WORDS FOR 'TO SPEAK' IN OLD ENGLISH POETRY AND THE USES POETS MAKE OF THEM

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Thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, University of Oxford, 2017.

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This project is the first holistic survey of the major verbs of speech in Old English Poetry. In particular, the thesis examines those numerous verbs of speech which have seemed to modern scholars and readers to be nearly synonymous; a supposition probably due to the loss of the connotative distinctions between these words which would have been evident to contemporary speakers of Anglo-Saxon. Underlying the written project there are several large Excel databases in which data used for analysis are gathered. Although these form the factual basis for the written project, the thesis does not require the reader to have access to the databases.[i]

The introduction discusses the significance of speech as a field, before examining the complex problems and theories which underpin semantic field studies. The literature review is used to examine the practical application of these theories, and the scope of the project and methodology are also explained therein. Chapter One looks at the *maþelian, mælan, mæþlan* group of verbs, including examining the problem of disentangling their etymologies, and discussing possible post-conquest usage. Chapter Two explores the *(-)secgan* group of verbs, uncovering evidence of connotations which were hitherto unknown. The Conclusion discusses the *(-)cweðan* and *(-)sprecan* groups, which show little evidence of connotational differences, and, in addition to this discussion, provides an overview of the connotations of the verbs of speech in Old English. A selective examination of the Old Norse cognate verbs of speech in the poems of the Codex Regius, focussed particularly on *segja*, forms a forward-looking Epilogue.

[i] It was agreed, in email conversations with the Director of Graduate Studies, that Appendix A (the databases) would not count towards the word count.

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A Note on Abbreviations and Conventions

A conscious effort has been made to avoid abbreviations as far as possible within this thesis. The conventions adopted are adapted from the style guide found in the Oxford University Faculty of English Language and Literature PRS / D. Phil. / M. Litt. Handbook. I depart very little from its guidelines (see below), except in the matter of the use of Arabic numerals for journal volumes, in accordance with the advice of my Confirmation of Status examiners.

For increased consistency and concision, series details are not given when books are part of a series (e.g. the Anglo-Saxon Poetic Record or Dumbarton Oaks Medieval Series). Likewise, the issue numbers for journals are not provided. Abbreviations of United States of America State names are those used by the United States Government Printing Office. Town names are not abbreviated. ‘Unpublished diss.’ and ‘diss.’ are used to mark dissertations in the Bibliography and footnotes respectively. Dates provided are for the editions consulted: details of earlier editions are not provided.

Introduction: The Field of Speech

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I. Chapter Summary

This introduction begins by evaluating speech and its role within society, with particular reference to Anglo-Saxon England. There follows a discussion of a range of relevant theoretical, linguistic and other approaches to words, studies of lexis, and studies of speech. This overview of the fields relating to speech words and lexical studies is followed by a review of the relevant published and unpublished work in and around the field of speech words, which also integrates an examination of how some of these approaches can be adapted for the purposes of the study of the Old English language, and specifically to the verbs of speech upon which the thesis focuses. The small number of studies which relate to the group of words which are the particular concern of this project, namely speech verbs in Old English, are given particular attention. From this literature review, and the review of theories and approaches which precedes it, a theory for the study of these verbs in this project is outlined in a section focused upon the scope of the project. This section also includes a detailed outline of the material included in the project, and the material excluded, with a rationale for the selection. The introduction concludes with an exposition of the methodology used for the collection and analysis of the data for this project.

II. Speaking Now and Then

Speaking is, and has always been, one of the most important of all human social activities, and is even one of the behaviours used to define what it means to be human.[1] The centrality of speech to human culture can be illustrated amply through reference to the considerable range of scholarly and popular interest in speech, ranging from the mechanics, psychology and biology of speech production to the philosophical, legal and socio-political implications of laws such as Article Ten of the European Convention on Human Rights (1950), which states the human right to freedom of expression, including freedom of speech.[2] Speaking has long associations with acts of particular social and cultural significance: promises, dying (last) words and law all began as speeches rather than as written documents, and the importance of the oral tradition of law within Anglo-Saxon England in particular is suggested by the great contrast in survival of legal material either side of the eleventh century.[3] A great deal has been written on the links between language and legal history more generally, and such scholarship typically includes studies of pre-literate oral legal practices.[4]

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[1] The introduction to Philip Lieberman, *Uniquely Human: The Evolution of Speech, Thought, and Selfless Behavior* (Cambridge, Mass., 1991) explains the uniquely human combinations of abilities which enable speech, and for Lieberman as for many other scientists, linguists and anthropologists, language is one of the key elements which separates humans from other animals.

[2] For a thorough analysis of the former, see, for example, Douglas O'Shaughnessy, *Speech Communication: Human and Machine* (New York, 2000). For a study of some of the latter, see, for example, C. Edwin Baker, *Human Liberty and Freedom of Speech* (Oxford, 1992).

[3] For an assessment of the movement towards a predominantly written legal system during this century, see, for example, Michael T. Clanchy, *From Memory to Written Record: England 1066-1307* (Maldon, Mass., 2013), especially chapter eight ('Hearing and Seeing', pp. 255-85).

[4] One particularly important collection on this, which explores the long-lasting links between speech, language, and law, is John Gibbons, *Language and the Law* (New York, 2013). See especially chapters two (which looks at pre-literate legal practices) and three (which looks at the transition to literacy through Anglo-Saxon wills), pp. 51-135 inclusive.

From a literary perspective, the particular importance of speeches within an oral culture, such as that within which Old English literature must have originated, is in one sense self-evident. Although the poems which survive in Old English are to some extent indisputably literary (being, as they are, *written down*), it is also generally accepted that Old English verse originated in oral composition and performance, and that some of the surviving poems had an earlier life within oral tradition.[5] The oral origins of Old English verse have been widely discussed, particularly with regard to the question of how Old English verse was composed: this question regarding oral composition is summarised briefly in this introduction, but is ultimately outside the remit of this project.

The debate over the correlation between highly formulaic poetry and oral composition was launched by A. B. Lord and Milman Parry in their famous, ground breaking study of oral poetic culture in what was then Yugoslavia, the findings of which they compared with the form of Homer's epics and briefly also with *Beowulf*, suggesting that poetry composed in an oral tradition is highly formulaic.[6] This idea was further developed by Francis Magoun, who analysed *Beowulf* using the findings of Lord and Parry, and argued that his findings proved that *Beowulf* had been composed orally.[7] Unfortunately, however, this neat means of identifying orally composed poems proved ultimately syllogistic: while it is true that oral poetry is formulaic, it does not

[5] The case for oral origins for Old English poetry is particularly well made in Katherine O'Brien O'Keeffe, *Visible Song: Transitional Literacy in Old English Verse* (Cambridge, 1990), notably in the Preface (pp. ix-xx).
[6] See A. B. Lord, *The Singer of Tales* (Cambridge Mass., 2000), and Milman Parry et al., *The Making of Homeric Verse: The Collected Papers of Milman Parry* (Oxford, 1971).
[7] See Francis P. Magoun, 'The Oral-Formulaic Character of Anglo-Saxon Narrative Poetry', *Speculum* 28 (1953), pp. 446-67.

follow that all formulaic poetry is composed orally. Many scholars since Magoun have, therefore, argued that *Beowulf* is not an orally composed poem, in that there is good evidence (of various kinds) that, on the one hand, literature, and especially poetry, is inherently formulaic; and that on the other, *Beowulf* as it survives in Cotton MS Vitellius A. XV is a *literary* poem, even if it has oral roots.[8] The exact relation between the underlying oral tradition of the Germanic tribes and the written poetic texts which survive has been extensively debated within the twentieth-century scholarship concerned with the texts and traditions of the Anglo-Saxon period, and Old Norse literature, and is, like so much else about the period, ultimately impossible to establish with absolute certainty.[9]

Although this study does not aim to reconsider the vexed question of oral-formulaic theory, it is likely that a study of speech words such as this will offer insights into how Germanic peoples, particularly the Anglo-Saxons, understood the act of speech, within a poetic and mythic context. This is particularly likely given that, outside oral-formulaic theory and a general interest in speeches within poems, there has been surprisingly little scholarly attention concentrated upon the vocabulary for speech in the early medieval period; this lack is particularly acute where speech appears within the poetic

[8] See, for example, Adrien Bonjour, 'Beowulf and the Beasts of Battle', *Modern Languages Association* 72 (1957), pp. 563-73; Larry D. Benson, 'The Literary Character of Anglo-Saxon Formulaic Poetry', *Modern Languages Association* 81 (1966), pp. 334-41. See especially Andy Orchard, 'Oral Tradition' in Katherine O'Brien O'Keeffe, *Reading Old English Texts* (Cambridge, 1997), pp. 101-23 for a negotiation of the role of the *oral* tradition within the context of the *literary* works which survive. For an up-to-date appraisal of the state of this debate, see Chapter 4, 'Orality' of John D. Niles, *Old English Literature: A Guide to Criticism, with Selected Readings* (Chichester, West Sussex, 2016), pp. 112-35.

[9] For a useful assessment of the differences between oral and literate cultures, and the transition from orality to literacy, see, for example, Walter J. Ong, *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word* (London, 2002).

literature. With regard to the words for speech themselves, key questions regarding how they were used by poets and understood by contemporary readers and audiences have garnered little scholarly attention. What attention such words have received has tended to be focused upon linguistic, especially syntactic, analyses of particular constructions, and has not therefore primarily addressed questions of semantic or artistic choice.[10] It is this lack that the present study works to address, with a particular focus upon close reading, alongside the kind of technical linguistic analysis more typical of word studies. This study endeavours to clarify what speaking meant in poetry, and what the deployment therein of different speech words can uncover of early medieval attitudes to speaking in different ways, and how these different speech types might be indicated through word choice. The study also clarifies distinctions, as understood by the Anglo-Saxons themselves, between different kinds of speech. In particular, the study seeks to explore the vocabulary of speech, and its dramatic and aesthetic context within Old English poetry: that common group of verbs (as well as nouns and some adjectives) which denote this vital human activity, as they are used by Anglo-Saxon poets in their poetry.[11]

It is, as established above, unsurprising that speaking is of great significance in Old English literature (as it is in many other literatures). As will be explored at greater length within the body of this thesis and especially in this chapter, the centrality of speech within Anglo-Saxon culture and literature has resulted

[10] See, for example, Michiko Ogura, 'Is Indirect Discourse Following OE Cweðan Always in the Subjunctive Mood?', *English Studies* 72 (1991), pp. 393-99. See 'Approaches to Speech Words' for more examples of this type of study.
[11] For more on the aesthetics of Old English poetry, see for example, John M. Hill, *On the Aesthetics of Beowulf and Other Old English Poem*s (Toronto, 2010).

in considerable scholarly interest in speeches and speech making within, and in relation to, Old English literature.[12] A considerable number of critics have contributed to our knowledge of Old English literary speeches and speech making, in a huge range of scholarly works, which explore speeches in Old English, both generally and within individual poems.[13] A number of studies of the speeches in individual poems exist. *Daniel*, *Andreas*, and *Guthlac* in particular have attracted scholarly attention, as have the speeches in *Beowulf*, and the contentious speeches in *The Battle of Maldon*. Indeed, Andy Orchard's observation regarding *Beowulf* in the chapter on speeches in his *Critical Companion* holds true for Old English poetry as a whole: '[f]or a poem in which action is often held to play a major role, there is an inordinate amount of talk in *Beowulf*'.[14] Introductory works which aim to help scholars and students tackle *Beowulf* from a critical perspective invariably include some reference to the speeches; this interest is mirrored in Old English scholarship more generally, and several critics have focused on the speeches in *Beowulf*.[15]

[12] Several general studies of speech in Old English verse have been written, and these are discussed in detail in the 'Literature Review' (pp. 35-61). Two, however, should be noted immediately. Heusler's extremely wide-ranging study must be mentioned because it is one of the earliest attempts to examine speech in Ancient Germanic literature: Andreas Heusler, 'Der Dialog in der altgermanischen erzählenden Dichtung', *Zeitschrift für deutsches Altertum und deutsche Literatur* 46 (1902), pp. 189-84; and Louviot's recent book must also be mentioned, because it provides the most up-to-date assessment of the state of the field currently in print. Louviot's book also provides a useful indication of the proportion of direct speech found in several Old English poems: Élise Louviot, *Direct Speech in Beowulf and Other Old English Narrative Poems* (Cambridge, 2016).

[13] Again, these many studies are explored within the body of the thesis: to mention a few, Angela Abdou, 'Speech and Power in Old English Conversion Narratives', *Florilegium* 17 (2000), pp. 195-12, discusses conversion and change in the speeches of characters in *Andreas* and *Guthlac*, and a study by Frantzen explores the speeches in *Juliana*, focusing on dramatisation: Allen J. Frantzen, 'Drama and Dialogue in Old English Poetry: The Scene of Cynewulf's *Juliana*', *Theatre Survey* 48 (2007), pp. 99-119.

[14] See Andy Orchard, *A Critical Companion to Beowulf* (Cambridge, 2003), p. 203.

[15] See, for example, Robert E. Bjork, 'Speech as Gift in Beowulf', *Speculum* 69 (1994), pp. 993-1022, Peter S. Baker, 'Beowulf the Orator', *Journal of English Linguistics* 21 (1988), pp. 3-23, or more recently (as mentioned above) Louviot (2016).

Speech is also central in the ways it shapes and influences a number of poems, notably *The Battle of Maldon*, where the speeches not only provide valuable material for discussion of oral, warrior culture, but have also been scrutinised for evidence regarding the character of Byrhtnoth,[16] the portrayal of the Vikings,[17] the topography of the battle,[18] and even the most famous crux of the poem: that much contested word, *ofermod*.[19] Within Old English poetry, speeches serve a number of important functions, and often occur at crucial points.[20] For instance, substantial parts of the narrative of *Beowulf* recur in speeches, as various characters retell events.[21] Certain kinds of speech, moreover, hold particular importance within Anglo-Saxon culture (as this culture is depicted by the poetry). For example, the exchange of verbal vows of loyalty is depicted in some of the poetry as an integral part of the *comitatus*, essential for maintaining the links between a lord and his people.[22] The central

[16] Much early scholarship focused on the question of Byrhtnoth's character, particularly in the context of the disputed word *ofermod* (see below). For example, Cross explored the question of the hagiographic portrayal of the character of Byrhtnoth within the poem, largely through the speeches in the poem: J. E. Cross, 'Oswald and Byrhtnoth', *English Studies* 46 (1965), pp. 93-109. Similarly, Stuart wrote an article on the meaning of the poem, where her close reading of the speeches determines her characterisation of the leader: Heather Stuart, 'The Meaning of *Maldon*', *Neophilologus* 66 (1982), pp. 126-39.

[17] See, for example, Fred Robinson, 'Some Aspects of the *Maldon* Poet's Artistry', *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 75 (1976), pp. 25-40. This article is one of the first to explore the use of Scandinavian loan words within the speech of the Viking messenger.

[18] Most recently, see Daniel Thomas, '*Landes to Fela*: Geography, Topography and Place in *The Battle of Maldon*', *English Studies* (2017), pp. 1-21 explores how the topography is signalled within the speeches of characters in the poem.

[19] Recently, Mark Griffith, '*The Battle of Maldon*: The Guile of the Vikings Explained', *Notes and Queries* 63 (2016), pp. 180-86 seeks to reconcile the negative connotations of *ofermod* with the heroism of the speeches which Byrhtnoth and many of his followers die fulfilling, and the boasts which the sons of Odda do not keep, through a combined assessment of the role of the speeches in the poem and the topography of the battle site (specifically the late realisation of the strength of the enemy force).

[20] In his book on the verse saints' lives, Bjork identifies several of the speeches as key hagiographical moments, for example: see Robert E. Bjork, *The Old English Verse Saints' Lives : A Study in Direct Discourse and the Iconography of Style* (Toronto, 1985).

[21] For example, at ll. 2000-23 and ll. 2070-100 (interrupted by the story of Freawaru and Ingeld), Beowulf tells Hygelac again how he killed Grendel and what happened in Heorot.

[22] See Cornelius Tacitus, *Agricola Germania,* ed. J. B. Rives (London, 2009), especially chapter 13 of Book 1, which speaks of the Germanic *comitatus.* Although very little can be deduced about what the 'real life' views of the Anglo-Saxons were from either the *Germania* or from surviving Old English poetry, these ideas of loyalty and of the bond between retainers

importance of making and keeping vows of loyalty is vividly illustrated in *The Battle of Maldon*, for example in lines 198-201,[23] where the disgrace of desertion is emphasised when Offa's warning that many who swear to fight will desert is recalled just after Odda's sons run away.[24] Speech is also fundamental to more performative or dramatic modes of expression. Drama as a recognisable genre does not survive in written form in Old English, but insofar as the dramatic is implied in social performances, such as liturgy and the probable contexts in which Old English poetry was heard, drama must have been closely related to poetry within Anglo-Saxon culture, given the oral origins of verse in this culture.[25] Speeches, then, of varying type and length, occur with great frequency throughout the Old English poetic canon.

Although the speeches within Old English poetry have received scholarly attention, the words used to denote speech in Old English (such as *secgan, cweðan, sprecan* and *maþelian*), have not been studied extensively. Speech words in Old English are used in a number of ways: to introduce speeches, but also to describe speech, and in reported speech. The words which are used to introduce speech are numerous and varied, some verbs of speech being

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and their lord are of interest even if thought to exist solely in the realm of myth and poetic tradition.

[23] These lines have been much discussed, and the impact of and reasons for the flight of the sons of Odda likewise: see, for example, George Clark, '*The Battle of Maldon*: A heroic poem', *Speculum* 43 (1968), pp. 52-1; Norman Francis Blake, 'The Battle of Maldon', *Neophilologus* 49 (1965), pp. 332-45; and Richard North, 'Getting to know the general in *The Battle of Maldon*', *Medium Ævum* 60 (1991), pp. 1-15.

[24] See Richard Firth Green, *A Crisis of Truth: Literature and Law in Ricardian England* (Philadelphia, 1999), especially pp. 10-11, for a pertinent discussion of troth-plighting in Anglo-Saxon times.

[25] The relationship between speech and drama has been explored to great effect in relation to eddic poetry by Terry Gunnell: see, Terry Gunnell, *The Origins of Drama in Scandinavia* (Cambridge, 1994). Drama within Anglo-Saxon literature has been explored to a limited extent, and not at all in relation to the poetry, but rather in relation to the liturgy, and the influence of Classical drama. See M. Bradford Bedingfield, *The Dramatic Liturgy of Anglo-Saxon England* (Woodbridge, 2002); and C. R. Dodwell, *Anglo-Saxon Gestures and the Roman Stage* (Cambridge, 2000).

sometimes used as *inquit* tags immediately followed by speech, but also often in longer, sometimes periphrastic introductions to speech. The group of words (both nouns and verbs, and occasionally adjectives) used to introduce these speeches contains many words which are often considered to be almost synonymous. Close and detailed examination such as that undertaken in this study, however, reveals significant differences in connotation, in register and in usage, even where these words are indeed denotatively close.[26] Verbs, which are the central focus of the present examination, are a particularly rich example of the value of such close examination. The richness of Old English vocabulary, of course, admits many near-synonyms. Within poetry, the demands of alliterative verse are often thought to contribute to the generation of multiple synonyms among nouns and adjectives denoting commonly occurring ideas. As is explored in greater detail within a number of word studies cited later in this introduction, Old English poetic language comprised particularly rich vocabularies for ideas such as 'man', as well as terms necessary to the depiction and valorisation of a warrior culture, from which poets could draw, in order to fulfil those demands. This artistic pressure is one well-documented reason posited for the breadth of the poetic vocabulary.

However, this presumed impetus for lexical breadth and synonymy does not obtain in the case of verbs, which alliterate metrically much less frequently within poetic lines.[27] The existence of several terms apparently denoting the

[26] The use of variation within Old English verse might be thought to lead to a further rapprochement of the meanings of different verbs; however, in fact, variation using multiple speech words is not very frequent, and not all speech words are used within such variations interchangeably: this is discussed in detail in the individual verb studies within the body of the thesis.

[27] For more on the place of verbs within Old English poetic diction, see, for example, M. R. Godden, 'Literary Language', in Richard Hogg ed., *The Cambridge History of the English Language Vol. 1: The Beginnings to 1066* (Cambridge, 1992), pp. 490-535, p. 501.

same concept ('to speak') stands in need of alternative explanation. It is, therefore, all the more important to explore the connotative differences between apparent synonyms among verbs. Such an exploration suggests the need to reappraise the role of alliteration as a lexical constraint in the composition of poetry: this study's findings suggest that were the explanation to hold, it should presuppose a greater degree of synonymity among the words than is the case.[28] Some verbs, for instance, are far more frequently used within direct speech than others, and likewise there are variations in how frequently different verbs are used to introduce direct speech. Furthermore, in contrast with the words for 'sea' and 'ocean', for example, the words for 'to speak' do not demonstrate the variety of word-initial sounds which would be necessary for their number to prove an aid to poets in the composition of alliterative verse.[29] These, along with the other differences in usage which are briefly outlined above (and explored at greater length with relation to individual verbs) also argue for a much more nuanced explanation for the high frequency of words in at least *this* highly populated lexical field.[30] The

[28] Two studies on Old English verse composition are particularly helpful in outlining the processes of variation and versification which must be kept in mind when assessing word meanings in Old English verse: Stanley B. Greenfield, *The Interpretation of Old English Poems* (London, 1972); and more recently, H. Momma, *The Composition of Old English Poetry* (Cambridge, 1997).

[29] In the semantic field of 'sea' and 'ocean', we find, among other terms: *sæ, geofon, garsecg, heafu, mere, lagu, wæter, fam, argebland* and *stream-gewinn* (see below for studies on this field). All these words alliterate on different letters or letter combinations. In the semantic field of speech, we find, among other terms: *secgan, sprecan, cweðan, maþelian, mælan / mæðlan, gesecgan, asecgan, acweðan, becweðan.* It is clear that though long, this list includes several words which alliterate on the same letter or letter combination. If we take into account the fact that some (probably late) Old English poems (notably the *Psalms*) alliterate all *s* groups, this argument seems even more conclusive.

[30] The terms 'lexical field' and 'semantic field' are not used contrastively in this thesis. Linguists distinguish between lexical and semantic fields, and they also investigate functional fields, which can of course also have semantic implications. It must be highlighted, however, that the approach taken in this thesis is not primarily that of a linguist. For details of such distinctions in linguistics, see e.g. Michiko Ogura, *The Syntactic and Semantic Rivalry of 'Quoth', 'Say' and 'Tell' in Medieval English*, Tokyo: Sanseido Printing, 1981, especially pp. 13-14. The references in the thesis are to this edition; however, Ogura's dissertation was also published elsewhere as 'The Syntactic and Semantic Rivalry of *Quoth*, *Say* and *Tell* in

question of why so great a wealth of words for introducing and describing speech abounds in Old English poetry, and what the differences in sense between these words might be, is of great significance, as it has a bearing on the interpretation of many passages in many poems. A thorough study of the whole group of words used to signify 'say, speak, tell' is, therefore, valuable. As well as enhancing our understanding of this important group of words and how they are used, a study such as this can also establish some of the reasons behind the plenitude of synonyms in this vocabulary field.

Although this thesis focuses very much on literary insights enabled by a close study of the usage of speech words (especially verbs) within the Old English poetic corpus, what is uncovered here regarding the usage of a range of verbs and other words associated with speaking inevitably also sheds light on the cultural importance and role of speech within the Anglo-Saxon period, and occasionally points to far older distinctions between types of speeches. This more historical interest in the evolution of the semantics of speech verbs, however, is limited to etymological analysis, notably with comparison to cognates in other Germanic languages, especially Old Norse. This study cannot, and does not, offer insights into the difficult question of the dating of Old English verse, since to do so would inevitably involve circular reasoning: in focusing upon connotative differences, the study considers all extant instances of the verbs under consideration occurring in verse, and all these instances are used to ascertain the connotative differences which have otherwise been lost. It therefore stands to reason that this same body of

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Medieval English', *Senshu Jimbun Ronshu* [Senshu University Periodicals] 26 (1981), pp. 1-53. Ogura's study is a helpful companion to this thesis, as she investigates functional fields for a similar group of verbs to that studied in this thesis.

research cannot also be used in the other direction to try to suggest even a relative chronology within the verse, since the conclusions upon which such a chronology would be built are themselves the product of a dataset which is too small to study otherwise than as a whole, without much regard for dates.[31] Comprehensive analysis of speech words across the Germanic languages enables a greater understanding of the linguistic, cultural and etymological contexts of this important group of words.[32] Therefore, this study also explores languages other than Old English with reference to certain words, notably those with obscure or problematic etymologies, and those which have the most pronounced patterns of usage within Old English poetry. Old Norse provides particularly rich comparative data, as the results unearthed in this study show.

[31] Dating, however, has been discussed at length, especially with regard to *Beowulf*, by a number of scholars. For a very helpful summary of the history of this debate, and a useful examination of the difficulties in trying to set a clear date for the poem, see, Roberta Frank, 'A Scandal in Toronto: The Dating of 'Beowulf' a Quarter Century On', *Speculum* 82 (2007), pp. 843-64. More recently, the question of dating is addressed in Leonard Neidorf, *The Dating of Beowulf: A Reassessment* (Cambridge, 2016).

[32] Including etymological information within the context of a word study is not at all unusual, though more typical of the earlier studies than of more recent ones, as Strite explains in his survey of Semantic-Field Theory. See Vic Strite, *Old English Semantic Field Studies* (New York, 1989), pp. 14-15.

III. 'Words and Meanings'

The quotation taken as the title of this section is an apt summary of the problem tackled here, and is expressed so well by the original poet, that I begin by quoting it in full:

> That way of putting it – not very satisfactory:
> A periphrastic study in a worn-out poetical fashion,
> Leaving one still with the intolerable wrestle
> With words and meanings.[33]

This study bears particularly obvious comparison to semantic field study, which has become an increasingly productive and varied method for mapping the fine distinctions between words of similar meaning. Defining any semantic field is inherently problematic, not least because *meaning* is a concept itself difficult to define precisely.[34] Even concrete nouns, which appear to present the most straightforward relation between the name of a thing and its 'thingness', are sufficiently semantically 'fuzzy' to make precise mapping within a semantic field complex and difficult.[35] This problem of the relation between meaning and words has been explored extensively, across several

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[33] T. S. Eliot, *Four Quartets* (Orlando, 1971), p. 28.

[34] See, for example, Willard V. Quine, 'The problem of meaning in linguistics' in Jerry A. Fodor and Jerrold J. Katz eds., *The Structure of Language* (Eaglewood Cliffs, N.J., 1964), pp. 21-32, for a discussion of the implications of our lack of 'explanation for the notion of meaning' (p. 21) for linguists working with semantic fields. Quine also provides a helpful analysis of the distinctions in approach to meaning between lexicographers, linguists and grammarians.

[35] For a brief overview, which includes worked illustrations, of the preponderance of words with imprecise or ill-defined meanings, see, for example, Andrew Goatly, *The Language of Metaphors* (London, 1997), pp. 20-3. Prototype theory provides some solutions to the problems of identifying meaning which are raised with a number of theories and methods in this section, and it underlies some of the choices made regarding which words were selected for study in this project (see *Methodology*). For a very useful introduction to prototype theory, see Jean Aitchison, *Words in the Mind: An Introduction to the Mental Lexicon* (Hoboken, 2012), pp. 66-79. Aitchison also provides a useful assessment of the limitations of this theory (pp. 80-9).

different fields. The developments of semiotics within multiple disciplines, notably psychology, philosophy and linguistics, further complicates an already difficult topic, since there are a number of different ways of describing meaning, depending upon the discipline being employed, and of course the disciplines have borrowed freely and extensively from each other. Thus what might be called 'essence' and 'accident' in philosophy correspond, to a point, to what linguists describe as the 'signified' and 'signifier' (and, what I described above as 'thingness' and 'name of a thing' respectively).[36] With almost all lexical fields, particularly when these are concerned not with concrete but rather with abstract concepts, the borders are at best permeable, and at worst arbitrary.[37] Language has, of course, no 'natural' boundaries, not only between the words we group by meaning,[38] but even between the slightly more clear-cut distinctions formed by grammatical groups.[39] The fact that

[36] Philosophy is concerned not so much with the relation between a word and a thing, as with the relation between a thing and its true core (essence), and hence 'accident' is more often used to indicate the properties of an item than the word used to signify a concept, and 'essence' is more often used to indicate the indissoluble and individual character of that item, than the meaning of a word: this serves to illustrate how difficult it is to talk about meaning. Not only do we have a linguistic difficulty in identifying a signifier with its signified, but we have a further philosophical difficulty with identifying the signified (or, indeed, the sign) with its essence. The study of the relation between signifier and signified in particular inevitably has a bearing on any study which is concerned with any aspect of semantics, even when theory is not the focus. See Robert Scholes, 'Language, narrative, and anti-narrative', *Critical Inquiry* 7 (1980), pp. 204-12, pp. 204-9 for a particularly pertinent discussion of the ways such theories can be applied to words within semantic fields.

[37] From a pragmatic perspective, that is, from the study of *usage*, it is possible to define the semantic space occupied by similar words, and the boundaries between them. This, however, requires native speakers and an investigation of cognition. See, for example, Anna Wierzbicka, 'Defining emotion concepts', *Cognitive Science* 16 (1992), pp. 539-81, especially pp. 539-50 and 577-78.

[38] For linguistic investigations of semantic shift, see, for example, Susan M. Ervin, 'Semantic shift in bilingualism', *The American Journal of Psychology* 74 (1961), pp. 233-41, which explores the way colour terms from different languages shift semantically within the cognition of bilingual speakers. The discussion of the difficulty of discussing colour in terms of sharp discriminations on p. 233 is particularly helpful. It is also worth pointing out that many Anglo-Saxons would have been bilingual, or close to bilingual, and some would probably have been trilingual.

[39] Matthew Juge, 'Unidirectionality in Grammaticalization and Lexical Shift: The Case of English RATHER', *Annual Meeting of the Berkeley Linguistics Society* 28 (2002), pp. 147-54, pp. 147-9 for example, provides an overview of the processes of grammaticalisation and lexical shift.

there are so many examples of movement between grammatical groups is one example of this. When we try to divide words into semantic fields, these problems are even more acute, especially when dealing with verbs. Verbs are a particularly fluid part of language, and their meaning is intrinsically mutable, based upon not only context, but also tense and aspect.[40] As a result, any selection of vocabulary on semantic grounds will, almost inevitably, appear to cover incompletely the chosen field. As Vic Strite puts it in his invaluable study of semantic fields in Old English, '[u]ltimately, everything is a part of a whole. How and where one divides the whole into parts is a relative and subjective decision. Each culture, and perhaps each researcher, may choose different division points.'[41]

Nevertheless, linguistics has striven to produce theories of and approaches to language which enable studies of particular 'semantic segments', often underpinned by semantic field theory, but also within pragmatics. It is therefore important for the methodology of this project to examine these theories and approaches. The concept of a semantic field has come to encompass increasingly diverse ways of theorising language, as many different disciplines have applied different aspects of this term to various ends. Notably, linguistics, as it has grown further from its literary and philological roots and has encompassed scientific methodologies (especially within neuroscience), has appropriated older notions of the semantic field as a way of placing individual words and word-groups within languages, and has

[40] For an analysis of these and other features of verbal grammar from the perspective of their semantic content, see chapter 1, especially pp. 15-23, of Suzanne Fleischman, *Tense and Narrativity: From Medieval Performance to Modern Fiction* (London, 1990).
[41] Srite (1989), p. 4.

reoriented the approach in semantic field studies toward the language users.[42] Semantics as a field has undergone an even more dramatic diversification across disciplines, and a great deal of the more recent work on semantics focuses upon the decisions of different language users, sometimes within groups (for example stammerers),[43] or sometimes as a way of establishing different functions of the brain.[44] Other disciplines have also explored semantics, notably psychology[45] and philosophy.[46] Even within the much more limited area of studies concerned with establishing the semantics of individual words, or groups of words, such varied approaches as those outlined above have been employed.[47] Moreover, although several studies within these disciplines involve cross-over approaches, and several attempts have been made to lay the groundwork for the holistic (cross-disciplinary) study of semantics,[48] much of the theory associated with semantics within linguistics has not been fully reconsidered in the light of work within other

[42] See, for example, Harold Goodglass and Errol Baker, 'Semantic field, naming, and auditory comprehension in aphasia', *Brain and Language* 3 (1976), pp. 359-74. For a more detailed overview of semantic-field theory as it has applied to Old English, see Strite (1989), pp. 14-30, and below, pp. 35-9.
[43] See, for example, W. H. Moore, 'Bilateral Tachistoscopic Word Perception of Stutterers and Normal Subjects', *Brain and Language* 3 (1976), pp. 434-42.
[44] See, for example, Xintao Hu et al., 'Bridging low-level features and high-level semantics via fMRI brain imaging for video classification', *Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers Transactions on Multimedia* 14 (2012), pp. 314-25.
[45] See, for example, Lance Slade and Ted Ruffman, 'How language does (and does not) relate to theory of mind: A longitudinal study of syntax, semantics, working memory and false belief', *British Journal of Developmental Psychology* 23 (2005), pp. 117-41.
[46] See, for example, Jerry A. Fodor, *Psychosemantics: The Problem of Meaning in the Philosophy of Mind* (Cambridge, Mass., 1987) for a clear and interesting exploration, using a cross-over approach between psychology of the mind and philosophy of language to evaluate semantic content.
[47] See, for example, Paul Pietroski et al., 'The Meaning of 'most': Semantics, Numerosity and Psychology', *Mind & Language* 24 (2009), pp. 554-85. See also the journal *Natural Language Semantics*, which encourages work which combines linguistic approaches with concepts from philosophy and logic. One useful example of such an article is Paul Elbourne, 'Incomplete descriptions and indistinguishable participants', *Natural Language Semantics* 24 (2016), pp. 1-43, which explores the semantic content of different words and word groups with the lens of philosophical logic.
[48] See, for example, Paul Henle, *Language, Thought, and Culture* (Ann Arbor, Mich., 1965).

fields. In particular, the more literary (and therefore, from the perspective of this study, relevant) end of linguistics is very far from having integrated the discoveries of neuroscience and cognitive psychology regarding semantics and semantic fields into existing theories.[49]

As linguistics has progressed towards a more user-centric approach, and away from the earlier focus upon static, written usage, for instance, theories around how speaker needs influence semantic coverage within a field (for example through the much discussed aversion to exact synonyms within languages)[50] have continued to develop largely without reference to the actual mechanisms which occur within human brains, and which can now be at least partially mapped.[51] One example of this is that, from a scientific perspective, the parts of the brain involved in processing *written* language are, on the face of it, separate from those involved in processing *speech*.[52] As a result, there is an argument to be made for entirely disregarding those linguistic approaches which rely upon the examination of spoken language when considering written language, although this problem is mitigated to some extent by the fact that the dichotomy between literary and spoken language is extremely difficult to draw for Old English (not least because we have no examples of spoken Old English) and even in Modern English drawing this distinction between the

[49] See Strite (1989), pp. 14-30 for an overview.
[50] See, for example, Kristin Denham and Anne Lobeck, *Linguistics for everyone: An introduction* (Boston, 2012), p. 389, 'languages tend to avoid exact synonyms'.
[51] See, for example, Alexander G. Huth et al., 'Natural speech reveals the semantic maps that tile human cerebral cortex', *Nature* 532 (2016), pp. 453-8.
[52] For an excellent and thorough examination of some of the evidence for the division between speech generation and reading, see Steven E. Petersen et al., 'Positron emission tomographic studies of the cortical anatomy of single-word processing', *Nature* 331 (1988), pp. 585-9. For a more recent and wide-ranging discussion of these issues, see Anthony D. Wagner et al., 'Cognitive control, semantic memory, and priming: contributions from prefrontal cortex', *The Cognitive Neurosciences* 3 (2004), pp. 709-25.

spoken and the 'literary' is not without contention.[53] Nevertheless, there are still clear difficulties with using linguistic approaches which were developed for the study of spoken language when studying written language (and these difficulties are only the more acute in a study focused upon poetry). Therefore, without even addressing the persistent dangers of treating written evidence from the past as a snapshot of how Anglo-Saxons (or other ancient peoples) actually spoke, it is clear that the existing theoretical approaches are generally not well adapted to the study of Old English literature.

Notwithstanding these theoretical difficulties, within Old English, semantic field studies have become an increasingly frequent and often fruitful area of study. Strite, in the introduction of his aforementioned book, lays out the difficulties, as well as the value, of this type of research work.[54] Strite's examination of word studies also provides a useful evaluation of the state of the field as it stood in the late 1980s.[55] Strite explains how much of the semantic field research arose initially out of work towards producing the *Oxford English Dictionary*, so that early studies tended to have a lexicographical, and often an etymological, focus. From its inception within the (often comparative) study of ancient Germanic languages, the study of

[53] For an introduction to some of the difficulties involved in identifying the differences between spoken and written instances of speech, see, for example, Douglas Biber, *Variation across speech and writing* (Cambridge, 1991).
[54] See Strite (1989), pp. 1-2. Also see pp. 14-30 for an overview of the history of semantic field studies, including the various relevant areas of linguistic theory, up to the date of publication of his book; a valuable prequel to the assessment provided here.
[55] Strite identifies some 283 semantic-field studies, and a further 263 other studies which were beneficial to his section on specific semantic fields. Since Strite's assessment of semantic-field theory as it applied to Old English semantic-field studies up to 1989 is based upon ten years of investigation into semantic-field studies in Old English, a full survey of either the studies themselves carried out in this period, or of the accompanying changes in semantic-field theory would be redundant. However, the points most relevant to this thesis are discussed. For more details of what he covers, see Strite (1989), pp. 3-5.

semantic fields has been concerned with the delineation and development of the meanings of individual words within their historical, lexical and etymological context. This study, then, negotiates carefully these difficulties and differences of approach, and must begin with some explanation of the theoretical underpinning behind the methodology employed, not only in the accumulation and examination of the data, but also in the close reading of texts and the interpretation of results.

IV. Putting Theory into Practice

The theoretical underpinning for the research upon which this thesis is based bears some discussion. As noted above, the most obvious comparisons with the present study are to be drawn from other word studies. However, the linguistic theory behind many contemporary studies is not adapted sufficiently specifically to the situation we find within Old English literature, and the particular combination of factors to be considered in this study compounds this problem. In broader terms, although lexical field theory (also known as word-field theory) has proven very fruitful in providing a method for many studies of the kind undertaken here, problems with the underlying assertions of this theory when it is applied to Old English mean that it requires adaption.[56] In particular, the premise of at least the older iteration of this theory, namely that any lexical field is a closed set, with no gaps or overlap in meaning, is inimical to the approach taken in this study. Even disregarding this outdated iteration of the theory, on the grounds that it constitutes something of a straw man, the happenstances of survival (which is a problem discussed at greater length elsewhere in this chapter) within Old English pose a serious challenge to the implications of completeness inherent within this conception of relating language to meaning.[57]

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[56] Despite the problems with the theory, linguistic field theory has been applied to study both concrete and abstract concepts in Old English. See, for example, J. R. Schwyter, *Old English Legal Language: The Lexical Field of Theft* (Odense, 1996); C. P. Biggam, 'Old English Colour Lexemes Used of Textiles in Anglo-Saxon England', in Graham D. Caie ed., *The Power of Words* (Amsterdam, 2006), pp. 1-22.

[57] For a helpful review of the history of semantic field study, and a more up-to-date iteration of it, see, for example, chapter seven of Eva Feder Kittay, *Metaphor: Its Cognitive Force and Linguistic Structure* (Oxford, 1987).

Survival is, in fact, perhaps the most serious problem, for this project especially, with trying to use lexical field theory to study Old English poetry. Specifically, the fact that we have no way of assessing the real lexical field as it existed in Anglo-Saxon England (either for speakers or authors, or poets) renders any idea of a closed set, or full coverage of meanings between the words we have within a semantic group, redundant. We do know that what we have is a fragment of the original Old English literary corpus, and therefore it is a reasonable surmise that a number of words from any given lexical set have also been lost in the interim.[58] This problem compounds a difficulty which is particularly acute with a study of speech words: namely that this lexical set, in its broadest conception certainly, but even in a narrower sense, is influenced in discernible ways by a vast range of other lexical sets, which touch too closely upon it to be easily distinguished from it.

Let us consider, for example, verbs and verb phrases such as *to make a will*, *to make a testament* or *to vow*. These verbs and verb phrases are, in one sense, clearly outside the field of which the verbs *to say*, *to speak* and *to tell* form the centre. Yet they can be assumed to have had (according to lexical field theory, at least) a profound effect upon the 'speech' set when they vacated it, as they shifted in meaning so that 'speech' was no longer the central sense. Initially, as mentioned in 'Speaking Now and Then' (pp. 8-18), verbs denoting legal

[58] A number of assessments or surveys of the probable losses to the Old English corpus have been carried out, of which Raymond Wilson Chambers, 'The Lost Literature of Medieval England', *The Library* 4 (1925), pp. 293-321 is among the first, and R. M. Wilson, *The Lost Literature of Medieval England* (London, 1970) among the most comprehensive. Chapters one, two and three, in particular, pertain to the discussion of the survival of Old English verse: chapters four and five deal with prose, and the rest of the book focuses more on the survival of Middle English texts. For a more recent study, see Michael Lapidge, *The Anglo-Saxon Library* (Oxford, 2008), which provides much needed information regarding some of the most important libraries of Anglo-Saxon England.

avowals signified a verbal (though binding) agreement. This group of words would, at that stage, have denoted a particular kind of speech, which ranged from a fairly casual assurance to a legally binding avowal. For example, the noun *cwide* commonly means speech or utterance, but can also mean will.[59] Verbs such as *cweðan* and *biddan* are used at the start of wills to represent the (in Anglo-Saxon, still verbal) bequest, while also carrying the less restricted senses of 'speak'[60] and 'bid'[61] respectively.[62] As Anglo-Saxon and later legal practices shifted towards the written (rather than the spoken) medium, a number of words changed their meanings significantly to accommodate this change (such as *will* and *bequeath*, for example). Once some of these words came to denote a separate activity altogether from speaking (that is, writing),

[59] See the entry for *cwide* in the *Dictionary of Old English*, especially the senses under 1, 3 and 4, which deal with mostly spoken uses, and 7 and 9 which deal with the more legalistic uses: *cwide*, n., Angus Cameron et al. ed., *Dictionary of Old English: A to G Online* (Toronto, 2007), [last accessed 8 November 2016]. See also the usage of this word in wills, for example, *Þis is Aþelwoldis cwyde* 'This is the will of Athelwold', at the start of 'The Will of Athelwold', which can be found in Dorothy Whitelock ed. and trans., *Anglo Saxon Wills* (Cambridge, 1930), p. 30.

[60] See the entry for *biddan* in the Dictionary of Old English, especially the senses 1, 2, and 4, which deal with senses relating to (verbal) request and (verbal) command, and 3 which deals with the more legalistic, formal uses: *biddan*, v., *Dictionary of Old English* (2007), [last accessed 8 November 2016]. See also the usage of this word in wills, for example, *Ic Wulfwaru bidde mine leofan hlaford…þ ic mote beon mines cwydes wyrðe* 'I Wulfwaru bid my beloved lord…that I may be entitled to [make] my will', at the start of 'The Will of Wulfwaru', which can be found in Whitelock (1930), p. 62. Again, *cwide* is used for Modern English 'will'.

[61] See the entry for *cweþan* in the *Dictionary of Old English*, especially the senses under A, which relate to oral and less formal uses, and C and F, which deal with the more formal uses: *cweðan*, v., *Dictionary of Old English* (2007), [last accessed 8 November 2016]. See also the usage of this word in wills, for example *Þis is Byrhtrices 7 Ælfswyðe his wifes nihsta cwide. ðe hi cwædon on Meapaham on heora maga gewitnæsse…* 'This is the will of Bihtric and his wife Ælfswith, which they spoke at Meopham in the witness of their kin…', at the start of 'The will of Brihtric and Ælfswith', which can be found in Whitelock (1930), p. 26. This document also shows *cwide* being used for 'will'. For a use of the related prefixed verb *becweðan* in a similar context, see *Ic Ælfred Westseaxena cingc…gecwethe hu ic ymbe min yrfe wille æfter minum dæge* 'I Alfred king of the West-Saxons…explain about how I wish my wealth [to be disposed] after my days', in John Earle, *A Hand-book to the Land-charters, and Other Saxonic Documents* (Oxford, 1888), p. 146.

[62] For an analysis of the ongoing importance of oral practices in the tradition of Anglo-Saxon wills, see, for example, Brenda Danet, and Bryna Bogoch, 'From Oral Ceremony to Written Document: The Transitional Language of Anglo-Saxon Wills', *Language and Communication* 12 (1992), pp. 95-122.

rather than being a sub-set of speech denoting a special kind of speech, the whole 'promise' set became one apposed to speech: next to it, but no longer part of it.

It is worth noting that, in this divide, *cweðan* ceased to be used as much for the formal 'attest' (though it continued to be used for 'say, speak'), but was generally replaced in this usage by *becweðan* – that is to say, some words which had been used to denote a formal spoken promise remained attached to the 'speech' set, as the 'promise' (written) set moved away from speech. In some cases, as *becweðan* illustrates, a prefix may have been used to clarify which kind of *cweðan* was happening, as the earlier meanings of the verb became less closely associated, commensurate with a shift from formal agreements being linked to speech, to formal agreements being linked to writing. A little later, whenever the noun *testament* (for example) ceased to denote primarily an *oral* agreement and became instead a word for an agreement which was commonly *written down*, this also caused the verb phrase *to make a testament* to shift its meaning away from 'to say words which constitute a formal promise or will' (a signification which brought it into semantic relations with other verbs denoting various kinds of speech), and to come to mean 'to write down words which constitute a formal promise or will', which no longer has any direct relation with the verbs for 'to speak'. A parallel shift must have taken place for a number of similar terms, such as *to make a will*, and even *to vow*.[63] This latter (*to vow*) still retains an emphasis on the spoken, but it is now semantically so closely linked to a set of words

[63] On roles of speech verses text, see, for example, Andrén, Anders, *Between Artifacts and Texts: Historical Archaeology in Global Perspective* (New York, 1998), especially pp. 1-8.

which are associated with written, formal, legal agreements, that it is not regarded primarily as a specialised kind of speech, but rather as one of a number of verbs (which include *to promise* and *to swear*) where the agreement is not necessarily written, and has become largely restricted to specific, highly formal spoken contexts, notably the marriage service.[64]

This example hints at the underlying problem within the 'speech' lexical set – that even among its most obvious semantic opposites, such as the 'written', there are multiple words which are either borrowed or developed from the 'speech' set.[65] As a result, the 'speech' lexical set is particularly subject to change, and consequently susceptible to shifts in perception. The semantic field of speech, then, has especially permeable boundaries, no doubt as a consequence of the fact that speech and speaking are so integral to human behaviour and culture.[66] As a result, speaking is present in some form in a great number of words relating to a wide range of subjects, such as expression, but also writing, communication, and even internal forms of dialogue such as thinking and imagining. Moreover, the 'speech' set takes in a wide range of word types – verbs are the most obvious, but of course there are also many nouns, some adjectives and a few adverbs which have an effect upon the

[64] It is significant, for example, that the Oxford English Dictionary entry for this word makes no mention whatever of *speech* in its definition of either the form of *vow* more closely related to a formal agreement (*vow*, v. 1), or the less formal version of the verb (*vow*, v. 2). See *vow*, v. 1., *Oxford English Dictionary Online* (Oxford, September 2016), [last accessed 3 November 2016], and *vow*, v. 2., *Oxford English Dictionary Online* (Oxford, September 2016), [last accessed 8 November 2016], respectively.

[65] Useful work has been done in examining the relationship between a group of the words in the 'written' set in Germanic by Denis Green, in 'The Vocabulary of Writing', D. H. Green, *Language and History in the Early Germanic World* (Cambridge, 2000), pp. 254-70. It is also worth noting that reading was often done aloud in this period, and therefore the written was in one way less clearly distinct from the spoken than it is now.

[66] See 'Speaking Now and Then', especially p. 8, for a more detailed discussion on the importance of speech.

semantics of the verbs. All these parts of speech not only fall naturally within the semantic field but also need to be considered together in order to enable a proper assessment of the usage, especially because etymologically related words from different parts of speech can provide useful insights into connotations, although of course not without some complications.[67]

The difficulties explored here in defining the borders of the 'speech' set are revisited in the section on methodology; conversely these difficulties also have implications for the ways theoretical and linguistic approaches are used in this project. A number of approaches are combined, therefore, in this study. Systemic functional linguistics, for instance, provides the notion of the multiple possible choices within language, and this, combined with the notion (taken from pragmatic approaches) that usage provides information regarding meaning, and the idea from lexical field theory that words influence each other's meanings (rather than existing atomistically), has underpinned the methodology employed in this project. However, none of these approaches is entirely free from difficulty, and therefore they are used selectively.

For example, the idea of the choices which are available to language users, and what these choices tell us about word semantics, has been crucial. It is especially worthwhile taking into account what can be deduced about meaning from usage in studies of Old English literature, because of the scale of the losses sustained in the intervening centuries. We know that we must have lost a great deal of Old English literature, making a wide ranging and varied

[67] For an explanation of how words interact with each other semantically, in this case within the context of diachronic change, including a more detailed description of the concept of a semantic field, see, for example, Jean Aitchison, *Language change: progress or decay?* (Cambridge, 2001), pp. 123-30.

approach to what data we do have all the more important. In particular, the relation of prose to verse within the corpus means that studies of Old English poetry above all benefit from, and often require, the use of several different approaches simultaneously: since the majority of the small body of surviving data for Old English is in the form of prose (not verse), and yet it is clear that usage in verse and prose differs greatly, studies of Old English verse must be particularly broad, to try to make up for what we lack in quantity of data with the quality and thoroughness of the analysis.

For poetry, the dataset available is generally too small to be straightforwardly analysed diachronically, and indeed the remarkable lexical consistency of Old English poetry throughout the Anglo-Saxon period has even led scholars to suggest the existence of a poetic dialect, which further masks diachronic variations.[68] The combination of the particular quality of Old English poetic vocabulary (as well as other aspects of usage which are specific to poetry) with the very low survival rate of Old English poetry means that using systemic functional linguistics alone to try to establish what can be deduced about the relative semantics of a group of words on the bases of the choices made by poets is theoretically unsound. Old English poetry is, in fact, not well suited to the kind of statistical bulk analysis favoured by much modern linguistic investigation, although many of these theoretical approaches are helpful conceptually. It is, therefore, inadvisable to look at any single aspect of usage within Old English poetry, such as collocations, frequency of

[68] See, for example, Kenneth Sisam, *Studies in the History of Old English Literature* (Oxford, 1962), pp. 119-39 ('Dialect Origins of the Earlier Old English Verse'), Godden (1992), especially pp. 496-501, and Mark Griffith, 'Old English Poetic Diction Not in Old English Verse or Prose – and the Curious Case of Aldhelm's Five Athletes', *Anglo-Saxon England* 43 (2014), pp. 99-131, especially pp. 99-101.

occurrence, or any other aspect of the contexts in which a verb is used, to draw conclusions regarding word semantics generally (or even specifically within poetry) from that alone. Such a narrow approach is often inadvisable in any analysis of language, but the particular circumstances which affect the analysis of the lexis of Old English poetry precludes this kind of analysis altogether.

The approach favoured in this study is composite, therefore, as is explained at greater length in the methodology section. In particular, although based on linguistic theory, in practice the approach of this study is a literary one. The data which underpin this thesis have served as a guide to identifying patterns; however, the findings of this thesis rely not only on these patterns, but also on the subsequent close reading and careful analysis of the texts where verbs of speech appear. Thus, although the database was used to identify significant collocative links (such as that found between *soð* and *secgan*), it is the analysis of the instances of *secgan* which occur within the corpus (including those where *secgan* and *soð* do not collocate) which provided the grounds for establishing a semantic link between *secgan* and truthfulness or earnestness.[69]

As the overview of existing word studies within Old English carried out in 'Approaches to Old English Speech Words: A Literature Review' (below) illustrates, the central ground of such studies is concrete nouns. These studies are, almost without exception, occasion pieces, both in that they deal with occasions (events, such as battle, travel, feasting, and so on), and in that they focus on words which are themselves infrequent in appearance, and the (relatively infrequent) literary occasions in which they appear. A word study

[69] See Chapter 1I; contrast especially section III ('How say you to that', pp. 162-8) with section IV ('How say you sir? Can you deny all this?', pp. 169-92).

focusing not upon unusual or specific vocabulary, but particularly concerned with exploring the least connotatively distinguishable words within an extremely central semantic set that is in constant use throughout the corpus of poetry (and, indeed, prose) is highly unusual. There are, furthermore, particularly keen tensions within semiotics in the case of the verbs, especially those which denote 'to speak'. Particularly within direct speech, openings such as 'I am speaking to you today', though their rhetorical purpose is clear, illustrate semantic redundancy, since the action they proclaim is self-evident in the act of proclamation. The relation between the verbs used to signify speech and any particular signified itself is somewhat 'meta-semiotic': 'to speak' is a verb which signifies often the very activity of which it is a signifier, since language is, as far as we know, a uniquely human construct. Thus all the difficulties around negotiating the relationship between meaning and symbol, between signifier and signified, between what a thing *is* and what a word *says*, are particularly brought to bear upon the word 'speak' itself, as the written representation of an oral act.[70] Consequently, the paradoxes and unexamined complexities of semantics and semiotics are acutely focused within the group of words which this study examines. This study negotiates with and addresses these theoretical and philosophical difficulties at various points, and an awareness of these caveats has informed the section on methodology.[71]

[70] For more on these relations between words and things, see 'Words and Meanings', pp. 19-25.
[71] See 'Methodology', pp. 78-87.

V. Approaches to Old English Speech-Words: A Literature Review

i. Semantic Field Studies

The shifts in linguistic and literary theory described in the section entitled 'Putting Theory into Practice' (above) have had a profound effect on semantic field studies, as linguists moved from favouring diachronic to synchronic linguistics, back to an approach which incorporated both diachronic and synchronic approaches, and literary theoreticians moved similarly from historical and impressionistic criticism towards a more self-contained study of the texts themselves. Beyond (and partly in response to) these general trends, developments in other areas of English studies have also had an influence on semantic field studies. Despite the ongoing difficulty of describing or categorising the complex relations between words and meanings, it has been demonstrated that meaning involves a composite and shifting range of literary and linguistic responses, which are influenced and conditioned by all manner of social and extra-linguistic factors. In Old English scholarship, the study of Christian allegory, syntax, oral-formulaic theory, discourse analysis, and growth in the study of rhetoric have all affected the ways in which individual semantic field studies approach and describe the words and meanings they investigate.[72] The *Dictionary of Old English* project at Toronto has also generated and stimulated a great deal of scholarship, much of which is immensely important and relevant to this thesis.[73] Likewise, a number of projects at Glasgow relating to the *Thesaurus of Old English*, notably the

[72] For more details on these movements within scholarship, see Strite (1989), pp. 14-30.
[73] See Angus Cameron et al. ed., *Dictionary of Old English: A to G online* (Toronto, 2007), [last accessed 8 November 2016].

Thesaurus itself,[74] which has been made available online and was revised during the writing of this thesis, as well as the *Mapping Metaphors* project,[75] are both influential and informative regarding the delineation of semantics and semantic fields in Old English scholarship.

The beginnings of semantic field studies are detailed in Strite (pp. 16-18), and therefore not described here in detail; however, a brief overview is necessary for contextualising the theoretical approaches, detailed above, which this study negotiates. The following developments within the study of semantic fields are particularly important as a backdrop to the genesis of this study. Ferdinand Holthausen was one of several early German scholars who provided an etymological model for semantic field studies which focused upon an historical approach, without much recourse to the local context in which words occurred.[76] Gunter Ipsen and then Jost Trier developed semantic field theory, which became methodologically and theoretically more distinct from lexicography than had been the case previously, and moved away from onomasiology towards a more structuralist approach.[77] Building on the work of Trier, Wolfgang Kühlwein and others in the 1960s placed a greater focus on lexis and syntax, as well as etymology through phonology and morphology.

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[74] See Jane Roberts et al., *A Thesaurus of Old English* (Glasgow, 2017), [last accessed 17 July 2017].
[75] See *Mapping Metaphor with the Historical Thesaurus*: *Metaphor Map of English* (Glasgow, 2015), [accessed 17 July 2017].
[76] See, for example, a number of articles in *Anglia Beiblatt* by F. Holthausen, published between 1903 and 1940. Apart from Gunter Ipsen and Jost Trier (see below), Johannes Hoops was also an important figure. See, for example, Johannes Hoops, *Reallexikon der germanischen Altertumskunde* (Strasburg, 1911), which has been revised and republished several times since. Hoops also supported the publication of numerous semantic-field studies as editor of *Anglistische Forschungen*.
[77] See, for example, Gunter Ipsen, 'Der alte Orient und die Indogermanen' in Johannes Friedrich et al., *Stand und Aufgaben der Sprachwissenschaft: Festschrift für W. Streitberg* (Heidelberg, 1925), pp. 135-44, and Jost Trier, 'Das sprachliche Feld. Eine Auseinandersetzung', *Neue Jahrbücher für Wissenschaft und Jugendbildung* 10 (1934), pp. 428-49.

Kühlwein in particular developed a holistic approach, which incorporated several parameters of linguistic analysis, and his work attempted a synthesis of paradigmatic word-field theory (Trier) with syntagmatic word-field theory (Walter Porzig).[78] A much more detailed outline of semantic field theory than the one provided here can be found in the work of Michiko Ogura, and her study of Old English verbs of saying provides valuable background to this thesis. Her approach is linguistic, and her aims (unlike those of this project) are therefore not literary in focus.[79]

Semantic field studies have been more frequent in areas of the lexis which abound with nouns. As Strite points out at the start of his section on motion terms, '[m]ost semantic-field studies examine nouns and adjectives. They usually isolate tangible material objects in the world, or man-made objects in a culture, or they isolate concepts and ideas.'[80] For example, a number of studies have focused on agricultural terms,[81] animals,[82] and food and drink terms.[83] Sea terms form one of the largest semantic fields in the Old English

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[78] W. Porzig, *Das Wunder der Sprache* (Bern, 1950).
[79] See Ogura, *Rivalry* (1981), especially pp. 3-8.
[80] Strite (1989), p. 109.
[81] Graf's early (1909) study of some of the basic legal terms linked to agriculture was followed by several studies of farmers, including for example one which focuses on plows. See Leopold Graf, *Landwirtschaftliches im altenglischen Wortschatze: nebst einer Untersuchung über die festländische Heimat der germanischen Besiedler Britanniens* (Breslau diss., 1909), and Karl Inge Sandred, 'On the Terminology of the Plough in England', *Studia Neophilologica* 38 (1966), pp. 323-38.
[82] Following a comprehensive study of mammal terms by Jordan (Richard Jordan, *Die altenglischen Säugetiernamen* (Heidelberg, 1903)), later studies have often focused on a narrower field, for example Allan Metcalf, 'Ten Natural Animals in Beowulf', *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen* 64 (1963), pp. 378-89, and a number have focused on specific animals. More recently, Jennifer Neville, *Representations of the Natural World in Old English Poetry* (Cambridge, 1999) offers an illuminating assessment (though not primarily from a semantic field perspective) of this field.
[83] Notably in studies by Grube – see, for example, F. W. Grube, 'Meat Foods of the Anglo-Saxons', *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 34 (1935), pp. 511-29. Or more recently, see, for example, Richard W. Unger, *Beer in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance* (Philadelphia, 2004), or Ann Hagen, *Anglo-Saxon Food and Drink* (Little Downham, Ely, 2010).

vocabulary, and this is also among the most studied fields: numerous studies have looked at terms for, and about, the sea and seafaring.[84] Unsurprisingly, terms for people have been particularly widely studied, including general terms for humans,[85] children,[86] women,[87] and marriage,[88] as well as men.[89] Likewise, military terms have been widely studied.[90] Areas of ambiguity have naturally attracted scholarship, hence the lasting interest in Old English colour terms.[91] More abstract terms have also been studied, though generally less

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[84] See, for example, Brady's particularly instructive article on sea terms in *Beowulf* (Caroline Brady, 'The Synonyms for "Sea" in Beowulf', in C. K. Hyder et al. ed., *Studies in Honor of Albert Morey Sturtevant* (Lawrence, Kansas, 1952), pp. 22-46. For a recent study, which includes a survey of this field, see Katrin Thier, *Old English Sea Terms* (Ely, England, 2014). For a more general survey, see Stacy S. Klein et al. eds., *The Maritime World of the Anglo-Saxons* (Tempe, Ariz., 2014).

