of the keys to understanding the depiction of signs in the Junius manuscript, and is the main theme of the following chapter.

[125] In the following chapter, I suggest a similar system is at work in *Genesis B* and the Saxon *Genesis*: the punishment for attempting to withdraw from communication with God is to be further removed from communication with Him.

CHAPTER 4: THE JUNIUS MANUSCRIPT

Bodleian Library, MS Junius 11 contains a sequence of biblical poems.[1] *Genesis B*, embedded within *Genesis A*, tells the story of the Fall of Man, and attributes the Tempter's success to his offering a *tacen* to Eve. *Genesis A* recounts the major events of Genesis, and presents the circumcision of Abraham and his household as a *tacen* or *beacen* of the covenant. *Exodus* depicts the flight from Egypt and crossing of the Red Sea in terms which draw typological connections between Moses, Noah, and Abraham (and, implicitly, Christ), and characterizes the pillar of fire as a *beacen*. *Daniel* is based on the book of the same name and depicts the failure of dreams and miracles to which the terms *beacen* or *tacen* are applied to convert Nebuchadnezzar. *Christ and Satan* begins with a depiction of Satan as a poor interpreter who laments the *tacen* that is his exile in Hell, and brings the *Genesis B* narrative full circle in Christ's Harrowing of Hell.

The first part of this chapter focusses on the *tacen* in *Genesis B*. *Genesis B* is a peom about how the giving and receiving of signs can go wrong and break down covenants. In order to explain the nature and connotations of the *tacen* the Tempter offers in *Genesis B*, I read the poem in light of the Vatican *Genesis* fragments.[2] These two texts together—the Old English *Genesis B,* found embedded in *Genesis A* in the Junius Manuscript, and the Old Saxon Vatican *Genesis* fragments recorded on several non-sequential folios in Vatican Palatinus Latinus 1447—are the surviving evidence attest-

[1] See entry 640 in Gneuss and Lapidge, *Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts.*
[2] Quotations of both texts are from: *The Saxon Genesis: An Edition of the West Saxon* Genesis B *and the Old Saxon Vatican* Genesis, ed. A.N. Doane (Madison, 1991). Following Doane, I use '*Genesis B*' to refer to the Old English text found in Bodleian Library, MS Junius 11, 'The Vatican *Genesis'* to refer to the Old Saxon text found in Vatican, Biblioteca Apostolicam, Palatinus Latinus 1447, and 'The Saxon *Genesis*' to refer to the two texts considered together as a unit.

ing to the existence of an Old Saxon poem on the events of the Book of Genesis. To explain the *tacen* in *Genesis B*, I begin by considering what the lexical clusters surrounding the term *tacen* (*tekan* in the Vatican Genesis) tell us about how to understand how the term is used. Next, I argue that in presenting a sign to Eve, the Tempter performs a role that is a deliberate inversion of the sign-bearing hero type enacted by Beowulf and Judith, and that the thematic links foregrounded by this inversion, and lexical echoes in the Vatican *Genesis*, make it clear that the poet conceives of the desire to place limits and controls upon one's communication with God as a fundamental facet of sin. I then examine how Eve is led to believe that the Tempter's words, and her own words, have more power than they actually do, and the extent to which intentionality matters in the poem's ethics. Finally, I argue that Eve is misled by the Tempter's words not because she trusts her senses over her reason, but because she employs reason in place of direct perception. The sign in *Genesis B* deserves the space given to it not only because of the poem's unique origin and transmission history, but because it is the first sign in the Junius MS—the one which initiates the entire dramatic arc that links Noah to Abraham to Moses to Daniel to Christ—so this interpolated episode sets up the context in which the other references signs in the manuscript will be read.

The second part of this chapter compares the depiction of signs in *Genesis A* and *Exodus* to that in *Daniel* and *Christ and Satan*. *Daniel* and *Christ and Satan* provide a counterpoint to *Genesis A* and *Exodus* in regards to themes of covenant, because they are primarily about characters who misread God's signs, and who are excluded from the sort of relationship with God enjoyed by Abraham and Moses. One of the ways this difference is manifested is in the employment of brightness imagery. *Genesis A* and *Exodus,* terms like *tacen* and *beacen* are frequently associated with brightness, but this is not the case in *Daniel* and *Christ and Satan.*

GENESIS B

The key sign term in *Genesis B* is *tacen*, but it is worth considering the other terms the poem uses which relate to ideas of signs and signifying. First, there is the verb *mearcian,* a cognate with the noun *mearc*, which in some circumstances means 'sign'. The Old English verb appears to have undergone metaphorical extension, from literal marking in the drawing of boundary divisions to the abstract notion of designating. A similar process seems to have occurred in Old Saxon: in Otto Behaghel's edition of the *Heliand,* he suggests "*bestimmen*" ('appoint') and "*bemerken*" ('remark') as translations of the verb *markon.*[3] In every place where the verb *mearcian* appears in *Genesis B*, the word refers to God's appointing, designating, establishing, or predetermining events or states of being, and (as with modern English 'designate') the original metaphor of signification is dead: the narrator says of man that *God mearcode selfa* ('designated [man] for himself', l. 459b) as his servant or disciple; of Eve that *hæfde hire wacran hige / metod gemarcod* ('the Maker had designated for her a weaker mind,' ll. 590b–591a); and of Eve's accepting the fruit that *ne wearð wyrse dæd / monnum gemearcod* ('there was no worse deed appointed for man', ll. 594b–595a).

Another word which can be translated as 'sign' is *mar(i)đa.* The Vatican *Genesis* uses it of Lot's wife's transformation into a pillar of salt, and to describe Enoch's life and/or ascension. Doane suggests in the case of Enoch that "we might understand *marđum* in a sense 'figura,' or 'type'—the ascending Enoch being a figure of Christ's Ascension and of mankind's restoration to Heaven. The plural here may indicate or suggest the whole sequence of signs that were traditionally thought to precede the com-

[3] This verb is used twice: God *marcoda* ('placed' or 'appointed', l. 601a) the star of Bethlehem in the sky, and men may *marcon* ('remark', or 'observe', l. 1671b) the lilies of the field. *Heliand und Genesis* ed. Otto Behaghel (Halle, 1948). See also Brett Kessler, 'Concordance of words and bigrams, with frequencies, in alphabetical order' in *The Old Saxon Heliand* (2002) <http://artsci.wustl.edu/~bkessler/OS-Heliand/> [accessed by 5 October 2011].

ing of the Antichrist and the End."[4] If Doane is right (and the fact that the narrative proceeds directly from Enoch's ascension to his return and confrontation with the antichrist confirms that the poet is thinking in typological terms at this point), the emphasis in the word *mar(i)đa* is on signs in the context of their interpretation by readers of the text, rather than characters within it. On the other hand, both Lot's wife's transformation and Enoch's ascension are visually dramatic events, so the emphasis of the word could be on the spectacle rather than the significance of the miracle (similar to the use of Old English *wundor*).

Another important word is *frithu,* which usually means 'peace' or 'protection'. When God sets the mark on Cain, he says: *tho uuillik thi frithu settean / togean sulic tekean* ('then I will set a security on you, show such a sign', ll. 72b-73a). This linking of *frithu* to *tekean* is similar to *Genesis A*'s use of the compound *friðotacen,* ('sign of peace/protection', l. 2371a) to describe circumcision, but in the Vatican *Genesis* quotation *frithu* is linked to *tekean* by apposition rather than compounding which collapses the distance between signifier and signified so that it is protection, not a sign of protection, which is placed upon Cain. As I will argue in the final chapter, this conflation of protection and the sign conveying protection is actually fairly common in Old English poetry, and seeing the Old Saxon poet do the same suggests a significant continuity of literary tradition between the two languages and locations. The practice is particularly apt in this case because the mark God sets on Cain both signifies his security and causes his security, and because God's words have the power to accomplish what they signify. God's declaration that He intends to set a mark on Cain is not followed by any separate act of doing so because the declaration is sufficient to perform the action: God's will is articulated and fulfilled in the same utterance.

[4] Doane, *Saxon* Genesis, p. 325, n. 133a.

Finally, the word *bokan* (cognate with OE *beacen*) appears once in the Vatican *Genesis* in a reference to the sun as *alloro bokno beratost* ('brightest of all beacons', l. 269a); this is discussed in the final chapter in the context of other poetic uses of the word *beacen*. In evaluating the distinction between *beacen* and *tacen* in the Junius Manuscript, Catherine Karkov argues that within *Genesis* "*tacen* is used only for marks made on the body," while "throughout the manuscript *beacen* and its compounds are used to describe striking spectacles, miracles, or signs witnessed by large groups of people."[5] She seems to have overlooked Noah's rainbow, called an *andgiettacen* (l. 1539a), which she does not include it in her list of uses of *tacen* (though she does include another compound, *friðotacen*). She argues:

> The *tacen* that Satan's messenger fails to offer Adam (*Gen.* 540) but does offer Eve (*Gen.* 653) is also marked on the body. It is ultimately unclear whether the *tacen* is the fruit or the vision or both—we are told only that he showed her a *tacen* (*iewde hire tacen, Gen.* 653) and that she showed a *tacen* to Adam. [Karkov quotes ll. 713–14.] But Eve shows Adam both the apple and her vision, the latter portrayed vividly to him through her words. The confusion continues after the Fall. Eve implies that the vision is the *tacen* in her lament at its disappearance: [Karkov quotes ll. 770b–774.] Adam, however, laments that he carries the mark (*tacen*) of the apple and his disobedience on him still:
>
> me ða blæda on hand. bryd gesealde.
> freolucu fæmne. freahdrihten min.
> ðe ic þe on teonan geþah. nu ic þæs tacen wege.
> sweotol on me selfum.[6]

Karkov concedes in a footnote that the fact that Adam initially rejects the apple and asks for a sign argues against identifying the fruit as the sign,[7] but the more striking flaw in her argument is that the lines she quotes as evidence that the *tacen* offered by Satan in *Genesis B* is bodily, Adam's declaration that *nu ic þæs tacen wege, / sweotol on me selfum* ('now I carry the sign of it, clear upon myself', ll. 885b–886a), occurs not in *Genesis B* but in *Genesis A*. Adam's words in *Genesis A* cannot be taken as evidence

[5] Catherine Karkov, 'Word, Sign and Reader' in *Text and Picture in Anglo-Saxon England: Narrative Strategies in the Junius 11 Manuscript* (Cambridge, 2001), pp. 101–141, p. 130.
[6] Karkov 'Word, Sign and Reader', p. 131. Her translation of the lines she quotes is: "The bride gave the fruit into my hand, the beautiful woman, my Lord, which I took as an insult to you. Now I carry the clear mark of it on myself."
[7] Karkov 'Word, Sign and Reader', pp. 131–132, n. 126.

that *Genesis B* has been confused or ambivalent about whether the *tacen* is the apple or the vision.

As for what Adam means by *tacen* in *Genesis A* ll. 883–886, it is possible that a reader of Junius 11 would consider this use of *tacen* by Adam in light of what has come before (though they would not necessarily equate it with those earlier signs, which are all linked to each other by a network of collocations that is absent in Adam's words here). Likewise, it is possible that a reader could take the *tacen* to be the weight of the apple in his breast in the context of *Genesis B*'s imagery in l. 636 (*sum heo hire on handum bær, sum hire æt heortan læg:* 'one she bore in her hand, one lay at her heart'). However, there is nothing within *Genesis A* to suggest that it must be read this way. As far as we are told, the only physical change manifest on Adam's body is the fact that he has attempted to conceal himself with clothing. It could be that the very urge to conceal his body is the *tacen* which Adam knows must be visible to God. Ultimately, it is inadvisable to attempt to be too precise about what the sign is that Adam carries—as I discussed in the introduction to this thesis, there are many instances of the word *tacen* where the signified is clear but the signifier only vaguely conceived, and this may be one of them.[8]

Tacen (or the OS cognate *tekean*) is used five times in the Saxon *Genesis*, of which appear during the temptation of Adam and Eve in *Genesis B*. I have added emphasis in the quotations below to draw attention to its collocation with the words *oþiwan/togean* ('to show'), and *treow/treuwa* ('good faith, loyalty, covenant'). I will be returning through this set of quotations throughout the chapter and marking them up in different ways to highlight other patterns, such as the presence of the word *hyld* ('favour/grace') in or near these passages, and the way repetition of the words *hold* ('gracious/faithful') and *wordum* ('with words') connect Eve to the Tempter.

[8] See p. 6.

Tacen is first used when Adam explains to the Tempter why he is not inclined to follow his instructions:

Ne þu me **oðiewdest** ænig **tacen**
þe he me þurh **treowe** to onsende,
min hearra þurh hyldo. (*Genesis B,* ll. 540–542a)

[Nor have you shown me any sign which He sent to me through good faith, my Lord through [his] favour.]

It next appears when the narrator explains how Eve begins to believe the message of the Tempter:

Þe he hire swa wærlice wordum sægde,
iewde hire **tacen** and **treowa** gehet,
his holdne hyge. (*Genesis B,* ll. 652–654a)

[He who spoke to her so cunningly with words showed her a sign and promised good faith, his loyal heart.]

It is used again when the narrator comments on Eve's good intentions:

Ac wende þæt heo hyldo heofoncyninges
worhte mid þam wordum þe heo þam were swelce
tacen oðiewde and **treowe** gehet. (*Genesis B,* ll. 712–714)

[But she believed that she brought about with those words the heaven-king's favour, because she showed the man such a sign and promised good faith.]

And once again when Eve realizes that the sign misled her and grieves:

Þa heo þæt leoht geseah
ellor scriðan þæt hire þurh **untreowa**
tacen iewde. (*Genesis B,* ll. 772b–774a)

[When she saw that light depart elsewhere which he showed her through bad faith.]

And in the Vatican *Genesis,* in God's words to Cain:

Thoh uuillik thi frithu settean,
togean sulic **tekean** so thu an **treuua** maht
uuesan an thesero uuerolde. (Vatican *Genesis,* ll. 72b–74a)

[I will set a peace on you, show such a sign, so you might be in security in this world.]

The cluster of *tekan*/*tacen*, *togean*/*oþiwan* and *treuwa*/*treow* seems to be a distinctive feature of the Saxon *Genesis*. Outside *Genesis B*, the only poems which collocate *tacen* and *treow* are *Genesis A*, in the description of the circumcision of Abraham (ll. 2375b–2377a), and *Andreas*, in God's words reprimanding Andreas for his reluctance to under-

take the journey to Mermedonia (l. 214a).[9] *Togean* and *tekan* are used together in the Old Saxon *Heliand* (in ll. 844, 2163a, and 5273), as are *togean* and *treuua* (in l. 1457), but I have found no instances of all three appearing together in the *Heliand* or in the Old English corpus outside *Genesis B*.[10]

Neither the Bible nor the Old Saxon expansion of it makes clear precisely what the mark of Cain *is*. That is beside the point—the signification is understood, so the signifier is irrelevant. Theological queries into the implications of Cain's mark sustain interest; queries into the appearance of the mark produce idle speculation at best.[11] Similarly, when Old English poets talk about signs, a 'realistic' imagining of the scene, including what the sign looked like, is often of less importance than conjuring key themes linked to the showing of signs, or establishing links between one scene and another. The strong lexical links between the mark of Cain in the Vatican *Genesis* and the several references to signs in *Genesis B* are not intended to suggest that the mark of Cain and the vision of Eve (or whatever it was she thought she showed Adam, or that Adam thought the Tempter was lacking) *looked* alike, had the same signification, or could be interpreted by the same process. Instead, what the similarity emphasizes is the thematic link between the scenes, which all deal in one way or another with forming, sustaining, or breaking covenant-type relationships.

INVERSION AND WITHDRAWAL

The behaviour of the Tempter in *Genesis B* inverts the character type of the sign-bearing hero enacted by Beowulf and Judith. Beowulf and Judith each present a sign to their community which is intended to elicit behaviour which confirms a covenant-type relationship in which a lord confers protection in exchange for service: Beowulf's presenta-

[9] These are discussed on pp. 169 and 104.
[10] I have used Brett Kessler's *Heliand* concordance to identify these lines.
[11] And an excuse for racism at worst—see Stephen R. Haynes, *Noah's Curse: The Biblical Justification of American Slavery* (New York, 2002), p. 15.

tion of Grendel's head and the hilt moves Hrothgar to say: *Ic þe sceal mine gelæstan / freode, swa wit furðum spræcon* ('I must fulfill my friendship to you, as we two spoke of before' ll. 1706b–1707a), while Judith's presentation of Holofernes' head communicates God's promise that if the Bethulians obey His direction to attack the Assyrian camp, He will give them victory. The Tempter presents a sign which is intended to elicit behaviour which undermines such a relationship.

The sign that the Tempter offers also inverts expectations in other ways. The signs in *Beowulf* and *Judith*—Grendel's trail of carnage, Grendel's arm, Grendel's head and the hilt, the gifts to be exchanged, Holofernes' head and body—are all tangible, legible things that offer an insight into places which remain unseen. The Tempter, by contrast, offers to fundamentally change Eve's sense of sight, allowing her to directly experience a formerly unseen place. Another feature of the vision which differentiates it from most signs is its exclusivity. The signs offered by Beowulf and Judith are self-explanatory and visually arresting, and inspire communal acts of looking and wondering. Most miracles (which are also frequently called *tacen*) do the same. Eve's vision belongs only to her as only she can see it. The third major point of difference between the Tempter's sign and those shown by Beowulf and Judith is in the location and timing of debt relations. Though Adam asks the Tempter to show (*oþiwan*) a *tacen* (l. 540), the *tacen* offered Eve is not *shown* but *given*: it is called a *laðan læn* ('loathsome gift', l. 601a).[12] Beowulf and Judith show their signs as proof that they have accomplished an act for which people will be thankful, but the Tempter makes the sign itself the gift. Where Beowulf sends his sign ahead of him, and Judith tells her handmaiden to uncover her sign before the crowd, the Tempter withholds his sign, putting Eve in a position where she must obey him in order to receive the proof that he should be obeyed.

[12] In the context of land grants, this term means "a grant that can be recalled, lease". '*Læn*', B-T.

Beowulf and Judith each go away from their community into a dark, enclosed, hostile space; the Tempter's journey originates in a dark, enclosed, hostile space. Beowulf and Judith are awaited and recognized on their return; the Tempter's arrival takes Adam and Eve by surprise. The return of Beowulf and Judith spells release from danger and suffering for their communities, while the Tempter's arrival is the beginning of these things for Eve and Adam. Beowulf and Judith remain with their communities after their journeys into dark places, but the Tempter returns to a dark place after his journey. Ann W. Astell observes that certain imagery in *Judith*

> ...recalls Hrabanus Maurus's allegorical treatment of Bethulia as a type of heaven and the church. […] Here within the walls of Bethulia, Judith will reveal Holofernes's head, teach the people and inspire them with courage, incorporating them into the miracle of her own inner transformation.[13]

The Tempter, by his sign and teaching, similarly seeks to incorporate Adam and Eve into his transformation—his downfall.

This is not to say that *Genesis B* responds to *Beowulf* or *Judith* specifically. It may be that both Old English and Old Saxon poets had access to similar older, vernacular models—if the waterfall episode in *Grettis saga* and the mere episode in *Beowulf* are each derived separately from a Germanic folktale motif, it is possible that similar motifs also existed in Old Saxon narratives and the Saxon *Genesis* was responding to them independently, apart from any influence from Insular traditions. It is also possible, and I think more likely, that the Saxon poet was responding to more contemporary iterations of this type in Anglo-Saxon texts, since, as A. N. Doane says, "it is likely that *Genesis B* represents just a visible ripple in a ceaseless two-way flow of books between England and Germany."[14]

One aspect of the Tempter's aping of legitimate messengers is his tendency to mislead by means of near-truths and partial-truths. Andrew Cole argues that Eve's vi-

[13] Astell, 'Holofernes's Head', p. 129.
[14] Doane, *Saxon* Genesis, p. 52.

sion is persuasive because it resembles the sort of vision Adam is used to receiving, and observes that in the poem, as in Gregory's Dialogues, "demonic tempters can speak truths for perverse purposes."[15] Alain Renoir also discusses this in his essay on the psychology of Satan and the Tempter, where he comments upon "the Tempter's insistence upon drawing illogical conclusions from correct statements," noting that "he has gone out of his way to list accurate but unnecessary facts in order to formulate an illogical argument."[16] (Several critics have interpreted this feature of the Tempter as a topical warning about heresy.)[17] Although the narrator says that the Tempter is speaking *mid ligenum* ('with lies', ll. 496a etc.), he is dangerous because he approaches truth. He presents himself as an angel because he was one once—and he still is, if we take angel as 'messenger' (cf. Mark 1:2).[18] He talks about how his journey from heaven was made *ofer langne weg* ('over a long way', l. 554a)—and it certainly is a long way, given the route by which he has come.

