

**WORKERS AND ARTISANS, THE BINDERS AND THE BOUND:  
CRAFTSMEN AND NOTIONS OF CRAFTSMANSHIP IN OLD  
ENGLISH LITERATURE**

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## ABSTRACT

### WORKERS AND ARTISANS, THE BINDERS AND THE BOUND: CRAFTSMEN AND NOTIONS OF CRAFTSMANSHIP IN OLD ENGLISH LITERATURE

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This thesis analyses Anglo-Saxon conceptions of craftsmanship, and provides new interpretations for the notions of *searo*, *orþanc* and *cræft* in Old English literature. I argue that the texts discussing craftsmanship and craftsmen subscribe to an atemporal myth. This myth is not so much that of Weland the smith of Germanic lore, but rather a myth of the inculcating and redemptive power of craftsmanship, after a fall-and-salvation pattern. I show that, on the level of semantics, mirroring the above pattern, there are concurrent shifts in the meanings of two of the main terms for craftsmanship, and that notably *searo* is subject to pejoration in the process of transition from a poetic to a prose term, while *cræft*, on the other hand, witnesses a number of semantic changes to make it a versatile and uniquely positive expression of craftsmanship. Whereas *orþanc* is a neutral notion of craftsmanship that is bound to a concrete genre before being recast in the close environment of bishop Æthelwold's circle at Winchester in the tenth century, the semantic shifts in *searo* and *cræft* are testimony to broad cultural shifts in the representations of craftsmanship and in perceptions of the craftsman.

The point of departure in Chapter One is with the artisans themselves, the craftsmen and skilled metalworkers – the actual makers of *searo*, *orþanc* and *cræft*. Taking the smith as the archetypal craftsman, I examine the manner in which this artisan-artist is depicted in Old English and Anglo-Latin literature. I argue that two strands can be distinguished, one depicting the craftsman as reprobate, and another exalting him. In subsequent chapters, semantic studies and new readings of three notions of craftsmanship illuminate the intricate ways in which these two strands interact across time, genre and medium of expression. In Chapter Two, *searo* is examined within the semantic field of binding to show that it represents a traditional expression of superlative craftsmanship associated primarily with the smith, and denoting status and quality in verse. In its pejoration as a notion of scheming and deceit, it retains its strong association with binding and becomes a mechanism for redemption by connecting with the Harrowing of Hell tradition. Chapter Three shows how *orþanc* evolves from a poetic term denoting ancient craftsmanship into an abstract notion of ingenuity, by charting its existence in the gloss corpus and relating it to the glossing of *mechanica* in later Anglo-Saxon England. It emerges as a hermeneutic term characterised by moral neutrality, with close connections to the Benedictine Reform movement. Chapter Four is the first segment of a two-part examination of *cræft* as a notion of craftsmanship. After evaluating the body of existing critical material, I assess our understanding of the term's polysemy before analysing its use as a concrete but somewhat antiquated notion of magical craftsmanship. Chapter Five provides an in-depth assessment of an alternative, much more widespread, Christianized usage of *cræft* as a notion of divine endowment. It shows how this notion is instrumental in several highly positive assessments of smiths analysed in Chapter One, and argues that it provides a platform for other craftsmen to distinguish themselves in a religious, orthodox way. In my conclusion, I show that the new readings of these notions are key to interpreting metaphors of poetic creation and creativity as used by authors such as Cynewulf.

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## *Abbreviations and Short Titles*

AF	Anglistische Forschungen
ANQ	<i>American Notes and Queries</i>
ASE	<i>Anglo-Saxon England</i>
ASPR	Anglo-Saxon Poetic Records
BaP	Bibliothek der angelsächsischen Prosa
BT; BTS	Bosworth and Toller, <i>An Anglo-Saxon Dictionary; Supplement</i>
CCSL	Corpus Christianorum Series Latina
CSEL	Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum
DMLBS	<i>The Dictionary of Medieval Latin from British Sources</i>
DOE	<i>The Dictionary of Old English</i>
EETS	Early English Text Society
ES	<i>English Studies</i>
HE	Bede, <i>Historia Ecclesiastica Gentis Anglorum</i>
JEGP	<i>Journal of English and Germanic Philology</i>
LS	Life of Saints
LSE	<i>Leeds Studies in English</i>
MÆ	<i>Medium Ævum</i>
MP	<i>Modern Philology</i>
NM	<i>Neuphilologische Mitteilungen</i>
n.s.	new series
o.s.	original series
s.s.	supplementary series
PL	Patrologia Latina
RES	<i>The Review of English Studies</i>
SP	<i>Studies in Philology</i>

## INTRODUCTION: A Literary Approach to Craftsmanship

Most medieval-art historians claim that the visual and material arts surpassed all other forms of artistic expression in Anglo-Saxon England. They find that Anglo-Saxon tastes were uniquely responsive to the glowing of a sword and the patterns of intricately wrought brooches. Poets, they say, were equally hypnotized by the crafts.<sup>1</sup> This thesis addresses the question of how Old English literature engages with the makers of art and with craftsmanship, and to what extent perceptions of skill are influenced by ideas and ideologies that can be found in both Latin and vernacular compositions of the period. The point of departure is an assessment of the representation of the archetypal craftsman in Anglo-Saxon literature, which emerges as starkly contradictory within itself and in some disagreement with the ostensibly positive role of art and craftsmanship evident in the claims of art historians. My thesis as a whole is immensely indebted to the work conducted in this related academic field. Important studies by Dodwell, Hinton and most recently Webster, as well as others, have highlighted the roles of early medieval artisans, and inferred their historical standing and relationships with the holders of power.<sup>2</sup> They have often used examples from the extant body of Anglo-Saxon literature to illustrate their own field in a most inspired way.

Research which seeks to evaluate the craftsman from a literary point of view, on the other hand, has been limited. It is most conspicuous in critical assessments of the allusive *Weland* references found throughout the corpus, and is most often discussed by drawing extensively on the Old Norse poem *Vǫlundarkviða* and a range of European analogues to establish a context in which to read these references. A far-reaching study of smiths in early literature was conducted by

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<sup>1</sup> C. A. Dodwell, *Anglo-Saxon Art: A New Perspective* (Manchester, 1982).

<sup>2</sup> Dodwell, *Anglo-Saxon Art*; D. A. Hinton, 'Anglo-Saxon Smiths and Myths', in *Textual and Material Culture of Anglo-Saxon England: Thomas Northcote Toller and the Toller Memorial Lectures*, ed. D. G. Scragg (Woodbridge, 2003), pp.261-82; L. Webster, *Anglo-Saxon Art: A New History* (London, 2012).

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Bradley as part of his doctoral research, submitted in 1987.<sup>3</sup> This project collected tales of metalsmiths from an impressive literary range, including continental, post-Conquest and indeed post-medieval sources. My own study of the representations of smiths in Chapter One draws on much of the evidence he presents and may be read as a re-evaluation of his argument. Several limitations in his study – including what I consider to be an erroneous conclusion that smiths are represented mainly in a positive way in Old English literature – have greatly influenced my response, and were instrumental in guiding me towards an analysis of notions of craftsmanship to resolve the contradictions I found myself confronted with. Bradley neglects to present all the extant evidence from Anglo-Saxon England (notably the negative homiletic tradition and the examples associating craftsmen with pride which I discuss in the first chapter), presents most of his legends without a thorough analysis, and draws on too much material from outside the Anglo-Saxon period to build up his argument. The stated objective which frames his thesis – to explain whether the mysterious smiths mentioned in an Anglo-Saxon charm were bringers of disease or part of the remedy – forces Bradley to arrange (and perhaps select) his material to reach one or the other conclusion. The main issue is thus a structural weakness in the presentation of the evidence.

In their comprehensive interdisciplinary (though mainly archaeological and art-historical) study of the Anglo-Saxon goldsmith, Coatsworth and Pinder devote a chapter to ‘Imagined Goldsmiths’ presenting the material collected by Bradley as well as some new material. They argue for a distinction to be made between the positive representation of goldsmiths in heroic and secular writings, and the negative depiction of blacksmiths in homiletic writings.<sup>4</sup> I have found that the boundaries do not tend to be so clearly demarcated for reasons I evidence in Chapter One below.

Two studies which seek to outline profitable ways to integrate archaeological approaches into a study of literature have informed my own approach. Owen-Crocker’s seminal study of *The Four Funerals in ‘Beowulf’* has demonstrated how evidence from material culture can be applied to

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<sup>3</sup> J. L. Bradley, ‘Legendary Metal Smiths and Early English Literature’, unpubl. PhD dissertation (University of Leeds, 1987).

<sup>4</sup> E. Coatsworth and M. Pinder, *The Art of the Anglo-Saxon Goldsmith* (Woodbridge, 2002), ch.7.

## Introduction

enhance our understanding of its role in literature as well as our interpretation of texts.<sup>5</sup> This approach has illuminated my readings of notions of craftsmanship throughout the thesis. I have also been inspired by Hines's call to read artefacts featured in Anglo-Saxon literature as part of a 'highly meaningful system of material culture' which finds its expression in the literary medium rather than in the real world.<sup>6</sup> The greater part of my studies of notions of craftsmanship attempts to identify usages which transcend the mere definition or precise meaning of these terms and show how they participate in a cultural discourse of craftsmanship which defines how Anglo-Saxons perceive not just the position of the craftsman but also the role of art both in their literature and their society.

The bulk of my thesis constitutes a semantic investigation of three notions of craftsmanship – *searo*, *orþanc* and *cræft* – and as such it follows primarily a semasiological approach. In other words, it uses in-depth contextual analysis to establish the meanings and usages of these words. Here, I am heavily indebted to the philological tradition, which has encouraged the integration of word studies into literary analysis. The nature of the words that I analyse allows me to conduct my examination on various levels. All three terms operate according to a four-fold division which can be helpfully illustrated by the model which Girsch established in her 1988 thesis on *cræft*. Girsch posits four distinct broad senses for the term into which all of its more specific meanings can be neatly accommodated.<sup>7</sup> I present her model in a simplified form to accommodate for *searo* and *orþanc*, and propose the most obvious senses with which all these terms can be identified in my thesis in brackets:

- (1) A physical object or concrete thing. (e.g. an artefact)
- (2) A set of activities (e.g. craftsmanship).
- (3) A quality of an inanimate being (such as the refinement of an artefact).
- (4) (a) An attribute of a person or (b) a personal attribute. (e.g. the skill of a craftsman, the character of a craftsman influencing his craftsmanship).

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<sup>5</sup> G. Owen-Crocker, *The Four Funerals in Beowulf* (Manchester, 2000).

<sup>6</sup> J. Hines, 'Beowulf and Archaeology – Revisited', in *Aedificia Nova: Studies in Honour of Rosemary Cramp*, ed. C. Karkov and H. Damico (Kalamazoo, 2008), pp.89-105.

<sup>7</sup> E. Baldwin Stevens Girsch, 'A Semantic Analysis of the Old English *Cræft* and Related Words', unpubl. PhD diss. (University of Toronto, 1988).

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I accept this model silently throughout my semantic analyses. These indirectly form proof that Girsch's model is valid not just for *craft*, but for other notions of craftsmanship, too. The very fact that Old English notions of craftsmanship are used in this way is significant, testifying to the close bond between the artisan and his product as well as aspects of the creative process. It is this very connection which allows us to combine an assessment of craftsmen and the examination of notions of craftsmanship to establish a prevailing cultural dialogue. It is also the reason why manual trades are most often portrayed in superlative terms (the conflation of (2) and (4a)) or why the character of a craftsman matters so much in many of the extant accounts (the conflation of (4b) and (1); cf. Chapters One and Five).

In order to simplify my discussion I refer to the terms examined as notions of craftsmanship (rather than as one of the 4 sub-senses of the above model) throughout my thesis. By 'craftsmanship' I understand: (1) Manual art or skill: the method or skill with which an object is created, perceived either as belonging to or being enacted by a person or viewed as an attribute of the object, usually, but not exclusively, relating to the manufacture of an artistic object; the object itself (2) Skill: a broader notion of skill or a general attribute (not primarily artistic, but possibly compared to artistic skill). In Chapters Two, Three and Four, (1) constitutes the primary definition I am working with. (2) is the predominant sense with which I use the term craftsmanship in Chapter Five. I employ the word 'use' to describe an individual occurrence of a term in its immediate context, while 'usage' describes a more systematic employment of a term, either in a single text, in a genre or even across the entire corpus.

I establish senses through contextual analysis, accepting that 'the meaning of a word is, after all, its use'.<sup>8</sup> My technique is to present individual uses as part of broader usages which I have seen emerge during my research. As part of this technique I often (though not always) eschew an immediate translation of *searo*, *orþanc* and *craft* in favour of a more profound contextual analysis, both to avoid reducing the often rich meanings of these notions, and in order to assess how they

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<sup>8</sup> J. Bately, 'On Some Words for Time in Old English Literature', in *Contributions to Old English Lexicography: Studies in Memory of Angus Cameron*, ed. A. Bammesberger (Regensburg, 1985), 47-64.

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fall into established patterns of discourse. Each of the word studies follows its own methodology based on the distribution of each term in the corpus.

Throughout my analysis, I have borne in mind several caveats. The semantic analysis of near-synonyms is usually considered problematic, especially since Old English poetry tends to use them almost indistinctly through the technique of variation.<sup>9</sup> At the same time, many scholars have analysed variation as a technique through further meaning is gradually accumulated, indicating that Anglo-Saxons are likely to have understood the fine differences between near-synonyms.<sup>10</sup> There is also, however, the issue of alliterative constraint in verse, which forces us to consider if the words we analyse in a given context have any true semantic value.<sup>11</sup> For the main, however, I have found that while it is true that the terms occasionally overlap or converge, there is also a surprising precision in the uses of the notions I analyse. In fact several poems, notably *Andreas*, *Daniel*, *Elene* and a number of riddles, are highly attuned to the particular shades of craftsmanship expressed by *cræft*, *searo* and *orþanc*, and deftly play with the overtones that each individual notion can convey.

In texts closely associated with Latin models, such as the Old English prose translations and the glosses, there is also a need to assess to what degree the vernacular leans on the Latin, and whether the terms analysed might constitute ‘translation senses’, of lower semantic value. In my own experience, it is necessary to approach this matter on a case-by-case basis. It is evident that a term like *orþanc*, which survives mostly in the gloss corpus, will often represent a more artificial semantic value and be subject to a more idiosyncratic transference of meaning in contact with the Latin (cf. Chapter Three) than a term of broad distribution like *cræft*, which, although it frequently translates *ars*, is often demonstrably independent from the Latin, to the extent that translators can

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<sup>9</sup> S. Ullmann, *Semantics: An Introduction to the Science of Meaning* (Oxford, 1962), p.140; D. Kastovsky, ‘Semantics and Vocabulary’, in *The Cambridge History of the English Language*, Vol.1: The Beginnings to 1066, ed. R. Hogg (Cambridge, 1992), pp.290-408, at pp.400-1.

<sup>10</sup> See, for instance, F. C. Robinson, ‘Artful Ambiguities in the Old English ‘Book Moth’ Riddle’, in *Anglo-Saxon Poetry: Essays in Appreciation: For John C. McGalliard*, ed. L. E. Nicholson and D. Warwick Frese (London, 1975), pp.355-62; M. R. Godden, ‘Literary Language’, in *The Cambridge History of the English Language*, Vol.1: The Beginnings to 1066, ed. R. Hogg (Cambridge, 1992), pp.490-535, pp.507-8.

<sup>11</sup> T. Shippey calls Old English poetry a ‘low-information genre’ in ‘“The Fall of King Hæðcyn”: Or, Mimesis 4a, the Chapter Auerbach Never Wrote’, in *On the Aesthetics of Beowulf and Other Old English Poems* (Toronto, 2010), pp.247-65, at p.262.

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be seen to change the surrounding phrase to accommodate the meaning of *craft* (cf. Chapters Four and Five). Although I was only partially able to analyse the Anglo-Latin uses of *ars*, my inquiry, having to rely on Latin dictionaries,<sup>12</sup> indicates that the paradigm which developed around the notion of *craft* in the vernacular appears to have influenced and dictated the uses of *ars* and other Latin words in this period (Chapter Five). For this reason, I see for instance no inconvenience in reading the Old English *craft* gloss in Ælfric's *Colloquy* in its own right, rather than as a translation sense.

I have chosen *searo*, *orþanc* and *craft* over other designations because they are the most common concrete terms for craftsmanship in Old English literature. I have excluded general notions like *(ge)weorc*, and terms of very scarce occurrence like *list* in order to delimit a manageable project. I refer to derivatives and compounds of the terms I analyse if their inclusion is warranted by the nature of my discussion. The majority of my work was conducted using the *Dictionary of Old English* web corpus as a search engine.<sup>13</sup> Here, I have employed both Simple Search and Proximity Search in order to find uses and establish common collocations and co-occurrences of words. I have also widely consulted common Anglo-Saxon dictionaries and reference works, notably Bosworth and Toller, Clark Hall, *An Old English Thesaurus*, as well as Cameron *et al.*'s *Old English Word Studies* and the *Concordance to the Anglo-Saxon Poetic Records*.<sup>14</sup> In addition, I have widely consulted modern translations and semantic studies.

Although my focus is primarily on Old English literature, I have treated evidence from Anglo-Latin texts on a par with that of vernacular ones in Chapter One, and considered possible influences from Latin wherever appropriate in the other chapters. This reflects an ongoing

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<sup>12</sup> In particular the *Database of Latin Dictionaries*, <http://clt.brepolis.net/dld/Default.aspx>; and *Dictionary of Medieval Latin from British Sources*, prepared by R. E. Latham *et al* (Oxford, 1975-2013) [hereafter *DMLBS*].

<sup>13</sup> *Dictionary of Old English: A-G Online*, ed. A. Cameron, A. Crandell Amos, A. diPaolo Healey *et al* (Toronto, Dictionary of Old English Project 2007), <http://www.doe.utoronto.ca> [hereafter *DOE*].

<sup>14</sup> J. Bosworth and T. Northcote Toller, *An Anglo-Saxon Dictionary* (Oxford, 1898) [hereafter *BT*]; J. R. Clark Hall, ed., *A Concise Anglo-Saxon Dictionary*, Fourth edition, with a supplement by H. D. Merritt (London, 1960); *A Thesaurus of Old English in Two Volumes*, ed. J. Roberts and C. Kay, with L. Grundy (London, 1995); A. Cameron, A. Kingsmill and A. Crandell Amos, *Old English Word Studies: A Preliminary Author and Word Index* (Toronto, 1983); *A Concordance to the Anglo-Saxon Poetic Records*, ed. J. B. Bessinger, Jr., programmed by P. H. Smith, Jr., with an index of compounds compiled by M. W. Twomey (Ithaca, NY; 1978).

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development in the field of Old English fuelled by a growing recognition that virtually all Old English poets and writers must have been schooled in Latin and many may have composed in this language too. In fact scholars have significantly challenged the perceived binary between Old English and Latin in more recent research.<sup>15</sup> The word studies naturally concentrate on vernacular concepts of craftsmanship, but I have taken care here too to read the terms I analyse as existing in a bilingual environment.

I have limited my analysis for the most part to literature from Anglo-Saxon England, or closely associated with it, to the exclusion of texts from cognate and neighbouring languages. The main reason for this was a necessity to demarcate clear boundaries of investigation due to a wealth of material on offer. An important exception is the Old Norse *Vǫlundarkviða*, whose close relationship to the Old English *Deor* has been noted on multiple occasions, and whose origins have at times been placed in the Danelaw environment.<sup>16</sup> In discussing *Vǫlundarkviða* I focus on the aspects which it can be seen to share with its Old English analogues, rather than on elements which are ostensibly later, and very foreign additions to the poem (such as the swan maiden episode, usually considered to be derived from a Finno-Ugric folktale). I also consider in detail the depiction of craftsmanship in *Genesis B*, a poem usually considered to be a close translation from Old Saxon. However, I provide evidence for reading the craftsmanship motif in this poem as an English feature. For the rest, I fully recognise that in-depth comparisons with attitudes to smiths and craftsmanship in these other literatures (notably Old Norse and Old Irish), and connecting my observations with research being conducted on these topics there, would constitute a very interesting counterpart to my argument. This must, however, remain the subject for future research.

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<sup>15</sup> M. Lapidge, 'Aldhelm's Latin Poetry and Old English Verse', *Comparative Literature* 31 (1979), 209-31; A. Orchard, *The Poetic Art of Aldhelm* (Cambridge, 1994); A. Orchard, *Pride and Prodigies: Studies in the Monsters of the Beowulf-Manuscript* (Toronto, 2003); *The Old English Dialogues of Solomon and Saturn*, ed. D. Anlezark (Woodbridge, 2009); cf. A. Orchard, 'Looking for an Echo: The Oral Tradition in Anglo-Saxon England', *Oral Tradition* 18 (2003), 225-7; C. Abram, 'Aldhelm and the Two Cultures of Anglo-Saxon Poetry', *Literature Compass* 4/5 (2007), 1354-77.

<sup>16</sup> J. McKinnell, 'The Context of *Vǫlundarkviða*', *Saga-Book* 23 (1990), 1-27, esp. 1-13; *The Poetic Edda, Vol 2: Mythological Poems*, ed. U. Dronke (Oxford, 1997), pp. 243-328, *passim*.

## Introduction

Turning towards the first chapter, my thesis starts with a focus on the smith as the archetypal craftsman since he is the most discussed and the most problematical of all artisans in the corpus. He seems to have provoked diametrically opposed reactions, which makes him an especially interesting figure for literary analysis.

## Chapter One

**CHAPTER ONE:  
Dichotomising the Archetypal Craftsman: The Smith in Anglo-Saxon  
Literature**

It is fitting to start a discussion about the representation of smiths in Anglo-Saxon literature with the most famous exponent of the craft. That Weland was dear to the Anglo-Saxon imagination is testified by several references to the myth in a range of poetic genres as well as in prose, by an important depiction of the myth on the Franks Casket, and possibly by a charter which has been interpreted as pointing to a topographical analogue to the story.<sup>1</sup> The Franks Casket is the earliest surviving representation of the tale and it confirms a number of details found in what is accepted to be its closest analogue, the Old Norse *Vǫlundarkviða*, a poem recorded in the Icelandic Codex Regius copied in the thirteenth century, though possibly composed as early as the year 900.<sup>2</sup> The Franks Casket depicts the smith in what is usually interpreted by comparison with the other

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<sup>1</sup> The Weland references occur in *Deor* 1-6, *Waldere* I 2 and II 9, *Beowulf* 1.455, OE Boethius B-Text: Chapter 19; C-Text: Metre 10 (all discussed below); and Charters S367 (A.D. 903) and S564 (A.D. 955), <http://www.esawyer.org.uk>. The latter charter describes the site of present-day Wayland's smithy in Berkshire and has been of special interest to L. V. Grinsell ('Wayland the Smith and his Relatives: A Legend and its Topography', *Folklore* 102 (1991), 235-6) who identified two sites named Beaghildae Byrigels and Hwituc's hlaew (sic) in close proximity, arguing that they represent two figures closely associated with Weland in the legends that survive: Beadohild, with whom Weland is said to have had a sexual encounter, and their son Widia respectively; but cf. M. Gelling, *The Place-Names of Berkshire*, Vol.II (Cambridge, 1974), p.347. The site of Wayland's smithy, a Neolithic long-barrow on the Ridgeway in Oxfordshire (historically Berkshire), is often associated with folk-tales recorded in post-medieval times, recounting the existence of a smith living and exercising his trade in the burial chamber. It is sometimes argued that this folk-tale was known to the Anglo-Saxons, and in particular to King Alfred, who grew up near this site in Anglo-Saxon Wantage (e.g. H. R. Ellis Davidson, 'Weland the Smith', *Folklore* 69 (1958), 145-59), but this must remain the object of speculation. There are also several Anglo-Saxon stone sculptures thought to depict the legend of Weland, including notably a pre-Conquest cross in Leeds parish church, and possibly a panel on the Halton cross. R. Nedoma's monograph, *Die bildlichen und schriftlichen Denkmäler der Wielandsage* (Göppingen, 1988), remains the most comprehensive survey of the extant (Anglo-Saxon and European) sources of the legend of Weland. For the extant pre-Conquest depictions of Weland on stone, see J. T. Lang, 'Sigurd and Weland in Pre-Conquest Carving from Northern England', *The Yorkshire Archaeological Journal* 48 (1976), 83-94. In addition to these representations of the legend, A. C. Bouman, 'Leodum is Minum: Beadohild's complaint', *Neophilologus* 33 (1949), 103-13, identified an analogue to Beadohild's affliction after Weland's escape in the portion of verse now termed *Wulf and Eadwacer*.

<sup>2</sup> S. Bugge, 'The Norse Lay of Wayland (*Vǫlundarkviða*), and its Relation to English Tradition', *Saga-Book* 2 (1899), 275-316, p.282.

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witnesses as the smithy in which he is held captive by King Niðhad and appears to relate his revenge against the king effected through murdering the latter's sons (an element identified through the presence of a corpse in the bottom left hand corner of the scene), and impregnating his daughter Beadohild, who is seen extending her hand towards the smith who is repairing a ring. The ring is normally interpreted as the one featured in *Völundarkviða*, which the king stole from the smith as he imprisoned him and then gave to his daughter, which ultimately leads to her sexual relationship with the smith. The casket also alludes to Weland's escape by depicting a second male figure, possibly the smith himself or his brother Egill, strangling birds for what we may impute is the use of their feathers in an artefact designed to help him escape.<sup>3</sup> Egill is mentioned as Weland's brother at the beginning of *Völundarkviða*, and he features as such as his associate in the smith's escape from captivity (shooting birds to construct a feather-coat) in the thirteenth-century *Velents þáttr smiðs*.<sup>4</sup> An interest in the episode of Weland's imprisonment and his relationship with Beadohild is also manifest in *Deor*, a poem briefly but subtly evoking those elements separately in its first two stanzas as states of hardship which are ultimately overcome. The Franks Casket and *Deor* are the fullest extant versions of the Weland myth in England, and they represent complex testimonies which must be read in their immediate environments – the iconographic programme of the casket, and the elegiac, Boethian context of the poem – as well as in relation to the fascinatingly diverse representations of smiths in Anglo-Saxon England. I will discuss both witnesses in relation to these contexts below.

The formulaic allusions to Weland in *Beowulf* and *Waldere* are witnesses to the high reputation the smith enjoyed in the context of heroic poetry. In both poems he is memorialized as the maker of high-quality weapons and armour. Beowulf's coat of mail is described as the best of battle-garments (*hrægla selest [...] Welandes geweorc*, ll.454a and 455a), having previously been

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<sup>3</sup> This identification is also supported by the depiction of an archer-figure on the lid of the Casket, identified by the runic inscription ÆGILI.

<sup>4</sup> This chivalric version of the story is part of the *Pidreks saga af Bern*, a text for which there is currently no proper scholarly edition, and which is most accessible in translation: e.g. E. R. Haymes, *The Saga of Thidrek of Bern* (New York, 1988). Its relationship to the other texts and its (limited) potential to fill certain gaps left by the no doubt partial transmission of the early form of the legend are discussed by Nedoma, *Denkmäler der Wielandsage*, pp.194-73.

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mentioned as a work of first-class and intricate skill (*on him bryne scan / searonet seowed, smiþes orþancum*, ll.405b-6).<sup>5</sup> This description will be subject to my analysis of the notions of *searo* and *orþanc* in subsequent chapters, but it is clear, even without a deeper understanding of the semantics of skill, that Weland's work is of superior quality, which manifests itself both aesthetically (through its shine and the refined appearance of a garment) and functionally (it constitutes a major protective force in his fight with Grendel's mother, ll.1503b-5). A very positive representation of the smith as a maker of weapons is also found in the first of two surviving fragments of the heroic poem titled *Waldere* where the hero is encouraged to fight on the basis that the sword Mimming, paraphrased as *Welandes worc* (l.2), will not fail anyone able to hold it. The second fragment refers to Widia as *Niðhades mæg, Welandes bearn* ('Niðhad's kinsman, Weland's son', ll.8b-9c), further confirming the smith's place in the stock of legendary figures of secular poetry.<sup>6</sup>

Smiths are seen as embodying heroic stature in *The Battle of Brunanburh*, where Æthelstan's men are described as *wlance wigsmiðas* ('proud war-smiths', l.72) in an extended 'smithy-war motif'.<sup>7</sup> This epithet recalls the earlier reference to their triumph being brought about through *mylenscearpan* swords ('grindstone-sharp' or 'sharp from the forge', l.24), possibly pointing to a technological advantage granted to the English through the superior skills of smiths.<sup>8</sup> The smith motif is built up from the poem's first lines onward. Here, the use of the kenning *hamora lafum* ('the remnants of hammers', l.6) to describe the English swords reminds the audience of the crucial role that these craftsmen played in engineering the victory by application of their superior skill. The riddles, too, represent a genre where smiths excel. The *wrætlic weorc smiþa* ('wondrous

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<sup>5</sup> Cited from *Klaeber's Beowulf: Fourth Edition*, ed. R. D. Fulk, R. E. Bjork, and J. D. Niles (Toronto, 2008).

<sup>6</sup> Cited from *The Anglo-Saxon Minor Poems*, ed. E. V. K. Dobbie, ASPR 6 (New York, 1942), with my own emendation shown in Roman script. See also E. Coatsworth and M. Pinder in *The Art of the Anglo-Saxon Goldsmith* (Woodbridge, 2002), pp.186-7.

<sup>7</sup> Cited from *The Battle of Brunanburh*, ed. A. Campbell (London, 1938); N. D. Isaacs first recognised this motif in 'Battlefield Tour: Brunanburg', *NM* 63 (1962), 236-44, at p.243. cf. T. Lawler, 'Brunanburh: Craft and Art', in *Literary Studies: Essays in Memory of Francis A. Drumm*, ed. J. H. Dorenkamp (Wettern, 1973), pp.52-67.

<sup>8</sup> S. Walton, 'Words of Technological Virtue: 'The Battle of Brunanburh' and Anglo-Saxon Sword Manufacture', *Technology and Culture* 36 (1995), 987-99. Cf. Campbell, ed., p.105, n24.

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work of smiths', *Riddle 26* [W24], l.14, 'Codex' or 'Bible') is evoked as a stamp of distinction, and usually a mark of refinement designed to entice a reader's sense of wonder (cf. *Riddle 20* [W18] *hondweorc smiþa*, l.7, 'Sword').<sup>9</sup>

As reflected in this literary evidence, the smith fulfilled two fundamental functions: he assured a people's safety and martial superiority, and he satisfied the Anglo-Saxons' taste for ornament and precious artefacts. As such he played a particularly important function in the secular world, providing weapons and intricate artefacts that would elevate the owner's status and allow them to participate in the social practice of gift-giving. Early laws show the importance of the smith as a servant of the king. The Laws of Æthelbert fix his *wergeld* at the level of a free-man, a detail which has been interpreted as evidence that smiths were then kept as slaves but considered of high value. The Laws of Ine allow *gesipas* to travel in the company of their smiths, again indicating that smiths from the early period were constrained to remain with nobility.<sup>10</sup> These laws are sometimes cited in support of the idea that the Weland myth once reflected a social reality. There is, however, also evidence of itinerant smiths as well as free smiths rewarded with grants of land by their patrons, suggesting that some smiths may have moved to higher social strata throughout their careers.<sup>11</sup> Their work was also highly prized in the religious world, where there was a high demand for religious artefacts (e.g. altar and processional crosses), functional implements (to serve the day-to-day needs of monastic life) as well as secular objects fashioned as gifts for noblemen. From the conversion period onwards, Anglo-Saxon churchmen supported the practice of syncretism, thereby ensuring the continuation of the intricate secular metal-work of the pre-Christian era, and allowing it to develop into a highly developed religious art form, prized beyond the shores of the British Isles.<sup>12</sup> The elevated status of smiths in heroic poetry, and their depiction as skilled makers of secular or religious artefacts in the riddles appear to reflect their historical position on the axes of power.

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<sup>9</sup> Cited from *The Old English Riddles of the 'Exeter Book'*, ed. C. Williamson (Chapel Hill, NC; 1977).

<sup>10</sup> Hinton, 'Smiths and Myths', pp.266-7.

<sup>11</sup> Coatsworth and Pinder, *Goldsmith*, p.214.

<sup>12</sup> Webster, *Anglo-Saxon Art*, esp. pp.69-97; for overseas reputation see Dodwell, *Anglo-Saxon Art*, pp.44-6.

### Early Northumbrian attitudes

A very different picture emerges from historical or semi-historical accounts of the role of smiths in the establishment of the Christian Church in Anglo-Saxon England. This is apparent in the writings of Bede, who expressed himself repeatedly on matters of art, poetry and craftsmanship. Not only did he leave us with an account of the birth of a new Christian vernacular poetic tradition in the story of Cædmon, but he also penned his own accomplished Latin verse<sup>13</sup> and is said to have composed poems in his native tongue.<sup>14</sup> Amongst his many interests and aptitudes can also be counted a keen eye for religious artefacts, with which he was confronted in the texts he read, or which he saw in Wearmouth-Jarrow.<sup>15</sup> His lasting influence, however, seems to have been in his role as a chronicler of Anglo-Saxon Christian religion in the *Historia Ecclesiastica*, and as a shaper of the tenets of this faith in his commentaries. It is in this context that Bede's reflections on smiths took shape, and where attitudes to craftsmanship and creativity seem to have received a decidedly dogmatic tinge.

In the opening lines of the *HE*, Bede praises the riches of Britain:

Optima frugibus atque arboribus insula, et alendis apta pecoribus ac iumentis; uineas etiam quibusdam in locis germinans; sed et auium ferax terra marique generis diuersi; fluuiis quoque multum piscosis ac fontibus praeclara copiosis, et quidem praecipue issicio abundat, et anguilla. (...)

Quae etiam uenis metallorum, aeris, ferri, et plumbi, et argenti, fecunda, gignit et lapidem gagatem plurimum optimumque; est autem nigrogemmeus, et ardens igni admotus, incensus serpentes fugat, adritu calefactus adplicita detinet, aequae ut succinum.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> See M. Lapidge, *Bede the Poet*, Jarrow Lecture 1993 (Jarrow, 1993), reprinted in *Anglo-Latin Literature 600-899* (London, 1996), pp.313-38.