[85] See, for example, Reinius's etymological study of terms for human beings: Josef Reinius, *On Transferred Appellations of Human Beings Chiefly in English and German* (Göteborg, 1903) and Kjellmer's study of terms for people: Göran Kjellmer, *Middle English Words for 'people'* (Stockholm, 1973).

[86] See, for example, Bäck's particularly good study of synonyms for 'child', 'boy' and 'girl' in Old English: Hilding Bäck, *The Synonyms for "child", "boy", "girl" in Old English: An Etymological-semasiological Investigation* (Lund, 1934), as well as Bernhard Diensberg, 'The Lexical Fields BOY/GIRL – SERVANT – CHILD in Middle English', *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen* 85 (1985), pp. 328-36, and, more recently, Christine Rauer, 'Mann and Gender in Old English Prose: A Pilot Study', *Neophilologus* (2016), pp. 1-20, which provides a useful overview of this field (see p. 3).

[87] See, for example, Stibbe's thorough, mostly etymological study: Hildegard Stibbe, *"Herr" und "Frau" und verwandte Begriffe in ihren altenglischen Äquivalenten* (Heidelberg, 1935).

[88] See, for example, Fischer's excellent study of the male/female semantic field: Andreas Fischer, *Engagement, Wedding, and Marriage in Old English* (Heidelberg, 1986), or more recently Anita R. Riedinger, 'Lexical Inequities in Marriage: Old English Wif, Wer, and Husbonda', *Studia Neophilologica* 66 (1994), pp. 3-14.

[89] These have been so frequent that it is possible to separate terms for 'man' from terms relating to social distinction, such as 'lord' and 'king'. See, for example, Marie B. Murtagh, *Some Words for "Lord" in Old English Poetry: An Investigation of Word Meaning and Use* (Boston diss., 1985); Stella Wang, *"Beowulf": Translating Old English Cyning* (Rochester, N.Y. diss., 2000).

[90] This includes terms for warriors and weaponry as well as warfare itself. See, for example, Brady's studies of warrior and weapon terms in *Beowulf*: Caroline Brady, ''Warriors' in Beowulf: An Analysis of the Nominal Compounds and an Evaluation of the Poet's Use of them', *Anglo-Saxon England* 11 (1982), pp. 199-246. Caroline Brady, ''Weapons' in Beowulf: An Analysis of the Nominal Compounds and an Evaluation of the Poet's Use of them', *Anglo-Saxon England* 8 (1979), pp. 79-141, and many more specific works on individual weapons, often predominantly archaeological in nature.

[91] This is one of the most frequently studied fields in Old English. Studies vary in approach. For example, this very thorough semantic field study: Angus F. Cameron, *The Old English Nouns of Colour: A Semantic Study* (Oxford diss., 1968), focuses upon terms for *hiw* and *bleo*. Barley, meanwhile, provides a helpful summary of the field of colour terms up to the mid-seventies in Nigel F. Barley, 'Old English Colour Classification: Where do Matters Stand?', *Anglo-Saxon England* 3 (1974), pp. 15-28. More recently the field of Old English colour terms has been revisited in, for example, Amy Clark, 'More than Meets the Eye: Cultural

extensively. Terms relating to the intellect, for example, have generally focused upon a small number of words for mind,[92] and verbs for thought.[93] This brief survey illustrates the predominance of approaches which tend towards the categorical, and of studies which set out detailed taxonomies of the words under examination. Terms are usually divided and assessed according to similarities in their usage, their collocations, or the grammatical constructions in which they appear.

Color Resonances in Old English Literature', Online Publication by UC Berkeley (2015), https://escholarship.org/uc/item/1sp7v54x>, [retrieved 12 October 2016].

[92] For example Malcolm Godden, 'Anglo-Saxons on the Mind', in Michael Lapidge and Helmut Gneuss eds., *Learning and Literature in Anglo-Saxon England: Studies Presented to Peter Clemoes on the Occasion of His Sixty-Fifth Birthday* (Cambridge, 1985), pp. 271-298; Soon-Ai Low, 'Approaches to the Old English Vocabulary for "Mind"', *Studia Neophilologica* 73 (2001), pp. 11-22; Antonina Harbus, *The Life of the Mind in Old English Poetry* (Amsterdam, 2002); and more recently, Leslie Lockett, 'Mind the Gap: Cognitive Approaches to Early Medieval Poetry and Audiences', *Exemplaria* 28 (2016), pp. 181-191.

[93] For example, Elmar Seebold, 'Die AE Entsprechungen von Lat. *sapiens* und *prudens*', *Anglia* 92 (1974), pp. 291-333, and Ogura's wide-ranging study of verbs of thinking, which is primarily a syntactic study: Michiko Ogura, 'OE Verbs of Thinking', *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen* 87 (1986), pp. 325-41.

ii. Problems and Solutions

Scholars have generally focused their investigations upon a detailed presentation of the deployments of words and word groups within the surviving textual record, with an emphasis on comprehensiveness which demonstrates the influence of the theories which underlie corpus linguistics on the fields of word and semantic studies in Old English.[94] There are several objections which can be raised to such approaches, and these objections merit examination in the light of this discussion of the state of the field. Many of the studies which attempt to map the semantic field with which they are concerned, using an approach derived largely from corpus linguistics as described above, simultaneously focus upon a selection of texts. Such a combination of corpus linguistics with a selective approach to the texts examined is, though indisputably practical, theoretically problematic, since the primary postulation of corpus linguistics demands a study of the full set of words within the designated semantic field. Moreover, in Old English, the tendency of studies to focus upon words which appear in sufficiently small numbers to allow synchronic, or even diachronic examination of all the surviving instances of use, while presenting an appealing comprehensiveness of coverage, often risks producing studies which elide issues of genre or text type.

This kind of elision, which does not fully take into consideration generic questions or negotiate with the necessary subtlety the, often, fine distinctions between different types of writing, has consequences, of course, for the

[94] For a discussion of the problems with the application of approaches which rely on mass analysis of data to Old English, see 'Putting Theory into Practice', pp. 26-34 above.

precision and nuance of the conclusions which can be drawn: as mentioned above, analysis predominates towards general taxonomy rather than providing close textual examination. The insights arising from these approaches are most acutely affected by the problems discussed above in the case of poetry, since this is the form of writing in which the nuances of word meanings are most systematically and intentionally exploited and even confounded by poets. The limiting effects described above upon the insights which can be offered by studies into word use within poetry are most extreme in the case of those terms whose frequency alone poses a challenge to attempts at comprehensive analysis across the entire corpus of Old English. It is probably partly for this reason that studies of speech words in Old English have, on the whole, been both infrequent, and narrowly focused in the scope of their inquiry.

Although vocabulary field studies such as this are not rare, verbs are treated less frequently than nouns, no doubt in part because of the difficulties involved in finding and analysing all the different parts of common verbs, which greatly complicate the ease with which statistical information about usage of words can be gathered. Similarly, although study into various aspects of the field of speech, from a range of perspectives, including those of sociolinguistics, history and literary analysis, is widespread, studies have tended to take very different approaches to the one taken in this project. The limited survival within Old English, and the almost total loss of any material which has any claim to reflect quotidian speech, makes the standard approaches of sociolinguistics less useful than in other languages. The great distinction between poetic and prosaic usage is made difficult to explicate by the loss of awareness of what constituted poetic usage which the passage of

time has made inevitable, and this has a limiting effect on what can be uncovered by the study of speech within a purely literary critical approach.

The kind of large scale statistical analysis which this project involved borrows from recent fields which only emerged with the evolution of computing power. Corpus linguistics, in particular, has some evident parallels in approach to this project. There are, nevertheless, also major differences, most notably the impossibility of collecting the living (spoken) language, which is one of the commonest uses of this approach. Although corpus linguistic approaches have influenced some of the decisions made in the collection and analysis of data in this project, the approach used here has only limited similarities to that of corpus linguistics. This is chiefly because this study, though statistical at the outset, is at heart a literary analysis, which is only informed by the database analysis, rather than driven by it. Thus linguistics is important, but rarely central, to the analysis. This project is unusual in combining a range of approaches – consequently, in surveying the state of the field, it is both necessary to look at, effectively, several different fields, and inevitable that some relevant works will have been missed.

iii. Studies of Related Fields

A number of studies, though not concerned explicitly with speech words, nevertheless examine other areas of language which are sufficiently closely related to speech words to be worth listing. As discussed in 'Words and Meanings' above, because of the nature of speech, it is difficult to establish firm boundaries for this semantic field. Therefore this survey also includes details of scholarship on closely related, or 'touching' fields. The studies considered in this section range widely, and many are not semantic field studies, but employ various scholarly approaches to the study of speech, speeches, orality, narration, and other directly or indirectly related fields. As it can be difficult to distinguish 'relevant' scholarship from the titles, this review covers a wide range of material, much of which has no direct bearing on this thesis.[95] It will be noted that there are relatively few comprehensive studies of terms relating to speech. Studies of verbs in general are lacking, and this field requires more work: a lack also identified by Strite (and not yet rectified). Likewise, language terms are under-studied, especially the verbs. The one exception to this general lack is a large study by Michiko Ogura of verb syntax, which encompasses a comprehensive survey of Old and Middle English verbs. Ogura's careful linguistic analysis of speech and other verbs is an exception to the bulk of verb studies, and is very instructive. Her approach is linguistic (as opposed to literary), and her focus is on the syntax. Her

[95] See, for example, Baker (1988), pp. 3-23, which is concerned with the content, style and rhetoric *within* speeches, not the verbs used to introduce or describe them.

contribution to this field is dealt with in greater detail below, and in the body of the thesis.[96]

Among the studies which focus on fields related or adjacent to speech, a number of studies have been carried out which examine the terminology surrounding poets,[97] boasts,[98] prayer,[99] and law terms.[100] An interest in the connections between theology and speech-acts is clear in works by such scholars as Robert Bjork, Alexandra Hennessey Olsen and Eric Jager.[101] Ward Parks examines narrators,[102] and their relation to the Anglo-Saxon oral tradition, in relation especially to oral formulae.[103] Parks has also written on pre-fight speeches, in a wide ranging comparative study which includes not only Old English texts, but comparisons drawn from, for example, Ancient Greek, Sanskrit, and cultural observations.[104]

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[96] Michiko Ogura, *Verbs in Medieval English: Differences in Verb Choices in Verse and Prose* (Berlin, 1996.)

[97] See e.g. Werlich, Egon, *Der westgermanische Skop: der Aufbau seiner Dichtung und sein Vortrag* (Münster diss., 1964); Jeff Opland also writes on this subject, with reference to anthropology and oral cultures. He uses an exploration of the vocabulary relating to orality in Old English to explore Anglo-Saxon oral practices: see, Jeff Opland, *Anglo-Saxon Oral Poetry: A Study of the Traditions* (New Haven, 1980). More recently, a comprehensive book on Old English poets has been written: Emily Thornbury, *Becoming a Poet in Anglo-Saxon England* (Cambridge, 2014). See especially pp. 11-36.

[98] e.g. Marie Nelson, 'Beowulf's Boast Words', *Neophilologus* 89 (2005), pp. 299-310.

[99] Donald G. Bzdyl, 'Prayer in Old English Narratives', *Medium Ævum* 51 (1982), pp. 135-51.

[100] Notably David Mellinkoff, *The language of the law* (Eugene, Oreg., 2004). See especially pp. 36-57, which deals with law in England before the Norman conquest.

[101] See Bjork (1985); Alexandra Hennessey Olsen, *Speech, Song and Poetic Craft: The Artistry of the Cynewulf Canon* (New York, 1984); and Eric Jager, *The Tempter's Voice: Language and the Fall in Medieval Literature* (Ithaca, 1993).

[102] Narrators have also been studied more recently, notably in *Christ and Satan* by Robert Emmett Finnegan in: 'Christ as Narrator in the Old English Christ and Satan', *English Studies* 75 (1994), pp. 2-16.

[103] See Ward Parks, 'The Traditional Narrator and the "I heard" Formulas in Old English Poetry', *Anglo-Saxon England* 16 (1987), pp. 45-66. For another study of formulae also informed by oral-formulaic theory, see Robert P. Creed, 'The Andswarode-System in Old English Poetry' *Speculum* 32 (1957) pp. 523-8.

[104] See Ward Parks, *Verbal Dueling in Heroic Narrative: the Homeric and Old English Traditions* (Princeton, 2014).

Oral expressions in Gothic and Old Norse-Icelandic were studied in a dissertation by Katharine Oline Aston (in 1958), and although Aston's study does not focus upon Old English, nor is it a semantic field study, it is thorough, containing etymological examinations of several language categories.[105] In Old English studies, John Miles Foley is one of a number of critics who have written on the intersection between orality and literacy, a common theme which produces work related to, but not directly relevant for, the study of verbs for 'to speak'. Foley's article provides an overview of the field and the scholarship therein.[106] Much of the material in fields adjacent to speech is concerned with orality, as the studies cited in this section illustrate. R. Huisman outlines a theoretical approach to this question in a published International Society of Anglo-Saxonists conference paper.[107]

A few studies have also focused upon oration, diction and voicing, notably in *Beowulf*. An article by Peter Baker examines how Beowulf is characterised as a good orator, with little reference to the verbs used to introduce Beowulfian speech.[108] Similarly, an essay by Stanley B. Greenfield on voicing in *Beowulf* is focussed less upon the speeches themselves than upon the narrative voicing of the poem, and what it suggests about appropriate forms of exegesis.[109] A

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[105] Katharine Oline Aston, *A Semantic Study of Gothic and Old Icelandic Words for Oral Expression* (Ann Arbour, Michigan diss., 1958).
[106] See John Miles Foley, 'Texts that Speak to Readers Who Hear: Old English Poetry and the Languages of Oral Tradition', in Allen J. Frantzen ed., *Speaking Two Languages: Traditional Disciplines and Contemporpary Theory in Medieval Studies* (New York, 1991), pp. 141-56.
[107] See R. Huisman, 'Subjectivity/Orality: How Relevant Are Modern Literary Theories to the Study of Old English Poetry? What Light Can the Study of Old English Poetry Cast on Modern Literary Theory?', in Paul E. Szarmach and Joel Thomas Rosenthal ed., *The Preservation and Transmission of Anglo-Saxon Culture: Selected Papers from the 1991 Meeting of the International Society of Anglo-Saxonists* (Kalamazoo, Mich., 1997), pp. 313-31.
[108] Baker (1988), pp. 3-23.
[109] Stanley B. Greenfield, 'The authenticating voice in *Beowulf*', *Anglo-Saxon England* 5 (1976), pp. 51-62.

dissertation by Anne Leslie Harris, submitted the same year as the essay by Greenfield, examines the diction of *Beowulf*. Harris's work is not primarily concerned with speech at all; however, her study is not only thorough but also has similarities of approach with this one.[110] Two theses focus upon speeches in *Beowulf* with the aim of improving our understanding of the characters: Bryan Brott's thesis examines the speeches from a chiefly linguistic perspective, to evaluate characterisation.[111] Similarly Dong-Ill Lee looks at the speeches, although his focus is upon the characterisation of the eponymous hero of the poem.[112]

[110] Anne Leslie Harris, *'Beowulf': Studies in the Diction* (Chapel Hill, N. C., 1976).
[111] Bryan Bott, *Fighting Words: The Language of Power / The Power of Language in 'Beowulf'* (Colorado diss., 2003).
[112] Dong-Ill Lee, *Character from Archetype: A Study of the Characterization of Beowulf with Reference to the Diction of Direct Speech in 'Beowulf'* (London diss., 1996).

iv. General Studies of Speech

The small group of studies of speech which have been carried out are of course also the studies most directly and obviously relevant to this project. They are generally limited in scope, though often very thorough. Many of these studies do not focus upon questions of semantics, therefore much of the scholarship in this section has relatively little relevance for the research undertaken in this project, despite the promising titles. Nevertheless, these studies constitute the scholarly backdrop to the work of this thesis, and therefore must be discussed. The studies of speech below may be grouped into two categories: highly specific studies which focus upon individual verbs, and more general studies, which often tend towards an examination of linguistic development across a broad period. In examining the more general studies first, it is worth noting further that many limit their scope to individual poems, and very few examine speech more broadly across the canon. One further group is discussed separately below, and this is a series of studies on direct discourse, mostly undertaken by Élise Louviot over the last five years. Because of the significance of this contribution to the (otherwise small) field of studies of speech in Old English, it is treated separately.

Considering first those studies which are broadest in scope, one of the earliest is a ground-breaking piece by Andreas Heusler.[113] This early study is still among the most comprehensive examinations of direct speech in Old English, and is impressive in the range of literatures it examines, including the entire corpus of ancient Germanic poetry. Another, even earlier study by J. Hendren

[113] See Heusler (1902).

Gorrell focuses upon indirect discourse (which seems, on the whole, to have attracted less attention than direct discourse, for which see below).[114] Gorrell's work is impressively thorough, and he discusses a large range of verbs, including two which are discussed in this thesis, as well as several which are outside the scope of this project, across a wide range of Old English texts. Gorrell's focus, however, is upon how aspects of grammar, especially syntax and mood, are used in conjunction with these verbs, and to what effect, and therefore most of his work, like much of the linguistic scholarship which focuses upon individual verbs discussed below, has limited relevance to this thesis. One important early study of the verbs for 'to speak' in Old English was carried out by Michiko Ogura, and gives a useful overview of the field of speech verbs, outlining the statistics of usage, with a particular focus on the syntax.[115] This study is discussed at greater length within the thesis. Slightly later work reflects interest in the conceptualisation of speech, for example an article by Eric Jager, in which he examines the imagery of speech production, and highlights the persistent figuring of speech as issuing from the chest in Old English poetry, rather than the mouth.[116]

More recently, Angela Abdou has written on the speeches in *Andreas* and *Guthlac*, discussing conversion and change in the speeches of characters.[117] A number of recent studies of speech words (discussed below) are linguistic in

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[114] J. Hendren Gorrell, 'Indirect Discourse in Anglo-Saxon', *Publications of the Modern Languages Association of America* 10 (1895), pp. 342-485.
[115] Michiko Ogura, '*Verba Dicendi* in Old English Poetry', *Bunken Ronshu* 3 (1978), pp. 1-26.
[116] Eric Jager, 'Speech and the Chest in Old English Poetry: Orality or Pectorality?', *Speculum* 65 (1990), pp. 845-59. Similar issues are discussed further by Jager, this time with less focus upon speech, in —, 'The Word in the "breost": Interiority and the Fall in *Genesis B*', *Neophilologus* 75 (1991), pp. 279-90.
[117] Angela Abdou, 'Speech and Power in Old English Conversion Narratives', *Florilegium* 17 (2000), pp. 195-212.

focus. One such study, by Maria González Orta, is a syntactic dictionary of the verbal lexicon of Old English focusing upon the verbs of speech, which is in Spanish.[118] This study was submitted as a dissertation and not published, although Orta has done more work on the field of speech verbs in Old English since (see below). The main focus of Orta's project, as the title suggests, was to create a syntactic dictionary of the verbs for 'to speak' in Old English, which includes a syntagmatic analysis of the lexemes which make up the group of verbs which have a more central meaning within the set, and this dictionary subdivides the verbs according to their use. The thesis is focused narrowly upon linguistic analysis of the interplay between syntax and semantics, with a focus upon onomasiology and reference also to pragmatic and cognitive aspects. The focus is highly technical and linguistic, and the approach taken is fundamentally different from that of this thesis, and literary scholarship.

Two other wide-ranging early surveys of this field should be noted. The earlier study is by I. S. Slez, and is a dissertation. Unfortunately, this dissertation was never published, and is in Ukrainian.[119] In his study, Slez traced the development of the verbs of speaking between the eighth and seventeenth centuries. The other study was also initially a doctoral dissertation, by B. S. Umarova, which was later partially published in a journal article; both dissertation and article are in Russian.[120] Umarova's study takes an

[118] Marta González Orta, *Diccionario sintáctico del léxico verbal del inglés antiguo: verbos de habla* (San Cristóbal de La Laguna, 2003).
[119] See I. S. Slez, *Razvitie glagolov 'govoreniia' v angliiskom iazyke (VIII-XVII vv.)* (Ukraine diss., 1958). [The Development of 'Speaking' Verbs in English (VIII-XVII Centuries)].
[120] See B. S. Umarova, 'K semantike glagolov rechi v drevnegermanskikh iazykakh', *Filologiia* 5 (1976), pp. 42-51. [On the Semantics of Verbs of Speech in Old Germanic Languages].

etymological approach to the field, focusing upon the semantics of these words across the Germanic languages. Taken as a whole, these studies suggest both the complexity of the field, and point to the continued need for examination of these terms and their early medieval deployment.

Two other early studies examine direct discourse, a field which has grown a great deal thanks to the recent work of Louviot (see below). Gerald Irving Richman focuses upon the stylistic effects of the genre (as his title suggests), with reference to Greek literature, notably for a theoretical underpinning, while Leslie Perelman focuses upon applying speech act theory to direct speech.[121] Although Perelman's thesis focuses upon *Beowulf*, because her focus is theoretical, the resulting work is broader in scope than is usually the case with studies of individual poems. Perelman helpfully examines pragmatics, and considers the meaning of some speech words (notably *beot*). Richman's study lays the foundations for later analysis of direct discourse, not only through his development of relevant theoretical approaches, but also because he examines contexts in which direct discourse is likely to be employed by Anglo-Saxon authors.

More recently, a number of works on speech as a style of narration have been written, mostly by Louviot. Among the most recent of these works is a book on direct discourse;[122] however, Louviot has also published a number of other articles on the subject,[123] in both English and French, and her doctoral thesis

[121] See Gerald Irving Richman, *The Stylistic Effect and Form of Direct Discourse in Old English Literature* (Yale diss., 1977); Leslie Cooper Perelman, *The Conditions, Consequences, and Structure of Direct Discourse in 'Beowulf': A Study of Speech Acts* (Mass. diss., 1980).
[122] See Louviot (2016).
[123] See, for example,; Élise Louviot, 'Poetic de la Transparence: le Cas du Poème Hagiographique Vieil-Anglais', *Études de Stylistique Anglaise* 5 (2012), pp. 61-74; —,

(in French) also examines speech as a narrative device.[124] Louviot's articles focus upon a range of aspects of direct speech, including individual manuscripts or poems and prose, as well as poetry. In these studies, Louviot discusses the background to direct speech as a field in Old English, and she looks at many aspects of direct discourse, including what we can learn of Anglo-Saxon understanding of speech from examining syntax and the transitiveness of verbs, the manuscript punctuation of direct discourse, and the conventions of direct discourse. This body of work has obvious relevance for this project, and yet it should also be clear from the above summary that, in common with so much scholarship in this field, Louviot is not primarily concerned with the topic which is at the heart of this thesis: namely, the semantics of the verbs for 'to speak' in Old English, particularly the connotative differences between them. Laura Reinert has also carried out an analysis of direct speech, but her focus is on the speech of female characters, looking at what can be discovered about their rhetoric, technique, and what their speeches in the poetry suggest about the value placed on female speech within the ten poems in which women speak.[125] As well as the book by Louviot, an article by Michiko Ogura on direct speech came out in 2016, and this examines the constructions used to introduce direct speech.[126] This article

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'Transitions from Direct Speech to Narration in Old English Poetry', *Neophilologus* 97 (2013), pp. 383-93; —, 'La Monstruosité du Discours Direct: Perspective Diachronique', *E-rea* 12 (2015), pp. 1-11, [accessed 3 June 2016]; and —, 'Discours direct et ponctuation dans deux manuscrits vieil-anglais en prose: London, British Library, Cotton Julius E VII et Oxford, Corpus Christi College, 279B', *Bulletin des Anglicistes Médiévistes* 89 (2016), pp. 25-46.

[124] Élise Louviot, *Les Conventions du Discours Direct dans la Poésie Narrative Vieil-Anglaise* (Lorraine diss., 2012).

[125] Laura Reinert, *'Heo Spraec Thicce': The Privileges and Proprieties of Female Speech in Anglo-Saxon Poetry* (Saint Louis, Mo. diss., 2008).

[126] Michiko Ogura, 'Stylistic Devices for Introducing Direct Speech in Old English Poetry', *Studies in Medieval English Language and Literature* 31 (2016), pp. 1-19.

builds on work, also by Ogura, on the formulae and variation in speech introducers, in an earlier article not exclusively focused on direct speech.[127]

As the above survey illustrates, most of the general studies of speech which have been carried out more recently are focused upon direct discourse, and not upon the semantics of speech words or verbs for 'to speak'. Earlier scholarship which did look at semantics is unfortunately both inaccessible to most scholars, by reason of the scarcity of copies and also because this scholarship is, for the most part, not in English, French, German or Latin, and is very old.

[127] Michiko Ogura, 'Formulas and Variations of Discourse in Old English Poetry', *Tsuru University Review* 17 (1981), pp. 1-24.

v. Individual Poems

A number of studies with tangential relevance to the present examination, or which discuss poetic moments with which I am also concerned in my analysis, are those which examine individual poems. In particular, many studies focus upon *Beowulf*, and these are therefore discussed as a subset, but speeches in a number of other poems are also examined. Several scholars have explored speeches within the genre of saint's lives. Early work includes an unpublished dissertation on twenty-six speech verbs in *Daniel* by Marie Kranz,[128] an article by Hugh T. Keenan on the literary ancestry of Satan's (literally) fiery speech,[129] an article by Marie Nelson on magic words and acts, which she examines with the help of speech act theory, in three Old English charms (*For a Swarm of Bees*, *For Unfruitful Land* and *A Journey Charm*),[130] a study of the artistry of Cynewulf by Alexandra Hennessey Olsen,[131] and an article on *Genesis B* by Eric Jager, in which he discusses how Satan corrupts Eve through changing her understanding of language, and how this 'teaching of rhetoric' becomes a linguistic marker for the fall, not just of Adam and Eve, but also of language.[132]

The interest in devilish speech and rhetoric found in the early scholarship continues in more recent studies, notably by Susannah B. Mintz, who looks

[128] Marie Kranz, *A semantic analysis of the verbs denoting speech in the Anglo-Saxon poem, Daniel* (Michigan diss., 1973).
[129] Hugh T. Keenan, 'Satan Speaks in Sparks: Christ and Satan 78-79a, 161b-162b, and the Life of St. Anthony', *Notes and Queries* 21 (1974), pp. 283-4.
[130] Marie Nelson, '*Wordsige* and *Worcsige*: Speech Acts in Three Old English Charms', *Language and Style* 17 (1984), pp. 57-66.
[131] Alexandra Hennessey Olsen, *Speech, Song, and Poetic Craft: The Artistry of the Cynewulf Canon* (New York, 1984).
[132] Eric Jager, 'Tempter as Rhetoric Teacher: The Fall of Language in the Old English *Genesis B*', *Neophilologus* 72 (1988), pp. 434-48.

again at *Genesis B*, this time contrasting the clarity of Eve's speech with more difficult speeches, which are considered in contrast.[133] Even more recently, a dissertation by Nathan Breen examines devilish speech and other aspects of the narration in seven Old English poems, to investigate how devilish characters are constructed in Old English poetry.[134] Two other of the more recent articles on speech have focused on the antithesis of devilish speech – the first on Christ, and the second on Juliana's speeches which ultimately defeat the devils. Robert Emmett Finnegan explored the speeches in *Christ and Satan* focusing on narrative style, while Allen J. Frantzen examined Christ as narrator in *Christ and Satan,* and dramatisation within the poem.[135]

There are a number of studies of speech in *Beowulf*. Among the earliest is a thesis by Robert Alan Levine, investigating the speeches of a number of characters in *Beowulf*. His introduction also provides a useful assessment of the earliest scholarship on speech.[136] Stanley Greenfield wrote another article, focusing upon the role of the coastguard.[137] Patricia Silber is also interested in the voicing of characters within *Beowulf*; however, she investigates, among other things, the role of direct speech in characterisation, particularly when verbs such as *maþelian* are used, and her analysis has some relevance for the section of this thesis which focuses upon the *maþelian* / *mælan* / *mæþlan*

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[133] Susannah B. Mintz, 'Words Devilish and Divine: Eve as Speaker in *Genesis B*', *Neophilologus* 81 (1997), pp. 609-23.
[134] Nathan Breen, *The Voice of Evil: A Narratological Study of Demonic Characters in Old English Literature* (Urbana, Ill. diss., 2003).
[135] Robert Emmett Finnegan, 'Christ as Narrator in the Old English Christ and Satan', *English Studies* 75 (1994), pp. 2-16, and Allen J. Frantzen, 'Drama and Dialogue in Old English Poetry: The Scene of Cynewulf's Juliana', *Theatre Survey* 48 (2007), pp. 99-119.
[136] Robert Alan Levine, *Direct Discourse in 'Beowulf': Its Meaning and Function* (California diss., 1963).
[137] Stanley B. Greenfield, 'Of Words and Deeds: The Coastguard's Maxim Once More', in Morton W. Bloomfield, et al. ed., *The Wisdom of Poetry: Essays in Early English Literature in Honor of Morton W. Bloomfield* (Kalamazoo, Mitch., 1982), pp. 45-51.

group.[138] The aforementioned thesis by Leslie Perelman is among the first studies of speech in *Beowulf* to focus upon speech as a separate and important activity within Anglo-Saxon society.[139]

More recently, a handful of scholars have examined various aspects of speech in *Beowulf*. Robert Bjork has used a number of theoretical approaches, notably stylistic and rhetorical analysis, along with modern gift giving theory, to re-evaluate the importance of direct discourse in *Beowulf*.[140] John M. Hill has also written on the significance of speech in social terms.[141] Tom Shippey, like Bjork, used a theoretical approach to examine the speech of characters in *Beowulf*, but Shippey used approaches borrowed from modern linguistics, especially discourse analysis. As with most of the studies considered here, his focus is on the content of speeches, rather than on speech words; however, he does provide an useful outline of the words and phrases commonly used to introduce speech in *Beowulf*, and he highlights the obliqueness of these terms, compared to those used to introduce speech in the modern novel, for example.[142] Joseph Harris, meanwhile, concentrated on Beowulf's last words, contextualising them within the genre of final words.[143] Some linguistic aspects of the use of verbs of speech in *Beowulf* have been investigated by

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[138] Patricia Silber, 'Rhetoric as Prowess in the Unferð Episode', *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* 23 (1981), pp. 471-83.
[139] Perelman (1980).
[140] Bjork (1994), pp. 993-1022.
[141] John M. Hill, 'Translating Social Speech and Gesture in *Beowulf*', in Mary K. Ramsey ed., *'Beowulf' in Our Time: Teaching 'Beowulf' in Translation* (Kalamazoo, Mich., 2002), pp. 67-79.
[142] See Tom A. Shippey, 'Principles of Conversation in Beowulfian Speech', in Michael Hoey et al. ed., *Techniques of description: Spoken and Written Discourse: A festschrift for Malcolm Coulthard* (London, 1993), pp. 109-26, especially p. 109.
[143] Joseph Harris, 'Beowulf's Last Words', *Speculum* 67 (1992), pp. 1-32.

Michiko Ogura in two articles on the subject.[144] The more recent of these is helpful in listing all the verbs used to introduce direct discourse in *Beowulf*, together with senses and etymologies.

[144] Michiko Ogura, 'Verbs of Saying in *Beowulf* (1)', *Key Word Studies in Beowulf* 5 (1995), pp. 205-29. —, 'Verbs of Saying in Beowulf (2)', *Key Word Studies in Beowulf* 5 (1995), pp. 231-65.

vi. Studies of Individual Speech Verbs

A number of studies of individual verbs exist, most of which are primarily linguistic and grammatical in focus. These are discussed in fuller detail within the body of the thesis, and brought into conversation there with the research undertaken in this project; however, for completeness, they are also discussed briefly here. These studies are generally those which have most relevance for the research undertaken in this thesis, despite their overwhelmingly linguistic focus. In particular, Michiko Ogura has undertaken several important studies of speech words from a primarily syntactic perspective, in both Old and Middle English, looking at both verse and prose. Although Ogura's focus is linguistic, and the one adopted for this project is literary, her results are often supported by my own, and shed light on areas not considered in this study. Ogura's dissertation (published in a revised form) is particularly important, as it examines the functional field of speech. Although it includes many verbs, this dissertation focuses upon *secgan, cweðan* and *tellan*. Ogura's findings in this study are particularly important for my project as regards the former two of these three verbs.[145]

Ogura further investigated these verbs in a number of articles over several years, notably in an article written a little before the publication of her dissertation, which examined the use of *cweðan* and *secgan* in Old English prose. As with much of Ogura's work, this article is useful, as it studies verbs which are central to this thesis, but in prose, which this thesis does not

[145] See Ogura, *Rivalry* (1981).

investigate.[146] Another article (published in English, though in a book which also has scholarship in Japanese) on *cweðan* by Ogura gives an useful overview of the usage of the verb in Old English, which is fuller than what is provided in this thesis, as Ogura includes prose as well as verse in her survey, and Ogura gives valuable data regarding the Latin words for which *cweðan* is used in Old English texts of the Gospels.[147] Likewise, Ogura's study of the use of *me cwæð* in the manuscript of the Old English Heptateuch examines an area of the use of *cweðan* not investigated here.[148] The common constructions and formulae in which *cweðan* occurs are thoroughly examined in another article by Ogura, which built on the research for her dissertation and for the *Dictionary of Old English* entry for *(ge)cweðan*.[149] Much of Ogura's work is so linguistic and syntactic in focus as to have little direct relevance for the present study, however, except as useful background to the verbs discussed.[150] Ogura's deep knowledge of and interest in this group of verbs, especially *cweðan,* is self-evident, not only through her many publications on this topic, but also through her contribution to *(ge)cweðan* in the *Dictionary of Old English*.

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[146] Michiko Ogura, 'Cwethan and Secgan in Old English Prose', *Benken Ronshu* 4 (1979), pp. 1-30.
[147] Michiko Ogura, 'Another Quest for Old English *Cweðan*: A Morphological Approach', in Kōichi Jin et al. eds., *Eigo Bunkengaku Kenkyū Ono Shigeru Hakushi Kanreki Kinen Ronbunshū* [Studies in English Philology in Honour of Prof. Shigeru Ono] (Tokyo, 1990), pp. 107-18.
[148] Michiko Ogura, '"Me Cwaed" in MS Cotton Claudius B iv', *Notes and Queries* 37 (1990), p. 152.
[149] Michiko Ogura, 'Stylistic Features in the Use of OE *cweðan*', *Journal of Yokohama National University* 37 (1990), pp. 25-45.
[150] This is true, for example, of Michiko Ogura, 'Why is the Element Order *to Cwæð him* 'Said to him' Impossible?', in Matti Rissanen et al. eds., *History of Englishes: New Methods and Interpretations in Historical Linguistics* (Berlin, 1992), pp. 373-8; Ogura (1991), pp. 393-99; —, '*Cweðan* + *to* + Dative of Person', *Neophilologus* 75 (1991), pp. 270-78.

Several other scholars have carried out studies, also mostly of a linguistic nature, on a number of speech verbs. Belén Méndez Naya, for instance, has examined mood selection in Old English dependent statements in *cweðan, secgan* and *cyðan.* Because Naya investigates (among other things) how mood selection influences the meaning, her work provides valuable research based on linguistic methods not used in this thesis, which can provide nuance for the arguments made here.[151] Similarly, Anna Cichosz's work on the syntax in which Old English verbs of saying occur is helpful in providing linguistic analysis of how certain (relatively) commonly occurring speech introducers are used, in both prose and verse, though her work is ultimately very different from that carried out in this thesis.[152] The same is true of an earlier study by Javier Calle-Martín and Antonio Miranda-García of verb-initial constructions, upon which Cichosz drew, though the broader focus of the earlier study makes it generally less relevant to this thesis.[153]

A number of studies have focused on *maþelian*, especially upon the famous formula *Beowulf maþelode*, found repeatedly in *Beowulf*; however, unfortunately, not all of these are widely available.[154] A dissertation by Charles McNally, regrettably not published, explored the use of this formula to

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[151] See Belén Méndez Naya, '*Cweðan, Secgan* and *Cyðan*: On Mood Selection in Old English Dependent Statements', *Atlantis: Revista De La Asociacion Española De Estudios Anglo-Norteamericanos* 17 (1995), pp. 127-44.
[152] See Anna Cichosz, 'Old English Verbs of Saying and Verb-initial Order', *English Language and Linguistics* (2016), pp. 1-26.
[153] See, Javier Calle-Martín and Antonio Miranda-García, '*gehyrdon ge þæt gecweden wæs*: A Corpus-Based Approach to Verb-Initial Constructions in Old English', *Studia Neophilologica* 82 (2010), pp. 49-57.
[154] See, for example, Colette Stévanovitch, '*Beowulf maþelode, bearn Ecþeowes* [Beowulf prit la parole, fils d'Ecgtheow]: Les formules d'insertion de tirade dans *Beowulf*', *Q/W/E/R/T/Y: Arts, Litterature et Civilisation du Monde Anglophone* 8 (1998), pp. 17–25; and Roderick W. McConchie, 'The Use of the Verb *maþelian* in *Beowulf*', *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen* 101 (2000), pp. 59-68.

introduce Beowulf's speeches in the context of speech act theory and text linguistics.[155] Albert Cook was among the first to write on this formula, and he argued that the meaning of *maþelian* seems close to that of the Greek verb *ἀγορεύειν*, suggesting a possible Homeric influence upon the poet of *Beowulf*. Some of what Cook says regarding the meaning of *maþelian* is of interest, and not very different from my own conclusions regarding this word: the suggested Greek influence, though very difficult to substantiate, is worth discussing.[156] A number of scholars have also discussed the etymology of *maþelian,* which is complex. In particular, Don Ringe has written on the relations between *maþelian, mæþlan* and *mælan,* in a very interesting article which is discussed in detail in the chapter on that verb.[157] The rest of what has been written on *maþelian* is chiefly brief and based upon work on subjects indirectly related to questions of semantics or etymology, for example Dongill Lee has written an overview and summary of the general consensus on the meaning of *maþelian* and its usage by the *Beowulf* poet in an article on Korean translations of the poem.[158]

Rather less has been written about *secgan*, apart from the studies of groups of verbs including *secgan* already discussed above. Very little has been written which focuses upon the verb itself. There is one article concerned only with the etymology of the verb,[159] and two which examine the syntactic

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[155] Charles Edward McNally, '*Beowulf maþelode': Text Linguistics and Speech Acts* (Binghamton, N. Y., 1975).
[156] See Albert Cook, 'The Beowulfian Maðelode', *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 25 (1926), pp. 1-6.
[157] See Don Ringe, 'Old English *maþelian, mæþlan, mǣlan*', in J. Penny ed., *Indo-European Perspectives: Studies in Honour of Anna Morpurgo Davies* (Oxford 2004), pp. 417-35.
[158] See Dongill Lee, 'Korean Translation of *Beowulf*: Variety and Limitation of Archaic Words', *Medieval and Early Modern English Studies* 16 (2008), pp. 19-41, especially pp. 26-9.
[159] Alan S. C. Ross, 'Old English "secgan"', *Notes and Queries* 21 (1974), p. 284.

constructions in which *secgan* is used from a highly linguistic and technical perspective, both by Marta Maria Gonzales Orta.[160] The first of these articles considers how syntactic and semantic uses of *secgan* and *tellan* versus *say* and *tell* have changed, while the second is focused solely upon the syntax-semantics interface of *secgan*. All three of these articles are discussed in the chapter on *secgan*. Apart from references within works already cited, nothing has been written on *sprecan*.

[160] Marta María González Orta, 'The Syntax and Semantics Interface of Present-day and Old English Speech Verbs: *say* and *tell* versus *secgan* and *tellan*', *Journal of English Studies* (2001), pp. 81-98; —, 'Lexical Templates and Syntactic Variation: The Syntax-Semantics Interface of the Old English Speech Verb *secgan*', *Functional Grammar Series* (2002), pp. 281-302.

VI. Scope of the Project

The primary driving force for this research project has been, from the outset, to clarify the meanings of ambiguous or 'bland' words. As Michiko Ogura put it in her important study of speech words in Medieval English, '[t]he conception of each Old English lexeme is rather vague to the modern minds. Therefore it is said that there is [sic] a great number of synonyms or equivalents in OE [Old English] in comparison with MnE [Modern English]'.[161] For this reason, and because the semantic field of speech is particularly rich, taking in (as already discussed) not only many words but also many classes of word, this study does not aim to be, in the strict sense, a semantic field study at all. A more traditional semantic field study would aim to position each word contained in the identified semantic field within a specific semantic range, thus mapping the entire field. This study, though it borrows from semantic method (particularly as applied within semantic field studies), also uses methods taken from pragmatics, and literary-critical methods, to focus upon the least well understood of the speech words. Unlike in a semantic field study, these words are not considered chiefly in contrast to each other in this study, but rather the usage of each is explored individually, and the precise aspects of usage which are studied in detail vary for each word examined, according to the specific patterns of usage which emerged for each word. This study is also more concerned with etymologies than is usual in a semantic approach, although not for reasons particularly typical of philological approaches either. It is a regrettable fact (which this study seeks in

[161] See Ogura *Rivalry* (1981), p. 13.

part to redress) that philology and linguistics have largely divided and become separate from their origins within the study of English.[162] The cross-disciplinary approach employed in this study of speech is not without precedent: it has, for instance, similarities to the approach used by Nils Erik Enkvist to explore style.[163]

The focus upon the poetic corpus in this study deserves some explanation. There are some important reasons for treating poetry separately from prose which hold true across languages, since poetic usage is typically a heightened and specific use of language. This is especially the case in the Old English language, in which many words are restricted to poetry, or have meanings specific to poetry. It is natural that a study of word semantics in this language, more than most other kinds of scholarship, should be careful to distinguish verse from prose usage. In addition, the most frequently occurring verbs of speech researched for this thesis, especially *sprecan, secgan* and *cweðan*, occur in numbers so great as to be difficult, if not impossible, to study within any reasonable timeframe and in the detail required for this project, without employing some restrictions. Thus there are both pragmatic and stylistic reasons for limiting the investigation to poetry.

Of course, there are areas of the poetry which are commonly considered 'less poetic', notably the metrical *Psalms* of the Paris Psalter. The metrical *Psalms* are widely regarded as of little literary value. Mark Griffith's comment at the

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[162] For an evaluation of the differences between linguistic and philological approaches, as well as a useful reminder of the wealth of scholarship which relies upon a shared approach, see, for example, Daniel Donoghue, 'Language matters' in O'Keeffe (1997), pp. 59-78.

[163] See Nils Erik Enkvist, 'On Defining Style: An Essay on Applied Linguistics', in John Spencer ed., *Linguistics and Style* (Oxford, 1964), pp. 3-56. A defence of this approach is also made in the introduction to this volume by John Spencer (pp. vii-xii).

start of an important article in which he analysed their use of poetic language sums up the scholarly consensus: '[t]he metrical version of the psalms…is a pedestrian and unimaginative piece of poetic translation'.[164] In addition to their rather uninspiring poetic reputation, the metrical *Psalms* are also among the subset of Old English poetry which is clearly translated from Latin (for more on the implications of this, see below, pp. 73-4), and they are, moreover, quite likely to be among the later poems to survive in Old English, as they have been widely considered to show the deterioration of the Old English poetic tradition. As a result of all these factors, the *Psalms* (and other late poems like them) are arguably not the best basis for a study focused upon reconstructing the often subtle connotations of the best poetic usage at the height of the Old English poetic tradition. The inclusion of the *Psalms* within the data, as well as of a number of indisputably late poems, such as *An Exhortation to Christian Living,* is chiefly governed by the scholarly consensus on what constitutes Old English poetry; a consensus which, despite problems, some of which are discussed here, is widely held and little disputed. It is worth noting as an aside, moreover, that *An Exhortation to Christian Living* does not, in fact, contain any of the verbs of speech under discussion in this thesis. It is also important to note that, although the *Psalms* are included within the data gathered, they are not discussed as a straightforward part of the Old English poetic canon in this thesis: indeed, their use of speech words merits a separate study, which is one important reason why only limited

[164] See Mark Griffith, 'Poetic Language and the Paris Psalter: The Decay of the Old English Tradition', *Anglo-Saxon England* 20 (1991), pp. 167-86, p. 167. Griffith discusses the language of the Old English metrical Psalter in this article, and his point regarding the non-typical, even degraded use of language by the late Old English poet of this text is a helpful guide to reading the usage in this text.

reference is made to them within the thesis, and chiefly in the context of comparisons and within the statistics which were used to identify general trends.

There are also areas of the surviving prose from the Old English period which are considered 'poetic', most obviously Ælfric's alliterative and rhythmic prose. Ælfrician writings have been scrutinised, and the question of whether they can be considered to be verse, and which texts might not be prose, has been debated, for several decades.[165] Despite some arguments for recategorising Ælfric's alliterative prose as verse,[166] the consensus that his prose is sufficiently distinct from Old English verse not to be considered poetry is now relatively well established.[167] Haruko Momma also makes the important point (in her essay on Ælfrician style) that 'Ælfric is a true exception in Old English literature', in that we know a great deal about his history.[168] The fact that we know so much about Ælfric's background makes him 'an ideal case for stylistic studies in Old English literature'.[169] In relation to this project, the same facts which make him such a good candidate for stylistic studies also make Ælfric a good candidate for a separate study,

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[165] Among the earlier critics, see especially Gordon Hall Gerould, whose refutation of Ælfric's prose as verse is seminal, and who also gives a very helpful outline of the early debate at the start of his article: Gordon Hall Gerould, 'Abbot Ælfric's Rhythmic Prose', *Modern Philology: A Journal Devoted to Research in Medieval and Modern Literature* 22 (1925), pp. 353-66, especially p. 353. For an analysis of Ælfrician prose, see also Frances Randall Lipp, 'Ælfric's Old English Prose Style', *Studies in Philology* 66 (1969), pp. 689-718.

[166] See especially the introduction to John Collins Pope's edition of Ælfric's Homilies: John Collins Pope, *Homilies of Ælfric: A Supplementary Collection, Being Twenty-one Full Homilies of His Middle and Later Career for the Most Part Not Previously Edited with Some Shorter Pieces Mainly Passages Added to the Second and Third Series* (London, 1967), pp. 105-136; and Sherman Kuhn, 'Was Ælfric a Poet?' *Philological Quarterly* 52 (1973), pp. 643-62.

[167] See Haruko Momma, 'Rhythm and Alliteration: Styles of Ælfric's Prose up to the Lives of Saints', in Catherine E. Karkov and George Hardin Brown eds., *Anglo-Saxon Styles* (Albany, 2003), pp. 253-269, especially pp. 255 and 266.

[168] See Momma (2003), p. 254.

[169] See Momma (2003), p. 255.

focusing solely on Ælfric's use of speech words. It would, for instance, be well worth interrogating whether the general patterns of usage of speech verbs (including what can be ascertained regarding their connotations) in Old English poetry, hold true in the case of Ælfric's usage – but to be able to carry out such a study, of course, a study of the established poetic corpus in Old English is first necessary. This is especially true given that, despite all Ælfric's similarities of style with Old English poetry, there is little debate within the field regarding which texts should be counted as poetic, and which as prosaic, and therefore (although Ælfric in particular provides a tempting avenue for further research), this study confines itself to the poetic corpus of Old English. It is worth adding that a study of Ælfrician prose might fit better with a study of early Middle English alliterative verse than within a study of Old English verse, since it is with late Old English verse and Early Middle English alliterative verse that Ælfric's rhythmic and alliterative prose has most in common, and Ælfric has even been posited as an early innovator or adaptor of Old English metre for the later period.[170]

The method for the research carried out for this project is detailed in 'Methodology' (pp. 78-87 below); however, a note on the approach adopted for the present study is necessary for a proper discussion of the scope of the project. The written material presented in this thesis rests upon a detailed database of speech words, but also upon a focus on close reading of the words as they occur in specific poetic contexts. This study is therefore pre-eminently concerned with questions of vocabulary selection, and the literary contexts in

[170] See, for example, Kuhn (1973), pp. 661-2.

which verbs for 'to speak' occur. In particular, the study's focus upon poetic language allows greater space for considering the importance of nuance within word selection, since in poetry more than in any other genre, the selection of words is crucial – a point which was particularly well made by Samuel Taylor Coleridge: 'prose = words in their best order: – poetry = the *best* words in the best order'.[171] This focus on the poetic corpus of Old English also means that this study takes account of the potential effects of alliteration and metrical demands on vocabulary selection, in addition to considering aspects of the contexts in which verbs for 'to speak' appear, such as collocations, interlocutors, the presence or absence of direct speech, and the kinds of speeches which verbs introduce.

As mentioned above (pp. 22-4), the study combines several different linguistic approaches: while the usefulness of semantics has been discussed and is to a degree self-evident, the use of pragmatics within the study, though it will become more noticeable in the methodology section below, deserves a little explanation. Semantics does not traditionally require much scrutiny of the speakers or hearers – the people – who are involved in producing the data being analysed. Pragmatics, conversely, is centred upon this aspect of the data. In the case of Old English, a traditional pragmatic approach is largely impossible, since we have (failing the development of time travel) no speakers, in the proper sense of the word. We do, however, have interlocutors within the literature, and this study is concerned with who speaks to whom, and how, to a degree that is perhaps not typical of semantic approaches, and

[171] Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Specimens of the Table Talk of the Late Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, ed. Henry Nelson Coleridge (London, 1835), vol. 1, p. 84.

which is consciously an adaptation of pragmatic approaches. The study is also concerned with situating speeches, again to a degree perhaps untypical of semantic approaches: the exact information recorded varies; however, a general interest in when, where and what a speaker speaks is recorded in the database. For this reason, detailed information regarding who speaks is considered alongside the other material in the database, to reconstruct a detailed contextual semantic map of the periphery of the verbs of speech studied in this project.

The group of words which form the focus for this study, as mentioned at the start of this section, are those which are currently described by dictionaries without much connotative 'colouring'. Interestingly, the selection of verbs for this study, which was made (as described below) chiefly on the basis of the connotations (such as we understood them from our dictionaries) of the speech verbs in Old English, is not dissimilar to that made by Anna Cichosz in her syntactic study of the Old English verbs of saying.[172] The group of words which are the central concern in this thesis are verbs for 'to speak', often in very frequent use across the poetic corpus, which mean only 'say, speak, tell', rather than being known to denote a particular type of speech. Thus words such as *cweðan, maþelian* and *secgan* form the centre of the study, whereas words such as *andswarian* (to answer), *hatan* (to call, name, bid, command) and *abeodan* (to announce, declare a message) are generally excluded from the database, except on some occasions, usually when they form part of complex speech introductions.[173] Words which are too specific to introduce or

[172] See Cichosz (2016), p. 6.
[173] Definitions given are from Joseph Bosworth, *An Anglo-Saxon Dictionary Online*, ed. Thomas Northcote Toller et al. (Prague, 2010), available at <http://www.bosworthtoller.com/>

describe speech in most contexts, such as *cirman* (to shout), have also been excluded. Many words pose a dilemma, having a range of meanings, some or several of which fall outside the area of focus for this study, and some within it. Most of these have been excluded, since a primary driver for this study is to examine those words for which we lack any sense of connotational difference. In particular, words which sometimes cannot be glossed with 'say, speak, tell', but have to be glossed with something more specific, such as *sciran*, which though it can mean 'declare, tell', sometimes has to be glossed with 'decide, distinguish' or 'make clear', are generally excluded, though to a certain extent and where possible the occurrences where they mean 'say, speak, tell' have been considered in the database.

To put this in more linguistic, technical terms, the study aims to focus upon the verbs for 'to speak' which form part of the core vocabulary for 'to speak' in Old English. Core vocabulary has been helpfully defined by linguists, but might be succinctly summed up as follows: '[i]n / the domain of lexis, core items are generally seen to be the most basic or simple'.[174] To find and define this core vocabulary is, naturally, at best a tricky business and at worst an arbitrary exercise of scholarly preference. To avoid the worst outcome of this selection process, this study started with the widest conception of the lexical field for 'to speak', and the initial list of words for consideration was comprehensive.[175] The next step was to isolate the words within the lexical

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[14.08.2015]: this edition of the dictionary includes the Supplement and Addenda. Subsequent references to Bosworth Toller are to the dictionary with the supplement and addenda. Reference is, of course, made to Angus Cameron et al. ed., *Dictionary of Old English: A to G online* (Toronto, 2007), available at <http://tapor.library.utoronto.ca/doe/index.html> [14.08.2015]. For the sake of consistency, however, (since the Toronto dictionary is unfinished), in general definitions are taken from the Bosworth and Toller dictionary.

[174] Ronald Carter, *Vocabulary: Applied linguistic perspectives* (London, 2012), pp. 47-8.

[175] Details of how this list was devised can be found in 'Methodology' below.

field which lacked connotations, especially those words which, in linguistic terms, might be categorised as lacking 'outfield senses'.[176] This useful term is defined by Henk Aertsen as 'those senses of the lexical items in the lexical field that do not correspond to the concept defining the conceptual field'.[177] In other words, senses such as 'to shout', which might be an 'outfield sense' of a word such as 'to proclaim', are not the defining sense of the lexical field 'to speak', and therefore this study aimed to eliminate those lexical items (such as 'to proclaim' in this example) where such non-central (outfield) senses were already known. Thus the study strives to avoid the inclusion of words which, although they share the meaning 'to say' in some or all instances, as a core or peripheral sense, also have other meanings which are definitely different (such as 'to answer', or, as in the example given, 'to shout'). This is a major difference of approach from that of a traditional semantic field study, which would have to include these terms if it were to adhere strictly to semantic field theory.

The group of words considered within the parameters described above is large, and it is therefore inevitable that the number of words considered in the databases which contain the research undertaken for this project is much larger than the selection of words actually discussed within the body of this thesis. It is, however, important to emphasise the scope of the research phase of the project, so as to clarify the breadth and significance of the comparisons made. Although not all instances of all the verbs which are considered connotatively unclear are gathered in the databases, the majority of the instances of these

[176] This is a term taken from Henk Aertsen, 'Word Field Semantics and Historical Lexicography', *Folia Linguistica Historica* 9 (1988), pp. 33-57, p. 45.
[177] Aertsen (1988), p. 45.

verbs are included, and not only the verbs, but also the nouns and adjectives which are etymologically and semantically closely related, and equally lacking in connotative distinctions: as this study does also take note of etymology, it is logical to include words which are linked etymologically, even when they are from different parts of speech. Due to obvious constraints, only the section of work on verbs is based upon full coverage of the verbs in Old English poetry. The work on nouns and adjectives is based on samples occurring alongside or near the verbs, and therefore serves a supporting role. The same is true of several verbs which have clearly known connotations or outfield senses, but which occur in the locus of the core group of verbs, many of which are listed in the database when they occur near the core verbs, and can therefore also be analysed in terms of their role alongside the core verbs, for instance in complex speech introductions. The inclusion of nouns and adjectives also facilitates the analysis of complex speech introductions, containing multiple speech words.

The words selected for consideration in detail within the body of this thesis deserve a brief introduction, and some explanation regarding why they have been singled out. The most frequently occurring verb of speech in Old English poetry, *secgan*, together with the prefixed forms *asecgan,* and *gesecgan,* is an obvious choice, not only because of its omnipresence in the corpus, but also because of the evidence uncovered of strong connotative links between *secgan* and truthfulness. Similarly, one of the most famous speech introducers in Old English poetry, *maþelian*, together with two verbs which may share etymological links with *maþelian; mælan* and *mæþlan*, is an unsurprising choice, not only because of its importance as a key component in the most

famous formula for introducing speech (*[Name] maþelode*), but also because the etymological confusion around the verbs in this group deserves discussion. The database contains all instances of two other verbs: *cweðan* (together with the prefixed forms *acweðan* and *becweðan*), and *sprecan*. As will be clear from the literature review, a great deal has been written on *cweðan*, particularly by Michiko Ogura. Moreover, *cweðan* has the inestimable advantage of having been described by *The Old English Dictionary*, being among the privileged lexemes which begin with a letter between 'a' and 'h'. Although much less has been written on *sprecan*, there is no strong evidence of the connotations of *sprecan* or *cweðan*, and it is ultimately for this reason that neither verb is discussed in as much detail as *secgan* and *maþelian*.

The bulk of the thesis is concerned with discussing instances of these verbs in their literary contexts, and therefore a great deal of what follows is focused on close reading. However, as the primary aim of this research was to establish the connotative differences between these verbs, a certain amount of statistical information is also discussed, notably the number of occurrences of each of the verbs, the most frequent collocations (when these are numerous), who generally speaks, and who is spoken to, using these verbs, and etymological information. Central to the inception of this study is the belief that true and perfect synonymy does not exist, certainly within any individual language, and probably even across languages. This point is particularly clearly explained by Eric Stanley: 'even for what, on the face of it, look like several words for one well-defined concept, there are in application and register, variations, such that no two of the…words can be used in all circumstances as equipollent. In defining any one of them, dictionaries resort to synonymy, that is, they give

others of the set, with qualifications'.[178] It is exactly this 'set' of words within the group of verbs for 'to speak' in Old English which this study examines, and through employing exactly the approach explained by Stanley above, the precise differences in application, register, variation and usage, are teased out to reveal the differences between these words. The central premise of the thesis is 'that so-called synonyms are [in fact] coterminous only for some part of their polysemous range.'[179]

An area not explored within this study is the relation of the verbs under discussion to Latin equivalents, or at least to the terms in Latin which one or more words in Old English are commonly used to translate. Although an area deserving of study, this is again quite distinct from the central concern of this thesis, especially if we accept what Stanley terms 'the indeterminacy of translation'.[180] If it is, ultimately, impossible to communicate the words in one language using those of another, it must also be true that, to recapture the connotations of a language, it is better to look within that language than to search for the parallels outside it. To some extent, the two approaches are mutually exclusive, and to avoid 'pollution' from what Latin evidence might show, it is better to treat the study within the language separately from that of other languages. It is for the same reason that etymological information is studied in a separate and specific way from the general study of the verbs, which is focused upon close reading of instances exclusively within Old

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[178] See Eric Stanley, 'Polysemy and Synonymy and how these Concepts were Understood from the Eighteenth Century onwards in Treatises, and Applied in Dictionaries of English', in Julie Coleman and Anne McDermott eds., *Historical Dictionaries and Historical Dictionary Research: Papers from the International Conference on Historical Lexicography and Lexicology, at the University of Leicester, 2002* (Tübingen, 2004), pp. 157-83, p. 166.
[179] Stanley (2004), p. 157.
[180] See Stanley (2004), pp. 157 and especially 159-60.