In *Beowulf* and *Judith*, misreading follows as a consequence of the hero's obscurity: the Danes and Assyrians misunderstand what is going on while Beowulf and Judith are out of sight. The return of the hero restores clarity: the Danes realize their mistake when Beowulf marches into Heorot, and the Assyrians wake up from their

[15] Andrew Cole, 'Jewish Apocrypha and Christian Epistemologies of the Fall: The *Dialogi* of Gregory the Great and the Old Saxon *Genesis*', in *Rome and the North: The Early Reception of Gregory the Great in Germanic Europe*, ed. Rolf H. Bremmer, Jr., Kees Dekker, and David F. Johnson, Mediaevalia Groningana new series 4 (Paris/Sterling VA, 2001), pp. 157–188, p. 162.
[16] Alain Renoir, 'The Self-Deception of Temptation: Boethian Psychology in *Genesis B*' in *Old English Poetry: Fifteen essays*, ed. R.P. Creed (Providence, 1967), pp. 47–67, pp. 61; 60.
[17] See Rosemary Woolf, 'The Fall of Man in *Genesis B* and the *Mystere d'Adam*' in *Studies in Old English Literature in Honor of A.G. Brodeur*, ed. Stanley B. Greenfield (Eugene, 1963), pp. 187–199; Susan Burchmore, 'Traditional Exegesis and the Question of Guilt in the Old English "Genesis B" ', *Traditio* 41 (1985), 117–144; and Doane, *Saxon* Genesis, pp. 101–107. Doane contextualizes the poem's concerns with reference to the heretic Gottschalk, who followed Augustine's positions on predestination more strictly than was acceptable to his former teacher, Hrabanus Maurus. Burchmore writes that "the confusion about the tempter's appearance is an integral part of the poet's theme of visual deception," and links this to biblical and patristic warnings against heretics and allegories of the senses (p. 120). Woolf similarly proposes a link to the warnings of Gregory and Corinthians against false preachers.
[18] *Sicut scriptum est in Esaia, propheta: "Ecce: Mitto angelum meum ante faciem tuam, qui praeparabit viam tuam,* ('As it is written in Isaiah, the prophet: "Behold: I sent my angel before thy face, who shall prepare thy way before thee." ') *The Vulgate Bible, Volume VI: The New Testament: Douay-Rheims Translation* ed. Angela M. Kinney, Dumbarton Oaks Medieval Library (Harvard, 2013).

drunken slumber and peer behind the *fleohnet* only because Judith's return to Bethulia has caused the Bethulians to attack. The Tempter, by contrast, manages to be obscure and misread in plain sight. Whereas Beowulf and Judith become visible—and become messengers—on their emergence from dark places, the Tempter conceals himself in the process of revealing himself, when he dons his *hæleðhelm* (l. 444a), defined by Doane as a "helmet (cover) of invisibility (deceit)",[19] and *wearp hine þa on wyrmes lic* ('then threw himself into a snake's body', l. 491a). Adam cannot say what the Tempter *is* like, only that *þu gelic ne bist / ænegum his engla þe ic ær geseah* ('you are not like any of His angels that I ever saw', ll. 538b–539).

The Tempter's disguise has baffled critics just as it baffled Adam and Eve. Susan Burchmore claims that the Tempter never appears as an angel (despite the Junius 11 illustrator's representations), but that his angelic appearance as reported by Eve is itself a false vision.[20] Rosemary Woolf considers possible patristic, rabbinic, and apocryphal precedents for the devil's disguise.[21] J.M. Evans finds several precedents for simultaneous presentation of the Tempter as a serpent and an angel, originally "made all the easier by the fact that the Hebrew word *saraph* could mean both" and possibly perpetuated because "the winged serpent [*wyrm*] of Germanic folklore would not be so very far from the conception of an angel with his *feðerhoma*."[22] *Solomon and Saturn I* also links feathery and snakelike disguises:

> Mæg simle se Godes cwide gumena gehwylcum
> ealra feonda gehwane fleonde gebrengan
> ðurh mannes muð, manfulra heap,
> sweartne geswencan, næfre hie ðæs syllice
> bleoum bregdað, æfter bancofan
> feðerhoman onfoð. Hwilum flotan gripað.
> Hwilum hie gewendað in wyrmes lic,
> stranges ond sticoles, stingeð nieten,

[19] Doane, *Saxon* Genesis, p. 373. See also pp. 277–278 (note on l. 444a) on the use of this word in several Germanic languages, where it is associated most often with dwarves and devils, and variously denotes concealment and deceit.
[20] Burchmore, 'Traditional Exegesis'.
[21] Woolf 'Fall of Man', esp. pp. 191–193.
[22] J.M. Evans, 'Genesis B and its background' (first part), *RES* 14:53 (1963), 1–16, p 8.

> feldgongende feoh gestrudeð. (*Solomon and Saturn I,* ll. 146–156)

> [The utterance of God can always for everyone put each and every fiend to flight through the mouth of man, the host of wicked ones, can vex the black ones, even if they change their hues ever so strangely, draw a feather-cloak over their bodies. Sometimes they grab the sailor. Sometimes they go about in the likeness of a powerful and biting serpent, sting the wild beast, destroy field-going cattle.][23]

So the idea that a devil may look like a serpent one moment and a feathered being the next—or even at the same time—is not without analogues. In any case, the ambiguity created by the poem's apparently conflicting references to the Tempter's appearance is entirely appropriate, since the Tempter has both the intention and the ability to deceive and confuse.

Eric Jager proposes a reading of *Genesis B* in which the Tempter inserts himself between the humans and God, but particularly the direct experience of God's voice.

> The Tempter's pretense that it is *normal* for him to carry messages ('bodscipe', 'ærende') between God and his creatures enables him to taint God's direct speech to the humans as *abnormal* […] By inspiring a fear of God's voice and a desire for mediation, the Tempter divorces Eve *emotionally* from God's voice and presence well before she formally breaks with him by eating the forbidden fruit.[24]

Of course, the Tempter's claim that he can mediate for Eve—that he has the power to allow Eve to see God (or his metonymic throne) without God's knowledge, and the power to prevent God from seeing Adam and Eve's supposed misdeeds—contradicts the very nature of the Christian God. It is God who sees all, and who decides when and how He will be seen. John F. Vickrey suggests that since "to see God is the purpose of faith and the end of life, but the way is not through disobedience," when the Tempter implies otherwise "it is possible that the response of a ninth-century audience to this immense error would have been exasperation, indignation, perhaps even derision and scorn."[25] This is also part of the Tempter's inversion of the hero-interpreter type: the

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[23] Anlezark's translation. *The Old English Dialogues of Solomon and Saturn* ed. and trans. Daniel Anlezark, Anglo-Saxon Texts 7 (Cambridge, 2009).

[24] Eric Jager, 'Invoking/Revoking God's Word; the Vox Dei in *Genesis B*', *English Studies* 71:4 (1990), 307–321, pp. 315–316.

[25] John F. Vickrey, 'The Vision of Eve in *Genesis B*', *Speculum* 44:1 (1969), 86–102, p. 98. See also p. 97, n. 39.

Tempter urges Eve to behave like Holfernes, who conceals himself but peers out through the curtain at his followers, or like Grendel, who *in þystrum bad* (‘waited in darkness’, l. 87b), watching the bright hall. Both in offering the vision and in suggesting that he can conceal Adam’s transgressions from God, the Tempter offers Eve a world in which she can see God without being seen, receive the content of His command without His presence, and hear Him without being heard by him.

When the humans decide to trust the Tempter, this undermines their relationships of trust with each other and with God, and ultimately prompts their impulse to separate themselves (by clothing and hiding) from God and each other. This idea that the urge to conceal oneself is a feature of sin is also explored in the Cain and Abel episode in the Vatican *Genesis.* When Cain is about to be questioned by God, the narrator comments that Cain wishes to conceal his error:

> Uuande he suiđo
> that he bihelan mahti herran sinum
> thia dadi bidernian. (Vatican *Genesis,* ll. 40b–42a)
>
> [He strongly wished that he might conceal [it] from his Lord, hide that deed.]

Of course this is impossible, and after he is reprimanded by God, Cain acknowledges that he has come to understand *that is ni mahti uuerdan uualdand uuiht an uueroldstundu / dadeo bidernid* (‘that his deeds could not at all be hidden from the Lord in all the world’s time’, ll. 57–58a).

God does not only banish Cain from human society, but from conversation with Him, stating that a condition of his punishment is that *thu ni salt io furthur cuman te thines herron sprako*, / *uueslean thar mid uuorđon thinon* (‘you must not ever further come into your Lord’s conversation, argue there with your words’, ll. 77b–78a). Here we see that the pattern which was begun in the fall of Satan and recapitulated in that of Adam and Eve is repeated again with Cain: the punishment for attempting to withdraw from communication with God is to be further removed from communication with Him.

USELESS SPEECH

Many critics have taken an interest in speech in *Genesis B*. Jager has analyzed the ways that Eve's speech imitates the Tempter's.[26] He has also described *Genesis B's* depiction of the temptation as an illustration of the dangers of corruption in oral tradition. He argues that the poem "depicts the Fall as a tragedy of oral culture by showing how easily oral tradition is corrupted when Adam and Eve abandon their direct memory of God's word and accept instead the Tempter's 'report' of God's speech."[27] Renoir has explored the rhetorical failures of the devils, who being "contrary of God, are unable to produce anything but illogical arguments."[28]

The spoken word is likewise an abiding concern of the Vatican *Genesis*, which signals the state of characters' relationship to God in terms of their relationship to speech and teaching. Like his exclusion from God's conversation, Cain's expulsion from society is framed in terms of speech: *forhuatan sculun thi hluttra liudi*, ('people must curse you loudly', l. 77a).[29] Of Cain's heirs it is said: *ni uueldun uualdandas / lera lestian*, ('they did not listen to the Lord's teaching', ll. 121b–122a). By contrast, when Adam and Eve prosper, it is said that they *gewitt linodun / spaha spraka* ('learned wisdom, wise speech', ll. 105b–106a). They are then blessed with good progeny, including Seth, who is named *uuarom uuordum* ('with true words', l. 109a), and whose heirs in turn are called *guoda mann, / uuordun uuisa, geuuitt linodun*, ('good men, wise in words, learned in wisdom', ll. 116b–117). Enoch is called *uuis endi uuordspah* ('wise and wordwise', l. 131a). Lot learns from the messengers who both *leddun hina endi lerdun* ('led him and taught him', l. 301a), while his wife's failure is not attributed

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[26] Eric Jager, 'Tempter as Rhetoric Teacher: The Fall of Language in the Old English "Genesis B" ', *Neophilologus* 72:3 (1988), 434–448.
[27] Eric Jager, *The Tempter's Voice: Language and the Fall in Medieval Literature* (Ithaca, 1993), p. 149.
[28] Renoir 'Self-Deception', p. 60.
[29] Doane argues that this phrase indicates that Cain is not exiled but excommunicated. Doane, *Saxon* Genesis, p. 158.

to simple human weakness, but to the fact that *siu ni uuelde thera engilo* / *lera lestia*n, ('she did not wish to listen to the teaching of the angels', ll. 331b–332a).

Spah, which Doane translates as 'wise', is cognate with Old Norse *spá*, 'prophecy'. When *spah* is used of Adam and Eve (who learned *spaha spraka*) and Enoch (who is *uuordspah*) in the Vatican *Genesis*, it does not explicitly denote prophetic speech, but it may carry related connotations. *Spah* is used three times in the *Heliand:* when Christ preaches and prophesizes on the Mount of Olives and the narrator says that there is no man *sô spâhi* ('so wise', l. 4244b) that he could explain all that Christ said, when the Wise Men are called *uuordspâhe weros* ('word-wise men', l. 563a), and when the Wise Men tell Herod about an ancestor who *sprâkano sô spâhi; mahte rekkien spel godes* ('spoke so wisely; he could interpret the speech of God', l. 572).[30] Wherever *spah* appears in the *Heliand*, the type of wisdom in question is that of one who can interpret prophetic signs or explicate the words of God.

Genesis B also frames relationships with God in terms of speech. Although Satan claims to be able to work wonders *mid handum* ('with [his] hands', l. 279b), he does nothing of the sort—his rebellion is expressed entirely in terms of what he says, not what he does. Between l. 261 and l. 278, the word *cwæð* appears four times, along with the phrases *sohte hetespræce* ('he sought hostile speech', l. 263b), *gylpword ongean* ('he began boasting-words', l. 264a), and *feala worda gespæc* ('he spoke many words', l. 271b). A speech by Satan follows, and then at l. 294b the narrator again frames his rebellion in terms of speech, describing how God heard that Satan *spræc healic word* ('spoke proud words', l. 294b).

[30] G. Ronald Murphy comments on this line: "This seems to be very much the creation of the author. Zoroaster might be thought of, but it is equally possible that this 'ancestor' of the people of the East, represents the fact that pre-Christian peoples had access to God's word, a thought not unwelcome to the Saxons. […] The author is implicitly respecting the possibility of divine revelation in Germanic religion as well." *The Heliand: The Saxon Gospel* trans. G. Ronald Murphy (Oxford, 1992), p. 22, n.35 and n.36.

The Tempter has clearly absorbed the lesson from Satan's Fall that speaking the wrong words can have serious repercussions, because when he portrays Adam's 're-bellion' to Eve, he is more persistent in attacking Adam's words than his inaction or lack of understanding, and he appears to be more offended by Adam's (alleged) insults than his disobedience. Although he initially tells Eve that God will be angry about their actions, *þæt git ne læstan wel*, ('that you two did not properly carry out [God's com-mand]', l. 554b), all of his subsequent accusations relate not to deeds, but to Adam's words. He describes Adam's response to him as *laðan strið / yfel andwyrde* ('hateful contention, evil answer', ll. 572b–573a), *hearmes swa fela* ('so many insults', l. 579b), *eargra worda* ('useless words', l. 580b), and *womcwidas* ('vile speeches', l. 621a), and claims that *fela he me laðes spræc* ('he spoke much of hate to me', l. 622b). His repeat-ed criticism of Adam's words and speech also cultivates an urgency around language, which teaches Eve that Adam's hasty words have the power to bring material distress upon them, and that her own words of persuasion have the potential to turn back this threat.

The Tempter accuses Adam's words of doing too much and too little. By call-ing Adam's words *hearmes swa fela* he suggests that they have done him injury. In the next line, though, he calls Adam's speech *eargra worda* (l. 580b). The Toronto *DOE* suggests that in this case *earg* is used in a general sense of 'evil' or 'wicked' (a subset of the third meaning, 'base').[31] However, the subaudition is of cowardice and shameful inaction: in Old English, the primary meaning of *earg* is 'cowardly,' shading into 'indo-lent' (and the OED shows the meaning 'cowardly' persisting into Middle English).[32] I am not aware of any examples of this word being recorded in Old Saxon, but the exam-ples of other Germanic languages suggest that the world would also have had connota-

[31] 'Earg', *DOE.*

[32] '† argh, adj.' in *OED Online* (Oxford, 2014) <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/10618> [accessed 6 November 2014].

tions of inaction in Old Saxon. Jóhannesson's Icelandic etymological dictionary lists cognates in several Germanic languages (in Icelandic, the cognate is *argr*, which he translates as *unmännlich*—unmanly), of which the closest to Old Saxon are Old English *earg*, which Jóhannesson translates as "*feige, träge, böse*" ('lazy, slow, evil'), and Old High German *arg*, which he translates as "*geizig*, *feige*, *untauglich*" ('stingy, lazy, unfit').[33] In effect, the Tempter accuses Adam of using words which lead to inaction, and implies that this is shameful. As we saw in Chapter 1, what makes Beowulf and Judith good interpreters is that they act boldly, and the examples of the Danes and Assyrians by contrast establish an association between cowardly inaction and misunderstanding.[34] When the Tempter suggests that he is on the side of bold action, countering Adam's shameful inaction, this is yet another aspect of his aping of the heroic sign-bearing interpreter character type.

For all the weight the Tempter assigns to the words he claims Adam has spoken, Adam's actual words fail to make much impression. He spends most of the poem resisting words, telling the Tempter that *ic þe hyran ne cann* ('I cannot obey—literally, hear—you', l. 542b), then listening in apparent silence to Eve's campaign of persuasion. He is largely taciturn, but on the occasions he does speak, his words have no perlocutionary force: except that Eve accepts Adam's suggestion that they go apart from each other to clothe themselves in leaves, the only time Adam's words influence anyone is when he inadvertently gives the Tempter the idea of offering a *tacen* to Eve. When he does speak up to blame and berate Eve, his words fail to change either the situation or Eve's feelings about it, for she replies:

> Þu meaht hit me witan,   wine min adam,

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[33] Alexander Jóhannesson, 'ergh', *Isländisches Etymologisches Wörterbuch* (Bern, 1956), p 70.

[34] See also the discussions of hesitation and slowness in *Elene* (p. 67) and *Andreas* (from p.122). Also relevant is the poem *Vainglory*, where the man held up as an example of bad behaviour is a boastful drunkard who lives *on ofer-medum eargum dædum* (l. 75), which Robert E. Bjork translates as "in pride with slothful deeds." *Old English Shorter Poems Volume II: Wisdom and Lyric*, ed. and trans. Robert E. Bjork, Dumbarton Oaks Medieval Library (Harvard, 2014).

> wordum þinum. hit þe þeah wyrs ne mæg
> on þinum hyge hreowan þonne hit me æt heortan deð.
> (*Genesis B,* ll. 824–826)
>
> [You might blame me for it, my friend Adam, with your words; yet it may not distress you worse in your mind than it does me in my heart.]

By contrast, the Tempter persuades Eve that his own words, and her own words, have great power. Jager argues that Eve's misperceptions caused by the Tempter's words extend beyond the vision itself:

> Eve's skewed perceptions—she finds sweetness and light in what is bitter and dark—dramatize the Tempter's comment that, as a result of *following his word*, all things look different to her. […] Eve sees differently because of verbal influence (*wordum, lare*) rather because of eating the apple *per se.*[35]

Doane argues that Eve's perception of the Tempter as an angel rather than a snake, "is the product of her state of mind, not a magical trick,"[36] and that her other false visions are similarly produced by her self-deception. However, the Tempter does tell Eve what she should expect to see on eating the fruit. He then tells her that *þu meaht nu þe self geseon swa ic hit þe secgan ne þearf*, ('you may see for yourself, so I do not need to tell you', l. 611) but this is only paralepsis, and he does go on to narrate to her what she should—and presumably does—see. So although the poem does not suggest to the reader that the Tempter's words have any 'magical' powers to produce the vision, it does suggest that the Tempter would like to give Eve the impression that they do. Medieval ideas about speech allow that words can have tangible effects without being mediated by human hearing: God's creation of the world is accomplished by its being spoken, as is his condemning of Satan, and his marking of Cain. In the right circumstances, and given the correct formula, it is also possible for human speech to alter the natural world—this is essentially what charms profess to do. The Tempter takes advantage of this basic assumption to portray his own words as more powerful than they really are—as being of a kind with God's generative speech acts.

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[35] Jager, 'Tempter as Rhetoric Teacher', p. 444.
[36] Doane, *Saxon* Genesis, p. 150.

The implication of the lexical echoes between the lines where the Tempter shows a sign to Eve and the lines where Eve shows a sign to Adam is clear: Eve is aping the Tempter's actions. Here again are the second and third quotations from page 167, with *wordum* marked in addition to the parallels highlighted previously:

> Þe he hire swa wærlice **wordum** sægde,
> **iewde** hire **tacen** and **treowa gehet**,
> his holdne hyge.[37] (*Genesis B,* ll. 652–654a)
>
> [Because he spoke to her so cunningly with words, showed her a sign and promised good faith, his loyal heart.]
>
> Ac wende þæt heo hyldo heofoncyninges
> worhte mid þam **wordum** þe heo þam were swelce
> **tacen oðiewde** and **treowe gehet**. (*Genesis B,* ll. 712–714)
>
> [But she believed that she brought about with those words the heaven-king's favour, she who likewise showed the man a sign and promised good faith.]

These lines also make it clear the Eve has bought into the Tempter's lie about the power of words.

In her attempt to 'show' Adam the sign by description alone, Eve demonstrates her overconfidence in the power of her words to affect the world, but even more revealing is the fact that she believes she *worhte mid wordum*: the verb *(ge)wyrcan* is more properly associated with words in accounts of God's creation—it is used, for example, in the account of the Creation in *Genesis A*,[38] and in Ælfric's translation of the opening lines of the Gospel of John: *ealle þing syndon gesceapene þurh þæt Word, / 7 butan þam Worde nis geworht nan þing* ('all things are formed through that Word and without that Word no thing is made').[39]

[37] Note the thought/word/deed triad here. On this triad, which appears frequently in *Beowulf* and in homiletic texts, see Patrick Sims-Williams, 'Thought, Word, and Deed: An Irish Triad', *Ériu* 29 (1978), 78–111; Andy Orchard, 'Re-editing Wulfstan: Where's the Point?', *Wulfstan, Archbishop of York: The Proceedings of the Second Alcuin Conference* (Turnhout, 2004), 63–91; Orchard, *Critical Companion*, pp. 53, 73, 123, 146, 215, and 218.