<sup>14</sup> See 'Cuthbert's Letter on the Death of Bede', in Bede, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, ed. B. Colgrave and R. A. B. Mynors (Oxford, 1969) (hereafter *HE*), pp.580-7.

<sup>15</sup> For a comprehensive account of Bede's engagement with art see G. Henderson, *Bede and the Visual Arts*, Jarrow Lecture 1980 (Newcastle upon Tyne, 1980).

<sup>16</sup> *HE*, ed. Colgrave and Mynors, i.1, pp.14 and 16. Subsequent quotations from *HE* are taken from the same edition.

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(The island is rich in crops and in trees, and has good pasturage for goats and cattle; vines also grow in certain places; it has land- and water-fowl of various kinds; it is famous for its rivers full of fish and the fountains too, where the salmon and the eel are in abundance. (...))

The land is also rich in veins of metal, bronze, iron, lead and silver, and it produces jet of quality in abundance; it is glossy black and ardent when it burns; when set on fire it puts the serpents to flight, and when it is warmed by rubbing it holds what is applied to it, just as amber does.)

As Bede styles his description of Britain as of a land of plenty, he also makes it a paradise for the craftsman. It bears abundant resources of metal, bronze, iron, lead and silver. Moreover the natural resources nature has provided for the island seem to have an inbuilt resistance against sin: The jet, when kindled, drives away serpents, those beasts associated with temptation and the fall of man. God has furnished Britain as a *locus amoenus*, with the right resources for its inhabitants to do him honour and abide by his law. It is surprising that given these prospects, the smith should figure so strongly as a sinner in the writings of Bede and his peers.

In chapter 14 of the fifth book of the *Historia Ecclesiastica*, Bede tells the story of a smith living with a monastic community in Bernicia. Bede suggests that he knew this smith personally, and makes it clear that the narrative serves as an injunction to his readers to do penance for their sins. The smith is said to have lived an ignoble life and died without repenting of his ways. He is treated as a pariah, and the monks, who during his lifetime tolerated his presence because of his superior skill (*fabrili arte singularis*), refuse to pray for him after his death and bury him in the outmost corner of the churchyard. The smith, a man *tenebrosae mentis et actionis* ('of dark mind and of dark deeds'), is said to have been greeted with the open gates of hell at the point of his death. Bede adds momentum to his account with a contrived dichotomy between the example of the smith and the felicitous death of the protomartyr Stephen. What is curious about this chapter is the contrast between the fervour of Bede's narration and the reasons he gives for condemning the smith to infamy. Bede says that

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Seruiebat autem multum ebrietati, et ceteris uitae remissioris inlecebris; magisque in officina sua die noctuque residere, quam ad psallendum atque orandum in ecclesia, audiendumque cum fratribus uerbum uitae concurrere consuerat.<sup>17</sup>

(But he was very much a slave to drink, and all the other kinds of loose pleasures; and he used to remain in his workshop day and night rather than go to church with his brothers to sing and pray, and listen to the word of life.)

It is noteworthy that Bede, instead of elaborating on those *uitae remissioris inlecebris* which made the craftsman so despicable, seems to find no better accusation than that he spent more time alone in his workshop than with the monks in church. He accuses the smith of drunkenness, but that would hardly have been a cause to single him out from the rest of the brothers, if we are to believe Bede's complaints about the lack of sobriety in the monasteries of his day. The summative nature of *celeris uitae remissioris inlecebris* is, at first sight, equally unenlightening. The account of the smith is complex, and may be analysed by combining three readings of the text: as a personal/historical anecdote, as a stylised literary story, and in relation to Bede's exegetical commentaries.

By considering Bede's story as the personal and historical anecdote it claims to be (*noui autem ipse fratrem*), we may be able to read as much into what Bede says as into what he keeps silent. Through the parallel construction of *magis...quam* the smith's reclusiveness is cast as if it was contrasted to the holy lifestyle that Bede would have expected to see him lead. This conveys a loaded injunction, suggestive of Bede's scorn of the smith's dedication to his craft, as well as of his refusal to participate (or lack of interest) in the monastic community. While the source of this scorn, and the reasons for the smith's behaviour are not immediately clear, it is possible to entertain the proposition that Bede's smith was a secular artist, a man recruited in the services of the church because of his skill but despite a lack of religious conviction. Such a proposition would be supported by the scholarly opinion that in the early Anglo-Saxon period lay people were frequently asked to enter monasteries because of a lack of 'monk-craftsmen' (who thrived in the later Anglo-

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<sup>17</sup> v.14, p.502.

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Saxon period).<sup>18</sup> The smith's refusal to repent and receive the viaticum before his death may be suggestive of his inability to have faith in the new religion. So could be his lack of desire to participate in the divine office. His high art, as Bede evokes prominently, is the only reason why his fellow monks put up with him.

It is in contrasting the smith with Saint Stephen that Bede betrays his true concern. Like the smith, the proto-martyr refuses to change the perceived error of his ways in the face of pain, torture and death. Both share a single-minded dedication to a specific purpose: Saint Stephen to the defence of truth, the smith to his craft. Saint Stephen's determination to stand by his faith is orthodox. However, as the first martyr he was also notably a convert from Judaism, representing the acceptance of what Bede would have known as the true, pious way of living. The smith on the other hand has not embraced, and indeed opposes, the new religion.<sup>19</sup> It is moreover possible that the smith's determination to devote his life to his craft was deemed incompatible with pious living because among his creative output, alongside the church art he was asked to produce, were included artefacts with a secular bend.<sup>20</sup>

Bede's depiction of his protagonist as a recluse is in line with a tradition of seeing smiths as outsiders, operating on the fringe of societal structures. This appears to have been both a literary figure and a historical truth for certain smiths in early Anglo-Saxon England. Völundr's loneliness

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<sup>18</sup> Dodwell, *Anglo-Saxon Art*, pp.66-67. The Benedictine reform in the tenth century appears to have produced a large number of these monk-craftsmen. This is most likely due to the Benedictine Rule's tenet of devotion to manual labour including all forms of craftsmanship beneficial to the monastery. Cf. below and Chapter Five. The most well-known example of these monk-craftsmen is Dunstan, who is said to have cultivated calligraphy and excelled at painting, and who gained a posthumous reputation for metalworking. This reputation was amplified considerably in post-Conquest accounts of his life, as for instance in the tale of Dunstan taking the devil by the nose with his white-hot tongs (Dodwell, pp.52-3). The monastic need for craftsmen seems to have been great, and there is ample evidence for secular craftsmen working alongside monastic ones in the later period. On secular craftsmen, see also D. M. Wilson, *Anglo-Saxon Art* (London, 1984), p.14.

<sup>19</sup> The smith's rejection of repentance is a combination of a refusal and an inability to do penance. While close to death, he feels as if judgement has already been passed upon him. It is not clear, whether this is Bede's opinion or his own. Two similar stories in Book Five of *HE* form a thematic link to v.14 through the importance of penance. One of them is similar to v.14, the other, in which a man has a near-death experience, offers the sinner a possibility for redemption after he is shown hell and heaven. It is not immediately clear why (Bede deems) some people deserve a second chance and others do not. Irreligiosity is probably the reason in v.14.

<sup>20</sup> This would include artefacts depicting, for instance, scenes from Germanic mythology similar to those on the co-eval Franks Casket, or using traditional apotropaic motifs, without integrating these scenes or elements into an overall Christian iconography.

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is poignantly evoked in *Vǫlundarkviða* after the swan-maidens – his love and his brothers' companions – depart and he is left alone (*einn*) in Ulfdǫlum (Wolfdales) (5/5-6), a place-name which Dronke suggested emphasizes his 'characteristic, outlaw-like isolation'.<sup>21</sup> He is imprisoned by Niðuðr on an island, kept far away from the king's royal household. Weland is said to have known exile in *Deor* (1.2), and a great number of folk-tales follow this tradition of depicting the smith as a recluse.<sup>22</sup> Our archaeological evidence on smiths from the Anglo-Saxon period is mixed, showing them both in close proximity to monastic or secular centres, as well as on the periphery.<sup>23</sup> It is often suggested that this was necessitated by the nature of their trade, which generated a lot of heat and was noisy and that, as a result, they were somewhat withdrawn from normal societal activities. The discovery of a probably foreign (Scandinavian) smith's grave, including tools and materials associated with high status artefacts, at Tattershall Thorpe, thought to have been a lonely burial site, has given rise to the theory that Anglo-Saxons feared the combination of skill and the unknown.<sup>24</sup> Referring this evidence back onto Bede's rejection of the smith, is it possible to imagine that it was motivated by excessive wariness of what his craft might entail? Smiths would have appeared to the Anglo-Saxons, learned and unlearned alike, as endowed with a refined knowledge of something they would have found incomprehensible: an understanding of metallurgical processes, which was probably more empirical than scientific (but generated a huge interest in some educated circles, as testified by the survival of manuscripts

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<sup>21</sup> Dronke, *Edda* II, p.308.

<sup>22</sup> L. Motz, *The Wise One of the Mountain: Form, Function and Significance of the Subterranean Smith: A Study in Folklore* (Göppingen, 1983), esp. ch.2.

<sup>23</sup> J. Blair, *The Church in Anglo-Saxon Society* (Oxford, 2005), mentions evidence from monastic sites at Hodden and Lindisfarne indicating that early medieval monastic workshops (smithies, *officinae*) were located at the periphery of the monastic site. The smith's involvement with the monastery thus seems to have been marginal in a very literal sense. This may have slowed down the process of converting lay smiths to the Christian message. A tenth-century site at York Minster provides evidence that the smiths' spatial relation to the monastic community had become normalised, cf. M. O. H. Carver, 'Roman to Norman at York Minster', in *Excavations at York Minster, Volume I: From Roman Fortress to Norman Cathedral* (Swindon, 1995), pp.177-204, at p.195.

<sup>24</sup> D. A. Hinton, *A Smith in Lindsey: The Anglo-Saxon Grave at Tattershall Thorpe, Lincolnshire* (London, 2000), pp.111-15; D. A. Hinton, with a contribution by R. White, 'A Smith's Hoard from Tattershall Thorpe, Lincolnshire: A Synopsis', *ASE* 22 (1993), 147-166, esp. pp.163-166. The location of Weland's smithy (*Welandes smiþþe*) on the site of a Neolithic burial chamber on the Ridgeway in Berkshire has also been speculated to represent evidence of the fabled smith being considered a liminal figure straddling this earth and the 'Other World'. Cf. Ellis Davidson, 'Weland the Smith' (cf. fn1 above).

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containing *mappae claviculae*),<sup>25</sup> e.g. an awareness of when metal had reached the right temperature for a certain process. An ineptitude to comprehend the smith's understanding of the created world, together with the fact that the smith was absorbed in his craft to the extent of neglecting monastic rituals and to all appearances was isolated in his workshop (either through his own volition, due to the monks' refusal to engage with him, or a combination of both), and quite possibly Bede's knowledge of the smith's non-Christian spiritual leanings, might have contributed to shape this episode of the *HE*.

On the literary level, the story of the smith in v.14 provides a counterpart to the well-known account of the poet Cædmon's initiation to the world of poetry (iv.24). Both chapters narrate the life and death of an artist/craftsman in the service of the church. Both artists are outsiders, either before or after entering monastic life. But in the Cædmon episode, the cowherd's seclusion appears to be a sign of his virtue. In contrast to the smith, Cædmon does not seek out his craft, but receives the gift of poetry through divine grace (*diuina gratia*) in a fashion that has been likened to divine inspiration, almost becoming a receptacle for God's Word.<sup>26</sup> His compositions, a versification of Genesis, Exodus and other biblical texts, are more an imitation of Scripture than a creative act. Critics have commented on the contrived character of the chapter, and the 'poetic' nature of Bede's Latin rendering of *Cædmon's Hymn*.<sup>27</sup> Some scholars have even harboured the suspicion

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<sup>25</sup> A *mappae clavicula* is understood to be a type of basic technical literature for the curious literati. It survives in manuscripts from the ninth to the fifteenth century, despite providing no practical value as the description of methods is usually limited. It appears to satisfy a need for knowledge about processes such as goldsmithing for people who are not otherwise engaged in the manual arts. A twelfth-century manuscript claims it intends to disclose 'to those who wish to understand these things what the actual processes are that are used in painting and other kinds of work.' C. S. Smith and J. G. Hawthorne, '*Mappae Clavicula*, a Little Key to the World of Medieval Techniques', *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society* n.s. 64 (1974), 3-128. Cf. Coatsworth and Pinder, *Goldsmith*, pp.11-14. There is evidence in the manuscript tradition that Anglo-Saxon scribes were involved in copying one of the earlier versions of this text. Coatsworth and Pinder summarize the evidence for this connection on pp.11-12. Although limited, this evidence appears interesting in light of the possibility that some Anglo-Saxons' attitudes towards smiths may have been formed by a lack of knowledge about their work, indicating that they tried to remedy this situation.

<sup>26</sup> *HE*, pp.414-420.

<sup>27</sup> Both Cædmon and Bede's smith also share a standard feature of hagiographical accounts: they both have foreknowledge of their deaths. B. Colgrave suggests that premonition of one's death is a distinctive hagiographical commonplace in 'Bede's Miracle Stories', in *Bede, his Life, Times, and Writings: Essays in Commemoration of the Twelfth Centenary of his Death*, ed. A. H. Thompson (New York, 1966), pp.201-29.

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that the Old English *Hymn* might be a back-translation from the Latin.<sup>28</sup> The Cædmon episode may thus be written quite deliberately, revealing Bede's desire to break with the pre-Christian oral tradition and restart an artistic culture that is in line with the teachings of the Church. For a milieu that was more at ease with words, but less master of the crafts pertaining to manual labour, this was perhaps easier to accomplish for poetry than it was for the material arts. If the church did indeed rely on the intake of lay craftsmen, then it is possible that their services were tolerated with a certain amount of suspicion about the nature of their craft.

Bede's reservations are reflected in the writings of his contemporary, Stephen of Ripon, pupil and hagiographer of St. Wilfrid. Chapter 38 of the *Vita Wilfredi* ('*De eo, quid vincula se cadebant*') is a famous episode in Wilfred's long-standing quarrel with King Ecgfrith. The king has ordered the sheriff of Durham to put the saint in fetters in a bid to reinforce his authority undermined by the sheriff's resistance against his orders to keep Wilfred in prison. There follows a miraculous scene where the smiths are called to forge the fetters, a plot development highlighted by alliteration (indicated here in bold):

Ille vero, praecepto Regis coactus, **vincula ferrea fabros facere iussit**, qui sine causa opus diligenter membra sancti confessoris nostri metientes facere inchoabant, Deo enim resistente.<sup>29</sup>

(He, however, constrained by the king's command, ordered some smiths to make iron fetters. These, unduly fastidious in their labour, started their creative task by measuring the limbs of our saintly confessor. Of course God was opposing them.)

The passage is noteworthy for its careful turn of phrase. Instrumental in the repression of the saint, the smiths are portrayed as opponents of God. But the author seems to be sensitive to the particular nature of their craft. The use of *inchoare* rather than *incipere* reinforces the creative élan with which they go about their work. *Inchoare* transcends the significance of 'to start', by denoting the

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<sup>28</sup> The complex critical debate surrounding this poem is lucidly presented by A. Orchard in 'Poetic Inspiration and Prosaic Translation: The Making of *Cædmon's Hymn*', in *Studies in English Language and Literature: 'Doubt Wisely': Papers in Honour of E.G. Stanley*, ed. M. J. Toswell and E. M. Tyler (London, 1996), pp.402-22.

<sup>29</sup> Eddius Stephanus, *Vita Wilfredi*, ed. B. Colgrave (Cambridge, 1927), p.38.

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incipience of a primary creative act. In early medieval Latin texts from British sources, the term is used almost exclusively to denote the start of large, transformative projects, being applied, for instance, to the start of Gregory the Great's grand exegetical undertaking resulting in 35 books of biblical commentary, in *HE* ii.1; the construction of works in stone; the start of the third age of world history, translating as 'venturing into a new area' (in Aldhelm, *De uirginitate prosa*, chapter 54).<sup>30</sup> The application of this term to the forging of chains in the *Vita Wilfredi* is thus a comparatively incongruous use of an action verb, highlighting the misguidedness of the smiths' creative endeavour and how acutely their deed is interfering with God's purpose. In his portrayal of the smiths as God's antagonists, Stephen of Ripon parallels Bede's negative account in *HE*. The smiths fail to place their art in the service of the Lord. More explicitly than in Bede, they operate under laws which are not compatible with the divine order. As evidence shows that Bede had read this account before composing the last book of *HE*,<sup>31</sup> this analogue might have further shaped his portrayal of the brother in v.14. Both texts might, however, have been influenced by Bede's earlier writings.

To fully appreciate these early Northumbrian attitudes to smiths it is necessary to address the complex representation of smiths and craftsmanship in Bede's exegetical writings and its relation to the sources that might have guided him to his own, and influenced others', doctrinal position on these subjects. Bede was familiar with the account of the Fallen Angels in 1 Enoch, as well as with Josephus's *Antiquity of the Jews*.<sup>32</sup> In these texts, the craft of the smith is associated with a fallen state dominated by bodily vices. It is seen as inciting further indulgence in bodily pleasures. Bede

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<sup>30</sup> *DMLBS*, p.1293. cf. also the use of the term in the sources collected by O. Lehmann-Brockhaus in *Lateinische Schriftquellen zur Kunst in England, Wales und Schottland, vom Jahre 901 bis zum Jahre 1307* (Munich, 1955-1960). Although Lehmann-Brockhaus investigates a disproportionately large amount of post-Conquest material, and only two of c.120 instances of *inchoare* in the corpus he investigated (possibly not very thoroughly) relate to the Anglo-Saxon period after 901 (both cited in entry 4690), his study appears to support evidence from the *DMLBS* entry that *inchoare* is primarily applied to the beginning of large-scale projects such as the building of churches or other edifices in stone.

<sup>31</sup> D. P. Kirby, 'Bede, Eddius Stephanus and the *Life of Wilfred*', *English Historical Review* 98, No. 386 (1983), 101-114.

<sup>32</sup> Fontes Anglo-Saxonici Project, ed., *Fontes Anglo-Saxonici: World Wide Web Register*, <http://fontes.english.ox.ac.uk/>. These texts and their influence on Bede's exegetical commentary are discussed in Bradley, 'Metal Smiths', pp.23-27 and pp.36-41. Another author who might have influenced Bede's negative portrayal of Tubalcain is Origen, who refers to the father of smithcraft as *Cain ortus* and *filius Cain*. Jerome, *Translatio Homiliarum Origenis in Jeremiam*, PL 25 (1845), pp.584-809, at p.608.

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reprises this element in his own hexameral commentary, noting how all things invented or discovered by the sons of Lamech (which includes Tubalcain and his craft) *ad cultum vel ornamentum vel inlecebras huius vitae pertinent*, ‘pertain to the ornamentation, adornment or seduction of this life’,<sup>33</sup> concluding that the works made of bronze and iron, like the other products of Lamech’s son, were invented *a filiis maledictionis* (‘by the children of the curse’).<sup>34</sup> This commentary provides a direct verbal parallel with the account of the smith in *HE* through *inlecebras* (cf. *celeris uitae remissioris inlecebris*), indicating how Bede’s attitude to the smith’s uncongenial person is likely to have been framed by his own reading.

After thoroughly condemning craftsmanship in this way, Bede moves on to distinguish between the sinful examples of those who follow the sons of Lamech, and the elect who renounce the worldly pleasures. He then cites Isaiah 2:4, but turns the pacifist vision of the biblical verse into a vindication of church art in his commentary (italics indicate Bede’s direct quotations from biblical verse):

Erant in populo Dei uiri docti in *cuncta opera aeris et ferri*, necnon et argenti et auri; sed hos ipse hanc artem ad constructionem sui tabernaculi transferre praecepit. Propheta quoque gaudia dominicae incarnationis euangelizans, opera ferri noxia tollenda atque in melius commutanda praedixit. *Et conflans*, inquit, *gladios suos in uomeres et lanceas in falces; non leuabit gens contra gentem gladium, nec exercebuntur ultra ad praelium.*<sup>35</sup>

(There were amongst God’s people men learned in *all the works of bronze and iron*, and also in silver and gold; but he instructed those same people to dedicate their art to the construction of his tabernacle. The Prophet too, announcing the joy of the Lord’s incarnation, preached to let go of the noxious works of iron and to convert them to better things. *And they shall melt*, he said, *their swords into ploughshares and their spears into scythes; no nation will lift a sword against another nation, nor shall they then practice war.*)

<sup>33</sup> Bede, *Libri Quatuor in Principium Genesis*, ed. C. W. Jones, CCSL 118A (Turnhout, 1967), pp.87-8.

<sup>34</sup> Following the biblical verse on which he is commenting, Bede also includes tent-making and poetry, or ‘the play upon the harp and the pipe’ in this blanket condemnation. He finds very little to say about the former, and his condemnation of poetry is kept to a brief utterance each time. The exegetical passage focuses much more fully on the craft of Tubalcain and craftsmanship in general.

<sup>35</sup> *In Genesis*, p.88.

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While Isaiah envisions the conversion of destructive weapons into functional farming implements, Bede's paraphrase is anxious to salvage art, in particular church art. His introduction of references to gold and silver artists makes clear that the coming of Christ will be celebrated by artefacts rather than tools to cultivate the land. Similarly, in *De Templo Salomonis*, Bede affirms the role of art in the Christian faith by echoing Gregory's contention that *Quod legentibus scriptura, hoc idiotis praestat pictura cernentibus* ('What the Bible is to those who can read, a picture can prove to the unlearned viewers').<sup>36</sup> These commentaries betray Bede's attachment to the arts, and we may surmise that he would have just as gladly written about the smith as he wrote about Cædmon. The fact that he did not do so is remarkable. Bede had at his disposal other models, most of them more authoritative than I Enoch or Josephus, which take a much softer approach to craftsmanship: Augustine and Isidore, who respond positively or neutrally to Tubalcain in their commentaries, as well as a number of early Christian writers such as Claudius Marius Victor, whose *Aletheia* portrays the craft of metal-working as a gift of divine grace which Adam and Eve obtained as they attacked a serpent after their expulsion from Eden.<sup>37</sup> Bede's choice to eschew these interpretations in favour of darker ones sits somewhat uncomfortably with the importance he attributes to art and craftsmanship elsewhere in his commentary.

Bede's learned adversity towards Tubalcain and his critical portrayal of the smith in *HE* v.14 are intimately related, not just through the verbal parallel noted above (*inlecebras*) but also in the positive value he attaches to communal life. In an effort to open up a possibility for pious craft, Bede observes in his commentary that although the human race degenerated as a result of the inventions of the children of the curse, *etiam boni Dei famuli pro communione uitae socialis*

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<sup>36</sup> Gregory the Great, 'Epistle 13 to Serenus, Bishop of Marseilles', *Letters XI*, xiii, PL 77, p.1128; quoted in J. Hawkes, 'Symbolic Lives: The Visual Evidence', in *The Anglo-Saxons from the Migration Period to the Eighth Century: An Ethnographic Perspective*, ed. J. Hines (Woodbridge, 1997), pp.311-44, at p.312.

<sup>37</sup> *Sancti Isidori Hispaliensis Episcopi Chronicon*, PL 83, Col.1020B (<http://pld.chadwyck.co.uk/>) has a neutral reference to Tubal Cain; Augustine talks about Lamech but omits any reference to Tubalcain or his role as the father of smithcraft. Augustine is generally complimentary towards the arts, but notes their inherent vanity on a divine scale, cf. *S. Aurelii Augustini Hipponensis Episcopi Ad Marcellinum De Civitate Dei Contra Paganos*, PL 41, Col.0449, Col.0450, and Liber XXII, Caput XXIV; *Claudii Marii Victorii Aletheia*, ed. P. F. Hovingh, CCSL 128 (Turnhout, 1960), pp.150-3. Cf. Bradley, 'Metal Smiths', pp.27-29. Cf. *Fontes Anglo-Saxonici*, and M. Lapidge, *The Anglo-Saxon Library* (Oxford, 2006), pp.191-228, for evidence of Bede's knowledge of these sources.

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*aliquotiens huiusmodi rebus operam dabant* ('good disciples of the Lord sometimes worked hard at these kinds of things for the sake of communion of the social life').<sup>38</sup> Both texts connect the orthodoxy of art to a communal setting.

While the commentaries provide a template through which Bede expresses concerns about the smith, a full understanding of his attitude is derived by combining his exegetical opinion with evidence of his personal response of the smith's otherness, his inability to fit into a Christian community, and perhaps even the incompatibility between the smith's *arte singularis* and Bede's own, very strict exigencies for ecclesiastical art. In Question 6 of his *Eight Questions*, he advises that the name of God must always be written in gold letters, because 'God is light and in him there is no darkness at all [...]. Nor again in the *tituli* of the Psalms should the names of reprobates like Absalom and Doeg be written in glowing red, but only in black.'<sup>39</sup> In other words, Bede advocates a breach in the scribal practice of writing rubrics in red ink,<sup>40</sup> because it contravenes the Holy Writ. In Bede's view, the rules under which art and craft can be practiced are rather strict. Visual, material, and also poetic (Cædmon), it has to imitate scriptural truth.

Almost contrapuntal to Bede's smith is the figure of Cuicuino (Cwicwine), featured in Aediluulf's *De Abbatibus*. This Anglo-Latin poem was written to celebrate the author's *cella*, an establishment dependent on a larger monastic institution. On the basis of being dedicated to Bishop Ecgberht of Lindisfarne, it is accepted to have been composed during the period in which he held this office (803-21). Scholarly opinion locates the cell in either Crayke or Lindisfarne, and links it to the famous monastic institution under the helm of Ecgberht.<sup>41</sup> As a Northumbrian poet writing not much later than Bede, Aediluulf presents us with a stunningly positive eulogy to a

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<sup>38</sup> *In Genesim*, p.88.

<sup>39</sup> Cited by G. Henderson in 'Bede and the Visual Arts', Jarrow Lecture 1980 (Jarrow, 1980), p.9.

<sup>40</sup> The *tituli* are headings that preceded each psalm, informing the reader of the historical circumstances of its composition, and are treated like rubrics in the layout of texts.

<sup>41</sup> Æthelwulf, *De Abbatibus*, ed. A. Campbell (Oxford, 1967), p.xxiii; citations from the poem are taken from this edition and the translations are by Campbell; M. Lapidge, 'Aediluulf and the School of York', *Anglo-Latin Literature 600-899* (London, 1996), pp.381-98; cf. D. R. Howlett, 'The Provenance, Date, and Structure of *De Abbatibus*', *Archaeologia Aeliana* Fifth Series 3 (1975), 121-30.

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blacksmith whose work and behaviour forms an important contribution to the distinction of his cell.<sup>42</sup> The smith's craft is evoked through vivid imagery:

continuo insonuit percussis cudo metallis  
 malleus, et uacuas uolitans cum uerberat auras  
 iam coenam fratrum peditans culdarios ornat.<sup>43</sup>

(forthwith the hammer rang on the anvil as the metal was struck, and as it flew and smote the empty air, it decked the table of the brothers by beating out vessels.)

Cuicuno is the antithesis of Bede's smith. He loves to join in communal prayer with his fellow monks (*coetibus hic sanctis coniunctus dicere psalmos / dulce habuit*, ll.300-1), and is eager to put his craft in the service of his community, giving anything he acquires as a reward to the poor. He is highly pious, performing fasts and frequent genuflections (*non parcit tundere membris marmora*, ll.296-7). At his death he is granted salvation, observed by a fellow monk Aethuinus as a bright troop coming down from heaven to carry Cuicuno to heaven. This vision is directly opposed to the one in Bede, where the smith is able to preview the depths of everlasting damnation before his death.

The overall contrast with Bede appears to be conscious and deliberate. As Campbell points out, Aediluulf demonstrates familiarity with Bede throughout the poem, and notably with the vision of Drythelm in *HE* v.12.<sup>44</sup> As this vision is part of a story just one chapter removed from the tale of the smith, it is reasonable to assume that Aediluulf read this one too. Therefore, the antithesis between the two accounts is especially meaningful. Aediluulf rejects Bede's attitude to his smith and supplants it with his own model. Just as Bede underscored his misgivings by echoing his exegetical commentary based on darker interpretations of Tubalcain, Aediluulf echoes a more

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<sup>42</sup> Cuicuno is described as a blacksmith in the poem (*ferrea qui domitans potuit formare metalla*, 'who could control and shape metals of the iron variety' (trans. Campbell), l.279. Coatsworth and Pinder, *Goldsmith*, (p.201) argue that he was also skilled in non-ferrous, though not necessarily fine, metals as indicated by the fact that he was *peditans culdarios* ('beating out vessels', l.305).

<sup>43</sup> ll.303-5, trans. Campbell.

<sup>44</sup> p.xxxiii.

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positive tradition. Throughout the poem, he employs a ‘cut-and-paste technique’<sup>45</sup> borrowing from older verse, including Sedulius, Juvencus, Arator, Paulinus of Nola, Prosper of Aquitaine, Fortunatus, Vergil, Statius and Lucan as well as Cyprianus Gallus.<sup>46</sup> The latter’s poetry served as an inspiration for the following lines depicting Cuicuino at work:

**Diuersisque modis sapiens incude subactum**  
Malleus in **ferrum** peditat, **stridente camino**.<sup>47</sup>

([And] his hammer under wise guidance crashed onto the iron placed beneath it in different positions on the anvil, while the forge roared.)

The phrases in bold show the overlap with Cyprian’s description of Tubalcain’s craft:

Tobelum mox Sella parit, cui fundere riuos  
Aeris erat moris **ferrumque incude subactum**  
**Diuersis** formare **modis stridente camino**.<sup>48</sup>

(Soon Sella bore Tubal, whose habit it was to pour streams of brass, and to form iron on the anvil placed under it in various ways, while the forge roared.)

While Cyprian usually stays close to the biblical text, he amplifies his relatively neutral description of Tubalcain in an imaginative, visual way, which can only testify to his particular regard for this character or the activity he epitomizes. Aediluulf thus aligns himself with a tradition that held the smith in some esteem. On the whole his account reads as a vindication of the figure of the smith, and possibly as historical evidence for the positive standing of some smiths in early monastic communities in the North of England. It also anticipates the favourable attitude towards the exercise of craftsmanship in a communal monastic setting which spreads across England in the context of the tenth-century monastic reform.

<sup>45</sup> Orchard, *The Poetic Art of Aldhelm*, p.264.

<sup>46</sup> Lapidge, ‘Aediluulf’, p.389.

<sup>47</sup> ll.280-1, trans. Campbell, emphases mine.

<sup>48</sup> *Cypriani Galli poetae Heptateuchos*, ed. R. Peiper, CSEL 23 (Vienna, 1891), *Gen.* 188-90, p.8.; cf. Campbell, p.xliv; cf. Bradley, ‘Metal Smiths’, pp.83-4; trans. and emphases are mine.

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The Benedictine Rule prescribes the pursuit of a variety of crafts necessary for the monastery alongside spiritual devotion. It also, to an extent, conflates the notions of spirituality and craftsmanship by calling the monastery the workshop of the soul where the monk can perfect his spiritual duties (translated as ‘smithy’ in the glossed manuscripts of the Benedictine Rule: *smeðe ipær we ealle þas ðinc geornlice wyrcean clysunga mynstre* [sic], ‘the smithy where we may diligently work on those things is the monastery’s enclosure’), and those duties are described as tools (*efne þas sind tol cræftis gastlice* [sic], ‘precisely those are the tools of the spiritual craft’).<sup>49</sup> No doubt inspired by this metaphor, Ælfric, in his first letter to Wulfstan, recommends a range of instruments and equipments for priests, so that they may do their work *Godes þenungum* (‘in the service of God’) comparing them to *se smið* who *him begyt slecge and anfylte and tangen and bylias and gehwylce tol* (‘acquires a hammer and an anvil and tongues and bellows and such tools’).<sup>50</sup> Here, the craftsmanship of the smith has become a benchmark against which spiritual occupations are measured. Just as in the early period, however, this glowing role of the smith is counterbalanced by considerably more negative representations of his person. I will return to this dichotomy presently. First, however, it is important to evaluate the last of the remaining representations of smiths in the early period, notably the depiction of Weland on the Franks Casket, a whale-bone artefact thought to have been manufactured in Northumbria around the year 700.

The Casket has been aptly described as a ‘riddle wrapped in a mystery’, most likely posing interpretative challenges even to its first owner.<sup>51</sup> The following brief assessment of the depiction of Weland on this artefact is thus not designed to offer a definitive interpretation, but it reviews existing opinions and offers possible alternative ideas based on iconographic details linking individual scenes, in the hope that these may serve as points of comparison with other representations of fabled and ordinary smiths in the corpus. The Franks Casket is usually held to

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<sup>49</sup> *The Rule of St. Benet: Latin and Anglo-Saxon Interlinear Version*, ed. H. Logeman, EETS o.s. 90 (London, 1888), pp.19-23, esp pp.22 and 23.

<sup>50</sup> *Die Hirtenbriefe Ælfrics in altenglischer und lateinischer Fassung*, ed. B. Fehr, BaP 9, repr. with supplement by P. Clemoes (Darmstadt, 1966), sentence 166.

<sup>51</sup> L. Webster, *Franks Casket*, British Museum Objects in Focus (London, 2012), p.7.

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present a programme of contrapuntal scenes in which ‘one Christian topos offers a commentary on a Germanic one’.<sup>52</sup> In particular, it is usually agreed that the two scenes on the front panel – on the left the Weland scene, on the right the depiction of the three Magi bearing gifts to the Christ-child – are meant to be read together. Their connection is considered especially relevant as the front panel is the only one to contain two scenes.