English. Where the study of instances in cognate languages is most comprehensive (in the case of the Old Norse verb *segja*), the clearly stated aim is to establish through a pilot study how much of what seems to be true of the connotations of the cognate in Old English might also be true of the Old Norse cognate. In other words, the two studies were carried out separately, not in conjunction with each other. In addition to this, the natural choices of the texts which ought to be studied most carefully alongside Latin, in a study of the Old English words used for the translation of Latin terms, are often those which naturally fall in the periphery, or outside, a study of classic Old English verse: namely, the *Psalms*, Biblical translations and glosses. Lastly, the Latin counterparts to the Old English verbs for 'to speak' have already been studied by Michiko Ogura in a number of articles, and especially as regards *cweðan*.[181]

It is no accident that the approach to synonymy and translation which is so aptly expressed by Stanley and so central to the aims and methods used in this study is thus expressed in an article on lexicography: indeed, the aims and approach of this study share a great deal with those of lexicographers, including a great interest in polysemy. Unlike a lexicographer, however, I am not concerned with trying to present simple, clear definitions of the words considered in this study (not least because this has largely already been done admirably by lexicographers). The aim in this study, rather, is to fulfil only the second of the 'two conflicting principles' which Antonette diPaolo Healey identifies as guiding the lexicographers of the *Old English Dictionary*: 'should

[181] See Ogura, *Rivalry* (1981), especially pp. 22-3 and 25; and, for *cweðan*, — (1990), especially pp. 114-5.

we generalize (and reduce polysemy) or make distinctions (and increase polysemy)', she asks.[182] In my study, the aim is firmly the second of these, which enables the study to expose 'a richness of semantic detail and perhaps a truer, i.e., more representative, structure.'[183] The links to lexicography are not only in the approach used for the study, of course, but also of deep and abiding indebtedness. This study benefits enormously from the extraordinary achievements of the lexicographers, not only at the *Old English Dictionary*, but also from the earlier efforts of Joseph Bosworth and Thomas Northcote Toller,[184] and from the countless lexicographers who have devised and improved the entries in the *Oxford English Dictionary*. I am also much indebted to the lexicographers who have worked on the *Middle English Dictionary*. These colossal scholarly achievements are merely a few of the many giants on whose immense shoulders this study stands, but the similarities of approach between the lexicographers, especially of the *Old English Dictionary,* and this project are particularly marked, hence dictionaries are particularly important to this study.

The reasons for discussing most of the aspects of the usage of the verbs for 'to speak' outlined above are fairly self-evident in a study of connotations, but the inclusion of etymologies is perhaps less obviously relevant, and therefore a brief explanation for their presence is necessary. Etymologies are examined for a range of reasons, including: to establish as much of the historic

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[182] Antonette diPaolo Healey, 'Polysemy and the Dictionary of Old English', in Coleman and McDermott eds. (2004), pp. 137-47, pp. 138-9.
[183] Healey (2004), p. 139.
[184] Subsequent references to Bosworth and Toller are to the online searchable version of the dictionary, which also includes the Supplement: Joseph Bosworth, *An Anglo-Saxon Dictionary Online*, ed. Thomas Northcote Toller et al. (Prague, 2010), [Web. 5 November 2013], available at: <http://www.bosworthtoller.com/>.

connotations of words (many of which, of course, survive, though often in altered form); and to examine the endurance of meaning within different words (this can vary, and words which have particularly fixed or enduring meanings do so often on account of other aspects of usage, such as being poetic or archaic words, whose meaning is essentially fossilised). Comparing the use of speech words in the different Germanic languages, and noting which cognates are found in several different branches of Germanic and which are restricted, can also provide etymological and semantic clarification where words have related etymologies, sometimes providing evidence for the separateness of words otherwise thought to be closely related. Such information also poses intriguing questions about the provenance of words which, though generally thought of as Germanic (rather than borrowings from Latin or elsewhere), are unattested in one or even two of the three main branches of Germanic, and examining such etymological difficulties may even enrich our understanding of how these branches relate to each other. The survival and change of words and meanings also provides some concrete insight into the longevity of a kind of 'cultural identity', which is otherwise very difficult to examine or in any way recapture.

Such a study of a semantic field as this will doubtless also shed light on some more general questions affecting verbs in Old English and the way that they were evolving at the time of the surviving written sources. The perfective prefix *ge-*, for example, becomes in some verbs a marker of a more completed version of the full verb, thus gradually forming a new verb, which often forms its own past tense separately – for example *gesecgan – gesægde*, where the past tense is formed through the addition of a dental suffix. The question of

the semantic effect of this prefix, when it forms new verbs, is one which this study will inevitably explore, to some extent. Likewise, the semantic effect of other common Old English prefixes (such as *a-* and *be-*) will be considered in this group of words. Some prefixes, such as *for-* and *ofer-,* do not figure in this study, because their meaning is not generally as ambiguous, and their effect on the verbs they precede is better understood.

Old Norse Icelandic data have been examined, as mentioned above, in the case of the verb *segja*, cognate with *secgan*, because the findings relating to the connotations of the Old English verb were so striking. This research, as already explained, forms a preliminary study, which is discussed in the epilogue, and which strongly argues for the value of further work on the cognate verbs for 'to speak' in Old Norse. The data for Old Norse have been gathered in much the same way as that for Old English, and with similar aims and methodology: full details are given in the Epilogue, however.

VII. Methodology

Finding the words which are to be included in the lexical field of speech words was the natural starting point of this study, and a list was compiled using both the print and online versions of the *Thesaurus of Old English*, by Jane Roberts and Christian Kay. Although the project is restricted to Old English verse, in this phase of research the whole semantic field was listed – thus words occurring only in prose but listed in the *Thesaurus* were incorporated into the first list of words for study. This list was then examined, and many words were discarded because they were either restricted to prose, or too far from 'to speak' in meaning.[185] Further words were added to the field through reading primary texts and noting words which, either because of their usage (for example *meldan* ('to announce', 'to declare')) or through their strong etymological relationship to words already being studied (such as *wordgleaw,* ('prudent in speech')), needed to be included. The database contains partial coverage of nearly all the words for speech in Old English poetry, and complete coverage of a core group of verbs.[186] Nouns were included when they occurred near to verbs, and several verbs which do not always mean 'to speak' were included in instances where they clearly did mean this, especially when they also occurred as part of the same speech introductions as instances of the core group of verbs.

This study is more comprehensive than any that has gone before, in that it seeks to examine this group of verbs for 'to speak' in a number of different

[185] The exact rationale for inclusions and exclusions is discussed at greater length in 'The Scope of the Field', above.
[186] See 'The Scope of the Field' above, for a list.

ways, using a cross-disciplinary approach which integrates and adapts modern linguistic methods to enrich a literary critical focus.[187] The study also covers a wide range of texts and a large corpus of verbs, in a way that is both unusual and holistic. This complex and data rich approach is facilitated by the significant technical and academic advances of the last decades. The *Dictionary of Old English* project in Toronto, though still incomplete, does include a complete searchable corpus of all the surviving Old English, and this is invaluable as a tool for cross checking the data to ensure that it is not only correct but also complete. However, there are limitations to this resource. In particular, because the corpus is not lemmatised, it is difficult to search for verbs in such a way as to ensure that every form and spelling of a verb is found, without many unrelated words, or verbal forms (notably homonyms), also arising from the search. For the part of the alphabet which has been incorporated into the dictionary itself (A-H), this is of course much less of a problem. The letter *h* has, in fact, been incorporated into the dictionary near the end of this project, and the continuing improvements to this resource have greatly facilitated the work of this project, although as the research had to be carried out first, less than they would do were the project now in its infancy. The *Concordance to the Anglo-Saxon Poetic Records*, edited by J. B. Bessinger and Philip H. Smith, which preceded the more comprehensive electronic *Dictionary of Old English Corpus*, is a valuable resource, and is extremely reliable in its cover, although also not lemmatised. However, analysis of grammar and usage (as well as alliteration and metre) are beyond

[187] See 'Approaches to Speech Words: A Literary Review' especially, for details of the studies which have already been carried out in the field of verbs for 'to speak', and other related areas, as well as for a fuller explanation of how this study's approach differs from preceding work in the field.

its remit. Many editions of Old English poetry with good glossaries exist, but a small number of Old English poems have not been satisfactorily or recently edited, some are in editions without a glossary, while others are un-edited except in the Anglo-Saxon Poetic Records.[188] C. W. M. Grein's *Sprachschatz der angelsächsischen Dichter* is not only indispensable as a means of finding forms and spellings of the words with which this project is concerned, but is also very useful in supplying grammatical analysis for many individual entries and acting as a cross-check to Bessinger and Smith. A search of texts in translation was made, to find instances of speech words, which were then cross-checked against the texts. A full list of the poems in Old English was checked against the database entries, and all the poems which were not represented in the database were listed, and where possible, combed for speech words, and these were then added to the data-set, so as to make this as complete a survey of the surviving poetry as possible. Combining these various approaches, it was the aim of this project to be comprehensive in covering the Old English core verbs of speech.

For many of the verbs, earlier dictionaries, most especially Bosworth Toller, are a significant source of semantic information and generally provide the standard definitions. However, some words are lemmatised differently in Bosworth Toller and the *Dictionary of Old English*, and occasionally occurrences of words were not considered in the compilation of Bosworth Toller, thus making some meanings less well informed than in the later

[188] Fortunately, this has been remedied to a degree by the recent editions of Old English Poetry in the Dumbarton Oaks Medieval Library, which also include very useful facing page translations. These editions have the serious short-coming of appearing without glossaries of any kind, and with very limited textual apparatus or commentary, however.

dictionary. Moreover, the etymological information in Bosworth Toller is limited and not always reliable, and the *Dictionary of Old English* is not always in agreement with Bosworth Toller on where a word should count as a separate lemma. This project can provide some clarification in some instances, as careful analysis of the context of instances can shed light on whether or not an unusual spelling constitutes a rare form of an existing verb. Grammars of Old English have been helpful for grammatical analysis, finding forms of verbs and for some etymological information, in particular, Richard Hogg and R. D. Fulk's *A Grammar of Old English*, and A. Campbell's *Old English Grammar*.

There are two databases which are used to analyse the data for this project: the first contains all the data found, notably every instance of a speech word which is recorded, in a single sheet containing well over a thousand entries, and the second is smaller and enables more specific research. The first ('masters') database contains several separate sheets, each of which serves a particular function.[189]

The greater part of the 'masters' database consists of one sheet (called 'words'), containing in excess of one thousand three hundred data entries of speech words. These data can be analysed easily using the sort functions of Excel in various ways. Each entry has an entry number, and also includes information about the grammar of the word, including whether it is a noun, verb or (more rarely) adjective or adverb and grammatical information, such as (where relevant) details of the case, number, and tense. Details regarding

[189] The names of these sheets are given in single quotation marks below, as each sheet is explained, for future ease of reference.

the provenance of each entry are also recorded, including the poem in which the entry occurs, the line number, and with those poems which have several sections, or parts, such as *Genesis A* and *B*, and the *Psalms*, this is also recorded. In the case of the *Psalms* not only the *Psalm* numbers and line numbers, but also the verse numbers are recorded. Each of these areas (part, poem, line number, and verse number) forms a searchable field, such that there is great precision and detail regarding where entries are occurring which can be used to order the entries. Each speech word is recorded in the infinitive, or in the case of non-verbs, the nominative singular, as well as in the form in which it appears in the text. This enables searches which not only show every occurrence of any given word, but also searches which show only a particular grammatical form or spelling of a word. The fact that grammatical information (for example '1pl past' for a first person plural preterite past tense verb entry) is also listed in a separate field enables searches based upon grammar, which do not rely upon identical or similar spellings of the same verbs, or conversely, searches of spellings, regardless of the grammar. An attempt was made to distinguish words being used as part of an introduction to direct speech, although occasionally usage is ambiguous. Likewise, whenever possible or relevant, the speaker and addressee are listed. In the case of non-verbs, this relates to the person whose words or utterances the non-verbs relate to, and the person who is receiving these words or utterances. An attempt has been made to provide a short tag, consisting typically of one, two or three words, summarising the type of speech to which the speech word refers. This is inevitably interpretive, but does at least enable distinctions between, for example, commands, promises and petitions. There is also a longer description

providing context for the occurrence, which usually takes the form of a partial translation and / or summary. The full line, and when possible the clause, of which the entry is a part, is provided in Old English.[190] When the sentence is short, the sentence is given. If the sentence and clause are both too long, and the line makes sense on its own, the line is given without more context, particularly if a good translation of the poem is widely available.[191] A limited amount of metrical analysis is also provided, regarding whether or not the alliteration of the line falls on the word in question. No other indication of metrical stress is given. However, patterns in the way words are used within the Old English poetic line can be established to a degree, as the position where the word appears, and in which half of the line, is noted. Although less precise than a record of which metrical stress, if any, the word falls on, this has been a useful guide towards the general usage of words; particularly when a word is being used highly regularly, for example in the case of *maþelode*, where the line position of entries of this word shows this regularity very clearly. This method also avoided the difficulties which arise with lines which are not metrically regular, or in which the metrics are disputed. Lastly, a column was devoted to any noteworthy comments relating to the entry not contained within the other columns, and this has been used chiefly to indicate exact repetitions between lines, when they occur (relatively rarely).

[190] All the quotations in the database are from the volumes of the Anglo-Saxon Poetic Record (henceforth referred to as ASPR), and these quotations also preserve the editorial punctuation of the texts in ASPR, for similar reasons to those given for observing editorial sentence division.

[191] Although the sentence is a modern construct, editors make sentence divisions based upon the sense of the Old English, so as long as the text is well edited, looking at the sentence divisions is still valid, notably when testing the nature of the link between words, for example between *soð* and *secgan* (see below).

The sample tables below should help illustrate the explanation above. Because of the proportions of the printed page, what would be one long table in the database is presented here in three tables. Two entries are provided below, one from the *Psalms*, to illustrate the aspects of the database which are only relevant for the *Psalms* (verse number, in particular), and the other from *Andreas*, to illustrate how the noteworthy comments column is used in the rare instances where the line is similar or identical to another line elsewhere. The abbreviations for the poem titles used in this sample, as in the database, are taken from the Bessinger and Smith *Concordance to the Anglo-Saxon Poetic Records*. The other abbreviations used in both database and below are in common usage and should be self-explanatory. The translations given in these sample entries, as in the database, are my own efforts, much aided and abetted by a number of published translations.[192]

[192] The translations used most frequently within this project, listed in approximate order of the magnitude of my debt, are: S. A. J. Bradley trans., *Anglo-Saxon Poetry* (London, 2004); Mary P. Richards ed. and trans., *The Old English Poem Seasons for Fasting: A Critical Edition* (Morgantown, 2014); R. K. Gordon trans., *Anglo-Saxon Poetry* (London, 1970); John Porter ed. and trans., *Anglo-Saxon Riddles* (Swffham, Norfolk, 2006); T. A. Shippey trans., *Poems of Wisdom and Learning in Old English* (Cambridge, 1977); John R. Clark Hall, trans., revised by C. L. Wrenn, *Beowulf and the Finnesburg Fragment* (London, 1950); Richard Hamer ed. and trans., *A Choice of Anglo-Saxon Verse* (London, 2015); Robert E. Bjork ed. and trans., *Old English Shorter Poems: Vol. II Wisdom and Lyric* (Cambridge, Mass., 2014); Mary Clayton ed. and trans., *Old English Poems of Christ and His Saints* (Cambridge, Mass., 2013); Christopher A. Jones ed. and trans., *Old English Shorter Poems: Vol. I Religious and Didactic* (Cambridge, Mass., 2012); Daniel Anlezark ed. and trans., *Old Testament Narratives* (Cambridge, Mass., 2011); Kevin Crossley-Holland trans., *The Anglo-Saxon World: An Anthology* (Oxford, 2009); Seamus Heaney trans., *Beowulf: A Verse Translation* (New York, 2002); R. D. Fulk ed. and trans., *The Beowulf Manuscript* (Cambridge, Mass., 2010); Robert Kilburn Root trans., *Andreas: The Legend of St. Andrew* (New York, 1899); Craig Williamson trans., *The Complete Old English Poems* (Philadelphia, 2017).

entry number	root word	form in text	poem	part	verse	line number	line of poetry
1300	word	word	And			1299	Wigend lærde / for þam heremægene helle dioful / awerged in witum, ond þæt word gecwæð:
410	secgan	sægeon	P	144	4	3	þin weorc herigean wordum georne, / and þine mihte eac micle sægeon.

verb or noun	alliteration	position a-verse	position b-verse	grammar	speech introduction?	speaker	addressee
noun	alliterating		3rd	acc sg	Yes	helle dioful	wigend
verb	not alliterating		2 and last	3pl pres subj	No	kynn cneorissa	not specified

type of speech	comments	NB
Deceit	A devil from hell directed the warriors before the army, accursed in mind, and he spoke this word: – the devil incites the warriors to strike Andrew.	same as And 1172
praise	'The kindred of the people praise your work with eager words, at every occasion with utterances, and they say of your mighty power likewise great [things].' corresponds roughly to Ps 145 v 4 'One generation together with a family will speak words about your work eager words of praise...'	

Other pages within this database hold other information relating to speech words, and were used to help keep track of the main database. One sheet ('thesaurus') records all those words which might be considered within the semantic field, found using the *Old English Thesaurus* and their categories. Another sheet ('meanings') lists this same set of words again, along with any added through reading Old English texts, and the number of instances of all those where every instance has been recorded, a definition of each word, the place whence this definition derives, and whether the word is a verb, noun, adjective or adverb.[193] The abbreviations used by the *Thesaurus of Old English* have also been used to mark certain words, and this sheet has been employed to keep track of which of the words do not occur in the main sheet of the database, 'words' (for instance because they occur exclusively in prose), as well as those words where every instance in poetry is included in 'words'. A sheet entitled 'problems' records those instances where there is a problem with a line, either in the manuscript or for some other reason, for example in the interpretation of the metre. Finally, each verb is listed again in a sheet entitled 'forms', where each spelling and form of each verb, and the number of instances of these, is recorded. This provides an orthographic overview of each verb, and also enabled tracking of progress towards complete coverage of each verb while the database was being compiled.

A second database (called 'individual verbs') was created using some of the information within the first database, and in this database information relating to all the entries of each verb is stored: thus there is within this database one

[193] See Appendix B for this list, pp.260-72.

page devoted only to every instance of *sprecan* in Old English poetry. This has been useful for isolated examination of individual verbs. Additional columns have been created in this database, which vary depending upon the verb in question and the particular queries which arose in each case. For example, collocations in the case of *secgan* were of particular interest, and therefore this was added. At some stage it is to be hoped that this work can be repackaged in a more generally accessible form. This attempt to explain the contents of the databases, however, is intended not as a user manual, but rather as an aid to the reading of the analysis of the results which forms the rest of this thesis.

All the data in the databases enabled concrete searches of instances of the verbs for 'to speak', and other speech words occurring in Old English poetry, for common or repeated features. Thus, it was possible to search by several criteria in a set order, so as to isolate patterns. For instance, one could search 'words' by verb, then by root word (thus grouping together all instances of *secgan*, for example), then by collocations (so as to isolate all the instances where *soð* occurs near *secgan*, for example). In most cases, through compiling the data for a particular verb, certain patterns started to emerge, and the searches were then a helpfully scientific way of verifying 'hunches' regarding patterns in the data. The more selective database could then be tailored to interrogate certain aspects of any trends identified in greater detail. It will be noted, however, that the argument of the thesis rests, not upon data and statistics (for reasons explained in the sections above), but ultimately upon looking at the instances identified by the data in a literary critical manner, as they occur within texts.

Chapter One: The *maþelian* Group

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I. Chapter Summary

This chapter begins by giving an overview of the three verbs under investigation, before the scholarly consensus regarding what *maþelian* means is examined. Then the data gathered in this project regarding the usage of these verbs are discussed, and several instances within the literature are examined. This overview of the usage is then used to help construct a more nuanced and detailed picture of the connotations of these words. This discussion of the meaning and usage of our verbs leads to a detailed discussion of the difficult problem of the etymology of the words, their possible roots, and some of the linguistic evidence, including the scholarly consensus on the origin of *maþelian*, and how *mælan* and *mæðlan* might or might not relate to this term. Lastly, the possible later life of these verbs is discussed.

II. Meet our Verbs – the maþelian / mælan / mæðlan *group*

This group of words (*mæðlan, mælan* and *maþelian,* and a number of related and prefixed forms) shares significant similarities of usage and probably some common etymology, linking them with the related noun *mæðel* (either 'assembly', or 'the kind of speech made in an assembly'):[194] for this reason they are grouped together in this chapter, and in some scholarship. All four words combined occur only ninety-five times in Old English poetry, according to John F. Madden and Francis P. Magoun.[195] The etymological relationship between *maþelian* and *mæþlan / mælan* is complicated, and there is evidence to suggest that they originally all came from a common ancestor.[196] In particular, the fact that there are limited attested forms of each verb, and that the forms exist in complementary distribution has been used to suggest that none of the verbs is really a full verb in its own right.[197] In this chapter, I explore how these three verbs are used in Old English verse, and examine what this can tell us about their meaning. Their etymology, or pre-history, and what happened to these verbs after the end of the Anglo-Saxon period is also discussed. The cognates in Germanic are examined in particular for what they can tell us about the possible meaning(s) of the Proto-Germanic ancestor(s) of Old English *maþelian*, *(ge)mælan* and *mæþlan*, and the older connotations

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[194] See the definitions given in Bosworth Toller for more details: *mæðel*, n. I and II, Joseph Bosworth et al., *An Anglo-Saxon Dictionary Online* (Prague, 2010), [last accessed 30 September 2017]. There are also a number of related compounds, but as these are nouns, they are not discussed within the body of the thesis (though some are recorded in the 'words' database in Appendix A).

[195] See John F. Madden and Francis P. Magoun, *A Grouped Frequency Word-List of Anglo-Saxon Poetry* (Cambridge, Mass., 1979).

[196] See Don Ringe, 'Old English *maþelian, mæþlan, mælan*', in J. Penny ed., *Indo-European Perspectives: Studies in Honour of Anna Morpurgo Davies* (Oxford 2004), pp. 417-35, especially pp. 419 and 422-33.

[197] See Ringe (2004), especially pp. 417, 419 and 423.

which these verbs may still have carried in Old English. Similarly, the afterlife of these verbs in Middle English and beyond is discussed, to enrich our view of what connotations these verbs may have been acquiring by the end of the Anglo-Saxon period. This combined approach is used for this particular group of verbs because these verbs survive in small numbers, and yet are used with an unusually high degree of (metrical, grammatical and contextual) regularity in the poetic corpus. Moreover, the difficulty we have in establishing their etymological relationship to each other has a bearing on our ability to establish their semantic relationship to each other, and therefore it is important to examine the evidence which suggests these verbs are closely related, possibly originating in the early Old English period from a single verb, which may have split into two or three forms. In particular with *(ge)mælan* and *mæðlan*, we have too few instances to be able to establish that these were really separate verbs, either from each other or from *maþelian* – and yet there are differences in how these verbs are used, which would suggest some differences in connotations, and that these verbs were at least in the process of separating during the Old English period.

The chapter begins by examining the usage of the three verbs, beginning with *maþelian*, the most famous of the verbs discussed in this study, because of its part in the famous (and commonly occurring) formula *[Name] maþelode, [patronymic]*. The data regarding usage having been investigated for what they reveal of the connotations of each of these verbs, the chapter goes on to examine the etymologies of these verbs, and their possible afterlife.

III. How is it Used? – Maþelian

Not as much has been written on *maþelian*, beyond the widely recognised fact of its role in the famous formula *Beowulf maþelode,* as the fame of the formula might lead us to expect. In particular, defining exactly what the usage of this verb across the poetic corpus and especially in *Beowulf* reveals about the kind of speeches which are introduced using this verb (and the kinds which are not) has caused difficulty. Scholars have long agreed that *maþelian* is a poetic word, which was probably a poetic archaism for the poets who employed it.[198] That formality (of various kinds) is signalled through the use of this verb is similarly widely recognised, both by regular academics and even more widely.[199] The formulaic nature of this word has also been commented on. Similar points about the meaning and usage of *maþelian* are made by Michiko Ogura, who likewise thinks it 'seems to be a formal, poetic word, employed for introducing a direct speech'.[200] An article by Matti Rissanen examines the use of the verb in *Beowulf* to introduce persons of import.[201] This article is built upon by Roderick W. McConchie, whose detailed study of the use of *maþelian* in *Beowulf* gives a nuanced assessment of the contexts in which the word is used.[202] McConchie's conclusions are in some respects similar to those reached in this study; however, he restricts his

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[198] See, for example (there are many possible examples), Grant Allen, *Anglo-Saxon Britain* (London, 1901), p. 323, where *maþelian* is listed as an example of archaic vocabulary: likewise see Lee (2008), especially p. 22.
[199] See, for example, David Fritts, 'Warrior Heroes: Buffy the Vampire Slayer and Beowulf', *Slayage* 5 [17] (2005), [19].
[200] Ogura (1978), p. 14.
[201] Matti Rissanen, '*Maþelian* in Old English Poetry', in Peter S. Baker et al. eds., *Words and Works: Studies in Medieval English Language and Literature in Honour of Fred C. Robinson* (Toronto, 1998), pp. 159-72. See also Ogura (1995), pp. 211-14 for a brief overview of the etymology of the verb and its usage in *Beowulf*.
[202] McConchie (2000).

study to the instances in *Beowulf*, and the use of the verb in the other poems of the Old English poetic canon reveals some aspects of the possible connotations of the verb which McConchie dismisses. Ogura discusses the use of *maþelian* more widely across the corpus in one of her most recent articles, and here she makes the point that only important people, often of noble lineage, have their speech introduced using the verb. McConchie's scepticism regarding how we should define 'important people' is a helpful critique to much that has been written regarding the meaning of the verbs,[203] although the speeches themselves, as McConchie and Ogura both point out, are usually significant.[204]

Dongill Lee (in an article on Korean translations of *Beowulf*) gives surprisingly detailed semantic information (in view of the subject of his article) about *maþelian*, by beginning with a list of the verbs which have 'to say', 'to tell', 'to speak' as their core meaning.[205] This list includes one of the only mentions of *(ge)mælan* in the scholarly literature. In this list, Lee glosses *maþelian* as meaning '"to make a formal speech", "to say", "to speak"'.[206] Lee goes on to make the point that the *Beowulf* poet 'quite consistently relies on the use of maþelode…when introducing main characters before their speeches', before discussing the common formula *X spoke, Y's son*.[207] Lee even examines briefly some of the uses of *maþelian* in *Elene*, noting similarities between the various instances, and he discusses the kinds of

[203] McConchie discusses the circularity of many of the arguments about 'importance', and the difficulties around establishing the personal importance of the characters whose speeches are introduced using *maþelian*: see especially McConchie (2000), pp. 60-1.
[204] McConchie (2000), p. 59, and Ogura (2016), p. 2.
[205] See Lee (2008) pp. 26-9.
[206] Lee (2008), p. 26
[207] Lee (2008), p. 27.

speeches which *maþelian* prefaces in *Beowulf*. In light of the fact that Lee's article is primarily concerned with explaining the writing of a Korean translation of *Beowulf*, his analysis is very detailed and gives an excellent overview of what scholars think the verb means. Lee likewise identifies a courtly setting as being the common backdrop to speeches which are introduced using *maþelian*, though he finds exceptions to this also.[208] Like Élise Louviot,[209] Lee links *maþelian* to the noun *mæþel*, without detailed discussion of the etymology.[210]

The transitiveness of *maþelian* is analysed by Élise Louviot in some detail, along with that of the other verbs for 'to speak', and Louviot also examines the etymology of the verb, briefly.[211] Louviot then gives a brief overview of the semantic spaces occupied by each of her 'slightly transitive' verbs:[212] '*andswarian* serait équivalent à donner une réponse, / *maþelian* à donner un discours et *reordian* à donner de la voix'.[213] The fact that *maþelian* (as well as a number of other verbs for 'to speak', notably with reference to this chapter, *mælan*) is one of the verbs for 'to speak' which rarely or never alliterate is noted by Ogura,[214] who makes the important point that the apparent discrepancy between the poetic character of a number of these verbs and their

[208] Lee (2008), pp. 28-9.
[209] For which see below.
[210] Lee (2008), p. 28.
[211] See especially Louviot (2015), p.4.
[212] Louviot's phrase is 'verbes peu transitifs' – there is no perfect translation of French 'peu' as it is used here. Louviot defines 'verbs peu transitifs' as follows: 'des verbes que l'on ne rencontre pratiquement jamais avec un groupe nominal à l'accusatif ou ave une complétive' (verbs which almost never occur with a nominal group in the accusative or with a complement): See Louviot (2015), p. 4.
[213] Louviot (2015), p. 4-5: '*andswerian* would be equivalent to giving a response, / *maþelian* to entering into discourse and *reordian* to giving voice'. The similarities between *andswerian* and *maþelian* have also been discussed by Robert Creed, and by Michiko Ogura. See Creed (1957) p. 527, and Ogura (1978), p. 14-15.
[214] Ogura (1978), pp. 23-4.

tendency not to alliterate is not, in fact, surprising: '[t]here are two important stylistic devices in OE [Old English] poetry – "alliteration" and "variation": the latter requires poetic words to appear in non-alliterating (stressed) position. Thus in OE poetry, and as far as the verbs of saying go, "poetic" does not always mean "alliterative"'.[215]

More philological studies of *maþelian* have discussed the complex problems of the etymology of this verb, and its relationship with *mæðlan* and *mælan*.[216] The earliest of these, by Albert Cook, is the among first articles to link *maþelian* to the probable Gothic cognate *maþljan*,[217] which is one of the verbs which is used to translate the Greek verb λᾰλέω (defined by Liddell and Scott as 'to talk, chat, prattle') in the Gothic translation of the Bible.[218] Cook's argument is discussed in greater detail below; however, he does not fully address the complicated inter-relation between the other two verbs which seem to be related to *maþelian*, despite discussing the usage of *mælan*.[219] This problem of the relation between *mæðlan, (ge)mælan* and *maþelian* has been addressed by philologists, notably Don Ringe, and Witold Mánczak,[220] and is discussed in some detail in this chapter, especially in subsections V and VI (pp. 131-51).

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[215] Ogura (1978), p. 24.
[216] Several of the articles discussed above, notably Rissanen's, have philological approaches: those discussed here are distinct in that they give more detailed etymologies, and evaluate how *maþelian* relates to *mælan* and *mæðlan*.
[217] Cook (1926), p. 4-5.
[218] Henry George Liddell and Robert Scott eds., *A Greek English Lexicon* (Oxford, 1953), pp. 1025-6.
[219] Cook (1926), p. 2.
[220] Ringe (2004), and Witold Mańczak, 'Ancien Anglais *maþelian, mæþlan, mǣlan*', *Kwartalnik Neofilologiczny* 54 (2007), pp. 23–5.

As noted by McConchie,[221] there are forty-four instances of *maþelian* in Old English poetry, and almost none in prose.[222] This makes *maþelian* a particularly clear example of a poetic word, forming part of a group of words restricted entirely, or almost entirely, to verse. These poetic words in Old English often have cognates in Old Norse, some of which are likewise restricted to verse.[223] As has been widely noted, the verb *maþelian* only occurs in the third person preterite form *maþelode*. Likewise, all these instances of *maþelian* are in the same position within the Old English poetic line: *maðelian* always occupies the second stress position in the a-verse. This remarkably grammatically and metrically restricted use of the word, which has been widely remarked upon in the scholarly literature, also suggests that this word may have been appropriate to a relatively narrow selection of literary contexts. As has been suggested by other scholars, and will be explored at greater length in this chapter, these literary contexts are highly formal, and the poetic context for the use of *maþelian* is highly stylised and formulaic. Notwithstanding Ogura's aforementioned observation,[224] in all but one of the instances of the word, *maðelian* does not alliterate, which is somewhat surprising, since the second stressed syllable in the first half line carries alliteration in between about forty percent and fifty percent of lines.[225] Even given that *maþelode* is a

[221] See McConchie (2000), p. 59.
[222] See 'Everyone likes a Good Mardle', pp. 40-50 for exact details.
[223] For an excellent introduction to poetic diction, and poetic language more generally, see Godden (1992), especially pp. 491-512.
[224] Ogura (1978), p. 23-4.
[225] The statistic is taken from Mark Griffith's study of alliterative rank: Mark Griffith, 'On the Lexical Property Termed "Rank" in Old English Poetry and its Later Development', *Notes and Queries* 60 (2013), pp. 1-14, p.3.

finite verb, and therefore statistically less likely to alliterate, the lack of alliterating instances of *maþelian* is striking.[226]

The only instance of *maþelian* carrying alliteration occurs in *Riddle* 38, commonly called (after its generally agreed solution) the *Bullock* or *Ox Riddle*. This is also the only instance of *maþelian* to occur in a riddle. *Riddle* 38 is unusual in being one of only three riddles to include enclosed speech, as Marie Nelson points out.[227] The *Riddle* refers to an undisclosed speaker,[228] who introduces the clinching riddling doublet, a kind of riddle within the riddle, in line five: *Mon maþelade, se þe me gesægde* (a man spoke, that one who said to me).[229] The use of two verbs for 'to speak' in this speech introduction is (possibly here and) elsewhere often a marker of formality: the repetition serves an emphatic function, suggesting the importance of the speech. This is clearest in speech introductions which include even more speaking words than this one, for instance in the pleonastic phrase *wordum mælde*.[230] If *maþelade* here should be taken to mean 'to make a speech in an assembly', as the use of this verb in the poetic corpus on the whole suggests

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[226] For more on the alliteration of finite verbs, see Mark Griffith, 'Alliterating Finites and the Origin of Rank in Old English Poetry', in Leonard Neidorf et al. eds., *Old English Philology: Studies in Honor of R.D. Fulk* (Woodbridge, Suffolk, 2016), pp. 103-21. The formula itself has been discussed by numerous metricists: see, for example, R. D. Fulk, *A History of Old English Meter* (Philadelphia, 1992), especially pp. 219-20, and Alan Bliss, *The Metre of Beowulf* (Oxford, 1967), especially p. 48.

[227] See Marie Nelson, 'Four Social Functions of the Exeter Book Riddles', *Neophilologus* 75 (1991), pp. 445-50, especially pp. 448-9 and p. 450 footnote 7.

[228] It has been suggested that this man could be one of the fathers of riddles, Aldhelm or Eusabius. See, for example, Dieter Bitterli, *Say What I Am Called: The Old English Riddles of the Exeter Book and the Anglo-Latin Riddle Tradition* (Toronto, 2009), p. 30 for a discussion of the identity of this second narrator. For a discussion of the interaction between the Latin *Aenigmata* and the Old English *Riddles*, see Miranda Chiharu Villesvik, '"Saga Hwaet Ic Hatte": The Riddles of the *Aenigmata* and the Exeter Book in Conversation', *Senior Capstone Projects* 625 (2017).

[229] All quotations to Old English poems, unless otherwise stated, are from the volumes of *The Anglo-Saxon Poetic Record*, except for quotations from *Instructions for Christians*, which are taken from James Rosier ed., 'Instructions for Christians', *Anglia* 82 (1964), pp. 4-22.

[230] See below for a discussion of this verb. Of the ten instances of the third person singular preterite form of *mælan*, eight instances occur as *wordum mælde*.

(see below, pp. 102-5), the context in *Riddle* 38 implies an odd mix of the public and personal – 'a man delivered a speech, that one who said to me…'. If we read the *Riddle* and other instances where *maþelian* occurs with another verb of speech in this way, the use of two verbs might partly serve the function of limiting the sense of *maþelian* to formality, rather than allowing it to suggest public address. Although here the context of *maþelode* does not particularly suggest stateliness or formality of situation, it is certainly possible to interpret this speech as a moment of gravitas, especially since the riddling doublet which *maþelode* introduces here is dealing with matters of life and death:[231]

> *"Seo wiht, gif hio gedygeð, duna briceð;*
> *gif he tobirsteð, bindeð cwice."*
> (The creature, if he escapes danger, breaks up hills; if he bursts asunder, binds up the living. Lines 6-7.)

As this chapter will go on to explore, the evidence across the corpus suggests such a formal interpretation is likely to be a correct interpretation of the connotations of *maþelian*.

As mentioned above (pp. 96), the verb *maðelian* occurs exclusively in poetry, in the third person singular preterite as *maþelode,* or the variant *maþelade,* except for a handful of possible occurrences in glosses, usually for Latin *contionatur*.[232] It is not uncommon for speech verbs to occur predominantly in the third person singular preterite, since third person narration is dominant in

[231] This doublet is also the end to Eusebius's *Enigma* 37 – see Bitterli (2009), pp. 27-30 for this and the other *Ox* riddles in the Latin tradition, and an analysis of the three *Ox Riddles* in the Exeter Book.

[232] A search in the *Dictionary of Old English Corpus* brings up a total of ten possible instances of *maþelian*, in a range of forms, most in glosses to Aldhelm's *De Laude Virginitatis*. In addition, there is one possible instance of *maþelian* in Byrhtferth's *Enchiridion.* This is discussed at greater length in section VI of this chapter ('Everyone Likes a Good Mardle', pp. 140-50).

Old English verse, but it is unusual for a verb to occur exclusively in the third person singular preterite. The verb occurs twenty-six times (which represents fifty-seven percent of the total instances of the verb) in *Beowulf*,[233] and even considering the fact that *Beowulf* is the longest surviving Old English poem by a considerable margin, this represents a very large proportion of the instances.[234] In addition to the aforementioned instances in *Riddle* 38 and *Beowulf*, there are nine instances of *maþelian* in *Elene*,[235] two in *Genesis A*,[236] two in *Genesis B*,[237] two in *The Battle of Maldon*,[238] one in *Widsith*[239] and one in *Waldere 2*.[240] The fact that *maðelian* always introduces direct speech supports the proposition that this word is used in a formulaic and formalised way. Nineteen uses of *maðelian* occur in lines that are repeated verbatim, or with a single substituted name, in the same poem, and this is particularly remarkable: the evidence from the rest of the verbs (and the other words) examined suggests that this type of repetition is extremely rare. The line most often repeated, occurring in *Beowulf* eight times verbatim (half of these repetitions do not even vary in spelling), is *Beowulf maþelode, bearn*

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[233] At lines 286, 348, 360, 371, 405, 456, 499, 529, 631, 925, 957, 1215, 1321, 1383, 1473, 1651, 1687, 1817, 1840, 1999, 2425, 2510, 2631, 2724, 2862, and 3075. These instances can also be found listed in Ogura (1) (1995), pp. 211-13.

[234] Because of the very limited survival of Old English poetry, another way to try to analyze the frequency of the occurrences of a word is density percentage, which is calculable by dividing the number of instances by the number of lines in the poem and multiplying the result by a hundred, rounded up to one decimal place: thus for *Waldere 2*, the calculation is as follows – 1/31 x 100. This yields somewhat different results. *Waldere 2*, because it is so short, has the highest density percentage despite having only one instance of *maþelian*, at three point two percent. *Beowulf* has the next highest, at zero point eight percent, then *Elene* and *Widsith* at zero point seven percent, before *Battle of Maldon* at zero point six percent, *Genesis B* at zero point three, and lastly *Genesis A* at zero point one percent.

[235] At lines 332, 404, 573, 604, 627, 642, 655, 685 and 806.

[236] At lines 1820 and 2893.

[237] At lines 347 and 522.

[238] At lines 42 and 309.

[239] At line 1.

[240] At line 11.

Ecgþeowes (Beowulf spoke, the son of Ecgtheow).[241] An exactly parallel formula occurs twice for Wiglaf, but with a variation in the spelling of Wiglaf's father's name ('Wihstanes' in line 3075): *Wiglaf maðelode, Weohstanes sunu* (Wiglaf spoke, Weohstan's son).[242] A further three lines are repetitions of a very similar formula: *Hroðgar maþelode, helm Scyldinga* (Hrothgar spoke, the protector of the Scyldings).[243]

As noted by McConchie, speeches introduced by *maþelian* are not 'courtesy speeches' (which he defines as 'greetings, farewells, invitations, challenges, and the like').[244] Instead, speeches introduced using *maþelian* tend not to begin a sequence of speech, coming in the middle of conversations, not at the start (which McConchie suggests is probably a by-product of the fact that *maþelian* does not introduce courtesy elements, since these are likely to open sequences). These speeches introduced with *maþelian* tend to be speeches, McConchie argues, in which 'a choice of answer as well as doubt as to the answer pertains to a particular question'.[245] McConchie's analysis of the significance of *maþelian* as a speech introducer is complicated and does not offer a simple rule for the use of the verb, but by the same token it is circumspect and does not oversimplify the evidence.

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[241] This line occurs at Beowulf 529, 631, 957, 1383, 1473, 1651, 1817, 1999, and 2425. Of these, 957 has *Ecþeowes*, 2425 has *Biowulf maþelade*, and 1999 also has *Biowulf*, and *Ecgðioes*. This repeated line inverts the expected form of the b-verse: we would expect *[Name's] son* rather than *son of [Name]*, and this is what occurs in a number of instances listed. However, this repeated line in *Beowulf* seems to be designed to draw the hearer's attention to the lack of alliteration between Beowulf's name and his father's, in contrast to all the contemporary members of the Danish, Geatish and Scandinavian royal houses.
[242] *Beowulf* line 2862.
[243] This line occurs at *Beowulf* 371, 456 and 1321.
[244] McConchie (2000), p. 62
[245] McConchie (2000), p. 63.

Fred Robinson was one of the first to identify *maþelian* with such contexts, and his idea of *maþelian* fits very well with what this project has uncovered about the contexts in which the word is used, particularly in *Beowulf*: it does indeed seem likely that '[t]he original sense was "to make a speech in the presence of an assembled group"'.[246] Robinson further suggests (following Julius Pokorny's etymology) that the verb was formed from *mæðel*, which he glosses as 'meeting, assembly of people'. Robinson goes on to describe the sense of the verb as 'primitive', and points out that the Harley Glossary's gloss of *maðelaþ* (discussed in section VI below, pp. 141-51) as 'contestatur in populo' is a particularly helpful definition. He also argues that the use of *meþelwordum* by the poet of *Beowulf* in the shore guard's speech immediately before using *maþelode* is a 'device for semantically rejuvenating *maðelian*…with a phrase which is in effect an etymological analysis of *maðelian*.'[247] Moreover, Robinson highlights the fact that we are explicitly told that the speaker introduced by *maþelode* is speaking before an assembly at lines 1215 and 2631-2.

One line containing *maðelian* is shared verbatim between *Beowulf* and *Elene*, except for the name of the speaker and spelling variations: line 1840 of *Beowulf*, *Hroðgar maþelode him on ondsware* (Hrothgar spoke, and answered him) and line 642 of *Elene*, *Elene maðelade him on ondsware*.[248] This is especially remarkable as it is the only instance found in this study of such close repetition across two poems. Although the two lines are lexically

[246] Fred Robinson, *Beowulf and the Appositive Style* (Knoxville, 1987), p. 66.
[247] Robinson (1987), p. 66.
[248] Alan Bliss and R. D. Fulk have both discussed the metre of line 1840b in *Beowulf*: see Alan Bliss, *The Metre of Beowulf* (Oxford, 1967), p. 48; and R. D. Fulk, *A History of Old English Meter* (Philadelphia, 1992), p. 57.

identical, they are not alike metrically. The line in *Beowulf* conforms to Kuhn's 'laws', as we would expect, with the displaced sentence particle *him* carrying alliteration. However, the line in *Elene* breaks this law, with the displaced *him* unstressed and the alliteration falling on the vowels instead, presumably because of the importance of keeping the formula intact. This is a very significant example, as the poet of *Elene* is faced with a choice; either to adhere to the rules of metrical grammar or to the demands of the formula, and it seems indicative of the importance of this particular formula that the poet chooses to break the rules of metrical grammar rather than to change the formula. One possible solution to this apparent violation of Kuhn's 'laws' is that the name here, at line 642, should be not the Old English form 'Elene', but the Latin form, 'Helena', producing normal alliteration on *h*. There is evidence of a Latinising influence on the poem elsewhere, for instance at line 610, where the word *rex* is used. Lines 332 and 404 of *Elene* are also identical, except for minor variation in the spelling of *maþelode* / *maþelade* (respectively): *Elene maþelade ond for eorlum spræc* (Elene proclaimed and spoke before the nobles).

The verb *maðelian* seems to be used for a variety of speeches, ranging from informative to threatening. It is, however, chiefly used, especially in those poems which contain multiple instances of the verbs (particularly *Beowulf* and *Elene*), to introduce consecutive speeches between two interlocutors. In both *Beowulf* and *Elene*, *maþelian* is used in this manner for large sections of the poems, where every speech is introduced with this verb. In *Beowulf*, *maþelian* is most often used in the context of the formal (often set piece) speeches made

in court by Beowulf, Hrothgar, Unferth, Wealhtheow, and Wulfgar.[249] In fact, the only instances in *Beowulf* where *maþelode* does not seem to be used of speech in a court setting are in line 286, when the sentinel offers to lead Beowulf and his followers to Hrothgar, in three speeches by Wiglaf at lines 2631, 2862 and 3075, first urging the other retainers to come to Beowulf's aid, then deriding their cowardice and finally lamenting Beowulf's death, and at line 2724, when Beowulf, dying, instructs Wiglaf to secure the treasure. All these speeches also fall under the class of formal set pieces. The *weard*'s pledge to look after Beowulf's ship is a promise, which was, in this period, legally binding, and his offer to guide them is similarly a fulfilment of his official duty (linked ultimately to promises made in court) to guard the shore, and present important visitors to his king.[250] Similarly, Wiglaf's first speech to the retainers recalls their formal (again, legally binding, or contractual) vows of loyalty, which would have been made in a courtly setting, before their lord and witnesses. These vows of loyalty would have included the promise to fight for their lord. Wiglaf's second speech also rebukes them for breaking these oaths. Wiglaf's last speech includes Beowulf's final will, related formally to him in line 2724. This reiteration of Beowulf's will as he lies dying would be equivalent, in an oral culture, to the final checking of a written will before it is signed before witnesses. The will includes details, among other things, of the manner in which Beowulf wishes to be buried: a part of the ritual around the

[249] The terms 'court setting' and 'courtly' have been used for a range of meanings, ranging from a concrete court setting to more descriptive senses relating to polished or refined speech and manners. Because of this inherent ambiguity, both within the terminology and also probably within actual courts during this period, the meaning of 'court' and 'courtly' is clarified in individual instances in this thesis, but usually refers to the physical court.
[250] For a further discussion of this exchange between the guard and Beowulf, and Wulfgar in Heorot, see pp. 93-7 in John Hines '*Beowulf* and Archaelogy -- revisited', in Catherine Karkov and Helen Damico eds. *Aedificia Nova: Studies in Honor of Rosemary Cramp* (Kalamazoo, 2008), pp. 89-105.

death of any human (especially a noble one) which has particular significance and import.[251] There is a formal, even legal dimension to these speeches, which often bind the speakers with vows of martial, not to say heroic, exploits: *maþelode* is used by Beowulf in line 405 before he asks Hrothgar to be allowed to cleanse Heorot alone, for example.

Similarly, *maþelian* is used to preface Elene's speeches to Judas, in line 604 when Elene threatens to kill Judas, and again in line 685 when she swears she will put him to death by starvation if he will not help her find the cross. Both these threats are made in the context of judgment: Elene takes upon her the authority of a queen, to judge and to dispense punishment, in both these speeches. Indeed, Elene is named *tireadig cwen* (glorious queen) in line 605, suggesting not only her regal power but perhaps also her divine right to rule, especially in the context of a poem concerned with a great ruler's quest for the true cross. There is, furthermore, an echo of the court in Elene's apposition of life against death: the ability to impose *swa lif swa deað* upon subjects is among the most distinctive prerogatives of rulers – and of God. As for the speech introduced by line 685, in this speech Elene swears by the Son of the Measurer (*þurh sunu meotodes*) that the death penalty awaits him if Judas does not reveal the truth – this is not only a formal (legally binding) promise, then, but the passing of sentence. Elene's similar threat of death for the Jews in line 573 is also introduced with *maþelian,* and is again suggestive of the passing of sentence. Likewise, Elene is described as *geatolic guðcwen, gold gehyrsted* (stately battle-queen, gold adorned) at line 331, immediately prior to

[251] For more on the importance of burial practices in the period, see for example Sam Lucy, *The Anglo-Saxon Way of Death: Burial Rites in Early England* (Thrupp, Gloucestershire, 2000).

her speech being introduced at line 332 with *maþelian*.[252] In fact, many of the instances of the verb in *Elene* occur in moments which particularly display the authority of the monarch, introducing commands, demands or moral instruction, and the verb is used to introduce speeches in which Elene acts as judge, or displays her power to kill or pardon, which is one of the hallmarks of rulers.

Judas has three of his speeches introduced with this verb, two before he is converted and one after converting to Christianity. Here also the speeches are formal, almost courtly, because they are addressed to Elene twice, and once to God. Thus although Judas's speeches do not display his own authority, nor are they forceful, they too are suggestive of set piece speeches made before a ruler, in which a clear power imbalance creates deference on the one hand, and authority on the other. The speeches by Judas to Elene are both spoken in some degree of anxiety or unhappiness, which might be linked to this power imbalance, as well as to Judas's sinful (unconverted) state. At line 627 Judas has a *geomor sefa* (sorrowful spirit), while at line 655 he is described as suffering *gnornsorge* (grief). It must be conceded that *Elene* is not over-blessed with informal speeches, and most of the speeches in the poem suggest a degree of courtly (polished and refined, and often regal) formality. However, what characterises particularly Elene's speeches in the poem is that so many of them involve promises – a type of speech which inherently presupposes a court setting, because of the legal implications which, in the context of autocracy, centre upon the person of the ruler.

[252] Lee cites this speech as Elene's most formal speech to the meeting, see Lee (2008), p. 29.

In *Genesis A*, the verb *maþelian* is used on two occasions when Abraham is the speaker: the verb is used in line 1820 when Abraham asks Sarah to pretend to be his sister in Egypt, and it introduces Abraham's reply to Isaac's enquiry about what animal they will sacrifice just before Abraham almost sacrifices Isaac in line 2893. The first of these speeches occurs shortly after Abraham first catches sight of the *Egypta hornsele* (Egyptian gabled halls, lines 1820-1) and the brightly dazzling city (*byrig beorhte blican*, lines 1821-2): thus he makes this speech introduced by *maþelode* with very grand halls as the backdrop, and his speech is instructive, but also ultimately a command. As with the speeches in *Elene*, there is probably a similar power imbalance here, and Abraham is commanding Sarah in his role as her husband, as much as requesting her, to hide her identity.[253] The second speech, at line 2893, is not only a moment of great significance, but is also the moment at which Abraham fulfils verbally his avowal to obey his Lord, as he answers Isaac's enquiry with a statement of faith: immediately before his speech, at lines 2893-4, we are told Abraham had determined to do as his Lord had commanded. This is also, of course, the famous life and death moment in *Genesis A*.

The verb is used twice in *Genesis B*, once when Adam resists the devil's temptation in line 522, and once to introduce the devil's lament at his fall from grace in line 347. The devil's speech at line 347 comes immediately after God has thrown him from paradise and doomed him to hell, and as with Judas's unconverted speeches in *Elene*, Satan speaks *sorgiende* (sorrowing). The content of the speech shows a combination of Satan's traditional sin, *superbia*,

[253] For a discussion of the *Genesis* poet's treatment of this passage vis-a-vis the Latin, see George Clark, 'The Traveler Recognizes His Goal: A Theme in Anglo-Saxon Poetry', *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 64 (1965), pp. 645-59.

with his powerlessness. As with the speeches in *Elene,* power imbalance seems to be part of the context – however, Satan does not appear to be addressing anyone in particular (although, as we lack the end of the speech, it is hard to be sure, and it seems a reasonable surmise that Satan addresses us, the readers or listeners, by default). As for the instance of *maþelian* at line 522, like the speech introduced using *maþelian* in *Genesis A* at line 2893, the speech which the verb *maþelian* introduces here is one in which Adam affirms his determination to keep God's command. It is an important speech, as it is the only speech which Adam makes before succumbing to Eve's persuasion, as John F. Vickrey points out.[254] As Vickrey goes on to discuss, the speech clearly sets out the relationship of obedience and command between Adam and God, once again a context which clearly demonstrates a power imbalance.[255]

The evidence in the *Genesis* poem preserved in Vatican, Biblioteca Apostolica, MS Palatinus Latinus 1447 shows similar usage of the Old Saxon cognates of *maþelian* to the usage in the Old English poems. The Old Saxon verbs *mahlian* 'speak', 'argue' and *gi-mahlian* 'speak', 'make a speech', which are clearly related to *maþelian*, occur in the Vatican *Genesis* text, *mahlian* once, *gi-mahlian* three times. In particular, the usage of *gi-mahlian*, which occurs at lines 189, 211 and 224 to introduce Abraham's speech, shows similarities to the usage of *maþelian* in the Old English *Genesis* poems. At line 180 in the Vatican *Genesis*, just before his speech which is introduced using *gi-mahlian*, Abraham is described with a rare Old Saxon word for courage, *ellian*. As A.

[254] John F. Vickrey, *Genesis B and the Comedic Imperative* (Bethlehem, 2015), p. 52.
[255] See Vickrey (2015), pp. 51-5.

N. Doane points out, this word only occurs twice in Old Saxon poetry, and on both occasions 'the formula occurs when the protagonist is stepping forward to assert before God or Christ his sense of spiritual authority or mission'.[256] At line 225, immediately after Abraham's speech is introduced by *gimahalda*, Abraham's persistence (identified with the adverb *agaletlico*, here glossed 'with importunity'),[257] which might be seen as insubordinate, is shown not to be so with the explanation *folgoda is froian* (he followed his Lord), which makes it clear that Abraham is in fact obedient, not obstinate.[258] These two instances in particular highlight similarities of usage in Old Saxon to those found in the Old English *Genesis* poems and in *Elene*: the contexts in which *maþelian* and, it would seem, its Old Saxon cognates, are used often seem to be ones in which obedience is pledged, loyalty fulfilled, and power recognised. It is also worth noting that divine speech is <u>not</u> introduced using *maþelian*, suggesting perhaps that the primary context for the verb is an earthly one, particularly that of the Anglo-Saxon *comitatus*.

In *The Battle of Maldon*, the verb *maþelian* is used twice, first to introduce Byrhtnoth's reply to the Viking messenger, in which he promises the Vikings will receive weapons as their only ransom at line 42, and then at line 309 to introduce Byrhtwold's famous exhortation to the warriors to continue fighting:

> *Hyge sceal þe heardra, heorte þe cenre,*
> *mod sceal þe mare, þe ure mægen lytlað.* Lines 312-13

[256] See A. N. Doane ed., *The Saxon Genesis: An Edition of the West Saxon Genesis B and the Old Saxon Vatican Genesis* (Madison, 1991), p. 334. John Hines has also pointed out, in a paper on the (forced) conversion of the Old Saxons in the late eighth century, that the recurrent formulae in these verses appear to be thoroughly Christian, rather than convincingly drawing on any historically deep, older poetic tradition in that language.
[257] See Doane (1991), p. 338.
[258] See Doane (1991), p. 338.

> (Thought shall be tougher, heart stronger, mind the greater, as our might diminishes).

These are two of the most famous speeches in the poem, and the choice of this verb to introduce them is therefore both notable, and fits in well with the rest of the evidence, which points towards significant speeches being introduced using this verb.[259] The two speakers introduced by *maþelode*, Byrhtnoth and Byrhtwold, are also the only speakers who are explicitly described as old. Byrhtwold is described as *eald geneat* (which although it may have been simply a term for 'liegeman', also literally means 'old retainer')[260] in line 310, and at line 317a Byrhtwold describes himself as *frod feores* (wise of life / advanced in years). Byrhtnoth, meanwhile, is also described at various points with words suggesting his age, notably as *har hilderinc* (hoary battle-warrior) at line 169a, and as *frod* (wise) at line 140a.[261] The age of the speakers who use *maþelian* in *The Battle of Maldon* may suggest that a similar imbalance is being signalled by the use of the verb in the poem, this time not necessarily primarily of power, but of wisdom.

Why the other speeches by Byrhtnoth are not so introduced might be partially answered by the fact that this speech is the one where Byrhtnoth most clearly gains the upper hand in his verbal exchanges, winning, as it were, the war of words with his wit. Furthermore, this speech of Byrhtnoth is the first speech we have (though of course, as we lack the poem's opening, Byrhtnoth may

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[259] These speeches have been widely discussed. See, for example, Andy Orchard, 'The World of Anglo-Saxon England', in Corinne Saunders ed., *A Companion to Medieval Poetry* (Malden, Mass., 2010), pp. 11-33.

[260] For more on this term, see, for example, the notes to E. V. Gordon's edition of the poem: E. V. Gordon ed., *The Battle of Maldon* (London, 1968), p. 61, and D. G. Scragg ed., *The Battle of Maldon*, Manchester University Press: Manchester, 1991, p. 22 where Scragg suggests *geneat* was 'a tenant who performs riding duties for his lord'.

[261] For a discussion of the possible significance of Byrhtnoth's age, see, for example, Gordon (1968), p. 5.

have spoken before). It is, lastly, worth mentioning that both Byrhtnoth's and Byrhtwold's speeches are introduced with *Byrht… maþelode, bord hafenode*: the formula is clearly repeated, and the formality of this moment is reinforced by the raising of the shield in the second half line, which 'was a sign that an announcement was to be made'.[262] Michael R. Kightley has suggested that this remarkable correspondence is one of a number of instances where 'specific verbs [are used] to create causal links between events of the poem': he suggests that the repetition of this formula 'creates a causal link between Byrhtnoth's rejection of the Viking messenger's offer and the rally sparked by Byrhtwold's speech'.[263] This provides one possible explanation for why these are the only speeches introduced using *maþelian* in the poem.