[38] *Holmas dælde / waldend ure and geworhte þa / roderas fæsten. þæt se rica ahof / up from eorðan þurh his agen word, / frea ælmihti*g ('our Lord divided the waves and made then the firmament of heaven; that the ruler raised up from the earth through his own word, Lord almighty', ll. 146b–150a).

[39] 'Nativitas Domini' in *Homilies of Ælfric* Vol I, ed. John Colins Pope, EETS o.s. 259 (Oxford, 1967), p.198, ll. 31–32.

This is the inevitable next step in the descent from God's words which make things real in the world, to the Tempter's words which make the vision appear in Eve's mind's eye, to Eve's words which can only make the vision appear in Adam's imagination or intellect to the extent that he consents to visualize and consider her description.

Vickrey argues that "not only is the *tacen* 'sign' when collocated with *(-)iewan* otherwise in Old English something visual in character but also it is something which appears under supernatural auspices,"[40] and argues that it follows that the use of this language when Eve speaks to Adam subverts expectations: it upends the natural hierarchy for her to show him a sign, she has no power to manifest a sign by supernatural means, and she simply has nothing visual to show him. The word *treow* is potentially problematic as well in terms of confounding expectations.

The seemingly straightforward expression *treowa gehet* ('promised loyalty/fidelity/good faith'), used once of the Tempter (l. 653b) and once of Eve (l. 714b), is actually quite a rare turn of phrase. The expression does not appear in the Vatican *Genesis* or the *Heliand*, and it appears in just one place outside the Old English corpus outside *Genesis B*.[41] That one other occurrence is in *Homiletic Fragment I*, which takes as its theme treachery and falsehood; its prevailing metaphor is that dishonest people are like bees, with honey in their mouths, and a sting behind.[42] The passage reads:

> Swa bioð gelice   þa leasan men,
> þa ðe mid tungan   treowa gehataþ
> fægerum wordum,   facenlice þencaþ,
> þonne hie æt nehstan   nearwe beswicaþ   (*Homiletic Fragment I,* ll. 24–27)

[40] John Vickrey, 'Adam, Eve, and the *Tacen* in *Genesis B'*, *Philological Quarterly* 72:1 (1993), 1–14, p. 5.
[41] According to the information in Doane's glossary to the Vatican *Genesis* and Kessler's concordance to the *Heliand.*
[42] See Jonathan T. Randle, 'The "Homiletics" of The Vercelli Book Poems: The Case of *Homiletic Fragment I*' *New Readings in the Vercelli Book* ed. Samantha Zacher and Andy Orchard (Toronto, 2009), pp. 185–224.

> [That is what those dishonest people are like, who with their tongues promise loyalty using fair words and yet who treacherously anticipate the soonest chance to practice cunningly their deception.][43]

So the expression *treowa gehet* is only attested in situations when the utterance is infelicitous—that is, it does not accomplish what it claims to do.[44] By contrast, the expression *treowa sealdon*, which is used three times in *Genesis A*, always appears in scenarios where the loyalty is genuinely intended and fulfilled to the best ability of the one who promised it. This is too small a set of attestations to conclude that the expression *treowa gehet* was usually, or often, used ironically, but it does suggest that it is worth considering whether the expression should be taken at face value.

Futhermore, the poet is very explicit about the fact that Eve's promise *of* good faith was made *in* good faith, but the suggestion that she acts in the manner of the Tempter (and the ambiguity around the expression *treowe gehet*) associates her promise with false promises. It is possible that the poet thinks of all promises that turn out badly as false, regardless of the intention of the participants—an ethical orientation closer to

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[43] Translation by Jones: *Old Engish Shorter Poems Vol. I: Religious and Didactic* ed. Christopher A. Jones, Dumbarton Oaks Medieval Library (Harvard, 2012).

[44] I am using the terms 'felicitous' and 'infelicitous' as they are employed in Speech Act Theory; see J.L. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words: the William James Lectures Delivered at Harvard University in 1955* (Oxford, 1975; Oxford Scholarship Online, 2011), p. 5. Of course, these terms would not have occurred to the medieval reader, but the concept is essentially the same as that expressed by Augustine in his Tractate on John 15: 1–3: '*Iam vos mundi estis propter uerbum quod locutus sum uobis.' Quare non ait: mundi estis propter baptismum quo loti estis, sed ait: 'Propter uerbum quod locutus sum uobis,' nisi quia et in aqua uerbum mundat? Detrahe uerbum, et quid est aqua nisi aqua? Accedit uerbum ad elementum et fit sacramentum, etiam ipsum tamquam uisibile uerbum. Nam et hoc utque dixerat quando pedes discipulis lauit: 'Qui lotus est non indigent nisi eut pedes lauet, sed est mundus totus.' Vnde ista tanta uirtus aquae ut corpus tangat et cor ablaut, nisi faciente uerbo, non quia dicitur, sed quia creditur? Nam et in ipso uerbo, aliud est sonus transiens, aliud uirtus manens.* (' "Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you." Why does He not say, Ye are clean through the baptism wherewith ye have been washed, but "through the word which I have spoken unto you," save only that in the water also it is the word that cleanseth? Take away the word, and the water is neither more nor less than water. The word is added to the element, and there results the Sacrament, as if itself also a kind of visible word. For He had said also to the same effect, when washing the disciples' feet, "He that is washed needeth not, save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit." And whence has water so great an efficacy, as in touching the body to cleanse the soul, save by the operation of the word; and that not because it is uttered, but because it is believed? For even in the word itself the passing sound is one thing, the abiding efficacy another.') 'Tractatus LXXX' in *Homélies sur l'Évangile de saint Jean: LXXX–CIII* ed. and trans. Marie-François Berrouard, Œuvres de Saint Augustin vol. 74B (Paris, 1998), pp. 68–79, pp. 74, 76. Translation by James Innes: 'Tractate LXXX' in *Lectures or Tractates on the Gospel According to St. John* Vol. II trans. James Innes, The Works of Aurelius Augustine, Bishop of Hippo: A New Translation Vol. XI, ed. by Marcus Dods (Edinburgh, 1874), pp. 298–301, p. 300.

that of Gregory of Tours than that of Abelard.[45] If the poet is observing such a distinction between intentions and outcomes, then it may be that Eve does not have the authority or ability to offer *treow.* This depends on the particular shade of meaning the word takes in this text. Of the cognate *treuwa* in the Vatican Genesis*,* Doane writes:

> This word continues the nexus *frithu, tekean*; in HL *treuua* always means a mental state of assurance or inner peace (so VG 66); here the reference is to an outer, literal condition. Jellinek, *AfdA* 21.205, suggests 74b–74a means "be in a state of peace" i.e., worldly security, hence "be protected." In GN *treow* means "covenant," e.g. 2037, *treowa sealdon* = "pepigerant foedus," and so frequently in OE (see B-T, *treow* IV and Supp., *ad loc.*). The OS Werden Prudentius glosses have "foederatus": *getriuuid,* "fidem": *treuua*, etc. (see Wadsteidn, 94.85, 93.19, 100.22, 99.36); the frequency of these related glosses in the same text suggest the word was unfamiliar in this sense, perhaps newly technical.[46]

So in the Vatican *Genesis*, when God sets a sign on Cain *so thu an treuua maht* / *uuesan an thesero uuerolde* ('so that you might be in protection in this world', ll. 73b–74a), *an treuua* must refer to Cain's physical state of being protected through God's promise, rather than an inner state of 'good faith' or 'loyalty'. Similarly, in *Genesis A*, in all three instances where the expression *treowa sealdon* appears, the promise is not abstract but practical and efficacious. The first two (in ll. 2037a and 2044a) refer to the promise of military support the three brothers make to Abraham, while the third (in l. 2375b–2376a) refers to God's promise to establish a covenant with Abraham. Thus in both the original Old Saxon poem *Genesis B* derives from, and in the Old English poem to which it was joined, we find examples of *treow* being used in such a way that the inner state 'faithful' or 'loyal' shades into the outer state 'the actions and results of loyalty' or 'protection'.

Within *Genesis B* itself we can see the same thing when Adam equates *treow* with *hyld* (which Bosworth and Toller defines as "favour, protection, grace [of a superior to an inferior], loyalty, allegiance [of the inferior to the superior]"). Here again is the first passage quoted on page 167, with the parallel marked:

[45] See Charles M. Radding, 'Evolution of Medieval Mentalities: A Cognitive-Structural Approach', *The American Historical Review* 83:3 (1978), 577–597.
[46] Doane, *Saxon* Genesis, pp. 315–316.

Ne þu me oðiewdest æenig tacen
þe he me **þurh treowe** to onsende,
min hearra **þurh hyldo**. (*Genesis B,* ll. 540–542a)

[Nor have you shown me any sign which He sent to me through (by reason of) protection, my Lord through (by reason of) favour.]

Hyld, like *treow*, can be used of allegiance, but the reference here is clearly to the protective favour with which God looks on Adam.[47]

In each of the four places where the poem collocates *treow* and *tacen* (the four passages quoted on page 167, the word *hyld* appears somewhere nearby. Eve's speech to Adam which follows on immediately from the second passage (ll. 652–654a). In that speech, Eve says both that *his hyldo is unc betere* ('his favour is better for us', l. 659b) and then *unc is his hyldo þearf* ('we need his favour', l. 664b). *Hyld* appears within the third passage:

Ac wende þæt heo **hyldo** heofoncyninges
worhte mid þam wordum þe heo þam were swelce
tacen oðiewde and treowe gehet. (*Genesis B,* ll. 712–714)

[But she believed that she brought about with those words the heaven-king's favour, because she showed the man such a sign and promised good faith.]

It also appears in the sentence that contains the fourth passage:

Þæt wif gnornode,
hof hreowigmod. hæfde **hyldo** godes,
lare forlæten. þa heo þæt leoht geseah
ellor scriðan þæt hire **þurh untreowa**
tacen iewde. (*Genesis B,* ll. 770b–774a)

[That woman mourned, the distressed one grieved—she had forsaken the favour of God, his teaching—when she saw that light pass away elsewhere which he through bad faith showed as a sign.]

Note also the phrase *þurh untreowa*, which echoes the *þurh treowe* and *þurh hyldo* of the first passage.

If *hyld* and *treow* are synonymous, as passage one suggests, this makes Eve's promise of *treow* a useless one. If she is simply offering her own *treow* to Adam, she

[47] The phrase *þurh treowe* does not appear in Old English outside *Genesis B*, and the expression *þurh hyldo* is rare, but when it does appear (in *Azarias* l. 13a, and, by emendation, *Daniel* l. 292a) it is in a request for help from God. Farrell, *Daniel and Azarias.*

does so pointlessly, because whatever her intentions she has nothing to offer Adam that will improve his security. Or it may be, since she *wende þæt heo hyldo heofoncyninges / worhte mid þam wordum* ('believed that she brought about the favour of the heavenly king with those words' ll. 712–713a), that she is actually promising Adam *God's* protection and favour, which she has no authority to do. Either way, given the poem's insistence that Eve acts with a *holdne hyge* ('loyal heart', l. 708a) the association of Eve's promise with false promises only makes sense within an ethical framework where it is the result, not the intention, which determines whether or not her act of promising is felicitous.

The words *tacen* and *hyld* appear again when Eve realizes her error and forfeits her vision. In this moment of clarity, Eve understands that she has not *worhte* ('brought about') God's *hyld* but *forlæten* ('abandoned') it, and that the Tempter showed her a sign *þurh untreowa* ('by reason or means of bad faith'). *Bad faith* (i.e., a reference to the Tempter's inner state) is a reasonable way to understand *untreow*, but given *treow*'s tendency in the poem to encompass the external consequences as well as the internal state of loyalty, we could also reasonably understand that the word shades into an idea of 'un-protection': the bad faith of the Tempter relates to the outcast state he is in, and into which he hopes to assimilate Adam and Eve.

REASON

There is a persistent critical tradition which reads the poem as an allegory of the way the intellect (Adam) is misled by the senses (Eve).[48] Cole has contradicted this narrative in stating that that the Tempter "appeals to Adam's and Eve's visionary faculties and not their 'senses'," but the bulk of Cole's engagement with the tradition of reading Eve as a

[48] See Burchmore 'Traditional Exegesis', p 126; T.D. Hill, 'The fall of the angels and man in the Old English Genesis B' in *Anglo-Saxon Poetry: essays in appreciation for J. McGalliard* ed. L.E. Nicholson and D. Frese (Notre Dame, 1975), pp. 279–290, p 282; Vickrey, 'Adam, Eve, and the *Tacen*', p. 9.

representation of the senses is confined to a single footnote, so the counter-argument still needs to be made more forcefully and more fully.[49]

Cole's article, 'Jewish Apocrypha and Christian Epistemologies of the Fall: The *Dialogi* of Gregory the Great and the Old Saxon *Genesis*', demonstrates the influence of Gregory's Dialogues on *Genesis B*. He describes how "the poet derives Eve's vision from Adam's, as detailed in the *Dialogi*".[50] He situates *Genesis B* within an apocryphal tradition, mediated by Gregory, wherein Adam and Eve experience light, visions, and direct discourse with God before the Fall, and experience the Fall "not simply as an aversion from spiritual light, as Augustine has it time and again, but as a withdrawal from divine vision (sight of heaven and angels) and converse with God".[51]

It is clear that Eve's intellect is deceived before her senses are. The Tempter initially presents her not with the gift of a beautiful *tacen* but with a verbal challenge: he rushes upon her with a story begun in *medias res*, threatening God's anger and leaving her to piece together its cause, his identity, and the content of his interview with Adam from his fragmentary and erratic account. He makes her guess and suppose and plot to avert God's wrath before she can so much as speak. Eve must accept the Tempter's words before she accepts the apple and receives the vision. We also see her foreground her intellectual reception of the *tacen* above her sensory reception of it when she refers to it not as a vision or a sign, but as *gewit* ('understanding', l. 671b).[52] The poem also states that Eve did not perceive the vision *þurh monnes geþeaht* ('through human thought/counsel/suggestion', l. 605b) but because the Tempter deceived her *sawle* ('soul', l. 607a). The sense of *geþeaht* here isn't perfectly clear, but the poet seems to

[49] Cole, 'Jewish Apocrypha', p. 183, n. 81. See also Alain Renoir, 'Eve's IQ rating: two sexist views of *Genesis B*' in *New Readings on Women in Old English* Literature, ed. H. Damico and A.H. Olsen (Bloomington IN, 1990), pp. 262–272, which suggests that the misogyny critics perceive in the poem may be the result of reading the text through the lens of later French culture.
[50] Cole, 'Jewish Apocrypha', p. 162.
[51] Cole, 'Jewish Apocrypha', p. 169.
[52] Cole points out that this word also links Eve's perception to that of Angels; 'Jewish Apocrypha', p. 177.

be setting up a contrast between 'normal' perception (i.e., perception by the senses) and vision that originates in the soul, which is often equated to the mind.[53]

The Tempter's tendency to abuse truth helps to explain one passage which has caused editors enough discomfort that it has accumulated a tradition of emendation and restoration.[54] After the Tempter promises to excuse Adam's *womcwidas* ('vile speeches', l. 621a) if he demonstrates sufficient contrition and obedience, the narrator breaks in with a gnomic statement on atonement, observing that this is how things are for Eve's descendants: when they sin against their Lord, they must *betan heora hearran hearmcwide ond habban his hyldo forð* ('amend harmful speech [against] their Lord and have his favour henceforth', l. 625). The statement seems out of place because Adam has not actually sinned or spoken *hearmcwide* and the Tempter is not his lord, so atonement is clearly inappropriate in this case—in fact, obedience to the Tempter will *cost* him God's *hyld*. However, the disjunction between the narrator's moralizing on what is appropriate in the fallen world and the narrative context serves to point out that the Tempter is abusing truth. The model of behaviour he advocates, in which reconciliation follows atonement, is perfectly orthodox, but perfectly out of place in Paradise. It is a post-lapsarian solution to a post-lapsarian problem, which he imports into a pre-lapsarian world.

Likewise, messengers, signs, words—and reason—are the means by which the faithful access God after the Fall, but they are not appropriate to Paradise. The Tempter's inappropriate mediation extends beyond the interruption of direct speech described by Jager. He also corrupts Eve's intellect by inserting mediating signs (words, and the

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[53] Malcolm Godden has demonstrated that the soul and mind are consistently conflated in the writings of Alcuin, who had a great influence on subsequent generations of intellectuals in the region where *Genesis B* is most likely to have been composed. Malcolm Godden, 'Anglo-Saxons on the Mind' in *Learning and Literature in Anglo-Saxon England: Studies presented to Peter Clemoes*, ed. M. Lapidge and H. Gneuss (Cambridge, 1985), pp. 271–298, p. 272.
[54] Doane's note on lines 623–625 summarizes the various attempts to amend it. Doane, *Saxon* Genesis, pp. 290–291.

vision) between her and reality. The notion that reason is fallible and inferior to a type of non-sensory direct perception is present in different forms and under different terminology in a range of genres. Cole's allusion to the reinterpretation of the threefold soul in the writings of Alcuin is most obviously relevant because it can be linked to the time and place of the poem's origin, but we may also think of the Alfredian adaptation of Boethius' hierarchy of *sensus, imaginatio, ratio, intelligentia* (as Godden points out, the translator "attributes *intelligentia*, translated as 'gewis andgit', certain or direct understanding, to angels and wise men, not just to God,")[55] or of the poem *Daniel* in which, in Graham Caie's assessment, the Babylonians' rational *scientia* proves inferior to Daniel's intuitive *sapientia*.[56] The Tempter's challenge to Eve—particularly his flurry of 'if' statements—forces her to resort to reason to attempt to untangle the superfluity of words and signs with which he assaults her. When she accepts the Tempter's mediation and replaces her direct experience *of* God with reasoning *about* God, she has already slipped to a lower state of mind in which she sees through a glass, darkly.

GENESIS A

Like *Genesis B*, *Genesis A* treats signs as things which effect changes in relationships with God. The words *tacen* and *beacen* appear in the poem exclusively in the context of reformulations and renewals of God's relationship to mankind, or a particular subset of mankind.

The theme of misreading doesn't feature as prominently in *Genesis A* as it does in *Genesis B* and several of the other longer poems discussed in previous chapters. There is some blindness and misunderstanding—the angels who visit Lot in Sodom are able to appear as youths to him and to blind the eyes of the people of Sodom to allow

[55] Godden, 'Anglo-Saxons on the Mind', p 276. The relevant passage in the *Consolation* is in Chapter 41 of the Old English text: *Boethius*, Vol. I pp. 374–380 and Vol. II pp. 91–94.
[56] Caie, 'Warning Against Pride', p. 7.

Lot and his family to escape, and Lot's insensible drunkenness is a sort of blindness as well. However, such misunderstanding is an occasional narrative device almost exclusively determined by the source text, not an extended and developed theme such as is found in *Andreas*. The most prominent misunderstandings are in the two narratives in which Abraham pretends that Sarah is his sister and a foreign ruler (Pharaoh in the first instance, Abimilech in the second) takes her from him. In the first iteration of this narrative, God sends punishments upon the household of Pharaoh. The poem does not mention whether Pharaoh understands that Sarah was actually Abraham's wife, only that Pharaoh quickly perceives the cause of his misfortunes and returns Sarah to Abraham (ll. 1859b–1872).[57] In the second, God appears to Abimilech in a dream and tells him precisely what the situation is. Abimilech protests his innocence in the misunderstanding first to God, then to Abraham, who in turn explains himself (ll. 2621–2716). (The poet silently omits Abraham's secondary justification found in Genesis 20:12, that Sarah really is his half-sister.) Abimilech's drunkenness on the night he receives this message from God is doubly stressed in the poem—he is *wine druncen* ('drunk with wine', l. 2635b) and *symbelwerig* ('feast-weary', l. 2641b)—but absent from the source, Genesis 20. This detail may have been added in part to establish Abimilech as the villain in this situation, thereby distracting from the blame that could legitimately be placed on Abraham for the misunderstanding.[58] It increases Abimilech's resemblance to other rapacious foreign rulers, such as Holofernes and Nebuchadnezzar as depicted in *Judith* and *Daniel*. Another purpose of the emphasis on his drunkenness may be to establish that although God is speaking to Abimilech in a dream, this is not a transformative vision that marks out its recipient as worthy and holy—it is simply a scolding.

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[57] As stated in the introduction, quotations of *Genesis A* are from *Genesis A: A New Edition, Revised* ed. A.N. Doane (Tempe AZ, 2013).