Opinions usually divide on whether they are to be interpreted as complementary or adversarial. A number of scholars see the scenes as typologically linked, pointing out, for instance, that Weland’s capture and his sexual encounter with Beadohild – a great source of affliction for the latter – will find a positive outcome in the birth of the hero Widia, who is seen as a Germanic prefiguration of Christ.<sup>53</sup> Dronke sees this as far-fetched, but provides an alternative link between the scenes by interpreting Weland’s repairing of Beadohild’s ring as the sealing of the bond between Christ and Ecclesia (the new Christian people).<sup>54</sup> These interpretations consider the front panel to contain a message of redemption, obtained through the grace of God upon accepting the new Christian faith. Others have argued that the scenes are juxtaposed for contrast, noting the stark opposition between a pagan mindset favouring revenge and the merciful doctrine of Christianity.<sup>55</sup> Abels accepts the opposition but argues for complementarity, pointing out that the casket may sustain a message of reciprocity in which both gift-giving and revenge are ‘two sides of the same coin’, an ethos which he argues represents the cultural climate of eighth-century Christian Northumbria.<sup>56</sup> Several scholars have proposed that the scene contrasts good and bad kingship, with Niðhad (not depicted) understood as the bad ruler who is punished for his cruelty through Weland’s revenge, while the good king Christ is given due reverence.<sup>57</sup> The theme of exile is also

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<sup>52</sup> L. Webster, ‘The Iconographic Programme of the Franks Casket’, in *Northumbria’s Golden Age*, ed. J. Hawkes and S. Mills (Stroud, 1999), pp.227-46, p.230.

<sup>53</sup> H. R. Ellis Davidson, ‘The Smith and the Goddess’, *Frühmittelalterliche Studien* 3 (1969), 216-26, p.219; Webster, ‘Iconographic Programme’, p.232;

<sup>54</sup> Dronke, *Edda* II, p.280-1.

<sup>55</sup> R. Fletcher, *The Barbarian Conversion: From Paganism to Christianity* (New York, 1997), p.270; cf. M. Osbourne, ‘The Lid as Conclusion of the Syncretic Theme of the Franks Casket’, in *Old English Runes and their Continental Background*, ed. A. Bammesberger, AF 217 (Heidelberg, 1991), pp.249-68, p.252.

<sup>56</sup> R. Abels, ‘What has Weland to Do with Christ? The Franks Casket and the Acculturation of Christianity in Early Anglo-Saxon England’, *Speculum* 84 (2009), 549-81.

<sup>57</sup> Webster, ‘Iconographic Programme’, p.233; Abels, ‘Franks Casket’, pp.577-8.

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evoked, with Weland – as a prefiguration of Christ – interpreted to represent the Old Testament exile in Egypt (Exodus; Egypt is twice referred to as an iron furnace in the OT: Deuteronomy 4:20 and Jeremiah 11:4), pointing to the Christ-child's own imminent exile in the same land (the Magi deliver a warning which precipitates the flight into Egypt).<sup>58</sup>

Not much has been said about Weland in his capacity as a craftsman. Weland's artisanship is clearly presented in action as he holds tongues clasp an object over an anvil, possibly an artefact made out of the carcass of one of Niðhad's sons seen lying below the forge. The violent capture of the birds by the figure in the right corner of the scene also alludes to the fabrication of the wings with which Weland will escape. The bird motif is repeated in the Christ-scene where it provides a significant contrast. Here the bird is depicted as a peaceful creature bowing down to the new ruler, whereas in the neighbouring scene three birds are in a flurry trying to fly away from the figure who has wrung the neck of a fourth. This detail is unsettling in an interpretation that explains Weland as a *figura* of Christ, though it is perhaps not at odds with understanding the front panel as providing a comment on syncretic practice. The Casket itself is of course a product of an environment in which syncretism was a common *modus operandi*, and it is usually appreciated for its agile combination of Christian, Germanic, Jewish and Mediterranean themes. Created just about seventy years after the conversion of King Edwin to Christianity (627), it is likely that the juxtaposition of the diverse scenes was fresh and original, not influenced by preconceived ideas dictating how the pagan figures fit into a Christian scheme. There may have been a model apposing two scenes from the Christian story. As Goldschmidt suggested, the juxtaposition of Weland and Christ might have been influenced by a Byzantine model depicting the fallen Adam as blacksmith and Eve with the bellows in relation to the birth of Christ.<sup>59</sup> If so, this model appears to lean on the story of the origin of metal-working in Claudius Marius Victor's *Alethia*, presenting craftsmanship as a condition of the fallen man, but obtained through the grace of God. The model would have proposed a typological link between the Fall of Man and the birth of Christ as a

<sup>58</sup> Webster, 'Iconographic Programme', p.232; Osbourne, 'Franks Casket', pp.252-3.

<sup>59</sup> A. Goldschmidt, *Die Elfenbeinskulpturen*, Vol II, VIII-XI Jahrhundert (Berlin, 1914-1926).

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bringer of salvation through divine grace. It is likely that this link was emphasized through the notion of craftsmanship, with Christ himself an artisan in his human incarnation, pursuing the carpenter's or smith's trade with his earthly father Joseph.<sup>60</sup> The artist would have been aware, however, that substituting Weland for Adam was an artistic statement of a different order, and that it constituted an appropriation of Germanic culture for Christian purposes.

This is obvious in the choice of scenes on the casket and the repetition of stylistic motifs for the purpose of interconnecting them. The back panel of the casket depicts the Roman sack of Jerusalem led by Titus in 70 AD. It focuses on the capture of the Temple containing the Ark of the Covenant (shown as an empty container), represented by an arched structure at the centre of the panel. Four distinct scenes narrating the capture are organised around the Temple, which appears as central, dominating the sack. Webster has argued that this scene, in conjunction with the depiction of Romulus and Remus on the left-hand panel, signifies 'the continuity of the universal church which is continually renewed in the body of its members'.<sup>61</sup> The scene also represents the integration of Jewish culture (the temple containing the old law) into the newer Christian culture (the temple is flanked by the evangelists' symbols). The emptiness of the Ark contrasts with the Nativity scene, where Jesus is depicted as if contained in Mary, who herself is sitting under an arched structure resembling the Temple on the back panel. This signifies the establishment of the new law.<sup>62</sup> But it also presents a process of syncretism with a special visual reference to Jewish craftsmanship and its integration into Christian culture. This integration bears marks of violence,

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<sup>60</sup> An Anglo-Saxon might have understood Jesus's trade to be either in carpentry or in metal-working, although we lack evidence to properly conclude in this matter. Taking issue with *BT*'s definition of *smiþ* as a 'worker in iron or in wood', both Klump and Bradley show that *smiþ* only denoted 'a worker in iron or other metals' in the extant examples of the Old English corpus. The use of *smiþ* in connection with the manual occupations of Jesus and Joseph in tenth- and eleventh-century Gospel translations appears to derive from the semantic range of *faber* – the word used for Joseph's trade in the Vulgate – which could denote both metal-working and carpentry in the early Middle Ages. Late Anglo-Saxons appear to have read *faber* only in the first sense. W. Klump, *Die altenglischen Handwerkernamen sachlich und sprachlich erläutert*, AF 24 (Heidelberg, 1908), esp. pp.97-104; Bradley, 'Metal Smiths', 'Appendix', pp.227-34. There are, however, no other extant documents which describe Jesus and Joseph's trade in terms of metalworking or indeed in another way. This indicates that the nature of their trade might not have been considered as hugely significant in Anglo-Saxon England. Divine craftsmanship is usually seen as the domain of God the Father, cf. Chapter 2 and Chapter 5.

<sup>61</sup> Webster, 'Iconographic Programme', pp.238.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.238-9.

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with the Jewish people depicted as desperate to escape carnage, scrambling onto the temple.<sup>63</sup> The bottom right corner of the back panel carries the caption *gisl*, ‘hostage’, referring to the capture of the Jews, but also providing a parallel to the hamstrung Weland on the front panel.

These iconographic parallels are complex but in essence they seem to point to a perceived struggle in this form of cultural adoption. If the front panel is read as one scene, Weland stands in line with the magi facing the Christ-child. The contrast between the deferent Magi and the hamstrung Weland with his half-bent but defiant posture, could not be any starker. He does not fully submit to the new craftsman on the opposite end of the panel. If there is a typological link between the two scenes, it may serve to highlight Weland’s fallen state in a contrastive manner, to bring out his willful craftsmanship, perhaps pointing to initial difficulties in converting native talent to syncretic practices. It would not be the last testimony to portray the smith as a single-minded character. In fact, what appears implicit on the Casket and in Bede’s depiction of his smith gains great prominence in a surprisingly high proportion of all extant representations of smiths. In the next section I shall examine the intriguing focus on the smith’s mind and mental faculties in Anglo-Saxon literature.

### **A singular talent of the mind: Wisdom and pride**

One of the allusions to Weland in the extant corpus has been frequently noted, often with a hint of surprise or consternation, but not further investigated. The allusion is found in two versions in the prose and prosimetrical texts of the Old English Boethius. The prose reads as follows:

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<sup>63</sup> But cf. J. Lang who points out that Josephus, in his *History of the Jews*, blames the Jews for desecrating the Temple by using it as a military vantage point, and thus justifies Titus’s destruction of it (‘The Imagery of the Franks Casket: Another Approach’, in *Northumbria’s Golden Age*, ed. J. Hawkes and S. Mills (Stroud, 1999), pp.247-55). On the Casket, however, the Jews appear to use the temple as a refuge of last resort: Titus (identifiable through a distinctive helmet) is seen cutting down one of their citizens as another tries to save his life by climbing onto the Temple. While Titus was held in high esteem by Josephus and Late Antique writers (cf. Webster, ‘Iconographic Programme’, pp.238-9), it does not follow that the Anglo-Saxons felt the same. They may possibly have associated his sack of Jerusalem with the biblical destruction of the First Temple by Nebuchadnezzar, an episode narrated in the Old English *Daniel*. Here the Babylonian attack is seen as a form of divine retribution, punishing the Jews for abandoning God’s law, but Nebuchadnezzar is still represented as hostile and malicious.

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**Hwær** synt nu þæs foremeran and þæs **wisan** goldsmiðes ban **Welondes**? (Forþi ic cwæð þæs wisan forþy þam cræftegan ne mæg næfre his cræft losigan ne hine mon ne mæg þonne eð on him geniman ðe mon mæg þa sunnan awendan of here stede.) **Hwær** synt nu þæs **Welondes** ban, oððe **hwa** wat nu **hwær** hi wæron?<sup>64</sup>

(Where are now the bones of Weland the most famous and wise goldsmith? (I say the wise one because that craftsman can never ever lose his *cræft*, nor can anyone take it off him any more easily than they may divert the sun from its course.) Where are Weland's bones now, or who knows now where they are?)<sup>65</sup>

The translation renders the Latin *Ubi nunc fidelis ossa Fabricii manent*,<sup>66</sup> a reference to an eminent Roman consul, a figure in Boethius' catalogue of men (together with Brutus and Cato) deemed famous for their honesty. Discussion surrounding his replacement through the fabled smith has centred mainly on the question of whether it was deliberate or a mistaken identification of an obscure foreign figure (**Fabricius**) with a well-known *faber*.<sup>67</sup> The first answer has more merit based on the evidence that the Old English adds the sun image strongly associated with Fabricius in a famous saying, suggesting that the translator knew about his reputation.<sup>68</sup> The alliterative pattern evident in the English on either side of the parenthesis (highlighted in bold above), indicative of the translator's inclination to imitate the poetics of the vernacular, further points to a deliberate, contrived substitution. Even so questions remain as to Weland's fitness to feature in this passage, as he does not seem to represent any of the qualities that are said to distinguish the other men. Even more startling is the reference to him as *wisan*, 'wise'. Though presumably designed to align him more with the other men (described as *se foremæra and se aræda and se wisa and fastræda* respectively), it is still a 'remarkably forceful statement to apply to Weland',<sup>69</sup> a smith

<sup>64</sup> *The Old English Boethius: An Edition of the Old English Versions of Boethius's De Consolatione Philosophiae*, ed. M. Godden and S. Irvine with a chapter on the Metres by M. Griffith and contributions by R. Jayatilaka, 2 vols (Oxford, 2009), B-Text: Chapter 19, vol.1, p.283.

<sup>65</sup> *Cræftiga* denotes a craftsman, and does not follow *cræft*'s broad semantic range, see Chapter 4.

<sup>66</sup> *Anicii Manlii Severini Boethii Philosophiae consolationis libri quinque*, ed. G. Weinberger, CSEL 67 (Vienna, 1934), 2m7.15.

<sup>67</sup> Cf. K. Otten, *König Alfreds Boethius*, Studien zur englischen Philologie, neue Folge 3 (Tübingen, 1964), pp.238-9; Godden and Irvine, *Boethius*, vol. 2, pp.326-7.

<sup>68</sup> *Ille est Fabricius, qui difficilior ab honestate quam sol a suo cursu auerti posset*, quoted in Godden and Irvine, vol. 2, p.326.

<sup>69</sup> Dronke, *Edda* II, p.284, n61.

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from Germanic legend distinguished through his craft, but notably associated with murder and revenge, as well as portrayed as fitting somewhat reluctantly into a Christian scheme on the Franks Casket. The translator himself seems to fear that the collocation may appear a little incongruous, because he adds an elaboration which reads somewhat apologetically or defensively (*Forþi ic cwæð þæs wisan ...*).

We may presume, however, that it fitted well into the theme of *wela and wisdom* thought to define the Alfredian educational programme, if we believe that the text was associated closely with that enterprise.<sup>70</sup> This may also be reflected in the elaboration which refers to Weland's *cræft*, a semantically rich term denoting craftsmanship but also, in this text particularly, wisdom and virtue.<sup>71</sup> The connection between the two is pervasive. It has been noted that the Old English Boethius' use of *wisdom* is 'not wholly consistent; sometimes [used] for practical skill and knowledge, even when put to bad purposes' and at other times used to denote 'virtue and knowledge of God'. Assuming the unity of the traditional Alfredian canon, this slippage 'enables Alfred to connect [wisdom] with wealth'.<sup>72</sup> However, if we take into account the ambivalence about smiths noted above, connecting the spiritual with the material by associating wisdom with a craftsman rather than with artefacts is still potentially a controversial undertaking if there is no

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<sup>70</sup> Research conducted within the remit of the recent new edition of *Boethius* (Godden and Irvine) sheds severe doubts on this assumption, arguing that there is no evidence for an Alfredian connection, and that there are indeed indications that would support the thesis of an unconnected authorship. These doubts are expressed most strongly by Godden, one of the co-editors of the new edition, in a separate article: 'Did King Alfred Write Anything?', *MÆ* 76 (2007), 1-23; They are upheld in the edition (pp.140-151) but expressed in milder terms here ('In preparing this edition we have (...) worked on the hypothesis that the OE Boethius was the work of an unknown writer of substantial learning, not necessarily connected with King Alfred or his court, but working some time in the period 890 to about 930, probably in southern England.', p.146). The relationship of *wela* and *wisdom* to real-life artefacts made by smiths has been explored by J. Nelson, 'Wealth and Wisdom: The Politics of Alfred the Great', in *Kings and Kingship*, ed. J. T. Rosenthal (Binghamton, NY; 1986), pp.31-52; N. Guenther Discenza, 'Wealth and Wisdom: Symbolic Capital and the Ruler in the Translational Program of Alfred the Great', *Exemplaria* 13 (2001), 433-467; N. Guenther Discenza, 'Persuasion and Invention at the Court of King Alfred the Great', in *Court Culture in the Early Middle Ages*, ed. C. Cubitt (Turnhout, 2003), pp. 189-221; L. Webster, 'Aedificia nova: Treasures of Alfred's reign' in *Alfred the Great*, ed. T. Reuther (Aldershot, 2003), pp.79-103.

<sup>71</sup> *Cræft* is incredibly polysemous and may denote other senses not mentioned here. I discuss its meanings and their relationships in Chapters Four and Five of this thesis. The term's usage in the traditional Alfredian canon has received thorough critical attention, notably by P. Clemoes, 'King Alfred's Debt to Vernacular Poetry: The Evidence of *Ellen* and *Cræft*.', *Words, Texts and Manuscripts: Studies in Anglo-Saxon Culture Presented to Helmut Gneuss*, ed. M. Korhammer with K. Reichl and H. Sauer (Cambridge, 1992), pp.213-38; and N. Guenther Discenza, 'Power, Skill and Virtue in the Old English *Boethius*', *ASE* 26 (1997), 81-108.

<sup>72</sup> Discenza, 'Wealth and Wisdom', p.446.

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previous model which an audience could draw on to contextualise the reference. Such an extra-textual model has therefore been suspected and has been inferred in a theory that *Weland* had a reputation for wisdom in Anglo-Saxon England, and that *\*wis Weland* was a common formulaic expression with the two words bound together by alliteration.<sup>73</sup>

Beyond this unverifiable theory, however, there are other connections of smiths with wisdom in the literature of the Anglo-Saxons. In the passage which *Aediluulf* constructed with phrases derived from Cyprian, *Cuicuno*, hammering away at the forge with gusto, is qualified as *sapiens* (l.280). He is of course a paradigm for pious living, but as I argued above, this is intimately linked to his function as a smith, and corresponds to more positive depictions of these craftsmen in late antique and early medieval biblical literature. We can also find a possible model for this association of smiths with wisdom in an Anglo-Saxon source – in fact, in a text penned by no less a person than Bede himself, who elsewhere insisted on his contempt for smiths. The connection is made, however, not in an effort to exalt smiths, but to explain their capture by Nebuchadnezzar during the siege of Jerusalem in his commentary on 4 Kings 24:14. The biblical verse narrates how the Babylonian king carries away

omnem Jerusalem, et universos principes, et omnes fortes exercitus, decem millia, in captivitatem: et omnem artificem et clusorem[.]<sup>74</sup>

(all Jerusalem and all the princes, and all the valiant men of the army, to the number of ten thousand into captivity: and every artificer and smith[.]<sup>75</sup>)

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<sup>73</sup> M. Ishikawa, 'War Wieland der Schmied ein 'Weiser'? Über die Herkunft seines Namens', *Studien zum Altgermanischen*, Festschrift für Heinrich Beck, ed. H. Uecker (Berlin, 1994), pp.371-80. Ishikawa proposes that the expression *vísi álfa*, usually translated as 'lord of the elves', applied to *Völundr* in the Old Norse poem is a corruption of 'the wise elf', based on a close association of wisdom with the smith in cognate languages (Old English, and, as he speculates, Old High German). However, cf. Nedoma, *Denkmäler der Wielandsage*, p.124.

<sup>74</sup> Latin Vulgate Bible cited from *Biblia Sacra Iuxta Vulgatam Versionem*, ed. R. Weber et al, 4th ed. (Stuttgart, 1994). Subsequent biblical citations are taken from the same text, unless they are quoted as part of a biblical commentary, in which case they follow the commentary text.

<sup>75</sup> Douay-Rheims Bible cited from *The Holy Bible: Douay version, translated from the Latin Vulgate* (London, 1956). Subsequent biblical citations in English are taken from the same text, except for translations of biblical quotes that occur within a commentary, in which case they are my own.

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In his commentary on this verse in *In Regum Librum XXX Quaestiones*, Bede cites Proverbs 20:15 *aurum est et multitudo gemmarum* ('it is gold and a multitude of gems') to define wisdom (*sapientia*). He then identifies both the artificers and the smiths as makers of these, comparing them to teachers who expend the industry of their craft in adorning the Holy City. He further comments that the reference to the craftsmen who were carried away from Jerusalem to Babylon as prisoners

hoc est talentum verbi coelitus acceptum in terram defodi, id est, scientiam spiritualem ad peccatorum opera converti.<sup>76</sup>

(means that the gift of the Word that was received from heaven has been hidden in the ground, that is, the spiritual arts have been turned to sinful works.)

Bede's commentary is probably making a link to the better known version of this episode from Jewish history as narrated in the opening verse of the Book of Daniel, in which the captives taken to Babylon alongside the king of Juda are '[c]hildren in whom there was no blemish, well favoured, and skilful in all wisdom, acute in knowledge, and instructed in science, and such as might stand in the king's palace, that he might teach them the learning, and the tongue of the Chaldeans'. Among the children referred to here are of course Daniel and his three companions who are said to be endowed with wisdom by God and feature throughout the biblical narrative as advisors to Nebuchadnezzar. Daniel 1:2 briefly refers to the Judaic 'vessels' transferred into the Babylonian house, a detail recalling the capture of the smiths in 4 Kings 24. Bede may have consciously conflated these two narratives, recalling perhaps Jerome's identification of the vessels as signifying *dogmata veritatis* ('the dogmas of truth'),<sup>77</sup> hence the association of smiths with wisdom. Nevertheless, this exegesis is especially important for the fact that it presents an analogue of smiths taken prisoners by an unjust king, and it may plausibly have influenced perceptions of the Weland myth, including the identification of Weland and smiths as wise.

<sup>76</sup> Bede, *In Regum Librum XXX Quaestiones*, ed. D. Hurst, CCSL 119 (Turnhout, 1962), pp.289-328, at p.322.

<sup>77</sup> Jerome, *Commentariorum in Danielem Librum III*, ed. F. Glorie, CCSL 75 A (Turnholt, 1964), p.36.

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If this model did facilitate the connection, it is also clear that this link had a life of its own, going beyond the notion of divinely endowed wisdom by denoting a mental force inherent in creative activities. To return briefly to the depiction of Cuicuino, the close association of wisdom, placed in the very middle of line 280, right at the centre of the description of his smithing, appears to appeal to more than just a quality of virtue or knowledge of the divine. It represents also a creative energy inherent in his act of craftsmanship. In this respect, the use of *sapiens* is very close to vernacular descriptions of the mind in Anglo-Saxon England. As Godden has pointed out, the Anglo-Saxons were ‘inclined to associate the ‘mind’ with emotion and a kind of passionate volition and self-assertion’, and *mod* often translates as ‘passion’, ‘temper’, ‘mood’.<sup>78</sup> It is this very association that becomes apparent in the description of Cuicuino beating the iron ‘while the forge roared’.<sup>79</sup>

The mind is of course not equivalent to wisdom but the two are intimately related, wisdom being an attribute impacting on the mind and steering it. In the Old English *Pastoral Care*, wisdom is described as not just a quality of the mind but as something that must be applied in the world or it ceases to be wisdom.<sup>80</sup> It thus possesses an active dimension just like *mod*. This convergence is perhaps most apparent in the description of Weland in *Deor*. Here the smith is described as *anhydig* during his suffering in captivity. This term, compounded with a notion of the mind (*hydig* derives from *hygd*), comes from the heroic register and expresses resolution, literally translating as ‘single-minded’. It is closely linked to courage in the formula *elnes anhydig*, and is ostensibly a quality of heroes.<sup>81</sup> As such it incorporates the idea of ‘passionate volition and self-assertion’

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<sup>78</sup> M. R. Godden, ‘Anglo-Saxons on the Mind’, in *Learning and Literature in Anglo-Saxon England: Studies Presented to Peter Clemoes on the Occasion of his Sixty-Fifth Birthday*, ed. M. Lapidge and H. Gneuss (Cambridge, 1985), 271-98; Reprinted in *Old English Literature*, ed. R. M. Liuzza (Yale, 2002), pp.284-314, at pp.301 and 308.

<sup>79</sup> It is fitting to relate this image to L. Lockett’s recent study of Anglo-Saxon representations of the mind as guided by a hydraulic understanding of the effects of emotions on the heart/mind (L. Lockett, *Anglo-Saxon Psychologies in the Vernacular and Latin Traditions* (Toronto, 2011)). Lockett shows how in Old English literature intense mental activity or intense mental states often coincide with cardiocentric heat (see esp. ch.2). Smithing, by its very nature executed in states of extreme heat, may thus have been naturally associated with acute minds and deep emotions. In the example Cuicuino’s craft, the blazing fire provides a counterpoint to his composure. The saintly smith thus transcends Lockett’s hydraulic model.

<sup>80</sup> Discenza, ‘Wealth and Wisdom’, p.444.

<sup>81</sup> Examples include *Elene*, l.828, *Guthlac*, ll.894 and 978.

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characteristic of the mind in Old English poetry. *Deor* is often described as a wisdom poem on a Boethian theme. The refrain (*Pæs ofereode, þisses swa mæg*) is often read as an expression of the transitoriness of human misery, although it should perhaps be read more simply as a theme of mutability to do justice to all the possible interpretations of this evocative line.<sup>82</sup> In the face of hardship, Weland's mind is intent and persevering, a quality associated with wisdom in the Old English Boethius. In fact, it has been suggested that the poet of *Deor* was influenced by reading the reference to the wise Weland in that text.<sup>83</sup>

This quality may also be related to his craft. The Old Norse *Vǫlundarkviða* is enlightening in this respect. As noted above, this poem is thought to bear a close relationship to *Deor*, indicated by a number of verbal parallels and words deemed to be of English origin. It has even been suggested that the two poems share a common ancestor.<sup>84</sup> *Vǫlundr* expresses his suffering through his art. Both in the aftermath of his wife's departure, and during his imprisonment, the poet stays quiet about the smith's emotions and remains factual. *Vǫlundr* is not said to pine after his wife, but his situation is described as a constant waiting and forging of artefacts (*Hann sló gull rautt / [...] sva beið hann sinnar líósar kvánar, / ef hánom koma gerði*; 'He beat red gold [...] so he waited for his radiant wife, if she might come back to him' 6/1 and 6/5-6). The understatement in these lines greatly amplifies their pathos and testifies to his stoic determination. The emotional intensity thus powerfully contained flows directly into the creative process in which he is absorbed (*Hann sló gull rautt*). *Vǫlundr*'s imprisonment is described in very similar terms: *Sat hann, né hann svaf, ávalt / ok hann sló hamri* ('He sat, he did not sleep, always, and he smote with his hammers', 19/1-2). There is no room for comfort here. *Vǫlundr*'s determination is once more accentuated by the beat of the hammer. His craft becomes the ultimate expression of his self-assertion as he literally forges his revenge by murdering Niðuðr's sons, then shaping them into intricate artefacts. Critics have also noted the lexical/aural relationship between *Vǫlundr*'s name and his *vél*, the trick or

<sup>82</sup> Cited from *The Exeter Book*, ed. G. P. Krapp and E. V. K. Dobbie, ASPR 3 (New York, 1936); M. F. Markland, 'Boethius, Alfred and *Deor*', *MP* 66 (1968), 1-4; L. Whitbread, 'The Pattern of Misfortune in *Deor* and Other Old English Poems', *Neophilologus* 54 (1970), 167-83; K. Kiernan, '*Deor*: The Consolations of an Anglo-Saxon Boethius', *NM* 79 (1978), 333-40.

<sup>83</sup> Kiernan, '*Deor*', pp.337-8.

<sup>84</sup> Dronke, *Edda* II, pp.276-80.

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device by which he escapes from captivity. *Vél* can be used both concretely, to denote an artefact or device, or abstractly to indicate a trick of the mind.<sup>85</sup>

If they shared a common ancestor, it is possible that the poet of *Deor* was familiar with a similar depiction of the smith's bold and wilful craft. In this case we might entertain the possibility that the portrayal of Weland in *Deor* is perhaps less directly derived from Boethian wisdom than generally assumed. Such an interpretation is sustained by an ambiguity in the first half-line of the refrain. *Pæs ofereode* is most often read as an impersonal construction, but it can also work as an active voice translating as 'he overcame this', which would emphasize Weland's agency in changing his situation for the better. Depending on how one reads the refrain and the juxtaposition of stanza 1 (evoking the plight of Weland) and stanza 2 (pointing out Beadohild's suffering), Weland overcomes his misery by inflicting pain on others. His own pain has passed, but Beadohild's redoubled misery (resulting from her brothers' death and her pregnancy) is patent. The idea that he brings about his own revenge, rather than patiently suffering, is hinted at in 1/4 through *wræce* which may denote suffering, but also revenge. Even the use of *anhydig* is potentially negative. It is applied with critical overtones to Nebuchadnezzar in *Daniel* and *Azarias*, denoting an inflexibility of the mind connected with an overweening disposition; while Wiglaf's description of the dying Beowulf as *æðeling anhydig* (l.2667) is conceivably ambivalent ('resolute'/'stubborn'). It is not likely, however, that the poet of *Deor* ultimately meant for his description of Weland to resound negatively. The refrain certainly does not contain a moral judgement. The overall elegiac tone and the Boethian frame may call for a gentler interpretation which highlights the evocation of personal misfortune in each stanza, building up to a powerful universal message of transience and uncertainty.<sup>86</sup> Furthermore, there is a parallel between the smith and the poet persona in that they both overcome their hardship through a creative process.<sup>87</sup> On the other hand, several elements, such as Weland's single-minded dedication to a purpose – to his craft if interpreted by way of *Vǫlundarkviða* – and the allusion to his separation from society

<sup>85</sup> Dronke, *Edda* II, pp.265-6, and Nedoma, *Denkmäler der Wielandsage*, pp.61-9.

<sup>86</sup> Cf. R. Trilling, 'Ruins in the Realm of Thoughts: Reading as Constellation in Anglo-Saxon Poetry', *JEGP* 108 (2009), 141-167.

<sup>87</sup> E. I. Condren, 'Deor's Artistic Triumph', *SP* 78 (1981), 62-76.

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(*wræc*, ‘misery’, ‘punishment’, ‘exile’, l.1), recall the depiction of the smith in *HE*, and these elements might have invoked – deliberately or not – pre-existing biases. Altogether, it is probably fair to say that the poem is quite cryptic in its evocation of Weland’s mental force. As Bloomfield has noted, ‘*Deor* invites speculation and is not easily open to definitive answers. We must rely on probableness’.<sup>88</sup> I will leave this question open before returning to the poem below.

Other texts focus on the smith’s mind. In *The Gifts of Men*, an Exeter Book poem presenting a diverse range of human skill as divine endowments, the description of the weapon-smith’s skill stands out from the abilities of other craftsmen by virtue of being markedly cerebral: *Sum mæg wæpenþræce, wige to nytte, / modcræftig smið monige gefremman* (‘One, a *modcræftig* smith, can bring about force of arms (make weapons) for use in war.’, ll.61-2).<sup>89</sup> *Modcræftig* is a *hapax legomenon* and has been glossed as ‘possessing mental power, intelligent, skilled’ in *BT*, where the last option was no doubt given to do justice to the sole extant application of this term to a craftsman. Bradley translates it as ‘ingenious’,<sup>90</sup> while Girsch suspects that it might be used to denote ‘a little pride’ which the smith was allowed to harbour as a result of his importance in Anglo-Saxon society.<sup>91</sup> All recognise it as a quality of the mind. In the context of the poem, this quality encapsulates the ‘talent’ with which the smith is especially endowed. While the exact meaning of this adjective and the significance of its application to the smith in this catalogue will become clear in my discussion of *cræft* in Chapter Five, it is cited here as evidence of another smith seen as applying a faculty of the mind to a manual endeavour.

The idea that a mental attribute associated with smiths might carry a suggestion of pride is developed strongly in two poems narrating the Fall of the Angels. In *Genesis B*, Lucifer’s transgression that leads to his fall is described in terms of an activity of craftsmanship:

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<sup>88</sup> M. W. Bloomfield, ‘*Deor* Revisited’, in *Modes of Interpretation in Old English Literature: Essays in Honour of Stanley B. Greenfield*, ed. P. Brown, G. Crampton, and F. C. Robinson (Toronto, 1986), pp.273-82, p.273.

<sup>89</sup> Cited from *The Exeter Book*, ed. Krapp and Dobbie.

<sup>90</sup> S. A. J. Bradley, *Anglo-Saxon Poetry* (London, 1982), p.327.

<sup>91</sup> Girsch, ‘A Semantic Analysis of the Old English *Cræft*’, p.736.

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pohte þurh his anes cræft  
 hu he him strenglicran stol geworhte,  
 heahran on heofenum. cwæð þæt hine his hige speonne  
 þæt he west and norð wyrcean ongunne,  
 trymede getimbro;<sup>92</sup>

(He pondered how he through *craft* of his own/his unique *craft* could make a stronger throne for himself, higher up in the heavens; he said that his mind urged him to begin building in the northwest, to set up a construction.)

Lucifer seems to feel an artistic urge to compete with God's creation, making this one of two instances of prelapsarian craftsmanship – the other one being that by God himself. Not included in any other extant sources from early medieval Europe, the construction of the throne seems to be a uniquely Old English detail of the creation myth.<sup>93</sup> There is a mention of the throne in *Genesis A* but there is no reference to craftsmanship. The angels' betrayal is portrayed there, as Michelet has argued, in terms of a turning away from the *sibblufan*, the love and friendship that traditionally governs family or lord-retainer relationships.<sup>94</sup> This is expressed as a territorial conflict, with heroic overtones: *hæfdon gielp micel / þæt hie wið drihtne dælan meahton / wuldorfæstan wic* ('they had a great boast that they could partition the glorious dwelling with the Lord', ll.25b-27a), and Lucifer says that he *on norðdæle / ham and heahsetl heofena rices/ agan wolde* ('wanted to own a home and a high-throne in the northern part of the kingdom.', ll.32b-34a).<sup>95</sup> Michelet and others see the same conflict occurring in *Genesis B*.<sup>96</sup> However, while there are without a doubt overtones of a heroic rebellion which were probably transposed to the poem from the Old Saxon text on which it is based, a close analysis of the lines in question indicates that the altercation is

<sup>92</sup> *Genesis B*, ll.272b-76a, cited from *The Saxon Genesis: An Edition of the West Saxon Genesis B and the Old Saxon Vatican Genesis*, ed. A. N. Doane (Madison, WI; 1991).

<sup>93</sup> It is, however, based on a biblical detail (Isaiah 14: 13-14). It is a well-known fact that *Genesis B* is derived from the Old Saxon *Genesis*, and it may thus not be straightforward to describe its peculiarities as insular. I analyse the craftsmanship motif in this poem in detail in Chapter Four, and argue that it represents a native addition to the Saxon poem.

<sup>94</sup> F. Michelet, *Creation, Migration, and Conquest: Imaginary Geography and Sense of Space in Old English Literature* (Oxford, 2006), p.65.

<sup>95</sup> Cited from *Genesis A: A New Edition, Revised*, ed. A. N. Doane (Tempe, AZ; 2013).