The single use of *maþelian* in *Waldere 2* is similar to the first usage in *The Battle of Maldon*: at line 11 of the poem, Waldere dares the friend of the Burgundians to come and take the heirloom of Ælfhere from Waldere's shoulders (the heirloom is a corselet) if he wants it. This is a similar taunt to Byrhtnoth's punning use of *heregeatu* (war-gear) at line 48 of *The Battle of Maldon*. Waldere is described, moreover, as *ellenrof* (remarkably strong, brave, daring) in the same speech introduction in which *maþelian* occurs, suggesting he may be speaking from a position of superiority here (although the fact we have so little of this poem makes it hard to know the context).[264] In

[262] Gordon (1968), p. 45.
[263] See Michael R. Kightley, 'Communal Interdependence in *The Battle of Maldon*', *Studia Neophilologica* 82 (2010), pp. 58-68.
[264] The instance of *maþelode* at line 11 of *Waldere* is unclear: the first 'e' in the word is very faint. ASPR has a lacuna for that character, but other editions suggest *e*: Bernard James Muir has 'the first *e* is barely visible', Bernard James Muir ed., *Leoð: Six Old English Poems – a Handbook* (New York, 1989), p. 44 note 43. Meanwhile Jonathan B. Himes comments 'medial *e* just visible, especially its calligraphic cross-stroke.', Jonathan B. Himes ed. and trans., *The Old English Epic of 'Waldere'* (Newcastle, 2009), p. 23 note 10.

Widsith, *maðelian* again is found only once, but introduces the whole poem, occurring in the first line, an iconic usage which is not dissimilar to the use of the word in *Riddle 38*, where the subject of the verb is a man, who speaks the riddle-within-a-riddle: *mon maþelade, se þe me gesægde* (a man spoke, who said to me). This opening to *Widsith* is highly formulaic, as the second half of the line (*wordhord onleac*) is also a formula, as has been pointed out, notably by Hugh Magennis.[265] The importance of the use of *maþelian* at the opening of the poem has been further commented on, as emphasising the formality of both the speech which makes up the bulk of the poem, and the probable setting in which it occurs.[266] It is also possible that the use of the verb in this poem is a further emphasis of Widsith's skill, 'Widsith's own supreme qualities as a court singer (*scop*)', and the particular importance of this role, without which 'reputation cannot exist'.[267] Lastly, Widsith's speech is made presumably before a powerful ruler, and is not only about many other powerful rulers but also displays his 'considerable memorial skill' in his extensive list of great men.[268] The context in *Widsith*, then, suggests once again that *maþelian* has connotations of power, wisdom and courtliness.

The remarkably uniform use of *maþelian,* in terms of where it occurs in the poetic line, and in the highly repetitive way it is used to introduce (usually

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[265] See Hugh Magennis, *The Cambridge Introduction to Anglo-Saxon Literature*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011, p. 43. Magennis also points out the basic facts about the instances of *maþelian* on this page.
[266] See Rissanen (1998) and Niles, J. D., *Old English Heroic Poems and the Social Life of Texts* (Turnhout, 2007), especially Chapter 2 (pp. 73-109), and p. 73.
[267] See Rolf H. Bremmer Jr, 'Old English Heroic Literature', in Johnson, David F., and Elaine M. Treharne eds., *Readings in Medieval Texts: Interpreting Old and Middle English Literature* (Oxford, 2005), pp. 75-90, p. 80.
[268] See Heather Maring, 'Bright Voice of Praise: An Old English Poet-Patron Convention', *Studies in Philology* 108 (2011), pp. 299-319, p. 304.

named) speakers,[269] often with a patronymic, and often with exactly repeated lines, points to the likelihood that this word was formulaic, and although this is in part because *maþelode* fits the metrical demands of a half line very well when preceded by a name, it is likely that this is not the only reason for the high degree of formality of the (literary) circumstances in which the verb is used, and the great regularity, both contextual and grammatical, in the circumstances where *maþelode* appears. The associations of this verb with a formal assembly, or with formal types of speech, such as formal accusation and legally binding or sworn promise, might be suggested by the possible Old High German cognate *mahalōn* 'to accuse', the contexts in which probable Gothic cognate *maþljan* 'to speak' is used, described in sections VI and VII below, and by the usage of the Old Saxon cognates discussed above. The Old English noun *mæþel* 'speech, assembly', which probably preceded the verb, and derived from an old Germanic noun (see sections VI and VII below), may have led to this verb being used in a formulaic way, to signal the speech appropriate to an assembly, or court (whether legal or royal). Or possibly it is the status of *maþelian* as a poetic word which led to the formulaic use of this word, although few poetic words are used so consistently.

[269] The only two places where the speaker is not named are when the guard speaks at *Beowulf* line 286 and in *Riddle 38* line 5, cited above.

IV. How is it Used? – **mælan, mæþlan,** *and related verbs*

Overview

There are a number of verbs which may be related, all of which occur less frequently even than *maþelian*, whose meanings vary subtly but are broadly similar. It is not clear, in many cases, which of these verbs should be regarded as separate full verbs, and which are spelling or grammatical variants. The most distinct of these verbs, both in terms of the number of instances and the patterns of usage, is *mælan*, but how it relates to *gemælan, meðlan, mæðlan*, *mældan, meldan* and a number of prefixed forms, notably *tomeldan, tomældan* and *onmælan* is not entirely clear, not least because many of these verbs occur fewer than half a dozen times in the Old English corpus. It is not clear (due to the scarcity of evidence) what the effect of the prefixes is on the full verbs. How these verbs are lemmatised in grammars and dictionaries varies as well,[270] and it seems likely that modern confusion about how to distinguish between spelling variants, how to separate the verbs from each other in this group of words, and what the semantic implications may be of these divisions, which verbs should be seen as related to which, and how closely, reflects growing confusion about this group of verbs present already during the Old English period, which probably continued into the Middle English period and beyond.[271]

[270] For example Grein groups *meldan* with *mældan,* with *tomeldan* and *tomældan* listed beneath and then *medlian, meldigan* as separate verbs from *medlan/mældan* with *gemeldian* beneath (see Grein (1912), p. 459) whereas Bosworth and Toller list *meldan* but not *mældan,* suggesting at the bottom of the entry that *meldan* is related to *tomeldan, meldian.* They also list *gemeldian* and *meldan* under *meldian* (see Bosworth and Toller (1898), p. 677).
[271] See section VI below for more on this.

As *mælan* occurs the most frequently, and is the easiest of this group of verbs to discuss in terms of what usage suggests regarding semantics, especially connotations, this section begins with *mælan*. For clarity, in the initial analysis *mælan* is treated separately from any of the other forms or verbs, which are treated in turn. The other verbs in the group are discussed next, and how they inter-relate is also discussed, here and in sections VI and VII below. Very little has been written about this group of verbs, and on the rare occasions that *mælan* is mentioned in scholarly literature, it is either to comment on the formula *wordum mælde*, or to list it as one of the verbs for 'to speak'.[272] It is worth noting, as an aside, that none of these verbs occur in *Beowulf*.

mælan

There are fourteen instances of *mælan* in verse and almost none in prose,[273] suggesting that *mælan*, like *maþelian*, is a strictly poetic word.[274] All but four of these occur as the second stressed word of the b-verse.[275] The four occurrences of *mælan* which do not occur in this position are also the only four occurrences of the word to carry alliteration, and these same occurrences are also the only instances in which *mælan* does not introduce speech. That the

[272] Examples of these have already been mentioned at the start of the section above (see pp. 94-5 footnote 215). One article which deals with this group of words, notably *mælan*, is an article apparently on direct speech by Dongill Lee; however, unfortunately it is almost entirely in Korean: 이동일, '"Maþelian" 과 Direct Speech 의 도입부 동사에 관한 연구', *Medieval English Studies* 8 (2000) [On-line Database Edition, article available at: http://hompi.sogang.ac.kr/anthony/mesak/mes08/01LeeDongIl.htm] [Dongill Lee, 'A Study on the Introduction verb "maþelian" and Direct Speech'].

[273] See section V below for exact details

[274] The instances of *mælan* are: *Andreas* lines 300 and 767 (both *mælde*); *Elene* lines 351 (*mælde*) and 537 (*mældon*); *Genesis A* line 2913 (*mælde*); *Juliana* lines 351, 455 and 538 (all *mælde*); *The Battle of Maldon* lines 26, 43 and 210 (all *mælde*); Psalm 84.7 line 2 *(mælan*); *The Seasons for Fasting* lines 43 and 90 (both *mælde*).

[275] The following are the exceptions: *Andreas* line 767 *mælde for mannum. Man wridode*; Psalm 84.7 line 2 *on minum modsefan mælan wille*; *The Seasons for Fasting* lines *43 Moyses mælde, and we þa mearce sceolan*, and 90 *þæs þe Moyses iu mælde to leodum*.

rest of the occurrences of *mælan* do not carry alliteration is of course unsurprising, since the last stressed syllable of the Old English poetic line should never carry functional alliteration. It is remarkable, nevertheless, that these four alliterating instances are also the four instances not to introduce speech, especially as the rest of the usage (in terms of metre and speech introduction) of *mælan* accords with the way *maþelian* is used, since the latter never alliterates and always introduces speech. Two of these four instances of *mælan* are the only instances of the verb in *The Seasons for Fasting.* On both occasions Moses is speaking, and the narrator is relating his speech for the instruction of the readers or listeners:

> *...swa se froda iu*
> *Moyses mælde, and we þa mearce sceolan*
> *heoldan higefæste…*
> (…thus the wise Moses spoke of old, and we then must hold firm in mind to the mark. Lines 42b-44a.)[276]
>
> *...þu gebann sceole*
> *her on eorþan ænig healdan,*
> *þæs þe Moyses iu mælde to leodum…*
> (…you must keep any commandment here on earth which Moses of old spoke to the people…Lines 88b-90.)

In both cases, similar elements occur, notably an association with age (*iu* 'of old' occurs at lines 42 and 90, and *froda* 'wise' occurs at line 42), similar to the association of aged speakers found in the uses of *maþelode* in *The Battle of Maldon* (see above, p. 109). The only occurrence of *mælan* in the *Psalms* is also one of the four alliterating instances. It occurs in *Psalm* 84 verse 7:

Syþþan ic gehyre, hwæt me halig god / on minum modsefan mælan wille

[276] Laurence Nowell corrects final *a* of *malde* to *e* in his transcript, made in 1562 (British Library MS Additional 43703). See Richards ed. and trans. (2014), p. 115, the note to line 43, for details.

(Since I hear what holy God wishes to say to me in my spirit).[277] The other occurrence of *mælan* which alliterates but does not introduce speech is one of two occurrences of the verb in *Andreas*, at line 767, and the subject is *se scyna stan* (the shining stone), which Christ orders to speak to the unbelieving sinners in the temple, in Andreas's retelling of Christ's miracles to God (who is disguised as a ferryman). This instance suggests some of the connotations of public speech found in the occurrences of *maþelian* discussed above (on pp. 101-8) may also apply to *mælan*. Although power imbalance is not clearly at play in this exchange, there is a clear imbalance in a spiritual sense – and this kind of spiritual imbalance is at play in many of the speeches introduced with *mælan*. In all but two instances of the verb, *mælan* occurs in the third person preterite singular form *mælde*; the other two instances are of the infinitive (*mælan*),[278] and the third person plural preterite (*mældon*).[279] None of the occurrences of *mælan* is in a line which is exactly repeated in any poem, in contrast to *maþelian*. The verb occurs in a wide range of poems considering its infrequent use, never more than three times in any one text.

This verb seems to carry particular connotations to do with spiritual enlightenment or lack of it, being used repeatedly when God, an angel or a saint or prophet (namely: Andreas, Juliana, Abraham, Isaiah or Moses) is speaking or being spoken to. This link between *mælan* and divine address shows a clear difference in usage to the uses of the verb *maþelian*, which is

[277] The Vulgate has *audiam quid* ***loquatur*** *Dominus Deus* (I will hear what the Lord God will say to me) for this verse (bold typeface my addition), thus *mælde* corresponds to *loquatur* in this instance: the correspondence of this group of words with Latin words in the glosses is briefly discussed on p. 98 above and pp. 138-9 below.
[278] The aforementioned occurrence in Psalm 84 verse 7.
[279] *Elene* line 537.

never used to introduce the speech of God, and is only once used for speech addressed to God (for Judas's speech to God at *Elene* at line 806). In five speeches introduced by *mælan* a saint or prophet is speaking, in four, God or an angel or messenger of God is speaking, and in three, saints are being spoken to. There are two instances of a devil (disguised as an angel) speaking, and one of the same devil being spoken to.[280] Only in four instances is neither a saint nor God involved, and three of these four instances are the instances of this verb in *The Battle of Maldon*, which does not perhaps keep to the traditional connotations of the verb (which may have been changing), being almost certainly composed much later than most of the rest of the poems in which this verb occurs.[281]

Alternatively, it is possible that the poet is using the word as part of a vocabulary of religious strife, which is particularly evident in and around Byrhtnoth's prayer, in lines 172-81, and which centres around the character of Byrhtnoth, who is positioned in the uneasy area between saintly martyr and secular war hero.[282] Since two of the instances of *mælan* in *The Battle of Maldon* occur during Byrhtnoth's exchange with the Viking messenger, they may serve to enhance the implicit religious dimension at play during the

[280] Andreas is speaking to an angel of the Lord in *Andreas* line 300; Juliana is being spoken to in *Juliana* lines 351 and 538, both times deceptively by the devil (disguised as an angel), and she is speaking to the devil in line 455; God is speaking to Abraham in *Genesis A* line 2913, and to the psalmist in Psalm 84.7 line 2; Isaiah is speaking to the people in *Elene* line 351; Moses is speaking in *The Seasons for Fasting* lines 43 and 90; Christ or God is speaking through a sculpture of an angel in *Andreas* 767.

[281] The traditional formula *wordum mælde* survives a long time: see below.

[282] John Damon makes a compelling argument that Byrhtnoth, along with a number of other Anglo-Saxon pious warrior-noblemen, fails to qualify for sanctity, despite his saintly attributes, as only kings are able to be both saints and warriors. See John Damon, 'Sanctifying Anglo-Saxon Ealdormen: Lay Sainthood and the Rise of the Crusading Ideal', pp. 185-209 in Thomas Hall ed. *Via crucis: essays on early medieval sources and ideas in memory of J. E. Cross* (Morgantown, 2002).

exchange between heathen and Christian, in a similar way to the uses in *Juliana*, where *mælan* is used three times in the long exchange between Juliana and the devil. Although the fact that in both of these instances the other interlocutor is the Viking messenger who asks for ransom suggests that the associations of *mælan* are not exclusively positive (which is also suggested by the uses in *Juliana*), these instances in *The Battle of Maldon* could still support the proposition that *mælan* is associated with spiritual strife or enlightenment, or with a spiritual imbalance, since the Viking messenger is, of course, a heathen. Although there is no heathen attempt at conversion within his speech which could be compared to the corrupting aims of the devil in his speeches to Juliana, seen from the perspective of the Christian poet of *The Battle of Maldon*, there may not be much difference between the direct threat of a corrupting speech, and the subtler threat of extermination or suppression under a pagan yoke.

The usage in *The Battle of Maldon* may also suggest that the word *mælan* is associated with messengers, since both the angel in *Andreas* line 300 and the devil in *Juliana* could be regarded as messengers – likewise Moses in *The Seasons for Fasting* could be seen as a messenger, speaking God's will to the people, and so could *se scyna stan* in *Andreas* line 767. The association with messengers could also be extended to Byrhtnoth himself, who, in his opening remark in line 45, positions himself as the spokesman, and in that sense messenger, of his people: *Gehyrst þu, sælida, hwæt þis folc segeð?* (Do you hear, sailor, what this people says?). It is, furthermore, worth noting that these two instances of *mælan* in *The Battle of Maldon* occur in an exchange which is

also introduced using *maþelian*, suggesting some overlap between the connotations of the verbs is likely.[283]

The other instance of *mælan* in *The Battle of Maldon* is used to introduce Ælfwine's heroic speech of encouragement to those left behind to fight after Byrhtnoth's death, to fulfil their vows and avenge their lord.[284] This instance, moreover, also has a reference to age, but unlike those already discussed, this reference is to Ælfwine's youth: Ælfwine is *wiga wintrum geong* (a winter-young warrior, a warrior young in years, line 210). Again, this speech displays elements familiar from the contexts in which *maþelian* is used: the speech is a call to Ælfwine's fellow fighters, to keep their oaths and fight for their lord. Ælfwine also describes himself as suffering, near the end of his speech (*Me is þæt hearma mæst* 'mine is the greatest grief', line 223), a similar context to the instances of *maþelian* in *Elene* used to introduce the speech of Judas, discussed on p. 105. It is clear, however, that unlike with *maþelian*, the implication of a power imbalance being the cause of grief is absent here. The fourth instance of the word which does not involve a saint or prophet or God occurs in *Elene*, when the most discerning of the Jews (*þa gleawestan*) tell Judas to do as he sees fit, but beware of Elene. Again, a case could be made that, as these are the best of the Jewish people, the word would still carry spiritually positive connotations. However, as with *The Battle of Maldon*, the situation is rather ambiguous.

[283] The occurrences in *The Battle of Maldon* here under discussion are at lines 26, when the messenger speaks to Byrhtnoth, and 43, when Byrhtnoth replies. Semantic overlap with *maþelian* is made the likelier because the occurrence of *maþelian* in line 42 is followed by that of *mælan* at line 43, variation as part of a complex introduction to Byrhtnoth's speech.
[284] *The Battle of Maldon* lines 209-224.

Although the prevalence of religious verse in the Old English poetic corpus provides a simple explanation of the use of *mælan* predominantly in religious contexts, the fact that *mælan* is used so persistently in moments of strife, particularly strife which includes spiritual repercussions (notably the heathen threat in *The Battle of Maldon,* or the danger of corruption in *Juliana*), makes it seem likely that the word did carry some particular spiritual connotations. Although if an association with social prestige or status is assumed, this would make sense of the word's use in *The Battle of Maldon*, the fact that even in this poem it is used in the most iconic verbal confrontation between the representatives of Christian rule (Byrhtnoth) and pagan threat (the Viking messenger) suggests that there is also a spiritual dimension at play. The association of cognates of *mælan* with promises (notably in the use of the Old Saxon verb *mahlian*, discussed on pp. 107-8 above) is not perhaps conceptually very far from some of the usages seen above, notably in *The Battle of Maldon*, and there are parallels between Germanic or heroic notions of upholding promises and Christian notions of truth and faithfulness which might invest the word with a particular spiritual flavour.

mæðlan

There are six instances of *mæðlan* in Old English, just about enough to make some assessment of the usage of the verb in the corpus (unlike the remaining words discussed in this chapter, which each occur only once or twice).[285] All but one instances of the verb are of the infinitive form, *mæðlan*. The third

[285] The instances of *mæðlan* are: *Christ II* line 797; *Christ III* lines 1337 and 1363; *Genesis A* line 2220; *Genesis B* line 524; and *Guthlac B* line 1202. All the instances are of *mæðlan*, except *Christ III* line 1337, which has *mæðleð*.

person singular present form *mæðleð* occurs in *Christ III* line 1337; however, this is an emendation for manuscript reading *mædleð*.[286] Four of the instances (thus, over half) have God as the speaker: in the aforementioned instance in *Christ III* at line 1337, God promises heaven to those who look after the poor in his name, and the other instance in *Christ III*, at line 1363, introduces God's speech to evil doers at the last judgment. The third divine speech introduced with *mæðlan* occurs in *Genesis B*, line 524, when Adam recalls God's commands regarding not eating the infamous apple in response to temptation from the devil: this is also one of the two instances of *mæðlan* not to introduce direct speech, and the only instance of the verb to alliterate. Interestingly, Adam's speech resisting the devil within which this divine speech (introduced with *mæðlan* in line 524) is recalled was introduced using *maþelian* (line 522: see pp. 106-7 above, also for details regarding the significance of this speech). The other instance of *mæðlan* not to introduce direct speech is the instance in *Christ II*, at the start of Cynewulf's runic signature passage, in line 797, and this is also the fourth instance where the verb is used to report God's speech, which is another judgment day speech, this one causing C (the C rune is usually interpreted as either 'torch', or 'C' for Cynewulf) to tremble.[287] There are two instances where God is not the speaker introduced with *mæðlan*: the speech introduced in *Genesis A* by line 2220, in which Sarah instructs Abraham to sleep with Hagar (since Sarah does not believe she can bear a son); and the speech introduced in *Guthlac B* by line 1202, in which Guthlac's

[286] See G. P. Krapp and E. V. K. Dobbie eds., *The Exeter Book* (New York, 1936), p. 40.
[287] This runic signature and its significance are discussed, for example recently in a book and article by Tom Birkett: —, 'Runes and *Revelatio*: Cynewulf's Signatures Reconsidered', *The Review of English Studies* 65 (2014), pp. 771-89, especially pp. 784-6; and —, *Reading the Runes in Old English and Old Norse Poetry* (London, 2017), pp. 71-3.

servant requests consolation from Guthlac. In both these instances, the speaker is described as being in distress: Sarah is *ferhðcearig* ('troubled in spirit', line 2219), and before Guthlac's servant speaks, we are told *wearð modgeþanc miclum gebisgad, / þream forþrycced* ('his mind was much afflicted, oppressed with distress', lines 1197-8). In four of the instances of *mæðlan*, it occurs as the final stressed element of the b-verse,[288] and in three instances *mæðlan* occurs in the formula *wordum mæðlan*.[289]

The patterns of usage (as regards the metrical position in the line, and the alliteration), fit closely with the way that *mælan* is used in the corpus. The link with divine speech is also found with both *mælan* and *mæðlan* (and separates them out from *maþelian*, which is not used for divine speech). Ringe identifies *wordum mælde* as 'the preterite variant of *wordum mæðlan*'.[290] Certainly, the fact that *wordum mæðlan* and *wordum mælde* demonstrate a similar pattern suggests that it is at least possible that *mæðlan* could have functioned as the infinitive form of *mælde*, especially since *mæðlan* occurs several times, whereas *mælan* (in the infinitive) occurs only once, and that occurrence is in the *Psalms*, which are not typical of Old English poetic practice and were probably composed quite late (G. P. Krapp suggests 'the latter ninth or early tenth century' as the possible time of origin).[291] Ringe points out that, in contrast, none of the poems in which *mæðlan* occurs is likely to date from

[288] The instances where this is not the case are: *Genesis B* line 524, where *mæðlan* is the first stressed element in the b-verse, and the instance in *Christ III* line 1363, where *mæðlan* is the second stressed element of the a-verse.
[289] This formula occurs in: *Christ III* line 1363a; *Genesis A* line 2220b; and *Guthlac B* line 1202b.
[290] Ringe (2004), p. 418.
[291] G. P. Krapp ed., *The Paris Psalter and the Meters of Boethius* (New York, 1932), p. xvii. See also Ringe (2004), p. 429, who suggests how *mælan* could be a late form of *mæðlan* formed from *mæþl-*, which Ringe suggest is the past stem.

later than the ninth century.[292] Ringe also suggests that the distribution of forms in Old English suggests *mæþl-* is the present stem, and *mǣl-d* the past (although this argument is weakened by the fact that the only attested present tense form is an emended one, as discussed above).[293] This theory is supported by the evidence of sound changes, particularly the loss of *þ* and compensatory lengthening of the preceding vowel, and the other changes affecting spirants before liquids and nasals after a short vowel.[294] These are sound changes which Campbell suggests took place 'comparatively late in the Primitive Old English period, but which are found in other Germanic languages also'. He further suggests that these sound changes were triggered by linguistic expansion and the interaction between different dialects. This idea of possible dialectal influences also accords with the confusion, both morphological and of usage, around the group of words under discussion in this chapter.[295] The exact details of this change are not altogether clear, however; Richard Hogg does not agree with Campbell in this, suggesting instead that the *mæðl* form 'may be Merc borrowings', and discounts Campbell's explanation as based 'upon an implausible view of OE [Old English] syllable structure'.[296]

gemælan

Of the remaining words, *gemælan* appears to be a prefixed form of *mælan / mæðlan*.[297] However, as the verb only occurs in the third person singular

[292] Ringe (2004), p. 418.
[293] Ringe (2004), p. 429.
[294] See A. Campbell, *Old English Grammar* (Oxford, 1983), p. 171, especially §419-21.
[295] See Campbell (1983), p. 170, §415.
[296] For a fuller outline of the phonological complications, see Richard Hogg, *A Grammar of Old English, Volume 1: Phonology* (Oxford, 2011), p. 250, 7.10.
[297] Ringe (2004), pp. 418-19 argues these forms are all parts of the same verb, suggesting that *(ge)mælan* 'could in fact reflect Scandinavian influence', p. 419.

preterite, it is difficult to know from the evidence whether this should be regarded as a full verb. There are three instances of *gemælde* in the surviving Old English corpus, of which two are in *The Battle of Maldon* and one in *Genesis B*.[298] It is not possible to make any particularly strong claims based on usage, given the scarcity of evidence; however, all three of the instances of *gemælde* accord with the use of *maþelian* in the corpus better than with those of *mælan*. All three instances occupy the second stress position in the a-verse, but do not carry alliteration, and all three introduce speech. That neither instance in *The Battle of Maldon* introduces the speech of God is unsurprising, since the poem is one of the rare areas of the Anglo-Saxon corpus to suffer from a lack of divine speech; however, it is worth noting that the instance of the verb at line 790 of *Genesis B* is for speech between Adam and Eve, specifically introducing Adam's speech after he realises his error in eating the apple. This speech is one firmly bounded in the earthly, then, since it is spoken at the first moment at which man knows he is sinful, and the grief which Adam feels here is due to a judgment, similar to the grief felt by Satan in the instance of *maþelian* at line 347 of *Genesis B*, and the instances of *maþelian* which introduce speech between Elene and Judas, and Elene and the Jews in *Elene*. Why a prefixed form which seems much more closely related to *mælan* in its morphology than to *maþelian* should be used contrary to this alignment may be linked to the fact that this form occurs only in a late poem (*The Battle of Maldon*) and a poem influenced by a cognate language (*Genesis B*, which has long been considered an Anglicisation of part of the Old Saxon *Genesis*),

[298] *The Battle of Maldon* lines 230 and 244, and *Genesis B* line 790. See Appendix C, p. 273 for full details of these instances.

but also strongly suggests that confusion over the differences between these verbs was present already in the Old English period. It is likely that the widely occurring formulae in which *maþelode* and *mælde* were used are a large part of the reason why the usage of these verbs is clearly distinguishable in surviving Old English.

onmælan and tomeldan / tomældan

The other prefixed forms of the verb, *onmælan* and *tomeldan / tomældan* also unfortunately occur very seldom. The first, *onmælan*, occurs only once in the third person preterite form *onmælde*, and is glossed by Bosworth and Toller as meaning 'to address'. Like most of the instances of *mælde*, *onmælde* occurs as the second stressed element in the b-verse, and does not alliterate. Unlike most of the instances of *mælan* (and *maþelian*), however, it does not introduce direct speech. The context is similar to the contexts in which *maþelode* is used, as the verb is used to introduce the speech of the angry Babylonian king, Nebuchadnezzar, threatening Hannaniah, Azariah and Mishael with death by fire if they continue to refuse to pray to his god at line 210 of *Daniel*, thus the setting is both courtly and of judgment.

The second verb, or form, *tomeldan / tomældan*, occurs twice, in *Judgment Day 1* at line 26, and in *Maxims 1* at line 179 (thus both instances are in the Exeter Book).[299] The instance in *Maxims 1*, however, is an emendation from the manuscript reading, which is *mon to mon mædle*. In *Judgment Day 1*, the verb occurs in the third person singular present tense form *tomældeð,* whereas

[299] The poetical portions of the Exeter Book are in a single hand (see Krapp and Dobbie eds. (1936), p. xiii), therefore this may mean that *tomeldan/tomældan* was simply part of one scribe's idiolect.

in the second it occurs in the third person preterite (possibly subjunctive) form *tomælde*. Bosworth and Toller gloss the word as meaning 'to destroy peace by tale bearing, by spreading reports', which fits with the context of both instances. Again, it is difficult to make any assessment of the usage on such scant evidence. It is nevertheless worth noting that neither instance introduces direct speech (indeed, it is difficult to translate these instances even as verbs of speech, particularly the *Judgment Day* instance, where the verb seems to be used to identify a particular man by his action), and in both cases neither speakers nor the audience are specified. Apart from this, there is not much in common in the way the two instances are used. The instance in *Maxims 1* occurs in a series of irregular half lines which do not really alliterate either with each other or internally, whereas the instance in *Judgment Day 1* alliterates.

meðlan, meldan and *mældan*

The remaining forms, *meðlan*, *meldan* and *mældan* occur once each. To take the last first, *mældan* occurs in that form in *Riddle* 18 line 2, in which the riddle subject states *ne mæg word sprecan, / mældan for monnum, þeah ic muþ hæbbe* (I may not say a word, speak before men, though I have a mouth). It is difficult to say anything else about this unique instance, particularly as *Riddle* 18 is exceptionally short.[300] The only surviving instance of *meldan*, which also occurs in the infinitive, is likewise in a *Riddle*, and its meaning is especially

[300] Silence in the *Riddles* has been discussed, however, most recently in: Jordan Zweck, 'Silence in the Exeter Book Riddles', *Exemplaria* 28 (2016), pp. 319-36.

unclear: *ond þonne æfter deaþe deman onginneð, / meldan mislice* (and then after death it begins to judgme, to speak variously, lines 11-12a *Riddle* 28).

Riddle 28 has a contested solution,[301] and depending on how the riddle is solved, usually as either as an alcoholic beverage or as a musical instrument, *meldan* may mean a great variety of different things. This range of meanings is evident, for instance, in the translations of *deman onginneð, / meldan mislice*, lines 11b-12a of the Riddle: compare, for example, Porter ('start to judge with differing opinions') with Williamson's two interpretations ('it sings a clarion joy' and 'They clamour in confusion and find fault / With its dangerous pleasure.').[302] Although most editors treat *meldan / mældan* as variant spellings of the same verb, meaning 'to declare, announce', the range of meanings displayed in the translations of *Riddle* 28 illustrates the fact that the meaning of *meldan* is really very unclear here.

The doubt surrounding especially *Riddle* 28 makes it difficult to say much about either *mældan* or *meldan* – both alliterate, neither introduces a direct speech, and in both it may be the subject of the riddle who speaks (in *Riddle* 18 this is definitely the case) to an unspecified audience. As for *meðlan*, this occurs in *Andreas* at line 1440, alliterating but not introducing direct speech. The verb (which occurs in the infinitive) introduces God's promise to Andreas that he will not be made to suffer more than he can endure. It seems likely that all three of these isolated instances are derived from other morphologically similar verbs, and that they should not therefore be viewed as fully separate

[301] See, for example, Laurence K. Shook, 'Old-English Riddle 28—Testudo (Tortoise-Lyre)', *Mediaeval Studies* 20 (1958), pp. 93-7. Shook provides a helpful summary of the preceding scholarship on this *Riddle*.
[302] See Porter (2006), p. 28; Williamson (2017), p. 538 and 1157.

verbs in their own right: however, as with the prefixed forms, it is difficult to rule out the possibility that these are single attestations of quite separate verbs.

Richard Hogg and R. D. Fulk suggest that *maðelode* was formed not from *mæðlan* but rather from the noun *mæþ(e)l* 'assembly', but they also suggest that *maðelode* and *mælde* are being confused, as *mælde* and *mæþlde* 'are confused orthographically in verse, where the metre often shows which form was intended'.[303] The patterns of alliteration and the positioning of this group of verbs in the poetic line do not altogether suggest that an easy division can be made between those forms which should be regarded as arising from *maþelian* and those which should be seen as arising from *mæ(ð)lan*; however, the formula associated exclusively with *mælan* strongly links the instances of *mæðlan* which show this formula in the altered form *wordum mæðlan*, and as there are several of these, it seems likely that *mæðlan* is related to *mælan* rather than *maþelian*. Conversely, the well-established formula associated with *maþelian* can be used to identify forms linked more closely to *maþelian* through the usage in poetry: notably *[Name] gemælde* is more closely related to the usage of *maþelode* than to that of *mælde*, since this is the formula associated with *maþelode,* and this fits with other aspects of the usage of *gemælde*. As for *meðlan*, *meldan*, *onmælde* and *tomældeð, tomælde*, it is harder to categorise these into either group. The fact that *maþelian* does not introduce the speech of God (which fits also with the division in usage between *gemælde* and *mæðlan*, the former of which is not used of divine speech, but the latter of which is) could be used to argue that *meðlan* (in

[303] See Hogg and Fulk (2011), p. 269 6.96 note 2.

Andreas line 1440) is related to, or in error for *mæðlan*.[304] But there is also evidence that the two verbs, even in their clearly distinguishable forms, were being confused: for instance the single occurrence of *mælde* in the position normally reserved for *maþelode*, the second stress position in the a-verse, in *The Seasons for Fasting* line 43, where it occurs in a formula also associated with *maþelode*, *Moyses mælde*. The usage overall is sufficiently consistent and restricted to suggest that the uniformity of usage seen with *maþelode* was earlier mirrored with *mælde*. It seems likely that *mælde* occurred originally in poetry as the second stressed element in the b-verse, did not alliterate, and usually occurred as part of the formula *wordum mælde*: however, as this pattern was no longer consistently maintained by the time of the written record, it is hard to be sure.

The only clear semantic distinction in the usage of the two verbs is that *maþelode* is not used of divine speech, and is generally associated with the secular court, whereas *mælan / mæðlan* is associated with divine speech and, by extension, spiritual judgment. This secular / spiritual division also fits with the distribution of the verbs, in so far as the poem with the clearest roots in the Anglo-Saxon pre-Christian traditions, *Beowulf*, has no occurrences of *mælan / mæðlan*. The absence of divine speech with *maþelode* may also suggest that *maþelode* is the earlier word, whose very restrictive and formulaic use in pre-Christian legal and courtly contexts perhaps prevented it from being used for divine speech. How, when and why *mælan / mæðlan* developed is not clear, but it is possible that they arose partly from confusion with a number of other

[304] This is also plausible on philological grounds: see Ringe (2004), p. 418, and footnote 2, and below.

verbs, especially *meldian*,[305] a verb which occurs in a wide range of contexts (including both prose and verse) and grammatical forms.[306]

[305] Grein groups *meldian* and *meldigan* together, and glosses them *loqui, pronuntiare, indicare, deferre, manifestare, revelare*: see Grein (1912), p. 459. Bosworth and Toller only provide *meldian*, which they gloss as meaning 'to declare, announce tell; to inform against, accuse'.

[306] The etymologies and how they intertwine are discussed in more detail in the next section.

V. The maþelian *Group: A Bit of a Muddle*

The Proto-Old English verb or verbs which underlie *maþelian, mælan / mæðlan* and the other forms or possible forms, are of unclear origin.[307] Don Ringe suggests we must consider 'the possibility that *maþelode* is an artificial creation of the poetic tradition, of the sort familiar in Homeric Greek'.[308] This idea of a parallel with the usage found in Homeric Greek is old: Albert Cook, in 1926, outlined similarities between the usage of a group of words related to *mæðel* in *Beowulf* and Homeric use of *ἀγείρειν* and *ἀγορά*.[309] As with all suggestions of Greek parallels to, or influence in Old English texts, the links are hard to prove. Beyond the observation (which is made fully and clearly by Cook) that there are similarities of usage, as these may be only parallel, rather than due to connexion, the link itself must be speculative at best (see below for more on Cook's suggestion). Ringe argues that Old English inherited only one class I weak verb from Proto-Germanic, and the class II verb *maþelian* arose within the development of early Old English, from the noun *mæþl*.[310]

The verb *maþelian* and the related verbs *mælan* and *mæðlan* have a difficult and probably confused etymology. The *Oxford English Dictionary* suggests that Old English *mædlan, mæðlan, meðlan* are the ancestors of Middle English *medele, medle*.[311] The verb or verbs *mæðlan / mælan* et al. is or are probably

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[307] There must be an Indo-European root for the Old English noun *mæðel*, since there is a cognate in Sanscrit: the word मेल (*mela*) means 'gathering', or 'to meet'. See मेल *mela*, m., Sir Monier-Williams, *A Sanskrit-English Dictionary, Etymologically and Philologically Arranged with Special Reference to Cognate Indo-European Lanugages* (Oxford, 1851).
[308] Ringe (2004), p. 419.
[309] Cook (1926), p. 5.
[310] See Ringe (2004), especially p. 433.
[311] See † *mele*, v. *Oxford English Dictionary Online* (Oxford, June 2001), [last accessed 31 August 2017].

related to *maþelian* through a common Germanic base form from which the Old English noun *mæþel* is also derived.[312] If Ringe is correct, they descend from a Proto-Germanic verb, which presumably originally descended from the noun, either in Proto-Germanic or earlier. The *Oxford English Dictionary* cites a number of cognates for *mæðlan, meðlan, mædlan* in West Germanic, such as Old Saxon *mahlian* meaning 'to speak',[313] and Old High German *mahalen* 'to speak, promise, take as wife', which survives into Modern German only in the compound *vermählen* 'to marry, give in marriage'. There are also cognates in North Germanic, including Old Icelandic *mæla* 'to speak, stipulate', and Old Swedish *mäla, mela*, 'to speak, promise', which survives into modern Swedish in the now archaic verb *mäla*. In East Germanic, the Gothic word *maþljan*, 'to talk, hold formal discussion', which derives from a Germanic verbal derivative of the Germanic base of Old English *mæþel*, is suggested as a cognate for this group of Old English words, but not for *maþelian*.[314] The *Oxford English Dictionary* suggests that *maþelian* has a number of cognates or similar forms in two other West Germanic languages: Old Frisian *-mēlia,* attested as part of the compound *urmēlia*, meaning 'to report'; and Old High German *mahalōn* 'to accuse', derived from a Germanic verbal derivative, formed similarly to the base of *mele,* cognate to Old English *mælan*, derived from the Germanic base of Old English *mæþel* 'speech, assembly'.[315] According to this etymology, there are no cognates attested in North or East

[312] Although the etymology of *maþelian* is contested, it must be related to the noun *mæþel*. See, for example, Ringe (2004), p. 420.
[313] The occurrences of this verb in the Vatican *Genesis* are discussed in section III (above), pp. 107-8.
[314] See Ringe (2004), p. 420 and † *mathel*, v., *Oxford English Dictionary Online* (Oxford, March 2014), [last accessed 24 March 2014], in addition to † *mele*, v., cited above.
[315] See † *mathel*, v. *Oxford English Dictionary Online* (Oxford, March 2001), [last accessed 24 March 2014].

Germanic, although there are, as detailed above, cognates or similar forms for the related verb *mælan* in both North and East Germanic.

This etymology for *maþelian* agrees with Ferdinand Holthausen;[316] however, it is problematic, as the Old Frisian cognate *-mēlia*, found only in the compound *urmēlia* 'to announce, notify', is corrected to *urmēla* 'give up, renounce' by Dietrich Hofmann in his revised edition of Holthausen's *Altfriesiches Wörterbuch*,[317] where *urmēla* is listed as cognate with Old High German *mahalōn*.[318] As Ringe points out, *urmēlia* is a weak class 1 verb, making it less likely to be a straightforward cognate for an Old English class 2 verb.[319] The Old High German cognate, meanwhile, means 'to accuse, take to court', as Ringe also points out, suggesting parallel development rather than true cognateness. The connotations uncovered for the group of verbs discussed earlier in this chapter might bring *maþelian* and even *mælan* closer to the Old High German sense than Ringe suggests, however. It also seems likely that Gothic *maþljan* is a cognate of *maþelian* (giving us the East Germanic cognate missing from the *Oxford English Dictionary* etymology, probably based on Holthausen), although we would expect Old English *æ* for Gothic *a* here. Cook straightforwardly linked Old English *mæðel* to Gothic *maþl*, and upon this link he went on to explore similarities between the Beowulfian use of *maþelode* and the Homeric use of *ἀγορεύειν*, via Wulfila's translation of the Bible.[320] Cook's identification of the similarities in usage and semantics

[316] Ferdinand Holthausen, *Altenglisches etymologisches Wörterbuch* (Heidelberg, 1974).
[317] Ferdinand Holthausen, *Altfriesisches Wörterbuch*, ed. Dietrich Hofmann (Heidelberg, 1985).
[318] See also Ringe (2004), p. 420 for a fuller analysis.
[319] Ringe (2004), p. 420. Ringe suggests that the Old Frisian class II weak verb 'is a ghost word'.
[320] Cook (1926), pp. 4-5.

suggest a parallel example of how the noun might affect the meaning of the verb, keeping its connotations close to 'public meeting'. Both this parallel example from Greek, and especially the presence of *a* rather than *æ* in *maþelian* make it possible that *maþelian* did indeed develop from the noun in early Old English as Ringe posits, though this does not explain the evidence in the usage (which implies fossilisation) suggesting *maþelode* is old, and perhaps older than *mælan*, because the formula is so fixed and iconic. Ringe suggests a possible borrowing of the Old Norse cognates for *mæþl* and *mæ(ð)lan*, *mál* and *mæla* (past tense *mælti*) as a partial explanation for the range of forms found in Old English.[321] As he points out, if the Old Norse verb fell together with the Old English class 1 verb, or even contributed to its formation, this would also account for the loss of status of the verb, which would no longer necessarily be high register, suggested by the usage in early Middle English (which is discussed below).

It is not clear why the *Oxford English Dictionary* suggests these differences in the cognates for *maþelian* on the one hand, and the other verbs on the other, apart from the fact that *maþelian* is clearly a class 2 verb, whereas *mælan* at least must be class 1. The other words in the group are more difficult to categorise by class. The only instance of *mæðlan* which is not in the infinitive is in the present form, *mæðleð*,[322] and moreover this is emended from manuscript *mædleð,* and therefore this is not strong ground on which to base the classing of *mæðlan*. Ringe does firmly identify *mæðlan* as a class 1 verb,

[321] Ringe (2004), p. 429.
[322] Occurring in line 1337 of *Christ III*: *Þær he fore englum ond fore elþeodum / to þam eadgestum ærest mæðleð* (there he, before the angels and before the nations, will speak first to the most blessed)

without commenting on the emendation, and adding in a footnote that although *meðlan* (which occurs in *Andreas* line 1440) is the expected form, because of i-umlaut, '*æ* tends strongly to be restored by analogy with related forms', citing Campbell.[323] As for *meðlan* and *meldan*, as they each occur only once and only in the infinitive, it is not possible to say what class they should be assigned, although Ringe's suggestion that *meðlan* is a spelling variant of *mæðlan* fits with the evidence of usage, in that *meðlan* is used to introduce divine speech, which *mæðlan* often does, though *meðlan* alliterates, which is rare for *mæðlan*.[324] The prefixed verbs *tomældan / tomeldan* and *onmælan* must be from class 1, as the past tenses are *onmælde* and *tomælde* respectively: as these prefixed verbs are much more closely morphologically related to *mæ(ð)lan* than to *maþelian*, it seems likely that the fact that the prefixed verbs are class 1 is because they were formed from *mæ(ð)lan*. The instances of *gemælan* pose a particular puzzle, however, since morphologically *gemælan* must be class 1, as the instances show a past tense formed using the dental, and it therefore seems clear that *gemælan* was formed from *mæ(ð)lan* rather than *maþelian*, like the other prefixed verbs. The evidence of usage (both in terms of metrics and semantics), however, as explained in the section above, suggests that *gemælde* is more closely related to *maþelian* than *mæ(ð)lan*. The three surviving instances of *gemælde* provide the strongest evidence of confusion among the verbs, in spite of the class distinctions, and these instances are discussed in more detail below.

[323] See Ringe (2004), p. 418, and footnote 1 on the same page, and Campbell (1983), p. 76, especially §194.
[324] Only the instance of *mæðlan* in line 524 of *Genesis B* alliterates.

The split from North and East Germanic suggested by the *Oxford English Dictionary* etymology for *maþelian*, if accepted, could be used partially to explain the important differences both in usage and connotation between *mæðlan* and *mælan* on the one hand, and *maþelian* on the other, discussed in the sections above. However, Ringe argues that 'there is no question that OE inherited the class I weak verb *mæþlan ~ mǣlan*' from Proto-Germanic, and that the verbs were ultimately derived from the Proto-Germanic noun **maþlą*, and the related Proto-Germanic verb **maþlijaną*.[325] Ringe suggests the history of *maþelode* is within Old English, rather than in Proto-Germanic,[326] based on his argument that *maþelian* has 'no genuine cognates in any other Germanic language' – a statement which seems to be based on semantic evidence, notably from the Old High German word *mahalōn* mentioned above.[327] Having examined the evidence of the contexts of usage, however, this argument seems less persuasive, as *maþelian* bears interpretations which more closely relate to 'to take to court' , such as 'to speak in court'. Moreover, although the negative sense present in Old High German *mahalōn* is not strongly marked in the usage of *maþelode*, the instances in Middle English suggest the verb underwent strong pejoration, possibly partly driven by latent negative connotations relating to censure or judgement which may have been inherited from Proto-Germanic, as well as influence from morphologically similar words, both native and borrowed (this is discussed in greater detail in the next section). If anything, the evidence investigated in this study suggests that *maþelian* is the older verb, with stronger semantic links to the meanings

[325] Ringe (2004), p. 420; see also p. 433.
[326] Ringe (2004), p. 420.
[327] Ringe (2004), p. 422.

of the cognates found in other Germanic languages, and showing usage so inflexible as to suggest an ancient and (by the time of the written record) fossilised poetic formula. What can be stated with relative certainty is that the verbs *mæþlan / mælan* are somehow related to *maþelian* through a common Germanic base form, from which the Old English noun *mæþel* was probably derived first, and from which all or both the verbs therefore developed subsequently (although when the verbs were derived, whether in Proto-Germanic or only in early Old English, is not clear).

The key differences in usage between these verbs might be summarised as follows: firstly, *maþelode* occurs exclusively in the a-verse, occupying the second stress position, whereas *mæ(ð)lan* overwhelmingly occupies the second stress position in the b-verse; secondly, *maþelian* occurs in the formula *[Name] maþelode* (often followed by a patronymic), whereas *mæ(ð)lan* usually occurs in the formula *wordum mælde* or *wordum mæðlan*; thirdly, *maþelian* occurs in contexts which have courtly or legal associations, but not in contexts of divine speech, whereas *mæ(ð)lan* often introduces divine or saintly speech; lastly *maþelian* is almost entirely inflexibly used, suggesting a fossilised set piece *inquit* formula, and typified by the fact that *maþelian* occurs in several identical lines, whereas *mæ(ð)lan*, though it is used restrictively and formulaically, is afforded a little more flexibility of usage, typified by the fact that it occurs in other positions in the poetic line than as the second stressed position in the b-verse, alliterating on those occasions,[328] and does not occur in any exactly repeated lines. Intriguingly, both *mælde* and

[328] Although see Ringe (2004), p. 418-19, who argues that three of the instances where *mæ(ð)lan* occurs in a position other than the second stress in the b-verse are found in poems which are either late or not originally composed in Old English.

maþelode occur, along with two of the three instances of the intriguing word *gemælde* discussed above, in *The Battle of Maldon*, often in close proximity to each other. It is not clear from the usage in this poem what the connotative differences between these words might be, although *The Battle of Maldon* adheres to the respective formulae and the metrical distinctions between the words strictly. Although we cannot derive the connotations of these verbs from the usage in *The Battle of Maldon*, neither does the poem resist different connotations for the verbs: it is entirely possible (though unprovable), for example, that when Byrhtnoð is introduced with both *maþelode* and *mælde* in lines 42-3, this is meant to indicate both the legal and courtly formality of the context of his speech, and the religious significance of the Christian / heathen apposition (and opposition) in the subsequent exchange, since both religious and secular dimensions are in any case latent within the poem.

Although all these verbs are restricted to poetry, *mælan* and *maþelian* are attested a number of times, in three very late manuscripts of Old English (West Saxon) prose texts (one of which is an Alfredian text, being a late transcript of the Old English translation of Gregory the Great's *Dialogues*).[329] Ringe argues that these texts were written in a formalised late West Saxon chancery dialect, which probably had little relation to the spoken Old English of the time (as is often the case with formalised legal language). Ringe suggests that this formalised idiom is the likely reason for the presence of these originally poetic

[329] As Ringe notes, this instance of the verb *mælan* is likely to be a scribal error. Ringe says that *mælan* is probably an error here because it appears only in one manuscript, which is the least reliable surviving witness. See Ringe (2004), p. 421 footnote 5, and Hans Hecht ed., *Bischofs Wærferth von Worcester Übersetzung der Dialoge Gregors des grossen über das Leben und die Wunderthaten italienischer Väter und über die unsterblichkeit der Seelen* (Leipzig, 1900), pp. vii-viii. However, in fact, *mælan* does not occur in an Old English manuscript at all here, only in Junius's transcript, so this is likely to be a seventeenth century transcriber's error.

words in prose texts.[330] Ringe's argument regarding these words, however, needs further consideration. The transition of poetic words to late West Saxon prose texts is not a common one, making the transition suggested here rather surprising. Instead, the occurrences of *maþelian* in the *Enchiridion* may well be indicative, not of a general transition of the word from Old English verse into prose, but rather of the fact that Byrhtferth of Ramsey had carefully read and made use of a number of glossaries which contained this word. As Peter Baker and Michael Lapidge point out in the introduction to their edition,[331] a number of rare words which are found in both the *Enchiridion* and two Old English-Latin glosses make it particularly likely that Byrhtferth read and used vocabulary from the Aldhelm glosses in the Brussels AldV 1 (Royal Library MS 1650) and Digby AldV 13 (Bodleian Library Digby MS 146) glosses.[332] Moreover, there is uncertainty around at least one of the manuscript readings – the occurrence of *mælan,* in the third person singular preterite form *mælde*, found in Gregory's *Dialogues* and cited above occurs only in the least reliable of witnesses, a seventeenth century transcript, and it is quite likely that the Junius reading is erroneous, perhaps for MS. H's *ylde*. The verb *maþelian* does occur once in the *Corpus Glossary*, which probably dates from around

[330] Both verbs are attested in Byrhtferth's *Handboc* (see Michael Lapidge, and Peter S. Baker eds. *Byrhtferth's Enchiridion* (Oxford, 1995): *maðeligende* occurs on p. 62, line 118; *maðelian* occurs on p. 168, line 120; and *mælde* occurs on p. 122 line 6, in the formula *wordum mælde*). *Maþelian* is also cited in a very late fragment of *Soul and Body* (see Rissanen (1998), p. 322). *Mælan* is attested in a manuscript of the translation of Gregory the Great's *Dialogues* (see Hecht (1900), p.103, critical apparatus to l. 32 – however, see Ringe (2004) p. 421 footnote 5 for the problems with this manuscript). See Ringe (2004) p. 421 for more detailed information regarding these late attestations.

[331] See Lapidge and Baker ed. (1995), pp. cviii and cx. Baker and Lapidge cite *maþelian* as one of the words which suggest the glosses were the source of Byrhtferth's unusual vocabulary.

[332] The former of these glosses can be found in Arthur Sampson Napier ed., *Old English Glosses Chiefly Unpublished* (Oxford, 1900). The latter can be found in Louis Goossens ed., *The Old English Glosses of MS. Brussels, Royal Library, 1650 (Aldhelm's De Laudibus Virginitatis)* (Brussel, 1974).

800 and contains much older material.[333] The evidence for both the verbs in Old English prose, then, is slight, since both verbs occur in Byrhtferth, but are likely to be there because of influence from the Brussels and Digby glosses, and it is at least possible that the other prose use, in the *Dialogues*, is a scribal error. It seems, therefore, that only the instances of these verbs in the glosses provide reliable non-poetic evidence, and the use of words in glosses does not necessarily tell us anything about whether or not they were restricted to poetry. Ringe uses the prose evidence to argue that *maþelian* is a 'real verb', rather than an artificial creation.[334] The prose usage does not, it seems, provide such strong evidence of 'reality' as at first appears.

[333] See W. M. Lindsay, *The Corpus Glossary* (Cambridge, 1921) p. 48, 850, where *maðalade* glosses Latin *contionatur*. See also W. Lindsay, *The Corpus, Épinal, Erfurt and Leyden Glossaries* (London, 1921) for more details regarding this text.
[334] See Ringe (2004), pp. 419-21.

VI. Everyone Likes a Good Mardle

The etymology of this group of words, as discussed in the previous section, is complex, and the history of the development in the meaning of these words beyond the Old English period is worth examining in light both of this fact, and of the discussion earlier in this chapter of what we can recover of the semantics of this group of words from the usage. What follows is a discussion, at times tentative and speculative, of the possible afterlife of the Old English verbs discussed in the previous sections of this chapter, into Middle English and perhaps even into modern English, through dialectal uses.

The *Oxford English Dictionary* suggests that the Middle English forms *medele, medle* may be genuine reflexes of the Old English verb *mæ(ð)lan*;[335] however, they may also be forms arising from confusion with *meddle*, a loan adapted from Old French *mesler*, *meller*.[336] The only attestations of *mælan* in Middle English listed in the *Oxford English Dictionary* entry for *mathel*, apart from these possible reflexes of the verb, are six occurrences of the Middle English verb *mathelen, meathelen, meadelen* attested in the Corpus Christi College manuscript of *Ancrene Wisse* and the Maidstone manuscript of *The Proverbs of Alfred* listed below. However, in fact *mælan / mæðlan* do appear to survive into Middle English as *medlen, mellen, melen,* attested throughout the period, especially in the North and West Midlands in later Middle English:[337] confusingly, these Middle English attestations are listed under

[335] See † *mele*, v., *Oxford English Dictionary Online* (Oxford, June 2017), [last accessed 28 August 2017].
[336] See the Oxford English Dictionary entry for *meddle*, v., *Oxford English Dictionary Online* (Oxford, June 2017), [last accessed 28 August 2017].
[337] See Ringe (2004), p. 421.

mell, mele in the *Oxford English Dictionary* but not under *mathel*, although they are likely to be at least influenced by the Old English verbs, and may even be derived from them, though probably not directly.[338] Don Ringe suggests that *melen* may have survived into Middle English as a result of the coincidence of Old English *mælan* and Old Norse *mæla*, which is not likely to have been restricted in usage, or high register in Old English, as the Old English cognate appears to have been.[339] The fact that the possible modern descendant of *mælan* (for which, see below) is a word found in dialectal areas where there was heavy Norse settlement would support this theory, if accepted. The Old English verbs *meldan* 'to announce, declare', and *meldian* 'to announce, declare, tell; to inform against, accuse' may also have coincided with these verbs during the Middle English period, or at least added to the confusion in this group of words during the later Old English period and the transition into Middle English, due to morphological and semantic similarities with *mælan, mæðlan.* The *Oxford English Dictionary* does not, however, suggest this. The last instances of *meldan, meldian* in the *Oxford English Dictionary* are dated to the middle of the fifteenth century.[340] The final attestation of both *mell* and *mele* listed in the *Oxford English Dictionary* is a reference to *melit* (for the speech of a merle) on folio 229 of the Bannatyne manuscript, dated to 1568.[341]

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[338] See † *meld*, v.1, *Oxford English Dictionary Online* (Oxford June 2017), [last accessed 28 August 2017].
[339] See Ringe (2004), p. 429-30.
[340] See † *meld*, v.1, *Oxford English Dictionary Online* (Oxford June 2017), [last accessed 28 August 2017]. The *Oxford English Dictionary* suggests the later etymology of *meldan/meldian* is uncertain.
[341] See *mell*, v.2, *Oxford English Dictionary Online* (Oxford, March 2014), [last accessed 10 April 2014]. See also *melen*, v., *Middle English Dictionary Online* (Ann Arbour Mich., February 2006), [last accessed 10 April 2014].

According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, the verb *maþelian* survives into Middle English as *mathelen, meathelen, meadelen*, and it is attested in the Corpus Christi College manuscript of *Ancrene Wisse* (Corpus Christi College MS 402) five times, as well as in the Maidstone manuscript of *The Proverbs of Alfred* (Maidstone Museum and Art Gallery MS A.13) once.[342] This manuscript of *The Proverbs of Alfred* is dated to 1250 by the *Middle English Dictionary*,[343] and is the last attestation of the verb, which occurs here in the third person singular present, *maþeloþ*. The Trinity manuscript of the same text (Trinity College Cambridge, MS B. 14. 39), also dated to the thirteenth century, has *mamelit* at the same place. It seems probable that *mamelit* is either the direct ancestor of Modern English *mumble*, or fell in with it during the late Middle English period.[344] O. S. Arngart, in his edition of *The Proverbs of Alfred*, glosses *maþeloþ* as 'talks, chatters', and *mamelit* as 'mutters, chatters', and the similarity of the meanings he attributes to these words suggests that they occupied a similar semantic space within the field, at least as far as the idiolect of the scribes of these manuscripts was concerned. Importantly, the meanings Arngart assigns also suggest pejoration is affecting *maþelian*, and the other verbs with which it is being associated, and perhaps also gives us further evidence of the growing confusion between these verbs during this

[342] See O. S. Arngart, *The Proverbs of Alfred* v. 2 (Lund, 1955), p. 105 line 312.
[343] *mathelen*, v., *Middle English Dictionary Online* (Ann Arbour Mich., February 2006), [last accessed 24 March 2014].
[344] Walter W. Skeat links *mumble* to Middle English *momelen, mamelen* 'to speak indistinctly or weakly'; C. T. Onions links *mumble* to Middle English *momele*, noting a frequent formation on MUM[1], 'inarticulate sound made with closed lips'. See, Walter W. Skeat, *An Etymological Dictionary of the English Language* (Oxford, 1910), p. 390; and C. T. Onions et al. eds., *The Oxford Dictionary of English Etymology* (Oxford, 1966), p. 596 respectively.

period. Don Ringe points out that the attestations in *Ancrene Wisse* also carry a pejorative meaning – 'prate, gossip'.[345]

The second edition of the *Oxford English Dictionary* gives a number of eleventh century instances of words relating to *maþelian*, occurring mostly in eleventh century Aldhelm glosses, and ascribes pejorative meanings to one attestation of a derivative of the verb, *maðelild*, 'a female chatterer, gossip'. This word is listed as occurring in the Nero manuscript (London, British Library, MS Cotton Nero A xiv) of *Ancrene Wisse*.[346] The Corpus manuscript (Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, MS 402) has *meaðelilt* here, and the Cleopatra manuscript (London, British Library, MS Cotton Cleopatra C. vi) has *maðeleð*: all these forms are clearly related to *maþelian*, and support the theory that the word survived into the middle of the thirteenth century. These examples in *Ancrene Wisse* also suggest that the verb was undergoing pejoration.

It is possible that the verb *maþelian* did not then die out as the *Oxford English Dictionary* suggests, however, but rather that it survived, in dialect usage. The Modern English dialect word *mardle* (also written *mardel* and *maudle* according to Joseph Write)[347] seems a possible descendant of *maþelian*. This word is current in the East Anglian dialect of English, and the fact that the word is found in the dialect of this region also generally supports the link to *maþelian*, since the dialect of the Maidstone manuscript of the *Proverbs of*

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[345] See Ringe (2004) p. 422.
[346] See *mathele*, v. *Oxford English Dictionary*, second edition (Oxford, 1989).
[347] See Joseph Wright ed., *The English Dialect Dictionary: Being the Complete Vocabulary of All Dialect Words Still in Use, or Known to Have Been in Use during the Last Two Hundred Years* Vol. IV (London, 1903), p. 35.