[58] On the deliberate 'flattening' of characters in Old English poems, see Hugh Magennis, 'Contrasting Narrative Emphases in the Old English Poem *Judith* and Ælfric's Paraphrase of the Book of Judith', *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen* 96 (1995), 61–66.

Genesis A has a particularly sustained and consistent interest in signs in relation to covenants. *Tacen* appears first when Adam says to God, after he has eaten the fruit, that *nu ic þæs tacen wege, / sweotol on me selfum, wat ic sorga ðy ma* ('now I carry this sign clearly upon myself: I know the more of sorrow', ll. 885b–886). The mark of Cain (which is discussed further in the final chapter) is called both a *tacen* ('sign', l. 1044b) and a *freoðobeacen* ('sign of protection/peace', l.1045a). The rainbow after Noah's Flood is referred to by the *hapax legomenon andgiettacen* ('perceptible sign', l. 1539a). Most senses of the word *andgyt* refer to the receptive side of communication (i.e., sensing, perceiving, interpreting, understanding), although on rare occasions the word is used instead to refer to intention.[59] It is possible that the rainbow is called *andgiettacen* because it communicates God's intention, but it is more likely that the word is meant to convey that the rainbow was and still is present to be perceived and understood by mankind. The five remaining instances of the simplex *tacen* in *Genesis A* (at ll. 2313a, 2322b, 2326b, and 2377a) and the compound *friðotacen* ('sign of protection', l. 2371a), all refer to circumcision, as do *beacen* at line 2769a and *segn* ('sign') at line 2372b.

Samantha Zacher says, of the choice of such terms for circumcision, that the poet "deliberately suppressed the physical terms of the rite in order to emphasize its spiritual role as a *sphragis* or seal of the covenant."[60] She argues that Ælfric is more literal and explicit in his explanation of circumcision, but that he too emphasizes its relationship to other covenants by framing his explanation with allusions to the Flood and the binding of Isaac, "a link that serves to establish very clearly the Christian inheritance of the terms of the covenant as promised first to Abraham in the Old Testament."[61] The implication of her claim that the poem "suppressed" a literal description

[59] 'And-gyt', *DOE,* senses 3 AND 3a.
[60] Zacher, 'Views on Circumcision', p. 112.
[61] Zacher, 'Views on Circumcision', p. 102–103.

of circumcision in contrast to Ælfric's more explicit description is that the poet felt some (personal or theological) squeamishness about the procedure and wished to disguise or conceal it. However, I would argue that, as in *The Wanderer*'s use of *flet ofgeafon* ('they gave up the floor', l. 61b) for 'they died', the periphrasis here serves rather to add significance by linking this 'sign' to others than to conceal the carnal event.

The lexis of covenant clusters around the appearances of the words *tacen* and *beacen* in *Genesis A*. I include under that designation words like *friþ* ('protection'), *wær* ('covenant'), and *treow* ('pledge of loyalty'). The term *freoðobeacen,* which is used of the mark of Cain—a sign which marks the renegotiation of the relationship Cain has with God—is a compound of the words *beacen* and *friþ.* When God shows the rainbow to Noah, he says *ic eow* <u>*treowa*</u> *þæs / mine selle* (ll. 1535b–1536a) 'I give to you my sign of this pact'. When God proposes the covenant to Abraham, He instructs Abraham to keep well their <u>*treow*</u>*rædenne,* which is 'the condition of being engaged in a pledge of loyalty', (l. 2307a) and He promises that *ic þa* <u>*wære*</u> *forð / soðe gelæste* ('I will henceforth truly fulfill the covenant', ll. 2309b–2310a). Three covenant terms appear in quick succession in the passage in which Abraham establishes his household's covenant with God through circumcision:

> Abraham fremede swa him se eca bebead,
> sette **friðotacen** be frean hæse
> on his selfes sunu. heht þæt **segn** wegan
> heah gehwilcne þe his hina wæs
> wæpnedcynnes, **wære** gemyndig,
> gleaw on mode Ða him god sealde
> soðe **treowa** and þa | seolf onfeng
> torhtum **tacne**. (*Genesis A,* ll. 2370–2377a)

> [Abraham did as the eternal one bade him, set the sign of protection by the command of the Lord on his own son; he ordered that each male person of his household bear that high sign (mindful of the covenant, glad in mind) which God gave him as true pledge of loyalty, and then he himself received the bright sign.][62]

If the common emendation of the MS *wesan* to *wegan* is correct, the half-line *heht þæt segn wegan* resembles, and probably alludes to, Adam's earlier comment that *nu ic þæs*

[62] My translation is indebted to Doane's notes on these lines. *Genesis A,* p. 379.

tacen wege; the passage therefore carries a sense of culmination.[63] Contributing to that sense is the passage's unusual generic use of the word *segn*. Karkov notes that the circumcision of Isaac is called a *beacen* (l. 2769a) and that of Ishmael is called a *segn,* and proposes that *beacen* "may be used for Isaac's circumcision in *Genesis* to mark him as a type of Christ and a sign of salvation for his people."[64] However, the association of *segn* with the Cross is at least as firm as the association of *beacen* with the Cross—the two most common referents of *segn* are military standards and the Cross, and the cognate verb *segnian* means 'to bless' or 'to make the sign of the cross'. In the Doomsday imagery of *Christ III* the phrase *se beorhta segn* ('the bright sign' l. 1061b) makes use of both these primary denotations of *segn*, as it comes in a passage which depicts the actual Cross being used by the heavenly troops as a military standard (following the imagery of its source material, Pseudo-Augustine's *Sermon 155*).[65] It may be that in this case in *Genesis A,* like in *Exodus*, where the pillar of fire is called a *segn ofer sweoton* ('standard over the troops', l. 127a), the word *segn* is intended to provoke typological resonances with the sign of the Cross and the covenant fulfilled in that sign.

It is not surprising to find the lexis of covenant around these signs of covenant. What is surprising is that *Genesis A* does not reserve the language of covenant for relationships between God and men, but it does reserve the language of signs for that purpose. In passages in which Abraham makes pacts with other men the lexis of covenants is used, but not the lexis of signs. Pharaoh has Abraham escorted to the border so he may be *on frið* ('in peace'/'under protection', l. 1872b), three eorls *treowe sealdon* ('gave a pledge of loyalty', ll. 2037a and again in 2046a) to Abraham, Abimilech asks Abraham to *treowa selle, / wæra þina* ('give a pledge of loyalty, your covenant', ll.

[63] Doane cites Dietrich (*Zeitschrift für deutsches Altertum* 10) for this emendation. He follows it, as do Anlezark and Krapp (*Old Testament Narratives,* ed. and trans. Daniel Anlezark, Dumbarton Oaks Medieval Library (Harvard, 2011) and ASPR I).
[64] Catherine Karkov, 'Word, Sign and Reader', p. 130.
[65] *Sources and Analogues*, p. 97; *PL* 39.205 1–2.

2818b–2819a), and Abraham *abimelehe / wære sealde* (‘gave Abimilech his covenant’, ll. 2832b–2833a). Nowhere in these episodes depicting pledges of loyalty between human beings are the words *tacen*, *beacen*, or *segn* used. The language of covenant is used of pacts between men, but the language of signs is not.

There are two instances of *beacen* in *Genesis A* which I have not addressed yet. As well as being used of the mark of Cain and of Isaac’s circumcision, the word *beacen* is used twice of the Tower of Babel. The first time is in lines 1666–1667: *burh geworhte and to beacne torr / up arærde to rodortunglum* (‘they built a fortress and raised up a tower to the stars of heaven as a beacon’). *Beacen* is then used again when God comes to inspect the *beorna burhfæsten, and þæt beacen somed* (‘fortress of men, and that beacon together’, l. 1680). The *DOE* uses the first of these as an illustration for definition 3.b of *beacen*: “monument (freq. in inscriptions)”.

Ray Page has explained the appropriateness of the term *beacen* (or *becun*, in the runic material) to describe a monument like a runestone in terms of the three main implications of *becun* in Old English verse:

> The first implication is that of a token or symbol: the monument is a record or token of the departed, and if it is a cross it may also be remembered as a symbol. The second is that of conspicuousness: a *becun* is something that can readily be seen, because of its position (*on bergi,* for instance) or its impressive and towering appearance. The third is that of brilliance: *becun* collocates very often with the adjective *beorht,* and refers to fiery or glittering objects.[66]

The application of the term *beacen* to the Tower of Babel makes sense in the context of the first two implications Page describes, and it is possible to take *beacen* as applied to the Tower as meaning, simply, ‘a conspicuous monument’. However, there is something that doesn’t sit right about the people building a monument to themselves—monuments are typically for the dead. Most of the examples the *DOE* cites for this sense of *beacen* are from runic inscriptions, which are usually memorials. Only two ex-

[66] Ray Page, *An Introduction to English Runes* 2nd edn (Woodbridge, 1999), pp. 154–155.

amples that are not runic inscriptions are offered. They are this reference to the Tower of Babel, and Beowulf's burial mound.

As Daniel Thomas has pointed out in a recent conference paper, the sense of the grammar in the lines *ær seo mengeo eft* [...] *tofaran sceolde* (ll. 1663b, 1664b) requires a translation less like the Douay Rheims' "before we be scattered" and more like the King James' "lest we be scattered"—the Old English means something like 'lest the multitude must again be scattered', meaning that according to the poem the tower is built with the conscious intention of preventing exile and diaspora.[67] All the other instances of *tacen, beacen,* or *segn* in the poem outside the Babel episode appear in the context of a change or renewal in man's relationship to God, and other than the Tower and Adam's unfortunate sign, all the signs in the poem are initiated by God—and successfully confer protection. The use of *beacen* here therefore subtly implies hubris on the part of the builders.

Furthering this sense of impropriety and inversion is the use of the verb *sceawian*. God is the subject of the word *sceawian* ('examine/inspect/look at') three times in *Genesis A*: when He comes to inspect the building at Babel (l. 1679b), when He refuses to examine Cain's offering (l. 979), and when He looks at the beauty of His own work after creating and populating Paradise (l. 206). God's own creation is the only thing He examines that meets with His approval. God also commands several people to *sceawian* in the process of offering His signs and covenants—He tells Noah to look at the rainbow (l. 1540a), and He tells Abraham to look for the new land in which he will live (l. 1780) and at the stars which his descendants will outnumber (l. 1920). (Lot also looks for land l. 1920 and a shelter l. 2592, though his instructions to do so come second-hand through Abraham and the angels.) The use of the verb *sceawian* in the con-

[67] Daniel Thomas, 'Migration and cultural translation(s): Babel and beyond in *Genesis A*', Transforming Scripture: Biblical translations and adaptations in Old and Middle English, University of Oxford, 29–31 May 2014.

text of the *beacen* at Babel reinforces the idea that the builders are attempting to ensure their security by making a sign for God to view, instead of gaining protection by receiving and viewing a sign that comes from God. The builders have turned the natural order on its head.

EXODUS

In *Exodus*, sign words are applied primarily to the pillars of fire and cloud, which, as well as being likened to sails (ll. 81b, 89b) and beams (ll. 94b, 249a) and described through a messenger metaphor (*siðboda* is 'messenger who announces a journey', l. 250a), are described in terms of military signals and symbols (*segn ofer sweoton,* 'standard over the troops,' l. 127a; *fana* 'standard/flag', l. 248b), and in terms that apply generally to miracles (*lyftwundor,* 'wonder of the air', l.90a; *heofonbeacen,* 'beacon of heaven', l. 107b; *wundor,* 'wonder', l. 108b; *godes beacna* 'God's beacon' l. 345b). There are also several military banners and insignia that appear in the poem. *Beacen* is used of these on one occasion (l. 320b), but more often they are designated by more technical terms. The most frequent is *segn* (ll. 172b, 302a and 319a—see also *segncyning* 'banner-king' l. 172a), but *cumbol* ('ensign' l. 175b), and *þufas* ('standards made from tufts of feathers', l. 342b) are also used. The military forces also use horns and trumpets (ll. 192a, 216b), and the word *beacen* is used of their audible signals (l. 219b). In all, the word *beacen* is used of the pillars, a military standard, and the call of trumpets.

In the passage at lines 519b–532, *Exodus* instructs the reader briefly and fairly explicitly in how to read the poem by means of the *gastes cægon* ('keys of the spirit', l. 525b).[68] The poem also makes plain the connection between the covenants God had

[68] The passage in which this phrase appears has been discussed extensively. See, for example, Manish Sharma, 'The Economy of the Word in the Old English *Exodus*', *Old English Literature and the New Testament*, ed. Michael Fox and Manish Sharma (Toronto, 2012), pp. 172–194, esp. p. 188; Dorothy Haines,

with Noah and Abraham and the events of the Exodus from Egypt. A reader who follows the poem's instructions is likely to understand that the poem's exploration of the renewal and revision of God's covenants in the time of Moses also alludes forwards to the renewal and revision of the covenant through the Cross. With this in mind, the pillars which are described as signs and wonders may be understood as prefigurations of another sign, the Cross. The terms *beacen* and *wundor* are commonly used of the Cross, while the term *segn* works both within the 'military standard' metaphor, and as an allusion to the Cross since that is the other main denotation of the word. Similarly, the term *beam* works for a mast within the 'ship' metaphor, but is also a common term for the Cross.

The word *tacen* only appears once, when Moses parts the Red Sea by striking it with a *grene tacne* ('living sign', l. 281). T.D. Hill has shown that the phrase *grene tacne* used of Moses' rod "makes good literal sense" when understood in light of the connotations of Latin *virga*.[69] Like the pillars of fire and smoke, it does not have to be read figuratively as a prefiguration of the Cross, but it can be and often is.[70]

Exodus is full of signs, but most are meant to be interpreted by the reader, not by a character or characters within the poem. The poem features failure to see, in that God conceals the fleeing Israelites from the view of the Egyptians; however, this is accomplished by the intervention of an angel, and the poet does not draw attention to 'spiritual blindness' on the part of the Egyptians at all. Unlike the reader, the characters in the poem are not expected to dwell on and consider the significance of the miracles they witness or the audible signals of the trumpets, but simply to react to them quickly and correctly. As Moses says at the start of the crossing of the Red Sea, using a turn of

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'Unlocking *Exodus*', *JEPG* 98:4 (1999), 516–532. See also Irvine, *Textual Culture*, p. 254 on the 'key of knowledge' in Origen.

[69] T.D. Hill, 'The *virga* of Moses and the Old English *Exodus*' in *Old English Literature in Context* ed. John Niles (Cambridge, 1980), pp. 57–65, p. 59.

[70] Perhaps most recently by Michael Bintley. Michael D. J. Bintley and Michael G. Shapland, *Trees and Timber in the Anglo-Saxon World* (Oxford, 2013), p. 219.

phrase also used by the coast-guard of Heorot in *Beowulf* and by the newly converted Mermedonians in *Andreas*, *ofest is selost* ('haste is best', l. 293b).[71]

DANIEL

Like Beowulf, Daniel is distinguished from the people around him for his ability to discern and communicate what is invisible to others. Beowulf's ability to reveal information about monstrous places is dependent entirely on his own actions and character. At the other end of the spectrum—running through Judith, Judas, and Andreas in that order—is Daniel, whose ability to interpret Nebuchadnezzar's dreams is dependent entirely on the grace of God.

Daniel's ability with words is mentioned, though not emphasized by restatement the way Judas' eloquence is in *Elene*. Even the wisdom of the three youths in the fiery furnace is delineated in more specific terms than Daniel's is: Nebuchadnezzar seeks youths who *gleawost wære* / *boca bebodes* ('were wisest in books of law ll. 81b–82a).[72] The poet is not interested in how Daniel came by his ability, or in whether it requires an application of effort, or will. The poem offers two explanations for it, and both amount essentially to 'it comes from God'. The first is spoken by the narrator:

> Him god sealed gife of heafonum
> þurh hleoðorcwide haliges gastes,
> þæt him engel godes eall asægde
> swa his mandrihten gemæted wearð. (*Daniel,* ll. 154–157)
>
> [To him God gave grace of heaven through the discourse of the Holy Ghost, so that to him an angel of God told all as his lord had dreamed.]

The other by Nebuchadnezzar:

> Forþam ælmihtig eacenne gast
> in sefan sende, snyttro cræftas. (*Daniel,* ll. 484–485)

[71] See above, p. 125.
[72] As stated in the introduction, quotations of *Daniel* are from *Daniel and Azarias* ed. R. T. Farrell (London, 1974). Farrell notes that this departs from the Vulgate, which describes a much wider range of qualifications: "In the OE text, the entire quality of their learning changes, for they are only learned in the books of the law." *Daniel and Azarias*, p. 52.

[Because the Almighty sent an increased spirit into his mind, wise crafts.]

Of course, it has been frequently remarked that *Daniel* "is simply not about Daniel at all."[73] Unlike the critical readings of *Elene*, critical readings of *Daniel* have long seen Nebuchadnezzar's conversion as psychologically realistic, or at least emblematic of real mental states in the process of conversion, as opposed to merely typologically symbolic. Caie reads *Daniel* as a "warning against pride" in which wordly *scientia* is pitted against divine *sapientia*, and Nebuchadnezzar fails to understand God because he seeks wisdom for the wrong reasons, not "in order to worship God, but for his own aggrandizement."[74] Gillian Overing similarly contrasts the wisdom of the Babylonian advisors, who interpret "by logical process of deduction" with the wisdom of the Hebrews, which is "a gift of God in its entirety and clarity […] It is not a matter of individual talent."[75] She reads the poem as a "psychological portrait" of Nebuchadnezzar, and says that his failures as an interpreter stem from the fact that he "relies on his senses to comprehend the physical world. His perception is limited to the material and visible[;] for example, he thinks that wisdom is a commodity that can be bought and sold."[76] J. R. Hall also takes the poem as a parable about placing too much trust in worldly good fortune.[77] Roberta Bosse and Jennifer Wyatt have noted the similarities between Nebuchadnezzar's conversion and that of Judas in *Elene*, particularly the way that both characters know the truth intellectually but are not fully able to integrate that knowledge into themselves until they have been humbled by suffering.[78]

Perhaps the most thorough look at Nebuchadnezzar's psychology and the interpretation of his dreams has been by Antonina Harbus, who demonstrates that the po-

[73] Caie, 'Warning against Pride', p. 2.
[74] Caie, 'Warning Against Pride', p. 7.
[75] Gillian Overing, 'Nebuchadnezzar's Conversion in the Old English *Daniel*': A Psychological Portrait', *PLL* 20:1 (1984), 3–14, p. 6.
[76] Overing, 'Nebuchadnezzar's Conversion', p. 4.
[77] J. R. Hall, '*Daniel*, Line 610b', *The Explicator* 45:2 (1987), 3–4.
[78] Roberta Bosse and Jennifer Lee Wyatt, 'Hrothgar and Nebuchadnezzar: Conversion in Old English Verse', *PLL,* 23:3 (Summer 1987), 257–271.

em departs from the biblical text in its "preoccupation with the king's pride" and its "desire to account for the king's behaviour through the exposition of psychological and physical factors."[79] She sees pride as the reason that Nebuchadnezzar can understand, but not "assimilate" the messages of his dreams. She also explores the "relationship between grace and memory" in the poem, pointing to the ways that Nebuchadnezzar's sins and misreadings all stem from his failure to remember God.[80]

The critic who has engaged at greatest length with signs and interpretation in *Daniel* is Claire Fanger, who argues that the miracles of the poem to have a similar function to those in saints' lives. She writes:

> In any miracle story, the narrative involves God's choice of certain human individuals to be conduits for, as well as to show signs of, divine power. In conceptual terms, such signs are instrumental as well as symbolic, for they function not only as manifestations or representations by which the power of God may be read, but also as agents in a worldly context, healing the sick, exorcising demons, or, in the case of the Old English poem *Daniel,* converting the heathen. In the prophet the work of divine power acquires a special relationship with divine wisdom, for here the miracle—the potent sign— may be something whose function is incomplete without interpretation or may itself be a work of interpretation.[81]

Working from this premise, she offers a thorough exploration of the use of signs and the themes of teaching and interpretation in the poem, to which my reading of *Daniel* in this chapter is indebted. However, Fanger is working with a different definition of 'signs' than I am: in Fanger's article, 'sign' is used synonymously with 'miracle'. I am interested instead in those things which are actually named *beacen* or *tacen* in the poem—a category which overlaps but is not identical to Fanger's 'signs'. When the things which the poet chooses to name *beacen* or *tacen* are isolated from miraculous occurrences more generally, a distinct pattern emerges. Those things the poet calls *tacen* or *beacen*

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[79] Antonina Harbus, 'Nebuchadnezzar's Dreams in the Old English *Daniel*', *English Studies* 75:6 (1994), 489–508, pp. 494, 496. (Reprinted in *The Poems of MS Junius 11: Basic Readings,* ed. R. M Liuzza (London, 2002), pp. 261–286.)