<sup>96</sup> Cf. Doane, *The Saxon Genesis*, introduction, pp.116-53 *passim*; and commentary, *passim*; J. M. Evans, 'Genesis B and Its Background', *RES*, n.s. 14 (1963), pp.113-123. The heroic interpretation and the artistic interpretation are not mutually exclusive, and it is possible to see that the latter has been superimposed on the former which was already contained in the original, cf. Chapter Four below.

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based on Lucifer's wish to construct a better throne, and it is useful here to compare the use of *agan* in *Genesis A* with the use of *wyrcean* (and later *timbrian*) in *Genesis B*. The latter poem emphasises manual power/craftsmanship from the start. God's creation of the world and of his angels is described three times as the work of his hands (ll.241, 247 and 251). Lucifer is adamant that he is able to perform just as many wonders *mid handum* (l.279). Recognising the intricacies of this theme and its role in the temptation of Adam and Eve relies on interpreting *cræft* as a form of craftsmanship. This is explored further in Chapter Four below.

Lucifer's act of craftsmanship (*þurh his anes cræft*; 'through *cræft* of himself alone/through his own *cræft*/through his unique *cræft*') is clearly seen as an expression of pride as 'the sin of exaggerated individualism'<sup>97</sup> and it incidentally reprises *an* ('single', 'alone', 'singular'), which had been applied to the mental disposition of the smith in *Deor*. It is apparent that there is but a very fine line between creative ardour and pride. Pride is also manifested as a prelapsarian act of craftsmanship in *Solomon and Saturn II*:

Nolde gæd geador in Godes rice  
 eadiges engles and ðæs ofermodan.  
 Oðer his Dryhtne hierde, oðer him ongan wyrcean ðurh dierne cræftas  
 segn and side byrnan;<sup>98</sup>

(He did not want a fellowship together in God's kingdom of the blessed angel and the proud one. One obeyed his lord, the other began to craft a standard and a broad armour for himself through secret *cræftas*;) )

Although there are overtones of a heroic uprising (*segn, byrnan*), it is noteworthy that the proud angel starts by making his apparel himself. As Anlezark pointed out, this account may be based on 1 Enoch VIII, which narrates the invention of metalworking and magic (*dierne cræftas*) by the fallen angels,<sup>99</sup> the same account from which Bede may have derived inspiration in his commentary on Tubalcain. The craftsmanship theme in *Genesis B* may be influenced by the same

<sup>97</sup> M. W. Bloomfield, *The Seven Deadly Sins* (Michigan, 1952), p.75.

<sup>98</sup> *Solomon and Saturn*, ed. Anlezark, ll.273-5a.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, p.136, n274b; cf. D. Anlezark, 'The Fall of the Angels in *Solomon and Saturn II*', in *Apocryphal Texts and Traditions in Anglo-Saxon*, ed. K. Powell and D. Scragg (Cambridge, 2003), pp.122-33.

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source. Both *Genesis B* and *Solomon and Saturn* associate craftsmanship with the root sin in a process of self-assertion over a higher power. In *Genesis B* in particular, this self-assertion is fuelled by a sense of injustice stemming from being forced to labour against one's will in a condition of servitude (*Hwæt sceal ic winnan?*, 'Why should I toil?', asks Lucifer, l.278). In this respect these poems may connect to the narrative of the imprisoned smith (see Chapters Two and Four).

There is evidence that the association of craftsmanship with overweening practitioners was applied not just to the prime antagonists of God's creation, but that it extended to the generic smith too. In Ælfric's *Colloquy*, what was initially a light-hearted exposition of a variety of trades develops into a more competitive theme as the teacher starts asking questions about the utility and relative merits of each trade. A counsellor who is called in to provide an authoritative judgment on the matter elevates the humble ploughman's trade as the most useful of all. Immediately the smith, displeased with the verdict, jumps in – almost comically – to defend his own merit. The Latin reads: *Unde aratori uomer aut culter, qui nec stimulum habet nisi ex arte mea?* (compare the Old English gloss: *Hwanon sylan scear opþe culter, þe na gade hæfþ buton of cræft minon?*, 'Where does the ploughshare or the coulter come from, which would have no impetus if it were not for my art/cræft?', ll.220-1).<sup>100</sup> It is apparent that this trade had a reputation for possessing a good deal of self-conceit. The counsellor counters this challenge to his authority with a witty statement deflating the smith's self-love: he notes that while his utility is manifest, people prefer the ploughman's company because he provides them with food and drink, unlike the smith, who cannot treat them to anything but *ferreas scintillas et sonitus tudentium malleorum et flantium folium* (*isenne fyrspearcan and sweginca beatendra slecga and blawendra byliga*, 'sparks of iron and the din of clanging hammers and flatulent bellows', ll.227-8). Although the quality of self-assertion and the anti-social bent are portrayed here as traits which lend themselves to ridicule, they are essentially the same as those found in more serious or condemning portrayals of smiths, such as those we encountered in *HE* or the accounts of the fallen angels. The use of mockery may,

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<sup>100</sup> Ælfric's *Colloquy*, ed. G. N. Garmonsway (Exeter, 1978).

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in itself, refer to a certain distance from the damning tone of Bede's account. However, this passage shows that exactly the same concerns about smiths persist in the late Anglo-Saxon period.

With this context in mind it is profitable to return to the 'wise Weland' reference in the Old English Boethius. While I have provided evidence for certain smiths' association with wisdom, they have tended to represent saintly or divinely endowed figures (Cuicuino, and Bede's commentary). This association was much less evident in texts featuring secular smiths, including *Deor*. Many texts do, however, see the smith as possessing a type of mental force which plays a role in his craftsmanship. In a number of examples this mental force is associated with a volition of the self that materialises through craft. Where it impinges on divine authority this force is expressed as pride. In the prose version of Old English Boethius, the context of the Weland reference may stand very precariously against these attitudes. Remarkably, the chapter preceding the section containing the reference (B-Text: Chapter 18 in the Old English Boethius) presents a particularly strong resistance to Lady Philosophy's devaluation of fame. In the Latin, *Philosophia* categorically insists on the vanity of fame (II.7, throughout), but *seo gesceadwisnes* (used interchangeably with *se wisdom* to translate the figure of *Philosophia*) differentiates:

þæt is þon wilnung **leases gilpes** and **unryhtes anwealdes** and **ungemetlices hlisan**  
godra weorca ofer eall folc.<sup>101</sup>

(The desire I mean is for false glory and unrighteous power and fame beyond measure for good works over the entire nation.)

The Old English only decries the desire for 'false' glory gained through unrighteous means or through an excessive quest for recognition. Elsewhere it seems to encourage both the acquisition of wisdom and the quest for fame as if they were the same thing. Chapter 40 of the prose translation elaborates a few lines containing an exhortation to heroic conduct (with no reference to fame) into an intriguing passage spoken by *se wisdom*:

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<sup>101</sup> B-Text: Chapter 18, p.278.

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*Consolatio Philosophiae:*

Ite nunc fortes ubi celsa magni  
 ducit exempli via! Cur inertes  
 terga nudatis? Superata tellus  
 sidera donat.<sup>102</sup>

(Go now brave men to where the lofty path of this great example leads! Why do you show your backs? Earth overcome gives you the stars.)

## The Old English Boethius:

Wella **wisan menn** well, gað ealle on þone weg ðe eow læreð þa foremæran bisna þara godena gumena and þæra weorðgeornena weru þe ær eow wæron. Eala eargan and idelgeornan, hwi ge swa unnytte sion and swa aswundene? Hwy ge nellan ascien æfter þam wisum monnum and æfter þam weorðgeornum, hwilce hi wæron þa ðe ær geow wæron? [...] hi wunnon æfter wyrðscipe on þisse worulde, and **tiledon godes hlisan** mid godum weorcum, and worhton gode bisne þam þe æfter him wæron. Forþam hi wuniað nu ofer þam tunglum on ecre eadignesse for heora godum weorcum.<sup>103</sup>

(Oh, wise men, go all of you on the path that you are shown by the illustrious examples of good men and those eager for honour who were before you. Alas, you craven and idle men, why are you so useless and so sluggish? Why won't you ask about the wise men and those eager for honour, what they were like, those who were before you? [...] they strove for honour in this world, and aspired to good fame with good works and set a good example for those who were after them. Therefore they now dwell above the stars in eternal bliss for their good works.)

In this passage ('good') fame and wisdom are interdependent. The Old English translator betrays an attachment to earthly renown, an unwillingness to assign great people to the past. This occurs in stark contrast to the message communicated throughout the Latin text. The passage also recalls *mod*'s earlier wish – an elaboration which closes the section often anthologized as 'The Means of Government' – to *æfter minum life þam monnum to læfanne þe æfter me wæren min gemynd on godum weorcum* ('to leave my memorial in good works for the people who live after me').<sup>104</sup> The

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<sup>102</sup> IV.M7.

<sup>103</sup> B-Text: Chapter 40, p.372.

<sup>104</sup> B-Text: Chapter 17, p.278.

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Weland reference aligns itself with these statements rather than refuting them, thus doing the exact opposite of the Fabricius passage in the original. Not only is Weland described as ‘wise’ – hence joining the ranks of the wise men worthy of ‘good fame’ – but what is ostensibly an *ubi sunt* motif decrying the vanity of all earthly things (*Hwær synt nu*) is modulated by an astonishing elaboration which drives against the very message this motif is trying to convey. Indeed, in explaining why he calls Weland wise, the translator claims that ‘that craftsman can never lose his *cræft*’ thereby expressing a conviction that Weland’s works, or the memory of them, will continue to live on as long as the natural order prevails.

There is evidence that this was perceived as a rather bold statement to make. The prosimetrical version of the Old English text, usually thought to have come into existence after the prose text,<sup>105</sup> makes several fundamental changes which greatly alter the import of the ‘wise Weland’ and appear designed to attenuate the glorification of fame which transpires in the prose version. Firstly, it opens the Metre by adding a philosophical reflection on the vanity of fame in general, which also introduces the notion of wisdom so prominent in the reference to Weland. The wise, it maintains, recognise the vanity of fame (*Higesnotrum mæg / eaðe ðincan þæt þeos eorðe sie / eall for ðæt oðer ungemet lytel*, ‘To the wise man it is easily apparent that this world is exceedingly small in comparison with the other’, C-Text: Metre 10, ll.7b-9). This addition pre-emptly the application of this quality to the smith and predefines its impact: if Weland is wise this implies that he himself acknowledges that the significance of his work is extremely small in the face of eternity. The preamble also rejects the general idea of fame, rather than differentiating between good and bad fame. Although the latter idea is still contained in the preceding prose section (C-Text: Prose 9, which is not subject to versification and hence more or less duplicates the B-Text), it now appears much softer. Secondly, several other crucial changes occur in the reference itself, making it conform to a more religious perspective:

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<sup>105</sup> The critical debate on the versifier’s connection to the prose translator is complicated and inconclusive. It can be proven that the B-Text circulated independently of C, and it is possible to assume (as would favour our case) that the versifier worked at a later date. It is usually agreed that he versified a text similar to that found in B, and that he elaborated on what he found there. He seems to have had very little knowledge of or interest in the prose sections which he did not need to translate. Cf. Godden and Irvine, *Boethius*, pp.146-51.

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Hwær sint nu þæs wisan Welandes ban,  
 þæs goldsmiðes, þe wæs geo mærost?  
 Forðy ic cwæð þæs wisan Welandes ban,  
 forþy ængum ne mæg eorðbuendra  
 se cræft losian þe him Crist onlænð.  
 Ne mæg mon æfre þy eð ænne wræccan  
 his cræftes beniman, and þisne swiftan rodor  
 of his rihtryne rinca ænig.  
 Hwa wat nu þæs wisan Welandes ban  
 on hwelcum hlæwa hrusan þeccen?<sup>106</sup>

(Where are now the bones of the wise Weland, the goldsmith who was formerly most famous? I say the wise Weland's bones because no earth-dweller can ever lose the *cræft* that Christ lends him, nor can one deprive an exile more easily of his *cræft*, nor can any man bring the ever-moving firmament from its straight course. Who knows now in which barrow the wise Weland's bones cover the floor?)

This version is a sanitized rendition of the first. The reference to the *foremeran* smith is cleverly deconstructed into an allusion to someone who was *geo mærest* ('formerly most famous'), which defuses the awkward contrast between the Boethian rejection of fame and the fervour with which he is remembered. Weland's fame is now *passé*, a fact which supports the key message of the vanity of earthly fame. An exile reference (*ænne wræccan*) is added, possibly to further distance Weland from the reader.<sup>107</sup> Christ is the authoritative reference for Weland's *cræft* (a fact underscored through alliteration; *cræft...Crist*), and this *cræft* can only be borrowed (*onlænð*), a further reference to the transience of earthly life in the face of eternity. The verse appears to correct the prose as much as it can to make the Weland reference more compatible with both Boethian philosophy and Christian teaching.

<sup>106</sup> C-Text: Metre 10, ll.34-43, p.427.

<sup>107</sup> But cf. Davidson, 'Weland', for an interpretation which links this reference to a legend associated with Wayland's smithy in Berkshire.

### The hell motif

The proud angels in *Genesis B* and *Solomon and Saturn II*, whose fall is portrayed as resulting to a degree from a creative transgression, join Bede's hell-bound artisan in a tradition which employs smiths as an integral feature of literary hell iconography. In this darker tradition, the smith often appears as a fallen type. This representation is pursued both in poetry and in prose, and it appears quite explicitly in later Anglo-Saxon homiletic writings. A particularly striking example is found in the so-called 'The Devil's Account of the Next World', an anonymous homily from British Library MS. Cotton Tiberius A.iii, where the devil, pressed to reveal the horrors of hell by an anchorite holding him captive, gives the following rendition:

Pa cwæð se deofol þa git to þam ancran þus: 'þeah mon þane garsicg mid isenan wæalle utan betyne and hine man þanne fylle fyres oþ heofones hrof and hine mon þanne utan besitte æal mid smiþbelgum swa þicce þæt hiora elc oþrum anhrine and si þonne to eghwylcum belge man gesitted, and se hebbe Samsones strengþe [...] and mon þonne gesytte isern þel ofer þes fyres hrof, and þæt sio eal mid mannum þonne afylled, and hiora hebbe æghwylc hamor on handa, and hit þonne anginne eal ætgidre brastligan and þa hameras beatan, and þeahhweþere for eallum þisan gedene ne meg sio saule hi gerestan inne of þam egesan þe he ær geseh to þæt heo þa yrmþe æfre ma forgitan mage ane helfe tid dægges þe ær wæs ane niht an helle.'<sup>108</sup>

(Then spoke the devil to the anchorite thus: 'Even if one encloses the ocean from the outside with iron walls and fills it with fire as far as heaven's roof and outside besets it all with smith's bellows so close together that they touch one another, and at every bellows is sat a man with the strength of Samson [...] and then besets with iron plates the fire's roof, and it is all filled with men, and each one has a hammer in his hands, and they begin all together to shout and beat the hammers, and because of all the din, the soul that had been in hell for one night cannot rest therein sufficiently from the terrors that it had seen that it may ever be able to forget that anguish for one half hour of the day.')'

In this simile, it is not clear whether the noisy smiths are Satan's demonic assistants or condemned men (or possibly both), but it is evident that they are helping him run hell through their craftsmanship and torment the visiting soul that the devil evokes in his speech. The tale is

<sup>108</sup> F. C. Robinson, 'The Devil's Account of the Next World: An Anecdote from Old English Homiletic Literature', *NM* 73 (1972), 362-71, ll.35-47.

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considered to have similarities to Irish writings of the period,<sup>109</sup> but it is clear that by the time the Tiberius homily was compiled it already had a strong and independent existence in Anglo-Saxon culture. Some of the details evoked in the tale – the blasting bellows, the fire, the clanging hammers – recall the depiction of the smith as an anti-social but essential member of the community found in Ælfric’s *Colloquy*. They appear to be stock ingredients of an alternative smith narrative that gained currency in the late Anglo-Saxon period, if not before. In fact, this depiction of smiths as hellish denizens appears to have been very popular. A close parallel of the above passage can be found in a sermon from Bodleian MS. Hatton 115, fols.140-47, on fol.145v.<sup>110</sup> It survives in a number of homilies all ultimately derived from the prototype of Vercelli Homily IX.<sup>111</sup> While this homily does not contain the passage in question in its extant version, it is highly likely that the text was to be found on a now missing folio.<sup>112</sup> It is thought that this text was very close to that surviving in Hatton 113, printed by Napier as pseudo-Wulfstanian Homily XXX.<sup>113</sup> It also occurs in Cambridge, Corpus Christi College 303, where it is included as a short episode on some blank space as a piece entitled *De inclusis*.<sup>114</sup> This last item is a particular testimony to the popularity of the vision, considered worth keeping on its own, without a full homiletic body

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<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*, p.364. Of particular relevance here is a scene in the anonymous Latin *Voyage of St. Brendan*, a work written by an Irish monk on the continent in the second part of the eighth century, but hugely popular throughout Europe throughout the early Middle Ages (although there is no evidence of an insular copy having existed). Chapter 23 of the saintly odyssey has Brendan and his brethren stop in front of a barren, stony island covered in slag. The voyagers sense the bad aura of the place even before they hear the infernal din of hammers and tongs. A swarthy, rough-looking man with a red face comes out of a mountain-forge (*erat ille hispidus ualde et igneus atque tenebrosus*) and turns back in as soon as he sees them. Alarmed, Brendan orders his brethren to set sail, and they escape under a torrent of glowing embers and slag pelted at them by the smith and his companions. When they realize they have failed to hit the pious crew, the islanders start hurling the embers at themselves before setting the forges alight. The author has Brendan conclude the chapter with a somewhat ominous word of advice to his men: *uigilate et agite uiriliter [...] quia sumus in confinibus infernorum* (‘be watchful and behave with courage [...] for we are at the gates of hell’). Unlike the Old English tale, this account portrays the diabolical smiths as self-destructive, irrational creatures. In both accounts they are potentially a source of great fear for the Christian man, serving as a deterrent against sin. Quotations are taken from *Navigatio Sancti Brendani Abbatis from Early Latin Manuscripts*, ed. C. Selmer (Notre Dame, IN; 1959), pp.61-3; cf. the translation by J. F. Webb, in *The Age of Bede*, ed. D. H. Farmer (London, 1998), pp.230-267.

<sup>110</sup> This text is printed as a variant of Vercelli Homily IX in *The Vercelli Homilies and Related Texts*, ed. D. G. Scragg, EETS o.s. 300 (Oxford, 1992), pp. 159-83.

<sup>111</sup> *Vercelli*, ed. Scragg, pp.151-90; see pp.151-7 for a discussion of the stemma.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*, p.156.

<sup>113</sup> *Wulfstan: Sammlung der ihm zugeschriebenen Homilien nebst Untersuchungen über ihre Echtheit*, ed. A. Napier (Berlin, 1883), Homily XXX (‘Be rihtan cristendome’), pp.143-52, esp. pp.146-7. Scragg, ed., *Vercelli*, supplements the missing text of Vercelli Homily IX, ll.151-63 from the same manuscript (O) at p.176.

<sup>114</sup> *Vercelli*, ed. Scragg, pp.174-84, esp. p.176.

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around it. The anecdote is also thought to have existed in one of the homilies from MS. Cotton Otho B.x which succumbed to the 1731 fire at Ashburnham House.<sup>115</sup> As popular as the tale seems to have been, the version contained in the two-volume homiliary Bodleian Library, Bodley 340 and 342 deliberately chooses to omit the references to the hellish smiths from the devil's account of hell – perhaps an indication that the scribe or compiler had reasons for rejecting such a negative portrayal of the archetypal craftsman?<sup>116</sup>

While Scragg has pointed out that the Vercelli Homily is the earliest extant version – pre-dating the late Anglo-Saxon homiletic tradition in which the other accounts are thought to have originated – the quoted Tiberius account, esteemed to be a most skilful elaboration of the anecdote,<sup>117</sup> is the fuller and for our purposes more interesting text. The compiler of the Tiberius homily fleshes out his account by adding a narrative frame (a Theban anchorite captures the devil through God's will, thereby augmenting his own holiness, and forces the devil to share his vision); by inserting several sentences from other homilies; and by substituting a key term. What is particularly striking about this narrative is that beyond portraying smiths as noisome, sub-rational creatures, if capable and efficient craftsmen, it presents an artisan's vision of hell, and also of heaven. The devil's appreciation of heaven as a place of refined beauty sees him imagine it as a *sum smetegelden dun eal mid gimumm aset æt sunnan upgange* ('a certain mountain of pure gold all set with gems at the rising of the sun', ll.58-9), evoking the resplendence of a high-status artefact so commonly admired in Old English poetry. The Tiberius version makes a substitution

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<sup>115</sup> N. R. Ker, *A Catalogue of Manuscripts Containing Anglo-Saxon* (Oxford, 1957), p.226-7, esp. art.16 and art.18; cf. Robinson, 'The Devil's Account', p.362. The other homilies cited by Robinson and Scragg contain elements of the longer narrative he publishes, but they do not incorporate the above passage.

<sup>116</sup> Incidentally, out of all the extant versions of this tale, this manuscript is the one with the closest connection to the Benedictine Reform movement, which is possibly interesting in light of the depiction of craftsmanship associated with this movement (cf. below, Chapter Five). Bodley 340 and 342 are dated to s.xi<sup>in</sup>, with a Rochester provenance, but possibly originating in Canterbury: cf. H. Gneuss, *Handlist of Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts: A List of Manuscripts and Manuscript Fragments Written or Owned in England up to 1100* (Tempe, AZ; 2001), Item 569. Although Rochester itself was not a Benedictine centre and an extremely small institution until after the Norman Conquest, it is thought to have benefitted from its proximity to Canterbury in terms of the development of learning and dissemination of texts associated with the Benedictine Reform, cf. M. P. Richards, *Texts and their Traditions in the Medieval Library of Rochester Cathedral Priory* (Philadelphia, 1988), esp. pp.87-90. The other versions of this tale either predate or post-date the heyday of the reform in Anglo-Saxon England, cf. Scragg, *Vercelli*, xxiii-xxxvii for dates.

<sup>117</sup> D. G. Scragg, "'The Devil's Account of the Next World' Revisited', *ANQ* 24 (1986), 107-10; cf. Scragg, *Vercelli*, pp.153-5.

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here, with *dun* replacing *mor* ('a moor, waste and damp land', *BT*), a term used in all the other versions, including Tiberius's closest relative (Hatton 115). The substitution enhances the identification of heaven with brilliant artifice, and the solid condition of *dun* allows for a play on the material sense of *smætegylden* (whereas in the other versions it most likely would have suggested colour, the sun-drenched, but moist (reflective), pleasant nature of the plain). *Smæte* and *smætegylden* both consistently gloss *obrizum*, a technical, Greek-derived Latin term denoting pure gold.<sup>118</sup> The devil has appropriated the jargon of metalworking and reveals himself as an expert in this field. In Tiberius he is also evoked as having first-hand knowledge of heaven, with the compiler inserting a reference to his fall between the account of hell and that of heaven (*And he cuþe swiþe wel and mihte eaþe hit secgan, forþon he wæs hwilan scinende æncgel an heofena rice.*, ll.48-50). Although craftsmanship is not mentioned as a cause of the fall, the devil in Tiberius A.iii aligns himself with the fallen angels from *Genesis B* and *Solomon and Saturn II* through his affinity for the manual arts.

While these texts show the hell-motif at its most elaborate, the depictions of smiths discussed in this chapter, deriving from across the whole corpus of Anglo-Saxon literature, indicate that it was relatively pervasive, too. With the exception of the allusions to Weland and other depictions of smiths in secular heroic poetry, they all directly or indirectly invoke hell imagery. Bede's smith, the two poems portraying the Fall of the Angels in terms of craftsmanship, and the homiletic episode discussed in this chapter do so quite overtly. I have already noted the hellish overtones in the rebuke against Ælfric's smith. Such nuances may also be present in the description of Cuicuino beating iron 'while the forge roared'. Although the phrase is derived from Cyprian, and is in both cases used in a positive appreciation of craftsmanship, it cannot have escaped Aediluulf (and possibly also Cyprian) that in vocalising fire and heat in this way, *stridente camino* may evoke the hell-mouth, an iconographical detail the Anglo-Saxons were intimately familiar with.<sup>119</sup> The phrase may deliberately allude to the craftsman's long-standing association with hell, but without

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<sup>118</sup> DOE Web Corpus.

<sup>119</sup> Hellmouth iconography can be found in Junius 11, p.3 and in *The Whale*.

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thereby invalidating Aediluulf's genuinely positive portrayal of his smith. There is perhaps a special degree of saintliness in Cuicuino's ability to devote himself so admirably to God despite working right in front of hell's gates.

In *Deor*, the allusion is more subtle, and has not usually been understood that way, possibly for want of a narrative context which legitimises a reading of Weland in a hellish home or prison. The first stanza describes him as suffering *be wurman*, among 'worms' or 'serpents'. This detail was so confusing to early editors that they variously emended the phrase.<sup>120</sup> Since Malone's edition of the poem, it has been interpreted most often in relation to Weland's craftsmanship in one way or another. Malone himself proposed that it denoted swords with serpentine patterns or ornamental rings, and noted the irony of 'the hero oppressed in the midst of weapons of his own making'.<sup>121</sup> Kaske suggested that it might refer to an implement used by the smith, while Cox extended Malone's argument to link it to so-called 'snake rings', the coiled armlets found among extant Anglo-Saxon ornamental metalwork.<sup>122</sup> An alternative interpretation of the phrase, proposing that it refers to a snake pit into which Weland is thrown, has also been made.<sup>123</sup> A further explanation for the *wurmas*, which arises directly out of reading *Deor* as an elegy, would be to understand them as a sign for bodily decay, playing to the theme of death central to Old English elegies.<sup>124</sup> Since Weland is most likely not figuring here as a corpse, it is perhaps more plausible to read the *wurmas* as a detail placing him in a hellish underworld. As Woolf noted, hell in Old English poetry is depicted as 'infested with *wurmas*'.<sup>125</sup> Prominent examples include Satan describing Hell: *Hær is nedran swæg, wyrmas gewunade* ('There is the hissing of serpents, and

<sup>120</sup> F. Klaeber, 'The First Line of *Deor*', *Anglia*, Beiblatt 32 (1921), 38-40; F. Klaeber, Review of W. J. Sedgefield, *An Anglo-Saxon Verse-Book*, *JEGP* 23 (1924), 121-4.

<sup>121</sup> *Deor*, ed. K. Malone (Exeter, 1977), pp.6-7.

<sup>122</sup> R. E. Kaske, 'Weland and the *wurmas* in *Deor*', *ES* 44 (1963), 190-1; R. Cox, 'Snake Rings in *Deor* and *Völundarkviða*', *LSE*, n.s. 22 (1991), 1-20.

<sup>123</sup> H. Beck, 'Der kunstfertige Schmied – ein ikonographisches und narratives Thema des frühen Mittelalters', in *Medieval Iconography and Narrative: A Symposium*, ed. F. G. Andersen (Odense, 1980), pp.15-37, esp. p.25.

<sup>124</sup> Cf. A. L. Klink, *Old English Elegies: A Critical Edition and Genre Study* (Montreal, 1992). Although she does not explicitly interpret the *wurmas* in this way, Klink notes the prevalence of death as a theme in elegies and notes its presence in *Deor* at l.8 (reference to Beadohild's brothers' *deap*), at pp.231-2. A connection between the *wurmas* and the fate of the human body after death is graphically depicted in *Soul and Body II: wyrma gifl* ('worms' meat', l.22); *ond þe sculon moldwyrmas monige ceowan, / seonowum beslitan*, ('and many earthworms shall gnaw on you, tear you from your sinews', ll.67-8a).

<sup>125</sup> R. Woolf, 'The Devil in Old English Poetry', *RES*, n.s. 4 (1953), 1-12, at p.9.

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snakes live here', ll.101b-2a) in *Christ and Satan*;<sup>126</sup> the account of God designing hell with *wyrmgeardas*, 'snakepits' in *Solomon and Saturn II* (l.291); the evocation of hell in *Exodus* as a place *þær bið fyr and wyrm, open ece scræf / yfela gehwylces* ('where there is fire and serpent, an everlasting open cave of every kind of evil', ll.537b-8); and even the use of *wyrmcyncg* ('worm-king') to describe the devil in the Tiberius anecdote discussed above (l.23).<sup>127</sup> The reference to exile in *Deor* (l.1) is also consonant with other poetic descriptions of hell: it is described as *wræclicne ham* ('wretched/exile-like home') which must await exiles (*wræcna bidan*) in *Genesis A*; in *Descent into Hell*, the infernal home is brimful with exiles (*wræcca þrungon*, l.42); in *Christ and Satan*, the devil laments that he has to *wadan wræclastas*, 'walk on the tracks of exile'. The idea that *Deor*'s Weland is in hell may initially appear surprising but it fits into the narrative context of hellish smiths brought to light in this section. It does not mean that he is identified as the devil or a hellish demon. He might instead just be one of hell's many inhabitants – exiles – or a visitor. The poet may simply use a well-known analogy to evoke the extent of Weland's suffering. I return to the depiction of Weland in *Deor* in the next chapter to assess the full impact of the hell-motif there.

My analysis of the representation of smiths in Anglo-Saxon literature reveals a stark division into positive and negative portrayals. This division is not easily resolved, as some have claimed, by a development in time, nor does it fall neatly into generic or class boundaries. First of all, my analysis has shown that it is hard to claim outright that 'there was a favourable attitude to smithcraft in Anglo-Saxon England',<sup>128</sup> without ignoring about half of the surviving literary evidence. It is impossible to deny that Weland was greatly esteemed in heroic poetry, and that other smiths appeared to benefit from an equal admiration. It is also evident that beyond this genre Weland may have enjoyed a reputation for wisdom, but that this attribute had to be carefully defined in a Christian context. It is apparent that this quality was derived from a focus on a mental force with which the smith went about his craft, and that this capability was easily interpreted as

<sup>126</sup> *The Junius Manuscript*, ed. G. P. Krapp, ASPR 1 (New York, 1931).

<sup>127</sup> Cf. Robinson, 'The Devil's Account', p.364, and p.369, n23.

<sup>128</sup> Bradley, 'Metal Smiths', p.16.

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pride, too. While Cuicuino appears as the epitome of saintliness, even his portrayal hints at a darker tradition in which the smith is inevitably associated with hell. If there are greatly favourable depictions of smiths, these stand against a much more shadowy perception of the archetypal craftsman.

It is impossible to delineate the boundaries between these contrary perceptions. Coatsworth and Pinder's conclusion that 'there is a distinction between the literary treatment of the goldsmith and top-level weaponsmith on the one hand, and the ordinary blacksmith on the other' is invalid.<sup>129</sup> While it was true, in the social realities of Anglo-Saxon England, that craftsmen were defined by the materials they worked with (e.g. goldsmiths, black- or ironsmiths),<sup>130</sup> hence providing a possible historical argument to support dichotomous perceptions of the smith, it is also true that the literary portrayals do not reflect a bias based upon materials. The blessed Cuicuino was a blacksmith, while Bede's smith was *fabrili arte singularis*, a description surely indicating that he was creating high-status artefacts or refined church art, rather than farming implements or copper pots. If the blacksmiths' instruments feature in the Tiberius account, then this is most certainly because their enterprise is more large-scale, with the louder noise, stronger heat and fire evoked for literary effect more than anything else. Weland himself, though enjoying a reputation for a highly refined type of craftsmanship (both as gold- and as weaponsmith), is equally associated with hell in *Deor*, and may represent a sinful, fallen state on the Franks Casket. This indicates that the hell-motif ran across a variety of genres and was not unique to one particular literary form or mode of expression either. To all appearances, both traditions existed side by side throughout the Anglo-Saxon period and were recorded in a variety of mediums.

One of the most distinctive aspects to emerge from this analysis is perhaps the strong focus on processes of craftsmanship evident in the references to the smith's mind and mental faculties. Some reactions towards the smith – both positive and negative – are not so much conditioned by his status or any product he may produce than by the act of craftsmanship in which he is seen to

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<sup>129</sup> Coatsworth and Pinder, *Goldsmith*, p.203.

<sup>130</sup> J. Blair and N. Ramsey, *English Medieval Industries: Craftsmen, Techniques, Products* (London, 1991).

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engage or the type of talent he appears to possess. The remainder of my thesis will seek to clarify how these creative processes and skills are portrayed and how the notions of *searo*, *orþanc* and *cræft* bridge this dichotomous representation of the smith in Anglo-Saxon literature.

**CHAPTER TWO:  
*Searo* and the notion of craftsmanship as binding**

This chapter will establish the precise allusions inherent in the notion of *searo* by integrating it into the broader semantic field of binding, arguing that a number of Old English texts favour portraying creation as a form of binding, such as for instance a process of tying or twisting. It will then analyse the poetic usage of *searo* in *Beowulf* and *Andreas*, showing how the latter exploits and inverts the heroic function of *searo* by subtly adapting traditional formulae from *Beowulf*. I will also examine the relationship of the craftsman to the notions of binding and being bound, notably in relation to two versions of the Weland myth found in *Deor* and *Vǫlundarkviða*. This chapter argues that, to an extent, the positive and the negative traditions outlined in Chapter One are reconciled through a belief in redemption which emerges from the centrality of the Harrowing of Hell motif in Anglo-Saxon religious culture. It highlights the pre-eminent role of *searo* and the notion of binding in enabling this dialogue between both traditions, finding that *searo* loses its moral neutrality in the process.

**Preamble: The problem of the binding of Weland in *Deor***

The line describing the binding of Weland in *Deor* has long been considered to belong among the cruces of Old English literature. Lamenting the sorrow and pain of Weland, the poet describes his imprisonment, *siþþan hine Niðhad on nede legde / swoncre seonobende* ('after Niðhad put him in constriction, into supple sinew bonds', ll.5-6a).<sup>1</sup> How these lines should be read has been

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<sup>1</sup> *The Exeter Book*, ed. Krapp and Dobbie.