Alfred is localised to the East Midlands, which is near to modern East Anglia.[348] As for the occurrences in *Ancrene Wisse*, all three of the manuscripts discussed above are localised to the Midlands, although to the West, not the East. The Nero manuscript which is dated to the first half of the thirteenth century, shows dialect which is probably that of Worcester.[349] The Corpus manuscript is dated to the thirteenth century, and the dialect is probably northern Herefordshire or Southern Shropshire.[350] The Cleopatra manuscript is dated to the first half of the thirteenth century, and the dialect is probably north Worcestershire.[351] In other words, all these Middle English attestations of *maþelian* are in a strip across the middle of the country, which provides some evidence that the descendants of *maþelian* may have been restricted to dialectal usage during the course of the Middle English period, and the possible modern descendant is found in a similar area.[352] It is harder to discern what happened to *mælan* or *mæþlan* after the end of the Middle English period, particularly as these verbs are morphologically harder to distinguish from a number of other verbs which had similar meanings, notably the Old Norse cognate *mæla* and the Old English verb *meldian,* although there is evidence that *mælan* and Old Norse *mæla* survived, at least long enough to influence Old Scots. There is also some semantic evidence for the influence of *maþelian* on *mardle*, which is discussed below.

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[348] See Argnart (1955), p. 29.
[349] See Bella Millett et al. eds., *Ancrene Wisse: A Corrected Edition of the Text in Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, MS 402, with Variants from Other Manuscripts* (Oxford, 2005), pp. xix-xx.
[350] Millett (2005), p. xi
[351] Millett (2005), p. xiii-xiv
[352] The lack of evidence for early Middle English makes this a tentative suggestion only, however.

It is worth noting from the outset that E. G. R. identified *mardle* as deriving from 'A.-S. [Anglo-Saxon] *Mathelian*, to speak, discourse, harangue; or A.-S. *methel*, discourse, speech, conversation. (Bosworth.)', and (s)he identifies the possible confusion with *mardle* 'a large pond' (a sense which (s)he suggests is confined to Suffolk).[353] The *Oxford English Dictionary* suggests in the notes to the etymology of the verb *mardle* that 'connection with MARDLE n. 3 or its probable etymon…seems unlikely' – *mardle*, n. 3 is the word mentioned by E. G. R. which means 'a pond', and is probably derived from French *mardelle* 'brim or border of a well, fountain, spring…'.[354] The East Anglian dialect word *mardle,* v. is listed as meaning 'to gossip, chat; to pass time in this way' by the *Oxford English Dictionary*, which does not provide details of its origin. The *Oxford English Dictionary* does suggest *mardle*, n. 2 and *maudle v.* 2 may be related to the verb *mardle*, but the etymology of the former is also unclear, and the latter is a back formation from *maudlin*, adj., which may also be influenced by *mardle* for sense two (details of what the earlier form might be are not given).[355] Joseph Wright provides a broader list of meanings in his *English Dialect Dictionary*: I list all the senses he provides here, as they deserve a detailed examination.[356] '1. v. To gossip; to waste time gossiping; to dawdle. Hence **Mardler**, somebody [who is] a gossip, one given to gossiping. (East Suffolk). 2. To drawl. (Norfolk). 3. To quarrel; to interfere. (Norfolk). 4. To indulge in merrymaking, to drink together (East Anglia). 5. With *up*: to

[353] See E. G. R., 'Notes on Books', *Notes and Queries* 215 (1853), p. 577.
[354] See *mardle*, n.3, *Oxford English Dictionary Online* (Oxford, June 2017), [last accessed 4 September 2017].
[355] See *mardle*, v., *Oxford English Dictionary Online* (Oxford, June 2017), [last accessed 4 September 2017]; *mardle*, n.2, *Oxford English Dictionary Online* (Oxford, June 2017), [last accessed 4 September 2017]; *maudle*, v., *Oxford English Dictionary Online* (Oxford, June 2017), [last accessed 4 September 2017].
[356] I have expanded the abbreviations for clarity, and the brackets are my addition. I have excluded the examples which Wright provides.

coddle, nurse; to take pains about. (East Suffolk). 6. *somebody*. A gossip; a long talk. 7. One who gossips, a lounging, idle woman. 8. A festive meeting, a drinking bout. (East Anglia).'[357] The senses displayed by the East Anglian word show links to the meanings of the Middle English descendants of *maþelian*, particularly those found in *Ancrene Wisse* listed above, such as the word *maðelild*, 'a female chatterer, gossip'.

There are also a number of possible Old Scots cognates for *mardle,* and this means that whatever the explanation of the link between the Old English words and *mardle* (if that link is accepted), the explanation suggested above only partially explains the Early Modern and Modern outcomes. There are two Old Scots words which may be cognates to *mardle.* The first, *mele, meil(l)* v. (also spelled *mel, meil(l)e, meale*) is found in Old Scots and listed in the *Dictionary of the Older Scottish Tongue* as cognate with Middle English *mele*, *mælenn*,[358] Old English *mǽlan*, and Old Norse *mæla,*[359] and as meaning 'to speak, converse; to tell; to say'.[360] Denten Fox, in his edition of Robert Henryson's poetry, thinks the word is used traditionally for the song of the mavis and the merle.[361] The second possible Scots descendant of *maþelian* and / or the related verbs, and a possible cognate of East Anglian *mardle*, is a Modern Scots dialect word, *mardle*. This word occurs as two nouns and an

[357] See Wright (1903), p. 35.
[358] *The Dictionary of the Older Scottish Tongue* cites Middle English *mele* as 14th c., *mælenn* in the *Ormulum*, *meild* in the *Cursur Mundi*, *mealde* in the Legend of Katharine. See William A. Craigie, *A Dictionary of the Older Scottish Tongue: From the Twelfth Century to the End of the Seventeenth*, Vol. IV (Chicago, Ill, 1971), p. 168.
[359] See Craigie (1971), p. 168.
[360] See William A. Craigie, *A Dictionary of the Older Scottish Tongue: From the Twelfth Century to the End of the Seventeenth*, Vol. IV (Chicago, Ill., 1971), p. 204. The other meanings are discussed in more detail below.
[361] See Henryson, Robert, *The Poems of Robert Henryson*, ed. Denton Fox (Oxford, 1981), p. 281, commentary to lines 1709-10.

adjective, which *The Scottish National Dictionary* suggests are probably forms of the same word. None of the *mardles* listed in *The Scottish National Dictionary* is linked therein to any Old or Middle English cognate, or with the East Anglian *mardle*, but Scottish *mardle* is linked to an Old French borrowing, the noun *merdaille*. This Old French word (which derives from the noun *merde*, still commonly used in modern day especially spoken French, and is equivalent to the Modern English word *shit*) meant 'a heap of dung'.[362] The word *merdaille* is also found in Early Modern English, meaning 'rabble, "scum"', and in modern north-eastern Scottish dialect as *mardle, mairdle, merdle*, 'a crowd or swarm'.[363] The word had links to martial action: Old Scots *merdale, mardale* n., the predecessors of the north-eastern forms listed above, was 'A collective term for: Camp followers, the rabble following an army'.[364] It is tempting to find in this martial sense of the word *merdale, mardale* some kind of overlap with the words so often used to introduce martial promises in Old English, *maþelian* and *mælan*. The link is tenuous, but as it is not clear how the Old French word from which it more obviously derived could have acquired these senses, it is possible that the confusion around this group of words resulted in some marginal semantic interference from the Old English words. Modern Scots *mardle* adj., (also spelt *mardel, mardal, maurdel, merdle, merdal, merdel, mairdal* and *mairdil*) means 'heavy, unwieldy, clumsy, corpulent, hence lazy, applied most frequently to women' according to *The*

[362] This is the sense listed in William Grant and David D. Murison eds., *The Scottish National Dictionary: Designed Partly on Regional Lines and Partly on Historical Principles, and Containing All the Scottish Words Known to Be in Use or to Have Been in Use since C. 1700*, Vol. VI (Edinburgh, 1965), p. 207. 'worthless rabble' is also listed in Craigie (1971), p. 204 as a meaning for Old French *merdaille*.
[363] See Craigie (1971), p. 204.
[364] See Craigie (1971), p. 204.

Scottish National Dictionary. The same word (with the same alternative spellings) means 'a contemptuous term for a fat, clumsy, idle woman; a gossip' when used as a noun. As for *mardle*, n.², found in north-eastern Scots, this word (also spelt *mardel, merdle, mairdle, meirdel*) means 'a large number, a crowd, a heterogeneous collection, a swarm'.[365] The overwhelmingly negative denotations reflected in the Scots and Old Scots words are clearly derived from the Old French ancestor, but the Old French word does not explain the range of meanings exhibited in the Scots words. An examination of the East Anglian *mardle* shows some semantic similarities with the Scottish words. Older Scots did apparently borrow the Old Norse neuter noun *mál*, 'speech, agreement', but the word seems to have become confused with the Old Norse weak masculine noun *mále*, 'contract, terms, pay' and the late Old English word *mál* 'pay, payment, terms, agreement'. Possibly, then, Scottish *mardle* is the result of confusion and interaction between the various nouns mentioned, with possible marginal semantic interference from the *maþelian*, *mælan* group of Old English verbs, and the Old French word *merdaille.*[366]

The Middle English instances of *maþelian* provide semantic evidence of a possible link to some of the senses found in both the Scottish and East Anglian dialect words, particularly the link to female speech and lazy females. The link to negative talk is also found in both dialects, especially in the sense 'gossip', present in both. The association with groups of people could arguably be traced in both Scots *mardle*, n.² and East Anglian *mardle* sense 8, and has similarities with the contexts in which *maþelian* in particular was used (though

[365] See Grant and Murison eds. (1965), p. 207.
[366] See Craig (1971), p. 50.

not with the core meaning of the word). Without influence from the various words for speech, the last two senses of the Scots word listed above ('idle woman; a gossip') are particularly difficult to derive from the Old French loan, and the fact that Old Scots *mele* seems to be the result of interaction between a number of words including the Old English *mælan* and the Old Norse *mæla* also provides possible evidence of the continued confusion among these words as they appeared in Scots.

That the word *merdaille* occurs in the works of Gower, who of course wrote in English as well as French and Latin, makes it more likely that the word was widely in use, not only among French speakers, but also among polyglots and possibly even among speakers whose first language was not French. It is likely that the confusion among this group of words already suggested by the Old English evidence resulted in several morphologically similar words influencing each other semantically as well as morphologically over the course of the Middle English period, and it is therefore also possible that the French word *merdaille* became one of a number of factors which caused pejoration in the Middle English *maþelian* group, a process which had already begun by the time of the last attested instances of the verb in Middle English. However, there are also signs of the possible survival of senses of *maþelian* familiar from Old English, especially in the East Anglian *mardle*. In addition to the link with gossip already discussed, sense 8 of East Anglian *mardle* fits with the context in which a lot of Anglo-Saxon characters *maþelode*: a drinking hall. Ultimately it is not possible in the present study to do more than suggest the possibility of a link between the Old English words, the scattered Middle English instances, and the Modern East Anglian and Scots dialect

words, but the suggestion is tantalising, and the exploration of this group of words which it provokes has uncovered something of the complexity of the interactions between these words, and the changes affecting this group of words over the course of their long history.

Chapter Two: The *(-)secgan* Group

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I. Chapter Summary

In this chapter, the most frequently occurring verb for 'to speak' in Old English poetry, *secgan*, is discussed. In stark contrast to *maþelian* and the other verbs discussed in Chapter One, *secgan* occurs both in prose and verse, and in a wide variety of contexts. The study of usage has uncovered, however, some specific connotations of this verb, which is the more surprising because there are so many instances of this verb, and its use is so widespread. The chapter begins with a review of the (limited) work on *secgan,* the aim of which is to establish what we already know of the meaning of this verb from existing scholarship. This is followed by a careful analysis of the patterns of usage, first for *secgan* and then for the prefixed verbs *asecgan* and *gesecgan, gesagian*, and the semantic distinctions between these verbs are explored.[367] Because *secgan* is a verb which occurs very frequently throughout the corpus, the discussion is perforce more selective than that in the previous chapter. The first section on *secgan* focuses upon the general trends, with fewer specific examples: the second section is much more detailed, and examines all the uses of *secgan* in a handful of poems, as well as some of the words most strongly associated, often through collocation, with *secgan*.

[367] The other possible prefixed verb, *onsecgan*, is excluded, because its meaning is so distant from that of *secgan* (Bosworth Toller suggest 'to sacrifice') that it is not even certain it is etymologically related to *secgan*, despite the morphological similarity: see Ross (1974), p. 284, who argues that *onsecgan* and *onsægedness* are from the same root as the Latin root *sak-* (found in *sacer* and *sanctus*), whereas *secgan* is from the same root as Latin *seku-* (found in *sequor*).

II. What has been Said?

Probably because *secgan* is one of the only verbs which occurs sufficiently frequently for it to be argued that there is a surplus of data, this verb, more than any other under investigation in this study, has suffered from a lack of scholarly attention. Given the lack of studies focused on this verb, the following review of the scholarship on *secgan* is especially detailed. This is particularly necessary as the studies which have considered this verb are, without exception, linguistic or philological in approach. Detailed examination of the conclusions drawn is needed to analyse any further relevance for literary scholars: conversely, the conclusions reached by these linguistic studies are far from irrelevant to this study. In particular, the aim of this review is to glean from these studies what has already been discovered regarding the connotations and usage of *secgan*.

Only two pieces of scholarship are solely devoted to the verb: one is the short Note regarding the etymology of *secgan* mentioned in the Literature Review.[368] The Note provides a possible etymology for the verb, but nothing regarding its meaning, and therefore is not further considered here. The other study is one of the two studies by Marta Maria Gonzales Orta also mentioned in the Literature Review.[369] The earlier of these two studies by Orta examines the syntax and semantics interface between *say* and *secgan*, and *tell* and *tellan*, through analysing and comparing their syntactic behaviour. Her analysis is technical and linguistic, and does not examine questions of literary

[368] Ross (1974), p. 284.
[369] Orta (2002), pp. 281-302. The other, which also makes some reference to *secgan*, is Orta (2001), pp. 81-98.

significance; however, some of her conclusions have a bearing on this study. Orta establishes that 'the syntactic alterations of these lexemes [*say, secgan, tell* and *tellan*] show the evolution of the PDE [present day English] verbs say and tell in relation to their OE [Old English] counterparts, with the former becoming more transitive than the latter. This evolution, on the other hand, has also meant a restriction in the semantic coverage of the PDE verbs within the domain of speech'.[370] These conclusions suggest some of the syntactic changes which these verbs have undergone during their history, and it is worth keeping in mind that it would seem that the Old English verb *secgan* had a greater semantic coverage than the modern descendant *say*. The later study by Orta is again entirely linguistic in focus, as she examines how *secgan* behaves using lexical templates. Her conclusions once again suggest the centrality of *secgan* within the semantic field of speech in Old English: 'the results obtained from the syntagmatic analysis of the Old English lexeme *SECGAN* have proved its prototypical nature within the Old English speech lexical domain'.[371]

A number of linguistic studies have examined *secgan*, usually in contrast to other verbs in Old English, especially *cweðan* and *sprecan*. The chief of these are the studies (also discussed in the Literature Review) by Michiko Ogura, which discuss multiple verbs including *secgan*. Ogura examines *secgan* and *cweðan* to investigate how they are used, and she uncovers some useful differences between the verbs in a number of articles, notably one on verbs of speech in Old English poetry from 1978. In this article, Ogura establishes that

[370] Orta (2001), p. 97.
[371] Orta (2002), p. 294.

'[a]lthough these two verbs are synonymous, it is noticeable that they keep comparatively distinct functional distribution in the Old English period', and she lists the poems in which *secgan* is preferred to *cweðan*.[372] She points out that *secgan* alliterates much more frequently than *cweðan*,[373] (a fact also established in the research for this project) and she lists some of the collocations commonly found with *secgan*.[374] Her conclusions are that '*secgan* is often followed by an indirect question but rarely by direct speech…[a] personal dative immediately follows *secgan* in nearly half of all the examples' in Old English poetry, and she groups *secgan* among the alliterating verbs.[375] Ogura discusses *secgan* again in her dissertation, and in another article, both published in 1981. In the former, she examines many verbs, including noting the linguistic, and especially syntactic development of a group of speech verbs into Middle English. In this study, Ogura looks at prose as well as verse. Her conclusions regarding stylistic changes affecting *secgan* (which she dates to Late Old English, 'around the end of the tenth century')[376] are that '*[s]ecgan* has no marked function at first, but it is gradually restricted to a few functions which have been characteristic of *cweðan*'.[377] As regards differences between prose and verse usage, Ogura says 'OE [Old English] *secgan* is frequent in occurrence in verse and already shows the function of introducing direct speech, but in Early OE prose works it is comparatively less frequent and seldom occurs with [+d.s.]' – in Middle English, however, this changed, and

[372] Ogura (1978), p. 2. See also p. 9.
[373] Ogura (1978), p. 8.
[374] Ogura lists, for instance, nominals which *secgan* takes as its object, adverbs or adverbial phrases which follow the verb; and the instances on which *secgan* is followed by the instrumental dative *worde* (*-um*), and the other verbs with which *secgan* is used (Ogura (1978), pp. 11 and 12 respectively).
[375] Ogura (1978), p. 23.
[376] Ogura, *Rivalry* (1981), p. 104.
[377] Ogura, *Rivalry* (1981), p. 104.

secgan was used frequently in Middle English prose in this construction.[378] Ogura adds the following in regard to changes in morphological forms which are in frequent use: '*[s]ecgan* is often used in the infinitive and especially in verse, but, since it develops the function which *cweðan* used to have, it tends to be used in the present and the preterite. As "*say*+d.s." becomes common in ME [Middle English], the preterit *sayd* increases for the use'.[379] These differences in linguistic usage over the course of the period which Ogura identifies provide helpful functional background to this study. Ogura also makes the important observation that 'around the twelfth century…*tellen* begins to be used in several expressions where *cweðan* and *secgan* are originally used, though the functional interlockings of the three already took place in the tenth century'.[380] The results of the research in this project suggest that the functional shift from *secgan* to *tell* over the course of the Middle Ages which was identified by Ogura is mirrored, to an extent, by a shift in connotations, and this shift is explored within this chapter.

The other article by Ogura, published in the same year as her dissertation, investigates formulae and variation in Old English poetry, and their syntactic role; this article contains less material on *secgan*.[381] Ogura also studied how *secgan* and *cweðan* were used in Old English prose to establish the functional differences which distinguish the two verbs. She noted a number of differences in the functions of each verb based on the usage in Old English

[378] Ogura, *Rivalry* (1981), p. 105.
[379] Ogura, *Rivalry* (1981), p. 106
[380] Ogura, *Rivalry* (1981), p. 106.
[381] Ogura notes that *sægde* can be used as a *varians* with *maþelode* (see Ogura, 'Formulas' (1981), pp. 6 and 8), and lists *wordum sægde* as one of a number of formulae which 'may occur either with or without a discourse', (Ogura, 'Formulas' (1981), p. 19).

prose, the most significant of which (for the purposes of this study) is that *soþl(ice) ic eow secge* is a possible translation of Latin *Amen dico uobis*, especially in the Gospels.[382] This fits with the connotations uncovered in the usage of *secgan* in Old English poetry by this study. Among the functional distributions between *secgan* and *cweðan* in Old English prose which Ogura identifies, she notes that *secgan* can introduce indirect questions, and introduces indirect speech more frequently than *cweðan*. She also notes that *secgan* takes the dative without *to*, and that 'the accusative object of *secgan* occurs much more in frequency and in variety than that of *cweðan*'.[383] Ogura identifies a tendency for *secgan* to take words 'which indicate various features of what is to be told' as objects, and subjects which are inanimate (such as *boc, gewrit*) or generic (such as *mon / men*).[384] In addition, Ogura briefly identifies patterns of usage in verse, in the appendix to this article: for instance she notes that in prose *cweðan* occurs more frequently than *secgan*, whereas in verse *secgan* is more frequent than *cweðan*.[385] Ogura's article on the verbs of saying in *Beowulf* includes a useful list of all the instances of *secgan* occurring in the poem, the etymology of the verb, and she assigns the senses 'to say, tell' to the verb, as well as outlining collocations and alliteration patterns.[386] She provides similar information for the prefixed verbs *asecgan* (which she defines as 'to tell, declare') and *gesecgan* (which she defines as 'to say, tell').[387]

[382] See Ogura (1979), p. 18.
[383] Ogura (1979), p. 24.
[384] Ogura (1979), p. 24.
[385] See Ogura (1979), pp. 24-5.
[386] See Ogura, (1) (1995), pp. 216-20.
[387] See Ogura, (2) (1995), pp. 253 and 247 respectively.

Three other articles, by Naya, Cichosz, and Goossens, examine *secgan* as one of a number of other verbs. The article by Belén Méndez Naya mentioned in the Literature Review examines how mood selection influences meaning for *cweðan*, *secgan* and *cyðan*, 'the three most common predicates of reporting in Old English'.[388] Naya's study is based on a prose corpus selected from Alfred's *Cura Pastoralis* and Ælfric's *Lives of Saints*, chosen so as to represent early and late Old English prose respectively. Her conclusions regarding *secgan* are that 'SECGAN does not clearly favour either of the two moods [indicative or subjunctive]…Although the subjunctive can be used as an indication of reported speech after SECGAN, it is possible to find examples in which its selection is semantically determined, for instance when the subjunctive is used to denote the falsehood of the proposition, or when the complement has DTR [determined time reference] and is to be interpreted as a command'. In contrast, the selection of the indicative 'is always semantically motivated…this mood is generally found in connection with universal truths and with events which have taken place, or, in other words, the indicative is selected in propositions whose truth cannot be questioned'.[389] It is particularly important to note that Naya establishes that *secgan* does not favour one mood over the other in Old English prose (unlike *cweðan*), and therefore there may be semantic implications to mood selection in any given instance. All this is background information to the usage of *secgan* in Old English, and is the more helpful because it is also beyond the scope of this project to establish this type of information relating to (linguistic) function, especially with regard to Old

[388] See Naya (1995), p. 127.
[389] See Naya (1995), p. 140.

English prose. Naya notes the prevalence of *to soðan* occurring after indicative instances of *secgan.*[390] The fact that *soð* seems to be associated with *secgan* in prose as well as in verse is of interest for this study, and supports the connotations of *secgan* suggested by the research discussed in this chapter.

An article by Anna Cichosz (also mentioned in the Literature Review) examines verb-initial constructions using the Old English verbs of saying. Cichosz establishes that *secgan* is the second most frequent Old English verb of saying to occur in verb initial order, although this is not the favoured ordering for Old English prose.[391] She notes that *secgað men* seems to be a formula used in the Old English Bede 'to begin a story or a new stage of a story', and thus has a discourse function.[392] As Cichosz brings forward a number of convincing arguments for disregarding the theory that Latin influence on the translations of Bede provoked the substantial use of verb initial clauses using verbs of speech,[393] her conclusions also provide helpful contextual information regarding the possible function of *secgað men* as a formula. Both in the case of her scholarship, and of that of Naya, however, the fact that their work is restricted to prose, whereas this thesis is restricted to verse, means that there may be substantial differences of usage. This difference of focus also means that the same rules for the use of language established in their studies may not apply in the case of poetic language, studied in mine.

[390] See Naya (1995), p. 140.
[391] See Cichosz (2016), pp. 7 and 9.
[392] Cichosz (2016), p. 21
[393] See especially Cichosz (2016), pp. 16-18.

One further study, by Louis Goossens, is worth noting. It examines a group of verbs, three from Old English and four from present-day English, to compare the framing of the linguistic action scene.[394] Goossens notes the prevalence of accusative objects for *secgan*, most of which are 'narratable or relatable objects' (such as *tacen, swefn, godspel* or *big spel*), which he suggests 'give *secgan* a good deal of *narrate*-character'. He also suggests that '*secgan*…often has addressee focus'.[395] Goossens concludes that '*cweþan* is more like *say* and *secgan* like *tell*' – a conclusion also drawn from the research in this chapter, but through very different analysis.

The central denotation of *secgan* is, apparently, uncontroversially clear; its connotations, however, have received little critical attention. Not only the connotations, in fact, but even the less central denotations of the verb have been little explored. A number of the points made by the linguisticians who have looked at this verb, however, are of significance for the research discussed in this chapter, despite the fact that the aims of this study are very different from those of syntacticians and other linguisticians. In particular, the functional link established by Goossens between Old English *secgan* and Modern English *tell* is worth remembering. It is also worth noting the functional and syntactic evidence for the centrality of *secgan* among the Old English verbs of speech, commented upon by a number of the studies above. The link between *secgan* and *soð* mentioned by both Ogura (1979) and Naya

[394] The Old English verbs examined by Goossens are *sp(r)ecan, secgan* and *cweðan*. The Modern English verbs are *speak, talk, say* and *tell,* all high frequency linguistic action verbs. See Louis Goossens, 'Framing the Linguistic Action Scene in Old and Present-day English: Old English *cweðan, secgan, s(p)recan* and Present-day English *speak, talk, say* and *tell* Compared', in Jacek Fisiak ed., *Papers from the 6th International Conference on Historical Linguistics* (Amsterdam, 1985), pp. 149-70.
[395] Goossens (1985), p. 165.

is one which is strongly suggested by the research in this chapter, and will be discussed in some detail. Likewise the subjects identified by Ogura (1979) as frequently used with *secgan* will be discussed in much greater detail later in this chapter.

III. 'How say you to that?':[396] *Overview of Usage of* **secgan** *in Old English*

This section provides an overview of the usage of *secgan* in Old English, before going on to the analysis of individual instances. An effort is made throughout to provide as much substantiation for the more statistical or general points made in the footnotes and Appendix C as possible.[397]

Secgan is the most frequently occurring verb of speech in Old English poetry, as has already been pointed out in work on this verb.[398] In fact, *secgan* occurs almost twice as frequently in Old English poetry as the next most frequent verb of speech, *cweðan*.[399] However, unlike its modern descendant *say*, *secgan* does not appear, from its use in Old English poetry, to be a colourless word for 'to speak'. This is surprising, given that *secgan* is used in prose and glosses, as well as occurring in a wide range of poems, and in view of the central functional importance of *secgan* uncovered by linguisticians, notably in the syntactic studies discussed in *What has been said* above. This breadth of usage across the Old English corpus would suggest that *secgan* is adaptable for use in a large range of contexts, and therefore has few connotations. However, in fact, there is a particularly strong link between *secgan* and *soð* (truth), which is more than just an alliterative pairing, as the verb appears to be particularly associated with truthful speech in several other ways also. The link is strong

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[396] *Twelfth Night*, I.v.80.
[397] Where such substantiation is not possible, because of the volume of evidence, the reader is invited to consult Appendix A. As *secgan* occurs very frequently, the approach in this chapter is perforce more general and less focused on specific examples than that of the chapter on *maþelian* and the related verbs.
[398] See, for example, Ogura (1979), p. 25.
[399] *Secgan* occurs 354 times, *cweðan* 191 times and *sprecan* (the next most frequently occurring verb of speech) 158 times in poetry.

enough to have been noted by linguists working on Old English prose, as discussed above, also suggesting that the link between *secgan* and *soð* was semantic as well as alliterative: it cannot be simply explained by the necessity for alliterating pairs in Old English poetry, since it also occurs in prose. The verb is used in similar ways to those in which Modern English *tell* is now used, often for reporting speech within direct speech, as well as to demand others' speech, for example in the frequent use of *secgan* in the *Riddles* for the final exhortation 'say what I am called', or some variation of it.[400] The role of *secgan* for reporting speech has also been highlighted by linguists looking at the syntactic functions of Old English *secgan* and Modern English *tell*, as discussed above. The use of the imperative form, *saga*, to provoke speech in others, particularly within the *Riddles*, is echoed by the use of the verb in other poems and contexts associated with mystery, either in the form of other enigmas, or magic, or the numinous. Moreover, the verb is used in some contexts which suggest difficult speech, again often due to divine mystery, but sometimes also due to the complexity of the subject matter, and perhaps even the inadequacy of language. The use of the verb in the *Riddles*, as well as the dialogue poems *Solomon* and *Saturn I* and *II*, *Precepts* and *Soul and Body I* and *II*, for instance, supports this apparent link between arcane wisdom and the verb *secgan*.[401]

[400] (The riddles where the line is not listed have *Saga hwæt ic hatte*, 'say what I am called') *Riddle* 1 line 14 *Saga…/…hu ic hatte*; *Riddle* 3 line 72; *Riddle* 8 line 8; *Ridle* 10 line 11; *Riddle* 12 line 13; *Riddle* 19 line 9; *Riddle* 23 line 16; *Riddle* 35 line 13 *Saga…hwæt þis gewæde sy*; *Riddle* 36 line 8 *saga hwæt hio wære*.; *Riddle* 39 line 29 *saga hwæt hio hatte*; *Riddle* 62 line 9; *Riddle* 66 line 10; *Riddle* 67 line 15 *Secge se þe cunne/…hwæt seo wiht sy*; *Riddle* 73 line 29; *Riddle* 80 line 11; *Riddle* 83 line 14; *Riddle* 86 line 7.
[401] Specific examples are discussed below.

A very large portion of the finite instances of *secgan* have an unspecific, often plural subject, or the narrator, poet or psalmist is the subject, or a 'we' which includes readers.[402] The verb is also used particularly frequently with subjects such as *ænig* (any) or *beorn* (man) or *æghwylc* (everyone).[403] The unspecific nature of these subjects might help explain the verb's frequent occurrence, but also suggests an association with the conveyance of truisms, factual utterances, generally accepted truths. Sayings and proverbs are more likely to be introduced with *secgan* than any other verb, and *secgan* is often used in impersonal expressions, such as 'it is said'. Incidentally, the fact that the Modern English descendant *say* is still used in this sense for the noun 'saying' (aphorism or proverb) is noteworthy.[404] This proverbial, factual facet of the meaning of *secgan* ties in well with the association between *secgan* and *soð* (truth) already mentioned, and discussed below. The verb also has links with glory (*wuldor*) and wonder (*wundor*),[405] both of which fit with the kind of truth often linked to the verb, namely divine, learned or scriptural truth. *Secgan* does not appear to suggest a specific social register, being used with general subjects, of neither spiritual nor noble heritage, as well as for the speech of kings and saints.

Of course, truth (or its absence) is often a key feature of discourse, so that it could be argued that the link between speech and truth is only a product of this fact coupled with alliterative expedience. The link between *soð* and *secgan*,

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[402] This fits with Ogura's point about the predominance of generic subjects for *secgan*: see Ogura (1979), p. 24 and above.
[403] A list of examples of such general subjects is provided in Appendix C, pp. 273-9.
[404] See *saying*, n. 1, *Oxford English Dictionary Online* (Oxford, June 2015), [last accessed 5 October 2017], especially sense 2 and 3.
[405] See below for more details regarding the frequency and nature of this link.

however, is not satisfactorily explained by this, for the following reasons. Firstly, other aspects of the use of *secgan* (without considering its link to *soð*) also suggest an association with true speech; these aspects are explored in more detail below, but in summary they are: the association between *secgan* and writings including scripture; the tendency for the speakers of *secgan*, when they are named individuals, to be wise or knowledgeable figures, as well as the aforementioned frequent use of *secgan* for very general speakers and its implications; and the use of *secgan* to provoke factual speech, such as in the Riddle formula 'say what I am called'.

Secondly, although it can be argued that *soð* is the word which has both the strongest conceptual and alliterative link to *secgan*, there are a number of other words which could (and to a degree do) serve this function. None of these other words, however, is used anywhere near as frequently as *soð* to alliterate with *secgan,* nor do other aspects of the use of *secgan* support a stronger than merely alliterative link with these words as is the case with *soð*. For example, although *singan* (to sing) is often used in apposition to speech words,[406] often to introduce speech, and *secg* (man) would make a useful collocating pair, since it would provide a useful subject for speech (and has the added advantage of being a poetic word), the data show no comparable link to that between *secgan* and *soð*, either in terms of the frequency of alliterative pairing, or in terms of other aspects of usage, in either case. Other words, such as *sið* (journey), *sige-* (victory) compounds and *sunu* (son), and even *sylf* (self), and *sum* (some), are used to alliterate with *secgan*, and some of these

[406] See below for details of the alliterating instances with *secgan*.

words (though not all) also have a conceptual link to *secgan*, though possibly not one as strong as that between *soð* and *secgan*. The range of potential alliterative pairs for *secgan* rules out an argument for the link between *soð* and *secgan* based solely, or even chiefly, on alliterative expediency: a semantic association between these words, perhaps strengthened by expediency, seems more likely.

Lastly, an argument that the alliterative link along with the semantic association between *soð* and *secgan* explains their frequent use requires that other similar alliterative links (when backed with semantic association) also occur among other verbs of speech, for example, between *cuðe* (clearly) or *cyð* (knowledge) and *cweðan*. However, there is no such proportionally comparable alliterative linking among the other verbs of speech. It is also worth noting in this connection that *secgan* is one of the verbs of speech which alliterates more frequently, and this may be in part due to the link between *secgan* and *soð*.[407] The poetic link between *soð* and *secgan* was doubtless strengthened by this fact, and most (though not all) of the collocating instances of *secgan* and *soð* indeed alliterate functionally. As used in the poetry, the two words relate to each other in a number of different ways: as well as collocating, they generally occur in the same sentence or sense unit, and in contexts where *soð* links to the use of *secgan,* directly or indirectly (see below for examples). Each of these links suggests something slightly different about the semantic relation between *soð* and *secgan.* The evidence points

[407] This has been noted: see, for example, Ogura (1979), pp. 24-5. See also below.

clearly to a semantic link between the words which is about more than mere alliterative expedience.

The most obvious evidence is quantitative: *secgan* and *soð* (either occurring as a noun or adjective) or *soðe* (the adjectival form) collocate and / or alliterate on thirty-nine occasions throughout the poetic record, in a large range of poems.[408] *Soð* occurs in the same sentence as *secgan* without alliterating with it a further five times.[409] The *soð-* compounds *soðcwide, soðfæst*, *soðfæstnesse,* and the adjective *soðlic* and adverb *soðlice* appear in alliterating collocation with *secgan* a further twenty times.[410] Thus *secgan* and *soð* in some form are closely associated syntactically some sixty-four times, or in around eighteen percent of the occurrences of the verb in Old English poetry. This correlation is striking, particularly given that it applies to a verb which occurs so frequently (there are 354 instances of *secgan* in Old English verse). Even though the alliteration of *soð* and *secgan* makes the collocation a very obvious one, nevertheless such a commonly occurring pairing is rare, and has no parallel among the other verbs of speech: *cweðan*, for example, shows no

[408] *Secgan* alliterates with *soð* in the following: *Aldhelm* line 8; *Andreas* lines 764 and 851; *Beowulf* lines 532, 1049, 1700 and 2864; *Christ I* lines 33, 197 and 317; *Genesis A* line 2393; *Guthlac A* line 494; *Lord's Prayer 3* line 34; *Precepts* line 64; *Psalm 50* line 119; *Psalm* 89.13 line 1, *Psalm* 100.1 line 2; *Riddle* 39 line 29; *Solomon and Saturn 2* lines 253 and 431; and *Elene* line 588. *Secgan* collocates with *soð* in the following: *Christ II* line 451; *Genesis A* line 1915; *Judgment Day 2* line 302; *Psalm* 91.2 line 3, and *Psalm* 101.19 line 1. It alliterates with *soðe* in the following: *Andreas* line 618; *Beowulf* lines 51 and 590; and *Christ and Satan* lines 63 and 428. *Secgan* collocates with *soðe* in the following: *Andreas* line 458; *Christ III* line 1550; *Elene* lines 160 and 574; *Genesis B* line 570; *Juliana* line 132; *Psalm* 65.14 line 2, *Psalm* 104.10 line 1.

[409] *Christ III* line 1307; *Daniel* line 445; *Genesis A* line 2014; *Meters of Boethius* 12 line 29; and *Maxims* 2 line 65.

[410] *Soðcwide* in the following: *Daniel* line 445; *Riddle* 35 line 13; *Christ and Satan* line 469. *Soðfæst* in the following: *Christ I* line 302; *Guthlac A* line 506; *Juliana* line 348; and *Solomon and Saturn 2* line 237. *Soðfæstnesse* in the following: *Psalm* 88.4 line 4. *Soðlice* in the following: *Andreas* line 681; *Beowulf* lines 141, 273 and 2899; *Christ I* lines 137 and 203; *Elene* lines 317 and 665; *Guthlac A* line 51; *Juliana* line 561; *Psalm* 103.31 line 2, *Psalm* 118.85, line 2.

comparable alliterative pairing.[411] It is notable, too, that *secgan* alliterates far more frequently than *cweðan*, on one hundred and ninety-five occasions, so that *secgan* and *soð* or a word related to *soð* account for around thirty percent of the alliterating instances of *secgan*. None of the other words used to alliterate with *secgan* do so anything close to as frequently as *soð* and its compounds. Even the *singan*, *song* group, which like *soð* could be used in a number of word classes as well as grammatical forms, and might be expected to be a highly productive pairing for *secgan* in view of the fact that it can be used in variation with *secgan* as part of a speech introduction, in fact only alliterates with *secgan* eleven times.[412]

[411] Out of twenty-four instances when *cweðan* alliterates, *cweðan* collocates with *Crist* on five occasions: *Christ I* line 65; *Dream of the Rood* line 116; *Elene* line 1119; *Guthlac A* line 577; *Lord's Prayer 2* line 12. There are three collocations with *cuð*: *Psalm* 72.9 line 1, *Psalm* 93.7 line 1, *Psalm* 88.2 line 1. There are three collocations with *cuðlice*: *Psalm* 70.10 line 1, *Psalm* 82.4 line 1, *Psalm* 89.3 line 2.

[412] *Secgan* collocates with *song* or some form of the verb *singan* in the following instances: *Beowulf* line 90; *Christ and Satan* line 233; *Guthlac A* line 614; *Meters of Boethius* 2 line 17; *Psalm* 65.3 line 3, *Psalm* 100.1 line 2, *Psalm* 103.31 line 2, *Psalm* 104.2 line 2; *Widsith* lines 54 and 100; and *Christ II* line 667.

IV. 'How say you sir? Can you deny all this?'[413] *Detailed Examination of Usage of* **secgan**

In investigating the data in more detail, the link between truthfulness and the verb *secgan* becomes ever more evident. In most of the cases where the words collocate, *soð* is in some way qualifying *secgan*, either because it occurs as the direct object of *secgan* or because the speech introduced with *secgan* is explicitly denoted as truthful using *soð*. The most common manifestation of the direct qualification of *secgan* using *soð* is as direct object in the general claim '*someone* tells / will tell the truth'. The only occurrence of *secgan* in *Aldhelm* (at line 8) is one example of this, and is also an example of the link between writing and *secgan*: '*Biblos ic nu sceal / ... / secgan, soð nalles leas*' (I, a book (probably *De laude virginitatis*) now must…tell, the truth, not lies).[414] The contrast between truth and lies made here is a recurrent one.

A similar instance of the link between *soð* and *secgan*, but with a slightly different connotation, occurs at line 1049 of *Beowulf*, where we are told that Hrothgar's gifts in recompense to Beowulf cannot be belittled by *se þe secgan*

[413] Continuing with the Bard, this is from *Richard III*: I.i.96.

[414] Other instances where *soð* occurs as the direct object of *secgan* in this way are: *Christ I* lines 33 and 197; *Genesis A* line 2393; *Guthlac A* line 494; *Judgment Day 2* line 302; *Psalm* 89.13 line 1; *Precepts* line 64 (here, although *secgan* and *soð* are not directly syntactically linked, the father is counselling his son to make truth the aim of his speech, so semantically the link is clear); *Solomon and Saturn 2* line 253; *Genesis A* line 2014; *Daniel* line 445 (where *soðcwidum* also occurs in relation to *secgan*); *Christ III* line 1550; *Elene* lines 160 and 574; *Genesis B* line 570; *Juliana* line 132; *Psalm* 65.14 line 2, *Psalm* 104.10 line 1; *Christ and Satan* lines 63 and 428. A direct link between *secgan* and *soðcwide* occurs in the following: *Riddle* 35 line 35 *Christ and Satan* line 469. A direct link between *secgan* and *soðlice* occurs in the following: *Beowulf* lines 141, 273 and 2899; *Christ I* lines 137 and 203; *Elene* lines 317 and 665; *Guthlac A* line 51; *Juliana* line 561; *Psalm* 103.31 line 2; and *Psalm* 118.85 line 2. *Aldhelm* has been discussed mostly as a macaronic, but the speech of the book in this passage has also been discussed. See, for example, Susan Irvine, *Uncertain Beginnings: The Prefatory Tradition in Old English* (Cambridge, 2017), pp. 10-11.

wile soð æfter rihte (the one who wishes justly to speak the truth).[415] Here, *secgan* is associated with legalistic accuracy – *rihte* suggests not so much moral rectitude as justice, because of the importance (legal as much as social) of gift giving.[416] The legal nature of gifts of this sort is most obvious in the matter of *wergild*, paid as compensation for the peaceful resolution of feuds.[417] Strict rules also governed the gift-giving between a lord and a retainer. Although Beowulf is not Hrothgar's retainer at any stage in the poem, their relationship does have obvious parallels with that between a retainer and a lord, not least because the agreement between lords and retainers was in place largely for the defence of the realm from outside aggressors (or, conversely, to allow the successful conquest and looting of other realms). There is, therefore, a legal dimension to the kind of gift described in this passage, and to its gifting also. As Richard Firth Green explains, 'kings…who gave their followers no cause for gratitude had little reason to expect their blind devotion'.[418] Green goes on to explain the clause of exceptions to the Anglo-Saxon oath of fidelity, which allowed a retainer to cease being loyal to a king who did not honour his duty to provide for and remunerate his retainers appropriately.[419]

Hrothgar's use of *soð: secgan* at line 1700 is similar, and also includes a link to *riht*.[420] Hrothgar says to Beowulf, *þæt, la, mæg secgan se þe soð ond riht / fremeð on folce* (Lo, that one is allowed to say, who practices truth and right

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[415] Marie Nelson argues that this section of the poem was intended by the *Beowulf* poet to honour Hrothgar as much as Beowulf: see Marie Nelson, 'It is More Honorific to Give…', *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen* 74 (1973), pp. 624-9.
[416] The link between speech and gift is also relevant here, of course. See Bjork (1994).
[417] See Richard Firth Green, *A Crisis of Truth; Literature and Law in Ricardian England* (Philadelphia, 1999), p. 73.
[418] Green (1999), p. 209.
[419] See Green (1999), p. 210.
[420] A similar link between *secgan*, *soð* and some sort of legal rightness can also be found at *Genesis A* line 1915, but here the link is to *ræd*, not *riht*.

among the people, lines 1700-1) linking his right to state that Beowulf was born to be a great man to the fact that Hrothgar is among those who practice truth among the people, after Beowulf has killed Grendel.[421] This line (1700) is almost identical to line 2864, where Wiglaf points out that it is undeniable that Beowulf gave the followers their weapons, and that therefore, given their actions, it is also undeniable that Beowulf's generosity was wasted on his thanes.[422] The relationship between Wiglaf and Beowulf, and the other followers of Beowulf who fail to fight, fits exactly with the contract between a retainer and his lord: thus Wiglaf's observation plays directly on the same contract which is less directly referenced in the description of Hrothgar's gift to Beowulf. In this case, however, the retainers (apart from Wiglaf) have not kept their half of the loyalty oath. In both these cases, the meaning of the phrase is essentially the same as that at line 1049: namely that anyone who wishes to speak truly cannot help but agree with the preceding statement (lines 1046-8a). The use of *secgan* with *soð* in *Christ I* at line 317 is similar – here, although *soð* is not in the same clause as *secgan*, the sense of the sentence – *Ic þe mæg secgan þæt soð gewearð*... (I am able to tell you that came true…) – is clearly that the truth of the thing spoken is assured by the fact that it came true.[423]

[421] This speech has been discussed chiefly because of its parallels with the homiletic tradition: see, for example, Andy Orchard, *Pride and Prodigies: Studies in the Monsters of the Beowulf-manuscripts* (Toronto, 2003), pp. 47-53.
[422] The significance of this speech has been discussed. See, for example, Thomas A. Carnicelli, 'The Function of the Messenger in *Beowulf*', *Studies in Philology* 72 (1975), pp. 246-57, especially pp. 252-3 where Carnicelli suggests that the unworthiness described by Wiglaf in this speech is also the reason why the Geats lose their treasure.
[423] See also the following, where it is clear that *soð* refers to *secgan* indirectly: *Psalm* 91.2 line 3, *P.* 100.1 line 2, 101.19 line 1; *Riddle* 39, line 29; *Meters of Boethius* 12 line 29; *Christ I* line 302; and *Solomon and Saturn 2* line 431.

There are instances of the collocation where the only, or the main reason for their appearance together, is alliteration. The most immediate way of distinguishing these instances is to look for those occasions when *soð* and *secgan*, though in the same line, appear in different sentences.[424] Sometimes, even in these instances, an argument for the importance of the link can still be made. At *Beowulf* line 530-2, for example, Beowulf, when speaking to Unferth, says:

> *...þu worn fela, wine min Unferð,*
> *beore drunken ymb Brecan sprœce,*
> *sægdest from his siðe. Soð ic talige…*
>
> ("You have a lot to say, my friend Unferth, for a drunken man, about Breca, a lot to speak of regarding his journey. I reckon the truth is…).

It is clear that *sægdest*, here, although it can be translated as merely 'speak' (as in the translation above), would also bear a much more forcefully (ironically) positive translation. Beowulf is pointing out that, for a drunken man (who was not present at the events he describes), Unferth is speaking with a great deal of certainty.[425] Even though *soð* is used in contrast to *secgan*, to highlight that Beowulf has more claim to truth than Unferth in this matter, the implication is also surely that Unferth is speaking in a manner that suggests he claims to be speaking fact. As with line 681 of *Andreas* (see below), the use of *secgan* here seems to highlight the dishonesty of the speaker, possibly with a degree of irony.[426] Beowulf is to use *secgan* with *soð* in another speech a little later in

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[424] See the following for other examples where *soð* is linked to *secgan* really only by alliteration: *Lord's Prayer 3* line 34; *Psalm 50* line 119; *Beowulf* line 532; *Juliana* line 348; *Psalm* 88.1 line 3,.4 line 4, 106.31 line 3; and *Christ II* line 451. The following have *soð* and *secgan* in separate sentences: *Elene* line 588 and *Solomon and Saturn 2* line 237.

[425] The association of this section of *Beowulf* with irony is well established in the critical discourse. See, for example, Louviot (2017), p. 230 for a discussion of the context, and a brief history of this scholarly discussion.

[426] Roberta Frank's point about the lost subtleties which doubtless coloured usage such as this (though in her case she is speaking of unaccompanied weak adjectives) is relevant here: 'we

the poem, at line 590, again when speaking to Unferth, to make exactly such a claim to factually accurate speech, when he points out that Grendel would not be able to wreak such havoc in Heorot if Unferth were really as bold-hearted as he claims.[427]

The use of *secgan* with *soð* to contrast truthfulness with lies, already noted in *Aldhelm* line 8, occurs elsewhere also. One such example is *Christ III* lines 1306-7, where we are told how *se scrift* (the confessor, line 1305) cannot know *hwæþer him mon soð þe lyge / sagað on hine sylfne* (whether a man tells him truth or lies regarding himself, lines 1306-7).[428] As the statement presents the clear dichotemy between speaking the truth and lying, the association between *soð* and *secgan* is not as straightforward; yet the advice being given here is very much that men should tell the truth to another human being before facing God, as the alternative (facing divine judgement unshriven) is much worse. Indeed, at line 1304 of the poem, the recommendation to tell the truth to God's minister is also expressed using *secgan*: *wære him þonne betre þæt hy… / … / … / godes bodan sægdon þæt hi to gyrne wiston / firendæda on him* (it would have been better for them then that they…had said to God's messenger that they knew, to their grief, the sinful deeds upon them, lines 1301-5). It is clear, in this context, that *secgan* still implies truth; although the point at line 1307 is that it is possible to deceive an earthly minister, the

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cannot discern with any confidence the shades of meaning or subtle alterations in linguistic costume in a dead language'. Roberta Frank, 'The Discreet Charm of the Old English Weak Adjective', in Catherine E. Karkov, and George Hardin Brown, *Anglo-Saxon Styles* (Albany, 2003), pp. 239-52, p. 249.

[427] Similarly, in *Guthlac A* at line 506, *secgað* is used by Guthlac to accuse his enemies of speaking untruthfully, and again it is not hard to see the use of *secgan* as pointed.

[428] For a discussion of the role of confession and judgment in this poem, see Sachi Shimomura, *Odd Bodies and Visible Ends in Medieval Literature* (New York, 2006), pp. 13-38.

burden of the argument is also clearly that this is not a good idea in the long run, since God cannot be so deceived. This is reinforced through the use of *secgan*, which is the word used to describe the frank speech recommended at line 1304.

Secgan is repeatedly used to introduce authoritative (and thus implicitly truthful) speeches of assurance and command: speeches which are uttered by speakers who are persons of authority and may be presumed to be truthful. To illustrate this, it is helpful to look in detail at every use of the verb in individual poems. This allows an analysis of the complete usage of *secgan*, including instances which may not show immediately apparent signs of particular connotation because of a collocation with *soð* or some other obvious sign of truthfulness: broadly, the data have suggested that such a link exists; if this is the case, further evidence of the connection should appear. Conversely, if no such link exists, and the data are in error, this method should provide many instances where *secgan* clearly cannot imply truthfulness.

The usage of *secgan* in *Andreas* shows a nuanced negotiation of true and untrue speech, but is also remarkably consistent in terms of those who speak using *secgan*, and the types of speeches *secgan* is used about.[429] This evidence is the more convincing because the verb occurs seventeen times in the poem, which is a relatively high number of instances, both in terms of the distribution of *secgan* across the poetic record,[430] and in terms of the instances

[429] It is worth noting that Richard North and Michael D. J. Bintley gloss the preterite plural *sægde* (which occurs at lines 755, 1207 and 1654) as 'showed in words, promised' in their recent edition of *Andreas*. See Richard North and Michael D. J. Bintley eds., *Andreas: An Edition*, Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2016, p. 356.

[430] *Secgan* occurs 60 times in *The Psalms*; 32 in *Genesis A*; 30 in *Beowulf*; 25 in the *Riddles*; 14 each in *Juliana*, *Elene* and *The Meters of Boethius*; 12 in *Genesis B*; 11 each in *Christ 1*, *Daniel*, *Guthlac B* and *Christ and Satan*, and fewer than ten times in the following: *Aldhelm*

of any verb of speech in *Andreas*.[431] Seven of the instances of *secgan* alliterate, and of these, five alliterate with *soð* or a *soð*- compound. All these instances in which *secgan* and *soð* collocate are located within Andreas's speech, though they sometimes occur when he is using *secgan* to refer to another's speech. All but one of these instances are used within Andreas's speech when he is speaking to God disguised as a sailor.

Andreas uses *secgan* to address his companions directly (*Forþan ic eow to soðe secgan wille…* – 'therefore I want to tell you truthfully…') at line 458, to reassure them that God will not forsake them in adversity. Likewise, at line 618, Andreas uses *secgan* to insist on his sincerity (*secge ic ðe to soðe* 'I tell you truly'). At line 851 Andreas also uses *secgan* in this way. However, this is the only instance of *secgan* with *soð* not to occur in the conversation between Andreas and God in disguise. Here, Andreas assures his followers that they were helped across the sea the day before by God (in disguise): *Ic eow secgan mæg soð orgete, / þæt us gyrstan-dæge…/…æðeling ferede* ('I can tell you a manifest truth, that yesterday…the Lord transported us', lines 851-53).[432] One of the themes associated with *secgan* is that of glory or wonder, and this is

(1), *Brunanburh* (1), *Christ II* (7) and *III* (4), *Deor* (1), *The Descent into Hell* (1), *Deor* (1), *Durham* (1), *The Dream of the Rood* (2), *The Coronation of Edgar* (1), *Exodus* (5), *Fragment of Psalm 34* (1), *Finnsburh* (1), *The Fortunes of Men* (1), *Gloria 1* (1), *Guthlac A* (5), *The Husband's Message* (2), *Instructions for Christians* (1), *Judgment Day 1* (1) and *2* (2), *Judith* (2), *Lord's Prayer 2* (1) and *3* (1), *Metrical Charm 6* (1), *Maldon* (4), *Menologium* (1), *Preface of Wærferth's Translation of Gregory's Dialogues* (2), *Maxims 1* (1) and *2* (1), *Order of the World* (1), *Psalm 50* (2), *Pharaoh* (1), *Phoenix* (3), *Panther* (3), *Prayer* (1), *Precepts* (3), *Partridge* (1), *Resignation* (1), *Soul and Body 1* (2) and *2* (2), *Seafarer* (1), *The Seasons for Fasting* (4), *Solomon and Saturn 1* (1) and *2* (9), *Vainglory* (1), *Widsith* (3), and *Wife's Lament (1).*

[431] Of the other comparably frequent verbs of speech occurring in *Andreas*, *cweðan* occurs 15 times, (*gecweðan* 7, and *oncweðan* 1) and *sprecan* 5 times. Of the prefixed verbs linked to *secgan*, *gesecgan* occurs 3 times.

[432] This speech is one of four moments of revelation in *Andreas*: see 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 (2009), pp. 71-9.

present in the next line of this passage: *In þam ceole wæs cyninga wuldor* ('in the keel there was the glory of kings', line 854).[433] God is ultimately beyond language, so the link to wonder in this speech is not dissimilar to uses of the prefixed form, *asecgan*, which frequently seems to be associated with difficult speech, such as speech about the numinous or wonderful. Possibly the link is clearer with *asecgan* because the prefix is acting as a semantic intensifier.[434] A similar difficulty in speaking is expressed with the use of *secgan* at line 51 of *Beowulf*, as the poet explains that no-one knows what happened to Scyld after his sea burial: *Men ne cunnon / secgan to soðe* (Men cannot say as a truth [for sure], lines 50-1).

The other two instances where *soð* and *secgan* alliterate in *Andreas* are more complex. At line 681, Andreas uses *secgað soðlice* to emphasise the dishonesty of the chief priests, who speak pityingly to the disciples because of their misplaced faith – although the exact reported speech by the priest in which *secgað soðlice* occurs is truthful. Andreas is speaking to the disguised God, narrating an attempt by the priests to discredit Christ to his disciples: the priests say to the disciples *'secgað soðice þæt mid suna meotudes / drohtigen dæghwæmlice'* ('you say certainly that you live daily with the son of the measurer', lines 681-2). Ironically, though the priests are voicing derision

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[433] *Secgan* occurs in the same clause or line as *wuldor* (glory) on the following occasions: *Psalms* 95.3 line 1, *P.* 65.1 line 3 (and.3 line 3 – *wuldor* is on line 1), *P.* 113.9 line 2; *Guthlac B* line 1116-7; *Judith* line 341-2; *Christ and Satan* line 512; *Elene* line 1116 and *Dream of the Rood* line 96-7. *Secgan* occurs in the same clause or line as *wundor* (wonder) on the following occasions: *Psalm* 70.16 line 4, *P.* 104.2 line 2, *P.* 144.5 line 3, and.6 line 2; *P.* 77.5 line 1-2, *P.* 78.14 line 3 and *P.* 106.7 line 2-3; *Guthlac* (*A* line 527 – *wundor* is on line 529) *B* line 1116 and line 1117; *Juliana* line 425; *Durham* line 20 and *Beowulf* line 1724. *Secgan* occurs in the same clause or line as *wundorlic* in *Partridge* line 1 and *wundorlice* in *Psalms* 65.2 line 1-2. *Secgan* occurs in the same clause as *wundorweorc* in *Psalms* 113.9 line 2-3. *Secgan* occurs in the same line as a *wuldorcyninge* at *Beowulf* line 2795.

[434] See Section V of this chapter ('Say No More', pp. 193-8) for details of the usage with *asecgan*.

here, by following this statement with a reminder of Christ's provenance, they actually report the truth. At line 764, the speech which is reported by Andreas, using *secgan* to introduce it is emphatically dishonest. Here, Andreas has just recounted how Christ made a sign appear and speak, from the stones in the temple, and report truthfully on his heritage (and, as it happens, the true speech Christ commands from the statue at line 733 is told with true words: *secge soðcwidum*).[435] Andreas explains that the elders of the people dishonestly try to attribute this sign to magic, and he reports this sinful speech given by the elders with *secgan*. The reason for this dishonesty is that *soð ne oncneowan* (they did not acknowledge the truth). Again, the use of *secgan* here is significant, and although the association between *secgan* and truth is negated here, it is not absent. As with the examples above, and *Beowulf* line 532, the use of *secgan* by Andreas seems knowing, even ironic. As in several other places, notably the *Soul and Body* dialogues and in *Solomon and Saturn* (discussed below), *secgan* is being used for the speech of people who are (or, in this case, ought to be) wise.[436] They are speaking with the claimed authority of *sapientes*, and are claiming to discern truth. Of course, the ultimate truth of Christ lies behind (and beyond the corrupting power of) their attempt at falsehood, a point which the poet's deliberate deployment of the apparently unremarkable *secgan* here suggests. This term, carrying a subtle but particular

[435] For more on the significance of this moment within the poem, and how the Greek and Latin versions of the saint's life compare, see Mary Hayes, *Divine Ventriloquism in Medieval English Literature: Power, Anxiety, Subversion* (New York, 2011), especially pp. 63-70.
[436] Here, as elsewhere in the project, the inherent bias within Old English poetry towards religious and didactic material, and the relative lack of a comparable secular corpus, must be borne in mind. There are many wise protagonists in Old English verse, and possibly no similar superflux of idiots or ignoramuses. Even so, *secgan* is used, on the whole, of those imparting, rather than requesting, knowledge.

connotation of truth, is one more sign of the blessed rightness of the apostles' actions: even from the mouths of sinners, *secgan* carries the *soð* of the Lord.

A large proportion of the non-alliterating instances of *secgan* in *Andreas* occur in the speeches between Andreas and God (in disguise). At lines 344-5, the disguised God agrees to help Andreas cross the sea on account of Andreas's proclamation of faith, saying he will help them *Gif ge syndon þegnas þæs þe þrym ahof / ofer middangeard, swa ge me secgaþ* (If you are thanes of the one who set his majesty aloft over the middle-region, as you tell me). On the one hand, this context certainly casts a kind of doubt over the speech of Andreas – 'if what you say is true, I will help you', is essentially what the disguised God says – and yet, of course, He has also agreed to help, thus implying that He believes Andreas, and as the omniscient God, His 'belief' is on rather surer ground than that of men. There may even be dramatic irony in the use of *secgan* for the belief of God here: clearly, since He is omniscient, God already knows that Andreas is speaking the truth.