[80] A good model of the opposite process, in which remembering leads to compunction and clear vision is *Judgement Day II*, with its threefold refrain of [*ic*] *gemunde* moving the speaker from complacency into contemplation in the opening lines, and later instruction to the reader to exercise their memory similarly (ll. 12b, 21a, 24a).

[81] Claire Fanger, 'Miracle as Prophetic Gospel: Knowledge, Power and the Design of the Narrative in *Daniel*', *English Studies* 72 (1991), 123–135, pp. 124–125.

are all signs which communicate by or within a failure to communicate—whose unreadability is part of their significance.

The things which are called *beacen* are:

> The idol worshipped by the Babylonians (l. 191a)
> The miracle of the youths' survival of the fiery furnace (l. 487b)
> The writing on the wall (l. 729a)

The things which are called *tacen* are:

> The 'true signs' spoken by the three youths when they proselytize to the Babylonians on their emergence from the fiery furnace (l. 446a)
> The miracle of the youths' survival of the fiery furnace (l. 488a)
> The roots of the felled tree in Nebuchadnezzar's second dream (l. 514b)
> The miraculous appearance of the writing on the wall (l. 717a)

The idol worshiped by the pagans is first called a *cumbol* (l. 180a), a word which usually refers to a military banner (every example in the *DOE* apart from this one from *Daniel* uses the term in that way). It is also called a *herg* (l. 181a) and a *wihgyld* (l. 182a), both of which mean 'idol'. Then, when the Israelites are asked to worship the idol, it is called a *beacen*, and the Israelites who refuse to bow to it are pointedly called *Abrahames bearn* ('children of Abraham', l.193b) and described as *wærfæste* ('true to the covenant', l. 196a). The most common use of *beacen* throughout the corpus is to refer to signs from God such as portents, miracles, and the Cross. As we have seen already in the first two poems of Junius 11, it is used of such things as the mark of Cain, the circumcision, and the pillar of fire that protects the Israelites, all of which are signs of God's power and enduring protection. The use of the term *beacen* in this context in *Daniel* (when the poet could clearly think of several other ways to describe an idol), juxtaposed with the Israelite's faithfulness to the covenant of Abraham, serves to underline the emptiness of this *beacen* in contrast to those which come from God. It is not really a sign; it is just an image.

The second point when *tacen* and *beacen* are used is at the conclusion of the episode of the youths in the fiery furnace. Critics are divided on the effectiveness of

this miraculous event; Fanger calls it "the sign which first enables Nebuchadnezzar to read the evidence of the true God," and claims that it "provides a standard of intelligibility by which the miracles to follow may be measured."[82] Overing, on the other hand, claims that "Nebuchadnezzar's perception is not radically changed by either of his dreams or by the miracle in the furnace because he himself has remained personally unaffected," and points out that it is not the miracle itself but the advice of his counsellor which moves Nebuchadnezzar to release the youths.[83] An intermediate position may be the most tenable: Nebuchadnezzar's response to the miracle is deliberately ambiguous and half-hearted. While it is true that the miracle does not bring about deep conviction and permanent reform in Nebuchadnezzar, it does move him to return the Israelites' sacred vessels to them, and to declare that God *is ana ece drihten* ('is alone the everlasting Lord', l. 476). As Roberta Frank has noted, the poet makes playful use of the fact that *Daniel* means *iudicium Dei* ('judgement of God').[84] Many homilies and poems on Judgement Day (such as *Christ III*) stress that people will be judged by their *worda ond dæda* ('words and deeds') or by how well they have honoured God with their *wordum ond weorcum* ('words and works'). By that measure, Nebuchadnezzar should find himself among the ranks of the saved. The poet's point may be that words and deeds do not save in and of themselves, but as signs of inner faith. Or it may be an illustration of the sort of fault Vercelli Homily XI warns against: it is not enough to begin good works if you do not follow through on them.

The word *tacen* first appears in this scene when the three youths emerge from the furnace and *septon hie soðcwidum and him sædon fela / soðra tacna* ('they instructed by true sayings and related to them many true signs', ll. 445–446a). *Septon* is an

[82] Fanger, 'Miracle as Prophetic Gospel', p. 129.
[83] Overing, 'Nebuchadnezzar's Conversion', p. 10.
[84] Roberta Frank, 'Some Uses of Paronomasia in Old English Scriptural Verse', *Speculum* 47:2 (1972), 207–226, pp. 216–217. See also Harbus, 'Nebuchadnezzar's Dreams', p. 504; and Andy Orchard, 'Esoteric Knowledge', *A Social History of England 900–1200* ed. Julia Crick and Elisabeth van Houts (Cambridge, 2011), pp. 381–390, p. 384.

emendation from *stepton* on the example of *Elene,* line 530a, in which Judas says that his father instructed him about Christ with true words (*septe soðcwidum*).[85] The sentence also bears a resemblance to line 742 of *Andreas*, where it is said that the statue of the seraphim comes to life and *septe sacerdas sweotolum tacnum* ('instructed the priests with clear signs').[86] What it means to instruct by means of signs is ambiguous in both poems: if neither the youths nor the statue are performing new miracles, they may be instructing people by speaking *about* miracles, or it may be the very fact of their miraculously being alive and speaking which the expression alludes to. In *Andreas* this instruction by signs fails entirely, as the priests will not believe. In *Daniel*, it succeeds, but only in a limited way because Nebuchadnezzar quickly relapses into pride.

The need for these new signs spoken by the youths reveals the failure of the miracle to signify, as Fanger observes:

> It would appear from this need on the part of the three children (and presumably the *Daniel* poet) to explain, to gloss the original miracle, that the miracle itself was not perceived (as it seems to be in the Vulgate) as a completely self illuminating, self sufficient sign of God's power.[87]

The limitations of the miracle as a sign become even more evident a few lines later, when the miracle itself is called a *beacen* and a *tacen*:

> Swa wordum spræc werodes ræswa,
> Babilone weard, siððan he beacen onget,
> swutol tacen godes. No þy sel dyde,
> ac þam æðelinge oferhygd gesceod. (*Daniel* ll. 486–489)
>
> [Thus the prince of the troop spoke these words, the guardian of Babylon, after he understood the sign, the clear token of god. He did none the better, but pride came upon that noble one.]

In line 488, the very same line in which the miracle is called a 'clear sign of God', its failure to permanently alter Nebuchadnezzar's thoughts and behaviour is stated: *no þy sel dyde* (he did none the better).

The next thing to be called a *tacen* is the stump in Nebuchadnezzar's dream:

[85] The emendation is accepted by both Farrell (*Daniel and Azarias*) and Krapp (ASPR I).
[86] See above, p. 101.
[87] Fanger, 'Miracle as Prophetic Gospel', p. 128.

Het þonne besnædan seolfes blædum,
twigum and telgum, and þeh tacen wesan,
wunian wyrtrumam þæs wudubeames
eorðan fæstne, oðþæt eft cyme
grene bleda, þonne god sylle. (*Daniel* ll. 513–517)

[[The angel] then ordered its own blossoms, twigs, and branches be cut off, and nevertheless to be a sign, the root-stock of that wood-tree to dwell fast in the earth, until afterwards should come green shoots, when God might grant it.]

In the Biblical account, Nebuchadnezzar speaks of his dream in the first person and presents the angel's words as direct speech, but the poem tells the dream in the third person voice of the narrator and phrases the angel's utterances as reported speech. In the poem, it is not clear whether the fact of the roots (or their regeneration) being a *tacen* is articulated by the angel or surmised by Nebuchadnezzar or merely stated by the narrator and unknown to Nebuchadnezzar. To the reader, it is a cue to read figuratively: to understand that the tree is an allegory for Nebuchadnezzar (and perhaps to take *blæd* 'leaf/blossom' as a pun on *blæd* 'prosperity', as it certainly is intended later in line 562a: *swa þin blæd lið* 'so your glory will fall down'), and to further understand Nebuchadnezzar's downfall and restoration as a sign or prefiguration of other rebirths, such as those of baptism and crucifixion. As a sign intended to communicate within the narrative, however, this *tacen* fails. Perhaps Nebuchadnezzar does not know that it is a *tacen* because that word was spoken by the narrator only, not the angel. Or perhaps he knows that it is a *tacen* but refuses to read it himself, or to be persuaded of its meaning by Daniel.

Harbus says that the dream cannot cause Nebuchadnezzar to reform because "his punishment and rehabilitation were the working out of the plan of providence."[88] The dream also fails to persuade him because it is not enough for Nebuchadnezzar to know God with his mind—he must know with his body. The poem's emphasis on Nebuchadnezzar's penitential suffering fits a pattern we have also seen in *Elene* and *Andre-*

[88] Harbus 'Nebuchadnezzar's Dreams', p. 506.

as, where suffering often precedes conversion. Also, as it is common to depict an individual's relationship to God (good or ill) as made apparent upon their bodies (as we have already seen in *Juliana*, *Andreas, Genesis A* and *B,* and *Christ III*), it makes sense that Nebuchadnezzar should have to undergo some transformation of the body before he can achieve transformation of the mind. His suffering functions within both the discourse of penitence and the discourse of covenant.

On the hierarchy of sensory perception, rational thought, and spiritual intuition, Nebuchadnezzar is rational. Before he ascends from literal-minded man to spiritually-minded man, he has to be pushed down the scale into an animal state. This step backwards might seem like a strange way to make spiritual progress, but *Daniel* suggests, as *Andreas* does*,* that sometimes God's mute created things understand Him better than men do. The song of the three youths does ask all men to praise God, but the majority of the prayer calls for praise from God's other creations—from the abstract (heat and cold) and the inanimate (hills and mountains) and the inarticulate (wild animals and cattle). When Nebuchadnezzar becomes like an animal, he feels, rather than knows, God's power, in the manner of those irrational things.

It is also necessary that Nebuchadnezzar should fail to understand the *tacen* in order to become a model for his people, and a prefiguration legible to the reader. Fanger calls this conversion a 'sign', though the poet does not call it a *tacen*. She says, "the king's secondary conversion, his recovery from regression into idolatry, is seen to have power as a sign which may be turned to effect the conversion of others."[89] Significantly though, the ability of Nebuchadnezzar's conversion to signify in the way Fanger claims it does is predicated on his failure to understand an image that the poet *does* call a *tacen*—if he had correctly understood the image of roots in his dream, he would not

[89] Fanger, 'Miracle as Prophetic Gospel', p. 132.

have undergone the suffering and restoration that communicate a narrative of penance and redemption widely and effectively to all who observe him.

The final thing to which the terms *tacen* and *beacen* are applied is the writing on the wall. Fanger explains why this miracle's unreadability is so important:

> The sign is the more terrifying because the subjects of Belshazzar, by the nature of their sins, are in an even worse position to understand it. The obscurity of the sign becomes part of the declaration which the sign makes and part of the punishment which the sign signifies. Their fear is far more appropriate than they understand; it is in fact the only form of understanding possible to them, because their idolatry and sacrilege have made the world illegible in all human and sacred terms.[90]

In this case, Fanger's use of 'sign' to refer to the miracle overlaps neatly with the poet's use of *tacen* and *beacen*. The poet uses *tacen* in line 717a to refer not to the words themselves but the fact of their miraculous appearance. As with the previous *tacen* in Nebuchadnezzar's dream, both the fact that it is a sign and what the sign means are made clear to the reader: the narrator interprets the *tacen* as soon as he identifies it, saying that it communicates that Belshazzar's claim that his idols are stronger than God is a lie. The writing itself is called a *beacen* in line 729a, when the people come to look at it. Although they fail to understand what it signifies, in treating it as a *beacen* they show that they do understand that it must signify something. It is the inverse to the poem's first use of *beacen* to refer to the idols which are legible but ultimately empty. Belshazzar does understand the implication of the sign—that it predicts *Sennera wite* ('the punishment of the Shinarites', l. 726b). What he and his followers do not understand is *how* either the writing itself or its miraculous appearance signify—what discourse they belong to. They do not understand the language of the *beacen*. They do not understand that they have caused the *tacen* by their behaviour, nor that it is a miracle of God and therefore can be expected to convey some information about the conferring or withdrawal of His protection.

[90] Fanger, 'Miracle as Prophetic Gospel', p. 134.

Throughout *Daniel*, the things which the poet calls *tacen* or *beacen* always gain additional significance for the reader by their failures to communicate within the world of the narrative. The use of *beacen* for the idol worshipped by the Babylonians is ironic, and draws attention to the inability of such idols to cause miracles or grant protection. Nebuchadnezzar's failure to fully understand the miracle of the three youths' survival of the fiery furnace, the message the youths preach when they emerge, or the meaning of his dream sets him up to become an object lesson. The youths' survival merely demonstrates God's power to protect those in his favour, but Nebuchadnezzar's fall and restoration conveys a more complex salvific message on the universal availability of redemption. Likewise, in the miracle of the writing on the wall, in order for the miracle to effectively convey the message that self-satisfied men suffer spiritual blindness, it is necessary that Belshazzar should be unable to read the sign. For the sign and situation to be meaningful for the reader of the poem, it must in some way fail to communicate to the characters within the poem.

CHRIST AND SATAN

Christ and Satan qualifies the extent of man's knowledge of creation with the question *Hwa is þæt ðe cunne / orðonc clene nymðe ece god*? ('Who is there that may entirely know the design except eternal God?' ll. 17b–18), and includes *wera snytero* ('the wisdom of men', l. 490b) in the list of things which would not save men from the inevitability of Hell.[91] However, for a poem that takes in the Fall of Man and the story of Didimus (doubting Thomas) among its subject matter, *Christ and Satan* touches remarkably briefly on the limitations of man's knowledge and interpretive ability. Though it briefly blames the Tempter for causing the *balewe geþohtas* ('deadly thoughts', l. 488b) which brought down Adam and Eve, it does not interrogate how this

[91] Quotations of *Christ and Satan* are from Dobbie, ASPR I.

was accomplished, and it perfunctorily repeats the story of Didimus in just four lines (ll. 542–545). But this poem is not about man's misinterpretation—it is about Satan's.

Ruth Wehlau identifies the main themes of that poem as knowledge, recognition, and identity. She writes:

> Throughout, Satan is presented as a foil to the reader, an example of what not to do. Each narrative episode revolves around this theme as Christ either reveals his own identity or that of Satan, and as Satan either purposely confuses his identity with Christ's or is made to recognize his own.[92]

Wehlau points to the poem's depiction of Satan's self-deception before his Fall, and she suggests that Satan may also be seen as a poor interpreter in the final section of the poem, where he tempts Christ, because the Biblical passages on which this section is based are read by Jerome (and Hrabanus Maurus after him) as a "conflict between the true and false uses of Scripture".[93]

One of the faults of the devils which Wehlau doesn't mention is their tendency to read signs that appear too late to be of use to them. In lines 53–64 the devils alternate accusations of how Satan deceived them (and himself) with complaints about their present state, one of which is: *atol is þin onseon*! ('terrible is your face!', l. 61a). This is a comment on the way that the state of Satan's relationship to God is written on his body. As with the damned man in *Christ III* (ll. 1564b–1565a), Satan's faults are written on his countenance, but only once he is already in Hell.

In response to the devils, Satan himself recounts how he overreached and was condemned to Hell, then says:

> Wene þæt tacen sutol   þa ic aseald wes on wærgðu,
> niðer under nessas   in ðonne neowlan grund.[94]
>
> (*Christ and Satan,* ll. 89–90)
>
> [I believe that a clear sign, when I was expelled into condemnation below under the chasms in the deep ground.]

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[92] Ruth Wehlau, 'The Power of Knowledge and the Location of the Reader in "Christ and Satan" ', *JEGP* 97 (1998), 1–12, p. 2

[93] Wehlau, 'Power of Knowledge', p. 9.

[94] It does not matter whether l. 89a refers to the clause that precedes it or the clause that follows it: both describe the descent into Hell.

In poetry, signs which are qualified as 'clear' (*swutol* or *sweotol*) are seldom useful. When the statue in *Andreas* instructs the priests with *sweotolum tacnum*, the priests utterly reject these signs, and refuse to believe in the divinity of Christ (l. 742b). The *swutol tacen* Nebuchadnezzar observes and even, at some level, understands, fails to reform him (l. 488a)—there *swutol* is even linked by alliteration to *sel* in the statement of Nebuchadnezzar's failure to act on the sign: *no þy sel dyde* ('he did none the better'). In *Genesis A*, when Adam sees the *tacen* of his fall *sweotol on me selfum* ('clearly upon myself', l. 886a) it is too late for him to do anything about it. Likewise in *Christ and Satan*, Satan takes the fact that he has been exiled as a 'clear sign' that he has overreached—but exile as a sign that he deserves exile comes too late to be useful. It is like Grendel's hatred, which is conveyed to the Danes by the *sweotolan tacne* ('clear signs', l. 89b) of his invasion of Heorot: as Grendel's murderous rampage is a sign that he is murderous, Satan's damnation is a sign that he is damned. Both signs are perfectly clear, but perfectly useless.

CONCLUSIONS

Genesis B is not an allegory in which Eve stands for the senses and Adam stands for reason. Eve's reaction to the Tempter is perfectly reasonable, and that is precisely the problem: reason is inferior to direct perception. The Tempter, by his words and signs and 'if's, pushes Eve to consider God through reason and calculation, instead of relying on her previous direct experience. This is just one of many ways in which he misuses truth, offering Eve tools (messengers, words, signs, reason, atonement) which the faithful use to access God in a post-lapsarian world, but which are out of place in Eden, where unmediated experience of God is available. Thus the Tempter is able to persuade Eve that she is approaching God when in fact she is consenting to withdraw from God

by attempting to control the terms on which she sees and hears Him, and He sees and hears of her and of Adam.

The subversive nature of the Tempter, who lies by means of truths, is also expressed in the way he embodies the sign-bearing hero-messenger type illustrated in Chapter 1 by the examples of Beowulf and Judith, but undermines its purpose. In particular, he subverts the action of giving a sign, which normally confirms and strengthens covenant relationships, using the action instead to sabotage them.

In giving the sign, the Tempter not only imitates heroic sign-bearers, but also imitates God's power to create through language. The Tempter pretends to have similar power to affect the world when he gives Eve the vision, though in fact that vision is only temporary, and may exist only in her mind. Eve in turn comes to believe that her words have more power than they really do—that she can bring about God's favour (*hyld*), and cause Adam to see what she sees, and secure protection (*treow*) for Adam with her words.

The Tempter manipulates Eve into undermining a covenant by offering one, and into using truth to lie. Given the lexical echoes between the two passages where the Tempter and Eve offer signs and promise *treow*, the possible association of the expression *treowa gehet* with false promises, and the way that *treow* in certain contexts refers as much to the practical consequences of loyalty (i.e. support, protection) as the inner state of faithfulness, we can determine that the poet conceives of Eve's promise as 'false' despite being given in good faith. These non-intentionalist ethics allow the poet to paint a highly sympathetic portrait of Eve as rational, compassionate, and sincere without actually absolving her, because in the end she is judged not on the intentions of her words, but on their outcome.

Genesis B explores the link between signs and covenants, and the potential of both covenants and the giving or reading of signs to go wrong. *Genesis B*'s concentrat-

ed attention to these themes at such a crucial moment in the narrative establishes their importance early on, such that a reader encountering the other poems in the Junius Manuscript in the order in which the manuscript presents them would be more attuned to their importance, and likely to perceive their presence in the other poems.

While *Genesis* and *Exodus* make signs of covenant central to their narratives, *Daniel* and *Christ and Satan* focus their attention on characters who are excluded from God's protection. They are interested not only in the ways damnation can be signified (for example, by Satan's ugliness) but in the general breakdown of communication that occurs in situations where characters remove themselves from God's protection by their sins. Both *Daniel* and *Christ and Satan* depict characters who fail to read signs in a timely way, and suffer for it, yet in their misreading and suffering become object lessons for the reader. Both poems explore ways that signs can signify through failing to signify.

The concepts of 'signs' and 'covenant with God' are closely linked—so much so that in *Genesis A*, covenant terms like *wær* are used of agreements between mortal characters, but sign terms like *tacen* are never used to talk about anything but relationships between God and men. Across all the texts in the manuscript, *tacen* and *beacen* can be used both for positive signs that indicate a special relationship with God (such as the circumcision) and for those which demonstrate that such a relationship has soured or been severed (such as the sign Adam feels on himself in *Genesis A*, and Satan's exile in *Christ and Satan*.)

Positive signs are associated with the lexis of brightness—*Genesis* and *Exodus,* which depict far more positive and successful relationships with God than *Daniel* and *Christ and Satan* do, collocate 'sign words' with 'brightness words' in eight sentences, whereas neither *Daniel* nor *Christ and Satan* describes a single *tacen* or *beacen* as 'bright'. In the following chapter, which is also my conclusion, I make the case for un-

derstanding the concept cluster of brightness, sign, and covenant as an allusive traditional unit with a highly developed set of connotations.