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questioned since the early days of Old English scholarship. Grein judged the reading to be a scribal error and amended 1.6a to *swongre seonobenne* ('grievous sinew-wounds'), thereby rendering a detail found in other version of the story of Weland the smith.<sup>2</sup> All accounts and representations of that story indicate that Weland, when imprisoned by Niðhad, had a wound inflicted behind his knees to hamstring him, rendering him physically immobile and preventing him from escaping. The point of this special form of imprisonment according to narrative logic, was to root the prisoner without taking his ability to work with his hands and create precious objects for the king. This detail is evidenced in *Vǫlundarkviða*, and appears to be represented on the front panel of the Franks Casket. Grein's emendation is faithful in a literal way to these accounts and was widely adopted in editions of the poem published in the first half of the twentieth century, in spite of a number of objections to its use. Malone explained his preference for the use of *seonobende* by observing that the cutting of sinews would imprison the smith 'as effectually as ordinary fetters could have done', echoed by Whitbread's remark that 'the laming was even more effectual and striking than mere fetters', with the latter also citing a number of examples of ham-stringing that would or might have been familiar to an Anglo-Saxon audience.<sup>3</sup> In other words, they encouraged the reading of *seonobende* as a poetic detail rendering a realistic one. By doing so, however, these critics do not fully address the overtones created by the use of the notion of binding in the headword of the compound. It may thus be useful to uphold Whitbread's contention that 'difficulties remain in the precise allusion', or perhaps in more precisely establishing the breadth of allusion inherent in the use of *seonobende*.<sup>4</sup>

In the previous chapter I argued that Weland's suffering *be wurman* indicates that he has been placed in exile in Hell. It would thus make sense to read the reference to the means of his imprisonment in this context. However, in order to establish the full resonance of line 6a in *Deor*,

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<sup>2</sup> C. W. M. Grein, *Bibliothek der angelsächsischen Poesie*, I., ed. R. P. Wülcker (Göttingen, 1883), pp.278-80.

<sup>3</sup> L. Whitbread, 'The binding of Weland', *MÆ* 25 (1956), 13-9, at pp.18-9. Other objections provided alternate explanations for the use of *seonobende*, notably that Weland was bound by twisted animal sinews in a fashion reminiscent of the binding of Samson (B. Dickins, ed., *Runic and Heroic Poems of the Old Teutonic Peoples* (Cambridge, 1915), pp.70-7); or that his own sinews were used to restrict him (W. A. G. Doyle-Davidson, Review of *Deor*, ed. K. Malone, *ES* 18 (1936), 165-9).

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.17-8.

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and its relation to the notion of craftsmanship discussed in this chapter, it will be fruitful to first analyse the semantic field of ‘binding’ in Old English literature. The analysis will reveal a close and intriguing relationship between ideas of creation and craftsmanship and notions of imprisonment, the latter both actual and metaphoric. This relationship also emerges in the varied uses of *searo* across the corpus. My subsequent analysis will enable me to reconsider the full force of the opening verses of *Deor*.

### The use of *bindan*, and images of binding in Old English

A search through the Old English corpus published as part of ongoing work on the *DOE* shows that the Old English verb *bindan* is frequently employed to indicate conditions of restriction or imprisonment, both real and metaphorical.<sup>5</sup> These conditions are, predominantly though not exclusively, perceived as negative in the contexts in which they occur. A frequent use of *bindan* is in conjunction with the prefix *un-* to express a reversal of these conditions and to indicate a release. Occasionally, it takes on the meaning of ‘stick together’ or ‘cohere’. A notable example is the use of *bindan* in *The Wanderer*, where the inclement natural and meteorological setting of the vast seas is often described in terms of binding (*wapema gebind*, ‘the binding of the waves’). Even here, the use of *bindan* includes a notion of restriction and imprisonment, as the wanderer’s state of exile seems without escape. A notable exception to the standard negative connotation of restriction is found in the wanderer’s recognition that *biþ in eorle indryhten þeaw / þæt he his ferðlocan fæste binde* (‘it is a noble custom in man that he should bind fast the container of his mind’, ll.12-3).<sup>6</sup> The binding of the heart or mind, often interpreted as an expression of stoicism, is here described as a noble custom, thus connoting positively, even if the context is one of sorrow. A

<sup>5</sup> A search in the *DOE* web corpus yields 325 results, about 300 of which represent an occurrence of the verb *bindan* in the surviving Old English corpus.

<sup>6</sup> *The Exeter Book*, ed. Krapp and Dobbie, pp.134-7.

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few lines later, this is followed by the recognition that *forðon domgeorne dreorigne oft / in hyra breostcofan bindað fæste* ('therefore those eager for glory often bind sorrow fast in their breastchamber', ll.17-8). In this example the act of binding sorrow is represented through an artefact (*breostcofa*) which is able to contain and, one may say, imprison it.<sup>7</sup> As we shall see throughout this chapter, the concepts of craftsmanship and imprisonment are intimately related. This notion is also frequently denoted by synonyms for *bindan*, notably (*ge*)*fæstnian*. An example of this can be found in *The Order of the World*, where the one who asks about creation is enjoined *fæstnian ferðsefan* ('to fasten the mind', l.20) to consider the matter well. This request is repeated before the account of creation begins (*Gehyr nu þis herespil ond þinne hyge gefæstna*, 'Hear now this glorious discourse, and fasten your mind', l.37).<sup>8</sup>

*The Order of the World* is one of many Old English poems that link the notions of binding and creation. Towards the end of the poem, God's creation is described as *bestrybed fæste / miclum meahhtlocum* ('covered fast with great locks of might', ll.87b-88a). A parallel is thus established between the actions of God and that of the listener, who are both involved in acts of binding, the latter in imitation of the former. While the full import of this parallel will be made clear by my discussion of craftsmanship of divine endowment in Chapter Five, it is important to consider the notion of binding as a creative act in detail here. This idea is developed at length throughout the poem:

Forþon swa teofenede, se þe teala cuþe,  
 dæg wiþ nihte, deop wiþ hean,  
 lyft wiþ lagustream, lond wiþ wæge,  
 fold wiþ flode, fisc wiþ ypum.<sup>9</sup>

(Therefore he who knows how to do such things, thus joined day with night, deep with high, sky with stream, land with water, earth with ocean, the fish with the waves.)

<sup>7</sup> The verse discussed here is followed by a variation: *swa ic modsefan mine sceolde [...] feterum sælan* ('as I have to do with my heart/mind, seal it with fetters', ll.19 and 21b). The image of the mind as container is a topos in Anglo-Saxon literature, and in instances it is used with great subtlety, though an exploration of this here would be out of context. An important contribution to this topic has been made by B. Mize, 'The Representation of the Mind as an Enclosure in Old English Poetry', *ASE* 35 (2006), 57-90.

<sup>8</sup> *The Exeter Book*, ed. Krapp and Dobbie, pp.163-66.

<sup>9</sup> ll.82-5.

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God here is a joiner, both in the general and the more specific senses of the word, combining the elements of creation and fixing them firmly together into a coherent whole. The poet imitates the activity of coupling through alliteration and parallelism in these lines. The act of creation is a combination of materials to construct a new entity, not unlike the endeavours of a carpenter or a metalworker using a number and a variety of materials to craft a new object. The notion of fastening can be found in other accounts of the Creation, for instance in *Christ and Satan*, where God *gefestnade foldan sceatas* ('fastened the corners of the earth', l.3). Parallels to the motif of God as a binder can be found in Norse lore, where Odin is frequently referenced as having the power to bind and unbind, signifying his power over creation and the minds of men.<sup>10</sup>

The idea of joining is also echoed in an often quoted passage from the preface to the Old English translation of Augustine's *Soliloquies*, where the speaker describes the construction of his symbolic house of learning for which a variety of the best kinds of timber are to be gathered *þat he mage windan manigne smicerne wah and manig ænlic hus* ('so that he may bind together many a fair wall and many a splendid house').<sup>11</sup> The use of the term *windan* ('to twist', 'to weave', 'to bind by twisting') in conjunction with *smicer* and *fah* – two adjectives denoting finesse and adornment – seems to emphasize a stable yet refined method of carpentry. Although, due to the decomposable nature of the materials involved, not a tremendous amount of archaeological evidence survives to document Anglo-Saxon practices of constructing timber buildings, it is generally agreed that two main techniques were used during the period. Hall-type edifices (and other, often larger, types of timber buildings) were mainly constructed by fixing horizontal timber planks to a large number of earth-fast posts with the help of pegs. There is little archaeological evidence of metal-work being used in the construction of such buildings, though a small number of clenched-bolts have been found on two sites, where they are thought to have been used to secure the woodwork and fittings such as doors. Another method applied in the construction of timber

<sup>10</sup> *Haptagud*, 'God of binds/bonds', is one of Odin's titles in the *Snorra Edda*. Odin's sway is constrained by the binding of Fenrir, and will come to an end as Fenrir's fetters loosen, enabling the wolf to kill him.

<sup>11</sup> Cited from *König Alfreds des Grossen Bearbeitung der Soliloquien des Augustinus*, ed. W. Endter, BaP 11 (Hamburg, 1922; repr. Darmstadt, 1964), p.1.

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building is the wattle-and-daub technique used to construct partial or entire walls of houses. The wattling procedure would have consisted in threading branches or wooden rods around strong vertical posts. While potentially representing the twisting process that seems to be indicated by Alfred's use of *windan* (woods being bound up together and twisted tight), the wattle-and-daub technique is, however, not so much associated with the beautiful, high-status buildings suggested by *smicer* and *fah*, but rather with the common homes and workplaces of the Anglo-Saxons, the pit-based *Grubenhäuser*.<sup>12</sup> Although it may be argued that this use reflects Alfred's demotic imagery and use of language,<sup>13</sup> the juxtaposition of these words is primarily designed to draw attention to the creative act taking place, and to convey the idea of stability and the perception that the speaker is erecting more than just an ephemeral structure, belying the more perishable nature of the building materials. By invoking the notion of *windan* in this context, the writer aligns this creative act with the notion of craftsmanship explored in the examples above. The use of *windan* must not be seen literally, as a description of a combination of wooden sticks, planks or branches, but as a poetic trope tapping into a discourse of binding. As such the binding of trees constitutes a creative act transcending the material properties of wood, and perhaps even alludes to the more malleable nature of forged metals involved in skilful acts of binding.<sup>14</sup>

The images discussed so far would fit neatly into approaches that cite the architectural features of Anglo-Saxon narratives of creation, though perhaps only in a very superficial way. The idea of creation as an act of fastening is taken by Ruth Wehlau and others as part of what they identify as architectural metaphors of creation in Old English.<sup>15</sup> According to Wehlau, God is presented as the 'supreme architect' in Old English, as evidenced by the epithets *meotod* and *scyppend*, and God's role in not only devising creation but also playing an active role in

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<sup>12</sup> K. Leahy, *Anglo-Saxon Crafts* (Stroud, 2003), Chapter 2: 'Timber Buildings' (esp. pp.42-7).

<sup>13</sup> I explore the critical opinions on Alfredian commonplace imagery in relation to *craft* below (Chapter Four, 'Studies of the Alfredian Usage').

<sup>14</sup> In fact, a well-documented practice of binding by 'twisting' is the Anglo-Saxon method of forging swords, spears and various implements through pattern welding, cf. Leahy, *Crafts*, p.123.

<sup>15</sup> R. Wehlau, *The Riddle of Creation': Metaphor Structures in Old English Poetry* (New York, 1997), pp.15-56, and F. Michelet, reprising many of Wehlau's ideas in her chapter on Anglo-Saxon concepts of creation in *Creation, Migration, and Conquest*, pp.44-9, and 52-55.

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constructing the universe.<sup>16</sup> The example of God establishing *hebban to rofe* ('heaven as a roof') for mankind in *Cædmon's Hymn* is cited as evidence to this effect.

While it is no doubt true that the Anglo-Saxons were aware and made use of the idea of God as an architect, the claim for the importance and prevalence of this idea as prime metaphor for creation in Old English literature has perhaps been overstated by Wehlau. As she notes herself, the image 'cannot be considered to be uniquely Germanic'. While it can be found in Greek and Jewish literatures, it is in fact predominant in the Latin Christian culture which the Anglo-Saxons adopted as a result of their conversion to Christianity. The source of dissemination of this image into early medieval culture is the Bible.<sup>17</sup> Imagery from the Psalms and the Proverbs describes the creation as the work of God's hands and portray him as using a compass: *Initio tu, Domine, terram fudasti, Et opera manuum tuarum sunt caeli* (Psalm 101:26), *certa lege et gyro vallabat abyssos* (Prov. 8:27).<sup>18</sup> These images were more fully developed by the Church Fathers in their hexameral commentaries, notably by Ambrose, who made extensive references to God as an architect in his *Hexameron*. This text was widely available in Anglo-Saxon England, and the earliest surviving manuscript of the text can be dated to the ninth century.<sup>19</sup>

To argue that this is a central motif in Old English descriptions of the Creation or human creations or craftsmanship is perhaps taking the vernacular culture too readily as a clone of the Latin background of early medieval Christianity. While the Old English poets were no doubt aware of the image of God as an architect, which featured in the Latin and Anglo-Latin works with which they would have been familiar, and no doubt wove elements of this motif into poems like *The Order of the World*, they do not appear to have had an inclination to fully develop architectural metaphors, and tend to refer to the action occurring during creation with an apparently less determinate, certainly less large-scale concept of craftsmanship as a form of

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<sup>16</sup> Wehlau, *Creation*, p.16.

<sup>17</sup> A full account of the late antique and early medieval development of the image of God as craftsman can be found in G. Ovitt, *The Restoration of Perfection: Labor and Technology in Medieval Culture* (New Brunswick, NJ; 1987), chapter 2.

<sup>18</sup> 'At the beginning you, oh God, laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the work of your hands'; 'with a fixed law and a circle he encompassed the abyss'. These examples are cited by Wehlau, *Creation*, p.17.

<sup>19</sup> Lapidge, *The Anglo-Saxon Library*, p.278.

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binding or winding. Wehlau does not provide us with an explanation as to how acts of binding or winding can be considered architectural.<sup>20</sup>

Others have seen less structural intent in some of Wehlau's examples of creation. In an article on the geometrical forms and features in Old English literature, Anderson demonstrates that the world as described by the vernacular poets, can be termed as 'uncarpentered'.<sup>21</sup> In a definition of that term borrowed from cultural anthropology, an 'uncarpentered' world is defined as a space 'where manmade structures are a small portion of the visual environment and where such structures are constructed without the benefit of carpenter's tools [...] Straight lines and precise right angles are a rarity.'<sup>22</sup> Curved or circular shapes tend to dominate in such an environment, whereas angular or square features tend to be absent. In applying Anderson's observation to *Cædmon's Hymn*, a poem which Wehlau sees as evidence of the prevalence of architectural metaphors of creation, we may appreciate a different emphasis in its creation imagery. Since in the expression *hebban to hrofe* the roof is heaven or the firmament, the shape implied appears to be circular. The line derives from a formulaic expression *heofenes hrof*, also *wolcnes hrof*, thought to work either as a metaphor or as a reduplication of near-synonyms to create a sense of intensification.<sup>23</sup> If an Anglo-Saxon audience recognised a building metaphor in the *Hymn*, they would most likely have interpreted the idea of roof as expressing the social aspect of creation, which is indicated in the poem through the notion that heaven was created as a roof for mankind. As such it would have symbolised the hall in a metonymic expression of the lord-retainer relationship of heroic lore, which in the *Hymn* is an image of the relationship between God and mankind. The expression says very little, however, about God as an architect or about the nature of his creative act.

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<sup>20</sup> In fact, on pp.32-3 Wehlau cites imagery of binding under the guise of examining the architectural metaphors, but fails to address how this imagery enriches, extends, continues or even exemplifies the metaphors.

<sup>21</sup> E. Anderson, 'The Uncarpentered World of Old English Poetry', *ASE* 20 (1991), 65-80.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p.67, citing M. H. Segall, D. T. Campbell and M. J. Herskovitz, *The Influence of Culture on Visual Perception* (New York, 1966), pp.83-4.

<sup>23</sup> N. Peltola, 'Observations on Intensification in Old English Poetry.', *NM* 72 (1971), 649-90 (esp. p.657 and pp.683-4). See also Anderson, *op.cit.*, p.71: '*Hrof* can mean both 'roof; and 'sky', and more generally the 'summit' of a mountain.'

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In contexts where other features of building are used, notably in relation to the description of Heorot in *Beowulf*, which Wehlau also cites, it is questionable whether the poet invokes an architectural detail (i.e the hall or its door) in connection with creation or craftsmanship.<sup>24</sup> The passage she discusses is the description of Heorot during the fight between Beowulf and Grendel. The door is *fyrbendum fæst*, and the hall is able to withstand the havoc wreaked upon it:

He þæs fæste wæs  
innan ond utan    irenbendum  
searoþoncum besmipod.<sup>25</sup>

(Since it was firmly constructed, within and without, with iron bands, with skilful / bonding / fettering thoughts.)

In this example, the predominant reference to creation or craftsmanship is a notion of binding, rather than an architectural structure. The door and the hall are superior, close to perfection, because they are reinforced with bits of material that hold them together. This makes Heorot stand apart, as buildings featuring in similar accounts of two-man fights, in which there is an emphasis on destruction to infrastructure, as there is here with regard to furniture.<sup>26</sup> This description recalls the passage from the *Soliloquies* discussed above. Both incorporate notions of binding that seem to take these edifices beyond the normal architectural standards, both found elsewhere in Old English literature, or in our archaeological records. More precisely, these notions seem to indicate a form of craftsmanship performed by a smith, instead of a type of planning or construction used by a geometer, a carpenter or a stonemason.<sup>27</sup> The lines from *Beowulf* include at least one word directly from the register of smithing (*besmipod*), and in the context the word seems to be used with its literal meaning. The lines read like one of the poem's motifs, the elaboration of the quality, beauty or refinement of objects crafted by a smith, in one instance by Weland (l.455). The cultural and

<sup>24</sup> There is, of course, good reason to mention the parallels between the construction of Heorot and the scop's accompanying song about the Creation, giving this act of craftsmanship a mythopoeic emphasis. However, conversely, this does not reflect upon God's creative act as architectural.

<sup>25</sup> *Beowulf*, ll.773b-775.

<sup>26</sup> Klaeber, *Beowulf*, note for l.770ff, p.162, cf. *Grettis saga, Bjarkarímur*.

<sup>27</sup> The three trades associated with architecture in the early Middle Ages.

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material world of *Beowulf* is of course considered to be far removed from the realities of Anglo-Saxon England, though frequent comparisons are made with artefacts and evidence from the pre-Christian period. It is possible that the use of clench bolts or other metal parts was at one time more frequent in communal or high-status buildings and more versatile than archaeological evidence indicates, and that these were used to reinforce or embellish wooden structures. In the absence of any proof, however, it may be more illuminating to focus on the literary function of the ‘iron bonds’ that surround the hall. Intriguing here is in particular the focus on a mental form of skill in relation to the use of the verb *besmiþan*. As in the examples discussed in Chapter One, the smith’s craft is here conceived as partially enacted through mental faculties, though these are not further defined by context. The *searþoncum* (‘skilful thoughts’, ‘bonding thoughts’ or ‘bonds of thought’) combine with the iron bonds in a superior binding action, keeping Heorot against the most primal forces of destruction.

The notion of binding seems to be inherent in many other creative acts and the artefacts created through them. An example is *Riddle 40* (W38) on Creation: *ic eom fægerre frætsum goldes / þeah hit mon awerge wirum gebunden* (‘I am more beautiful than an ornament of gold, though man should enclose it by binding it with wires’, ll.46-7). Similarly the helmet in *Beowulf*: *Ymb þæs helmes hrof heafodbeorge / wirum bewunden walu utan heold* (‘Around the helmet’s top a comb, wound with wires was guarding the outside as a protection for the head’, ll.1030-1). Both examples again emphasise an effect of aesthetic and/or qualitative (protective) refinement implied as a result of the action of binding. In both cases, this action is indicative of the work of a smith. The effect of binding in these examples has an aesthetic and a heroic validation. It creates objects and entities virtually without par in terms of beauty. The description of the helmet centres on its superior protective qualities, which the wires, beyond being ornamental, reinforce.<sup>28</sup>

In *The Ruin*, the verses describing the construction of the *eald enta geweorc* recall the above passages describing artefacts, in their use the formulaic *bebond [...] wirum*.

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<sup>28</sup> Cf. F. Robinson’s interpretation of artifice in *Beowulf* as ‘reassuring’, signifying man’s control over the irrational forces of nature, in *Beowulf and the Appositive Style* (Knoxville, 1985), pp.71-4.

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In fact,

Mod mo[.....]yne swiftne gebrægd;  
 hwætred in hringas, hygerof bebond  
 weallwalan wirum wundrum togædre.<sup>29</sup>

(The mind [...] swiftly joined together; a resolute one, skilled in rings, bound the house walls wondrously together with wires.)

The vocabulary describing the craftsman at work here (*hwætred in hringas, wirum bewunden*) conjures up the notion of a smith, and not that of a mason or architect.<sup>30</sup> Interestingly an epithet describing the craftsman at work refers to him as *hygerof* ('strong of mind'). Though the poem is worded with many formulae found in the heroic register, this designation is remarkable in light of my analyses of the depictions of smiths and their craft in Chapter One and above. Here too we find a reference to a certain force of the mind which may become a factor during the creative act. In contexts such as this one, references to mental faculties may seem esoteric to a modern reader who is incapable of determining their import in relation to the surrounding words and phrases.

We must briefly consider the formulaic nature of Old English poetry, and the idea, proposed by Ong, that where they can be considered vestiges of a pre-literate culture, traditional expressions have a tendency to be kept intact once they have been 'crystallized'.<sup>31</sup> Does the concept of creative binding constitute such a crystallized expression? We may equally ask here whether the collocation of the smithy and the mind is a remnant of an association in a previous age. The Old English poems that have survived are of course by necessity products of a literate society, though the Anglo-Saxon poets' use of traditional formulae remains a field of ongoing investigation. It will be interesting to compare the above passage with the poetic description of an

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<sup>29</sup> *The Ruin*, ll.18-20.

<sup>30</sup> But cf. J. P. Frankis, 'The thematic significance of *enta geweorc* and related imagery in *The Wanderer*', *ASE* 2 (1973), 253-69, which argues that the phrase *enta geweorc* points specifically to Roman stone constructions surviving as ruins in Anglo-Saxon England. I return to this idea in my discussion of the uses of *orþanc* in *The Ruin* and *Maxims II* in Chapter Three.

<sup>31</sup> W. Ong, *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the World* (London, 1982), p.39; 'So soldiers are brave and princesses beautiful and oaks are sturdy forever'.

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architect's/carpenter's trade in *The Gifts of Men*, a poem featuring a prospectus of trades and their descriptions. I have already noted in Chapter One above how the poem describes the smith's trade by characterizing its exponent as a maker of weapons and armour and alluding to his mental faculties with *modcræftig*. The poem seems to distinguish between the craft of this weapon-making smith and the trade of a goldsmith, separately evoking him as a craftsman *searocræftig goldes and gimma* ('skilled in the binding of gold and gems'). While *Gifts* employs traditional epithets and vocabulary, they are with a much greater precision, and, arguably, with a greater degree of literalness, than in some of the examples discussed above. The architect / carpenter's trade is presented in a distinct fashion:

Sum mæg wrætlice weorc ahyrgan  
 heahimbra gehwæs; hond bið gelæred,  
 wis ond gewealdan, swa bið wyrhtan ryht,  
 sele asettan, con he sidne ræced  
 fæste gefegan wip færdryrum.<sup>32</sup>

(Another can wondrously devise some lofty buildings; the hand is learned, wise and controlled, such as is right for a craftsman, in the construction of a hall; he can firmly reinforce the wide hall against sudden collapses.)

The poem is a catalogue of intellectual and emotional abilities, as well as of manual skills and crafts that God has endowed men with. The craft of the 'architect', planner and builder of edifices is here described without the traditional formulaic expressions that recall the smith's trade. This may in part be due to the nature of the poem, and its need to differentiate, therefore having to employ a more trade-specific vocabulary. It is also, perhaps, a feature of the poem's didactic genre, enabling it to use, reject or modify traditional formulae with greater freedom. It repeats, however, the notion of reinforcement, and while not using *bindan* or *windan*, it employs *gefegan* (reinforced through *fæste*), a word equally associated with a fastening property fulfilled by metal objects, often

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<sup>32</sup> *The Gifts of Men*, ll.44-48.

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denoting a binding action.<sup>33</sup> In other words, *Gifts* tends to maintain familiar associations while detaching itself, to a degree, from the traditional formulaic expressions which may seem arcane to us without further contextualisation.

We may sum up the above observations to conclude that the notions of binding, twisting, joining and winding are typical expressions of a type of creation in Old English, and that they connote aesthetic refinement as well as structural reinforcement and stability. Although Old English poems use architectural metaphors and contain examples in which architectural detail is employed in the context of primeval creation, the predominant descriptions of the creator as craftsman associate him with the trade of the smith, and not that of the architect. Furthermore, it appears that even passages containing descriptions of or references to the craft of the architect are described with a vocabulary associated with the fabrication of metal artefacts.

That is not to say that the Anglo-Saxons rejected the image of the Creator as architect completely. On the contrary, as has been noted by Friedman, the earliest known illustrations to portray God holding scales and an architect's compass occur in Anglo-Saxon manuscripts.<sup>34</sup> The illustrations in question can be found in the Eadui Gospels (fol.9v), in the Tiberius Psalter (fol.7v), and in a Bible, BL Royal 1 E (fol.1v), here as an illumination for Genesis.<sup>35</sup> It would thus appear that the Anglo-Saxons transmitted the image of God as architect to the rest of medieval Europe, something which Wehlau uses as an argument for her theory that Old English poems are pervaded with architectural metaphors about creation. However, this argument is undermined by the fact that, as she herself notes, all these illustrations are dated relatively late, notably from the first half of the eleventh century, a date generally accepted to be later than most of the poetry discussed in Wehlau's book. Moreover they all occur in Latin manuscripts containing biblical texts, and are thus a poor indicator for vernacular preferences. It is perhaps interesting to note, in this context,

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<sup>33</sup> Cf. *Is se scyld ufan / frætwum gefeged ofer þæs fugles bæc* ('Above, the shield is clasped ornately over the bird's back', *The Phoenix*, ll.308b-309); *Ðonne þæt gecnawed of cwicsusle / flah feond gemah, þætte fira gehwylc / hæleþa cynnes on his hringe biþ / fæste gefeged [...]* ('When the deceitful, wicked fiend knows out of the living-torture that one of the children of men is firmly joined to his chain [...]', *The Whale*, ll.38-41a).

<sup>34</sup> J. Friedman, 'The Architect's Compass in Creation Miniatures of the Later Middle Ages', *Traditio* 30 (1974), 419-429 (at pp.424-5).

<sup>35</sup> Cf. Wehlau, p.20.

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that the illustrations of the vernacular Junius 11 do not contain any pictorial details that would indicate a portrayal of God as an architect, and this in spite of portraying the Creation over a number of folios.<sup>36</sup>

We may thus conclude that, while Old English texts make use of architectural details for effect, the portrayal of God as ‘architect’ in Anglo-Saxon England is realised most fully in the Anglo-Latin tradition. Architectural detail in the vernacular tends to be used figuratively and in isolation. It is rarely part of an extended metaphor residing in the notion of building; rather it is more frequently subsumed into a notion of binding, and linked to the craft of the smith.<sup>37</sup> In other words, the semantic field of binding, one of the major lexical fields used to describe a range of creative activities, refers predominantly to the trade of the archetypal craftsman. This confirms the smith’s central importance to conceptions of craftsmanship and creativity in Anglo-Saxon England. In many of the above examples, the smith’s trade figures as a metonymic, almost formulaic expression for creation. But what does this signify? To answer this with Walter Ong’s theory that the formula, as a form of traditional expression, is not ‘breaking up thought’ may be too simple. A lot of research published over the last thirty years has shown the subtlety with which Anglo-Saxon poets tend to employ formulaic expressions. This is a field of research which largely grew out of new trends in the debate about the relationship between *Beowulf* and *Andreas*.<sup>38</sup> In order to fully appreciate the refinement with which some poets employ the semantic range of binding, I will examine the formulaic use of *searo*, a notion of craftsmanship which inheres the very idea of binding, in these two poems.

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<sup>36</sup> Instead God’s Creation appears to be portrayed as a mental exercise. *A Digital Facsimile of Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Junius 11*, ed. by B. Muir, software by N. Kennedy (Oxford, 2004).

<sup>37</sup> But see Chapter Five of my thesis for depictions of the architect as the archetypal craftsman, which arise in some of the late texts adopting the definition of craftsmanship that arises within the Gifts-of-Men paradigm.

<sup>38</sup> See, for example, A. Riedinger, ‘*Andreas* and the Formula in Transition’, in *Hermeneutics and Medieval Culture*, ed. P. Gallacher and H. Damico (Albany, NY; 1989), pp.183-191.

### ***Searo*, formulaic adaptation and the meeting of two traditions**

Lexicographers agree that *searo* is polysemous. It is most often rendered as ‘skill’, but it is also found to variously denote types of armour and notions like ‘art’, ‘artifice’, ‘contrivance’, ‘device’ and even ‘treachery’.<sup>39</sup> In all its forms *searo*, together with its compounds and derivatives, is recorded *c.*310 times in the surviving corpus. By comparison, *craft*, its compounds and derivatives are recorded around 1330 times.<sup>40</sup> However, *searo* is by no means rare and its presence in the poetic corpus is notably profuse.<sup>41</sup> It occurs both in poetry and in prose, and is also found in glossaries (for instance, the glossary found in British Library, Cotton Cleopatra A.iii).<sup>42</sup>

*BT* divides its entry on *searo* (*searu*) into categories determined by the lexicographers’ perceived positive or negative value of the term in its various contexts. The first category, based on its occurrence in glosses, is only fronted by a note: ‘in the following glosses it is uncertain whether the word is used with a good or with a bad meaning’. The second category is prefaced: ‘in a bad sense: craft, artifice, wile, deceit’, and the third ‘in a good sense: art, skill, contrivance’. This presentation is problematic, because there is an uneasy link between the positive or negative value attached to the term within a particular text and the meaning we should take this word to have. My subsequent analysis will make clear that this arrangement misrepresents the usage of *searo* throughout the corpus. However, to illustrate the breadth of reference of the term, I will give two examples of its uses, loosely based on *BT*’s categories II and III. The first example corresponds to II, *searo* in a ‘negative’ sense, where it means insidiousness or treachery:

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<sup>39</sup> *A Thesaurus of Old English*, ed. Roberts, Kay and Grundy summarizes the lexical records by listing the following attested meanings: ‘art, skill, contrivance, cunning’ (11.04.02.01); ‘art, wile, craft, strategm, etc.’ (11.04.02.01.01); ‘treachery (hlafordsearo: high treason)’ (12.01.01.12.04); ‘body armour, war gear’ (13.02.08.03.01); ‘a machine, an instrument, an engine’ (17.03).

<sup>40</sup> 69 times in the OE *Boethius*, other texts are much lower.

<sup>41</sup> *DOE* Web Corpus.

<sup>42</sup> ‘The Latin-Old English Glossary in MS Cleopatra A. III’, ed. W. G. Stryker, unpubl. PhD dissertation (Stanford Univ., 1951); M. Voss, ‘Strykers Edition des alphabetischen Cleopatraglossars: Corrigenda und Addenda’, *Arbeiten aus Anglistik und Amerikanistik* 13 (1988), 123-138.

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Hie þa lærde se heora halga bisceop, & him to ræde fand þæt hie dydon þreora daga fæsten & manigfealde ælmeþan & halige lofsangas, & to ðæm heahengle Michaelæ, swa to ðæm getreowestan mundboran, þæt hie him frofre & fultomes wilnodan, þæt hie moston ðara feonda searo beswican & ofercuman.<sup>43</sup>

(Their holy bishop taught them, and counselled them to do three day's fasting, and [perform] manifold deeds of almsgiving and holy songs of praise, to the archangel Michael as well as to the truest protector, to supplicate him for consolation and support, so that they may supplant (lit. deceive) and overcome the fiends' *searo*.)

*Searo* is used to denote a general devilish attribute, consonant with the adversarial character that devils tend to embody. As such its negativity is intrinsic and there is no clear contextual motivation for it other than its attribution to the devils. This sense, and this application, is widespread in homiletic literature. To find a citation for category III proves much harder. *BT* cite the following example from *Beowulf*: *þær was helm monig eald ond omig, earmbeaga fela searwum gesæled* ('There was many an old and rusty helmet, many arm-rings sealed with *searo*', ll.2762b-64a). In this example the positivity resides in the translation only. *Searo* is employed in the dative plural, apparently in its adverbial use, as it is in most examples that would fit into category III, to denote an attribute of skill. We cannot imply directly from the immediate context that the quality referred to here is positive. In fact, one might argue that the notion of *omig*, 'rusty' connotes the lines negatively. The positive value can only be inferred when we subscribe to the idea, proposed by a number of critics, that treasure is represented in positive terms in traditional verse. While all meaning emerges from context, it is apparent from these two very diverse examples that the meaning of *searo* is particularly sensitive to not just one, but several contexts, some of which can be intangible at first for a modern reader. This may complicate our understanding of the word. In addition, we are easily bound to accept meanings received through an overreliance on translation, or an intransigent lexical classification. I will show below that these are real concerns, hampering our full understanding of *searo* as a notion of skill.

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<sup>43</sup> *The Blickling Homilies of the Tenth Century*, ed. and trans. R. Morris (London, 1967), 'Life of Saint Michael', ll.88-92.