At line 557, God (still in disguise) once again uses *secgan* in reference to Andreas's speech regarding the story of Christ's life on earth, this time not to report, but to command more speech, using the imperative *saga*. At line 1207 *sægde* is used to introduce God's command, but this time God is not in disguise, and his command concerns what Andreas should do about the multitude who are coming to attack him. Around line 1649 the poet tells us that a bishop (who is, of course, God's representative on earth), commands the people to follow the teachings of Plato, whom he has just consecrated (*nemned*), and Andreas commands (*bebead*) the people to follow him, before

expressing his intention to leave, using *sægde,* at line 1654. At line 755, Andreas uses *secgan* (this time to refer to God's speech to Abraham) in relating to God (in disguise) the history of the foretelling of Christ's birth. The instance of *secgan* at line 1006 is also about God, and also uttered by a saint – the poet tells us that Matthew, imprisoned, is seen by Andreas praising God (*secgan Dryhtne lof*). Similarly, Andreas's thanks to God for his preservation from the harm intended him (at line 1469) is expressed as *sægde meotude þanc.* At line 1022, Andreas joins Matthew and relates his story, and the word used to introduce Andreas's speech to Matthew is *sæde*.[437] The association with *secgan* and the speech of God shown in these instances might suggest similarities between the connotations of *secgan* and *mælan* – but the key difference is in why these verbs are both appropriate for use with divine speech. The verb *secgan* is appropriate to Godly utterance not so much because of associations with status, but rather because of its connotations of truthfulness.

The instances in *Andreas* where *secgan* is not used for the speech of either saints or God are also in contexts which suggest that truth or fact is being conveyed. At line 1080 *sægdon* is used to introduce the report which the men who intended to kill Andreas and Matthew are obliged to give to the people – namely that Andreas and Matthew are gone from the prison, the doors open and the guards dead. In this instance, the use of *secgan* seems to underline the truthfulness of a report which might at first glance be hard to believe. The use of *secgan* at line 1481 is noteworthy, as the verb is used here to describe the

[437] As there are some lines missing here, the exact substance of the meeting between Matthew and Andreas is now uncertain.

narrative of the narrator or poet, who explains that the story of Andreas which he has been telling is beyond his capabilities. Although he has spoken for a while, the poet explains that the subject is ultimately *ofer min gemet. Mycel is to secganne /...þæt he in life adreag* ('beyond my capability. There is much to say…of that which he [Andreas] bore in life', lines 1481-2).[438]

It is worth highlighting that eight of the seventeen instances of *secgan* in *Andreas*, including all the instances of *soð* with *secgan*, occur within, or introduce, Andreas's speech, mostly when he is speaking to God. Three further instances of *secgan* occur when God is speaking: at line 345 God reports Andreas's speech; at line 557 God demands speech from Andreas with *saga*; and at line 1207 God instructs Andreas to act bravely (*ellen fremman*). As *Andreas* is a saint's life, meant to be instructive to the reader or listener, it is reasonable to suppose that the speech of the eponymous saint, especially when addressed to God, is meant to be exemplary. That *secgan* is so strongly associated with Andreas's speech with God, often in collocation with *soð*, means it is highly likely that *secgan* implies the sort of earnestness or truthfulness appropriate for human speech to God. As seen above, *secgan* is repeatedly, almost exclusively associated with a select group of speakers within *Andreas*, all of whom are particularly linked to the truth. The verb is often used by characters who might be expected to be wise or learned, to address the less informed.

[438] Richard North and Michael D. J. Bintley frame this humble portrayal by the *Andreas* poet as part of a similar hidden name to the one used by Cynewulf in *Fates of the Apostles*. According to them, *lare*, and later *leoðgiddunga* in lines 1478-80 'appears to claim Cynewulf as the poet's teacher of Old English verse composition', North and Bintley eds. (2016), p.60. This intrusion by the narrator is unique to the Old English version of the poem, and absent from the sources and analogues, as Nathan Breen points out: Breen (2009), p. 73.

In the *Solomon and Saturn* and *Soul and Body* dialogues, and in *Precepts* (all poems which are particularly associated with spiritual truth, didactic texts concerned with the acquisition of wisdom which take the form of dialogues) this pattern bears further examination. It is worth noting first of all, for context, that *secgan* is disproportionally seldom used to introduce direct speech in Old English poetry, doing so on only twenty-one occasions (though, as already discussed, *secgan* is frequently used to request, report or command speech *within* direct speech).[439] In contrast, *cweðan* is used to introduce speech on almost one-hundred occasions, and *sprecan* introduces direct speech over sixty times, to say nothing of *maþelian,* which, due to its particularly specialised usage, is used to introduce speech in all but a handful of instances.[440] In view of this, it is striking that *secgan* occurs at all in dialogue poems, since these are one of the most obvious places where direct speech is repeatedly introduced.

In *Precepts* the conversation is one-sided, so we cannot draw any conclusions based on the subject of *secgan*, who is naturally always the father, at least when *secgan* introduces direct speech. The words used to introduce the father's speech to his son are very limited: *læran* (teach) is most commonly used, unsurprisingly, and indeed there are only a handful of occasions on which this is not the only verb used to introduce the father's speech.[441] The exceptions, when a verb other than *læran* is used, are all single instances,

[439] *Secgan* is used to introduce direct speech on the following occasions: *Andreas* lines 1022 and 1207; *Beowulf* lines 2632 and 2899; *Descent into Hell* line 23; *Elene* lines 588 and 1116; *Genesis A* lines 1090, 1289, 2246, and 2407; *Genesis B* line 725; *Guthlac A* lines 451 and 476; *Meters of Boethius* 24 line 48; *Psalm* 104.10 line 1; *Precepts* lines 53 and 66; *Riddle* 33 line 8; and *Christ and Satan* lines 125 and 469.
[440] See the respective sections on *sprecan*, *cweðan* and *maþelian* for more details, and Appendix A.
[441] *Læran* is used at lines 1, 22, 27, 33, 44, 52 and 87.

except for *secgan*: *gegretan* is used at line 15 (though oddly not at line 1, where we might expect the father to 'greet' his son), and *(ge)monian* ('admonish, exhort, remind') is used at line 60. *Secgan*, on the other hand, is used three times in the poem, and all three of these instances occur within a passage of about 20 lines which is concerned chiefly with wisdom. *Secgan* introduces the father's seventh and ninth utterances: the former is concerned with how to bear sorrow and joy wisely, and the latter with proper respect for and use of ancient writings. The last instance of *secgan* in the poem occurs within the father's speech (rather than introducing it as the other two instances do) when he tells his son to speak truthfully.[442] All three of these instances of *secgan*, then, are particularly associated with communicating wisdom of one kind or another. They are also all grouped together near the end of the poem, in the sections of the poem which deal particularly with teachings, wisdom and writings.

In *Solomon and Saturn I secgan* occurs only once, at line 65, with *godspel* as the direct object, inside the body of Solomon's speech. Relatively few speech words occur within the poetic lines of this poem, as most of the speech words are the *inquit* tags (always *cwæð*), which are extra-metrical (and therefore outside of the poetic data examined in this thesis). This single instance of *secgan* fits with the contexts explored above: Solomon is here speaking of the speech of God (*Godes cwide*), and how it is possible for anyone to relate this speech, through the Spirit and the Gospel. In other words, Solomon is trying to explain the invisible and unknowable forces by which mere humans, any

[442] The seventh speech is introduced by *secgan* at line 53; the ninth at line 66; and the father counsels his son to hold truth as victory when he speaks at line 64.

humans, are enabled to communicate the ineffable and eternally truthful speech of God. The instances of *secgan* in *Solomon and Saturn II*, of which there are nine, shed more light on the connotations of the verb than this single (though striking) instance in *Solomon and Saturn I*. The instances at lines 237, 253 and 431 all include an explicit link to *soð*. At line 237, Saturn uses *secgan* in a variant of the typical riddle formula, *saga hwat ic mæne* (say what I mean). The preceding half line of the formula, which occurs immediately before *saga*, though in a different sentence, is *soð-fæstra* (truth-fast), which alliterates with *segn* and *saga*. The alliteration here creates the link between *soð* and *secgan*, since the words are not in the same sentence or sense unit: however, the solution to the riddle posed by Saturn here (which he demands using *saga*) is 'book' – thus the associations between *secgan*, books, and (both through association and collocation) truth, are present.

The association of *secgan* with the typical riddle formula is indicative of one of the important functions of this verb, and one which has both syntactic and semantic dimensions. Syntactically, as Ogura has shown, *secgan* has similar functions to Modern English *tell*. Semantically, this also seems to be true: the implicit earnestness of 'tell me' carries across into non-imperative uses of the verb in Modern English, and it seems that the same is true of the usage here, in *Solomon and Saturn I*.[443] The instance of *secgan* at line 253 of the poem is a confirmation of truth: Solomon says *Soð is ðæt ðu sagast* (what you say is true). This is followed by a second instance of *secgan* on the following line, this time in the form of a challenge: *Wilt ðu ðæt ic ðe secge?* (Would you like

[443] See Ogura, *Rivalry* (1981), p. 106.

me to tell you?).[444] This strong declaration of truth about to be revealed is followed by 'one of the obscurest passages….in the Old English corpus',[445] making Solomon's reply very difficult to interpret. Thus, although Saturn (and we) are given the answer to a difficult problem, interpreting that answer is another matter.[446] Once again the truth imparted by a *secgan* speech is beyond our grasp, and the connotations of the verb here follow a pattern already observed above.

Similarly, Saturn insists that he knows the truth, and he does this using *secgan* twice in the same speech, not only to proclaim that he knows the truth (*Ic to soðon wat*) at line 431, but also four lines earlier to attribute the source of this knowledge: *ic frode menn fyrn gehyrde / secggan and swerian…* (I have long ago heard wise men say and swear…) in lines 426-7. The first use of *secgan* in this speech (line 427) is linked to wise men, and the knowledge Saturn has learned from them is about the limits of knowledge itself: although these wise men *winnað oft / mid hira ðreamedlan* (labour often with their mental oppression),[447] there is no ultimate solution to their debate, but rather the question is *hwæderne aðreoteð ær* ('who wearies first', line 430). The source of the truth on the second occasion when *secgan* is used is *Filistina witan* ('the Philistine council', line 432), and this instance of the verb is also linked to the

[444] Solomon is offering to answer Saturn's doubt regarding a persistent *geomrende gast* (sorrowing spirit, line 250) which has been troubling him day and night for fifty years.
[445] Tristan Major, 'Philistine Doomsday and the *Vasa Mortis* of *Solomon and Saturn II*' *Neophilologus* 100 (2016), pp. 143-60, p. 143.
[446] Solomon's reply is of uncertain meaning: for a discussion of the passage, see Major (2016).
[447] The word *ðreamedlan* occurs only twice in the corpus. Both instances are in this poem: the other instance is at line 426. The word's meaning is contested, but the meaning I give follows both Bjork's translation and Antonina Harbus's interpretation. See Bjork (2013), pp.150 and 166, and Antonina Harbus, 'The Situation of Wisdom in *Solomon and Saturn II*' *Studia Neophilologica* 75 (2003), pp. 97-103, p. 99, which also gives details of the discussion of the meaning and etymology of *ðreamedlan*.

books which are open while Saturn and the council debate philosophy (lines 432-3). In this case as well, Saturn is describing the limits of wisdom, since the conclusion reached by the councillors and Saturn is *ðæt nære nænig manna middangeardes / ðæt meahte ðara twegen [wyrd* and *warnung] tuion aspyrian* ('that [there is] no man anywhere on earth who can settle these two [fate and foreknowledge] by investigation', lines 435-6).[448]

The remaining instances of *secgan* in *Solomon and Saturn II*, at lines 210, 332 and 339, are all requests for knowledge. At line 210 Solomon uses *sæge* to request details of *ðam lande / ðær nænig fyra ne mæg fotum gestæppan* (the land where no man may set foot, lines 210-11), a request which provokes Saturn's first riddle.[449] Similarly, the instance of *secgan* at line 339 is also a somewhat cryptic request by Solomon for knowledge, and likewise the instance at line 332, immediately before, is a riddling request, this time by Saturn for knowledge from Solomon. In each of these cases, the speaker whose speech is requested by *secgan* is the one who knows, not the one who requests knowledge (or, in other words, *secgan* is used in each case to provoke wise speech). The last instance of *secgan* in the poem introduces the closing lines, at line 504, and the speech of the angel who returns to his country (*to his earde,* line 504) grieving that he could not turn the hard heart of a man beset

[448] Saturn's speech is answered by Solomon (lines 437-43), who does know the difference between these two unknowables (*wyrd*, 'fate', and *warnung*, 'foreknowledge'), though his answer is somewhat equivocal. Kathryn Powell suggests that Saturn and the Philistine council's inability to resolve this difference is part of a fetishist illusion in which ownership of books is sufficient to acquire wisdom and even knowledge: see Kathryn Powell, 'Orientalist Fantasy in the Poetic Dialogues of *Solomon and Saturn*', *Anglo-Saxon England* 34 (2005), pp. 117-43, especially pp. 124-5. See also David Pedersen, '*Wyrd ðe Warnung*... or God: The Question of Absolute Sovereignty in *Solomon and Saturn II*', *Studies in Philology* 113 (2016), pp. 713-38, especially p. 724 for a discussion of *wyrd* in this poem and this passage.

[449] For more on the possible context (both literary and geographic) for this riddle and this land, see Tristan Major, 'Saturn's First Riddle in *Solomon and Saturn II*: An Orientalist Conflation', *Neophilologus* 96 (2012), pp. 301-13.

by the devil. Although this instance is not associated with difficult or arcane knowledge, unlike the other instances in this poem, there is no doubt that the speech here introduced by *secgan* is truthful, since it is spoken by an angel.[450] Therefore, the occurrences of *secgan* in *Solomon and Saturn* confirm a strong semantic link with truthfulness. Moreover, nearly all of these instances also suggest a close association with the difficulty and the limits of knowledge.

There are four instances of *secgan* which occur in the *Soul and Body* dialogues, two in each. The first instance in both poems occurs when the soul asks the body what it will say to God on doomsday: *Ac hwæt wilt þu þær / on domdæge dryhtne secgan?* ('But what will you say to the Lord there on doomsday?', lines 88-9, *Soul and Body II*; *Soul and Body I* lines 95-6 are identical, except for the addition of an article in 96a – *on þæm domdæge*). The soul's implication here is doubtless partly that no untruth is possible in that judgement, and the legal connotations (of judgement) of this use of *secgan* fit with those in a number of instances where *secgan* occurs with *riht,* for instance at *Beowulf* line 1700, discussed above. The second instance in *Soul and Body II* is missing from *Soul and Body I*, and occurs at line 100, where *secgan* is used to express the tongue's inability to speak after it has undergone the tortures of hell: this fits with the associations of some of the instances of *secgan* discussed above, but also with the usage of *asecgan*, which is often linked to difficult or impossible speech (see pp. 194-9 below). The soul is making the larger point here that if the body lands them both (body and soul) in hell, there will be no one left who is able to speak in comfort to either of

[450] For more on this final speech, see Pedersen (2016), pp. 728-9.

them. In contrast, the second instance of *secgan* in *Soul and Body I*, at line 156, has the soul expressing sympathy for the body's suffering in death, and trying to comfort it with the coming relief and pleasure of heaven. In both these instances, speech is impossible for the body, due to decay.[451]

The verb *secgan* is used to introduce direct speech rarely, as already mentioned: the verb does introduce direct speech some twenty-one times, several times as part of the familiar metaphor 'as the books say'. These texts which 'speak' using *secgan* tend to be authoritative and are often scriptural, though a number of different Old English words are used for 'text'. Scripture is definitely the subject of *secgan* on seven occasions, and possibly the subject on a further three.[452] In addition, *godspel* (gospel), at line 65 of *Solomon and Saturn 1*, though not the subject, is the direct object of *secgan*, in the phrase 'speak the Gospel'. The word most often used for a scriptural subject for *secgan* is *gewritu* (writings), which is used in this sense six times. On one occasion, *bec* is used to refer to scriptures, at *Christ II* line 785. Here, although the word *bec* could be translated with its modern descendant 'books', scriptures, or more likely the books of the gospel, are certainly meant. Likewise, *bec* in *Lord's Prayer 2* line 20 and *Genesis A* line 1723 doubtless refers to holy books, again probably the gospel. Similarly, *gewritu* in *Phoenix* line 655 could refer to the scriptures. The verb *secgan* is used with *gewritu*, meaning 'scriptures', on three occasions in *Genesis A*, notably at line 2612,

[451] For a discussion of the theme of decay in these dialogues, and some of the metaphors which are used in the poems, see Benjamin Waller, *Metaphorical Space and Enclosure in Old English Poetry* (Oregon diss., 2014), pp. 41-55, especially pp. 50-51.
[452] The instances where scripture is definitely the subject of *secgan* are: *Christ II* line 785, line 547; *Elene* line 674; *Genesis A* lines 1121, 1630 and 2612 and *Psalm* 86.5 line 1. The instances where scripture is probably the subject of *secgan* are: *Lord's Prayer 2* line 20; *Genesis A* line 1723; and *Phoenix* line 655.

where *gewritu* is used in apposition to *godcunde bec* (Godly books) which makes it quite clear that these are scriptural writings.[453]

The word *gewritu* is used to mean 'writings' more generally (not scripture) on five occasions. In *The Coronation of Edgar* line 14, *gewritu* is used to denote official documents, possibly in the form of chronicles, an association of the verb with a legalistic truth that reinforces (and perhaps offers confirmation regarding the legal nature of) the link between *secgan* and *riht* which is present in some contexts discussed above. This connotation of legal rectitude also fits in with the use of *secgan* for conveying acknowledged fact: the use of *gewritu* twice in *Riddle* 39, at lines 1 and 13, to provide a clue as to the riddle subject, for example, fits in with the more factual connotations of *secgan*, and some of the instances of *secgan* in the dialogue poems discussed above are also suggestive of acknowledged fact, or truism. A comparable use of *secgan* occurs at line 1696 of *Beowulf*, where the word *runstafas* (rune-letters) is a post-prepositional phrase modifying *secgan*: *þurh runstafas… / gesæd* 'through rune-letters…it was said' (lines 1695-6).[454] In this instance again, what the writing 'says' is indisputable fact, since it records for whom an ancient sword was made. At line 20 of *Durham*, *writ* is also used in a non-scriptural sense, and as the subject for *secgan. Boc* (not meaning scripture) is used on a further four occasions as the subject of *secgan*, including the aforementioned instance in *Aldhelm* line 8, where, as already mentioned, *boc*

[453] The instances of *gewritu* used to mean 'scripture' in this way not already mentioned are: *Christ II* line 547; *Elene* line 674; *Genesis A* lines 1121 and 1630, and *Psalm* 86.5 line 1.
[454] The non-scriptural uses of *gewritu* as subject for *secgan* not already mentioned are: *Metrical Preface to Wærferths' Translation of Gregory's Dialogue* line 11 and *Phoenix* line 313.

probably refers to *De laude virginitatis*.[455] The wisdom and surety of the words of these inanimate 'speakers of truth' are reinforced through a verbal choice that both subtly personifies the written artefacts as active tellers, and assures the audience of the truth-value of the words they contain.

Secgan is used with greater frequency, and in a greater range of poems, than any other verb of speech in Old English – by a large margin. Some poems use *secgan* as their only verb for 'to speak'.[456] Possibly the link to veracity can account for this in part, as can the usage of the verb for the introduction of known and accepted truths. The appearance of *secgan* in the charms and maxims in particular is a sign of this, as is the exceptionally widespread and varied use of the verb in the *Psalms*. Although the *Psalms* are not discussed in detail in this thesis, for reasons outlined in the introduction,[457] it is worth noting a few general points about the usage of the verb in them, not least because *secgan* occurs frequently in the *Psalms*. The verb is often used in the *Psalms* to express what the psalmist says, and to address the audience or readers directly.[458] *Secgan* is also used a significant number of times to address God in the *Psalms*. The *Psalms* account for slightly less than one fifth of the occurrences of *secgan* in poetry, which, though it represents a substantial share, is comparable to the proportion of other speech verbs in the *Psalms*, and is perhaps unsurprising given that the *Psalms* account for one-

[455] The other instances of *boc* not referring to scripture as the subject for *secgan* are: *The Battle of Brunanburh* line 68; *Genesis A* line 227 and *Guthlac B* line 878.
[456] The following have only *secgan*: *The Battle of Brunanburh*, *Deor*, *Durham*, *The Coronation of Edgar, Fortunes of Men, The Husband's Message, Lord's Prayer 3*, *Metrical Charm 6, The Metrical Preface of Wærferth's Translation of Gregory's Dialogues*, *Pharaoh*, *The Seafarer*, *Vainglory* and *The Wife's Lament. Aldhelm* and *Maxim 1* have only *gesecgan* and *secgan*, and *A Prayer* has only *asecgan* and *secgan.*
[457] See pp. 63-5 and 73-4.
[458] See appendix C for many of these instances.

sixth of the entire poetic corpus.[459] The diversity of grammatical forms and spellings of *secgan* which is found within the *Psalms* is not typical, on the other hand. There are sixteen different grammatical forms of *secgan* which occur in the *Psalms*, with twenty-six spellings; thus just over sixty percent of the grammatical forms of the verb which are found in poetry occur in the *Psalms*, and just under sixty per-cent of the spellings attested in the poetry are attested in the *Psalms*.[460]

Prior to the research discussed in this chapter, the importance of *secgan* within the lexical field of speech in Old English was already established by the linguistic work examined in section II of this chapter,[461] and it was widely accepted that this was probably due to the breadth of the semantic and functional range which was attributed to the verb in the Old English period (also already established by linguists).[462] In addition to this, it was already clear that *secgan* was functionally distinct from *cweðan*, despite the great seeming semantic similarities between the two verbs.[463] My own work has confirmed that this functional distinction evident in the usage of *cweðan* and *secgan* is mirrored by similarly clear connotative distinction. Certain facts listed in these studies regarding the usage of *secgan*, notably that it occurs more frequently to introduce indirect speech than to introduce direct speech, at

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[459] *Secgan* occurs 60 times in the Old English metrical *Psalms*, so that around 17% of the poetic instances of the verb are in the Psalms. By comparison, *sprecan* occurs 29 times in the *Psalms* (around 18% of instances), and *cweðan* occurs 58 times in the *Psalms*, representing around 30% of instances.

[460] The following spellings of *secgan* occur only in the *Psalms*: *sæcge* (this is also the only instance of the first person singular present subjunctive to occur in poetry), *sæcgeað, sæcgean, sæcgen, sæcgeon, sægd, sægdan, sægdun, secggeað,* and *secggean.* The following forms and spellings of *secgan* occur in the *Psalms* and elsewhere: *sægde, sægdest, sægdon, sægeð, secgað, secgan, secge, secgeað, secgean, secgen* and *secgende.*

[461] See especially Orta (2002), p. 294.

[462] See especially Orta (2001), p. 97.

[463] See Ogura (1978), pp. 2 and 9.

least in verse, and that it is linked to indirect questions, were perhaps even suggestive regarding the possible outfield senses which might be attributed to *secgan*. Likewise, the link first identified by Ogura between Old English uses of *secgan* and Modern English *tell* had semantic implications.[464] However, the link between *secgan* and *soð* clearly identified first through the statistical evidence discussed in this chapter, and explored further through the analysis of the uses of *secgan* in *Andreas*, *Beowulf*, *Aldhelm*, and the dialogue poems above, is a new discovery. It is upon this discovery that the underlying proposition of the foregoing close analysis of instances of *secgan* throughout the poetic corpus is built: there is a fundamental semantic link between *secgan* and truthful speech, of which the collocation between *secgan* and *soð* is only the clearest manifestation. Support for this claim has been found in those frequent associations uncovered in the analysis above, in which truthful speech seems indicated but where *soð* itself does not appear. The usage in those poems where every instance of the verb has been discussed suggests the strength of the link: 'truthful speech' would be an apt gloss for *secgan* in every one of the instances discussed, and this implication of truth is clear in most uses of the term. The links to scripture and other authoritative texts, and the association of the verb with contexts of judgment comfortably accord with the truthful quality of *secgan*, and demonstrate that *secgan* is a verb whose ubiquity should not be mistaken for colourlessness. In its poetic contexts, *secgan* has been shown to carry significant connotative weight, functioning subtly but persistently to reinforce the legal, spiritual and poetic truths behind the words of a range of speakers. Elsewhere, the association of the term with

[464] See Ogura, *Rivalry* (1981), p. 106; see also Goossens (1985), p. 165.

difficult speech is less obviously related to this connotation of truthfulness, and may even appear to trouble it: it is to this and other possible associations (more clearly found in the prefixed forms, especially *asecgan*) that I now turn.

V. Say no More: asecgan

The prefix *a-*, like many of the Old English pre-verbal prefixes, is of ambiguous meaning; indeed, it is not always clear whether it is semantically meaningful, or whether it is redundant. Bosworth and Toller list a wide range of meanings: 'The peculiar force which this particle imparts to different verbs may correspond (1) to Latin ex *out*….(2) to English *up*….(3) it expresses the idea of an origin…(4) it corresponds to Latin *re*…. (5) it is often used merely to render a verb transitive, or to impart a greater force to the transitive meaning of the simple verb…(6) it is used with intransitive verbs, where it has hardly any meaning, unless it suggests *the commencement* or *beginning* of the action….(7) it expresses *the end*, *aim*, or *purpose* of an action…the various shades of its meaning are innumerable…'.[465] It would seem that, in the case of *asecgan*, the prefix is not redundant, but acts upon *secgan* as a kind of intensifier, so that *asecgan* is used repeatedly for difficult or impossible speech, such as speech about topics which are either too splendid (for example heaven) or too awful (such as hell) to verbalise.

In several instances, *asecgan* seems nearly synonymous with *secgan*, whereas in others the etymological force of the prefix might invite a more declarative translation than 'tell', such as 'speak out' or 'announce'. This stronger, more declarative sense of *asecgan* seems to be generally dominant in the poetry –

[465] See Bosworth and Toller et al. ed., *Á.,* C. 'The *long* Anglo-Saxon á', *An Anglo Saxon Dictionary Online* (Prague, 2013), [last accessed 2 October 2017]. Interestingly, Bosworth and Toller list *negation*, *deterioration* and *opposition* as some of the denotations for the short *a-* prefix; see *A.* 7., *An Anglo Saxon Dictionary Online* (Prague, 2013), [last accessed 14 September 2017]. The usage of *asecgan* fits very well with these denotations of the short *a-* prefix. However, *The Dictionary of Old English* gives the *a-* prefix in *asecgan* as long. See *āsecgan*, v., *Dictionary of Old English: A to H Online* (Toronto, 2007), [last accessed 2 October 2017].

usage in the prose, though largely beyond the scope of this project, suggests a degree of weakening of this sense over the Anglo-Saxon period. It is possible that the contrast between these nearly synonymous forms, which differ chiefly only in their syllabic structure, might have been useful to poets. What can be said with more certainty is that the patterns of usage for *asecgan* reveal a strong association with difficult speech, as already noted in some of the instances of *secgan* discussed above.

There are seventeen instances of *asecgan* in the Old English poetic corpus, and only two poems have more than one instance, so that the word occurs in fifteen poems.[466] Twelve of the instances of *asecgan* are in the infinitive (of which one is in the inflected infinitive).[467] All but four instances of the verb alliterate; all four of the instances which do not alliterate occur in the last position in the line, and three of these instances are also three of the five instances when the verb is not in the infinitive.[468] Two of these five instances are in the *Psalms* (the fourth is in *Daniel*).[469] *Asecgan* is never used to introduce speech. Interestingly, the link to truthfulness seems less pronounced with *asecgan* than *secgan*: *asecgan* collocates with *soð* only on three occasions, suggesting truth is less central to the word's connotations than is

[466] The instances of *asecgan* are: *Beowulf* line 344; *Christ I* line 221; *Christ III* line 1176; *Daniel* lines 129 and 156; *Juliana* lines 313 and 494; *Judith* line 330; *The Battle of Maldon* line 198; *Psalm* 65.7 line 3; *Psalm* 70.17 line 1; *Psalm* 72.24 line 1; *A Prayer* line 33; *Riddle* 1 line 2; *Seasons for Fasting* line 7; *Wanderer* line 11; and *Christ and Satan* line 350.
[467] The verb *asecgan* occurs in the infinitive in *Beowulf*, *Christ I* and *III*, both instances in *Juliana*, *Judith*, *Riddle* 1, *Wanderer* and *Christ and Satan*. The inflected infinitive *to asecganne* occurs in *Daniel*, line 129. The infinitive occurs with variant spellings twice: *asecgean* in *Psalm* 65.7 line 3, and *asæcgan* in *A Prayer*.
[468] These non-alliterating instances are: *Daniel* line 156 *asægde*; *Psalm* 65.7 line 3 *asecgean*; *Psalm* 70.17 line 1 *asecge*; and *Psalm* 72.24 line 1 *asecge*.
[469] The two other non-infinitive instances not already listed are *Maldon* line 198 and *Seasons for Fasting* line 7, both *asæde.*

the case for *secgan*.[470] The word *asecgan* is used with the auxiliary *magan* in eight instances, and with explicit negatives (such as *ne, næfre, nan, nis*) to indicate the inability to speak seven times.[471] The usage as a whole shows a high degree of regularity, therefore the connotations of *asecgan* can be outlined with reference to the contexts in which the verb is used, even without much reference to detailed close reading.

The most obvious indication that *asecgan* is linked to difficulty in speaking is the fact that it occurs nine times to express the impossibility of speech. In *Christ I asecgan* is used in the address to Christ to highlight the unknown and unknowable history of Christ's presence at the dawn of time, and the origin of His divine nature.[472] In *Christ III*, *asecgan* is used to express the impossibility for sentient *foldbuende* (earth-dwellers, line 1177) to know how *deade gesceafte* (dead creatures, line 1179) grieve at Christ's suffering and death.[473] In *Juliana*, *asecgan* is used twice by the devils to describe (or rather to explain their inability to describe) their crimes. In *Judith*, *asecgan* is used to describe the loot gathered by the Jews from the Assyrian camp, which is so fabulous that it is impossible to describe, even in thought. The word *asecgan* is used twice to describe a riddle too difficult to solve, in *Riddle 1* and in *Daniel*, line

[470] The collocations with *soð* occur in *A Prayer*, *Seasons for Fasting* and *Wanderer*, in which *soð* and *asecgan* occur in different sentences (but the same line).
[471] With *magan* in: *Christ I, Christ III,* both instances in *Juliana, Judith, A Prayer, Riddle* 1 and *Christ and Satan*. With a negative: *Christ I, Christ III,* both instances in *Juliana, Wanderer, A Prayer* and *Christ and Satan*.
[472] For a discussion of this moment, see Ioana Alexandra Bolintineanu, *Towards A Poetics of Marvellous Spaces in Old and Middle English Narratives* (Toronto, 2012), p. 95. See also —, 'Beyond the Sun's Setting: Webs of Unknowing in Old English', *Digital Philology: A Journal of Medieval Cultures* 4 (2015), pp. 160-89, especially p. 170.
[473] For a discussion of this moment, see Frances McCormack, 'Those Bloody Trees: The Affectivity of Christ', in Alice Jorgensen et al. eds., *Anglo-Saxon Emotions Reading the Heart in Old English Language, Literature and Culture* (Oxford, 2015), pp. 143-62, pp. 146-8, and Hannah Bailey, 'Architecture as Authoritative Reader: Splitting Stones in *Andreas* and *Christ III*', *Leeds Studies in English* (forthcoming, 2017).

129. At this point in *Daniel*, *asecgan* is used when the wise men cannot interpret Nebuchadnezzar's dream, which is too difficult to do (they explain) when they have not even been told the dream.[474] In the *Wanderer*, *asecgan* is used to highlight the protagonist's inability to trust anyone enough to speak his heart to them.[475] In *Christ and Satan*, *asecgan* is used to highlight the impossibility for anyone except God Himself to describe heaven.[476]

Even when *asecgan* is not used for impossible speech, it is used repeatedly – in all but one instance – to describe difficult, often marvellous, speech. For example, *asecgan* is used of the speech given by Moses to teach God's mysteries in *Seasons for Fasting*, and of the blessing delivered to Daniel through an angel's speech in *Daniel,* both awe inspiring speeches. The impossible speeches introduced by *asecgan*, then, as illustrated above, are frequently about things too awesome to speak of, for example the wonder of creation, heaven or God – and the loot gathered by the Jews from the Assyrian camp in *Judith*. The word is slightly less frequently used for things too awful to speak of – for example the uses by the devils in *Juliana*.

In *The Battle of Maldon*, *asecgan* is used by Offa when he speaks of proud boasts which were not to be fulfilled. Although not immediately apparent, scrutiny of the context of this occurrence of *asecgan* reveals that the speech indicated here is actually exceptionally difficult for the speaker. This speech is

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[474] This moment is clearly used to emphasise Daniel's pre-eminence as a prophet: see note 4 in J. Anne George, '*Daniel* 416-29: An "Identity Crisis" Resolved?', *Medium Aevum* 60 (1991), pp. 73-6, p. 76.
[475] This crisis of isolation is the immediate problem besetting the wanderer: see Manish Sharma, 'Heroic Subject and Cultural Substance in *The Wanderer*', *Neophilologus* 96 (2012), pp. 611-629, p. 614.
[476] This passage is nevertheless immediately followed by a description of heaven: for a discussion of this, see for example: Finnegan (1994), pp. 11-12.

uttered in very awkward circumstances: Offa feels compelled to reveal to Byrhtnoth a truth which it appears the leader has not hitherto grasped – that several of Byrhtnoth's close followers are cowardly and incapable of fighting. The difficulty, then, is that of a subordinate having to enlighten a superior that he is under a misapprehension. The content of this speech makes it unlikely that Offa spoke this speech publicly, but rather it seems more likely that this was spoken (or whispered) privately. Thus, although the use of *asæde* in the context of *meþelstede* and *gemot* momentarily creates the impression that Offa spoke out in a public meeting, this cannot be the case, which becomes clear when the content of the speech is revealed, in lines 200-1. We are, rather, being told something now which took place earlier in the day. Hence, there is a tension here between the two senses of the verb *asecgan* – 'speak out', the more forceful (etymological) sense (see Bosworth and Toller sense (1) above, which links the long *a-* prefix to Latin *ex-* 'out'), is discarded as we read, since Offa cannot be speaking publicly. Moreover, the irony of the contrast between open speech and cowardly deeds is brought out by this use of *asecgan* for a confidential speech which reveals the gap between promise and action.

The only two instances of the verb *asecgan* which do not at first glance have some sort of difficulty in speech explicitly within them are the instance in *Psalm* 72, when (after all) the psalmist is speaking of praise of God, which may indeed be difficult, and the single instance of the word in *Beowulf*, when it is used by Beowulf to explain that he wishes to tell his errand to Hrothgar near the start of the poem. Possibly the word is used to suggest that the errand is difficult, or that Beowulf is speaking with difficulty (either because of the formality of the occasion, or because he is unsure of his reception). In neither

of these cases would ‘speak with difficulty’ be an insupportable interpretation of the meaning of *asecgan*. The speech introduced by *asecgan*, like that of its unprefixed counterpart, are ones in which the truth matters: these are moments of secular or spiritual revelation, announcements, and vows. The truths told by *asecgan*, however, have an awful quality. They are truths beyond the comprehension of men, or those (like the speech of Moses) that tell a new and monumental truth into existence. In the case of Offa, the poet’s deployment of the term is a telling one, suggestive of a difficult disclosure, pointed in the attention it draws to the smallness of the action to be described, and finally ironic in its echoes of monumental announcement.

VI. Say Again?: gesecgan

As with the prefix *a-*, the semantics of the prefix *ge-* are difficult to determine, although this prefix has been discussed at greater length in scholarship.[477] The most common use of *ge-* in verbs is 'to denote perfective aspect', giving an 'association with "result"'.[478] This influence of the resultative connotation of *ge-* is detectable with some words, but not all, and *ge-* has a different meaning when it occurs with nouns, adjectives, and adverbs. In the case of *gesecgan*, it is not clear from the usage that *ge-* does anything more than intensify the meanings associated with *secgan*. In particular, the association with *soð* is even stronger for *gesecgan* than it is for *secgan*, and *gesecgan* shows signs of being used formulaically (which is less clearly true of *secgan*). As with *asecgan*, the connotations of *gesecgan* are easier to draw out than with *secgan*, and can be outlined through reference to the contexts in which the verb is used, without much detailed close reading.

There are thirty-two instances of *gesecgan* in Old English poetry, mostly in the third person singular preterite or the infinitive.[479] Twenty of these instances

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[477] See, for example, John William Richard Lindemann, *Old English Preverbal Ge-: Its Meaning* (Charlottesville, 1970). M. L. Samuels's review sums up the problems with this book, and the difficulties which make the role of this prefix so difficult to pin down: M. L. Samuels, 'Lindemann (J. W. R.), *Old English Preverbal Ge-: Its Meaning*' (Book Review)', *Medium Aevum* 41 (1972), pp. 289-92. More recently, see Javier Martín Arista, 'The Old English Prefix *ge-*: A Panchronic Reappraisal', *Australian Journal of Linguistics* 32 (2012), pp. 411-33, which also provides an overview of previous scholarship on this subject.
[478] See Randolph Quirk and C. L. Wrenn, *An Old English Grammar* (London, 1969), p. 110.
[479] These thirty-two instances are: *Psalm* 77.8 line 2 (*gesæcgan*); *Aldhelm* line 11 (*gesæd*); *Daniel* lines 165 and 482, *The Battle of Maldon* line 120 (*gesæde*); *Andreas* line 384, *Beowulf* line 2157, *Exodus* line 24, *Guthlac A* line 295, *Riddle* 38 line 5 (*gesægde*); *Beowulf* line 388 (*gesaga*); *Andreas* lines 603 and 624, *Christ III* line 1316, *Elene* line 984, *Guthlac A* lines 244 and 704, *Juliana* line 46, *Meters of Boethius* 19 line 40, *Maxim 1* line 2, *The Order of the World* line 24, *Riddle* 4 line 12, *Riddle* 39 line 28 (*gesecgan*); *Guthlac B* line 1179, *Meters of Boethius* 22 line 13, *The Order of the World* line 4 (*gesecge*); *Elene* line 168 (*gesecggan*); *Christ III* line 1309 (*gesegð*); *Daniel* line 543, *Riddle* 36 line 13, *Riddle* 39 line 25 (*to gesecganne*), *Exodus* line 438 (*to gesecgenne*).

alliterate, and fourteen do not, thus the split is relatively even.[480] Saints are the subject of *gesecgan* in eight instances, and God or a messenger from God are the subjects in two, accounting for around one-third of the instances.[481] Several subjects are very general (such as *ænig* or *mon,* or the reader or listener), as was the case with the subjects of *secgan*.[482] The verb is often used to convey the teachings of God, as the uses of the verb by saints and divine emissaries suggests. Of those instances of *gesecgan* which do not impart teachings about God, many show related themes: two are God testing Andreas' faith; two relate to Constantine's discovery of the cross; two relate to conquering sin (in *Christ III*); one is a book speaking (*Aldhelm*); one is part of the 'say if you can' formula (*Riddle* 36); one relates to counting the descendants of Abraham; and one is an angel commanding a devil (*Guthlac A*). As with the related verbs, *gesecgan* rarely introduces direct speech.[483] There is a link between *gesecgan* and *soð*, as was the case with *secgan,* which is even stronger in the prefixed verb. Just under one-third of the instances of *gesecgan* collocate with *soð* or a *soð*- compound.[484] *Beowulf* has two

[480] The alliterating instances are: *Andreas* line 603; all three instances in *Daniel*; both instances in *Elene*; both instances in *Exodus*; all three instances in *Guthlac A* and the instance in *Guthlac B*; *Juliana* line 46; *Meters of Boethius* 19 line 40; *The Order of the World* line 4; *Riddle* 36 line 13; *Riddle* 30 line 25; and *Beowulf* line 388. The non-alliterating instances are *Aldhelm* line 11; *Andreas* lines 384 and 624; *Beowulf* line 2157; both instances in *Christ III*; *Meters of Boethius* 22 line 13; *The Battle of Maldon* line 120; *Maxims 1* line 2; *The Order of the World* line 24; *Psalm* 77.8 line 2; *Riddle* 4 line 12; *Riddle 38* line 5 and *Riddle* 39 line 28.
[481] Daniel is the subject in all three of the instances in *Daniel*; Guthlac is the subject at lines 244 and 295 of *Guthlac A*; Juliana is the subject in *Juliana*; Andreas is the subject at lines 384 and 624 of *Andreas*. God is the subject at line 24 of *Exodus*, and a messenger from God (*dryhtnes ar*) at line 704 of *Guthlac A.*
[482] *Elene* line 168 (*ænig*), *Exodus* line 438 (*randiggendra*), *The Order of the World* line 4 (*monn*), *Riddle* 36 and *Riddle* 39 line 28 (reader), *Christ III* lines 1309 (*mon*) and 1316 (*ænig*); *Maxim 1* line 2 and *Order of the World* (*ic* / the poet), and *Riddle* 38 (*mon*).
[483] *Gesecgan* introduces direct speech thrice: *Andreas* line 384, *Guthlac A* line 295 and *Riddle 38* line 5.
[484] *Andreas* line 603, *Daniel* line 482, *Guthlac A* line 295, *Riddle* 36 line 13, *Riddle* 39 line 25 (*soð*); *Juliana* line 46 (*soðne*); *Daniel* line 543, *Exodus* line 438, *Riddle* 39 line 28 (*soþum*); *Guthlac A* (*soþa*); and *Exodus* line 24 (*soðwundra*).

metaphorical 'speeches', by actions and by runes, introduced by *gesægde* and *gesæd* (at lines 141 and 1696 respectively), but Klaeber's edition identifies these instances as past participle instances of *secgan*.[485] For this reason, these two instances are not included in the overall numbers for *gesecgan*, and the latter was discussed in the section on *secgan* above. The instance of *gesecgan* in *Aldhelm* at line eleven is in variation with *secgan*, and several of the other instances of *gesecgan* occur in close proximity to *secgan*.[486] This may support the theory that there is not much semantic distinction between *secgan* and *gesecgan*, although some aspects of the usage do suggest that *gesecgan* was more emphatic.

When it occurs more than once in a poem, *gesecgan* is frequently used for the same kind of speech. For example, two of the instances of *gesecgan* in *Andreas* occur within God's speech to Andreas, and the third instance introduces Andreas's speech to God.[487] Moreover, the instances of *gesecgan* at lines 603 and 624 are within very similar lines,[488] and all three instances have Andreas as the subject, since the instances at lines 603 and 624 are requests for Andreas's speech. The two uncontested instances of *gesecgan* in *Beowulf* both relate to exploits.[489] In *Christ III*, there are two speeches introduced using *gesecgan*, and both are in a speech about conquering sin through

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[485] As a dental marks the preterite and the past participle in both cases, it is not clear how the distinction between *secgan* and *gesecgan* should be made here: Klaeber's edition lists the other two instances of *gesecgan*, at lines 2157 and 388, under *gesecgan.*

[486] For example, *saga* occurs on line 29 of *Riddle* 39, after *gesecgan* on the previous line, and *to secganne* occurs at the start of the point which concludes with *to gesecganne* in lines 22 and 25 of the same. Similarly, in *Daniel sægde* is used first of Daniel's explanation of the dream in line 160, before the instance of *gesæde* in line 165 for the second mention of the same explanation.

[487] At lines 603, 624 and 384.

[488] Line 605: *"Miht ðu me gesecgan, þæt ic soð wite*; line 624: *"Miht ðu, wis hæleð, wordum gesecgan.*

[489] At lines 388 and 2157.

communicating with other humans.[490] All three instances of *gesecgan* in *Daniel* relate to dream interpretation.[491] Both the instances of *gesecgan* in *Elene* relate to finding the cross: the first instance, at line 168, is about discovering the meaning of the symbol of the cross, whereas the second, at line 984, relates to communicating to others having found the physical cross itself. Both the instances of *gesecgan* in *Exodus* are about God's teachings, and in both the extent of the universe is used to emphasise the numinosity and ineffability of God's knowledge.[492]

All three instances of *gesecgan* in *Guthlac A* are within defiant speeches to devils, in which the devils are chastened and commanded to change their behaviour. The first two (at lines 244 and 295) occur within Guthlac's speech, and the third occurs within the speech of a heavenly messenger (at line 704). These uses of *gesecgan* in *Guthlac A* are remarkably similar: in the first, Guthlac is speaking defiantly to devils; in the next he speaks similarly defiantly to his enemies (still devils probably); and in the third, an angel sent from God forces devils to heal Guthlac. In the solitary instance of *gesecgan* in *Guthlac B* (at line 1179), Guthlac instructs his servant what to tell his sister after Guthlac's death. The two instances of *gesecgan* in *The Order of the World* (at lines 4 and 24) relate to learning wisdom, being requests for knowledge of creation (*forðgesceaft*, line 3) and God's abundant strength (*meotudes mægensped*, line 24).

[490] At lines 1309 and 1316.
[491] At lines 165, 482 and 543.
[492] At lines 24 and 438.

The two instances in *Riddle* 39 both relate to the speed at which a thing can be told: the first instance, at line 25, is about the long story of life's condition (*ealdorgesceaft*, line 23); the second instance, at line 28, is a challenge to unravel the riddle fast. This leaves five instances where the verb occurs only once in a poem, and five instances in different *Riddles* and *Meters of Boethius*. The high incidence of *gesecgan* being used in similar contexts when it is used more than once in a poem might suggest some level of formulaic use, and this is also suggested by the fact that *to gesecganne soðum wordum* occurs at both *Exodus* line 438 and *Daniel* line 543, though with different spellings of the infinitive.[493]

The instances of *gesecgan* discussed above relate to authoritative, earnest and truthful speeches. Broadly, the connotations appear similar to those of *secgan*; however, there is a high degree of regularity within poems in the use of the word, and an even stronger link between *gesecgan* and *soð* than between *secgan* and *soð*. This suggests that *gesecgan* may have carried a little more significance or weight than *secgan*, possibly simply because it was a rarer word.

[493] *Exodus* has *to gesecgenne*.

VII. 'Oh say me true, if thou wert mortal':[494] To Sum Up and When Did the Link Die Out?

The most notable finding in this chapter is the strength of the link between *secgan* and the related prefixed verbs *asecgan* and *gesecgan*, and truthfulness. Discernible, though subtle, differences between *secgan*, *asecgan* and *gesecgan* have also been uncovered. Particular aspects of the connotations of *secgan* are much clearer in the prefixed forms: *asecgan* is much more clearly linked to difficult speech than *secgan*, and *gesecgan* is even more clearly linked to truthful speech than *secgan*. The strength of the association between *secgan* and *soð* seems to be considerable, from the evidence discussed above. What follows is a brief investigation of the persistence of this link between *say* and 'truth' in the intervening centuries.

Given that Milton (above) still saw a link between *say* and *truth*, and used *say* in preference to *tell* with *true*, it seems likely that the link between *secgan* and *soð* persisted for some time, and this would form an interesting avenue for further study. It would appear that the link persisted to some extent into the nineteenth century, since Arthur Conan Doyle uses the phrase 'what this young man says is true' – a phrase which would not sound odd to twenty-first century speakers, either.[495] In fact, the *Oxford English Dictionary* cites a number of quotations in the eighteenth, nineteenth and even twentieth centuries of *say* collocating with *true*, notably in a poem by Sylvia Plath:

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[494] John Milton, 'On the Death of a Fair Infant Dying of a Cough', in Helen Darbishire ed., *The Poetical Works of John Milton* Vol. II (Oxford, 1982), pp. 123-6, p. 125 line 41.
[495] Uttered by Sherlock Holmes to Watson: Arthur Conan Doyle, 'The Boscombe Valley Mystery', in Ed Glinert ed., *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes and The Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes* (London, 2001), pp. 69-93, p. 77.

‘“We’ll take / Whatever trial’s to come, so say true.”’[496] In Plath’s use, the context is also strikingly similar to that typical of poetic instances of *secgan* in Old English: *say* occurs here embedded within speech (as is often the case with *secgan*, *gesecgan* and *asecgan*), and not only does *say* collocate with true, the context here is one of difficulty. It is worth noting also that the link persists into modern usage in the fossilised form *sooth sayer.* Surprisingly, the phrase ‘true say’ (in which ‘say’ appears to be being used as a noun) is also found in modern ‘street’ language, originating from Jamaican creole, and meaning ‘I agree!’ or ‘I agree with what you’re saying’.[497] Perhaps this is a survival of Anglo-Saxon connotations of ‘say’!

Further study of these tentative suggestions of a persistence in the link between *say* and truthfulness might uncover further instances of this latent connection in modern usage, but even as it stands, the evidence of post-medieval usage generally, including some usage which is very modern indeed, supports the evidence of usage in Old English, and also suggests that it is likely that the association between *secgan* and *soð* in Old English was very strong, running much deeper than can be explained by the alliterative link between the words. The connotative link apparently outlived the alliteration of the key terms *soð* and *secgan*, persisting even when *soð* had fallen out of usage and been replaced by a word which did not alliterate with *say*, and despite the growth in the use of *tellan* and its descendants.[498] The associations

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[496] Sylvia Plath, ‘Crystal Gazer’, in Ted Hughes ed., *Sylvia Plath Collected Poems* (London, 1989), pp. 54-6, p. 55.
[497] According to the *Urban Dictionary*, see ‘true say’, <https://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=true+say>, [last accessed 4 October 2017].
[498] See *tell*, v., *Oxford English Dictionary Online* (Oxford, September 2015), [last accessed 5 October 2017], which provides detailed analysis of the senses of this verb, as well as a comprehensive etymology and form history.

of *tell* with counting, probably inherited from the borrowed Old Norse cognate *telja*, which gradually fell in with the native word, give *tell* connotations of straight dealing and truth, which place it in direct semantic rivalry with the native associations of *secgan*. Moreover, *tell* not only took over some of the functions of *say*, but alliterates with *truth*, the replacement for *soð*. The persistence of the link between *say* and truthfulness is all the more surprising in view of the suitability of *tell* as a replacement, and suggests the association was probably very strong in Old English.

Conclusion: An Overview of the Verbs of Speech

Chapter Contents

I. Chapter Summary

II. '"Teehee!" quod she, and clapte the wyndow to': An Overview of cweðan and Related Verbs

III. 'Oh Speak Again': sprecan

IV. 'Words, words, words': A General Overview of What We Have Found

I. Chapter Summary

This chapter, in addition to recapitulating the principal findings examined in detail within the body of this thesis, begins with providing a brief outline of the other verbs examined in the research for this project but not selected for more detailed examination, partly because the verbs examined above showed such intriguing evidence of connotations as yet uncovered, and partly because of the obvious constraints which curtail all theses. The chapter provides a brief overview of around a dozen of the verbs for 'to speak' in Old English poetry, how they are used and what their connotations might be: for this reason, the chapter provides some more detailed analysis of instances in the case of the verbs which are discussed only here, to support and explain the conclusions presented.

II. '"Teehee!" quod she, and clapte the wyndow to': [499]An Overview of **cweðan** *and Related Verbs*

What follows is an overview of the usage of *cweðan* and the related prefixed verbs. On the basis of the data gathered and analysed for this study, these verbs do not display evidence of strongly marked connotations. The *Dictionary of Old English* entry for *cweðan* also shows this, listing 'to speak, say' as the only senses (although a range of information relating to other aspects of usage is provided there).[500] Instead, it seems that *cweðan*, *acweðan*, *becweðan* and *gecweðan* do not have strong connotations, but are widely used general verbs for 'to say', similarly to Modern English 'speak'. Yet there are some trends and patterns which are suggestive, and worth exploring.[501]

Cweðan occurs very frequently, and, as there are no obvious connotations which can be pursued in the way that the link to truth with *secgan* could be pursued and tested in chapter two, the work to uncover the connotations through detailed analysis is harder to direct.[502] What the data have uncovered regarding the connotations of these verbs accords with both the frequency of their occurrence in Old English poetry (and prose), and the lack of connotations listed in the entries for this group of verbs in the *Dictionary of Old English*.

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[499] *The Miller's Tale*, line 3740.
[500] See *cweþan*, v. *The Dictionary of Old English A-H Online* (Toronto, 2007), [last accessed 2 October 2017].
[501] Because what follows is intentionally an overview of usage of the *(-)cweðan* group, the points made are often of a general nature, and there is less focus on detailed analysis of individual instances.
[502] An even more detailed database for this verb might uncover more of these subtleties, and might be an avenue for further research.

cweðan

The second most frequently occurring verb of speech in Old English poetry after *secgan* is *cweðan*, which occurs one hundred-and-ninety-one times. This count does not, of course, include the extra-metrical instances of the verb, which are frequent, especially in dialogue poems, where *cweðan* is used as an *inquit* tag outside of the meter. The verb introduces direct speech on ninety-one occasions and does not on ninety-three occasions. There are also a handful of instances where it is not certain whether or not *cweðan* introduces speech: for instance, *cwæð* on line 239 of *Guthlac A* introduces indirect speech, followed by a *þæt* clause, but is immediately followed by direct speech, so it could be argued that *cwæð* here introduces indirect or direct speech. Thus the split between the instances where *cweðan* does, and the instances where it does not introduce direct speech is almost even. The verb *cweðan* occurs in a large range of poems, as its frequency would lead us to expect.[503] The verb is found especially frequently in the *Psalms*, which account for around thirty percent of the instances of the verb in Old English poetry, and *cweðan* is more commonly found in religious than in heroic poetry.[504] Apart from several instances of collocation between *cweðan* and *word*, a pattern discussed in more detail below, there is not much evidence of formulaic usage associated with *cweðan*, which occurs in a range of positions within the poetic line. The

[503] Here are the poems in which *cweðan* occurs, and how often: *Andreas* (15); *Azarias* (1); *Beowulf* (11); *Christ I* (6); *Christ II* (4); *Christ III* (3); *The Creed* (1); *Daniel* (11); *Dream of the Rood* (2); *Elene* (5); *Fragments of the Psalms* (1); *The Finnsburg Fragment* (1); *Genesis A* (20); *Genesis B* (11); *Gloria 1* (1); *Guthlac A* (5); *Homiletic Fragment 1* (1); *Instructions for Christians* (3); *Judgement Day 1* (1); *Judgement Day 2* (2); *Juliana* (1); *Lord's Prayer 2* (1); *Meters of Boethius* (6); *Metrical Charms* (2); *The Battle of Maldon* (2); *Menologium* (1); *Psalms* (58); *The Metrical Preface to the Pastoral Care* (1); *Riddles* (5); *Seasons for Fasting* (1); *Solomon and Saturn 2* (1); *The Wanderer* (2); and *Christ and Satan* (5).

[504] In particular, there are fewer instances in *Beowulf* than the size of the poem might lead us to expect.

prefixed verbs show more formulaic usage, which suggests that *cweðan* may also have occurred within a formula at some stage before the written evidence, and this is also discussed below.

Although the verb *cweðan* is used in a large range of contexts, it seems to display some affinity for negative or forceful contexts. It is possible (and sometimes necessary) to categorise the contexts in which *cweðan* occurs with more than one term on several occasions, and therefore the instances of terms listed do not always relate to separate moments. Nevertheless, the usage of *cweðan* in these contexts does suggest something about the verb's connotations, although it is not possible to isolate strongly marked connotations. *Cweðan* is associated with taunts in thirteen cases, with blasphemy on twelve occasions, with commands on fourteen occasions, with complaints on thirteen occasions, with boasts in ten cases, with threats in ten cases, and with warnings in eight cases.[505] The verb *cweðan* is also linked to

[505] These instances of taunts are all in the *Psalms*, except for a single instance in *Beowulf*: *Psalms* 68.11 line 2; 69.4 line 2; 70.9 line 1 and 70.10 line 1; 72.9 line 1; 73.7 line 1; 82.4 line 1; 88.45 line 1; 93.7 line 1; 113.10 line 3; 119.2 line 2; and 138.17 line 2, which is also a threat. The instance in *Beowulf* is at line 2041, during the digression about Freawaru and Ingeld, when Beowulf explains how an old warrior re-ignites the flames of strife through his words. There is one instance of blasphemy, in *Psalm* 52.1 line 1. There are eight instances of blasphemy and boasts: *Psalms* 72.12 line 1; *Daniel* line 714; *Genesis A* line 31, *Genesis B* lines 265, 274, 276 and 278; and *Solomon and Saturn 2* line 454. There are three instances of threat and blasphemy: *Genesis A* lines 47 and 2459; and *Guthlac A* line 577. The instances of command are: *Andreas* lines 173, 329 and 1206; *Psalm* 104.27 line 1 and 104.30 line 1; *Psalm* 106.24 line 1; *Psalm* 148.5 line 1; *Genesis A* lines 195, 1510 and 2057; *Genesis B* lines 344, 500 and 503. There is also one instance of command and warning: *Genesis B* line 529. The instances of complaints are: *Psalm* 72.11 line 1; *Psalm* 78.10 line 1; *Psalm* 106.14 line 2; *Psalm* 118.82 line 3; *Psalm* 128.11 line 2; *Elene* line 667; *Genesis A* line 2246; *Andreas* lines 62, 1280 and 1411; *Guthlac A* line 206; and *Fragment of the Psalms* 40.4 line 1, as well as the aforementioned instance at *Psalm* 72.12 line 1, which is also blasphemy. In addition to the eight instances of blasphemy and boasts, there are also two others: *Genesis A* line 2146 and *Finnsburg Fragment* line 24. In addition to the aforementioned three instances of threat and blasphemy, and the instance of threat and taunt, there are a further five instances of threat: *Genesis A* line 1279; *Genesis B* line 549; *Psalm* 89.3 line 2; *Psalm* 128.6 line 1 and *Psalm* 136.7 line 4. There is also one instance of a threat and warning: *Instructions for Christians* line 196. In addition to this instance of threat and warning, and the aforementioned instance of warning and command, there are six other instances of warning: *Genesis A* line 1295; *Christ III* line 1549; *Daniel* lines 549 and 554; *Dream of the Rood* line 116 and *Psalm* 100.7 line 3.

praise on twenty-five occasions, and with petitions (not necessarily addressed to God) in twenty-one cases.[506] A wide range of speakers are the subject of *cweðan*, including such polar opposites as God and devils. On the whole, the verb seems associated with prayer, deep reflection or deeply felt or desperate speech, as is suggested by the fact that the word occurs most frequently in the *Psalms*, and that it occurs in general more frequently in religious than in battle or heroic poetry.