CONCLUSIONS: BRIGHT SIGNS

In purely denotational terms, there is no logical reason that circumcision should be described as *torht* (bright). However, it will have become clear by this point though that there is a convergence of language of signs, brightness, and covenant in many Old English poems. Following the examples of Ananya Kabir's analysis of the 'verbal cluster' surrounding the phrase *grene wang* ('green land') in poetic depictions of landscapes and, especially, Britt Mize's analysis of the "conceptual and (subordinately) lexical clusters" surrounding the term *gifre* ('voracious'), I hope to demonstrate that the description of the circumcision as a *torht tacen* in *Genesis A* (l. 2377a), although peculiar in its denotation, is very precisely expressive in terms of its evocation.[1]

In these concluding remarks, I would like to make the case for understanding the concept cluster of brightness-sign-covenant as a unit which participates in the "traditional referentiality" of Old English poetry. This is a term coined by John Miles Foley to express the way that poetic traditions will use conventional units which invoke "a context that is enormously larger and more echoic than the text or work itself."[2] I will begin by surveying the longer poems to demonstrate that the three concepts of 'signs', 'brightness' and 'covenant' are intimately linked, to the point that not only can we expect signs of God's covenant to be bright, but we should be surprised if any sign described as 'bright' is *not* in some way associated with God's protective power. Having established the consistency of this concept cluster's appearance in Old English poetry, I

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[1] Ananya Jahanara Kabir, *Paradise, Death, and Doomsday in Anglo-Saxon Literature* (Cambridge, 2001), p 144; Mize, *Traditional Subjectivities*, p. 118.
[2] John Miles Foley *Immanent Art: From Structure to Meaning in Traditional Oral Epic* (Bloomington, IN, 1991), p. 7.

will consider the implications of the Saxon *Genesis*' adherence to the convention, and *Beowulf*'s deviation from it.

Mize's analysis of the differences between *Genesis B* and the Vatican *Genesis* proceeds upon the methodological assumption that there are Old English poetic units which fall somewhere in between the level of formula and motif—"dictional structures" that do not necessarily employ phrasal templates, or collocations, and are not as easily encapsulated and separable from lexis as a 'motif' like 'exile'—yet which do clearly participate in the type of metonymic signification Foley termed 'traditional referentiality'.[3] For example, Mize shows that the word *gifre* has connotations beyond its strict denotation which attract remarkably consistent "concept clustering", and explains how these clusters signify:[4]

> Reference strictly to the citational, lexicographical meaning of the word cannot account for the regularity of these contextual links, and its pairing with *grædig* has associative dimensions not explicable by analytical processing of the component parts. This strong semantic prosody, seemingly arbitrary yet consistently upheld and thus reinforced, is a telltale sign that *gifre* has a widely perceived traditional value. It participates in received packages of phraseology and concept that signify metonymically, by reaching outside the single text to create meaning by reference to a larger received and recognized field of implication, rather than depending solely on what is provided in the immediate textual surroundings.[5]

Like 'gifre' the language of signs participates in clusters that have traditional meaning. When a sign word appears in conjunction with the concepts of brightness and/or covenant, this can be processed as the unit 'brightness-sign-covenant' which has connotations and associations which are not identical to those of the individual terms summed summed together. Connections between signs and brightness, and signs and covenant, have already come up repeatedly in the poems I have analyzed up to this point, but in order to offer a more systematic demonstration of the cluster's connotations, I have conducted a survey using the *Dictionary of Old English Web Corpus*

[3] Mize, 'Traditional Diction, Emergent Subjectivities' in *Traditional Subjectivities*, pp. 81–154, p. 93.
[4] Mize, *Traditional Subjectivities*, p. 118.
[5] Mize, *Traditional Subjectivities*, p. 123.

(*DOEC*).[6] I have included the results of my search in a set of appendices, in the form in which they appear in the *DOEC* with the search terms in bold (plus some minimal additional markings I have added for clarity), for ease of comparison. I have numbered these entries so that I can refer to, for example, to items 8–10 and 12 efficiently, without interrupting each paragraph of analysis with multiple lengthy quotations.

I have restricted my attention here to the 'longer' poems—those of 300 lines or more. The result of doing so is that nearly all the poems that appear in the discussion here are those which have been the focus of this study: the poems of the Beowulf and Junius Manuscripts, and the 'Cynewulfian' poems of the Vercelli and Exeter Books. The texts that are excluded are effectively the Riddles and the Paris Psalter.[7] As these are genres with distinctive compositional requirements different to those of the longer, narrative poems, and as there are intriguing parallels between some of the riddles and psalms which use the language of signs and brightness, they deserve separate attention which I hope to give to them in an article in the near future.

Boolean searches of the *DOEC* turn up combinations of words "within segments", which in practice usually means "within a sentence". Since sentences are usually longer than poetic lines, this makes some allowance for the fact that, as Mize says, Old English poetic structures such as this often "extend beyond the alliterative reach of the single poetic line, [to] groups of traditionally associated words that recurrently cluster together."[8] However, there is no restriction that prevents concept clusters overlapping syntactical boundaries, so this type of search cannot turn up every example of the cluster. For example, although these search parameters catch the link between *tacen* (l. 1104a) and *bleo* ('colour' l. 1105b) in *Elene*, they miss the subsequent use of *beorht* in

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[6] Compiled by Antonette diPaolo Healey with John Price Wilkin and Xin Xiang. (Toronto, 2009).
[7] Specifically, Riddles 59 and 63, as well as *The Riming Poem*, which has much in common with the Riddles (see Ruth P.M. Lehman, 'The Old English *Riming Poem*: Interpretation, Text, and Translation' *JEGP* 69:3 (1970), 437–449, p. 440), and Psalms 67, 71, 77, 115, 121, and 148, as well as *The Lord's Prayer II*.
[8] Mize, *Traditional Subjectivities,* pp. 92–93.

line 1109b, *leoht* ('light') in line 1115a, *tacen* in line 1120b, and *leoht* in line 1122b, which are all employed in the context of the miraculous revelation of the nails. This survey must therefore be regarded as conservative and exemplary, not exhaustive.

Appendix A at the end of this chapter is a table containing a list of 27 sentences gathered from a *DOEC* search for any instance—in the longer poems only—where *tacen* or *beacen* appears in the same sentence as one or more of the words from Paul Beekman Taylor's list of terms which convey "beauty as brightness."[9] Most of these are instances of the 'bright sign' motif, which is a subset of the brightness-sign-covenant cluster.

I have highlighted *beacnian* where it appears, but have not included sentences that feature only one of the verbs *(ge)tacnian* or *(ge)beacnian* and not either the noun *tacen* or *beacen*. I have highlighted the word *segn* where it appears in this list as an additional 'sign' term, but I have listed separately the four places where *segn* appears in conjunction with light imagery but not in the same sentence as *beacen* or *tacen* (Appendix A.1). Three of the four instances are from Exodus; in one the pillar of light is a bright *segn* but in the other two *segn* refers to a literal military standard and it is something else (for example, armour) that is described as bright. The fourth instance is from *Phoenix*, where editors emend the MS *sunnan þegn* to *sunnan segn*.[10] While *segn* is occasionally used for the sake of variation, it seems clear by the nature and limited number of these items that the link between *segn* and the lexis of brightness is subordinate to the stronger link *tacen* and *beacen* have with the lexis of brightness.

The 'brightness term' most commonly collocated with *tacen* is *torht*. *Torht* is very common word in poetry, but unattested in prose (though there are a handful of instances of the related noun *torhtnes*). The 'brightness term' most commonly collocated

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[9] These are: *beorht, blachleor, bleo(h), deall, fæger, glæm, hiwbeorht, hwit, leoht, leoma, scir, siene/sceone, ælfscienu, sunsciene, wlitesciene, scima, torht, wlite/wlitig,* and *wuldor*. Taylor, 'Vocabulary of Beauty', p. 217.

[10] Krapp and Dobbie, ASPR III.

with *beacen* is *beorht*. The collocation of *beacen* with *beorht* is not attested in prose. The rules of alliteration make these pairings unsurprising, but do not entirely explain them—for example, in several of the instances when *beorht* and *beacen* appear in the same sentence they do not actually appear in the same line, suggesting that the link between the terms, and the concepts, is more than a contingency of the rules of alliteration.[11]

The word *tacen* appears on this list fourteen times across thirteen entries. Of those thirteen entries, three refer to the sun (item 19 from *Guthlac B,* and items 21 and 23 from *Phoenix*) and one refers to the Cross (item 9, from *Elene*). The word *beacen* appears on this list fifteen times in as many entries. Of those four refer to the sun (item 5 from *Exodus*, item 6 from *Andreas*, item 22 from *Phoenix*, and item 26 from *Beowulf*) and five refer to the Cross (items 8, 9, 10, and 12 from *Elene*, and item 16 from *Christ III*). In all, around half of all bright signs identified by this *DOEC* survey are the sun or the Cross—I have identified these entries on the table by the labels 'Sun' and 'Cross'.

While the word *beacen* seems to be preferred for both purposes, as it is used slightly more often than *tacen* for both the sun and the Cross, there is not a systematic differentiation between the two. The two words are often taken as synonyms, as has already been seen on many occasions in previous chapters, and can be seen in item 9, where both *tacen* and *beacen* are used.

It is impossible to draw defensible conclusions about the origin and development of the 'bright sign' motif from such a limited sample. It is possible that the sun was called a bright sign first, and the tropes used of the sun were later extended to the Cross, perhaps in the light of Latin models such as Pseudo-Augustine's Sermon 155, which describes how much brighter than the sun the sign of the Cross will be at Judge-

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[11] See also Randolph Quirk on the way poets employ lexical connections "independent of grammar". 'Poetic Language and Old English Metre', *Early English & Norse Studies: Presented to Hugh Smith in honour of his 60th birthday* ed. Arthur Brown and Peter Foote (London, 1963) pp. 150–171.

ment day.[12] The word *beacen* is used of the Cross frequently, but across a limited range of texts—Elizabeth Okasha observes that this usage appears primarily in *Elene,* and outside that only in *The Dream of the Rood* and *Christ III.*[13] The concentration of this usage in a group of potentially related texts—critics have argued that Cynewulf had knowlege of *The Dream of the Rood* and *Christ III*—argues for the sun being the original bright sign and the bright Cross following later.[14] On the other hand though, every instance on this table of the sun being described as a bright *tacen* or *beacen* either explicitly attributes ownership of that sign to God (e.g., the *beorht beacen godes* in item 26) or is part of a system of signification in which it is firmly established that the sun's light is emblematic of God's power (e.g., in items 22 and 23 from *The Phoenix*), so it is also possible that the Cross was the original 'bright sign' and the trope was extended to the sun to make the sun into a figure for God's redemptive power. Regardless of which came first, the bright sun and bright cross tropes are both common enough for poets to exploit the overlap in expectations, so that the sun can be a sign of God, and the Cross can be as bright as the sun.

What makes the equivalence work is the fact that brightness connotes more than it denotes. Taylor demonstrates that words for brightness connote beauty, and goodness (with very few exceptions—he does note one in the punning description of the fallen angels in Christ and Satan ll. 71b–72a), but also power.[15] Considering the virtues and strengths attributed to Judith, Juliana, Elene and Wealtheow, he concludes:

> Beauty is not simply a visible or outward sign of an interior virtue. It is a particular force in itself whose frequent manifestations in words for brightness suggests a natural power. Women of beauty and boldness of character have preternatural strength. Their powers border on the monstrous.[16]

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[12] *Sources and Analogues*, p. 97, *PL* 38.2051–2.
[13] Okasha, '"Beacen" in Old English Poetry', p. 202.
[14] On Cynewulf's knowledge of these poems, see above pp. 89 and 98.
[15] Taylor, 'Vocabulary of Beauty', p. 213.
[16] Taylor, 'Vocabulary of Beauty', p. 217.

Likewise, by describing a sign such as the Cross as 'bright' the poet is not (or not exclusively) conveying the Cross' literal brightness, but its beauty, goodness, and power.

In items 24 and 25 from *Phoenix* the bright sign is the Phoenix itself—in the first instance it is described as a bright sign that gathers God's chosen together at end times, and in the second instance it is explained as a figural representation of resurrection and redemption through Christ. (These are marked as 'Phoenix' in the right-hand column of the table). The Phoenix, like the Cross, is a beautiful, good, and powerful sign of Christ that is invoked in a discourse of selecting and protecting chosen people.

In items 7, 11, 13, and 20 the 'signs' referred to are miracles (they are marked as such on the table). Item 7 is from *Andreas*—this is where the statue of the seraph is called to life as a sign of Christ's divinity, and the Jews who will not accept the new covenant still refuse to believe its message. Item 11 is from *Elene*—this is a reference to the miraculous fire that reveals the location of the nails at Calvary—the last component of the Cross. This is the final, missing piece that completes Judas' transformation from an adherent of the Old Law to a teacher of the New and which brings about the end of Elene's spiritual journey, when the Holy Ghost's finally comes to her and fills her with sapiential wisdom. Item 13 from *Christ II* refers to Christ's miracles, specifically to their being unacknowledged by the Jews—the context is thus similar to that in the item from *Andreas.* Item 20, from *Guthlac B*, refers to the bright light that appears around Guthlac's house as his hour of death approaches and identifies him as a saint. All of these miracles communicate information about the fulfilment of the covenant or the identity of those in God's protection. Items 2 and 3 refer to circumcision (and are marked thus), which like these miracles, relates to covenant and to the marking out of God's chosen.

I have marked three of the remaining items with the label 'Exclusion'. Thise three items use the absence or withdrawal of light to convey exclusion from communion

with God: item 14 from *Christ III* describes the appearance of flocks of bright angels and dark demons as a portent of Doomsday, and item 17, also from *Christ III,* tells of the *facentacen* ('sign of sin') which marks out the damned. Item 1 from *Genesis B* describes the moment when the light of Eve's vision fades and she realizes what the consequence is for her relationship to God. The correlation between the three concepts of brightness, signs, and covenant remains firm even in its negative expression.

Two of the remaining items are not strictly examples of the bright sign motif, although they do participate in the same discourses. In item four, from *Exodus, beacen* refers to the sound of trumpets, and it is armour, not the *beacen,* which is bright, so this sentence cannot strictly be classed as an example of the 'bright sign' motif. However, *Exodus* is a poem about covenants—it draws parallels between Moses and Abraham, and suggests that both prefigure Christ. Given that context, I think the presence of the two terms might be sufficient for a reader familiar with the traditional association of brightness-sign-covenant to perceive this as a more oblique example of the pattern. In item 18, where Guthlac preaches about *sigortacnum* ('miracles', but literally 'victory-signs'), it is his *geleafan* ('belief') that is *leohte*. The qualification of *geleafan* as *leoht* or *beorht* is common, especially in the poems formerly known as the 'Cynewulf Group'.[17] The collocation appears in *Fates*, *Elene, Juliana, Christ II, Guthlac A* and *B, Phoenix,* and *Andreas,* as well as in *Daniel* and the *Metres of Boethius.* I do think that the connotations of the 'bright belief' collocation take precedence over the connotations of the 'bright sign' motif in this case. However, the larger implication of the sentence is that Guthlac's supernatural ability to preach so well is itself a sign of his relationship to God, so the conceptual link between signs, brightness, and God's favour is still present.

Everything in this list of all the places in the longer poems where brightness words appear in the same sentence as sign words participates in the discourse of God's

[17] I am grateful to Daniel Thomas for alerting me to this pattern.

protection. There's just one odd one out, which is the last item on the list: in Item 27, the bright sign is the standard Wiglaf pulls from the dragon's hoard in *Beowulf*.

The cluster of brightness, signs, and covenant seems to belong to poetry, and not prose. We might expect a high degree of lexical overlap between *Genesis A* and Ælfric's Homily VI 'Kalendas Ianuarii Octabas et Circvmcisio Domini', in which he discusses the circumcision as a *tacen* of God's covenant, but he does not use the imagery of brightness as the poems do.[18]

This cluster also seems to belong to Old English and not to Latin. Each iteration of the bright sign motif in *Phoenix*, for example, lacks a model in the Latin source. *Phoenix* follows (loosely) its Latin source, Lactantius' *De Ave Phoenice*, up to line 380, and both of the two instances where the Phoenix itself is identified as a sign are from beyond this point. Where the sun is called *torht tacen godes* ('bright sign of God', l. 96a) and *beacen* (l. 107b) in the description of the Phoenix's behaviour at sunrise, the equivalent Latin text (roughly ll. 31–50) does not use any language of signs in its description of the sun.[19] *Phoenix* also describes the sun as *lifes tacen* ('life's sign', l. 254b) within an extended metaphor (running over 17 lines) of how the resurrection of the Phoenix is like the coming of spring after winter. The equivalent Latin text contains no reference to the sun at all—the comparison there is to the butterfly emerging from its chrysalis (ll. 99–108).

The closest the Latin text ever gets to the word *signum* ('sign') is the cognate verb *signare*—line 154 says that *signant* ('they carve') an image of the Phoenix in marble. We might expect the Old English to use the verb *(ge)tacnian* to gloss this, since *tacen* frequently glosses *signum*, *(ge)tacnian* often glosses *signare* (though it does so far

[18] *Catholic Homilies: First Series*, pp. 224–231.
[19] See *Lactanti de Ave Phoenice: with Introduction, Text, Translation, and Commentary* ed. Mary Cletus Fitzpatrick (Philadelphia, 1933).

less frequently than it glosses the related verb *significare*),[20] and *(ge)tacnian* can be used in sense of 'to make a mark on a material object', as it is of the carving of the Ten Commandments in *Andreas*.[21] Instead, the Old English reads *mundum mearciað on marmstane* ('they marked with hands on marble-stone', l. 333). *Andreas* similarly uses *amearcod* ('marked', l. 724b) with reference to the statues of the seraphim and cherubim. Perhaps *(a)mearcian* is the more intuitive choice for expressing the idea of sculpting an image, but avoiding *(ge)tacnian* also helps to differentiate signs generated by God and meant to be read figurally (Andreas discusses the Ten Commandments within a context of typological reading) from images created by man and meant to be read representationally.

Signs seem to be the central concept in the cluster of brightness, signs, and covenant. However, brightness and covenant can be linked without explicitly invoking a 'sign term'. Appendix B lists co-occurrences in the longer poems of the 'covenant terms' *wær*, *treow*, *friþ*, *sib,* and *mund*(*boran*) with the three terms from Taylor's list that most unambiguously convey brightness, *beorht, leoht,* and *torht.* Cognate verbs and adjectives of the 'covenant terms' have been omitted, as have all instances in which *treow* can be taken to mean *tree,* although the Cross as a pledge of faith is a perfectly plausible image, so there is almost certainly paronomasia at work in some descriptions of the Cross as a bright tree. The link between brightness and covenant is certainly a conceptual rather than a lexical pattern—among the many possible combinations of words from each category, there is not one dominant pairing. For example, a sentence that uses *treow* is no more likely to use *torht* than *leoht*.

This list confirms the association of brightness with protection that comes from God rather than from men. As we have seen, the 'covenant terms' can be and often are used of agreements between men, but the sentences in which the language of peace and

[20] According to the *DOEC.*
[21] See above, p. 155.

protection co-occurs with the language of brightness are almost entirely consistent in referring to a relationship between God and man. Four items in Appendix B (item 3 from *Christ and Satan*, items 7 and 8 from *Christ III,* and item 12 from *Phoenix*) describe the benefits the elect will enjoy in eternity, and one (item 5, *Christ I*) expresses the narrator's hope of enjoying those benefits; two (item 1 from *Genesis A* and item 15 from *Judgement Day II*) refer to the eternal withdrawal of God's protection (from Satan and the damned). Item 10 (*Guthlac A*) describes Guthlac's faith in God, and in item 13 Juliana exhorts faith in God. Items 2, 4, and 6 (from *Genesis A, Andreas,* and *Christ II*) relate to God's promises to man: item 2 describes the circumcision, item 4 is God's offer of protection to Matthew in the Mermedonian prison, and item 6 refers to the revised covenant that exists after the Harrowing of Hell.

In only three instances does the 'protection' or 'peace' exist between mortals rather than between God and man, and in two of those that accord between men is intimately tied to man's accord with God: item 9 (*Christ III*) refers to the peace that will exist between people at end times, and item 11 (*Guthlac A*) to the saints' brotherly love for one another. The single co-occurrence of a word denoting peace or protection with a word denoting brightness in which God is entirely irrelevant is item 14, from *Beowulf*, in which it is said that Grendel will neither make peace nor offer 'bright' (i.e., monetary) compensation.

So the lexis of brightness and the lexis of covenant meet in the discourse of God's protection. Not everything that is a sign is bright. Not everything that is bright is a sign. Not every covenant, contract, or peace is with God. But *every* 'bright sign' in the longer poems that is not the sun (and even that can be a sign of God's power and love), expresses or is conceptually related to covenant with God—with the sole exception of the standard from the dragon's hoard in *Beowulf*.