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The more concrete applications of the term are listed in a further category in *BT*'s entry number IV: 'that which is contrived with art, a machine, an engine, fabric; armour, equipment, arms'. The examples that *BT* give in this fourth category are mainly from *Beowulf*, and indeed it is striking that the term's application in this poem seems to mainly denote types of armour. This usage will form the starting point of my analysis of *searo* as, unlike *BT*'s usages II and III, it is not dependent on value judgement, and constitutes perhaps the most concrete meaning attributed to the term. In the famous scene of Beowulf's ship-journey to Denmark and his arrival on the shores of Hrothgar's kingdom, there is a sudden abundance of the term, accentuating the progression of Beowulf's troop towards Heorot. The word is used eight times in the space of 200 lines, and to great effect. As soon as Beowulf's men step onto the ship to leave Geatland, the focus is on the 'splendid wargear', *guðsearo geatolic* (1.215), which they carry in the bosom of their ship. The *beorhte randas* (1.231b) and *fyrðsearu fuslicu* (1.232a), or 'bright shields' and 'eager arms', is also the first thing the Danish coastguard notices as the men approach the shore. Here, *searo* is accompanied by the idea of shine, suggested by *geatolic* and *beorhte* and implied in the notion of the *fuslicu* arms. The audience is invited to envisage the reflection of the sun on the equipment. Before we visualise the bright armour, however, we perceive the arrival of the troop aurally through the ring of their armour sustained by alliterating pairs and assonance (*syrcan hrysedon*, 'they shook their coats of mail', 1.226, *guðsearo geatolic, fyrðsearu fuslicu*) as the warriors progress on their journey to Heorot. Both the visual and the aural effects recall the material properties of artefacts, reinforcing the sense that the poet is conjuring up *searo* as a product of skill through words. As a result, when the coastguard addresses the troop trying to assure that they come bearing peaceful intentions, and calls them *searohæbbende* (1.237b), usually glossed as 'warriors', we are invited to understand the compound much more literally as 'having' or 'wearing' *searo*: Beowulf and his men have arrived on Danish shores ready for combat. Heroic momentum increases with each repetition of *searo*.

The focus on Beowulf's men and Beowulf himself as bearers of *searo* continues with further uses of the term in this passage, as well as later on in the poem: for example, in the form of the

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formula *secg on searwum* (or *secgas on searwum*, ll.249 and 2530), referring to men in their mailcoats, and Beowulf's *searonet*, his chainmail (l.406). In fact, as often as nine times out of ten *searo* must be understood to denote a type of armour, and even in some of the remaining examples interpreting it in that sense is possible. The use of *searo* as protective gear in *Beowulf* is quite possibly very close to its original meaning. It supposedly derives from the Old Germanic *ser*, meaning 'hooking' or 'interlinking'. Studies by Falk and Holthausen have indicated similar uses of the word in other Germanic languages, as for example the Gothic, where *sarwa* corresponds to what the King James Bible and the Vulgate translate as 'armour', and in Latin, where *sero* means 'to connect' or 'intertwine'. A comparison can also be made to the Old Norse *sörvi* meaning necklace.<sup>44</sup>

Given these uses of the cognates of *searo*, it is possible that the original meaning of the simplex *searo* was an artefact of interlocking parts such as chainmail. Analysis of the only surviving mailcoat, from the Sutton Hoo ship burial, indicates that these protective garments were constructed of rows of very small rings of less than half an inch in diameter interlinked so that each one passed through four others and locked together by riveting and welding. This is of course a very laborious process, which must have taken a great deal of time and skill. In the context of the hortative attitude towards artefacts in *Beowulf*, a play on meaning is possible: *Beowulf maðelode on him byrne scan / searonet seowed smipes orþancum* ('Beowulf spoke. On him the mailcoat shone, a *searonet* sewn according to the smith's *orþancum*', ll.405-6). *Searo* here functions both in a physical sense, referring to the coat of mail which it varies, and abstractly with a meaning that could be translated as 'intricately woven net', thus anticipating a second reference to skill, *orþanc* in the next half line. *Orþanc* can sometimes be found to be used almost synonymously with *searo* in the corpus, a feature which I will analyse in depth in the next chapter. The use of the word 'sewn' here is also noteworthy. The mail is so fine it resembles a stitched garment. It is later said to be *hrægla selest*, [...] *Welandes geweorc* ('the best of garments, [...] Weland's work', l.455) –

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<sup>44</sup> C. Brady, 'Weapons' in *Beowulf*: an analysis of the nominal compounds and an evaluation of the poet's use of them', *ASE* 8 (1979), 79-141, esp. at 118-120; H. Falk, *Altnordische Waffenkunde* (Kristiana, 1914) p.175, n1; F. Holthausen, *Altenglisches etymologisches Wörterbuch* (Heidelberg, 1934).

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fabricated by the fabled smith himself – and it saves Beowulf’s life in the fight with Grendel’s mother. The simplex *searo*, or compounds where *searo* is the headword, are also frequently found in variation with terms denoting chainmail: *Guðsearo* is in variation with both *frætwe* and *byrnan*, both denoting garment-type armour. It also occurs in variation with *randas* (shields) and *garas* (spears) (ll.231-2; and ll.328-9), indicating a wider use of the term here in *Beowulf*.

However, I would argue that both in examples in the passage in discussion and in *Beowulf* as a whole, the sense of *searo* as intricately fabricated metal-based artefact consisting of a number of interlinked pieces, is never very far below the surface. This is indicated by the repetition of the two special attributes – light and sound – which dominate the passage and establish a motif that punctuates the rest of the poem. The first attribute:

Guðbyrne **scan**  
 heard hondlocen, **hringiren scir**  
 song in searwum, **þa hie to sele furðum**  
 in hyra gryregeatwum **gangan cwomon.**<sup>45</sup>

(The mailcoat shone, tough, interlocked with hands, the bright ring-iron in their chainmail sang, as they proceeded towards the hall in their wargear.)

Beautifully ornamented by interlinear alliteration (indicated in bold above), this is one of about 20-odd references to singing or ringing coats of mail in *Beowulf* (cf. l. 327b, *Byrnan hringdon*, *guðsearo gumena*, ‘The mailcoats rang, the men’s armour’). These references create a momentum building up Beowulf’s heroism.<sup>46</sup> The coats of mail themselves become creative agents telling the story of Beowulf’s rise, his glory and decline. *Searo* as a simplex or headword comes to denote the physical representation of this song.

The second attribute is light/shine. When the coastguard addresses the Geats as *searohaebbende*, there is more to this epithet than an expression of a coastguard’s sense of duty. In fact, the sight of an entire troop dressed in resplendent *searo* would have literally and

<sup>45</sup> *Beowulf*, ll.321b-4.

<sup>46</sup> Cf. Hines, ‘*Beowulf* and Archaeology’, pp.93-7.

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metaphorically dazzled the coastguard. The scarcity of chainmail in archaeological finds from Anglo-Saxon England (there is only one), along with our knowledge of the labour involved in making this finely meshed protective gear has led archaeologists to conclude it was most likely an elite item and not part of the standard equipment of an Anglo-Saxon warrior.<sup>47</sup> In fact, there is no mention of chainmail in certain Anglo-Saxon battle poems, notably in *Brunanburh*, where swords, spears and shields feature prominently. When the coastguard thus calls Beowulf's troop *searohæbbende*, he also expresses his bewilderment at the splendour of their equipment. There is no doubt that this bewilderment also includes a fair amount of wonder at this promise of heroic excellence. A close reading of *Beowulf* reveals that references to shine attached to *searo* and other words for armour are numerous, and serve to underscore both the special skill that went into the fabrication of the trappings, and the superior ability of those who wear them. Appearing with these two attributes, *searo* comes to function as a motif in *Beowulf*.

Hines has noted how the poem is very partial towards protective gear. Whereas swords consistently fail – and very prominently so – in Beowulf's fight with Grendel's mother and his fight with the dragon, the coat of mail saves his life.<sup>48</sup> It is this piece of armour, and not any of the swords, which was forged by the legendary Weland. Before Beowulf's descent into the mere, his mailcoat is described as *searofah* – which, in the scheme of the poem's use of *searo*, might be translated as 'bright with many rings' as well as more traditionally as 'skilfully/intricately decorated', perhaps carrying overtones of a special protective function of this quality. It is also, throughout the poem, a heroic attribute, and the chinking of its rings sings the lay of his heroic progress, as its silence at the end indicates the poem's modulation into elegy.<sup>49</sup> It is both a testimony to the smith's superior skill and Beowulf's own heroic ability. There is thus a strong literalness in the use of *searo*, but one that is never far from the word's significance of excellence

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<sup>47</sup> G. Owen-Crocker, "'Seldom ... Does the Deadly Spear Rest for Long': Weapons and Armour", in *The Material Culture of Daily Living in the Anglo-Saxon World*, ed. M. Clegg Hyer and G. Owen-Crocker (Exeter, 2011), pp.201-30, at pp.226-7; Leahy, *Crafts*, pp.131-2.

<sup>48</sup> Hines, *op.cit.*

<sup>49</sup> So does the lack of burnishers, depriving the world of *Beowulf* of shine. Thus, the last survivor laments that *feormynd swefað* ('polishers are asleep', l.2256). Helms in the dragon's lair are said to be *eald and omig* ('old and rusty', l.2763), and swords in the hoard are equally dull (l.3049).

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and skill – in fact these notions are often employed synonymously. In the description of the door of Heorot as *irenendum / searoponcum besmipod* (ll.774b-5a) the *searo-* element links back to *irenendum* to convey both the idea of strong, interlocking rings and high skill, while compounding with *-ponc* to anticipate *besmipod*, thus recalling the link between the archetypal craftsman's manual and mental faculties. The chain of thought thus literally 'forged' by the variation of ideas beautifully undergirds the poet's memorable description of Heorot's structural quality. These are just some of the shades of meaning with which Old English poets are able to use *searo* in subtle, and often idiosyncratic, plays on multiple meaning for effect.

An interesting parallel is provided by the use of *searo* in *Andreas*. As mentioned above, *Andreas* has often been compared to *Beowulf* as scholars have noted strong verbal correspondences between the two poems. Since the late nineteenth century, Anglo-Saxonists have debated whether these verbal correspondences are more than just a virtue of the formulaic nature of Old English verse, and whether the *Andreas*-poet borrowed directly from *Beowulf*.<sup>50</sup> The verbal correspondences between the two poems with regard to the use of *searo* and its compounds are striking. However, the *Andreas*-poet employs *searo* in a different contextual environment, deftly manipulating the meaning of traditional formulae.

*Andreas* begins by introducing Matthew's expedition among the cannibalistic race of the Mermedonians, undertaken with the intent of converting the heathen race. They immediately imprison him. What is interesting is that both parties are first introduced in relation to – as well as opposed through – their *craft*. Matthew is said to compose the gospels *wundorcraft*, 'through wondrous *craft* / skill' (l.13), whereas the Mermedonians, who are said to be given to the pursuit of confusing the minds of their prisoners through a monstrous drink, accomplish their evil deeds *þurh dwolcraft*, 'through the heretical *craft*' (l.34). *Andreas* thus immediately sets up a paradigm that views the contentions between the two parties as a morally charged battle of skills. In the

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<sup>50</sup> For a detailed account of the history of the debate about the *Andreas*-poet's indebtedness to *Beowulf* and an analysis of Peters's argument, see A. Riedinger, 'The Formulaic Relationship Between *Beowulf* and *Andreas*', in *Heroic Poetry in the Anglo-Saxon Period: Studies in Honour of Jess B. Bessinger, Jr.* (Kalamazoo, MI; 1993), pp.283-312. But cf. L. Peters, 'The Relationship of the Old English *Andreas* to *Beowulf*', *PMLA* 66 (1951), 844-63.

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following analysis, I will establish what skill the Mermedonians are said to exercise through *dwolcraeft*, and focus on the poem's manipulation of *searo* by looking at a number of examples that mirror its use in *Beowulf*.<sup>51</sup> The first is Matthew complaining about his chains in captivity:

Hu me elþeodige inwitwrasne  
searonet seowað.<sup>52</sup>

(Alas, how the foreigners have sewn for me a mailcoat bound up with ancient strife.)

The second is God comforting Matthew and promising to secure his release:

Nis seo þrah micel  
þæt þe wærlogan witebendum,  
synnige ðurh searocraeft, swencan motan.<sup>53</sup>

(It will not be for long that these covenant-breakers, sinful through their *searo*-skills (chain-skills/chain-power/treachery?) will be allowed to torment you with chains of torture.)

The poet here not only employs the same diction as the *Beowulf*-poet, but also uses *searo* with identical meaning, only in an inverted context, thus playing on the negative figurative meaning of *searo* evidenced in the homily tradition (*BT* sense II). While the plain sense of 'treachery' is active on the surface, the poet's use of *searo* plays with the core meaning of the term to denote the Mermedonians imprisoning Matthew. The interlocking rings used to bind him are chains, and, in parallel to *Beowulf*, they constitute his *searonet*. The Mermedonians, through their *searocraeft*, thus arm Matthew for his spiritual fight against evil. In this case, however, the intricate chainmail is bound up with ancient strife (*inwitwrasne searonet*), not with ancient protective craft. Their skill is that of *wærlogan* or 'covenant-breakers', and not that of *wundorsmiþa* (*Beowulf*, l.1681). They have chosen to break their alliance with God, though it is uncertain what the terms of the covenant

<sup>51</sup> My discussion here will focus on uses of *searo* and references to binding. For the exact meaning inherent in this compound use of *craeft*, please refer to my discussion of the 'old' meaning of *craeft* in Chapter Four.

<sup>52</sup> Cited from *Andreas and The Fates of the Apostles*, ed. K. R. Brooks (Oxford, 1961), ll.63-4b.

<sup>53</sup> ll.107b-9.

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were. In the Old Testament, the Noachic covenant forbids murder and the consumption of red meat, arguably both faults the Mermedonians are guilty of. However, they are also described as *synnigne ðurh searocraft*, which appears to indicate that the covenant was broken as a result of their creative activity.

In between the two examples cited above, which are only forty lines apart, the poet also refers to the Mermedonians as *wrohtsmiðas* (l.87, and later, more elusively, as *larsmeoðas* in l.1220). This term is glossed as ‘workers of iniquity’ or ‘workers of crime’ in what is to date the most influential reference material to the poem (Brooks and *BT*). These translations fail to do justice to the poet’s attempt to build an extended smith-metaphor.<sup>54</sup> Through this, *Andreas* provides a deliberate point of contrast with the role of the smith in traditional heroic lore. Like Weland, the Mermedonians fabricate intricate trappings for the hero, who, unlike the secular hero, but like the martyrs of some Old English Saints’ Lives must do battle through passive endurance. The same inversion is also found in later passages that tell of Andreas’s captivity.<sup>55</sup> The primary meaning of *searo* is still the concrete, object-denoting one, and these examples do not easily fit in *BT*’s category number II, where we find them. While at all times working with *searo*’s capacity to extend to the ‘bad sense’, the poem’s use of the term transcends this narrow sense to reflect a complex cultural paradigm. Realising the artistic import of the passages discussed here involves reading *searo* as we read it in *Beowulf*. In light of this, *BT*’s categories are unhelpful and unrealistic.

The inversion of the heroic world found in *Beowulf* is further continued in the description of the Mermedonians as warriors. Their so-called coats of mail do not emit the elevating type of song that we may find in *Beowulf*. Instead they seem to produce a jarring, almost screeching sound, as can be seen in the following half-line: *Guðsearo gullon* (‘Their mailcoats screeched’, l. 127b).

<sup>54</sup> But see M. E. Bridges, *Generic Contrast in Old English Hagiographical Poetry* (Copenhagen, 1984), proposing at pp.191-4 that the poet’s application of *searo* to the Mermedonians corresponds to an inversion of the sapiential motif attributed to Andreas, parodying the saint’s instruction of the faithful.

<sup>55</sup> *þa se halga wæs searohancum beseted* (‘Then the holy one was beset by chain-thoughts/binding intentions’, *Andreas*, l.1253); *Wæs se halga wer / sare geswungen, searwum gebunden, / dolgbennum þurhdrifen, ðendon dæg lihte* (‘The holy man was sorely beaten, put into chains/bound with treachery, inflicted with deep wounds, as the day dawned’, *Andreas*, ll.1395b-97).

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This half-line occurs in a passage describing how the Mermedonians throng around the prison the day after Matthew's capture, because they want to eat him. This description is rendered in the traditional diction of the Old English battle-type scene, but their bold move disintegrates into a frenzied push and shove, as by some official letter they themselves composed they must wait for another three days before they may devour him. Similarly they fail to live up to the epithet that the coast-guard used in awe of the appearance of Beowulf's troop. In fact, on one level, the use of *searohæbbende* in *Andreas* seems to be even more literal than the meaning I suggested for its use in *Beowulf* – simply that of somebody in possession of chains, in the following example:

Ne scealt ðu nu in henðum a leng  
searohæbbendra sar þrowian.<sup>56</sup>

(Nor shall you now suffer the torment of the chain-owners/the jailers any longer.)

My translation here is only partial, as the original is able to convey the qualitative difference between the meaning provided by the context (the Mermedonians as enslavers of the saint) and that of the traditional referent (the hero in armour). This can also be found in the following lines:

Meoduserwen wearð  
æfter symbeldæge, slæpe tobrugdon  
searuhæbbende.<sup>57</sup>

(After the day of feasting there was a deprivation of mead; the chain-owners started from sleep.)

Whereas the *Beowulf*-poet employs *searo* as a motif building up the hero's stature, the use of the term in *Andreas* serves to highlight the anti-heroic, wretched nature of the Mermedonians. As they are about to receive their just deserts, these false warriors (*searuhæbbende*) are shown to be deprived of the mead-dispensing hall-system which constitutes the social structure of the Anglo-

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<sup>56</sup> ll.1467b-8a.

<sup>57</sup> ll.1526b-8a.

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Saxon warrior's life. The *Andreas*-poet uses *searo* as a polysemous term which is semantically determined by register. It is possible to superficially read all of the above instances of *searo* only as expressions of the Mermedonians' contriving spirit, their wiles and their deceits – in line with the homiletic use of the term. However, the poem's intricate play with language and heroic register, as well as its artistic merits are only realised when *searo* is read with its more concrete meaning.

It is this very concrete meaning that acquires a negative colouring, as the *Andreas* poet depicts the traditional heroic associations of *searo* very unfavourably. In order to be granted passage to Mermedonia, Andreas emphatically states that he does not own any *locenra beaga* ('locked rings' l.304; to convey that he is too poor to pay a fare, but also that he is pure enough to go on board). During the voyage he tells his travel companions (Christ and two angels) an anecdote from the life of Jesus, mocking the notion of *searo* while recounting how on one occasion Christ sought to convert people to his teachings in a temple. On that day, Jesus gets angry and starts to reprimand the people around him for not listening to his words. Soon after, his attention gets caught by the beauty of angel figures chiselled into the wall of the temple. Jesus commands one of them to come down from the wall and speak. The figure comes alive to rebuke the faithless:

Septe sacerdas sweotolum tacnum,  
 witig werede, ond worde cwæð:  
 'Ge synd unlæde, earmra gepohta  
 searowum beswicene, oððe sel nyton,  
 mode gemyrde.'<sup>58</sup>

(In possession of intelligence, it taugt and rebuked the priests by clear tokens: 'You are wretches, led astray by the shackles/by the products/the connivings of despicable thoughts, or else, being confused, you do not know better.)

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<sup>58</sup> ll.742-46b.

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Christ here asserts creative superiority by appropriating the heathen artefact, and showing that it is under his command. It is especially ironic that the artefact then starts to rebuke the heathens for letting themselves be led astray by *searo*, which, thus opposed to the beautifully chiselled statues which Christ is able to instill with rational intelligence, appears as a limited human capability far inferior to divine craft. As they fail to be convinced by God's creative might, Christ summons the artefact, described as *þryðweorc* or 'mighty work', to leave and spread the gospel. The stone goes on to resurrect Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, who then preach to a terrified audience of renegades. The mastery over the products of human craftsmanship here displayed goes hand in hand with the poem's manipulation of the notion of *searo* into an inferior, unglamorous form of craftsmanship. This manipulation serves to undo the notion of a worthy, highly skilled, and ingenious artificer like Weland, and putting in its stead the monstrous, devilish and despicable race of the Mermedonians. If the skill of the Mermedonians is termed heretical (*dwolcraeft*) at the beginning of the narrative, this is because in the eyes of the poet their particular type of craft – *searo* – is antagonistic to God.

The above analysis shows that the *Andreas*-poet is skilfully adapting traditional expressions that incorporate the notion of *searo*, and playing with the term's semantic range across two different traditions, one of which appears to be the heroic tradition as represented in *Beowulf*, while the other is mostly evident in post-Alfredian prose, notably in later Anglo-Saxon homiletic literature, exemplified by the citation from the *Blickling Homilies* at the beginning of my discussion. The poet's very invocation of these traditions, however, allows us to infer that his audience was able to comprehend *searo* not only as a piece of armour, not only as a notion of skill, and not only as a concept of treachery, but that it was aware of a meaning that indicated an artefact made with an interlocking pattern, such an interlace filigree ornament, or chainmail, or quite simply chains. If the term denotes skill in compounds such as *searophonc* or adverbially in *searolice* or *searwum*, it seems that the very skill to contrive these artefacts is invoked. This is corroborated by the fact that *searo* never denotes skill as a simplex, except through the adverbial use of the dative case. In other words 'skilful' equates 'searo-like', like the evidence of refinement found in the miniscule filigree pattern on a brooch, for example. The meaning of skill is

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constructed through context, and often facilitated by variation with other notions of skill. *Searo* is thus intimately associated with the smith's craft in particular. It may be this very association which is responsible for the pejoration of *searo*.

This is indicated by the fact that *searo* remains closely associated with both chains and binding and with elements observed in Chapter One, such as the creative drive which antagonises God. In fact, *searo* comes to denote the prime means of hellish imprisonment, which also correspond to the trappings of redemption in the Anglo-Saxon imagination. That the meaning of *searo* as a means of imprisonment was not just confined to *Andreas* is shown by two interesting examples from other contexts. In the *Letter of Alexander to Aristotle*, transmitted in the *Beowulf* manuscript, the anonymous translator mistranslates the concept of *serratus* (past participle of 'to saw', 'serrated') in reference to the shape of a monster's back as *acæglod*, 'fastened with a bolt / a key'.<sup>59</sup> He seems to have been inspired here by the Latin's proximity to *searo*, and his erroneous translation implies that he was aware of the term's full range.

In *Exodus*, where *searo* occurs three times denoting arms and armour (ll.219, 471 and 573), one occurrence stands out as an interesting parallel. As the Egyptians are caught out by the wall of water that is about to crash down on them, they are described as *on cwealme / fæste gefeterod [...]* *searwum asæled* ('fettered fast in death, sealed in their armour', ll.469-70a and l.471a).<sup>60</sup> *Searo* here seems to denote both their armour and the physical impairment that it constitutes (in that they are slow in running away). It is also apparent that it is an invocation of the idea that the Egyptians are (or are soon to be) in Hell ('fettered fast in their death'). The Old Testament location of Egypt was associated figuratively with the smithy, as this land is twice referred to as an iron furnace in the Old Testament: Deuteronomy 4:20 and Jeremiah 11:4. It is also significant that the Egyptians (or their entertainers) are described as *hleahtorsmiðas* ('laughter-smiths', l.43) at the beginning of the poem. Ostensibly the passage refers to the ceasing of all forms of merriment as a result of the plagues which have beset them. The *hleahtorsmiðas* are said to have their hands bound (*Wæron*

<sup>59</sup> H. D. Meritt, *Fact and Lore about Old English Words* (Stanford, CA; 1954), p.5.

<sup>60</sup> *Exodus*, ed. P. Lucas (Exeter, 1977).

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*hleahtorsmiðum handa belocene*). Beyond denoting imprisonment, these uses of *searo* connect with a narrative tradition which emerges out of the depictions of smiths encountered above. Like Weland, the smiths who were previously binders (Weland a binder of objects, the Egyptians binders of people) find themselves bound or imprisoned in return. These figures often bring that reversal of fate upon themselves because their initial act of binding was considered unlawful. The Egyptians are bound in retribution for holding the Israelites captive. In *Andreas* the Mermedonians are thrown into an abyss and sealed into the earth because they have antagonised and imprisoned God's messenger. At l.1168 the appearance of the devil in the narrative confirms that the setting of the poem in the land of Mermedonia represents hell. The devil himself is dubbed *hellehinca* ('hell-hobbler', l.1171) by the poet, in reference to the injury he was popularly believed to have sustained during the Fall. Additionally, this sobriquet was likely to have resonated with the audience on a different level. Contextually framed by the smith-metaphor applied to his devilish helpers, the Mermedonians, the limping devil would have recalled the famously lamed captive of Niðhad, and possibly even Hephaistos/Vulcan of Greco-Roman lore. Although Weland, a craftsman who otherwise commands a high degree of admiration, seems at first somewhat removed from this narrative, the poetic details that I called attention to in my analysis of *Deor* – the *wurmas*, the sinew-chains, the reference to exile – connect this smith directly with his more nefarious counterparts.

The association of *searo* with Hell is very pronounced in eleventh-century homiletic material and saints' lives, and I would like to briefly trace this usage back to its potential origins. It occurs with great frequency in the writings of Ælfric and Wulfstan, and we thus know that their use of the word reached a wide audience. However, unlike the *Andreas*-poet, they employ the word without any indication of the primary meaning that it holds in the poetic medium, or in other types of the prose genre. Indeed, most of the time their usage can be translated as 'insidiousness', as in the following example:

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Ure wiðerwinna is witodlice se deofol, þe embe us swicað mid his searacræftum, þæt he us fordo and us drihtne ætbrede.<sup>61</sup>

(Our antagonist is truly the devil, who deceives us with his *searacræftum*, in that he seduces us and takes us away from God.)

In Ælfric's writings, the notion of *searocræft* always comes in close proximity to the devil. His notion is most likely directly derived from the usage of *searo* as a gloss in the interlinear translations of psalters during the Benedictine Reform period, in which *searo* consistently constitutes the *interpretamentum* for the Latin *insidia*.<sup>62</sup> Indeed Hofstetter has shown that Ælfric uses language specific to the big translation projects of the Benedictine reform.<sup>63</sup> The notion of Winchester usage will come under more scrutiny in Chapter Three. Here, it will suffice to note this dependence. The origins of the Benedictine gloss are harder to pinpoint, though the Anglo-Saxon gloss and prose corpus contains two possible influences. The first is the introduction of a law against *hlafordsearo* into the Anglo-Saxon law text under the reign of Alfred. This is the action of plotting to take the life of one's lord or one's king, and is punishable by death and integral dispossession in the worst case:

Gif hwa ymb cyninges feorh sierwe, ðurh hine oððe ðurh wreccena feormunge oððe his manna, sie he his feores scyldig 7 ealles þæs ðe he age.<sup>64</sup>

(If anyone should plot against the life of the king, through himself, or through the harbouring of exiles, or through his men, he shall be guilty with his life and all that he owns.)

This new law, which we know resulted in at least one lawsuit in the first half of the tenth century in the reign of King Æthelstan,<sup>65</sup> seems to resonate in a number of literary works, for instance in a

<sup>61</sup> Ælfric, 'Letter to Wulfgeat', in *Angelsächsische Homilien und Heiligenleben*, ed. B. Assmann, BaP 3, repr. with intro. by P. Clemons (Darmstadt 1964), ll.120-3.

<sup>62</sup> DOE Web Corpus.

<sup>63</sup> W. Hofstetter, *Winchester und der spätenglische Sprachgebrauch* (Munich, 1987), pp.38-66. Ælfric prefers the use of Winchester vocabulary 98.27% of the time for the semantic fields that Hofstetter identifies (at p.38).

<sup>64</sup> 'The Law Code of Alfred and Ine', Item 5, *Die Gesetze der Angelsachsen*, Vol I, ed. F. Liebermann (Halle, 1898).

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discussion between God and Adam after the Fall, where the former asks him *hu geworhte ic þæt* [...] *þæt þu me þus swiðe searo renodest* ('what did I do [...] that made you plot against me thus') (*Genesis A*, ll.2674b and 2679). Going further back, there is one curious instance in the gloss tradition which seems to contain a negative understanding of *searo*: a gloss found in both the Corpus Glossary and the Épinal-Erfurt Glossary, which reads 'yripeon hereseorum' (Y.6 and 1100 respectively).<sup>66</sup> The lemma is a Greek word in Anglicised spelling, and it should properly read *aireseaw* for 'heresies', and the *interpretamentum* should therefore read as the Latin *haeresiarum*. While the coupling of *heresearu* ('mailcoat', 'wargear') and heresy may be a mistake, we cannot exclude the fact that it might either have been influenced by or have influenced in turn, a connection which is very apparent in Old English smith narratives. In this respect, it is an echo – accidental or deliberate – of the association of both *dwolcraft* and *searo* with Mermedonian smiths in *Andreas*. Previous editors have interpreted *hereseorum* as a ghost-word,<sup>67</sup> but in light of our discussion above, the apparent misunderstanding seems perhaps a little too coincidental to be dismissed so quickly. It is possible that any or all of the above helped influence the notion of *searo* as it appeared in *Andreas*. Ultimately, however, its development appears to be intimately linked to the interaction of the two traditions I outlined in Chapter One, and to the image of Hell that is so predominant both there and in relation to *searo*. I shall further explore this interaction below.

### The craftsman in the Harrowing-of-Hell narrative

While playing on the traditional meanings of *searo* in his poem and confronting them with the context created by the plot of his story, the *Andreas*-poet also invokes what appears to have been a well-known motif in Anglo-Saxon literature: a play on the relationship of the craftsman and the act

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<sup>65</sup> P. Wormald, 'A Handlist of Anglo-Saxon Lawsuits', *ASE* 17 (1988), 247-81, item 30.

<sup>66</sup> Numbers refer to *An Eighth-Century Latin-Anglo-Saxon Glossary*, ed. J. H. Hessels (Cambridge, 1890) and *Old English Glosses in the Épinal-Erfurt Glossary*, ed. J. D. Pfeifer (Oxford, 1974).

<sup>67</sup> Cf. Pfeifer, *Glosses*, p.135.

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of enchaining, which involves the binder (artist or other) turning into the one that is bound up. As my analysis of the semantic range of binding has shown, traditional language tends to express both the notion of imprisonment and acts of creation as a process of binding, often specifically described as an act of enchaining. Thus, God's creation is found to be *bestryþed fæste/ miclum meahhtlocum* ('covered fast with great locks of might') and Heorot is *fæste [...] irenbendum / searopuncum besmipod* ('firmly constructed [...] with iron bands, with skilful fetters'). The archetypal craftsman is a forger of chains, and the superlative artefact is reinforced or enriched through a chain-like device or ornament. However, this motif is not as straightforward as it appears. As we have seen in the analysis of perceptions of smiths, these tend to be polarized, with some smiths appearing almost saintly, while others are despised, reprobate, and even demonised types. The representation of their activity, whether literal or metaphoric, shares that polarization.

I briefly analysed Stephen of Ripon's depiction of smiths in Chapter 38 of his *Vita Wilfredi* in Chapter One, noting how they are portrayed as God's antagonists performing a creative act of chain-making that contravenes his purpose. This account is relatively harmless in comparison to the contravention that is seen occurring in *Genesis B*. Here Lucifer attempts to compete directly with God's primal creative essence. As a result, he is banished into hell, where he experiences a highly idiosyncratic version of the Fall. In fact, the poem appears original in its distinctive use of a catalogue of chains. Satan is completely fettered, and unable to move. It might be argued that these chains are only symbolic, conjured up through repetition in his lengthy speech, where they figure *as irenbenda, racentan sal, hringa gespong, sliðhearda sal*, and where he describes his hands as *gebundene, gehæfte*.<sup>68</sup> However, as the plot develops, the extent of Satan's confinement becomes apparent. He laments that he does not even have the use of his hands (l.368), which prompts him to persuade one of his fellow fallen angels to seek out Adam and Eve in disguise. Satan himself remains chained in hell during the temptation of mankind. However, the narrative makes a point of stressing *feondes cræfte* ('the fiend's cleverness') and though Satan cannot escape his prison, he is

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<sup>68</sup> The speech extends from ll.356-441a and is interrupted by the textual lacuna. The catalogue of chains is mainly concentrated between ll.371-385a.

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able to devise a plan to bring about the fall of man with the help of a messenger (which includes the construction of a feather-coat to escape hell). He remains the mastermind of the fall, and, though chained, can still perform his craft in a different way. I shall examine the nature of this craftsmanship in relation to the poem's use of *craft* in Chapter Four. In its imagery of chaining, and the reference to a feathercoat this narrative bears a distinct resemblance to the Weland myth. Before discussing these similarities in more detail, I would like to draw attention to a potential source of the chain motif.

The importance of this motif is replicated in the illustration of this scene of Junius 11 (p.20), where we can find the earliest instance of its incorporation into the Genesis artistic tradition.<sup>69</sup> Satan here is fettered both hand and foot and tortured by demons whipping him over the hellfire. The artist is thought to have had no direct model for this scene, and he thus had to adapt a scene from either the Harrowing of Hell or the Apocalypse to represent the plots of *Genesis B*.<sup>70</sup> Interestingly, this is the same place that the narrative detail is thought to have come from. The binding of Satan at the Apocalypse (Rev. XX:1-3) was interpolated into commentaries on the first book of Genesis by the Church Fathers, and can also be found in early Christian Latin poetry composed on the Continent.

It is notably in the context of the early Church that the imagery of chains and bondage invoked in the contexts we have been discussing is likely to have originated. Iraneus was the first person to interpret literally Mark 10:45 that 'the Son of Man has come to give his life as ransom for many.'<sup>71</sup> The story of redemption is one which begins with man chained in hell through his sin, and Christ's death was necessary so that he could quite literally enter hell and deliver the human race from the devil's bondage. This idea is also prominent in the commentary of Origen and it was

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<sup>69</sup> T. Ohlgren, 'The Illustrations of the Cædmonian Genesis: Literary Criticism Through Art', in *Medievalia et Humanistica*, n.s. 3 (1972), 199-212, at p.204.

<sup>70</sup> *Op.cit.*, p.204; As Ohlgren points out (in n15 and n18, p.211), B. Raw has identified several drawings of Satan bound in English and Carolingian MSS, and she identifies a drawing of the Harrowing of Hell from the mid-eleventh century BL, Cotton Tiberius C.VI (The Tiberius Psalter) as possible model for the illustrator of Junius 11. (In her MA thesis, 'The Story of the Fall of Man and of the Angels in MS Junius 11 and the Relationship of the Manuscript Illustrations to the Text' (University of London, 1953), directed by F. Wormald.) It is also possible that the poet used a Spanish model figuring Satan bound at the Apocalypse.