There are twenty-seven instances of collocation between *cweðan* and *word* (twelve of these instances occur in *Andreas*), as well as a further eight instances where *word* occurs near *cweðan*.[507] There are also fourteen instances of collocation, and three of proximity between *cweðan* with *self* or *sylf*.[508] Ten of these collocative or proximity links between *cweðan* and *sylf* / *self* occur within the *Psalms*. The collocations between *cweðan* and *word* are more likely

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warnings

[506] Both praise and petition occur at: *Psalm* 117.2 line 1, 117.3 line 1, 117.4 line 1 and *Psalm* 141.5 line 4. The following instances are of praise: *Andreas* lines 539 and 1450; *Azarias* line 71; *Christ I* lines 283 and 401; *Daniel* lines 360, 425 and 1716; *Elene* lines 748 and 1119; *Lord's Prayer 2* line 12; *The Menologium* line 160; *Psalm* 69.5 line 3; *Psalm* 88.17 line 2; *Psalm* 91.14 line 1; *Psalm* 118.164 line 2; *Psalm* 123.1 line 2; *Psalm* 137.1 line 4; *Christ and Satan* line 655; *Beowulf* line 3180; and *Guthlac A* line 38. In addition to the four aforementioned instances of petition and praise, petition occurs with a complaint seven times: *Andreas* lines 62, 1280 and 1411; *Fragment of the Psalms* 40.4 line 1; *Psalm* 78.10 line 1; *Psalm* 106.14 line 2 and *Psalm* 118.82 line 3. Petition occurs with a threat at *Psalm* 141.5 line 4. Petition also occurs at: *Andreas* line 354; *Christ I* line 148; *Genesis A* lines 2028 and 2782; *Homiletic Fragment 1* line 8; *Psalm* 118.116 line 2; *Psalm* 139.6 line 1; *Riddle* 48 line 4 and *Christ and Satan* line 407.

[507] The collocations with *word* occur in: *Andreas* lines 62, 173, 354, 539, 716, 727, 743, 850, 913, 1206, 1280 and 1450; *Beowulf* lines 315, 2246 and 26662; *Christ I* line 401; *Daniel* line 549; *Elene* line 748; *Genesis A* lines 31, 195, 905 and 1254; *Genesis B* line 355; *Juliana* line 92; *Psalm* 69.4 line 2; *Riddle* 59 line 5; and *Instruction for Christians* line 193. There are a number of instances where *word* occurs near to *cweðan*, but not in direct collocation: *Azarias* line 71; *Christ and Satan* line 227; *Daniel* lines 360 and 425; *Dream of the Rood* line 111; *Genesis A* lines 1510 and 2727; and *Psalm* 88.2 line 1. There is one instance where a *word*-compound occurs near to *cweðan*: *Daniel* line 416 (*wordgleaw*).

[508] The verb *cweðan* occurs in proximity with *sylf* or *self* in: *Genesis A* line 1786; *Psalm* 91.14 line 1, and *Psalm* 118.116 line 2. Collocations between *self* or *sylf* and *cweðan* occur in: *Andreas* lines 329 and 1109; *Christ and Satan* line 305; *Instruction for Christians* line 196; *Psalm* 72.12 line 1, *Psalm* 76.7 line 1 and 76.9 line 1, *Psalm* 104.27 line 1, *Psalm* 106.24 line 1, *Psalm* 115.2 line 1, *Psalm* 117.3 line 1, and *Psalm* 148.5 line 1; and *Meters of Boethius* 6 line 2 and *Meters of Boethius* 8 line 3.

to be the remnants of a formula than to have any semantic significance. It is unclear what semantic significance *word* could give *cweðan*, apart from perhaps implying formality or sincerity, and of course marking the verb as transitive. The prefixed verbs also suggest the existence of a strong formula between the (-)*cweðan* group and *word*. *Gecwæð* occurs in the formula *ond þæt word gecwæð* ten times (five as the first, and five as the second half line) in the poems *Andreas* and *Elene*.[509] In addition, *gecwæð* occurs in a range of similar formulae, including *word* or a -*word* compound, in several other poems a further 5 times.[510] Elsewhere, *word* occurs in the line immediately preceding, in the same line as, and in the line immediately following *gecweðan* once each.[511] Thus there is some link between *gecweðan* and *word* on eighteen occasions (in slightly over half the instances of the verb).

There is an extremely frequently occurring formula involving *word* and *acweðan*, some form of which accounts for all but four instances of the verb, and this further suggests that there may well have been a similar formula involving *word* and *cweðan*.[512] The most common form of the formula between *word* and *acweðan* is *ond þæt word acwæð*, which occurs in exactly this form or with minor variations nineteen times.[513] The fact that the only

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[509] The formula *ond þæt word gecwæð* occurs in *Andreas* lines 896a, 1172b, 1299b, 1361b, 1400b and 1663a; and in *Elene* lines 338a, 344a, 440b and 938a.
[510] The following formulae occur: *þæt he worde gecwæð* in *Psalm* 104.8 line 2a; *þæt word gecwæð* in *The Battle of Maldon* 158b; *he þæt word gecwæð* in *Phoenix* line 551b; *þæt word þe gecwæð* in *Partridge* line 4a; and *ligeword gecwæð* occurs in *Daniel* line 719b.
[511] The words *gecwæð* and *word* occur in the same line at *Beowulf* line 874; *word* occurs in the line immediately preceding *gecweðan* in *Andreas* line 1464-5; and *word* occurs in the line immediately following *gecwæð* at *Daniel* line 757.
[512] The four instances of *acweðan* which do not use this formula are in *Genesis B* (line 304) and the *Psalms* (72.6 line 5, 86.2 line 1 and 121.1 line 2).
[513] The formula occurs at: *Beowulf* line 654b; *Christ I* line 316b; *Christ II* lines 474a and 714b; *Elene* line 1071b; *Guthlac B* line 1347b; *Juliana* lines 45a, 143b, 631b and 640b; *Judith* lines 82b, 151b and 283a; *ond þæt word acwyð* occurs at *Beowulf* line 2046b; *ond þas word acwæð* occurs at *Azarias* line 4b; *ond þas word acwið* occurs in *The Wanderer* line 91b; *þa*

four instances of the verb to occur outside of this formula are in a poem associated with Old Saxon (*Genesis B*) and in the *Psalms* further suggests the pre-eminence of this formula.[514] Furthermore, it has been argued that this instance of *acwæð* in *Genesis B* (one of these four instances of the verb to occur outside of the formula) is derived from an underlying Old Saxon form, and should be translated as 'proscribe'.[515] The other prefixed form of *cweðan*, *becweðan*, also shows evidence of a formula with *word*, as this verb occurs in collocation with *word* on all but two occasions, both of which are in the *Psalms*.[516] There is, then, good evidence that *cweðan* and the prefixed forms of the verb were widely used in a formula with *word*, and it seems likely that, as *cweðan* was used widely, this formula became commensurately less widely used for *cweðan*, though it retained its predominance with the prefixed forms of the verb. Conversely, it is possible that the link between *cweðan* and *self* or *sylf* does suggest some connotations, especially as it fits in well with the associations tentatively offered for this word, with prayer and other religious contexts.

The Prefixed Verbs

Very little about the connotations of the prefixed verbs can be deduced from the evidence, particularly as they occur much less frequently than *cweðan*.

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word acwæð occurs at *Genesis A* line 1110; *and þa word acwæð* occurs at *Daniel* line 282b; and the formula occurs with *and* at: *Genesis B* line 659a.

[514] For parallels to this unusual non-formulaic use of the verb in the *Psalms*, see Griffith (1991), pp. 181-2. The formula *word acweþan* also occurs in Gregory's *Dialogues*, further suggesting its strength.

[515] See Doane (1991), p. 275, note to line 406a and Fr. Klaeber, 'Notes on Old English Poems', *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 12 (1913), pp. 252–261, p. 255.

[516] These two instances are also the only instances of *becweðan* in the *Psalms*. They occur in *Psalm* 88.45 line 3 and *Psalm* 105.37 line 3.

Apart from the link with *word* and formulaic usage discussed above, not much about their usage suggests anything about the connotations.

The most frequently occurring of these prefixed forms of *cweðan* is *gecweðan*, which occurs thirty-five times. In view of the fact that it occurs relatively rarely, *gecweðan* occurs in a wide range of poems.[517] All but three instances of the verb do not alliterate, either functionally or otherwise.[518] All but eight instances of the verb are of the third person singular preterite form *gecwæð*: the exceptions are three instances of the verb in the third person plural preterite, one in the first person plural preterite, one in the first person singular preterite, one in the second person singular preterite, and one of the past participle.[519] As with *cweðan*, the split between instances that introduce direct speech and instances that do not is fairly even: *gecweðan* introduces speech sixteen times and does not nineteen times. A range of subjects are discussed in the speeches introduced with this verb, and likewise various speakers and addressees use the verb. The *Dictionary of Old English* lists the same senses for *gecweðan* as for *cweðan*: 'to speak, say', although again a number of other aspects of usages are detailed. The lack of connotations suggested by this dictionary entry further supports the claim that there is little semantic distinction between *gecweðan* and *cweðan*.[520]

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[517] The verb occurs in the following: *Andreas* (7), *Daniel* (6), *Beowulf* (5), *Elene* (4), *Christ and Satan* (3) and twice in the *Psalms*. The verb occurs once in each of the following: *Christ I*, *The Creed*, *Genesis A*, *The Battle of Maldon*, *Phoenix*, *Panther*, *Partridge*, and *Riddle* 48.
[518] The exceptions are: *Beowulf* line 535; *Daniel* line 138 and *Christ and Satan* line 569, in all of which *gecweðan* alliterates functionally.
[519] Third person plural instances: *Daniel* lines 138 and 200; *Psalm* 82.9 line 4 (*gecwædon)*. First person plural: *Beowulf* line 535 (*gecwædon*). First person singular: *Christ and Satan* line 122 (*gecwæð*). Second person singular: *Beowulf* line 2664 (*gecwæde*).
[520] See *gecweþan*, v. *Dictionary of Old English A-H Online* (Toronto, 2016), [last accessed 2 October 2017], for more details.

The verb *acweðan* occurs twenty-three times, again in a range of poems.[521] All but one instance of the verb have no kind of alliteration: the instance in *Psalm* 88.45 (line 3) has functional alliteration. All but five instances of the verb are of the third person singular preterite form *acwæð*. The exceptions are: one instance of the third person plural preterite, two of the third person singular present and two of the past participle.[522] All but five instances of *acweðan* introduce direct speech, which is the only marked difference between this verb and the rest of the verbs in the *-cweðan* group. The exceptions are the instances in *Genesis B* and the *Psalms*.[523] As with *gecweðan*, *acweðan* is used for speeches on a range of subjects, and for a range of speakers and addressees. The *Dictionary of Old English* entry provides little evidence of semantic distinction between *acweðan* and *cweðan*, suggesting only a slightly more declarative connotation for *acweðan* than *cweðan*, and that the verb can sometimes mean 'to sing'.[524]

There are only seven instances of *becweðan* in the Old English poetic corpus. Two are in the *Psalms*, four in *Andreas* and one in *Guthlac A*. All but one instance of the verb do not alliterate in any way.[525] Only one instance in *Guthlac A* introduces direct speech.[526] Three instances are of the second

[521] The verb occurs in the following: *Juliana* (4), *Judith* (3), three times in the *Psalms*, *Beowulf* (2) *Christ II* (2), and *Genesis B* (2). The verb occurs once in each of the following: *Azarias*, *Christ I*, *Daniel*, *Elene*, *Genesis A*, *Guthlac B*, and *The Wanderer* (1).
[522] Third person plural past: *Psalm* 72.6 line 5 (*acwædon)*. Third person singular present: *Beowulf* line 2046 (*acwyð*) and *The Wanderer* line 91 (*acwið*). Past participle: *Psalm* 86.2 line 1 (*acweðene*) and *Psalm* 121.1 line 2 (*acweden*).
[523] These are: *Genesis B* lines 304 and 659; and *Psalms* 72.6 line 5, 86.2 line 1 and 121.1 line 2.
[524] The full list of senses given provides more details regarding connotations than my own research can supply, as prose is, of course, considered there: see *ācweþan*, v. *The Dictionary of Old English A-H Online* (Toronto, 2007), [last accessed 2 October 2017].
[525] The exception is *becweþað* in *Psalm* 88.45 line 3, which alliterates functionally.
[526] Introducing Guthlac's speech about the need for faithfulness when in the wilderness, at line 360.

person singular present tense form *becwist*.[527] The others are all third person forms.[528] The verb is commonly translated forcefully, with 'command' or 'claim', reflecting the types of speeches associated with this verb. Unsurprisingly, in view of the poems in which the verb occurs, *becweðan* occurs between God and saints. Because of the small number of instances, very little can be said about the connotations of this verb, apart from the fact that it is quite clearly used of forceful speeches. The verb is used much more widely in prose, as the entry in *The Dictionary of Old English* illustrates, which states that there are around ninety instances, mostly in charters from the twelfth century.[529]

In sum, then, all the evidence of this group of verbs supports the hypothesis that the (-)*cweðan* group should be thought of as traditionally more strongly associated with religious than heroic contexts, and that, apart from this, they have no other strong connotations. Probably by the same token, this group of verbs is very versatile, and can be used in a wide number of contexts. It seems very likely that a formula with *word* existed for this group, but it survives fully only in the prefixed verbs. Of these, only *acweðan* shows clear distinctions in usage, in that it is the only one of this group of verbs to favour introducing direct speech. The *Dictionary of Old English* entries, like my own research, show very little semantic distinction between any of the prefixed forms and *cweðan*.

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[527] These are all in *Andreas*: lines 193, 304 and 418.
[528] The third person singular present subjunctive *becweðe* occurs at *Psalm* 105.37 line 3; the third person plural present tense indicative form *becweþað* occurs at *Psalm* 88.45 line 3; the third person singular present tense form *becwið* occurs in *Andreas* line 193; and the third person singular preterite form *bicwæð* occurs in *Guthlac A* line 360.
[529] See *beweþan*, v. *The Dictionary of Old English A-H Online* (Toronto, 2007), [last accessed 2 October 2017].

III. 'Oh Speak Again':[530] sprecan

The verb *sprecan* is the third most common verb for 'to say' in Old English poetry, after *cweðan* and *secgan.* As was the case with *cweðan*, the connotations of *sprecan* are not very strongly marked. The approach in this section is similar to that used for *cweðan*, though more literary and less statistical, chiefly because there is even less evidence of any pattern in the situations in which *secgan* is used, apart from an intriguing association with deceit in *Genesis B*, which would be worth exploring further.

The verb *sprecan* survives into Modern English as *speak*; in common with other verbs, the later Old English form of the verb without the *r, specan*, gained dominance in Middle English,[531] and the older form died out around the middle of the twelfth century. In Old English as in later periods, the verb was frequently used for a wide range of types of speech, as will be discussed below. Cognate forms of *sprecan* are found in a number of other West Germanic languages, including Old Frisian *spreka*, Middle Dutch (and Dutch) *spreken*, and Middle High German and Modern German *sprechen*; however, no cognates are attested in either North or East Germanic, the obsolete Danish *sprecke, sprække* and Icelandic *spreka* being adoptions from Low German.[532]

There are a number of prefixed forms of *sprecan*, none of which occur very frequently, and therefore, as with the prefixed forms of *cweðan*, it is difficult

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[530] *Romeo and Juliet*, Act 2 Scene 2.
[531] See A. Campbell, *Old English Grammar* (Oxford, 1983), p. 190 §475 for more details on loss of *r* in late Old English.
[532] *speak*, v., *Oxford English Dictionary Online* (Oxford, March 2014). [last accessed 24 March 2014]. Further etymological information as well as illustrations of the forms of the verb occurring in Old and Middle English can be found in this *Oxford English Dictionary* entry.

to say anything definitive about their meaning. There are five instances of *asprecan*, all occurring in the *Psalms*, mostly in contexts which might suggest declaration.[533] There are no instances of *besprecan* in Old English poetry, although there are a number of instances in prose.[534] There are fifteen instances of *gesprecan*, which occurs in a range of poems.[535] Just under half of these instances of *gesprecan* collocate with, or occur in close proximity to, *word*.[536] This is similar to the pattern found with *sprecan*, which, as discussed below, often collocates with *word*.

There are one hundred and fifty-seven occurrences of *sprecan* in Old English poetry, and many more in prose, making *sprecan* much less specialised than the verbs discussed in chapter one, but similar to *secgan* and *cweðan* in this respect. The verb occurs in a very wide range of forms, but is especially frequent in the third person singular preterite *spræc*, occurring sixty-two times in this form. The third person singular preterite, indeed, seems to be the most common form in which any verbs of speech occur, which is entirely logical, since this is the most useful form for introducing a speech: *sprecan* is used to introduce direct speech on sixty-three occasions, and does not on eighty-six.[537]

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[533] These instances are: *Psalm* 58.12 line 2 (*aspræcan*); *Psalm* 59.5 line 3 (*aspræce*); *Psalm* 65.13 line 1 (*aspræc*); *Psalm* 73.20 line 4 (*aspræcon*); and *Psalm* 105.2 line 2 (*asprecan*). See *asprecan*, v., *Dictionary of Old English A to H Online* (Toronto, 2007), [last accessed 1 October 2017].

[534] See *besprecan*, v., *Dictionary of Old English A to H Online* (Toronto, 2007), [last accessed 1 October 2017].

[535] These instances are: *Genesis B* lines 580 (*gespræc*), and 661 (*gespræce*); *Daniel* line 593 (*gespræc*); *Andreas* line 923 (*gespræc*); *Elene* line 1285 (*gesprecenra*); *Christ III* line 1511 (*gespræcon*); *Juliana* lines 145 and 193 (*gespræce*); *The Husband's Message* lines 16 (*gespræcon*), and 53 (*gespræconn*); *Beowulf* lines 675, 1398, 1466 and 3094 (*gespræc*); and *Psalm* 77.23 line 2 (*gespræc*).

[536] In the following, *word* and *gesprecan* collocate: *Genesis B* line 580; *Andreas* line 923; and *Juliana* line 193. In the following, *word* and *gesprecan* occur on consecutive lines: *Elene* lines 1284-5; *Daniel* lines 593-4; *Christ III* lines 1510-11; and *Juliana* lines 144-5;

[537] The instances where *sprecan* introduces speech are: *Andreas* lines 1315 and 1557; *Beowulf* lines 241, 1168, 1215, 1698, 2510 and 2724; *Christ III* line 1377; *The Descent into Hell* line 24; *Dream of the Rood* line 27; *Elene* lines 332, 404 and 724; *Exodus* lines 258, 277, 418 and

On a further seven instances it is not clear whether or not sprecan introduces speech, and on two instances it is used to mark the end of a speech.[538] Three lines containing *sprecan* are repeated within the same poem verbatim, or with only one word changed, but all three of these lines have explanations which could discount them as evidence of particularly formulaic use of *sprecan*. *Psalm* 143 has the same line at verse 9 and verse 13. However, as this is in agreement with the Roman version of the Vulgate (Jerome's first translation of the Psalter) upon which the Old English translation is based, where the verses are also repeated, the significance of this repetition is not, perhaps, very great. As discussed below, (and in the first chapter, p. 102) lines 332 and 404 of *Elene* are identical, except for the difference in the spelling of *maþelade / maþelode;* the presence of *maþelian* in the lines is much more likely to be the cause of this repetition than *sprecan*, however. The final repetition occurs in

553; *Genesis A* lines 918, 1294, 1483, 1744, 1899, 2123, 2138, 2305, 2407, 2464, 2498, 2636, 2721, 2795, 2849 and 2880; *Genesis B* lines 338, 347, 609, 654, 790 and 821; *Guthlac A* line 692; *Guthlac B* line 1294; *Instructions for Christians* lines 155 and 195; *Juliana* lines 89, 185, 189, 246 and 417; *Judith* line 176; *Meters of Boethius* 1 line 81; *The Battle of Maldon* line 211; *Psalm* 50 line 30; *Psalm* 77.20 line 4; *Psalm* 88.17 line 2; *Psalm* 107.6 line 3; *Soul and Body 1* lines 16 and 132; *Soul and Body 2* line 16; *Widsith* line 9; *Christ and Satan* lines 78, 247 and 534. The instances where *sprecan* does not introduce speech are: *Andreas* lines 904 and 1622; *Beowulf* lines 531, 643, 1171, 1476, 1595, 1707, 2618, 2864 and 3172; *Christ I* lines 22, 33, 171, 179 and 190; *Christ II* line 798; *Christ III* line 1121; *Daniel* line 423; *Genesis A* lines 1847, 2263, 2415, 2528, 2578 and 2658; *Genesis B* lines 294, 508, 575, 622, 684, 701, 704 and 788; *Guthlac A* line 200; *Guthlac B* line 1172; *Homiletic Fragment 1* line 5; *Instructions for Christians* line 241; *Meter of Boethius* 8 line 32; *Meter of Boethius* 10 line 45; *Meter of Boethius* 16 line 24; *Meter of Boethius* 20 line 142; *Meter of Boethius* 21 line 3; *Meter of Boethius* 25 line 33; *Meter of Boethius* 27 line 30; *The Battle of Maldon* lines 200 and 212; *The Order of the World* line 13; *Psalm* 54.11 line 2; *Psalm* 56.9 line 3; *Psalm* 57.1 line 1 and 57.3 line 3; *Psalm* 61.11 line 3; *Psalm* 62.10 line 5; *Psalm* 63.4 line 4; *Psalm* 68.12 line 3; *Psalm* 74.5 line 2; *Psalm* 76.4 line 4; *Psalm* 93.4 line 1; *Psalm* 105.2 line 4; *Psalm* 108.2 line 2 and 108.20 line 3; *Psalm* 113.13 line 2; *Psalm* 115.1 line 1; *Psalm* 118.23 line 2; *Psalm* 119.6 line 3; *Psalm* 125.2 line 2; *Psalm* 140.4 line 2; *Psalm* 143.9 line 1; *Psalm* 144.5 line 3, 144.7 line 4 and 144.21 line 1; *Riddle* 8 line 1; *Riddle* 18 line 1; *Riddle* 20 line 33; *Riddle* 23 line 11; *Riddle* 28 line 10; *Riddle* 39 line 12; *Riddle* 60 line 9; *Riddle* 95 line 9; *Resignation* lines 83 and 97; *Seasons for Fasting* line 203; *The Wanderer* line 70; and *Widsith* lines 107 and 137.

[538] On the following instances it is unclear whether *sprecan* introduces direct speech: *Andreas* line 732; *Beowulf* line 2069; *Genesis A* line 1913; *Meters of Boethius* line 1913; *Meters of Boethius Proem* line 8; *The Battle of Maldon* line 274; and *Riddle* 43 line 16. On the following instances *sprecan* marks the end of a speech: *Daniel* line 486; and *Judith* line 160.

Soul and Body 1 line 1: *spreceð grimlice se gast to þam duste* 'the spirit speaks fiercely to the dust (meaning body)'. This line is repeated almost exactly in *Soul and Body 2* line 2 (which has *spriceð*, *gæst*, and no *se*), but since the two poems are very similar throughout, this needs no further explanation.

Just under seventy percent of the occurrences of *sprecan* are as the last word of the second half line, and thus carry metrical stress only (but no alliteration). Only just over one quarter of the occurrences are in the first half of the line, and of these almost seventy percent are the last word of the half line. When *sprecan* and *maðelian* occur in the same line, *maðelian* always comes first, and as *maðelian* also occurs without a second verb in several instances in the same poems as those in which it occurs in the same line as *sprecan*, it is not likely that *sprecan* is being used to gloss the more unusual verb.[539] In fact, *secgan* and *cweðan,* when occurring in the same line as *sprecan,* also always come first.[540] Relatively infrequently *word* comes after *sprecan* when *word* and *sprecan* occur in the same poetic line, although more frequently *word* is placed first.[541] Compounds with *word* as the second element always come first in the full line (their position within the line is of course restricted by the fact

[539] Both verbs occur in: *Beowulf* lines 1215, 2510 and 2724; *Elene* lines 332 and 404, *Genesis B* line 347.
[540] The verbs *cweðan* and *sprecan* both occur in *The Battle of Maldon* line 211. The verbs *secgan* and *sprecan* both occur in *Christ I* line 33; *Resignation* line 97; and *Widsith* line 137.
[541] Collocations with *word* are extremely frequent. The instances where *sprecan* comes first are: *Andreas* line 904; *Christ II* line 798; *Genesis A* lines 2498 and 2721; *Genesis B* line 294; *Psalm* 76.4 line 4; *Psalm* 143.9 line 1 and 143.13 line 1. Instances where *word* comes first are: *Andreas* line 732; *Beowulf* line 341; *Christ I* lines 22 and 179; *Daniel* line 486; *The Dream of the Rood* line 27; *Exodus* line 418; *Genesis A* lines 1847, 2578 and 2849; *Guthlac B* line 1172; *Metres of Boethius* 1 line 81; *Riddle* 18 line 1; *Riddle* 95 line 9; *Psalm* 54.11 line 2; *Psalm* 108.2 line 2; *Psalm* 113.13 line 2; *Psalm* 144.5 line 3; *Psalm* 50 line 30; *Resignation* line 83; *Soul and Body 1* line 132; and *Widsith* line 107.

that they must carry alliteration).[542] Taken together, these facts suggest that *sprecan* does not hold a prominent position in the poetic line, which accords well with the fact that this word is not poetic in register, being frequently found in prose. It is quite common for several speech words to be used to introduce a speech, and this is probably an indication of the generally formal nature of many speech introductions in Old English poetry. The fact that *sprecan* occurs after the other verbs of speech when they occur in the same line might suggest it is the least prominent of the verbs for 'to speak' discussed in this thesis.

The contexts in which *sprecan* is used are very diverse. Among the more frequent are contexts of warning, such as when Hrothgar warns Beowulf of the dangers of misrule, specifically avarice and bloodlust, through the tale of Heremod, where *sprecan* introduces Hrothgar's speech at line 1698, and the verb also introduces the section of the speech directly relating to Heremod, at line 1707. Similarly, *sprecan* is used to introduce God's speech to Abimelech warning him that Sarah is Abraham's wife, not his sister, at line 2636 of *Genesis A*, and God's subsequent speech at line 2658, in which he suggests that unless Abimelech returns Sarah and thus solicits Abraham's help in interceding to God, Abimelech will die. Command is also a frequent context for the use of *sprecan*: for example, when the angel tells Lot to leave Sodom with his family in *Genesis A* line 2498, or when Guthlac tells his faithful friend to tell Guthlac's sister, once Guthlac has died, that he is dead, and to

[542] Compounds with *word* occur in the same line as *sprecan* in: *Beowulf* line 643 (*þryðword*); *Psalm* 56.9 line 3 (*soðword*); *Widsith* line 137 (*þoncword*); *Psalm* 57.3 line 3 (*lygeword*); *Andreas* line 1315; *Juliana* line 189 (*hospword*); *The Battle of Maldon* line 274 (*gylpword*); and *Psalm* 74.5 line 2 (*gramword*).

bury him, a speech introduced by *sprecan* in *Guthlac* line 1294. The other notably frequent use of *sprecan* is in contexts of lament, for example this is the verb used when Joseph speaks sadly of the bad things he has heard of the pregnant Mary in *Christ I,* at lines 171, 179 and 190. Likewise at the start of both *Soul and Body* poems, *sprecan* is used to introduce the soul's sorrowful and accusatory speeches to the body (line 1 in *Soul and Body 1* and line 2 in *Soul and Body 2*). The verb *sprecan* is also frequently used in introductions, either at the very start of a poem or narrative, or simply to introduce speech (as an *inquit*). Thus, for example, *sprecan* introduces the start of the cross's speech about the crucifixion in *The Dream of the Rood* line 27, and opens Widsith's narrative at the beginning of *Widsith* (line 9).

Only five of the instances in poetry carry alliteration, and two of these five occurrences are in *Genesis B*, which has numerous other occurrences of the verb where there is no alliteration. One of these five alliterating occurrences introduces a speech (in *Christ and Satan*): the other four do not. All five instances of the verb which carry alliteration have overwhelmingly negative connotations. The occurrence in *Christ and Satan* at line 78 introduces Satan's lament at his fall from grace and the distress he now endures in hell.[543] In Psalm 119 verse 6, the psalmist regrets that, though he teaches with power, those he speaks to respond in warlike fashion: *þonne ic him spedlice to spræce and hi lærde, / ðonne me earwunga ealle onfuhtan* (when I spoke powerfully to them and instructed them, then they all fought with me without a cause).

[543] *He spearcade, ðonne he spreocan ongan / fyre and atre* – however, *spearcade* may be *swearcade*, so that these lines either mean 'He emitted sparks, as he began to speak, fire and venom' or 'He became black as he began to speak…'. Hugh T. Keenan argues that the source of this image is the Greek *Life of St. Anthony*, which was widely available in a Latin translation. See Keenan (1974), pp.283-4.

The two occurrences in *Genesis B* at lines 575 and 684 are part of the devil's successful deception of Eve, and then of Adam through Eve. In the former, the devil persuades Eve to convince Adam to eat the apple:

> *Gif þu him soðe sægst hwylce þu selfa hæfst*
> *bisne on breostum...*
> *...he þone laðan strið,*
> *yfel andwyrde an forlæteð*
> *on breostcofan, swa wit him bu tu*
> *an sped sprecað*. (Lines 570-575)

(If you say truthfully to him whatever you yourself have in your breast...he then will abandon in his breast-chamber the loathsome strife, the evil answer, as we two, the both of us, speak with him so as to convince.)[544]

In line 684, Eve seeks (unintentionally) to deceive Adam, by persuading him to eat the apple:

> *Hio spræc him þicce to and speon hine ealne dæg*
> *on þa dimman dæd þæt hie drihtnes heora*
> *willan bræcon.* (Lines 684-6)

(She spoke to him repeatedly and enticed him all day in the dark deed, so that they broke their lord's command.)

The occurrence in *Christ III* at line 1121 describes the taunts of those who mock Christ before the crucifixion: *spræcon him edwit* (they spoke to him in scorn). Whether it is chance that all the instances of *sprecan* in which it carries alliteration are so negative is difficult to determine from so small a data set: the instances of the verb that carry alliteration are too few to allow firm conclusions. It is of interest to note, however, the poetic choice to alliterate in each of these instances on *sprecan*, rather than using the more common and arguably more poetic *secgan*: it seems probable that those connotations of truthfulness carried by the latter verb, which were established in the preceding

[544] The significance of this moment in the poem is discussed in Elana Harnish, '*Wif and Wæpned, Freo Fægroste and Godes Handgescaft': Eve and Adam in the Anglo-Saxon Genesis* (Ohio diss., 2012), pp. 44-5.

chapter, make *secgan* an inapposite (perhaps even poetically impossible) choice in such contexts.

That a very large proportion of the instances of *sprecan* occur in contexts which have spiritual significance is unsurprising, given how much of the surviving Old English verse is of a religious nature and involves spiritual subject matter. Unlike *mælan*, although many instances of *sprecan* have spiritual content, the word is not so markedly, nor so directly associated with spiritual beings. In *Genesis B*, *sprecan* is repeatedly associated with the fall, being used of Satan's deceitful speeches (at lines 575 and 609), as well as in Satan's laments at lines 338 and 347 and Eve's persuading of Adam to eat the apple at lines 654, 684 and 704. On the other hand, as *sprecan* is also used for Adam's lament after he realises that they have been misled (in lines 788 and 790), this use of the verb may not necessarily be indicative of intrinsic connotations of deception, though all these instances are in negative contexts.

Most of the instances of *sprecan* in *Genesis B* occur in contexts of deceit, or with negative associations, and are often associated with Satan. The verb occurs fourteen times in this poem. The first instance is at line 294, when God hears that Satan has been speaking *healic word* (haughty words). The instances at lines 338 and 347, mentioned above, occur within Satan's lament at his fall. The instance in line 508 occurs within Satan's deceitful speech to Adam, and is used to report Satan's flattering (and probably false) report of God's praise of Adam's *dæd and word* (deeds and words). The instances at lines 575 and 609, as mentioned above, introduce speeches in which Satan deceives Eve. The next instance, at line 622, is still within Satan's speech to

Eve, and here the verb is used by Satan to describe Adam's *laðes* (repulsive) speech. The instances in lines 654, 684 and 788 are all within Eve's speeches to Adam, in which she endeavours to persuade him to eat the apple, and the instance at line 701 is within the chilling line which affirms Satan's grip on Eve, so *þæt heo on his willan spræc* (that she spoke his [Satan's] will). Then *sprecan* introduces Adam's speech in line 790, when, having been misled into eating the apple, he speaks his regret to her. The verb is used again in line 821 for Eve's reply to Adam's accusatory speech, a reply which is full of regret. All the instances in the poem, thus, are of deceit and sin, or the fruits of these sins: grief, regret, and pain.

The great contrast in the way in which *sprecan* is used, much more frequently and flexibly than many of the other verbs discussed, and occurring in a greater range of different contexts, is probably largely due to the fact that *sprecan* is not a poetic word, and does not show any particular evidence of formulaic usage. This is also consistent with the Modern English usage of the related verb 'to speak', which is likewise used for a wide range of types of speech. The remarkably negative use of the verb in a number of the instances examined and especially within *Genesis B* is intriguing, and may suggest that the verb was drawn in to the space left empty by the impossibility of using the more poetic and more positive *secgan* to demarcate troublesome, deceitful or negative speeches.

IV. 'Words, words, words': A General Overview of What We Have Found

The subject of this thesis has been the analysis of very different verbs. Contrary to general assumption, the verbs of speech are not at all homogeneous in their meaning, even though they seem denotatively very close. In fact, usage suggests this group was used with a great deal of precision and nuance, and that each verb held particular connotations, at least within poetry. Before the foray into Old Norse which forms the epilogue to this thesis, an overview of the findings in Old English is warranted. The verbs which have been included in the database in their entirety have been discussed either in the thesis or in this chapter; they are the following: *cweðan*, *secgan, sprecan, maþelian*, *mælan, mæðlan, onmælan, tomeldan, gemælan, gesecgan*, *asecgan*, *acweðan, becweðan*, *gecweðan*, *asprecan* and *gesprecan.*

Some of these verbs are much more likely to introduce direct speech than others, some alliterate more than others, and some are more strongly constrained by formulae than others. To take the first of these differences, *maþelian,* and *gemalæn* always introduce direct speech. On the other hand, *sprecan, cweðan, gecweðan, mæðlan* and *mælan* sometimes introduce speech and sometimes do not. Some verbs, although they occasionally introduce speech, quite clearly do so infrequently, suggesting that speech introduction is not a primary function: this is particularly true of *secgan, gesecgan* and *becweðan*. A small number of verbs never introduce speech: these are *asecgan, onmælan* and *tomeldan*. The verb *acweðan*, although it occasionally does not introduce speech, introduces speech in the vast majority of cases.

Some of these verbs occur too infrequently for this to tell us very much: thus whereas it is possible to say that *secgan*, although it can introduce speech, more often does not, it is harder to draw conclusions in the cases of *mæðlan* and *mælan*, though there may have been a preference for introducing speech. Likewise *onmælan* and *tomeldan*, and the single instances of *mældan*, *meðlan* and *meldan*, although they do not introduce speech in the extant instances, occur too infrequently for this to tell us very much about whether or not these verbs could introduce speech, and similarly although all instances of *gemælan* introduce speech, there are too few to be certain that this was a rule.

Alliteration shows similar variations across the group of verbs. Some verbs, such as *acweðan*, *gecweðan*, *becweðan*, *sprecan, maþelian, mæðlan* and *cweðan* almost never alliterate functionally, and *mælan* rarely alliterates. Others, such as *asecgan*, almost always alliterate. Yet others, such as *gesecgan* and *secgan*, sometimes do, and sometimes do not alliterate. Again, the number of instances makes it difficult to determine the significance of the trends in some cases. In particular, although the two instances of *gemælan* and the single instance of *onmælan* do not alliterate, and the single instances of *mældan*, *meðlan* and *meldan* do alliterate, all these verbs occur too infrequently for this to give much indication of what normal usage was.

With formulae, the patterns are in one sense clearer: the research for this study has shown that there are not very many exactly repeated half lines in Old English, which makes the repeated instances of half lines clear indicators of formulaic usage. The most clearly marked formula is one which scholars have long known about: *maþelian* occurs exclusively in the a-verse formula *[Name]*

maþelode, and is usually followed by a patronymic. The two instances of *gemælan* also occur with this formula. Similarly, the verb *acweðan* occurs almost exclusively in some variation of the formula *ond þæt word acwæð*. A less forceful set of links exist for other verbs: for instance, *mælan* generally occurs in the half line *wordum mælde*. The verb *mæðlan* also occurs in the formula *wordum mæðlan* a few times. The verbs *becweðan* and *gecweðan*, moreover, show evidence of formulae with *word* similar to that involving *acweðan*.

Some verbs, though they do not show such clear evidence of formulaic usage, do collocate with particular words. The links between *secgan* and *gesecgan,* and *soð* or *soð-* compounds are an especially clear example of this. There are similar collocative links between *cweðan* with *self* or *sylf* and between *word* and *cweðan*.[545] In these cases, which show a link between words which are not as obviously occurring as part of formulae, it is not as clear whether the links between the words are due to formulae which have been weakened or fallen out of use, or whether the associations between the words have semantic significance, or possibly a combination of both these effects. In the case of *secgan*, *gesecgan* and *soð*, as has been discussed, it seems likely that there is a semantic dimension, as well as metrical reasons for the link, because other aspects of usage besides the collocative link suggest this. Similarly, the repeated link between *asecgan* and *magan*, often with a negative, seems likely to be semantically driven, although it could also be a formula. Of course, formulae probably often became formulae in the first place because their

[545] See section II of this chapter (pp. 210-19) for details.

semantic usefulness meant they were very useful phrases to the poets. With *cweðan* and its associations with *word* and *self / sylf*, the link is much less strong than is the case with *secgan*.[546] Moreover, as *cweðan* rarely alliterates (and *sylf / self*, and *word* do not alliterate with *cweðan*), if this is formulaic usage, it is different from the formulae which are used to facilitate functional alliteration, such as those associated with *maþelian* and *secgan*, but might be similar to those associated with *mælan / mæðlan* and *acweðan*, which do not alliterate. The strength of the formula *ond þæt word acwæð* suggests that there may well have been a similar formula involving *word* and *cweðan*. A similar formula with *gecweðan* and *word* also suggests this: *gecwæð* occurs in the formula *þæt word gecwæð* several times.[547] Likewise *bicwæð* occurs in collocation with *word* several times. It is, moreover, not clear what connotations *word* could bring *cweðan*, making a formulaic link (which had perhaps become less productive by the Old English period) more likely. It is possible that the link between *sylf / self* and *cweðan* is indicative of more than formulaic usage, as it fits with the rest of the evidence of usage of this verb in indicating that *cweðan* is often used of reflective speech. However, in general, *cweðan* is fairly connotatively bland, and usage shows less clear associations with *cweðan* than with *secgan*.

The usage suggests more strongly marked connotations in the case of the verbs discussed in detail in the previous chapters, which is why these verbs were selected for more detailed analysis. Thus *maþelian* is not used of divine speech, but is used of very formal speech, usually in a courtly setting. The

[546] There are fewer collocations - see section III (pp. 220-34) of this chapter for details.
[547] See p. 216-19 of this chapter for details.

related verbs *mælan* and *mæðlan* are used of divine speech, and are also associated with saints: these verbs are perhaps the spiritual counterparts of *maþelian*, being used also of formal speeches, but generally in less secular contexts. The evidence gathered strongly supports the idea that *maþelian* and *mælan* in particular are not only poetic words in so far as they occur almost exclusively in poetry, but are also poetic in register: their consistent placement within the line, and the regularity exhibited in their usage in relatively set contexts, is in stark contrast to the way *sprecan* and *cweðan* in particular are used, and suggests formulaic, poetic usage. The clear differences in the ways in which *maþelian* is used compared to *mælan* suggest that, although originally very closely related, these two verbs developed quite separately in Old English and should not be seen simply as variants of the same verb.

The verb *secgan* is most often used for reported speech, often within direct speeches. It is associated with earnestness and truth, and has similar uses and connotations to Modern English *tell.* The prefixed form *asecgan* is particularly associated with difficult speech, and is often used in contexts where speech is impossible, either because the subject being spoken of is too wonderful or too terrible. The distinction between *secgan* and *gesecgan* is less clear than that between *secgan* and *asecgan*, although the link between *gesecgan* and truthfulness is even stronger than is the case for *secgan*, and *gesecgan* seems to be used in restricted and similar contexts when used more than once within a poem. The remaining verbs are less clearly semantically distinct. The verb *sprecan* seems to have negative connotations, and is associated with laments and warning speeches. The prefixed forms *asprecan* and *gesprecan* do not provide evidence of strongly marked connotations, although *asprecan* seems

to denote more forceful speech than *sprecan*. The verb *cweðan* is also used for a range of contexts, especially religious ones. The prefixed verb *acweðan* is used more formulaically than *cweðan*, but is not semantically particularly distinct, although unlike the rest of the verbs in the (-)*cweðan* group, it generally introduces direct speech. The two other prefixed verbs, *becweðan* and *gecweðan*, are also not easy to distinguish from *cweðan* on connotative grounds, although *becweðan* is used for forceful speeches, especially commands and claims, which fits with the connotations of the modern descendant *bequeath.*

The epilogue suggests tantalising possible similarities of usage within the corpus of the other surviving Ancient Germanic languages, which would certainly be a fruitful avenue for further research.

Epilogue: Old Norse *segja*

Chapter Contents

I. Chapter Summary

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I. Chapter Summary

In this chapter, the aim is to establish, using a pilot study, whether a fuller study of the Old Norse verbs for speech, comparable to that carried out for Old English, would be likely to uncover similarly nuanced connotative distinctions between the seeming synonymous verbs for 'to speak' in Old Norse. A further question which prompted this pilot is whether the usage in Old Norse shows any similarities with the usage in Old English. The verb *segja* has been chosen as the focus, so that the pilot can also be used to test whether there is any evidence of similarity of connotations and usage between the Old English verb *secgan* and the Old Norse cognate *segja*. This verb was chosen because the Old English evidence is statistically stronger than for any of the other verbs discussed in the thesis, and the results in Old English were both unexpected and pointed to a clear set of possible associations of *secgan*, in particular with truth and, especially through the prefixed form *asecgan*, with difficult speech. The chapter begins with a discussion of the research question and its importance. This is followed by an overview of how the study was carried out, together with details of the principal resources used, and the method employed. Finally, there is a section on *segja* as it is used in a selection of the poems in which the verb occurs.

II. Significance of Speech in Germanic

An area of significant interest not examined in much detail hitherto in this project is the question of how far, if at all, the cognates in other Germanic languages were used in comparable ways to those identified through the study of verbs of speaking in Old English. The fact that several of the most frequently occurring speech words in Old English have cognates in other Germanic languages is of significant interest, and it would be desirable to examine the evidence in several of these languages, especially those languages which have surviving alliterative poetry comparable to that found in Old English. Such a comparison might help us determine the antecedence of the usage found among the Old English verbs of speech. In particular, it would be valuable to examine how far (if at all) the more marked trends in usage found with, for instance, the association between *secgan* and *soð*, are found in the usage in cognate languages. It might also be possible to examine the links between *cweðan* and spiritual speech, or *sprecan* and deceptive or negative speech among the cognate verbs. This, in turn, might enable a stronger case to be made for these connotations surviving in Old English, if they are found in other Germanic languages, as this would suggest that the connotations of these cognate words may date back to Common Germanic. This question of an ancient shared heritage preserved in linguistic usage is particularly worthwhile considering as an expansion to a study such as this, which focuses upon the poetry, since poetry is often thought to preserve older forms than prose.

In philological terms, Old Norse is not the most obvious language to choose, since, of the surviving Germanic languages with a poetic tradition, it is not the

closest relative of Old English. Moreover, it can be difficult to be sure that any similarities of usage in Old Norse are not due to contact between the cultures, since Old Norse is also a language which influenced and was influenced by Old English directly through contact and conquest. However, there is a large body of poetry surviving in Old Norse, and the size of this corpus must be weighed against these problems, as the size of a corpus is of paramount importance in allowing a study to be statistically meaningful. The reasons outlined above for a wider study of this group of words in Germanic literatures are also particularly pertinent to a further study of Old Norse in a number of ways. As in Old English, speech is common also in Old Norse literary texts, and is under-studied. Furthermore, similar questions are raised about the numbers of synonyms, or near synonyms, among words for speech in Old Norse. As with Old English, one reason often given for this plethora of choices is the demands of the alliterative metre: as with Old English, this explanation is not fully satisfactory, and for similar reasons.

What follows is a preliminary study, which seeks to establish whether there is any evidence of significant similarities in the usage of speech verbs in Old Norse to those in Old English. The study focuses upon the verb *segja*, the Old Norse cognate to Old English *secgan*. This verb has been chosen because of two important aspects of the verb as it occurs in Old English poetry – the fact that it occurs so very frequently, making statistical analysis less problematic than for rarer words, and the fact that the use of this verb in Old English is so consistent in its associations with truth and wisdom. The corpus analysed for this study of *segja* in Old Norse is the eddic poetry of the Codex Regius, since

eddic poetry, particularly *fornyrðislag*, is the closest cognate meter in Old Norse to that used in Old English poetry.[548]

[548] See Russell Poole, 'Metre and Metrics', in Rory McTurk ed., *A Companion to Old Norse-Icelandic Literature and Culture* (Malden, Mass., 2005), pp. 265-84; R. D. Fulk, 'Metre', in Carolyne Larrington et al. eds., *A Handbook to Eddic Poetry: Myths and Legends of Early Scandinavia* (Cambridge, 2016), pp. 100-134; and Nelson Goering, *The Linguistic Elements of Old Germanic Metre: Phonology, Metrical Theory, and the Development of Alliterative Verse* (Oxford, 2016), especially the chapter on *lióðaháttr*, pp. 103-162.

III. Method

In Old Norse, the resources (mostly dictionaries and grammars) are in some regards less comprehensive than in Old English, though this is particularly true of skaldic verse. Crucially, there is no glossary as comprehensive or as reliable as the *Concordance* to the *Anglo-Saxon Poetic Record*. The nearest thing to this comprehensive concordance is the 1923 revised edition of Gering's *Glossar zu den Liedern der Edda* (the earlier version of this glossary has significant errors).[549] This glossary is fairly comprehensive, and supplies grammatical information as well as the forms of *segja* and where they occur. Even this later edition, however, contains errors and omissions. This is partly because this glossary is based upon Gering's edition, which it accompanies, and as this edition precedes Neckel and Kuhn,[550] it is now rather outdated in several regards.

Sveinbjörn Egilsson's *Lexicon Poeticum Antiquæ Linguæ Septentrionalis / Ordbog Over det Norsk-Islandske Skjaldesprog* is extremely valuable, not only because it is currently the only dictionary of Old Norse skaldic poetry, but also because it provides relatively comprehensive lists of individual instances of each word.[551] However, Egilsson only references Finnur Jónsson's editions and emendations. *An Icelandic-English Dictionary*, edited by Richard Cleasby and Gudbrand Vigfusson provides a general coverage of

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[549] Although Robert Kellogg, *A Concordance to Eddic Poetry* (East Lansing, 1988) is a very useful tool, it is based on Finnur Jónsson's edition of *Eddukvæði*, and contains very few readings from other editions. The revised edition of Gering's *Glossar* is: Hugo Gering, *Glossar zu den Liedern der Edda* (Paderborn, 1923).
[550] Gustav Neckel and Hans Kuhn eds., *Edda: Die Lieder des Codex Regius nebst verwandten denkmälern* (Heidelberg, 1962).
[551] Sveinbjörn Egilsson, *Lexicon Poeticum Antiquae Linguae Septentrionalis: Ordbog over Det Norsk-Islandske Skjaldesprog,* ed. Finnur Jónsson (Copenhagen, 1966).

words not restricted to poetry, and instances.[552] However, as it is intended as a prose dictionary, this dictionary is less thorough in its treatment of poetic words. Hugo Gering's *Vollständiges Wörterbuch zu den Liedern der Edda* is very helpful for eddic poetry, although it does not include every instance,[553] as is Johan Fritzner's *Ordbog over det Gamle Norske Sprog*.[554] Geir T. Zoëga's *A Concise Dictionary of Old Icelandic* is useful, but not comprehensive, and is also principally a prose dictionary.[555] The skaldic poetry project is extremely useful, and would be even more so should this project be extended to cover all Old Norse poetry, as it provides a search function for all the words found in skaldic poetry, drawn from several important dictionaries including many already mentioned. Importantly, the skaldic poetry project also provides a list of all the instances of each word in the poems already edited. Because it enables such searches for words across a number of dictionaries, the skaldic poetry project has been helpful in this project, even though the focus of this project is eddic rather than skaldic verse. Individual editions of poems sometimes also have good glossaries. E. V. Gordon's *An Introduction to Old Norse* (edited by A. R. Taylor) and Ragnvald Iversen's *Norrøn Grammatikk* provide grammatical analysis, and can also be used to find forms of verbs and some etymological information.[556]

The *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, although not fully revised, contains detailed etymological information and includes some Old Norse words (as

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[552] Richard Cleasby and Gudbrand Vigfusson eds., *An Icelandic-English Dictionary* (Oxford, 1957).
[553] Hugo Gering, *Vollständiges Wörterbuch zu den Liedern der Edda* (Halle, 1903).
[554] Johan Fritzner, *Ordbog over det Gamle Norske Sprog* (Oslo, 1972).
[555] Geir T. Zoëga, *A Concise Dictionary of Old Icelandic* (Oxford, 1952).
[556] E. V. Gordon, *An Introduction to Old Norse*, ed. A. R. Taylor (Oxford, 1981); and Ragnvald Iversen, *Norrøn Grammatikk* (Oslo, 1928).

well as many obsolete Old English words), although not ones unattested in Middle English. Although the third edition has greater coverage, the first edition is more useful for etymologies and philology, as it gives reconstructed forms. Alongside dictionaries, several etymological dictionaries were consulted during this project, including Ferdinand Holthausen's *Altenglisches etymologisches Wörterbuch* for Old English,[557] Jan de Vries's *Altnordisches etymologisches Wörterbuch* for Old Norse,[558] and Alf Torp's *Nynorsk etymologisk Ordbok* for modern Norwegian.[559] The consensus between the etymological dictionaries regarding individual words is, naturally, not always complete.

As with Old English, translations have been used to identify speech verbs missed by the other methods outlined above. In this regard, Old Norse eddic verse is better supplied than Old English, as several complete translations of Old Norse eddic poetry exist, two of the newest of which are considered in this project.[560] Both these translations are sufficiently literal to be of great help in a project such as this. One translation has been used predominantly in the database to provide translations of the lines which contain speech words, particularly for those poems which Ursula Dronke did not edit.[561] The other translation has been used to identify any speech words missed by glossaries, and this has also been used to examine how different verbs of speech are

[557] Ferdinand Holthausen, *Altenglisches etymologisches Wörterbuch* (Heidelberg, 1974).
[558] Jan de Vries, *Altnordisches etymologisches Wörterbuch* (Leiden, 1962).
[559] Alf Torp, *Nynorsk etymologisk Ordbok* (Kristiania, 1919).
[560] These are: Andy Orchard, *The Elder Edda* (London, 2013), abbreviated within the database to Orc; and Carolyne Larrington, *The Poetic Edda* (Oxford, 1999), abbreviated within the database to Lon.
[561] This database can be found on the CD submitted with this thesis, and is referred to as Appendix E. An illustrative sample taken from the Norse database can be found in Appendix F, at the end of this thesis. For those poems which Ursula Dronke did edit, her translation is generally used, and the abbreviation used to identify this is Dke.

translated into English.[562] A conscious effort has been made to utilize multiple extant translations of eddic verse into English.

The Old Norse database is very like that created for Old English, though it contains a smaller dataset, and is therefore in some regards simpler. As with Old English, every entry within the database has its own entry number, and the database also contains a number of fields for each separate entry: the root form of the word, the form used within the text, the poem within which the word occurs, the part of the poem (in those cases where the poem is generally divided into parts), and the verse and line in which the speech verb occurs. To enable some metrical comparisons with Old English verse, the database also lists which part of the line the Old Norse verbs of speech would be said to occur in, if the Old Norse line were treated as an Old English long line, with two half-lines linked by alliteration forming one long line. This means that in the Old Norse database, some verbs occur in line [3], notably when the poem is in *ljóðaháttr*. Whether or not the verb carries alliteration, metrical stress, the part of speech involved, the subject, and object and the type of speech (a one- or two-word summary of the subject) are also listed. This database records not only whether or not the verb is used to introduce direct speech, but also whether the speech verb occurs within direct speech, and whether it is used to introduce reported speech. Likewise, this database, like the Old English one, contains contextual information. However, in this database the contextual information is supplied in addition to, rather than incorporated within, the translation of the relevant lines. Notable collocations and patterns are also

[562] Orchard (2013).

listed in this database, as are manuscript variants, and variations in stanza numberings between the editions used for this database. Three editions of the Edda poems are used in this database, and the relevant lines are quoted from all three editions for every entry, making it possible to compare differences in editorial approach.[563]

As with the Old English database, it is not possible to show a line of the database on the printed page as it appears in Excel, but the tables below show the content of two entries. A full list of the abbreviations for poems used in this database is contained in the Appendix A, which contains the full database. The abbreviations for poems used below are for *Lokasenna* and *Helgakviða Hundingsbana I* respectively. All other abbreviations should be self-explanatory. As with the table used to illustrate the Old English database, the two entries chosen here were selected in order to demonstrate the use of all the fields found in the database.

[563] The editions listed within the database are Jónas Kristjánsson and Vésteinn Ólason eds. *Eddukvæði* (Reykjavík, 2014); Gustav Neckel, and Hans Kuhn eds. (1962); and Ursula Dronke, ed. *The Poetic Edda* (Oxford, 1969, 1997 and 2011).

entry number	root word	form in text	Eddukvæði	Neckel & Kuhn	Dronke
24	segia	segi	Œrr ertu, Loki, / er þú yðra telr / ljóta leiðstafi; / ørlǫg Frigg / hygg ek at ǫll viti, / þótt hon sjálfgi segi.'	Œrr ertu, Loki, er þú yðra telr / lióta leiðstafi; / ørlǫg Frigg hugg ec at ǫll viti, / þótt hon siálfgi segi.'	Œrr ertu, Loki, / er þú yðra telr / lióta leiðstafi. / Ørlǫg Frigg / hygg ek at ǫll viti, / þótt hon siálfgi segi.
75	segia	sǫgðu	Mœttu þeir tiggja / í túnhliði, / sǫgðu stríðliga / stilli kvómu. / Úti stóð Hǫðbroddr / hjálmi faldinn, / hugði hann jóreið / ættar sinnar: / "Hví er herməar litr / á Hniflungum?"	Mœtto þeir tiggia í túnhliði, / sǫgðo stríðliga stilli qvómo; / úti stóð Hǫðbroddr, hiálmi faldinn, / hugði hann ióreið ættar sinnar: / 'Hví er herməar litr á Hniflungom?'	_

Poem	Type	Part	Verse	Line	Line part	Noun / Verb	alliteration	(stress)	meter type
Ls.	mythological	_	29	6	[3]	verb	yes	secondary	ljóðaháttr
HH.	heroic	1	48	3	1	verb	yes	primary	fornyrðislag

part of speech	introducing reported / direct / not	speaker	addressee	type of speech	own adjustments to translation	(translation)
3s pres subj	within direct	Frigg	not specified	boast / regret	…though she not herself may speak.	Dke: *Freyia said*: You are a lunatic, Loki, to relate your likes' hideous hatefulnesses. Of all fates Frigg has, I think, full knowledge, though she herself may keep silent.
3pl past	reported	they (Granmar' s sons)	tiggia (prince)	instructive		Lon: The prince met them on the meadow slope, forcefully they said that the lord had come; Hodbrodd stepped forward, wearing his helmet, he pondered his kinsmen riding towards him: 'Why do the Niflungs look so troubled?'

(context)	thematic Notes	MS Variation	NB
Frigg stepped in to prevent Loki and Óðinn talking about their fates as part of their argument, whereupon Loki starts insulting Frigg by alluding to her promiscuity, and Frigg reprimands Loki for his treatment of Baldr, to which Loki responds with pride, and this is Frigg's reply.	link to wisdom (viti)	5 hugg] hug R, hygg SnE	
Sinfjötli and Gudmund have been exchanging insults / flighting, and Helgi recounts a story to Sinfiotli.		5 Hǫðbroddr emended from Bǫðvildr	Gering has 49

IV. segja

Analysis of *segja* in Old Norse eddic poetry suggests strong parallels in usage to those found in Old English, and discussed in the body of the thesis. Out of the seventy-two instances of *segja* examined,[564] there is a direct collocative and / or alliterative link to truth in nine instances, all with some form of the adjective *sannr*, or the related noun *satt*.[565] The verb is similarly associated through collocation with wisdom on eight occasions, and with this link there is no parallel alliterative link to take into consideration when interpreting the numbers.

A number of words, denoting different kinds of wisdom, are used in collocation with *segja*. The most common is *fróðr*, which occurs in one form or another four times. However, *horskr* and *snotr* are also used to describe speakers who are introduced using *segja* (and thus, by association, the speech is wise). The verb *segja* also occurs in the proximity of *vita* or *vitr* on a couple of occasions.[566] In the majority of these cases, the link to wisdom is predicated upon the fact that the person who speaks using *segja* is considered wise, which bears obvious comparison with the usage in Old English, where the speech of figures of authority is often introduced by or associated with *secgan*.

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[564] Representing seventy-five percent or more of the instances listed in Gering (1923).
[565] *Sigrdrífumál* stanza 14 line 6 and stanza 25 line 4; *Atlamál* stanza 90 line 5; *Vafþrúðnismál* stanza 42 line 6 and stanza 43 line 3; *Fáfnismál* stanza 9 line 3; *Sigurðarkviða* stanza 71 line 7. The link is alliterative across two half lines at: *Vǫlundarkviða* stanza 40 line 2 and stanza 41 line 2.
[566] The links to wisdom are discussed below in greater detail: the link to wisdom occurs with *fróðr* at *Fáfnismál* stanza 12 line 1 and stanza 14 line 1; *Hávamál* stanza 28 line 3 and stanza 63 line 1; with *horsk* at *Atlamál* stanza 10 line 5; with *snotr* at *Grípisspá* stanza 8 line 1; with *vita* at *Lokasenna* stanza 29 line 6; and *Grípisspá* stanza 12 line 6.

Thus in purely quantitative terms, the link between truth and *segja* appears, on preliminary evidence, weaker in Old Norse than is the case with the cognate in Old English. The link between words for wisdom and *segja*, however, is stronger than the cognate link in Old English. As with Old English *secgan*, there are many distinctions relating to the strength of the link between the word relating to wisdom and truth and the verb *segja*. As with the Old English cognate, there are also other ways, not involving such direct lexical links, in which the verb *segja* is associated with these concepts, which are discussed in this chapter. Interestingly, the verb *segja* seems even more strongly linked to difficult speech than the cognate in Old English. As with Old English, the verb is frequently used to introduce advice, instructive speech, and prophecy. As with Old English, it is usually used to introduce the speech of the more knowledgeable party. Significantly, *segja* is used overwhelmingly within direct speech, as with Old English, in a comparable manner to that in which we would use Modern English *tell* embedded within direct speech, in phrases such as 'I tell you'. For example, the verb is often used in the imperative form *segðu* (just as *secgan* is repeatedly used in the imperative form *saga*, for example in the riddles), within direct speech.[567] Thus *segja* is used within direct speech in over seventy percent of the instances examined. The larger proportion of instances of *segja* occurring within direct speech in Old Norse compared to Old English, where *secgan* occurs within direct speech around forty percent of the time, is partly explicable because of the overwhelming prevalence of the discursive mode within Old Norse poetry.

[567] See Appendix D, pp. 280-2, for examples.