Although in terms of denotation, it makes perfect sense to describe a golden military standard as a 'bright sign' and it makes little sense to describe a minor surgical procedure as a 'bright sign', in terms of the evocation *beorht beacen* and *torht tacen* have within the system of conceptual clusters in Old English poetry, it is actually the former which is unexpected and the latter which is exemplary.

THE SAXON *GENESIS*

If *Beowulf* is interesting for its apparent deviation from patterns seen in other poems, the Saxon *Genesis* is interesting for its adherence to them. Although Mize demonstrates throughout his chapter on *Genesis B* the ways the adaptor changed the Old Saxon text to make it fit better within the systems of signification specific to Old English poetry, he also maintains that this was possible because "the Anglo-Saxon poet who produced *Genesis B* from the Saxon *Genesis* was working more within a single tradition than between traditions."[22] One piece of evidence for continuity of tradition between Old English and Old Saxon poetry is in the Vatican *Genesis*' use of the 'bright sign' motif in a brightness-sign-covenant concept cluster.

The Vatican *Genesis* calls the sun *alloro bokno beratost* ('brightest of all beacons', l. 269a). In itself, this would not be evidence of influence, only of the parallel formulaic use of an alliterating pair in both Old English and Old Saxon.[23] However, the context in which the expression appears suggests a closer link:

> Thuo te sedla hneg   sunna thiu huitta,
> alloro bokno beratost,   thuo stuond hie fore thes buruges dore.
> Thuo gisah he an haƀand   engilos tuene
> gangan an thea gardos.   (*Vatican Genesis* ll. 268–271a)

[22] Mize, *Traditional Subjectivities,* p. 148.
[23] Cf. Carolyne Larrington's assessment of the resemblance between *The Wanderer* l. 108 and *Hávamál* verses 76 and 77: "If there is a direct connection it most likely stems from the formulaic use of the words 'cattle' and 'kinsmen', an alliterating pair both in Old Norse, *fé* and *frændr*, and in Old English, *feoh* and *freond*." *The Poetic Edda,* trans. Carolyne Larrington (Oxford, 2014), p. 286. See also *The Elder Edda: A Book of Viking Lore* trans. Andy Orchard (London, 2011), p. 274; and *The Wanderer* ed. T.P. Dunning and A.J. Bliss (London, 1969) p.122.

> [When towards the seat set the shining sun, brightest of beacons, then he stood before the city's gate. Then he saw in the evening two angels go into the town.]

'He' in this passage is Lot, and he is seeing the angels which have come to rescue him from the destruction of Sodom. This is, then, another instance where description of a bright sign accompanies the arrival of God's protection. There is no comparable reference to the sun at this point in the Vulgate. Nor is the description of the sunset necessary to establish that the scene takes place in the evening, since l. 270a suffices to do that.

There are also links between brightness, signs, and protection in *Genesis B* which are too widespread and too central to the narrative for us to assume that they are all introductions by the Anglo-Saxon adapter. Pat Belanoff has argued that Satan's loss of his former radiant state is emphasized so often that "through such repetitions, Satan's nonbrightness becomes compromised: we are reminded so often of a trait he does not have that the trait perversely adheres to our image of him."[24] Loss of covenant figured as loss of brightness works perfectly within the signifying system of Old English poetry. The Tempter too is associatated with light. Jager identifies the theme of "Bestowal of Light" as one of the features of the Tempter's rhetoric (at ll. 614–615 and 619–620) which is picked up and repeated by Eve (at ll. 676–677).[25] The narrator never calls the Tempter *leoht*, but the Tempter speaks that word five times (at ll. 502b, 508a, 564b, 614b, and 619b) as well as *sciene* ('shining', l. 502a), planting the suggestion in Adam and Eve's minds that he must linked to brightness, and therefore, that light is his to bestow. Of course, given the traditional referentiality of light, it is implicitly clear to the reader familiar with the poetic tradition that in feigning that light is his to bestow, the Tempter is also feigning that God's protection is his to bestow. The poet confirms this, and makes the connection more explicit, in these lines which the Tempter speaks to Eve,

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[24] Pat Belanoff, 'The Fall(?) of the Old English Female Poetic Image' *PMLA* 104:5 (Oct 1989), 822–831, p 825.
[25] Jager, 'Tempter as Rhetoric Teacher', p. 437.

which clearly link the lexis of light (*leoht*) and covenant (*hyld*) within a description of the ‘sign’ Eve is to receive:

> Þonne wurðað þin eagan swa **leoht**
> þæt þu meaht swa wide   ofer woruld ealle
> geseon siððan   and selfes stol
> herran þines,   and habban his **hyldo** forð.   (*Genesis B* ll. 564b–567)
>
> [Then your eyes will become so bright that you might see widely over all the world afterwards, and the throne of your lord himself, and have his favour henceforth.]

As I noted in the previous chapter, in each of the four instances of the word *tacen* in *Genesis B*, the word *hyld* (favour, grace) is not far away.[26] In three cases, (ll. 538b–542a, 712–714, and 770–776) the words *tacen* and *hyld* appear in the same sentence. The fourth instance of *tacen*, where the narrator says that Eve believes the Tempter because he *iewde hire tacen and treowa gehet* (‘showed her a sign and promised good faith’, l. 653), is followed immediately by Eve’s speech to Adam, in which she counsels that *his hyldo is unc betere* (‘his favour is better for us’, l. 659b) and then *unc is his hyldo þearf* (‘we need his favour’, l. 664b).

As we have seen, there are several different ‘covenant words’ that appear in connection with ‘brightness words’ and ‘sign words’ in Old English poems. However, the co-occurrence of *hyld* with light terms is relatively uncommon (*hyld* appears in the same sentence as *leoht* twice in *Genesis B*, once in *Andreas*, and once in the Paris Psalter), and the co-occurrence of *hyld* with *tacen* or *beacen* is exclusive to *Genesis B*—it is not found in any other poem in the corpus. This difference of detail within similarity of structure can be taken to illustrate the character of the brightness-sign-covenant cluster as *conceptual* rather than lexical. It also illustrates something of the relationship between Old English and Old Saxon poetic traditions. Lexical variation exists between the two, within larger structural commonalities. The relationship between the two poetic traditions is not simply that they are both producing alliterative poetry using cognate

[26] See p. 184.

languages. The poetry of both languages uses similar units of poetic diction which appear to have similar traditional metonymic, allusive, and connotative value. This suggests a certain continuity of tradition between the literary communities in England and on the continent.

BEOWULF AND THE *BEORHT BEACEN GODES*

Beowulf is the odd one out. The bright compensation Grendel refuses to offer and the bright standard Wiglaf retrieves from the hoard are bright in that they are gold, and therefore literally reflective. Neither is associated with protection from God.

Some might say that *Beowulf*'s difference in this respect is evidence that the poem is 'early', and so predates the development of the brightness-sign-covenant cluster. But even if it is early, so is *The Dream of the Rood*, which, in its later manuscript form at least, seems to play with the concept-cluster of brightness, sign, and covenant as though it were already established:

> Þuhte me þæt ic gesawe   syllicre treow
> on lyft lædan,   leohte bewunden,
> beama beorhtost.   Eall þæt beacen wæs
> begoten mid golde.[27]   (*Dream of the Rood,* ll. 4–7a)
>
> [It seemed to me that I saw a wondrous tree brought forth in the air, wound about by light, brightest of beams. That beacon was all anointed with gold.]

Beama beorhtost puns on *beam* as in 'sunbeam' and as in 'limb of a tree', alluding to the convergence of imagery of the sun and the Cross, which are the two things most likely to be called a bright *beacen* or *tacen* in the longer poems.[28] The Cross is not called a *beorht beacen* directly though; this collocation is broken up across the line so that the word *beacen* appears in a separate sentence, but is alliteratively linked to *beama beorhtost*—a close enough proximity to suggest that *beam* and *beacen* are interchangea-

[27] As stated in Chapter 2, quotations of *The Dream of the Rood* are from Swanton's edition.
[28] Okasha observes a similar ambiguity in Guthlac B l. 1309. '"Beacon" in Old English Poetry', pp. 202 and 203.

ble semantically, as *beama* and *beacen* are metrically. The juxtaposition of brightness imagery with the language of signs suggests that the concept of 'covenant' will be present, and it is, since the Cross is a sign of God's new covenant with mankind. But covenant is also playfully alluded to in another pun—earlier in the sentence, before the Cross is called a *beam* it is called a *treow*. Like *beam*, *treow* means tree. But, as we saw in the previous chapter, it also means 'good faith', and in certain circumstances connotes something closer to 'a sign that confirms the mutual loyalty inherent in our covenant relationship'. This is, in fact, a more accurate literal description of the Cross than 'tree' is.

Another explanation for *Beowulf's* difference is that it is simply dealing with different subject-matter than the other longer poems, which are explicitly about Christian saints and Biblical narratives. However, this difference in subject matter doesn't isolate *Beowulf* from the poetic tradition. Mize's analysis of the traditional associations of *gifre* shows that the term participates in the same conceptual clusters, with the same connotations, in *Beowulf* as it does in other poems. *Beowulf* uses *gifre* "in the context of reference to hell or devils", just like poems such as *Guthlac A* and *Genesis B*.[29] *Beowulf* and *Christ II* also use the same fire kenning (*gæsta gifrost*)—*Beowulf* for the destructive consumption of the funeral pyre, and *Christ II* for the destructive consumption of the fires of Judgement Day.[30] *Gifre*'s traditional associations with death, destruction, and elemental force are common to both poems, even if only one poem uses it in an eschatological context.

In describing the enigmatic *segn* in the hoard as *beacna beorhtost*, it is possible that the *Beowulf* poet simply means the phrase literally. However, it also is possible that the poet, or a proactive scribe familiar with Biblical poetry, is deviating deliberately from the usual application of the motif for ironic effect. The battle standard (*segn*) must

[29] Mize, *Traditional Subjectivities*, p. 121.
[30] Mize, *Traditional Subjectivities,* pp. 119.

have once belonged to that defeated people who were mourned in the lay of the last survivor. A standard is a practical tool of war, providing a focal point in the chaos of battle, but it may also be hoped to convey protection like the crosses carried by Constantine's troops. In those terms, a battle standard is an attempt by a group of people to protect themselves by means of a sign. But like the Tower of Babel in *Genesis A*, this is not a *beacen* that comes from God, and so it ultimately fails and the people are dispersed by death. Even if this reading was not the intention of the poet, it may well have been how the line was later understood by people used to associating the concept of 'bright sign' with the Cross. If we are trying to understand *Beowulf*'s reception, we cannot assume that the pattern of a poetic unit would become unintelligible simply because it appears in an unusual context. We can't assume that this instance of the 'bright sign' motif would fail to evoke any of the traditional associations it clearly has elsewhere.

The use of the phrase *beorht beacen Godes* ('bright beacon of God', l. 570a) also lends weight to the hypothesis that the concept cluster of brightness-sign-covenant was available to and deliberately exploited by the *Beowulf* poet. It sounds as if it ought to be a standard formula for the sun, used habitually and carelessly by a Christian poet. However, it is not a formula. No other Old English poem calls the sun *beorht beacen Godes.* The nearest expressions to this are *Exodus' godes beacna* ('God's beacon', l. 345b), and *Phoenix's torht tacen godes* ('bright sign of God', l. 96a). Similar phrases are also used of the Cross, the writing on the wall in Babylon, and baptism which are called *beacen godes* (*Elene* l. 109a), *tacen godes* (*Daniel* l. 488a), and *godes tacne* (*Juliana* l. 491a). These three signs 'of God' all convey or revoke God's protection.

In *Exodus* and *Phoenix*, it is clear that the sun is intended as an emblem of God's power and protection. Both the reference in *Exodus* and the one in *Phoenix* refer to the sun at the point of sunrise. In *Exodus*, this occurs when, after spending a wakeful

night pinned between the Egyptian troops and the coast, the Israelites begin marching across the Red Sea. In *Phoenix,* the reference to the sun comes in the description of the *Phoenix*'*s* vigil—his habit of washing himself 12 times by night then watching and waiting for the sun to rise over the sea.

The sun is called a *tacen* or a *beacen* without being qualified as *godes* four times in the longer poems. Two are in *Phoenix,* which calls the sun a *beacen* in the same scene where the phrase *tacen godes* appears (l. 107b), and later calls it a *tacen* (l. 254b), in a description of how the light of the sun brings spring to the world after winter. Another instance is in *Andreas*, where the sun is called a *beacen* when Andreas goes down at dawn to the water, where God is waiting to ferry him to Mermedonia (l. 242a) in order to persuade him that he really is in His *frið*. And the fourth is in *Guthlac B*, where the sun is called a *wedertacen wearm* ('warm weather-sign', l. 1293a) when it appears at the end of a night's miraculously illuminated vigil, on the morning of Guthlac's death.

There are two converging trends here. The first is that references to the sun as a sign (and, in fact, references to the sun more generally) tend to convey restoration and relief after a night's (or winter's) vigil, with the implication that this relief comes from God. The second is that signs (whether they are the sun or not) which are qualified as *godes* tend to convey information about the state of a person's inclusion in or exclusion from God's protection.

Where the phrase *beorht beacen Godes* is used in *Beowulf* is at the conclusion of Beowulf's night-long battle with sea monsters as part of the swimming contest. The defeat of the monsters coincides with the coming of the dawn. Beowulf himself comments on this moment: *wyrd oft nereð / unfægne eorl, þonne his ellen deah* ('fate often saves an undoomed man, when his courage avails', ll. 572b–573). For an audience used to reading depictions of the sunrise in poetry as (explicit or implicit) demonstrations of

God's power to relieve struggle and suffering, and to reading signs 'of God' as indications of His favour, it would be hard not to make the same associations when encountering the phrase *beorht beacen Godes* here. Its function here may be to prompt consideration of how God works His will even in the life of the non-Christian Beowulf, who by his comment in lines 572–573 seems to understand that he is favoured by some paradoxical combination of fate and effort, even while he does not have the knowledge necessary to be saved through the similarly paradoxical combination of grace and will.

Beowulf's burial mound is also a bright beacon, though 357 lines separate the two words. Orchard compares Beowulf's request for his burial with the narrator's description of his actual funeral, and links Beowulf's request that the mound be *beorhtne* (l. 2803a) with the later description of the mound as a *becn* (l. 3160a):

> The use of the term *becn* ('beacon') in this passage is the more striking in that it echoes precisely Beowulf's own use of the word 'bright' (*beorhtne*, line 2803) in his earlier description of the burial-mound; certainly, the two terms are associated elsewhere in the poem in the only other instances of the word *be(a)c(e)n:* the sun is described as 'the bright beacon of god' (*beorht beacen godes,* line 570a), and a sign from the dragon's hoard is called 'brightest of beacons' (*beacna beorhtost*, line 2777a).[31]

Beowulf describes the mound as *beorhtne <u>æfter</u> bæle* ('bright after the flames', l. 2803a), and the narrator does not use *becn* of the fire, but of the construction around the *bronda lafe* ('remnants of fire', l. 3160b), so we can't explain the brightness of the burial mound as the literal brightness of flames, the way we could explain the brightness of the standard as the literal reflectiveness of gold. This may be evidence that the poet is simply oriented towards a different tradition than the other longer poems: Orchard sees precedents for Beowulf's bright burial-mound in Norse literature, where "the notion of a burial-mound full of treasure giving off light is a commonplace," and in the Latin source for the *Letter of Alexander to Aristotle*.[32] However, it may also be one more subtle comment of the vanity of man's attempting to protect himself by means of signs,

[31] Orchard, *Critical Companion,* p. 37.
[32] Orchard, *Critical Companion,* p. 37.

since the effort the Geats put into commemorating their great protector will not save them from the desolation and dispersal they know is coming.

CONCLUSIONS

Understanding the way conceptual clusters are used as building-blocks of Old English poetry helps to clarify the connotations of certain lines where the literal denotation doesn't strictly make sense, as in *Genesis A* when circumcision is described as *torht* ('bright'). The 'bright sign' motif is a subset of the brightness-sign-covenant conceptual cluster. This cluster is evocative in a different way than its parts taken separately would be, and can even override the denotational value of the individual words that constitute it. Recognizing this allows us to see that the description of circumcision as *torht* situates that sign within a network of other poetic depictions of the granting or removing of God's covenant—it prompts recollections of the brightness withdrawn from Satan, or that granted to Guthlac. It also allows us to see the irony in the application of the 'bright sign' motif to the Tower of Babel, and the standard in the dragon's hoard. The strong traditional connection between signs and covenant helps to explain why *Daniel* and *Christ and Satan*, which depict characters who struggle, and sometimes fail, to have a positive patronage relationship with God, portray these sinful and damned characters as poor interpreters who fail to read signs well—even signs which are not themselves 'signs of covenant'. A poor relationship with signs indicates a poor relationship with God.

The consistency with which the concepts of 'sign', 'brightness' and 'covenant with God' are linked in Old English poems (and also in the Vatican *Genesis*) means that in the right circumstances, words that belong in one of these categories begin to carry subauditions relating to one of the other categories. *Friþ* means 'peace' or 'protection', but when that peace is with God, *friþ* can also carry the idea of '*sign of* protection'—

hence the line *tho uuillik thi frithu settean,* ('then I will set a peace on you', l. 72b) with reference to the mark of Cain in the Vatican *Genesis*. The word *treow* as well is often linked to signs in the context of relationships to God: for example, we should understand the expression *treowe tacen* in *Andreas* (l. 214a) to mean something like 'a sign that confirms the mutual loyalty inherent in our covenant relationship'. It is usually possible to take *treow* simply as 'faith' or 'covenant' but sometimes, when the word *tacen* is not present but the theme is man's relationship to God, it makes even better sense to take *treow* as '*sign of* faith/covenant/loyalty'. *Christ I* praises Mary for carrying Christ (to whom the poet assigns brightness imagery through the comparison to the morning star) with the words: *huru treow in þe / weorðlicu wunade* (ll. 82b-83a). There is a double meaning in this. It can be read as 'indeed, faith dwelled worthily in you': praise for Mary's personal attribute of faithfulness. However, the use of *wunade* (dwelled) in this clause, which is part of a longer sentence about Mary's pregnancy, suggests another reading: it is Christ who dwells within her. The presence of brightness imagery and the lexis of covenant allows us to understand that Christ is figured as a sign of God's pledge of loyalty and his assurance of protection. Accepting *treow*'s subaudition of 'sign' or 'pledge' in this context allows us to additionally understand the line as 'indeed, the *sign pledging loyalty* dwelled worthily in you'.

Similar subauditions and connotations are suggested by the deployment of brightness imagery. When the theme of covenant with God is present, brightness means more than 'power', 'goodness', or 'beauty'—it means God's favour. When Satan laments his lost brightness in *Genesis B*, he is lamenting not just his physical transformation, but his loss of status as God's favourite. The link between brightness and the God's patronage (with the reciprocal loyalty that entails) also helps to explain the frequent collocation of *leoht* and *beorht* with *geleafan* (belief). It is possible that *Genesis B*'s consistent characterization of Eve as *idesa scionost* even when she loses God's pro-

tection reflects a subtle difference of connotation between Old English *scione* and Old Saxon *skino*. The Old English word (whose nearest reflex in Modern English is 'shiny') certainly retains connotations of brightness, as seen in Cynewulf's description of Juliana as *sunsciene* ('sun-shining', l. 229a). However, in Old Saxon *skino* may already be losing that sense and moving towards a more general meaning of 'beautiful', like Modern German *schön*—however, testing this hypothesis would require further investigation into the word's connotations in Old Saxon, Old High German, and Middle High German that there is not space for here. An investigation should now be made into concept clusters in Old Saxon and Old High German poetry. The Saxon *Genesis* shows evidence that the poet was using a concept cluster found in Old English poetry, but not necessarily employing the same lexis to realize it. An extension of the type of analysis I have presented here to the *Heliand* and the Old High German corpus could provide new insights into the relatedness of the poetic corpora of the three languages. An extension of the analysis into Early Middle English alliterative poetry could also reveal continuities and discontinuities of tradition.