<sup>71</sup> T. Rendall, 'Bondage and Freeing from Bondage in Old English Religious Poetry', *JEGP* 63 (1974), 497-512, at pp.498-9.

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championed by Augustine, and was formally adopted by the Church through the inclusion of a verse referring to the Harrowing of Hell in the Apostle's Creed at the Fourth Synod of Sirmium in 359.<sup>72</sup> In Old English literature, the story finds its poetic expression in the description of the plight of the fallen man as subjected to a constant binding and unbinding. While *The Wanderer* plays on the theme of exile as prison, its diction also invokes the notion of a story of redemption, which is achieved towards the end with the modulation into a Christian perspective at l.111 invoking a reality beyond the wanderer's misery in the form of Heaven. Nero's persecution of Peter and Paul is memorably described as *Nerones nearwe searwe* ('Nero's constrictive skill/binding', l.13b) in *The Fates of the Apostles*. This perfect rhyme highlights the connotations of binding inherent in *searo*, as well as the significance of Nero's agency in apostlehood becoming *wide geweorðod* (l.15a).

Scholars have long noted the relevance of the narrative of the Harrowing of Hell for the analysis of Old English literature. With regard to our discussion of *Andreas* it is worth pointing out an article by Hieatt arguing convincingly that Mermedonia is a symbol of hell, and that the poem's typology is extended through Andrew's rescue of Matthew and others, signifying the unbinding by Jesus of Satan's captives.<sup>73</sup> To her analysis I would add that the portrayal of the Mermedonians as smiths appears to tap into a tradition that places those craftsmen at the centre of the redemption story. In Chapter One, we saw that in the least favourable depictions of smiths, they are either devils themselves, or they are confined to hell as sinful. As I showed above, *Andreas* depicts the Mermedonians as fiendish smiths, as creators of *searo* – a notion generally associated with superlative craftsmanship, but here restricted to a debased form of binding. As Andrew himself takes on the role of the suffering captive ultimately released through divine intervention, it is worth noting how he sports a characteristic of the confined smith of Germanic lore during his ordeal. As the saint lies bound and tormented, he cries out lamenting that *nu sint sionwe toslopen* ('Now my sinews are loosened', l.1425), paralleling Weland's confinement by

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<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, p.500.

<sup>73</sup> C. E. Hieatt, 'The Harrowing of Mermedonia: Typological Patterns in the Old English *Andreas*', *NM* 77 (1976), 49-62.

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hamstringing. Chapter One revealed a complex picture of the extant representations of smiths, capable of being associated with Christ as well as the devil. Chapter Two uncovers an intensification of this duality on the level of the creative act of binding. In *Andreas*, this duality is reconciled as it is integrated into an overall story of redemption. Rather than being a mere consequence of the adoption of the Harrowing of Hell typology into Old English poetry, this concept is brought to life in verse, with a considerable complication of the notion of who is bound and who is the binder.

Returning to my initial discussion of the binding of Weland in *Deor*, it would seem that the idiosyncratic rendering of the hamstringing of Weland by Niðhad cannot be fully explained by trying to do justice to the literal detail of the wound inflicted to him, nor is it simply a type of Boethian confinement. Rather, it is an allusion to Weland as an archetypal smith who suffered a reversal in fortunes and is now confined by his very own means of creation. In this context, it makes sense not to advocate an emendation of *Deor's swoncre seonobende*, not least because of a potential instance of punning on *searobend*. Weland's constraint also shares the bind-loose paradox evident in Andrew's own restriction (*searo/bend/etc. vs. swoncre/toslopen*). The indication that Weland's affliction is temporary is indicative of a further reversal mirroring the story of redemption favoured by Anglo-Saxon writers.

An interesting parallel to the legend of Weland in *Deor* is provided by *Vǫlundarkviða*. As mentioned above in Chapter One, this supposedly pre-Christian poem presents a fully-fledged account of the story of the legendary smith, but with certain additional Lappish and Icelandic features to it. This poem develops the notion of enchainment before the smith is captured by King Niðhad. Thus Vǫlundr, mourning his bride's disappearance, forges 'closed rings' (*lukði hann alla / lindbauga vel 6/3-4*)<sup>74</sup> which he threads on a rope (*bauga dregna 8/6*). It is especially interesting that it seems to be this activity which attracts the greedy king and his men, and that after falling asleep he wakes up bound in chains (*nauðir 12/6*). The Old Norse poem has of course very distinct stylistic, generic and national sensibilities which make it fundamentally different from Old English

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<sup>74</sup> *Edda* II, ed. Dronke, pp.244-54.

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poetry. Nevertheless, we may appreciate a comparison with *Deor* with regard to its portrayal of creation and imprisonment. Scholars have indeed noted linguistic similarities between this poem and *Deor*, for instance in the use of *nauðir* ~ *nede* as means of imprisonment, as well as of *barni aukin* ~ *eacén*, used to describe Böðvildr's and Beadohild's pregnancy.<sup>75</sup> Since *barni aukin* is not recorded elsewhere in Old Norse, but *eacén* is very common in Old English, it is thought that the Norse poem is based on a now lost Old English poem, from which *Deor* also derives.<sup>76</sup> This is further supported by the fact that *Vǫlundarkviða* features another three likely loanwords from Old English: *gim* 'jewel' (6/2; OE *gim*), *lióði* 'lord' (11/3; OE *leod*) and *iarkasteina* 'gems' (25/10, OE *eorcnanstanas*).<sup>77</sup>

This connection is interesting for the way *Vǫlundr*'s creative activity is presented in the poem. Dronke interprets *lukði hann alla / lindbauga vel* as the smith forging closed rings, which he then strings on a bast cord, comparing it with 8/5-6 *sá þeir / á bast bauga dregna*. ('they saw threaded rings on a rope of bast'). However, both expressions seem to suggest more than a just the action of stringing rings on a cord. Dronke herself notes that *lindi* 'belt' is 'thought to be so called from the plaited linden-bast of which it is made.'<sup>78</sup> Equally, the expression *á bast bauga dregna* in 8/6 could also suggest rings threaded in the manner of (plaited) bast. This would indicate that *Vǫlundr* is forging a chain of interlocking rings, something which would not be out of place in a poem in which diverse notions of captivity, isolation and restraint are a major theme.<sup>79</sup> It is perhaps no accident that such an image is contained in a section of the poem which also features three words thought to have been derived directly from Old English. If *Vǫlundarkviða* was indeed so precisely inspired by an Old English version of the story here, we might venture to suggest that the image of

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<sup>75</sup> Dronke, *Edda* II, p.276.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, p.277.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, p.308.

<sup>79</sup> It is interesting that, apart from the well-known story of *Vǫlundr*'s capture, and the fates of the people involved in it, this poem also contains a distinctive notion of 'lack of freedom' (determinism) in the opening stanzas, where *Vǫlundr*'s and his wife are 'divorced' by *nauðr* ('unavoidable necessity', 'lack for freedom', 'slavery', 3/6), cf. Dronke, p.307.

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Vǫlundr forging a chain in this passage could have been derived from the Old English poem.<sup>80</sup>

This is ultimately very reminiscent of the theme we have observed throughout this chapter.

Paradoxically the chain seems to be tantamount to his autonomy. The removing of the ring by one of Niðuðr's men inverses the power relationship, Vǫlundr becomes weak (with emotion), and they become masters of the chain, and of his person. It is also Vǫlundr's craftsmanship under captivity (the revenge acts, and the execution of his *vél*) that seem to enable his escape from captivity at the end. It is notably the motif of chain-forging as it is presented towards the beginning of the poem that seems to borrow an Anglo-Saxon motif.

It is possible to extend this analysis to the polarized depictions of smiths in Anglo-Saxon England. While smiths can be diabolical, they can also appear saint-like, as agents of God's purpose. This dualism appears problematic, and I raised the question of whether a change in perception occurred at a specific point in time or in a period of Anglo-Saxon literature. In order to illuminate this question, I would like to return to my discussion of *Andreas* by examining the relevance of the wider typological scheme in the poem. Earl has interpreted the poem as a story about conversion, analysing in detail its use of the imagery of baptism.<sup>81</sup> After the recession of the floods which freed Andrew but swallowed a handful of Mermedonians (*ða wyrrestan / faa folcsceaðan*, 'the worst of the enemies of the people', ll.1592b-3a) and confined them to the centre of the earth, there follows the submission/conversion of the rest of the tribe, who are fearful that the same fate might befall them. Andrew, however, through intercession with Christ, then proceeds to resurrect the Mermedonian youth and they return to the surface of the earth where they are equally baptised. In this context, the reference to Weland as a *wræccan* in the highly positive depiction of his person in the C-Text of the Old English Boethius is also significant. The reference implies that Weland was once in exile, but his portrayal indicates that he has overcome this state and is now a paragon of wisdom, associated with *cræft*. In other words, *wræccan* alludes to a

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<sup>80</sup> Dronke suggests that the Old Norse poet would have heard this poem being recited and remembered specific words and scenes for the composition of his own poem. See also McKinnell, 'The Context of *Vǫlundarkviða*'.

<sup>81</sup> J. Earl, 'The Typological Structure of *Andreas*', in *Old English Literature in Context*, ed. J. D. Niles (Cambridge, 1980), pp.66-89.

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redemptive story arc in what is ostensibly just a static reference. I will return to this reference at the end of Chapter Five, where the full connotations inherent in this reference, and the nature of the redemption at hand, will unfold.

The notion of *searo* features prominently in our extant corpus, and provides an important conception of creation that is intimately connected with the practical pursuit of metalworking. It is integrated more broadly into a semantic field of binding with which it shares notions of creative excellence and transferable properties such as stability and protection, as well as more negative connotations of imprisonment and exile. This is most apparent in the comparison of the formulaic uses of *searo* in *Beowulf* to those in *Andreas*, where we can observe an inverted, anti-heroic application of the notion of the term. This notion is associated with heterodoxy and heresy in the poem, and the Mermedonians are cast as hellish smiths. I have shown how this alternate usage of *searo* is part of the literary tradition which demonises craftsmen, as their method or purpose of creation antagonises God's own purpose. While it may have been influenced by a number of linguistic developments in non-literary environments, such as the inclusion of the notion of *heafodsearo* into the Alfredian law-code, it belongs within a version of the Harrowing of Hell myth that incorporated extended metaphors of craftsmanship and used the semantic field of binding. We might point to the term's enduring usage in this environment, evident not only through such direct applications as in *Andreas* or *Exodus*, but also in the uses of different notions of binding in similar narrative contexts. As a result of this, it would appear that *searo* lost its moral neutrality as a term for craftsmanship outside of the traditional heroic genre. The next two chapters will consider two terms, *orþanc* and *cræft*, which are found to fill the gaps left open by this semantic harrowing of *searo*.

**CHAPTER THREE*****Orþanc*: Poeticism and a Winchester Word**

In the previous chapter I noted the apparent near-synonymy of the various terms denoting craftsmanship in Old English. This quality is perhaps nowhere more apparent than in the relationship between *searo* and *orþanc*, which are found to be intimately linked through poetic variation, as well as being matched to the same terms in glossaries and a handful of textual glosses, in some of which they both appear to display a tendency for semantic pejoration. While this chapter starts off by considering the nature of this semantic affiliation, its main aim is to establish the meaning of *orþanc* in its own right, as a term for craftsmanship intrinsically different from the notion of *searo*. I will show that it not only holds fundamentally different connotations in poetry, it also wields a strongly independent and prolific authority in Anglo-Saxon glossed texts and glossaries. There, I reveal, it circulates within a closed tradition that can be linked to the Benedictine reform movement at Winchester and the well-documented love for obscure words and the Latin hermeneutic style of the key figures involved in the movement. I argue that *orþanc* is, in fact, a feature of a vernacular hermeneutic style as evidenced by its use in the Exeter Book *Riddles*, and in *The Dialogues of Solomon and Saturn*. I also trace its relationship to *mechanica*, a notion of craftsmanship which enters the Anglo-Latin sphere long before it becomes an accepted branch in the medieval division of knowledge.

First, however, some important considerations apply. To a large extent, the quality of near-synonymy appears through our inability, real or perceived, to recover the subtle connotations of Old English words, many of which were most likely more eloquent in their contemporary context. Thus, Ullman's dictum that 'even the most sensitive critic will often be unable to recapture the

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evanescent overtones of words in older texts'<sup>1</sup> must give us pause to reflect on the extent to which such an endeavour will be limited by our distance to the Anglo-Saxon language.<sup>2</sup> As others have noted, there is a real necessity to address the question of the nature of meaning, for instance: was it always shared between poet and audience?<sup>3</sup> Old English poetry in particular displays a huge number of near-synonyms, for instance for 'man' and 'warrior' (*guma, beorn, hæleþ, rinc, secg; man, wiga*) and for 'sword' (*sweord, mece, heoru, edg, bil*), and we cannot acknowledge for certain whether some of these words would have had a specialised meaning for the audience, or even the poet.<sup>4</sup> Moreover, as will become evident later in this chapter, some writers had a predilection for a *recherché* style and arcane, highly-learned meanings, which appear to have been designed with a very intimate, if any, audience in mind.

In the case of *orþanc*, a somewhat limited occurrence of 58 known instances in the existing corpus, predominantly in glosses, is both a potential help and hindrance in the analysis of its meaning.<sup>5</sup> While it is easier to isolate meanings by identifying their relationship, careful consideration must be given to the possibility that findings are skewed by a non-representative transmission. My chapter will address this issue throughout.

### ***Orþanc* and *searo*: An initial appreciation of similarities and differences in meaning**

From a de-contextualised perspective, *orþanc* is very different from *searo*. Unlike the latter, which, as we have seen above, works with a very concrete meaning, never far below the surface in even the most figurative applications of the word, *orþanc* seems *a priori* an abstract notion. It is a

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<sup>1</sup> Ullmann, *Semantics*, p.140.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. D. Kastovsky, 'Semantics', p.298.

<sup>3</sup> Godden, 'Literary Language', at p.499.

<sup>4</sup> Some of the terms, notably *guma, beorn, hæleþ, rinc, secg, mece* and *heoru*, have been identified as poetic usages, but no further specifications have been possible.

<sup>5</sup> Because of the ongoing discovery of a good number of scratched glosses in manuscripts pertaining to similar traditions as those containing the glossaries and glosses discussed here, we cannot exclude the future addition of newly-discovered scratched *orþanc* glosses to this number.

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compound word, whose first element is generally accepted to be *or* (with a long vowel), the old English word for ‘origin’ or ‘beginning’, as opposed to, for instance, the privative prefix *or-* found in *orwene*, meaning ‘despair’ (literally ‘lack of hope’). There are indications that in some compounds there may be an association with *or-*, the intensifying prefix which is found in compounds denoting ancientness such as *oreald* ‘very old’ or *oryldu* ‘great age’.<sup>6</sup> The second part of the compound, and the headword, is *þanc* ‘thought’, thus making the compound an abstract notion in the absence of a context.<sup>7</sup>

That the primary meaning of *orþanc* should be abstract was the conclusion reached by the early lexicographers of Old English, who have set the precedent for many a student glossary, and will continue to do so for the fascicles of the *DOE* that still await publication.<sup>8</sup> Taking their lead from the basic notion evoked by putting the elements in this compound together, as well as being heavily guided by the gloss tradition, *BT* give ‘original, inborn thought’ as the modern English equivalent for *orþanc*. They then further qualify this by a two-fold subdivision expanding on the original gloss: ‘I. *mind, genius, wit, understanding; ingenium*’, and ‘II. *a skillful contrivance or work, artifice, device, design*’.<sup>9</sup> Both strands are heavily supported by the terms that *orþanc* glosses. Thus I. is supported by a variety of textual quotations charting the glossing of *ingenium*, whereas II. is supported by examples that gloss the Latin terms *molimen*, *argumentum*, and *machinamentum* most prominently.<sup>10</sup> The process by which the English translation is established appears to be by a back-translation of these Latin terms, while in each case they appear supported by one or two examples from Old English literature, where conformity of sense with the Latin glossed terms is certainly a possibility, though, one should note, this is highly dependent on

<sup>6</sup> As Holthausen pointed out in his *Altenglisches etymologisches Wörterbuch* (Heidelberg, 1934), p.241, these are not etymologically related. This does not, however, preclude either being used, or understood in the compound *orþanc*, as will become clear in this chapter. See also M. Gretsich’s note on the meaning of *orgeweorc* in *The Intellectual Foundations of the English Benedictine Reform* (Cambridge, 1999), p.66, n81.

<sup>7</sup> In Germanic languages, the modifier (or determinant) always precedes the headword (or determinatum), cf. Kastovsky, ‘Semantics’, p.356.

<sup>8</sup> At the time of writing the Dictionary has published its entries for the letters A-G.

<sup>9</sup> The *Thesaurus* divides *BT*’s two categories into three, listing the following meanings: ‘mind, genius, wit, understanding’ (06.01.05); ‘ability, capacity, power; cleverness, skill’ (11.04); ‘a skilful, splendid work’ (17.02.04). The adjectival use is listed thus ‘cunning, skillful’ (11.04.02.01).

<sup>10</sup> *BT*, p.767.

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reading them outside of the literary contexts in which they appear. There are several problems with the approach taken here. A gloss is by definition nothing more and nothing less than the matching of two words.<sup>11</sup> It does not constitute an equivalence, and adequateness in the glossing, while it can often be presumed, cannot be assured. While on many occasions, glossing can offer significant insights into Old English semantics, it may also lead astray, or skew our appreciation of how certain terms were used and understood. From my discussion below, it will become apparent how these concerns become critical in the glossing tradition of *orþanc*. Further aspects of *BT*'s treatment of *orþanc* include a sub-entry singling out the dative plural *orþancum* as an adverbial dative use denoting a skilful way of doing something ('*skilfully, cunningly, ingeniously, with art*'), which is equally supported by the Latin parts of a gloss, *subtiliter, sagaciter*; a separate entry for *orþanc* as an adjective ('*cunning, skilful*'); a further three discrete entries, the first for *orþanc* in a context where it appears to mean 'thoughtlessness', and two where it features in a compound: *orþancbend* ('*a skilfully contrived bond*'), and *orþancscipe*, which only appears as a gloss for *mechanica* in several manuscripts.

It would thus appear, according to *BT*, that *orþanc* and *searo* share the meanings of contrivance, design and art(ifice), but that these meanings are more secondary to *orþanc*, while they are primary in *searo*. But what does Old English literature say? In two examples from *Beowulf*, *orþanc* appears in the same line or sentence as *searo*, in both instances in the form of the poetic technique of variation, to modulate a notion of superior craftsmanship: *Beowulf maðelode; on him byrne scan, / searonet seowed smipes orþancum*. ('Beowulf spoke; on him his mailcoat shone, an intricate net sewn by the smith's *orþancum*')<sup>12</sup> (ll.405-6); and *Glof hangode sid on syllic, seorobendum fæst; / sio wæs orðoncum eall gegyrwod / deofles cræftum ond draacan fellum*. ('A glove was hanging down, wide and wondrous, fastened with intricate bonds; it was all adorned with *orðoncum*, the devil's *cræft* and a dragon's fell.') (ll.2086b-88).<sup>13</sup> As I noted in the previous chapter with regard to the first passage quoted here, the term *searonet* provides a point of semantic

<sup>11</sup> P. Lendinara, *Anglo-Saxon Glosses and Glossaries* (Aldershot, 1999), p.87.

<sup>12</sup> A full translation of these excerpts from *Beowulf* will be offered at the end of my discussion of the poetic meaning of *orþanc* below.

<sup>13</sup> *Klaeber's Beowulf*, pp.16 and 71.

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transition between the first term for mailcoat, *byrne*, which it varies as a concrete term with that meaning, and the notion of skill inherent in *orþancum* as well as *searo*. In the second example, three terms for craftsmanship vary to express the wondrous (*syllic*) quality in the construction of Grendel's glove, with a fourth term, *dracan fellum*, added to the variation to express a material involved. It would be fair to say that, with the exception of the dragon's fell, it is not completely clear if the terms indicate physical or immaterial ingredients in the process of creation. The traditional way of translating *searobendum* and *orðoncum* here is to render the former in a concrete way ('cunningly wrought band or clasp') and the latter abstractly ('ingenuity, skill').<sup>14</sup> In these passages, there is no immediate indication as to how we can render the effect of this variation in modern English, and thus, we often respond to the situation by glossing or translating *orðoncum* by taking more than a little inspiration from *BT*'s sub-entry for the dative plural case use of the term, which, as I mentioned above, is in turn heavily influenced by how this term appears in manuscript glosses. The two passages from *Beowulf* will be analysed in greater depth in my discussion on the poetic context of *orþanc* below, but we can already see how, in an effort to translate the effects of poetic variation against *searo*, we tend to rely on gloss-derived translations.

That this reliance is perfunctory at best, and does not do justice to the deeper connections between the two words, is evidenced by the fact that both terms are linked, very conspicuously, in other parts of our Anglo-Saxon records, for example in as many as three glossaries, where they gloss the same *lemmata*. Consider the following entries found in two late tenth-century glossaries:

*Commentis*      orðoncum searwvm

(Cleopatra I, MS Cotton Cleopatra A.iii, 953)<sup>15</sup>

<sup>14</sup> These translations are based on Klaeber's glossary. Compare, however, Seamus Heaney's (grammatically loose) translation of these lines: 'He had his roomy pouch, / a strange accoutrement, intricately strung / and hung at the ready, a rare patchwork / of devilishly fitted dragon-skins.' (S. Heaney, *Beowulf: A New Translation* (London, 1999), p.67).

<sup>15</sup> *DOE* Web Corpus [Accessed 30 April 2012]. Numbers correspond to the editions of W. G. Stryker, 'The Latin-Old English Glossary in MS Cleopatra A. III' (unpubl. PhD dissertation, Stanford Univ., 1951), and R. T. Oliphant, *The Harley Latin-Old English Glossary* (The Hague, 1966). These editions are unreliable (see the review by H. Schabram in *Anglia* 86 (1968), 495-99; M. Voss, 'Strykers Edition des alphabetischen Cleopatraglossars: Corrigenda und Addenda', *Arbeiten aus Anglistik und Amerikanistik* 13 (1988), and the

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*Commenta .i. tractationes, machinamenta. excogitata. adiumenta. astutia.  
argumenta machinationes. ficta. fraudes. mendacia sarwa, orþanc dicta*

(The Harley Latin-Old English Glossary, C1231)

The term *commentum* was used in medieval Latin with the core meaning of ‘something contrived’, denoting a work of art or artifice, a thought or an invention, a plan or project, a rhetorical argument or commentary, as well as being employed with more pejorative notions indicating falsehood or lies.<sup>16</sup> This range of meanings seems broadly reflected in the number of Latin *interpretamenta* given in the Harley glossary. However, at least four of these ten *interpretamenta* (*astutia, ficta, fraudes, mendacia*) have primarily pejorative meanings, while another two (*machinamenta, machinationes*) easily lend themselves to negative contexts. The Harley entry thus seems to indicate that *orþanc*, along with *searo*, lent itself to a pejoration of meaning. However, this impression is quickly redressed when one considers the nature of the Harley glossary which stands out among other Anglo-Saxon glossaries for its fullness and its ‘practice of combining material from different sources in a single interpretation’, therefore being judged to be of ‘limited textual’,<sup>17</sup> and, one may add, semantic, value. The entry presented in the First Cleopatra Glossary, which is very similar to the one in the oldest surviving Latin-Old English glossary, the Épinal-Erfurt glossary, is most likely an indirect source for the Harley gloss, which, it is reasonable to assume, accrued additional *interpretamenta* from one or more monolingual glossaries.<sup>18</sup> The Cleopatra

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corpus that originated in the preliminary phase of work on the *DOE* is thus the most up-to-date text for these glossaries. See also R. Derolez, ‘Anglo-Saxon glossography: A brief introduction’, in *Anglo-Saxon Glossography*, ed. R. Derolez (Brussels 1992), pp.11-42, esp. pp.11-12. An entry similar to the one found in Cleopatra is found in the early eighth-century Épinal-Erfurt Glossaries, which will be examined below. In addition links are found in the gloss apparatus to two manuscripts containing Aldhelm’s prose *De Virginitate*, Brussels, Bibliothèque Royale, 1650 and Oxford, Bodleian Library, Digby 146. These contexts will also be discussed in greater detail below.

<sup>16</sup> *Database of Latin Dictionaries*, <http://clt.brepolis.net/dld/Default.aspx>; C. T. Lewis and C. Short, *A Latin Dictionary* (Oxford, 1945) and *Blaise Patristic*.

<sup>17</sup> *Épinal-Erfurt Glossary*, ed. Pheifer, p.xxxvi.

<sup>18</sup> G. Goetz’s *Corpus Glossariorum Latinorum*, 7 vols (Leipzig, 1888-1923) gives a good indication of the range of *commentum* glosses extant from a number of European, and some Anglo-Saxon, glossaries. The vast bulk of Latin-Latin glosses and glossaries from the Anglo-Saxon period remains unedited. Cf. M. Lapidge, ‘The hermeneutic style in tenth-century Anglo-Latin Literature’, *ASE* 4 (1975), 61-98, pp.75-7 and *passim*.

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gloss is thus more representative of the relation between *commentum*, *orþanc* and *searo*. However, without further analysis of the relationship of Old English glosses and their likely sources, very little can be said about what meaning or meanings of *commentum* are rendered through the two *interpretamenta*. Do *searo* and *orþanc* constitute synonyms, do they provide two radically different interpretations of the *lemma*, or do they fall somewhere in between those two conditions?

The relation between the two terms is further complicated. One poet seems to have found it possible to employ *orþanc* in a very specific sense, as is evident in this extract from *Solomon and Saturn I*:

Gylden is se Godes cwide,   gimmum astæned,  
 hafað sylfren leaf.   [...]  
 He mæg ða saule   of siennihte  
 gefeccan under foldan,   næfre hie se feond to ðæs niðer  
 feterum gefæstnað;   ðeah he hie mid fiftigum  
 clusum beclemme,   he ðone cræft briceð  
 ond ða orðancas   ealle tosliteð.<sup>19</sup>

(Golden is God's utterance, studded with gems, it has silver leaves. [...] He can fetch the soul from everlasting night under the earth, however deep the enemy fastens it with fetters; even though he rivets them with fifty bolts, he will break the power and completely tear apart the chains.)

*Orðanc* here curiously takes on the primary meaning of *searo* – namely that of interlinking chains – as used in *Beowulf*, and the poet plays with this meaning in a way comparable to the *Andreas*-poet. Its context is very reminiscent of the Harrowing-of-Hell motif identified in the previous chapter. There seems to be some transference of meaning by association between the two terms, which seems to confirm not only a shared textual, but also a shared semantic history. This usage is puzzling for the modern reader. No further light can be shed on this passage without undertaking a comprehensive analysis of the semantic range of *orþanc* in the surviving corpus.

<sup>19</sup> *Solomon and Saturn I*, CCC 422, ll.63-4b and 68-72; quoted from *Solomon and Saturn*, ed. Anlezark.

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Such an analysis is made possible by a relatively low number of occurrences of *orþanc* as a simplex and as a compound (58), most of which are confined to a nexus of textual glosses and glossaries (38) and poetry (14), while there a small number of prose uses in the Alfredian period, and in the late 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> century (6 in total, of which 2 Alfredian, 3 post-Benedictine Reform, and 1 indeterminate). I will proceed by an analysis of the traditional poetic meaning of *orþanc*, then move to an examination of the gloss context, where I also discuss the prose examples, which I show are highly derivative of evolutions in the gloss tradition, before returning to what I identify to be a late poetic usage, acquired as a result of close contact with a tenth-century glossing practice.

### The traditional poetic usage of *orþanc*

The diction of Old English poetry distinguishes itself through a high number of words which are specific to poetry, and hardly, if at all, used in prose (as an exception it might be employed there as a poetic usage).<sup>20</sup> This is especially true of a high number of compound nouns, which have been argued to be of ‘ancient origins’, and have parallels in other Germanic languages, for example *heaðulac*, battle-play, and *facenstæf*, treachery.<sup>21</sup> Though we have seen that our compound *orþanc* survives in a few examples from prose, it is more frequent in poetry, and may be identified as a poetic word, even though it cannot be concluded to be so until all the uses of the term, including those outside of poetry, have been considered. It certainly seems to have a very distinct usage, which has partially been evidenced above in the examples from *Beowulf*. Though these are the only instances where it is employed to provide variation with *searo*, its dative plural use is a

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<sup>20</sup> On poetic, respectively prosaic diction in Old English texts see: M. S. Griffith, ‘Poetic Language and the Paris Psalter: the Decay of the Old English Tradition’, *ASE* 20 (1991), 167-86; E. G. Stanley, ‘Studies in the Prosaic Vocabulary of Old English Verse’, *NM* 72 (1971), 385-418.

<sup>21</sup> C. T. Carr, *Nominal Compounds in Germanic* (London, 1939) and M. Godden, ‘Literary Language’, p.500.

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familiar feature in some of the other poetic examples, as in the following excerpt from *Exodus*, concerning the ancestry of the people of Israel:

Cende cneowsibbe cenra manna  
 heafædera sum, halige þeode,  
 Israela cyn, onriht Godes,  
 swa þæt orþancum ealde reccað,  
 þa þe mægburge mæst gefrunon,  
 frumcyn feora, fæderæðelo gehwæs.<sup>22</sup>

(A certain one of the patriarchs brought forth that race of bold men, that holy nation, the people of Israel, befitting to God, just as old men, who enquired most about the tribes, the origins of human beings, and each person's lineage, recount in works of old.)

It is generally agreed that the passage in question makes reference to the genealogies contained in the Pentateuch.<sup>23</sup> Lucas's edition of the poem, which remains the standard text to date, offers that *orþanc* should be translated as 'skill', no doubt basing itself on *BT*. A student of the poem making use of his edition would therefore read and translate l.359 as follows: '[...] just as men of old [...] recount with skill', thus rendering a dative of manner. Most learned translators of the poem also follow course.<sup>24</sup> My translation above indicates that such a rendition is rather restrictive in view of the potential to translate *orþanc* differently, as I suggest, as 'works of old'. If there is indeed an implication of the Pentateuch in the above lines, a reference to its material reality would not be completely out of place. Moreover, although a modern English translation cannot easily capture this, taking a material referent defined by its ancientness would not exclude the idea of skill. Throughout Old English literature, there is an almost universal admiration for the past, and the traces of the past in the Anglo-Saxon present. Thus a notion of *orþanc* as material heritage would have connoted an idea of venerable superiority.

<sup>22</sup> *Exodus*, ed. Lucas, ll.356-61, p.122

<sup>23</sup> Lucas, note for ll.359-61, p.122.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. Bradley, *Anglo-Saxon Poetry* (London, 1982), p. 60, 'according as old men [...] skilfully recount.'; and more recently D. Anlezark, *Old Testament Narratives* (Cambridge, MA; 2011), p.231, 'just as the elders recount skillfully'.

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In his monumental analysis of Old English syntax, Mitchell notes that the dative of place can be expressed without preposition. One of the examples he cites is as follows: ‘Bede 26. 27 [...] *æfter rime fif Moyses boca, ðam seo godcunde æ awriten is*’,<sup>25</sup> ‘five after the number of the books of Moses, in which the divine law is written down.’ This example, where the dative plural form of the pronoun *se* is used to express a locative relation to the Pentateuch, presents an interesting parallel to the use of *orþanc* in *Exodus*, underscoring our argument that the use of the dative there is also a dative of place without preposition.

In her analysis on the vocabulary of the royal psalter, M. Gretsich discusses a line which offers a further correspondence, though not in terms of syntax. The line in question is the gloss to *domine in factura tua et in operibus manu[u]m tuarum exultabo* (‘oh Lord, I rejoice in your creation and in the works of your hands’), which reads *on ongeweorc þinum weorcum handa þinra ic blissie*.<sup>26</sup> Noting that *ongeworc* is unattested in the Old English corpus, and that it ‘would be definitely strange in terms of word-formation’, she argues against a dittography (*on ongeweorc*) here, and, on the basis of the ‘Glossator’s inclination towards lexical variation’ proposes that the intended compound was *orgeworc*, with the first part denoting ‘beginning, origin’.<sup>27</sup> Gretsich also notes the similarity of this noun with the prefix *or-* denoting antiquity, as in *oreald*, ‘very old’, or *oryldu*, ‘great age’, proposing that the author may have been influenced by such formations.<sup>28</sup> Though *orgeworc* would also constitute a *hapax legomenon*, Gretsich compares the word to *ærgeworc*, ‘work of olden times’, which occurs in *Beowulf* and *Andreas*.<sup>29</sup> We may extend this comparison to *orþanc*, noting that the prefix here too could be understood through phonic similarity as a work of ancient times. As mentioned above, the second part of the compound, *þanc* is often understood as denoting the abstract notion of thought. However, there are some examples from Old English poetry where this term is closely associated with physical creation, notably in the opening lines of *Cædmon’s Hymn*, where we must praise the Creator *ond his modgeþanc, / weorc wuldorfæder*,

<sup>25</sup> B. Mitchell, *Old English Syntax* (Oxford, 1985), §1416, p.593.

<sup>26</sup> Gretsich, *Intellectual Foundations*, p.65.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>28</sup> p.66, n8.

<sup>29</sup> p.65.

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‘and his mighty thought/purpose/creation, the works of the father of glory’ (ll. 2b-3a). *Modgeþanc* here seems to denote a realized creative potential, most likely expressing a theological point on the simultaneity of the word and the creative act in chapter 1 of Genesis.<sup>30</sup> The proposition that *orþanc* denotes a similarly concrete idea of creation appears to be confirmed by its usage, not only in *Exodus*, but across a range of poetic texts, such as, for instance, in this extract from *The Seasons for Fasting* where Moses receives the ten commandments:

Him þær gesealde sylfe dryhten  
 bremne boca cræft, bæle behlæned,  
 of his haligan handa gescrifene,  
 het hine leodum þone leoran and tæcan  
 elda orþancum eallum to tacne,  
 þæt we mid fæstene magon freode gewinnan  
 and þa deopan dryhtnes gerynu,  
 þa þe leoran sceolan leoda gehwylce,  
 gif us þære duguþe hwæt dryhten sylleð.<sup>31</sup>

(There God himself gave him that renowned craft of books, surrounded by flames, written by his holy hand, and ordered him to teach and instruct it to the people, to all men as evidence, through that ancient work, that we may obtain peace with that covenant and the deep mysteries of the lord, we who must teach it to each person if the lord is indeed to give us that salvation.)