The usage of the poems in which *segja* occurs also supports this link to knowledge and wisdom. The verb occurs at least once in all the mythological poems, but it does not occur in eight of the heroic poems (namely *Frá dauða Sinfjǫtla, Reginsmál, Guðrúnarkviða in fyrsta* and *Guðrúnarkviða in forna, Dráp Niflunga, Guðrúnarhvǫt* and *Hamðismál*). The verb occurs most frequently in *Grípisspá* (9 times) and in *Hávamál* (8 times). The first of these is a poem entirely concerned with prophecy, and the latter also in a sense, but particularly with advice and acknowledged truths or sayings. These themes are similar to the associations found with Old English *secgan*, and comparable in usage to the frequent occurrence of *secgan* within texts with a gnomic quality, such as the *Psalms* or *Riddles*. *Segja* has also been found occurring in *Atlamál in grœnlenzco* (7 times), in *Skírnismál* (6), *Vafþrúðnismál* (4), *Lokasenna* (4), *Sigurðarkviða in skamma* (4), *Oddrúnargrátr* (3), *Atlakviða in grœnlenzca* (2), *Hárbarðsljóð* (2), *Hymisqviða* (2), *Vǫlundarkviða* (5), *Sigrdrífumál* (2), *Vǫluspá* (1), *Alvíssmal* (1), *Þrymskviða* (1), *Brot af Sigurðarqviðo* (1), *Helgakviða Hundingsbana I* (2) *and II* (1), *Grímnismál* (2), *Fáfnismál* (3), *Helgakviða Hiǫrvarðzsonar* (1) and *Guðrúnarkviða* (1).

The verb *segja* occurs nine times in *Grípisspá*:[568] three of these occurrences have a link with knowledge,[569] and two with clarity.[570] For example, in *Grípisspá* stanza 6 line 5, *segja* is associated with knowledge, partly through occurring in the same half line (collocation) as a verb for knowledge, *vita*, and partly because of the wisdom of the speakers, described as *ráðspakir*

[568] At stanza 4 line 2, stanza 6 line 5, stanza 8 line 1, stanza 12 line 4 and 6, stanza 38 line 8, stanza 47 line 2, stanza 50 line 2, stanza 53 line 6.
[569] Stanza 6 line 5, and stanza 12 line 4 collocate with a wisdom word; stanza 8 line 1 is linked to wisdom by association (see following analysis).
[570] Stanza 8 line 1 and stanza 47 line 2.

(sagacious). This is one of five instances when Sigurðr uses *segja* to demand speech from Grípir, using the imperative form with an enclitic pronoun, *segðu.* Here, Sigurðr's request - *Segðu mér, ef þú veizt…* (tell me, if you know…)[571] – particularly suggests that *segja* is associated with knowledge, as the addition of *ef þú veizt* cannot really be an expression of doubt on Sigurðr's part: in fact the authors of *Kommentar zu den Liedern der Edda* recognise this formulation as typical of knowledge speeches, and go on to list instances in a number of other poems: 'Solche Formulierungen sind für Wissensgespräche typisch…'.[572] At stanza 8, *segja* is linked to *snotr* by alliteration across the lines, but also conceptually. Although *snotr* describes *konungr* ('king', referring to Grípir), if the king himself is wise, then so must be his speech. By the same token, if the king is *gegn* (just, upright, benevolent, wise), some of these connotations may also be linked to the verb used to describe his speech (even though *gegn* is an honorific).[573] Moreover, *gerr* (the comparative form of the adverb *gǫrva,* meaning 'completely, fully, thoroughly, well, clearly, exactly') is used to modify *segðu* directly, linking *segja* to clear speech. There is again a link to *gǫrva* at stanza 47 line 2, where the adverb collocates with *segja.* This second instance of the link is within a speech by Grípir to Sigurðr, in which the former is foretelling the latter's downfall.

In stanza 12 of *Grípisspá, segja* occurs twice, at lines 4 and 6, and the verb is again collocatively linked to wisdom. As at stanza 8, it is Grípir to whom *víst*

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[571] Unless otherwise stated, quotations are taken from Jónas Kristjánsson and Vésteinn Ólason ed., *Eddukvæði* (Reykjavík, 2014). Translations are my own.
[572] See Klaus Von See et al., *Kommentar zu den Liedern der Edda 5* (Heidelberg, 2006), p. 155.
[573] Definitions of words are taken, where possible, from Beatrice La Farge and John Tucker ed., *Glossary to the Poetic Edda: Based on Hans Kuhn's Kurzes Wörterbuch* (Heidelberg, 1992), as this is the most recent glossary to the Edda poems.

(adverbial form of 'wise', meaning 'certainly') applies here, but as in stanza 8 this affirmation of Grípir's wisdom *sem þú víst segir* (as you certainly say) naturally also suggests his speech is knowing. Then at line 6 the imperative *seg* is again used by Sigurðr to demand speech from Grípir. Notably, Sigurðr asks Grípir specifically for considered speech *leið at huga / ok lengra seg* (think about my way and speak longer). At stanza 38 line 8 and stanza 50 line 8 *segðu* is also used again to provoke speech from Grípir. *Segja* is also used to introduce Geitir's speech to Grípir near the start of the poem (stanza 4 line 2), in which he informs him of the arrival of Sigurðr, and this is an instance of *segja* not being used in the imperative to demand speech. Sigurðr's use of *segja* to describe Grípir's speech to him in parting at stanza 53 line 6 is the only other instance found of *segja* not in the imperative (apart from those discussed above, at stanza 8 line 1 and stanza 47 line 2). In all the instances above, save stanza 47 line 2 where the interlocutor is Brynhildr, it is Grípir's speech which is being referred to or provoked using *segja*, and he is speaking to Sigurðr.

The uses in *Fáfnismál* are comparable to this. The three instances of *segja* found in *Fáfnismál* occur near the start of the poem, and they are all strongly linked to truth and / or wisdom. In the first, Fáfnir promises to tell Sigurd something true (*ek þér satt eitt segik*, stanza 9, line 3) before proceeding to warn him that gold and rings will be his death. In the two later instances, Sigurðr uses this verb to demand that the dying (and consequently prophetic) Fáfnir speak of Sigurðr's future fate, using almost exactly the same line in both cases: *Segðu mér, Fáfnir, / alls þik fróðan kveða* (You tell me, Fáfnir, since they call you wise) is used in stanza 12 line 1, and stanza 14 line 1

differs only in adding a *þat* between *mér* and *Fáfnir*. As with the examples in *Grípisspá*, although it is the speaker who is described as wise, indubitably his speech must also be.

In *Atlakviða* and even more frequently in *Atlamál*, *segja* is used repeatedly to introduce the speeches of Guðrún.[574] In one of the two occurrences of the verb in the former, it is used to introduce the speech in which Guðrún reveals to Atli that he has eaten his sons' hearts. The verb is used in the parallel scene in *Atlamál* three times, firstly when Guðrún decides to reveal to Atli what has happened to his sons in full, secondly within her speech to him, in which she explains the reason for her vengeance, *segja* is used by Guðrún to introduce Atli's speech to her in which he told her of her brothers' deaths, and thirdly when Guðrún explains she initially told Atli he was eating calf when he asked what the meat was.[575] These speeches, which are not connected to prophecy, unlike most of the other speeches in *Atlamál* involving *segja*, seem to be particularly difficult or painful speeches, and, crucially, they are also truth revealing speeches. Gúðrun's aforementioned speech at stanza 47 line 8, for example, is both painful and earnest in character, since it is her *hinzt kveðja* (last greeting) to her dying brothers, and she wishes *sagði hon mun fleira* (she said considerably more to them). It seems to be especially important here to stress the truth of what is said, perhaps because it is so shocking that it might otherwise be hard to believe.

[574] *Atlakviða* stanza 6 line 2; *Atlamál* stanza 47 line 8, stanza 80 line 2, stanza 83 line 4 and stanza 90 line 5.
[575] At stanza 47 line 8, stanza 80 line 2, stanza 81 line 5 and stanza 83 line 4 respectively. See below.

It will be noted that *segja* seems to be associated with speeches in which infanticides are revealed in *Atlamál*.[576] As mentioned above, the word is used when Guðrún reveals that the meat which Atli has feasted on is his own children's flesh. Thus Guðrún uses *segja* at stanza 80 line 2, stanza 81 line 5 and stanza 83 line 4, when she explains to Atli how she has served him his own children's flesh. The same scene in *Atlakviða* also has Guðrún's terrible revelation to Atli introduced using *segja*, in stanza 35 line 6.

The verb *segja* is used once by Atli to provoke speech from Guðrún at the very end of his life, and here there is also a link to truth: in *Atlamál* at stanza 90 line 5, *segja* and *sannr* collocate and alliterate, and indeed *sannr* here directly modifies *segja*. This is another instance where *segja* is used to demand truthful speech. As Atli is killed, he demands to know from his killers who they are: *'Segið it sannasta, / hver vá son Buðla…'* (You tell me the truest [thing], who slew Buðli's son). Presumably this is also a difficult speech for both Atli and, possibly, his killers, since Atli is dying. Significance is of course also often attached to dying words. There is, in addition, a possible link between death and prophecy, and the fact that this verb is used in a dying speech perhaps suggests prophecy by association, even though there is no prophecy on this occasion. Ursula Dronke points out that Atli's death bears comparison with Brynhildr's in *Sigurðarkviða in skamma*, in that both ask for a noble burial, and indeed in both *Sigurðarkviða* and *Atlamál*, the husbands are 'weak, bewildered and exasperated' by their wives.[577] These parallels might add to the

[576] The use of *segja* in *Vǫlundarkviða* is comparable to a degree in this regard.
[577] Ursula Dronke ed. and trans., *The Poetic Edda Volume I: Heroic Poems* (Oxford, 1969), p. 103.

expectation of a prophecy here, as Brynhildr's death is accompanied by such prophecy.

There is a direct link to wisdom at stanza 10 line 5 of *Atlamál.* Here, there is a collocative link between *segja* and *horskr.* Although *horskr* refers to Hǫgni's wife, as she is also the subject of *sagði*, her wisdom is doubtless transferred into her speech. This is the first of two instances of *segja* used to describe the unsuccessful attempts of Hǫgni's wife, and later the wives of Hǫgni and Gunnar, to prevent them from visiting Atli. Thus *segja* is used at stanza 31 line 4 to refer in the middle voice to their wives' dissuasions. The wives have a strong sense of foreboding regarding this visit, because of their prophetic dreams in which they foresaw Atli's betrayal. Therefore, though their speech is ostensibly only dissuasion, it is also prophecy. A parallel scene in *Atlakviða*, this time with Gunnarr expressing doubt about the wisdom of going to Atli, also has the dissuasive speech introduced using *segja*. These uses of *segja* in these poems which tell Guðrún's story not only bear comparison with Old English usage because of their use by a character who has knowledge to inform one who does not, but also because they are, presumably, difficult speeches to make in a number of ways. This aspect of the verb is found in Old English, particularly in the prefixed form *asecgan*.

The uses of *segja* in *Vǫlundarkviða* bear comparison with those in *Atlamál* and *Atlakviða*. In two cases there is a link to *satt*: at stanzas 40 and 41 *segja* and *satt* are linked across the first two lines by alliteration, and in fact these two stanzas mirror each other syntactically, forming a question and answer pair. In stanza 40 Níðuðr asks Bǫðvildr whether it is indeed true, as he has

heard tell, that Vǫlundr raped her. In stanza 41 she replies, mirroring his question exactly, to say that it is.[578]

"Er þat satt, Bǫðvildr,
er sǫgðu mér:
Sátuð it Vǫlundr
saman í hólmi?"

(Is that true, Bǫðvildr, what they said to me: did you and Vǫlundr lie together on the island?)

"Satt er þat, Níðuðr,
er sagði þér:
Sátu vit Vǫlundr
saman í hólmi…"

(It is true, Níðuðr, what he said to you: Vǫlundr and I lay together on the island…)

These instances also deal with difficult speech, not dissimilar to those of Gúðrun to Atli in *Atlamál* and *Atlakviða*, and the themes of filial defilement and injury are again present. These themes recur in another use of *segja* in *Vǫlundarkviða*. The verb is used by Níðuðr at stanza 32 line 1 to demand of *Vǫlundr* what has happened to his sons: *Seg þú mér þat, Vǫlundr…af helium hvat varð / húnum mínum?* (You tell me this, Vǫlundr…what became of my healthy young bear cubs?). The speech which this demand prompts is the one in which Vǫlundr reveals what he has done to the boys (made jewels from their eyes, brooches from their teeth, and wound their skulls with silver, giving the resulting ornaments to their parents and sister). This explanation is strikingly similar to Gúðrun's in *Atlamál*, where she likewise explains that she made ale cups from her and Atli's sons' skulls, before going on to itemise the

[578] In my translations I use 'lie together' to translate the Old Norse euphemism *sitia saman*, as this seems to me the closest parallel in terms of idiom. That *sitia saman* was an euphemism for sexual intercourse is clear from its unambiguous use in Chapter 54 of Oddr Snorrason's *Saga Óláfs Tryggvasonar*. See also Klaus Von See et al. eds., *Kommentar zu den Liedern der Edda 3* (Heidelberg, 2000), p. 261.

body-parts which Atli has eaten, in response to his questions as to where his children are (not dissimilar to Níðaðr's question, quoted above).

The remaining instances of *segja* in *Vǫlundarkviða*, at stanza 22 line 5 and stanza 26 line 4, do not deal directly with the violence associated with the speeches discussed above, but set it up. In the former, the negative imperative *segiða* is used by Vǫlundr to command silence from the two princes, whom he is luring successfully to their deaths on the morrow with the promise of gold. The latter instance of *segja* is again about prevented speech, this time Bǫðvildr's, who dares not tell anyone save Vǫlundr of her broken ring. This prevented speech, and her trust in Vǫlundr, also lead to her being lured to her undoing. No doubt, the irony of the parallel speeches – Bǫðvildr's misplaced speech to Vǫlundr, which costs her a rape, and the princes' misplaced silence to the household of Níðuðr, which costs them their lives – is emphasised by the use of *segja* in both cases. In Old Norse, this association with difficult speech sometimes seems to be linked to the difficulty of putting things into words, rather than to the intensity and difficulty of the feelings being experienced. This is possibly partly the case in one of the instances of *segja* in *Vǫlundarkviða* discussed above, at stanza 26 line 4, when Bǫðvildr uses the verb to explain that she does not dare tell anyone save Vǫlundr of her broken ring: *'Þoriga ek at segja / nema þér einum'* (I do not dare to tell except to you alone). Bǫðvildr is anxious about confessing the damage done to her ring to her parents, but possibly she also does not know how to tell them what has happened.

In part 3 of *Hávamál*, stanza 121, line 9 there is another, clearer example of this kind of difficulty in speaking: *sorg etr hjarta / ef þú segja né náir / einhverjum allan hug* (sorrow eats your heart if you are not able to say your whole mind to someone). This example speaks specifically to the difficulty (and even the pain) of trying to put abstract thoughts into words. The verb is also used to express thoughts in the first of two instances of the verb in stanza 124, at line 2. The second instance of the verb is used contrastively at line 7, to refer to the verbalising of facts (in apposition to thoughts). In Part 1 of *Hávamál*, *segja* is applied to the speeches of interlocutors described as *fróðr* (learned, knowledgeable, experienced, wise) twice, at stanza 28 line 3 and stanza 63 line 1. Both of these statements where *segja* occurs are explicitly concerned (as is a great deal of the poem, of course) with wisdom and advice. Interestingly, however, these two passages in particular are concerned with the importance of asking and answering questions for those who are or wish to be considered wise:

Fróðr sá þykkisk
er fregna kann
ok segja it sama

(Wise may he seem who can ask and tell also)

Fregna ok segja
skal fróðra hverr,
sá er vill heitinn horskr

(To ask and to tell is the duty of everyone: whosoever wants to be called wise)

Another instance of *segja* at stanza 65 line 2 refers once more to the reciprocal aspect of speech, and is another aphorism; however, without explicit reference

to wisdom this time, and stanza 103 line 8 again has *segja* as part of a general point about the necessity for wide conversation in order to be considered knowledgeable about many things (*margfróðr*) rather than feeble-witted (*fimbulfambi*). *Segja* also occurs in stanza 111, which marks the start of part three, and the shift in focus from the achievements of Óðinn to his guiding of humanity.

Segja is the word used to mark the opening of *Lokasenna,* in Loki's demand of Eldir that he tell Loki what the gods are speaking of before Loki enters the hall. At *Lokasenna* stanza 25 line 3 and stanza 60 line 3 *segja* is used of prevented speech, with exactly the same line, in fact. The second line in both stanzas is also an almost exact repeat – in fact it is likely that Loki is purposefully mockingly echoing Frigg's earlier lines, at stanza 60.[579] The context for these lines is somewhat different: in the former, Frigg has stepped in to try to prevent Loki revealing the fates which Loki and Óðinn met in the *árdaga* (days of yore), in the course of Loki's insulting of Óðinn.[580] In the latter, Loki is insulting Þórr, and he reiterates Frigg's demand for silence as a taunting reminder of some of Þórr's humiliations, of which, presumably, he cannot speak for shame. Frigg uses *segja* also at stanza 29 line 6 to refer to speech she cannot make, again regarding the fates. This is, notably, also a reference to Frigg's powers of foresight:

[579] See Dronke's commentary to *Lokasenna*, in Ursula Dronke ed. and trans. *The Poetic Edda Volume II: Mythological Poems* (Oxford, 1997), pp. 356-74.
[580] The gods fear the intervention of elemental beings, such as *daimones* and *vættir*, who could visit their deeds upon them. See Dronke (1997), p. 351.

ørlǫg Frigg
hygg ek at ǫll viti,
þótt hon sjálfgi segi.

(Frigg, I think, knows all fates, though she may not speak of them herself.)

These instances, it will be noted, support the associations of *segja* found elsewhere: namely, a link to truthful or wise speech, and particularly to prophecy; the use of the verb to demand speech from others; and the use of the verb for speeches which are difficult for the interlocutors, either because of their emotional content, or because they are about things which are difficult to verbalise.

In a number of other poems there is a direct or indirect link to truth. For example in *Vafþrúðnismál*, there are two instances of *segja* where there is a direct link to truth: both at stanza 42 line 6 and at stanza 43 line 3, *segja* is used to refer to the explicitly truthful speech of *Vafþrúðnir*.[581] There are also several instances of *segþu* at the beginning of stanzas, where it is used to demand speech.[582] There is a conceptual link to truth in *Þrymskviða* stanza 10, as Þórr wants Loki to speak in the air, before he lands, believing this makes him more likely to be truthful.

This brief snapshot of some of the usage of *segja* in Old Norse suggests that a full study, not only of this verb but of the other verbs for 'to speak', might uncover other similarities of usage between Old English and Old Norse. Despite the fact that this study does not examine every instance of *segja*, it is based on around three quarters of the instances of the verb in eddic poetry, and

[581] In the phrases *segir þú it sannasta* (you tell it most truly) and *ek kann segja satt* (I can tell truly) respectively.
[582] Notably at stanza 11 line 1, stanza 13 line 1 and stanza 42 line 1.

therefore the trends identified are likely to be representative of usage. It would, in addition, be very desirable to do a similar pilot study to this with Old Saxon and Old High German poetry, to see whether (for example) the same links to earnestness or truthfulness and difficult speech are to be found in the usage of cognates of *secgan* and *segja* in those languages as well: this would be a good way to build on and extend the research done for this project. From this limited study, it seems a reasonable hypothesis that in Old Norse, as in Old English, the verbs of speech are deployed in specific contexts, with particular connotations. Therefore, a study of the evidence in Old Norse which paralleled this study of the evidence in Old English would be of value, if not comparatively, then certainly within Old Norse scholarship.

Appendices

Appendix A

See the attached CD, which contains this appendix. Three database files are on this CD: Individual Verbs, Masters and Old Norse Masters. Individual Verbs contains sheets with each of the verbs discussed in detail within the thesis. Masters, the largest database, contains five sheets: 'words', 'thesaurus', 'meanings', 'problems', and 'forms'. 'Words' contains all the entries found in Individual Verbs, as well as many other speech words not discussed in the thesis or listed separately. 'Thesaurus' contains the semantic field of speech as mapped out in the *Thesaurus of Old English*. 'Meanings' (partly reproduced below) contains all the verbs considered for inclusions in 'words', and various details about them. 'Problems' contains several problematic lines of Old English poetry, often containing lacunae or emendations. 'Forms' lists all the forms for several of the verbs discussed in the thesis, and details of instances. More information regarding these databases can be found in 'Methodology' (pp. 78-87) and 'Method' (pp. 240-5).

Appendix B

The lists and tables below give details of all the words considered for inclusion in the database, together with a range of other information. The meaning is provided in all cases, as are details of usage, as these are provided in the *Thesaurus of Old English*. Numbers of Instances are from Madden and Magoun, *A Grouped Frequency Word List*, and only provided for words considered for inclusion in the database after the first survey of the semantic field.

Abbreviations:[583]
thesaurus – *The Thesaurus of Old English*
bostol – the online Bosworth and Toller *A Dictionary of Old English*.
toronto – the online Toronto *Dictionary of Old English*.
word list – *A Grouped Frequency Word List*
q– indicates a doubtful form.
g– indicating words that usually appear in glossed texts or glossaries.
o– indicating that a word form is very infrequent.
p– indicating words that seem to occur only in poetry.

[583] The letter abbreviations match those of the *Thesaurus*, but for the convenience of the reader, definitions are provided.

Words Excluded

The list below is of the words which were drawn from the *Thesaurus*, but then discounted from further study, usually on the grounds that they are too far from the centre ground of this study.

word	definition	details
(ge)cīegan	to invoke, call upon	
(ge)sellan	to utter, put forth (words etc.)	
(ge)sendan	to utter, put forth (words etc.)	
(ge)tyng(e)lic	ready of speech, eloquent	
ābyffan	to stammer	og
āwlyspian	to lisp	o
bealcan	to utter, put forth (words etc.)	g
bealcettan	to utter, put forth (words etc.)	
betȳnung	a thesis, proposition	
clum(m)ian	to murmur, speak low	
drīfan	to speak often of	
foreset(ted)nes	a phrase	
formala	a formula	o
forþ forlǣttan	to utter, put forth (words etc.)	
gemōtmann	an orator, public speaker	g
getæl	ready of speech, eloquent	
getynge	ready of speech, eloquent	
getyngnes	a set speech	
gyrran	to chatter	
hīw	a formula	
hlūd	noisy, talkative	
hlȳdende	chattering (emptily)	
hwǣstrian	to murmur, speak low	g
hwǣstrung	murmur, whispering	
ingecīgan	to invoke, call upon	
locettan	to utter, put forth (words etc.)	g
mōtere	an orator, public speaker	og
nemnan	to invoke, call upon	
on spēd	eloquently	
pristol	chattering (emptily)	q

Words Excluded Continued

word	definition	details
raciend	an orator, public speaker	o
reccere	an orator, public speaker	
rēonung	murmur, whispering	
rihtstefn	a well-modulated voice	o
rocettan	to utter, put forth (words etc.)	
stam	stammering	
stamera	a stammerer	g
stamerian	to stammer	
stammetan	to stammer	og
stamor	stammering	g
stefn	the voice	
tōgecīgan	to invoke, call upon	g
tolcettende	chattering (emptily)	g
ungetinge	ineloquent	og
ungetingful	ineloquent	
wīse	an idiom	
wlæffetere	a stammerer	og
wlæffian	to stammer	o
wlisp	lipsing	
þwāstrian	to murmur, speak low	o
þyle	an orator, public speaker	

Words Absent

The list below is of the words which were considered for inclusion, but ultimately not covered in the 'words' database, usually on the grounds that they are too far from the centre ground of this study, or because they only occur in prose. Bold numbers indicate that the numbers are taken from the *Dictionary of Old English Corpus*, rather than from the *Grouped Frequency Word List*.

entry	definition	details	dictionary	word type	instances
(ge)gieddian	to speak formally, discuss		thesaurus	verb	
(ge)gretan	to address, speak to		thesaurus	verb	
(ge)nægan	to address, speak to		thesaurus	verb	
(ge)sp(r)eca	one who converses		thesaurus	noun	
(ge)spellian	to converse, talk, commune		thesaurus	verb	
(ge)sprecan	to address, speak to		thesaurus	verb	
(ge)tyng(e)lic	ready of speech, eloquent		thesaurus	adjective	
(ongean / wiþ)	to address, speak to		thesaurus	verb	
æfenspræc	conversation of an evening	op	thesaurus	noun	**1**
andcwiss	reply		word list	noun	
asecgendlic	utterable, that can be spoken		thesaurus	adjective	**1**
bodung	utterance, speaking		thesaurus	noun	
clipung	articulation		thesaurus	noun	
cwedol	ready of speech, eloquent		thesaurus	adjective	
cwidegiedd	utterance, speaking	op	thesaurus	noun	**1**
cwiss	speech, vocal utterance	og	thesaurus	noun	
dolspræc	silly chatter	o	thesaurus	noun	
felaidelspræce	chattering (emptily)	o	thesaurus	noun	
felasp(r)ecol	loquatious, garrulous		thesaurus	adjective	
felasp(r)ecolnes	excessive fluency, loquacity		thesaurus	noun	
felaspræc	excessive fluency, loquacity	og	thesaurus	noun	
felaspræce	loquatious, garrulous		thesaurus	adjective	
felawyrde	loquatious, garrulous	o	thesaurus	adjective	
felawyrdnes	excessive fluency, loquacity	o	thesaurus	noun	
frecnenspræce	using dagerous speech	q	thesaurus	noun	
gearowyrde	ready of speech, eloquent	o	thesaurus	adjective	**1**
gearowyrdig	ready of speech, eloquent	p	thesaurus	adjective	
gemaþel	speech, vocal utterance	o	thesaurus	noun	
gerscipe	conversation, discussion	op	thesaurus	noun	
gesegen	utterance, speaking		thesaurus	noun	

Words Absent Continued I

entry	definition	details	dictionary	word type	instances
gesegnes	utterance, speaking	o	thesaurus	noun	
gespræce	ready of speech, eloquent		thesaurus	adjective	
gesprecendlic	that should be spoken	og	thesaurus	adjective	
getæl	ready of speech, eloquent		thesaurus	adjective	4
getynge	ready of speech, eloquent		thesaurus	adjective	1
gewosa	conversation, discussion	g	thesaurus	noun	
geþoftræden	conversation, discussion		thesaurus	noun	
gyliende	loquatious, garrulous		thesaurus	adjective	
gylung	excessive fluency, loquacity	q	thesaurus	noun	
hiwspræc	dissembling speech	og	thesaurus	noun	
hyldig	loquatious, garrulous	g	thesaurus	adjective	
mæðel	council, meeting, speech		word list	noun	
maþelere	a speaker	g	thesaurus	noun	
maþeliend	a speaker		thesaurus	noun	
maþelig	noisy, talkative	og	thesaurus	adjective	
maþelung	excessive fluency, loquacity	g	thesaurus	noun	
motung	conversation, discussion	g	thesaurus	noun	
oferspræce	loquatious, garrulous		thesaurus	adjective	
ofersprecen	loquatious, garrulous		thesaurus	adjective	
ofersprecol	loquatious, garrulous		thesaurus	adjective	
ofersprecolnes	excessive fluency, loquacity	o	thesaurus	noun	
ofspræc	excessive fluency, loquacity		thesaurus	noun	
onspræc	conversation, discussion		thesaurus	noun	
samodspræc	conversation, discussion	o	thesaurus	noun	
secgend	a speaker		thesaurus	noun	4
spellung	conversation, discussion		thesaurus	noun	
sprælcful	loquatious, garrulous	og	thesaurus	adjective	
sprecolnes	excessive fluency, loquacity	o	thesaurus	noun	
sprecul	loquatious, garrulous	og	thesaurus	adjective	
sundorspræc	a private conversation		thesaurus	noun	
swiþspecende	loquatious, garrulous	q	thesaurus	adjective	
toclypung	an invocation, appeal		thesaurus	noun	
tungful	loquatious, garrulous	o	thesaurus	adjective	
tunggelælle	loquatious, garrulous	og	thesaurus	adjective	
twispræc	dissembling speech		thesaurus	noun	

Words Absent Continued II

entry	definition	details	dictionary	word type	instances
unhrædspræce	slow of speech	o	thesaurus	adverb	
worda gong	an outpouring of words		thesaurus	noun	
wordclipinde	able to speak	o	thesaurus	adjective	
wordes	with words, orally		thesaurus	adverb	
wordful	loquatious, garrulous	og	thesaurus	adjective	
wordhleoþor	the voice	p	thesaurus	noun	2
wordig	loquatious, garrulous		thesaurus	adjective	
wordig gehyld	excessive fluency, loquacity		thesaurus	noun	
wordlac	a speech, what is said, words	og	thesaurus	noun	
wordliend	a speaker	og	thesaurus	noun	
wordlung	conversation, discussion		thesaurus	noun	
wordsnoter	ready of speech, eloquent		thesaurus	adjective	
wordsprecende	able to speak		thesaurus	adjective	
wordulung	silly chatter		thesaurus	noun	
woruldspræc	conversation on worldly matters		thesaurus	noun	
ymb(e)spræc	conversation, discussion		thesaurus	noun	

Words Partially Included

The list below is of the words which were partially included in the database, usually when they occurred within a proximity of ten lines of Old English poetry or fewer to words which were in the core group (see below). As with the tables above, bold numbers indicate that they are drawn from the *Dictionary of Old English Corpus*, whereas normal font indicates numbers from the *Grouped Frequency Word List*. Starred numbers indicate that the *Word List* number includes several words which Madden and Magoun have grouped together: details of which words are grouped together in this way are available in Appendix A.

entry	definition	details	dictionary	word type	instances
ellreordig	foreign-speaking, barbarous		bostol	adjective	**1**
wordgleaw	prudent in speech	op	thesaurus	adjective	
(ge)mæðel	an assembly, a deliberative or judicial meeting, council; speech, address, harangue, conversation		bostol	noun	
beotword	a word of threatening, threats / a word of boasting	rare	bostol	noun	**2**
cwide	utterance, word, sentence, sermon, command, agreement, will, reckoning...		toronto	noun	
cyneword	royal or noble word; compound of cynn adj., hence "suitable or appropriate word"	poetic hapax legomenon	toronto	noun	1
færspel	a sudden message, sudden news, horrible message		bostol	noun	**6**
frumsprecend	one who speaks first, rendering *princeps* 'originator, leader' with sense 'one who speaks beforehand, one who predicts'	poetic hapax legomenon	toronto	noun	1
galdorcwide	a magic saying, song		bostol	noun	
geancwide	a reply, answering again		bostol	noun	
gereord	language, speech, tongue, voice		bostol	noun	**11**
gespræc	speech, discourse, conversation, advice		bostol	noun	
gespreca	one who talks with another, counsellor		bostol	noun	

Words Partially Included Continued I

entry	definition	details	dictionary	word type	instances
gilpcwide	a boastful speech	a rare word	bostol	noun	1
gilpword	a boastful word, a boast, vaunt		bostol	noun	
gramword	word or speech expressing anger		bostol	noun	1
herian	praise		bostol	noun	153
hleoðor	hearing, what is heard, sound, noise, voice, speech, song		bostol	noun	62*
hleoðorcwide	saying, vocal utterance, words, speech, discourse		bostol	noun	7
hospword	a word expressing contempt, contumely, reproach, abuse	possibly only poetry	bostol	noun	2
inwitspell	a tale of evil	rare	bostol	noun	1
laþspell	a painful, grievous story		bostol	noun	
lygenword	a lying word, lie, falsehood	possibly only poetry	bostol	noun	
lygeword	a lying word, lie, falsehood	maybe with *lygenword*	bostol	noun	2
mæðtel-cwide	discourse, converse		bostol	noun	
mæl	a speech, talk, conversation		bostol	noun	
meld	declaration, proclamation	rare	bostol	noun	18*
melda	a narrator, an informer, announcer	link to mælan	bostol	noun	
reord	speech, tongue, language, voice		bostol	noun	79*
reordberend	one gifted with speech, a man		bostol	noun	9
sæcgen	saying, what is said, oration		bostol	noun	
sarspell	a sorrowful speech, a lament	possibly only poetry	bostol	noun	1
secge	speaking, speech		bostol	noun	
soðword	true word	rare word, possibly only in psalms	bostol	noun	1
sorhword	a word expressive of care or sorrow	rare	bostol	noun	1
soþcwide	a true saying, a truth		bostol	noun	9
spell	story, narrative, account, relation		bostol	noun	66*

Words Partially Included Continued II

entry	definition	details	dictionary	word type	instances
spellboda	one who delivers a message, brings intelligence, a messenger, an ambassador; one who delivers a discourse, a public speaker		bostol	noun	2
spræc	speech		bostol	noun	
teonword	a word that conveys reproach, insult, abuse, calumny; a word that does wrong	possibly rare	bostol	noun	1
tornword	a word that causes distress or grief		Bostol	noun	1
wammcwide	evil speaking, reviling, slander, blasphemy	possibly only poetry	bostol	noun	
wilspell	welcome news, glad tidings		bostol	noun	
word	word		bostol	noun	631
wordbeot	a promise	p	bostol	noun	3
wordcræft	the art of speaking or writing		bostol	noun	2
wordcwide	a saying, words, speech, language		bostol	noun	11
wordgaldor	Word-songs / word-incantations		thesaurus	noun	1
wordgerynes	a mystery expressed in words, a deep saying		bostol	noun	4
wordgid	a lay	rare	bostol	noun	
wordhord	a word-hoard, store of words		bostol	noun	7
wordlaþu	speech, discourse		bostol	noun	1
wordriht	a law expressed in the form of a command, an ordinance, a law expressed in spoken words, a spoken law		bostol	noun	2
woþ	a cry, sound / eloquent, lofty speech		bostol	noun	19
þancword	word of thanks			noun	
þryðword	a brave word, noble speech	rare	bostol	noun	1
andwyrdan	answer, reply,	modification with *for*, *eft* etc.	toronto	verb	
biddan	require, bid, order, ask, request		bostol	verb	150

Words Partially Included Continued III

entry	definition	details	dictionary	word type	instances
bodian	announce, proclaim, prophecy, preach	used of non-human sound also	toronto	verb	
clipian	call, cry out, call for / to / upon, announce, say	in toronto, *cleopan* falls with *clipian*: in bostol separate verb.	toronto	verb	61
cwiðan	speak in grief		bostol	verb	11
cyðan	make known, tell, relate, proclaim, announce		bostol	verb	
deman	speak highly of		bostol	verb	
galan	of human sound; also of a monster, sing, recite, speak formally, cry out	details of more meanings	toronto	verb	43*
giddian	to sing, recite, speak		bostol	verb	
hleoðrian	to sound, make a sound, speak, sing, cry, exclaim, resound		bostol	verb	
leogan	to say what is not true in order to deceive; to state what is not correct, make a mistake; to give (or have) a wrong idea, deceive; to state incorrectly, make a mistake in what is said, to deceive a person		bostol	verb	52*
mældan	mean, relate, lament		bostol	verb	
mænan	mourn for		bostol	verb	
meldan	to announce, declare		bostol	verb	
meldian	to declare, announce, tell		bostol	verb	
nægan	to address, accost, speak to		bostol	verb	
oncweðan	reply, respond		bostol	verb	
onspannan	to unfasten, unclasp; to open the mind, speak, disclose the thoughts		bostol	verb	

Words Partially Included Continued IV

entry	definition	details	dictionary	word type	instances
reccan	to stretch, extend; to hold out to another, give; to stretch one's step, to tend, to go, stray; to unfold a tale, to narrate, recite, tell, say; to unfold the meaning of anything, to explain, interpret, expound; to unravel a difficult case, give a solution of a difficult question; to rule, direct, guide		bostol	verb	
reordian	speak, say, talk; read		bostol	verb	82
rocettan	eructate, utter, eructare		bostol	verb	
sciran	declare, tell, make known		bostol	verb	
styrman	to storm, make a great noise, cry aloud, shout		bostol	verb	
þing(i)an	to address, speak to		thesaurus	verb	
onsecgan	to sacrifice, offer; to deny, renounce, abjure; to offer a sacrifice, sacrifice; to sacrifice something; to offer a sacrifice; to offer a sacrifice to; to offer something as a sacrifice; to offer something in or by sacrifice.		bostol	verb	

Words Complete

The list below is of the words where every instance is recorded in the database, and these words constitute the core group of verbs researched in the project. As with the tables above, bold numbers indicate that they are drawn from the *Dictionary of Old English Corpus*, whereas normal font indicates numbers from the *Grouped Frequency Word List*. Starred numbers indicate that the *Word List* number includes several words which Francis and Magoun have grouped together: details of which words are grouped together in this way are available in Appendix A.

entry	definition	details	dictionary	word type	instances	numbers database
acweþan	speak, say, declare; sing		toronto	verb		23
asecgan	speak out, relate, tell, say, express, explain, announce, proclaim		bostol	verb	**13**	17
becweðan	say, assert; reproach; bequeath, give by will	þ / ð separate entries	bostol	verb	**1**	7
cweðan	Say, speak, proclaim		bostol	verb	430*	191
gecweðan	say, speak, call, pronounce, agree, resolve, order	may be part of *cweðan*	bostol	verb		35
gesægcan	say, tell		bostol	verb	**4**	1
gesagian	say, tell		bostol	verb		1
gesecgan	say, tell, relate, declare, prove; give a list, give an account of, speak of, narrate, give notice of, make known, announce, expound, discuss		bostol	verb		34
tomældan / tomeldan	destroy peace by talebearing, by spreading reports	tomeldan in bostol	bostol	verb	2	2
(ge)mælan	speak, harangue	as opposed to *mælan* 'to stain, smear'	bostol	verb		2

Words Complete Continued

entry	definition	details	dictionary	word type	instances	numbers database
meðlan	speak	poetic. under *mæðlan* in bostol	bostol	verb	1	1
maðelian	speak, declaim		bostol	verb	95*	44
mæðlan	speak	bostol only poetry	bostol	verb		6
mælan	speak, mark, spot, blemish		bostol	verb		14
onmælan	address, speak to	op	thesaurus	verb	**1**	1
secgan	say		bostol	verb	**380***	354
sprecan	speak		bostol	verb	**249***	157

Appendix C

Data discussed in Chapters

The data below are all selected from the large databases in appendix A, for the convenience of the reader. Only a selection of data relevant to the chapters is listed. The abbreviations of Old English poems used follow the Anglo-Saxon Poetic records.

Chapter I

gemælde

poem	part of poem	line number	line of poetry	speaker	addressee	type of speech	context
Gen	2	790	Adam gemælde and to Euan spræc:	Adam	Euan	Reproach / regret	Adam's speech of reproach to Eve after eating the apple and realising his sin.
Mld		230	Offa gemælde, æscholt asceoc:	Offa	Þegnas / Ælfwine	Reply / encouragement (military)	Offa's speech before he makes his last stand, rousing the troops.
Mld		244	Leofsunu gemælde and his linde ahof, / bord to gebeorge; he þam beorne oncwæð:	Leofsunu	not specified / þegnas	promise (military)	Leofsunu's final speech, in which he promises not to budge but rather to avenge his lord

All the above instances are in the third person singular past tense, do not alliterate, and occur as the second stress position in the a-verse.

Chapter II

Due to the quantity and complexity of the data on *secgan* analysed for this chapter, it is not possible to provide the full wealth of data used. The tables below are therefore selections used to exemplify specific points made in the thesis.

General subjects – *ænig* and related

Form in text	poem	part	verse	line number	line of poetry	grammar	speaker	addressee	type of speech
secge	FtM			97	Forþon him nu ealles þonc æghwa secge, / þæs þe he fore his miltsum monnum scrifeð.	3s pres subj	æghwa	nergend	Praise / thanks
secgan	SnS	1		65	sundor mæg æghwylc / ðurh gastes gife godspel secgan.	infinitive	æghwylc	godspel	Instructive / narrative
secggan	Ele			160	wære þær ænig yldra oððe gingra / þe him to soðe secggan meahte, / galdrum cyðan, hwæt se god wære,	infinitive	ænig	sigerof cyning	Instructive / reply
sæcgean	P	89	13	1	Hwa ðæs soð me cann sæcgean ænig, / hu þines yrres egsa standeð / and seo micle miht? Nis þæt mann ænig, / þe þa ariman rihte cunne.	infinitive	ænig	me (psalmist)	question
secgean	P	146	5	3	Micel is ure mihtig drihten, / and his mægen is micel and mihtum strang; / ne his snytru mæg secgean ænig, / on þyssum ealdre æfre ariman.	infinitive	ænig	not specified	Instructive / praise
secgan	Exo			510	ealle ungrundes ænig to lafe, / þætte sið heora secgan moste,	infinitive	ænig (Egyptians)	hæleþa cwenum	Instructive / lament

General subjects – various words for ‘man’

Form in text	poem	part	verse	line number	line of poetry	grammar	speaker	addressee	type of speech
sæcgeað	P	95	2	2	bealde bletsiað; beornas sæcgeað / fram dæge to dæge drihtnes hælu.	3pl pres	beornas	not specified	praise
sæde	Fnb			44	Ða gewat him wund hæleð on wæg gangan, / sæde þæt his byrne abrocen wære, / heresceorp unhror, and eac wæs his helm ðyrel.	3s past	hæleð	not specified	Instructive / complaint
secgað	Pnt			20	hiwa gehwylces; swa hæleð secgað,	3pl pres	hæleð	not specified	instructive
secgan	InC			131	Hwæt, we þæt gehyrdon hæleða secgan, / þæt iudagum Iacob hæfde / and Moyses eac micele speda,	infinitive	hæleða	we	Instructive / belief
secgan	MB	21		40	þonne wile he secgan þæt ðære sunnan sie / beorhtnes þiostro beorna gehwylcum / to metanne wið þæt micle leoht / godes ælmihtiges;	infinitive	hæleða	not specified	praise
sædon	Dan			445	septon hie soðcwidum and him sædon fela / soðra tacna,	3pl past	hyssas	hæðena folce	Praise / belief
sagað	Chr	3		1307	hwæþer him mon soð þe lyge / sagað on hine sylfne, þonne he þa synne bigæð.	3s pres	mon	se scrift	confession
secgan	Mx	1	3	138	Ræd sceal mon secgan, rune writan, / leoþ gesingan, lofes gearnian,	infinitive	mon	not specified	instructive
secggende	Bwf			3028	Swa se secg hwata secggende wæs / laðra spella;	pres part	se secg	Beowulf’s companions	narrative
secgað	Exo			377	Swa þæt wise men wordum secgað	3pl pres	wise men	not specified	Instructive / ancestry
sægdon	Dan			205	Þegnas þeodne sægdon þæt hie þære geþeahte wæron,	3pl past	þegnas	þeodne	Instructive / reproach
sægdon	Gen	1		16	sægdon lustum lof, heora liffrean / demdon,	3pl past	þegnas þrymfæste	þeoden	praise

General subjects – 'they', *eac*, and other general terms

Form in text	poem	part	verse	line number	line of poetry	grammar	speaker	addressee	type of speech
sæcgeað	P	106	7	2	Forðon hi mildheortnesse mihtigan drihtnes / ealle andettað, and eac sæcgeað / mycel wundur hys manna bearnum.	3pl pres	eac	not specified	Praise / thanks
secgeað	P	88	4	4	Heofenas andettað, halig drihten, / hu wundor þin wræclic standeð, / and þa halgan eac hergeað on cyricean / þine soðfæstnesse, secgeað geneahhige.	3pl pres	eac on cyricean	not specified	praise
secgan	SFt			188	and þa fyrna sceolan / þam sacerdan secgan gehwilce	infinitive	folce	sacerdan	confession
sæcgean	P	106	21	2	Hi sculon laces lof lustum bringan, / and his weorc wynsum wide sæcgean.	infinitive	hi	not specified	Instructive / praise
sæcgen	P	144	6	2	And hi mægen swylce mære and egeslic / þinra wundra wislic sæcgen / and þine mægenstrengðu mærsien wide.	3pl pres subj	hi	not specified	praise
secgan	Gen	2		438	Sittan læte ic hine wið me sylfne, swa hwa swa þæt secgan cymeð / on þas hatan helle,	infinitive	hie (those who speak contemptuously of heavenly words and deeds)	not specified	blasphemy
segeð	Mld			45	"Gehyrst þu, sælida, hwæt þis folc segeð?	3s pres	þis folc	sælida	threat

General subjects – ‘narrator’, ‘poet’

Form in text	poem	part	verse	line number	line of poetry	grammar	speaker	addressee	type of speech
secgan	HbM			1	Nu ic onsundran þe secgan wille	infinitive	ic (narrator)	þe	narrative
secge	Jg	2		4	Ic ana sæt innan bearwe, / mid helme beþeht, holte tomiddes, / þær þe wæterburnan swegdon and urnon / on middan gehæge, eal swa ic secge.	1s pres	ic (narrator)	not specified	narrative
secgean	MBP			10	Ic sceal giet sprecan, / fon on fitte, folccuðne ræd / hæleðum secgean. Hliste se þe wille!	infinitive	Ic (narrator)	hæleðum	Instructive / praise / narrative
sægde	Pnt			34	his fyrngeflitan, þonne ic ær fore sægde.	1s past	Ic (narrator)	not specified	instructive
secgan	R	42		6	Ic on flette mæg / þurh runstafas rincum secgan,	infinitive	ic (narrator)	rincum	riddle
secgan	R	55		8	Ic þæs beames mæg / eaþe for eorlum æþelu secgan;	infinitive	ic (narrator)	not specified	Instructive / riddle
secgan	WfL			2	minre sylfre sið. Ic þæt secgan mæg, / hwæt ic yrmþa gebad,	infinitive	ic (narrator)	not specified	Narrative / riddle
secge	Rsg			97	Ic bi me tylgust / secge þis sarspel ond ymb siþ spræce,	1s pres	Ic (poet)	not specified	Lament
secgan	Deo			35	Þæt ic bi me sylfum secgan wille, / þæt ic hwile wæs Heodeninga scop, / dryhtne dyre.	infinitive	ic (scop, Deor)	not specified	Instructive / narrative
secgan	Wds			54	Forþon ic mæg singan ond secgan spell,	infinitive	ic (Widsith)	mengo	narrative
secgan	Wds			100	Hyre lof lengde geond londa fela, / þonne ic be songe secgan sceolde / hwær ic under swelge selast wisse / goldhrodene cwen giefe bryttian.	infinitive	ic (Widsith)	not specified	praise
secgan	Gen	1		2014	We þæt soð magon / secgan furður, hwelc siððan wearð	infinitive	we (narrator)	not specified	Instructive / narrative

General subjects – 'psalmist'

Form in text	poem	part	verse	line number	line of poetry	grammar	speaker	addressee	type of speech
sægce	P	54	16	2	Ic on æfenne, eac on mergenne / and on midne dæg, mægene sægce / and bodie, þæt þu bliðe me / mine stefne stiðe gehyre.	1s pres subj	ic (psalmist)	not specified	Praise / belief
sægde	P	70	16	4	A ic wundor þin weorþlic sægde, / and ic þæt wið oryldu awa fremme; / ne forlæt þu me, lifigende god,	1s past	ic (psalmist)	God	Petition / praise
secggean	P	77	2	2	Ic on anlicnessum ærest ontyne / mines sylfes muð, secggean onginne, / þa on worldricum wæron æt frymðe.	infinitive	ic (psalmist)	not specified	instructive
secge	P	88	1	4	fram cynne on cynn and on cneorisse / ic þine soðfæstnesse secge geneahhe / on minum muþe manna cynne.	1s pres	ic (psalmist)	manna cynne	Instructive / praise
sægce	P	91	2	1	And þonne on morgene mægene sægce, / hu he milde wearð manna cynne, / and his soðe sægce nihtes.	1s pres subj	ic (psalmist)	not specified	Praise / belief
sægce	P	91	2	3	And þonne on morgene mægene sægce, / hu he milde wearð manna cynne, / and his soðe sægce nihtes.	1s pres subj	ic (psalmist)	not specified	Praise / belief
sægde	P	93	16	1	Gif ic þæs sægde, þæt min sylfes fot / ful sarlice asliden wære, / þa me mildheortnes mihtigan drihtnes / gefultumede, þæt ic feorh ahte.	3s past	ic (psalmist)	God	belief
sægce	P	141	2	4	Ic mine bene bealde swylce / on his gesihðe symble ageote, / and mine earfeþu ealle full georne / fore him sylfum sægce geneahhe,	1s pres	ic (psalmist)	him sylfum (God)	petition
sægcean	P	141	8	3	Alæd me of carcernes cluse swylce / mine sawle, þæt ic syþþan forð / þinne naman mote neode sægcean.	infinitive	ic (psalmist)	not specified	Petition / praise
secge	P	55	7	1	Ic nu leofum gode lif min secge, / sette on ðinre gesyhðe sarige tearas, / swa ic ðe on gehate hæfde geneahhige.	1s pres	psalmist	leofum gode	narrative
secge	P	65	3	3	Geweorðie wuldres ealdor / eall ðeos eorþe, ecne drihten; / and þe singe eac, secge geneahhie, / þæt þin nama is ofer eall niða bearn / se hehsta hæleþa cynnes.	1s pres	psalmist	ecne drihten	praise

General subjects – 'psalmist' continued

Form in text	poem	part	verse	line number	line of poetry	grammar	speaker	addressee	type of speech
sægce	P	72	12	1	Gif ic sylf cwæde and sægce eac, / swa þe bearn weorðað geboren syþþan, / þa ylcan ic ær foreteode.	1s past subj	psalmist	not specified	Blasphemy / temptation / complaint
secge	P	100	1	2	Mildheortnesse and dom mihtigan drihtnes / singe and secge, and soð ongyte / on unwemmum wege, hwænne þu me wylle to.	1s pres	psalmist	mihtigan drihtnes	praise
secge	P	101	21	4	"Ic þe feawe dagas / minra mættra mode secge,	1s pres	psalmist	God	petition
secge	P	103	31	2	Ic on minum life lustum drihtne / singe soðlice and secge eac, / þenden ic wunige on worulddreamum.	1s pres	psalmist	drihtne	praise
secge	P	115	7	2	Þu me tobræce bendas grimme, / þæt ic þe laces lof lustum secge.	1s pres subj	psalmist	God	Praise / thanks
secge	P	117	17	2	Ne swelte ic mid sare, ac ic gesund lifige / and weorc godes wide secge.	1s pres	psalmist	not specified	praise
secge	P	118	13	1	Ic on minum welerum wordum secge / ealles þines muðes meahte domas.	1s pres	psalmist	not specified	praise
secge	P	118	26	1	Ic þe wegas mine wise secge, / and þu me gehyrdest holde mode; / lær me on life, hu ic lengest mæge / þine soðfæstnysse selest gehealdan.	1s pres	psalmist	God	petition
secge	P	118	62	4	Ic æt midre niht mæla gehwylce / ricene arise, and hraðe gange / þær ic ofergittul, þæt ic æ þine / mid hygecræfte heolde and læste.	1s pres	psalmist	eall ætgædere	praise
sægdest	P	118	116	2	Onfoh me freondlice, fæle drihten, / æfter þam þe þu sylfa sægdest and cwæde, / þæt ic sceolde lifigan lange ðrage; / ne gescend me on siðe, nu ic þin swa onbad.	2s past	psalmist	fæle drihten	petition
secge	P	137	2	3	Eac ic þin tempel tidum weorðige, / þæt halige hus, holde mode, / and þær þinne naman on neod secge.	1s pres	psalmist	not specified	praise
secge	P	140	3	2	Swylce is ahafenes handa minra, / þonne ic þe æfenlac estum secge.	1s pres	psalmist	God	Petition / praise

Appendix D

Data discussed in Epilogue

The data below are all selected from the large databases in appendix A, for the convenience of the reader. Only a selection of data relevant to the chapters is listed. The abbreviations of Old Norse poems used are listed below. Due to the constraints of the printed page, some information which is of interest has had to be excluded, notably the translations. These are available in appendix A.

Abbreviations

Fm.	Fáfnismál
Grp.	Grípisspá
HH II.	Helgakviða Hundingsbana II
Hrbl.	Hárbarðsljóð
Ls.	Lokasenna
Skm.	Skírnismál
Vm.	Vafþrúðnismál
Þrk	Þrymskviða

***segðu* within direct speech**

Eddukvæði	poem	stanza	line	line part	meter type	speaker	addressee	type of speech	(context)
"Segðu mér, Fáfnir, / alls þik fróðan kveða / ok vel margt vita: / Hverjar ro þær nornir / er nauðgǫnglar ro / ok kjósa mœðr frá mǫgum?"	Fm.	12	1	1	ljóðaháttr	Fáfnir	Sigurd	instructive	Near the start of the conversation between the fatally wounded Fáfnir and Sigurd, his killer. Fáfnir has just foretold Sigurd's death (the fate of the Norns) and in response, Sigurd asks about the Norns.
"Segðu mér þat, Fáfnir, / alls þik fróðan kveða / ok vel margt vita, / hvé sá hólmr heitir / er blanda hjǫrlegi / Surtr ok æsir saman."	Fm.	14	1	1	ljóðaháttr	Fáfnir	Sigurd	instructive	Near the start of the conversation between the fatally wounded Fáfnir and Sigurd, his killer. Fáfnir has just told where the Norns come from and in response, Sigurd asks about the Æsir and Surt.
Mæla námu / ok margt hjala, / þá er ráðspakir / rekkar fundusk. / "Segðu mér, ef þú veizt, / móðurbróðir, / hvé mun Siguði / snúna ævi?"	Grp.	6	5	1	fornyrðislag	móðurbróðir (Grípir)	Sigurd	prophecy	Near the start of the poem. Sigurd asks Grípir to tell him how his life will turn out.
"Segðu, gegn konungr, / gerr en ek spyrja, / snotr, Sigurði, / ef þú sjá þykkisk: / Hvat mun fyrst gørask / til farnaðar, / þá er ór garði emk / genginn þínum?"	Grp.	8	1	1	fornyrðislag	Grípir	Sigurd	prophecy	Near the start of the poem. Sigurd asks Grípir for more details of what will happen to him immeditately after he leaves Grípir.
Hví gegnir þat? / Hví skulum skipta / litom ok látom, / er á leið erum? / Þar mun fláræði / fylgja annat, / atalt með ǫllu; / enn segðu, Grípir.'	Grp.	38	8	2	fornyrðislag	Grípir	Sigurd	demand	Gripir is telling Sigurd of his coming doom, and Sigurd is questioning in order to find out as much as possible. Gripir has just told Sigurd of the shape shifting between Sigurd and Gunnar, and Sigurd wants more details.
"Mun horskr Gunnarr / at hvǫtun hennar, / Guthormr ok Hǫgni, / ganga síðan? / Munu synir Gjúka / af sifjugum mér / eggjar rjóða? / Enn segðu, Grípir."	Grp.	50	8	2	fornyrðislag	Grípir	Sigurd	demand	Gripir is telling Sigurd of his coming doom, and Sigurd is questioning in order to find out as much as possible. Gripir has just told Sigurd of the shape shifting between Sigurd and Gunnar, and Sigurd wants more details.
"Hildófr sá heitir / er mik halda bað, / rekkr inn ráðsvinni / er býr in Ráðseyjarsundi; / baðat hann hleinnimenn flytja / eða hrossaþjófa, / góða eina / ok þá er ek gerva kunna; / segðu til nafns þíns, / ef þú vill um sundit fara."	Hrbl.	8	9	1	fornyrðislag	Þórr	Óðinn disguised as Hárbarðr	demand	Óðinn is disguised as Habrad the ferryman and refusing to let Þórr cross.

***segðu* within direct speech continued**

Eddukvæði	poem	stanza	line	line part	meter type	speaker	addressee	type of speech	(context)
Segðu Hœmingi, at Helgi man, / hvern í brynio bragnar feldo; / ér úlf grán inni hǫfðot, / þar er Hamal hugði Hundingr konungr.'	HH II.	1	1	1	fornyrðislag	hiarðarsvein (shephard boy)	Hœmingi	warning	This is the first stanza of the poem. Someone (subject unclear, but must be either Hæming or Helgi) tells a shepherd-boy to warn Hæming, son of King Hunding, that Helgi is not really the son of Hagal (his foster-father) but seems to be connected to the court of his enemy, Sigmund. Helgi is in fact Sigmund's son.
"Segðu þat, Eldir, / svá at þú einugi / feti gangir framarr, / hvat hér inni / hafa at ǫlmálum / sigtíva synir."	Ls.	1	1	1	ljóðaháttr	Turnspit	Loki	answer	very start of the poem. Loki demands of Turnspit (Eldir) before he goes towards the hall what the gods are talking about, and Eldir responds they have little to say about Loki that is good, and talk mostly of battle prowess.
"Segðu þat, Freyr, fólkvaldi goða, / ok ek vilja vita, / hví þú einn sitr / ennlanga sali, / minn dróttinn, um daga."	Skm.	3	1	1	ljóðaháttr	Freyr	Skírnir	refusal to speak	Niǫrðr and Skaði (Freyr's parents) have asked their servant, Skírnir, to ask Freyr what is wrong, and Skírnir does this, despite not expecting much in reply.
"Segðu mér þat, Skírnir, / áðr þú verpir sǫðli af mar / ok þú stígir feti framarr, / hvat þú árnaðir / í jǫtunheima / þíns eða míns munar."	Skm.	40	1	1	ljóðaháttr	Skírnir	Freyr	instructive	Immediately upon his return from giantland Freyr asks him how he fared.
"Segðu mér, Gagnráðr, / alls þú á gólfi vill / þíns um freista frama, / hvé sá hestr heitir / er hverjan dregr / dag of dróttmǫgu."	Vm.	11	1	1	ljóðaháttr	Gagnráðr (Óðinn in disguise)	Vafðrúðnir	instructive	Vafðrúðnir asks the disguised Óðinn a number of questions to test his knowledge of mythology.
"Segðu þat, Gagnráðr, / alls þú á gólfi vill / þíns um freista frama, / hvé sá jór heitir / er austan dregr / nótt of nýt regin."	Vm.	13	1	1	ljóðaháttr	Gagnráðr (Óðinn in disguise)	Vafðrúðnir	instructive	Vafðrúðnir asks the disguised Óðinn a number of questions to test his knowledge of mythology.
"Segðu þat it tólpta, / hví þú tíva rǫk / ǫll, Vafþrúðnir, vitir; / frá jǫtna rúnum / ok allra goða / segir þú it sannasta, / inn alsvinni jǫtunn."	Vm.	42	1	1	ljóðaháttr	Vafþrúðnir	Óðinn	giant secrets	Óðinn asks Vafðrúðnir a number of questions regarding the present history of the universe.
"Hefir þú erendi / sem erfiði? / Segðu á lopti / lǫng tíðindi. / Opt sitjanda / sǫgur um fallask, / ok liggjandi / lygi um bellir."	Þrk.	10	3	1	fornyrðislag	Loki	Þórr	instructive	Þórr's hammer has been stolen, and Loki goes to the giantland to try to find out where it is, where Þrym tells him he has buried it and won't relinquish it unless he is brought Freyr as his wife. This is Þórr's speech to Loki, asking for news, when Loki returns.

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