The flaw of hesitation is consistently attributed to bad interpreters across the poems which were the subject of this study. The scene in *Beowulf* when the fearful Danes hesitate by the bloody mere and conclude that Beowulf must be dead has a counterpart in the scene in *Judith* when the fearful Assyrians hesitate outside the *fleohnet* and conclude that Holofernes must be sleeping. Andreas and the Mermedonians are depicted as suffering from *acedia*-like hesitation or sloth which makes them poor interpreters, while *Juliana* contrasts the decisiveness of the saint with the *acedia* of the people the demon is able to tempt away from their prayers. In *Elene*, Judas becomes a good reader as soon as he stops prevaricating and asserts his intention to find the Cross. He is not a fully mature reader by this point, but simply deciding to take action renders him capable of finding what he could not find before. In *Daniel*, Nebuchadnezzar's great flaw as a

reader of both dreams and miracles is that he takes such a long time, and consults so many advisors, before he makes his mind up about what any of them mean, he has no courage of conviction in his interpretation and quickly falls back into his old patterns of behaviour. In *Genesis B*, Adam quickly and decisively turns the Tempter away, so the Tempter changes tactics—when he approaches Eve, he talks long enough before letting her answer that she has time to hesitate, and begin to be convinced by him. The poem's assertion that Eve *wende þæt heo hyldo heofoncyninges / worhte* ('believed that she brought about the favour of the king of heaven', ll. 712-714a) when she persuaded Adam to bite the apple makes her sound very like the monks suffering from *acedia* described by Evagrius of Pontus and Cassian: they fool themselves that they are serving God when they are actually serving themselves.

It isn't that the poems praise characters who act rashly, or denigrate those who ruminate carefully, but there is a surprising degree of consensus across these poems that the worst readers are those who are paralyzed by indecision. The consistency of this criticism of hesitation may relate to its relevance to both religious and secular contexts. In the Christian tradition, *acedia* is a deadly sin from which other sins spring, while a successful military leader must be able to understand a situation accurately and act decisively in response to changing circumstances—and both concerns apply to warriors of Christ such as Guthlac, who pleases God with his *elne unslawe* ('quick courage', *Guthlac B,* l. 950a).

The poems' good interpreters are more diverse in their particular virtues, strengths, and processes than the poor interpreters are in their flaws. A common thread in my readings of several of the poems which were most central to this study is that previous criticism has had a tendency to portray their structures of knowledge and of spiritual progress as simple dichotomies and hierarchies, when in fact, they are more nuanced than that. I have argued that *Genesis B* is not an allegory in which Adam and Eve

stand for Reason and the Senses but in fact Eve's fault is using something like *ratio* or *scientia* where she should use something like *intelligentia* or *sapientia*; she trusts her reason, not her wisdom, in deciding how to respond to the Tempter. Similarly, I have argued that the message of *Elene* is not simply that spiritual reading is better than literal reading. The path to mature understanding in *Elene* (and to a certain extent, in the other poems by Cynewulf) is not a linear progression from literal reading to spiritual reading. Instead, spiritual maturity requires a threefold understanding of the Cross analogous to Augustine's trinity of the soul. One mode of understanding is not sufficient without the others, and like the Trinity, they are not hierarchical or sequential. Even in *Daniel,* which does depict a hierarchy of understanding in which Nebuchadnezzar must learn to progress from reasoning *scientia* to intuitive *sapientia*, Nebuchadnezzar does not move in a linear manner from one state to the next—he first descends from having the mind of a rational man to having the mind of an irrational beast before he is able to become a spiritual man. We need to rethink the poems' relationships to the models of the mind and of spiritual progression coming from Augustine and Boethius; they are more complex and diverse than we have previously given them credit for. We must also allow that many of the poems are attempting to genuinely depict the uneven and twisting path towards enlightenment, rather than didactically herding the audience towards 'spiritual understanding' via typological or allegorical signification; they are, in a culturally specific way, interested in the psychology of their characters.

One of the things flagged up by this study is the relatedness of Old English poems that use the terms *tacen* and *beacen*. In addition to certain consistencies in the depictions of signs and misinterpretation within obvious groups of poems related by manuscript context or common authorship, there are consistencies between poems which reinforce existing theories about borrowings (such as the *Andreas* poet's borrowing from *Beowulf* and Cynewulf's familiarlity with *The Dream of the Rood* and *Christ III*). There

are also similarities which are not as easily explained, such as *Christ III*'s resonance with *Andreas*, or even the equivalence of the Vatican *Genesis*' *bokno beratost* (l. 269a) to *Beowulf's beacna beorhtost* (l. 2777a). Such similarities deserve further investigation, but so too do the differences which attest to the interests and inventiveness of individual poets. Poems like *Guthlac B* and *Genesis A* may both be tapping into the same traditional referentiality of signs but the *Genesis A* poet is far more subtle and inventive in making use of it. The distinctive usage of sign terms in the Paris Psalter and the Riddles also deserves further investigation to determine the extent to which they lay outside or participate in the discourses of signs and misinterpretation which unite most of the longer poems of the four major poetic codices.

APPENDIX A

Instances in the longer poems where *tacen* or *beacen*, appear in the same sentence as one or more of the words from Taylor's list of terms which convey 'beauty as brightness (*beorht*, *blachleor*, *bleo(h)*, *deall*, *fæger*, *glæm*, *hiwbeorht*, *hwit*, *leoht*, *leoma*, *scir*, *siene*/*sceone*, *ælfscienu*, *sunsciene*, *wlitesciene*, *scima*, *torht*, *wlite*/*wlitig*, and *wuldor*). 'Brightness terms' are in **bold**; 'sign terms' are in **bold and underlined**. The additional sign words *beacnian* and *segn* are marked where they happen to appear, but were not in themselves used as criteria for inclusion in this table. The classificatory terms in the right-hand column are to assist in following the analysis of this table which begins on p. 215 above.

1. (Genesis B: A1.1) [0265 (770)] Þæt wif gnornode, hof hreowigmod, hæfde hyldo godes, lare forlæten, þa heo þæt **leoht** geseah ellor scriðan þæt hire þurh untreowa **tacen** iewde se him þone teonan geræd, þæt hie hellenið habban sceoldon, hynða unrim.	Exclusion
2. (Genesis A: A1.1) [0735 (2370)] Abraham fremede swa him se eca bebead, sette friðo**tacen** be frean hæse on his selfes sunu, heht þæt **segn** <wegan> heah gehwilcne, þe his hina wæs wæpnedcynnes, wære gemyndig, gleaw on mode, ða him god sealde soðe treowa, and þa seolf onfeng **torhtum** **tacne**.	Circumcision
3. (Genesis A: A1.1) [0863 (2768)] Hine Abraham on <mid> his agene hand **beacen** sette, swa him bebead metod, **wuldortorht** ymb wucan, þæs þe hine on woruld to moncynne modor brohte.	Circumcision
4. (Exodus: A1.2) [0064 (211)] Wæron orwenan eðelrihtes, sæton æfter beorgum in blacum reafum, wean on wenum; wæccende bad eall seo sibgedriht somod ætgædere maran mægenes, oð Moyses bebead eorlas on uhttid ærnum <bemum> folc somnigean, frecan arisan, habban heora hlencan, hycgan on ellen, beran **beorht** searo, **beacnum** cigean sweot sande near.	[Bright Armour]
5. (Exodus: A1.2) [0102 (344)] Dægwoma becwom ofer <garsecge>, godes **beacna** sum, morgen mære**torht**; mægen forðgewat.	Sun
6. (Andreas: A2.1) [0074 (241)] Þa com morgen**torht** **beacna** **beorhtost** ofer breomo sneowan, halig of heolstre.	Sun
7. (Andreas: A2.1) [0224 (727)] Þa gen worde cwæð weoruda dryhten, heofonhalig gast, fore þam heremægene: Nu ic bebeode **beacen** ætywan, wundor geweorðan on wera gemange, ðæt þeos onlicnes eorðan sece, **wlitig** of wage, ond word sprece, secge soðcwidum, þy sceolon gelyfan eorlas on cyððe, hwæt min æðelo sien.	Miracle
8. (Elene: A2.6) [0037 (88)] Geseah he frætwum **beorht wliti wuldres** treo ofer wolcna hrof, golde <geglenged> gimmas lixtan; wæs se blaca beam bocstafum awriten, **beorhte** ond **leohte**: Mid þys **beacne** ðu on þam frecnan fære feond oferswiðesð, geletest lað werod.	Cross
9. (Elene: A2.6) [0067 (157)] Ða þæs fricggan ongan folces aldor, sigerof cyning, ofer sid weorod, wære þær ænig yldra oððe gingra þe him to soðe secggan meahte, galdrum cyðan, hwæt se god wære, boldes brytta, þe þis his **beacen** wæs þe me swa **leoht** oðywde ond mine leode generede, **tacna** **torhtost**, ond me tir forgeaf, wigsped wið wraðum, þurh þæt **wlitige** treo.	Cross

10. (Elene: A2.6) [0212 (772)] Gif þin willa sie, wealdend engla, þæt ricsie se ðe on rode wæs, ond þurh Marian in middangeard acenned wearð in cildes had, þeoden engla, gif he þin nære sunu synna leas, næfre he soðra swa feala in woruldrice wundra gefremede dogorgerimum; no ðu of deaðe hine swa þrymlice, þeoda wealdend, aweahte for weorodum, gif he in **wuldre** þin þurh ða **beorhtan** bearn ne wære, gedo nu, fæder engla, forð **beacen** þin.	Cross
11. (Elene: A2.6) [0302 (1104)] Leort ða **tacen** forð, þær hie to sægon, fæder, frofre gast, ðurh fyres **bleo** up eðigean þær þa æðelestan hæleða gerædum hydde wæron þurh nearusearwe, næglas on eorðan.	Miracle
12. (Elene: A2.6) [0342 (1251)] Ic þæs **wuldres** treowes oft, nales æne, hæfde ingemynd ær ic þæt wundor onwrigen hæfde ymb þone **beorhtan** beam, swa ic on bocum fand, wyrda gangum, on gewritum cyðan be ðam sige**beacne**.	Cross
13. (Christ II: A3.1) [0174 (642)] Noldan hi þa **torhtan** **tacen** oncnawan þe him beforan fremede freobearn godes, monig <mislicu>, geond middan-geard.	Miracle
14. (Christ III: A3.1) [0255 (892)] Þæt bið fore**tacna** mæst þara þe ær oþþe sið æfre gewurde monnum oþywed, þær gemengde beoð onhælo gelac engla ond deofla, **beorhtra** ond blacra.	Exclusion
15. (Christ III: A3.1) [0300 (1061)] Ðonne sio byman stefen ond se **beorht**a **segn**, ond þæt hate fyr ond seo hea duguð, ond se engla þrym ond se egsan þrea, ond se hearda dæg ond seo hea rod, ryht aræred rices to **beacne**, folcdryht wera biforan bonnað, sawla gehwylce þara þe sið oþþe ær on lichoman leoþum onfengen.	Exclusion
16. (Christ III: A3.1) [0307 (1083)] Ne bið him to are þæt þær fore ellþeodum usses dryhtnes rod ondweard stondeð, **beacna** **beorhtast**, blode bistemed, heofoncyninges hlutran dreore, biseon mid swate þæt ofer side gesceaft **scire** scineð.	Cross
17. (Christ III: A3.1) [0431 (1562)] Feores unwyrðe, egsan geþread, ondweard gode won ond **wlite**leas hafað werges bleo, facen**tacen** feores.	Exclusion
18. (Guthlac B: A3.2) [0332 (1110)] Ongon þa his mod staþelian **leohte** geleafan, lac onsægde deophycgende dryhtne to willan gæstgerynum in godes temple, ond his þegne ongon, swa þam þeodne geras, þurh gæstes giefe godspel bodian, secgan sigor**tacnum**, ond his sefan trymman wun-drum to wuldre in þa **wlitigan** gesceaft to eadwelan, swa he ær ne sið æfre to ealdre oðre swylce on þas lænan tid lare gehyrde, ne swa deoplice dryht-nes geryne þurh menniscne muð areccan on sidum sefan.	[Bright Belief]
19. (Guthlac B: A3.2) [0374 (1289)] Wæs se **leohta glæm** ymb þæt halge hus, heofonlic condel, from æfenglome oþþæt eastan cwom ofer deop gelad dægredwoma, weder**tacen** wearm.	Sun
20. (Guthlac B: A3.2) [0381 (1309)] Eal þæt **beacen** wæs ymb þæt halge hus, heofonlic **leoma**, from foldan up swylce fyren tor ryht aræred oð rodera hrof, gesewen under swegle, sunnan **beorhtra**, æþeltungla **wlite**.	Miracle
21. (Phoenix: A3.4) [0024 (90)] Se sceal þære sunnan sið behealdan ond ongean cuman godes condelle, glædum gimme, georne bewitigan, hwonne up cyme æþelast tungla ofer yðmere estan lixan, fæder fyrngeweorc frætwum blican, **torht** **tacen** godes.	Sun

22. (Phoenix: A3.4) [0026 (104)] Swa se æþela fugel æt þam æspringe **wlitig**fæst wunað wyllestreamas, þær se tireadga twelf siþum hine bibaþað in þam burnan ær þæs **beacnes** cyme, sweglcondelle, ond symle swa oft of þam wilsuman wyllgespryngum brimcald beorgeð æt baða gehwylcum.	Sun
23. (Phoenix: A3.4) [0061 (253)] Þonne sunnan **glæm** on lenctenne, lifes **tacen**, weceð woruldgestreon, þæt þa wæstmas beoð þurh agne gecynd eft acende, foldan frætwe.	Sun
24. (Phoenix: A3.4) [0126 (508)] Þonne on **leoht** cymeð ældum þisses in þa openan tid **fæger** ond gefealic fugles **tacen**, þonne anwald eal up <astelleð> of byrgenum, ban gegædrað, **leomu** lic somod, ond <lifes> gæst, fore Cristes cneo.	Phoenix
25. (Phoenix: A3.4) [0144 (570)] Ðus frod guma on fyrndagum gieddade gleawmod, godes spelboda, ymb his æriste in ece lif, þæt we þy geornor ongietan meahten tirfæst **tacen** þæt se **torhta** fugel þurh bryne **beacnað**.	Phoenix
26. (Beowulf: A4.1) [0156 (569)] **Leoht** eastan com, **beorht** **beacen** godes; brimu swaþredon, þæt ic sænæssas geseon mihte, windige weallas.	Sun
27. (Beowulf: A4.1) [0759 (2773)] Ða ic on hlæwe gefrægn hord reafian, eald enta geweorc, anne mannan, him on bearm <hladon> bunan ond discas sylfes dome; **segn** eac genom, **beacna** **beorhtost**.	Treasure

APPENDIX A.1

Instances in the longer poems where *segn* appears in the same sentence as one or more of the words from Taylor's list of terms which convey 'beauty as brightness', other than those which also contain *tacen* or *beacen*.

1. (Exodus: A1.2) [0037 (125)] Scean **scir** werod, scyldas lixton, gesawon randwigan rihte stræte, **segn** ofer sweoton, oðþæt sæfæsten landes æt ende <leodmægne> forstod, fus on forðweg.

2. (Exodus: A1.2) [0088 (301)] Hofon herecyste **hwit**e linde, **segn**as on sande.

3. (Exodus: A1.2) [0165 (565)] Æfter þam wordum werod wæs on salum, sungon sigebyman, **segn**as stodon, on **fæg**erne sweg; folc wæs on lande, hæfde **wuld**res beam werud gelæded, hali-ge heapas, on hild godes.

4. (Phoenix: A3.4) [0071 (287)] Bið him edniwe þære sunnan <**segn**>, þonne swegles **leoht**, gimma gladost, ofer garsecg up, æþeltungla wyn, eastan lixeð.

APPENDIX B

Co-occurrences in the longer poems of the ‘covenant terms’ *wær*, *treow*, *friþ*, *sib* and *mund*(*boran*), with the ‘brightness terms’ *beorht*, *leoht*, and *torht*. Key terms are marked in **bold**.

1. (Genesis A: A1.1) [0021 (54)] Þa he gebolgen wearð, besloh synsceaþan sigore and geweal- de, dome and dugeðe, and dreame benam his feond, **friðo** and gefean ealle, **torhte** tire, and his torn gewræc on gesacum swiðe selfes mihtum strengum stiepe.

2. (Genesis A: A1.1) [0735 (2370)] Abraham fremede swa him se eca bebead, sette **friðo**tacen be frean hæse on his selfes sunu, heht þæt segn <wegan> heah gehwilcne, þe his hina wæs wæpnedcynnes, **wære** gemyndig, gleaw on mode, ða him god sealde soðe **treowa**, 7and þa seolf onfeng **torhtum** tacne.

3. (Christ and Satan: A1.4) [0116 (308)] Þær heo sceppend seolf <**friðe**> befæðmeð, fæder mancynnes, ahefeð holdlice in heofones **leoht**, þær heo mid wuldorcyninge wunian moton awa to aldre, agan dreama dream mid drihtne gode, a to worulde a buton ende.

4. (Andreas: A2.1) [0028 (94)] He his maguþegne under hearmlocan hælo ond frofre bea- durofum abead **beorhtan** stefne: Ic þe, Matheus, mine sylle **sybbe** under swegle.

5. (Christ I: A3.1) [0008 (22)] Huru we for þearfe þas word sprecað, ond <mgiað> þone þe mon gescop þæt he ne <ete> ceose weorðan cearfulra þing, þe we in carcerne sittað sorgende, sunnan wenað, hwonne us liffrea **leoht** ontyne, weorðe ussum mode to **mundboran**, ond þæt tydre gewitt tire bewinde, gedo usic þæs wyrðe, þe he to wuldre forlet, þa þe heanlice hweorfan sceoldan to þis enge lond, eðle bescyrede.

6. (Christ II: A3.1) [0161 (583)] **Wær** is ætsomne godes ond monna, gæsthalig **treow**, lufu, lifes hyht, ond ealles **leohtes** gefea.

7. (Christ III: A3.1) [0366 (1339)] Halgan reorde frefreð he fægre ond him **friþ** beodeð, hateð hy gesunde ond gesenade on eþel faran engla dreames, ond þæs to widan feore willum neotan: Onfoð nu mid freondum mines fæder rice þæt eow wæs ær woruldum wynlice gearo, blæd mid blissum, **beorht** eðles wlite, hwonne ge þa lifwelan mid þam <leofstum>, swase swegldreamas, geseon mosten.

8. (Christ III: A3.1) [0452 (1639)] Ðæt is se eþel þe no geendad weorþeð, ac þær symle forð synna lease dream weardiað, dryhten lofiað, leofne lifes weard, **leohte** biwundne, **sibbum** bisweðede, sorgum biwerede, dreamum gedyrde, dryhtne gelyfde.

9. (Christ III: A3.1) [0456 (1652)] Ðær is leofra lufu, lif butan endedeaðe, glæd gumena weorud, gioguð butan ylde, heofonduguða þrym, hælu butan sare, ryhtfremmendum ræst butan gewinne, domeadigra dæg butan þeostrum, **beorht** blædes full, blis butan sorgum, **frið** freon- dum bitweon forð butan æfestum, gesælgum on swegle, **sib** butan niþe halgum on gemonge.

10. (Guthlac A: A3.2) [0234 (773)] Wæs se fruma fæstlic feondum on ondan, geseted wið synnum, þær he siþþan lyt **wære** gewonade, oft his word gode þurh eaðmedu up onsende, let his ben cuman in þa **beorhtan** gesceaft, þoncade þeodne þæs þe he in þrowingum bidan moste, hwonne him betre lif þurh godes willan agyfen <wurde>.

11. (Guthlac A: A3.2) [0239 (796)] Þæt beoð husulweras, cempan gecorene, Criste leofe, berað in breostum **beorhtne** geleafan, haligne hyht, heortan clæne weorðiað waldend, habbað wisne geþoht, fusne on forðweg to fæder eðle, gearwaþ gæstes hus, ond mid gleawnesse feond ofer- feohtað ond firenlustas forberað in breostum, broþor**sibbe** georne bigongað, in godes willan swencað hi sylfe, sawle frætwað halgum gehygdum, heofoncyninges bibod fremmað on foldan.

12. (Phoenix: A3.4) [0151 (598)] Weorc anra gehwæs **beorhte** bliceð in þam <bliþan> ham fore onsyne ecan dryhtnes, symle in **sibbe**, sunnan gelice.

13. (Juliana: A3.5) [0183 (652)] Ge mid lufan **sibbe**, **leohte** geleafan, to þam lifgendan stane stiðhydge staþol fæstniað, soðe **treowe** ond **sibbe** mid eow healdað æt heortan, halge rune þurh modes myne.

14. (Beowulf: A4.1) [0040 (149)] Forðam <secgum> wearð, ylda bearnum, undyrne cuð, gyd-dum geomore, þætte Grendel wan hwile wið Hroþgar, heteniðas wæg, fyrene ond fæhðe fela missera, singale sæce, **sibbe** ne wolde wið manna hwone mægenes Deniga, feorhbealo feorran, fea þingian, ne þær nænig witena wenan þorfte **beorhtre** bote to <banan> folmum, <ac><se> æglæca ehtende wæs, deorc deaþscua, duguþe ond geogoþe, seomade ond syrede, sinnihte heold mistige moras.

15. (Judgement Day II: A17) [0056 (219)] Þær **leohtes** ne **leoht** lytel sperca earmum ænig, ne þær arfæstnes ne **sib** ne hopa ne swige gegladað ne þara <wependra> worn wihte.

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