Rather than translate l.115 here as ‘[teach it] to all men skilfully as evidence’, we should consider the context, which favours a more material rendering of *orþanc* through ‘ancient work’, being the product of God granting Moses *bremne boca cræft* on Mount Sinai. This passage is characterised by a three-fold movement, the first being where Moses receives the Decalogue along with an instruction to teach (the Israelites) (ll.111-4), the second a reference to Moses’s instruction to ‘all men’, including the audience of the poem, through his work, the Pentateuch, or Bede’s *fif Moyses boca* (ll.115-7), and the third where ‘we’, the putative audience, take up the role of instructor to spread God’s law in return for ‘our’ salvation (ll.118-9). *Orþanc* is the connecting agent linking all

<sup>30</sup> Compare our modern notion of performative speech act, developed by J. L. Austin, *How to do things with words* (Oxford, 1978). Also, John 1:1.

<sup>31</sup> *The Seasons for Fasting*, ll.111-19; quoted from *The Anglo-Saxon Minor Poems*, ed. Dobbie.

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the actors in this chain of transmission. Its importance as such is highlighted by its position in the a-line, breaking up the recipient *ealda eallum*, rather than following in the b-line, thereby drawing our attention to it and alerting us to its role. The role of *orþanc* here cannot be rendered by considering it merely as a dative of manner denoting skill, however, as noted above, there are good reasons for assuming that skill was a connotation inherent in the idea of ‘ancient work’.

This connotation is strongly suggested in passages from *The Ruin*, and *Maxims II*, where *orþanc* is used to describe another type of material creation in the form of buildings. On a heavily corrupted folio in the Exeter Book, the ruin is described as [ ] *orþanc ærsceaft* [ ] (‘ancient work, old creation’) (l.16), whereas in *Maxims II*, *ceastra*, ‘fortresses’, are described as *orþanc entageweorc [...]/ wrætlic weallstana geweorc* (‘ancient works of giants [...], wondrous wall-stone creations’) (l.2a and l.3a). In *The Ruin*, the tone is elegiac, mindful of transience, yet full of praise and wonder (cf. *wrætlic*, l.1; *wundrum*, l.20) for the remains of ancient glory. The maxim, though much shorter, equally seems to pay tribute to the grandeur of the buildings that are *feorran gesyne* (‘seen from afar’, l.1). It is generally agreed that the stone remains described in *The Ruin* are old Roman buildings, possibly of the city of Bath (due to the reference to baths in ll.40 and 46, and of hot springs in ll.42-3),<sup>32</sup> and equally that the *ceastra* generally denote fortified towns built by the Romans.<sup>33</sup> In both instances there is thus a clear reason for the usage of *orþanc* in the sense that has been evidenced above, describing ancient craftsmanship. In *Maxims II*, the term works like an adjective in what looks like a formulaic expression, also appearing in *The Wanderer* as *eald enta geweorc* (l.87a). Note that this formula seems designed to express ancientness. *The Ruin*’s textual corruptions make an analysis of the syntax in l.16 difficult.<sup>34</sup> However, the fact that *orþanc* belongs to the a-line, and *ærsceaft* to the b-line, make it likely that the latter functioned as a variation of the former in what seems to have been a chiasmic line, supporting its notion of an age-old creation.

<sup>32</sup> *The Exeter Book*, ed. Krapp and Dobbie, p.lxiv.

<sup>33</sup> *BT*, p.149, cf. Frankis, ‘The thematic significance...’.

<sup>34</sup> Cf. A. Orchard, ‘Reconstructing *The Ruin*’, in *Intertexts: Studies in Anglo-Saxon Culture Presented to Paul E. Szarmach*, eds. V. Blanton and H. Scheck (Tempe, AZ; 2008), pp.45-68. The line in question resists Orchard’s subtle reconstruction efforts.

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Similarly in *The Phoenix*, after the mythical bird's rebirth, its eye is likened to a stone which *in goldfate / smiþa orþancum biseted weorþeð* ('through the smiths' ancient craft is (lit. becomes) set into a foil of gold') (ll.303b-4).<sup>35</sup> The use of *orþanc* here, along with the comparison of the bird to a refined artefact, reflects, I would suggest, the poem's affirmation that the old bird is constantly renewed in its original shape and splendour. The smiths' craft is ancient, because the phoenix is eternal and as old as time itself, while at the same time occurring in the present (*weorþeð*) as he continually rises from the ashes. This goes hand in hand with the description of the phoenix and of the sun as artefacts in this passage and elsewhere, contrasting with an evocation of a transient fauna and flora throughout the poem. Both are expressions of the paradox, and the miracle at the heart of the poem.

As my analysis indicates, the interpretation and translation of *orþanc* as merely a notion of skill does not do justice to the term's usage in the above-discussed poetic contexts. In all these examples, the referent is a material work of art or creation conceived in a past which the Anglo-Saxons perceived as distant, in their time immemorial. With this meaning in our minds, the passages unfold their full resonance. The notion of skill inherent in the work's conception, however, is often connoted and suggested through collocation with terms such as *wrætlic* in *The Ruin*, *Maxims II* and *The Phoenix*. This word is also used in the above-quoted description of Grendel's glove, one of whose ingredients was *orþancum*, and Beowulf's mailcoat is equally singled out as *beaduscruda betst, hrægla selest, Hrædlan laf* and *Welandes geweorc* ('the best of war-garments', 'the choicest of mail shirts', 'Hrethel's heirloom', 'Weland's work', ll.453-5 *passim*). As in the examples above, Grendel's glove and Beowulf's mailcoat are both artefacts created long before the time in which the poem is set: Grendel's glove was created by the devil, a fact which connects it with the mythical history of Grendel's race of outcasts at the beginning of poem; and Beowulf's mailcoat is a (seemingly indestructible) heirloom fashioned by the fabled smith Weland. Thus my translations for ll.405-6 and ll.2086b-88 of *Beowulf* can be completed as follows: 'Beowulf spoke; on him his mailcoat shone, an intricate net sewn in the manner of the

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<sup>35</sup> Cited from *The Exeter Book*, ed. Krapp and Dobbie.

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smith's ancient craft', 'A glove was hanging down, wide and wondrous, fastened with intricate bonds; it was all adorned according to ancient skill, with the devil's *cræft* and a dragon's fell.' Even though the usage of *orþanc* in *Beowulf* is more abstract than in the examples discussed above, the objects it is applied to are distinctly ancient artefacts, belonging to a quasi-mythical past. In this poem, as in the other examples, the makers of these objects are legendary and distinguished craftsmen, from Weland, the archetypal smith, to Moses, the father of writing. Even the Roman craftsmen are above and beyond mere stonemasons, with their constructions being termed the works of giants. Where *searo* emphasises the intricacies of joining, binding and fastening, *orþanc* gives a historical and mythical dimension to craftsmanship. This applies both in secular and in Christian contexts.

It is noteworthy that the items described by this term seem to be among the more special, even unique, artefacts featuring in the surviving corpus of Old English poetry. Beowulf's mailcoat is not just an ordinary piece of armour, but it saves his life twice; the Old Testament is the primordial book; the phoenix is both subject to and triumphs over the laws of nature; and the full force of elegy in *The Ruin* resides in the superior quality of the artefact that lies destroyed. Their unique quality does not merely reside in their *searo* or intricacy (in those poems where that notion comes into play), but also in the fact that they are works of old that were fashioned with an ancient craft, *orþanc*, that makes them distinct (*wrætlic, feorran gesyne*) and inimitable.

I noted above that *orþanc* is recorded only 14 times in the surviving poetic corpus. This is rare if compared with the poetic occurrences of the other two notions of craftsmanship discussed in my thesis. One way of explaining this would be that the term had simply fallen out of use by the time Old English poetry started to be written down, and was only favoured by certain poets with a flair for archaisms. Its relative absence from prose would seem to support this possibility. Equally, however, the meaning with which we saw it employed allows us postulate that it was conventionally used only with reference to mythical artefacts, or creations of a very distant past,

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and that occasions for this usage may have been limited in number.<sup>36</sup> Its prominence as a gloss would indicate that it was a transferable concept, which served as an important tool to understand Latin texts. It is indeed on a par with *searo* where occurrences in the gloss tradition are concerned, even though *searo* is roughly about ten times more frequent in poetry and prose. However, there are several difficulties in this observation, which prevent us from reaching such a conclusion at this stage. These are the nature of the origin and the transmission of the glosses in question; the derivative quality of the prose usages; and the existence of a second distinct poetic usage in the Exeter Book *Riddles*. These matters must be addressed before a full picture of the usage of *orþanc* in poetry, as well as in prose and in gloss, can be established. First, my discussion will turn to an analysis of the early gloss context.

### The early gloss tradition of *orþanc*

It will be important to preface my discussion of the gloss context of *orþanc* by mentioning that nearly all the glosses in question are Aldhelm annotations relating to his prose *De virginitate*. This is a fact which also applies to a large portion of the corpus of textual glosses (with the exception of continuous glosses, such as for instance the gloss to the Royal Psalter), and most of the extant Latin-Old English glossaries, which bear strong links to Aldhelm's works. Although the exact origin of the Aldhelm gloss corpus is unknown, it is generally accepted that the reason for its prevalence is that Aldhelm was a much-studied author across the entire period, and it is therefore sometimes inferred that the glosses have a didactic purpose. However, it is also true that this gloss tradition is far from monolithic and that its transmission is complex at best. In my analysis of how

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<sup>36</sup> Though the compound *orþanc* is not used in the description of the ancient sword that Beowulf finds in Grendel's mother's lair, this weapon is later associated with *or* as Hrothgar contemplates the message decorating the swordhilt (l.1688). In this description the makers of ancient craft, the Giants, are directly linked to a tradition of antediluvian smiths, possibly in a reference to 1 Enoch. In light of this, it is highly interesting that *orþanc* does not pejorate, and although this may be due to its relative scarcity, it also seems to indicate that the Anglo-Saxons regarded these narratives of sinful smiths with some equanimity.

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*orþanc* behaves within this tradition, I have found it helpful to distinguish between two periods: an early period, from the mysterious origins of the glosses up until roughly the beginning of the Benedictine *renovatio* in England, and a late period, with a focus on the intellectual environment in which the Benedictine Reform took place. This is motivated by the fact that this second period is marked by the addition of a new semantic field to the *orþanc* gloss corpus. However, this does not mean that the first and second periods should be considered completely independently of each other, since many of the glosses from the second period were directly or indirectly derived from the first. Gaining a full picture of the first period is hard, because very little is still known about the origin of the Aldhelm glosses. However, some important observations and inferences can be made.

In my initial assessment of the near-synonymy of *orþanc* and *searo*, I noted their shared existence as glosses by quoting from two tenth-century glossaries, as well as the impression that both were subject to pejoration, given by the existence of several morally negative Latin *interpretamenta* presented in addition in the Harley glossary. I indicated that this impression was wrong, given the synthesized nature of this glossary. Instead, the gloss found in the First Cleopatra Glossary (*Commentis orðoncum searwvm*) is more representative of the first glossing tradition. The earliest two glossaries containing *orþanc* are the Corpus Glossary in Cambridge Corpus Christi College MS. 144 (C), of the late eighth, or early ninth century, and the Épinal-Erfurt glossary (EE), surviving in two manuscripts, Épinal, Bibliothèque municipale MS. 72, dated to the eighth century, and Erfurt, Codex Amplonianus f. 42, thought to have been copied in the late eighth century in Cologne. The glosses in question are as follows: *machinamenta orþonc* (C), *commentis searwum uel ordoncum* (EE, *sic*).<sup>37</sup> C also has *commentis seorwum*. Both C and EE combine materials from a variety of sources, and they share common material. It is agreed that both EE manuscripts derive from a common exemplar, a large section of whose glosses share common ancestry with large portions of the C glossary.<sup>38</sup> The glosses cited above are generally accepted to relate to Aldhelm's *De virginitate*, a conclusion which is derived from a textual

<sup>37</sup> The Épinal and Erfurt glossaries are virtually identical, apart from a lacuna in Épinal from C-F. Erfurt was copied by a German scribe who had difficulties imitating English script, hence *ordoncum*. Cf. Pfeifer, *Old English Glosses*, pp. xxi-xxviii.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. xxviii-xxx.

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proximity analysis in *De virginitate* of the gloss batch in which the lemma occurs.<sup>39</sup> It is also argued that they represent a very early and near-contemporary witness to Aldhelm's text, since on the account of palaeographic and linguistic features in the surviving glossaries their common archetype is thought to have been completed by the early eighth century. Occasionally, textual inflections maintained in glossaries are also a good guide, though sometimes there is clear proof that the glosses have been recorded in their uninflected forms.<sup>40</sup>

The *machinamenta* gloss was traced to Aldhelm by Lindsay who cites *exquisitis poenarum machinamentis* ('refined instruments of torture') in the account of the persecution of Babilas, as the glossing occasion.<sup>41</sup> This is indeed the place of a similar, but inflected, textual gloss in MS Brussels, Bibliothèque Royale 1650, a heavily-glossed copy of *De virginitate* with glossing hands dated to the early eleventh century (B2911: *machinamentis orponcu*).<sup>42</sup> It is, however, very hard, if not impossible, to establish a direct relation between these two glosses, and, as a result, to accept Lindsay's proposition without doubt. In an effort to evaluate this early gloss against its traditional poetic use, it might be helpful nevertheless to examine the meaning in the above, potential, glossing occasion. *Machinamentum* continued to have the classical sense of machine, engine or construction in medieval Latin, though the post-classical usage also allowed for it to be employed with the meaning of trick or stratagem.<sup>43</sup> A person glossing Aldhelm's text around the year 700 might have been aware of both these trends, but would have been familiar with torture only through Latin Saints' Lives from the late antique period, and their very graphical accounts of torture, which often described in great detail the physical instruments with which this torture is

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<sup>39</sup> W. M. Lindsay, *The Corpus, Épinal, Erfurt and Leyden Glossaries* (Oxford, 1921), p.102 and H. Bradley, 'Remarks on the Corpus Glossary', *The Classical Quarterly* 13 (1919), 89-108, at p.91. This is more difficult in the Corpus glossary, an *ab*-order glossary, since some re-ordering of material has taken place. EE is an *a*-order glossary, and thus preserves a substantial amount of gloss batches that can be traced to its sources through proximity analysis.

<sup>40</sup> Cf. the activity of the Brussels C hand.

<sup>41</sup> W.M. Lindsay, *Glossaries*, p.102. The edition from which quotations from Aldhelm's *De virginitate* are taken throughout is *Aldelmi Malmesbiriensis prosa de virginitate cum glosa Latina atque Anglosaxonica*, ed. S. Gwara, CCSL 124-124A (Turnhout, 2011) (here at p.437).

<sup>42</sup> The number refers to its citation in L. Goossens's edition of the glosses, *The Old English Glosses of MS. Brussels, Royal Library, 1650 (Aldhelm's De laudibus virginitatis)* (Brussels, 1974).

<sup>43</sup> Blaise, Lewis and Short.

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carried out.<sup>44</sup> In the distance from the historical moment, and from the cultural environment in which such instruments were employed, a glossator may well have chosen *orphan* to reflect the notion of special artefacts that existed in an antiquity preceding their own known past (consider also the use of *exquisitis* in the Latin). Since we cannot be sure that the Corpus gloss represents this glossing occasion, however, we are prevented from accepting this as the only possible interpretation. This gloss may well have accompanied a more abstract usage of the *lemma* in the textual environment it was taken from. Indeed, *De virginitate* presents another glossing occasion for *machinamenta*, which is notably in the same case with which it is recorded in the Corpus glossary. This occurs in the account of the virgin and bishop Narcissus, who on facing false accusations, flees his see to escape *friuola aemulorum machinamenta* ('the frivolous schemes of his detractors').<sup>45</sup> This is the instance for a gloss in Brussels 1650, though the *interpretamentum* recorded here is *dofunga* ('dotage', 'stupidity', B2707). Nevertheless we cannot exclude that *orphan* might have been used to interpret this instance in an earlier glossing tradition, and that it could have acquired an abstract meaning by the time it appears in Corpus. We must assume, and indeed accept, that once an *interpretamentum* is linked to a *lemma* and then decontextualised in a glossary, it may take on the entire range of meanings that belong to the *lemma*. This is the instance of semantic change that Kastovsky termed 'semantic borrowing', whereby a native lexeme that shares one reading with a foreign lexical item adopts an additional reading from the foreign.<sup>46</sup> Kastovsky also notes that this appears to have been a common feature of semantic change in Old English, and that it is generally hard to prove this process.

With regard to the *commentis* gloss, it would appear that it was present in the common ancestor of EE and C, since in both glossaries it appears in batches that they share. The Cleopatra

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<sup>44</sup> Cf. for example, the works of John of Chrysostom, whose Saints' Lives were read in Anglo-Saxon England. Old English Saints' Lives tend to render accounts of torture as a mental struggle, however, they only start to appear 300 years after the putative date of the *machinamenta* gloss.

<sup>45</sup> Gwara, p.409.

<sup>46</sup> Kastovsky, 'Semantics', at pp.309-11. See also H. Gneuss, *Lehnbildungen und Lehnbedeutungen im Altenglischen* (Berlin, 1955), at p.22 ('Semantische Analogie'). One of the examples that Kastovsky cites is '*lingua* 'tongue, language' ~ *tunge* 'tongue' → 'language'. A semantic loan may also occur when a 'foreign meaning is transferred without a shared reading.' (Kastovsky, p.310), cf. Gneuss pp.24-6 ('Die substituierende Lehnbedeutung').

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gloss can be shown to be ultimately derived from an ancestor of *Corpus*.<sup>47</sup> All three can be related to textual uses in Aldhelm's *De virginitate*. Two sections in this text are easily identified for their use of the same inflected form as the gloss: the section on Athanasius, where certain 'schismatics' try to provide evidence of necromantic practice against him to discredit him in front of the emperor Constantius (*Quapropter imperator commentis hereticorum lenocinantibus illectus [...]*), 'thereupon, the emperor, persuaded by their seductive arguments [...]'<sup>48</sup> (1); and the story of Chrysanthus, who rejects worldly learning and philosophy in favour of holy teachings and who woos the learned Daria by trumping her argumentative and rhetorical powers in a debate. She converts to Christianity and with this action also adopts biblical and patristic learning, in which she is forthwith instructed: *canonicis scripturis et commentis spiritualibus instruitur* ('she is instructed in canonical writings and spiritual (exegetical?) commentaries.') (2).<sup>49</sup> Henry Bradley has convincingly shown that the *Corpus* gloss, with the *searwum interpretamentum* only, is directly based on (1).<sup>50</sup> This begs the question whether the EE and Cleopatra entries are based on a gloss which sought to differentiate another meaning of *commentis* by adding the *orþanc interpretamentum*. As I mentioned above, *commentum* had both a concrete meaning as a work of art or artifice, but also a broad abstract range in medieval Latin ('thought', 'invention', 'plan', 'project', 'rhetorical argument', 'commentary', 'falsehood' or 'lies'). It would appear that in (1) it was used with the notion of either plan or scheme or falsehood in mind. In (2) the meaning is commentary or a more concrete reference to exegetical works. (1) fits the range of *searo*, whereas (2), while not exactly corresponding to the poetic meaning of *orþanc*, could nevertheless be related to it in as far as it denotes exegetical works composed in Late Antiquity. The glossator of Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS. Digby 146 (glosses s.xi<sup>med</sup>) inserts an *orþanc interpretamentum* here, which may corroborate this possibility.<sup>51</sup> However, a note of caution applies. The Third Cleopatra

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<sup>47</sup> Pfeifer, p.xxxi and *ibid.*, n5.

<sup>48</sup> Gwara p.423.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, p.475.

<sup>50</sup> Bradely, 'Remarks', p.91.

<sup>51</sup> For date see Ker, *Catalogue*, no. 320, pp.381-3, esp. 382. For the gloss see *Old English Glosses, Chiefly Unpublished*, ed. A. S. Napier (Oxford, 1900), no. 1.3225. I argue below, however, that this gloss is idiosyncratic to Digby 146.

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Glossary, which dates from an indeterminate time before its inclusion into Cotton Cleopatra A.iii in the mid-tenth century,<sup>52</sup> provides two glossing occasions for *commentis*. In each case the *lemma* is coupled with *searwum*, which would indicate that no such differentiation applied. We are fortunate, however, that *Cleo III* is a *glossae collectae*, that is, a collection of unordered glosses copied straight from a glossed text of *De virginitate*. It helps us trace the *commentis* glosses to their textual instance with a great degree of certainty, since there is close lexical proximity with the preceding and successive glosses in Aldhelm's work. A collation of these glosses with the text reveals that the first can be traced to (1),<sup>53</sup> but the second corresponds to a third glossing occasion. This can be found at the start of the story of Chrystantheus, in which the works of the ancient philosophers are designated as *mortalium commenta* ('the works of mortals'), in opposition to the Holy Scripture (3).<sup>54</sup> This would indicate that there may indeed have been, at one point, a distinction between *orþanc* and *searo* in the gloss tradition, with *orþanc* denoting a higher truth value (such as that of exegetical commentaries), and *searo* implying, perhaps, the inferior status of the works of ancient philosophers in comparison to biblical lore. It would appear, however, that, if this distinction existed, it was not as strictly applied at all times, or in all environments, or that, perhaps, attitudes towards ancient philosophers and the merit of their work changed, since the Brussels manuscript glosses (3) as *orþanca*. We cannot say for certain whether this gloss existed in the early tradition, though equally we cannot prove that it was not the source for the *orþanc interpretamentum* in EE and Cleopatra. As with the *machinamentum* gloss, it is possible to observe in (2) and (3) evidence of how semantic change could have occurred for *orþanc*: in both cases

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<sup>52</sup> Lendinara, *Glosses and Glossaries*, pp.22-26.

<sup>53</sup> The surrounding *lemma* in *Cleo III* are: *Delatum*, *Commentis*, *Iletus* (Quinn: 816-818); 'The Minor Latin-Old English Glossaries in MS Cotton Cleopatra A.III', ed. J. J. Quinn, unpubl. PhD dissertation (Stanford Univ., 1956). I have highlighted them in their textual environment: '[...] ita prorsus, ut Constantio Augusto, qui Orientis imperii scepra gubernabat, euulsum cadaueris lacertum et in sarcofago **delatum** ostenderent, quem ab Athanasio magicae fraudis necromantia de Arsenii corpore sublatum fallaciter retulerunt. Quapropter imperator **commentis** haereticorum lenocinantibus **illectus** et probrosis factionibus deceptus in concilio praesulem inconsulte condemnari praecipit.' (Gwara, p.423).

<sup>54</sup> *Cathagorias X, commentis, prestare* (Quinn: 880-882) correspond to the text as follows: 'Igitur consummatis grammaticorum studiis et philosophorum disciplinis, [...], cum ad sacratissimos euangeliorum apices uenisset, quantocius cuncta Stoicorum argumenta et Arestotelicas **categorias**, quae **.X.** praedicamentorum generibus distinguuntur, dicto citius dispexit, dum solerter animaduverteret quantum caelestis philosophiae dogma mundi disciplinas et mortalium **commenta praestaret** [...]' (Gwara, pp.457 and 459).

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*commentum* represents both works composed in a (more or less) distant past and their contents, and these contents are philosophical and exegetical arguments. As I will show below, this is one of the meanings *orþanc* will adopt over the course of its journey through Anglo-Saxon glossaries.

It is important to address one assumption I have made in the above discussion, namely that the glosses examined were derived from Aldhelm, as opposed to Aldhelm borrowing from glossaries himself. The latter possibility is very real considering that the common ancestor of C and EE is thought to have existed in Aldhelm's lifetime. Moreover, Lindsay argued that Aldhelm's Latin is 'glossary Latin' rather than 'authors' Latin', and conclusively proved that 'there is no doubt whatsoever' that Aldhelm borrowed some items directly from an ancestor or cousin of C.<sup>55</sup> Pfeifer has since shown that the same is true for some glosses in EE.<sup>56</sup> That Aldhelm should have worked closely with glossaries is indeed consonant with his flamboyant style, which is generally termed 'hermeneutic', characterised by 'a very arcane and apparently learned vocabulary' featuring archaisms, neologisms and loan-words.<sup>57</sup> Aldhelm was also a teacher, and we should not completely exclude the possibility that he may have presented his work to his students for study, glossing his own work to help his students through what was no doubt for them a very difficult text. He might, equally, have augmented the glossaries that he was working with.<sup>58</sup> There is no point in speculating whether Aldhelm could have been responsible for the addition of the *orþanc interpretamentum* to the gloss tradition. While we may consider that this gloss seems closely derived from the vernacular poetic tradition (a tradition of which he is generally considered to have been part),<sup>59</sup> and smacking with *recherché* flair, it could equally have been written by someone who shared Aldhelm's love for all things arcane. However, we can show that Aldhelm used both *machinamentum* and *commentum* with the meanings that were consonant with the traditional (poetic) usage of the *interpretamentum*, and that this usage may have been confirmed by glosses

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<sup>55</sup> Lindsay, *Glossaries*, p.97.

<sup>56</sup> Pfeifer, *Old English Glosses*, p.lvi.

<sup>57</sup> Lapidge, 'The hermeneutic style', p.67; see also M. Winterbottom, and Gwara. The very term 'hermeneutic' serves to highlight Aldhelm's debt to lexical sources, or *hermeneumata*, a word by which certain Greek-Latin glossaries are designated (cf. Lapidge, p.67, n2).

<sup>58</sup> Some later (tenth-century) hermeneutic authors glossed their own texts. Lapidge cites the example of Abbo of Fleury ('The hermeneutic style...', p.72). Cf. Derolez pp.28&29 (n82).

<sup>59</sup> *Aldhelm: The Prose Works*, trans. M. Lapidge and M. Herren (Ispwich, 1979), p.19.

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derived from his work. There is also evidence of an incipient process of semantic change in the form of semantic borrowing, in which *orþanc* is adopting the broader (and more abstract) range of meanings of the words that it glosses. We may observe that, although *orþanc* and *searo* appear coupled in early glossaries, they were applied with different truth values and moral connotations. However, the evidence for this is dependent on making links with later glossaries and glosses, and not always consistent with gloss choices in other manuscripts. We should also consider that the purpose of the gloss may have played a role in how it was applied. For instance, a person with a pronounced interest in expanding their vocabulary or in arcane meanings may have had good reason to record two variant meanings of *commentum*: a concrete one (work of art, book ~ *orþanc*), and an abstract one (reasoning, scheme, falsehood ~ *searo*).

### The Alfredian prose examples

In total there are only six occurrences of *orþanc* in Old English prose, two of which predate the eleventh century, found in texts associated with the education programme of King Alfred. This may lead us to suspect that during this time *orþanc* transitioned from a poetic to a prose term.<sup>60</sup>

These usages are found in the vernacular versions of Gregory's *Dialogues* and his *Regula Pastoralis*. The Old English translations read as follows:

Gregorius him andswarode: 'þæt þe Paulus la cwæð, þæt se geleafa wære  
gehytendlicra þinga and wendendlicra sped, orþanclīc wīse and na geara wite,  
soðlice þis is gesæd, þæt hit mæge beon gelyfed and ne mæge beon gesegen.'<sup>61</sup>

<sup>60</sup> P. Clemons showed how the Alfredian use of *craft* presents a transition of this term from verse to prose: 'King Alfred's Debt to Vernacular Poetry: The Evidence of *Ellen* and *Cræft*', *Words, Texts and Manuscripts: Studies in Anglo-Saxon Culture Presented to Helmut Gneuss*, ed. M. Korhammer with K. Reichl and H. Sauer (Cambridge, 1992), pp.213-38.

<sup>61</sup> *Bischofs Wærferth von Worcester Übersetzung der Dialoge Gregors des Grossen*, ed. H. Hecht (Leipzig, 1900), p.269.

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(Gregory answered him: ‘About this matter Paul indeed say this, that faith is more about things to be hoped for and prosperity to be expected, an impenetrable matter and not readily known, truly it is said, that it can be believed and cannot be seen.’)

(Bishop Wærferth’s translation of the Dialogues of Gregory the Great, Book 4, Chapter VI)

Gehieren ða upahafenan hwæt awriten is be hiera heafde & be hiora lareowe, ðæt is dioful: hit is awriten ðæt he sie kyning ofer ealle ða oferhygdan bearn, forðæm his ofermedu is fruma ures forlores, & se orðonc þe we mid aliesede sindon is Godes eaðmodes.<sup>62</sup>

(Let the proud hear what is written about their head and their teacher, that is the devil: it is written that he is king over all the proud children, because his pride is the beginning of our loss, and the principle with which we are redeemed is God’s humility.)

(*Gregory’s Pastoral Care*, Chapter XLI)

Both excerpts adapt the original more or less successfully in an effort to translate it, and in both cases it would appear that in order to do so a glossary has been consulted. In each instance the Latin word that *orþanc* is trying to render is *argumentum*, which both times is employed with a meaning that is more specific than ‘argument’. In the first example *orþanclic wise & na geara wite* corresponds to the Latin *argumentum non apparentium* (‘the proof not being visible’). In the English version there are signs of struggle, and the result is an awkward circumlocution, which deviates from the original in meaning. Whereas the Latin states that faith lacks proofs on earth, in the Old English faith is cast as an impenetrable (*na geara wite*) subject. *Orþanclic* is a quality that faith has, whereas in the Latin *argumentum* is what it is lacking. This mistranslation, I would suggest, is due to a lack of familiarity on the translator’s part with this particular notion of *argumentum*. There are unfortunately no other uses of *argumentum* in the *Dialogi* to support this point, however, a brief survey of the uses of this term in the *Regula Pastoralis* (six in total) and its translation in the vernacular indicates that this text is very comfortable when translating the more

<sup>62</sup> *King Alfred’s West-Saxon Version of Gregory’s Pastoral Care*, ed. H. Sweet (London, 1871-2), p.301. All quotations from Sweet follow the Hatton MS.

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primary meaning of ‘exposition’ or ‘contention’, but adapts the original when coming across more unusual meanings. In the above example, *orþanc* is employed both as a direct translation of the Latin (*argumentum redemptionis nostrae*, literally ‘the means of our redemption’), and in its traditional poetic meaning (‘the origin/principle of our redemption’). To achieve this effect, the translator uses *fruma* ‘beginning’ to translate *occasio (occasio [...] perditionis nostrae*, ‘the cause of our fall’) (instead of the more closely related and widely used *intinga*), and thus reinforces the structural parallel between the two last clauses, highlighting the poetic meaning of *orþanc*.

In both examples it appears that the translators feel the need to juggle the translation of *argumentum* with a more established meaning of *orþanc*. In *Dialogues*, the translator appears to coin an adjectival and otherwise unattested form of the word to use in a circumlocution while also changing the syntactical relationships of the Latin. Could this be because he felt that the (traditional? poetic?) notion of *orþanc* that he was familiar with did not easily fit into the Latin phrase? If we believe what Alfred says in his preface to the *Pastoral Care* about the decline of learning in England at the time of his ascension to the throne, then we may indeed picture a situation in which the pioneers of English prose translated the works *ða þe nidbeðyrfesta sien eallum monnum to witanne* (‘that are most necessary for all men to know’) surrounded by glossaries to help them with the Latin. Although there is no *argumentum* – *orþanc* gloss in the early corpus, it is quite likely that it did exist there. *Orþanc* is a frequent *interpretamentum* in tenth- and eleventh-century textual glosses annotating *argumentum*. The gloss also features in the Third Cleopatra Glossary, and both *orþanc* and *argumenta* are *interpretamenta* of *commenta* in the composite, but later, Harley Glossary.<sup>63</sup>

The coupling of *commenta* and *argumenta* is also attested in Latin-Latin glossaries copied on the Continent during the Alfredian period, notably in the glossary in the manuscript also containing the Latin-English Erfurt glossary, perhaps sharing its link to England.<sup>64</sup> It would appear that *argumentum* and *orþanc* could easily have become linked in the form of a secondary gloss,

<sup>63</sup> *Orþanc* also translates *argumentum* (‘evidence’) in the Old English *Herbarium* (probably a tenth-century text). Cf. *The Old English Herbarium and Medicina de Quadrupedibus*, ed. H. J. de Vriend (Oxford, 1984), p.xliii and pp.54-55.

<sup>64</sup> Goetz, *Corpus Glossariorum*, vol.V., p.279.

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which is a ‘typical reflex of the way in which a medieval glossator worked’.<sup>65</sup> This refers to the practice of creating a new gloss by taking one of two or more *interpretamenta* of one gloss, and rewriting it as a *lemma*, thus creating a new gloss out of context. This mechanism could well have been the origin for the above Alfredian translations, as well as for multiple textual *argumentum* glosses originating in the tenth century. The study of the Latin-Latin glosses from Anglo-Saxon England is still in its infancy, and future research could no doubt shed further light on this matter. It is apparent that the Alfredian translators responded to this connection without much of a sense of connotations that *orþanc* might have acquired as a result of its previous existence in the gloss tradition. Instead they reveal themselves incapable of using *orþanc* as a translation of *argumentum* without making changes to the structure or the vocabulary elsewhere. My analysis indicates that they are negotiating the poetic meaning of *orþanc* and the uses of the term in the early gloss tradition within the new medium of prose.

Looking beyond the Alfredian context towards the tenth century, which provides abundant evidence for the term’s coupling of *argumentum*, I would like to briefly consider that this pairing is likely to have given *orþanc* a new authority, which allowed it to stand out outside the poetic context. Derolez reminds us of the fact that the study of Isidore’s *Etymologies* is likely to have influenced the word-pairings of Anglo-Saxon glossators, and also certain semantic evolutions in the vernacular.<sup>66</sup> Isidore’s text was part of the Anglo-Saxon curriculum, and it is very likely that many educated Anglo-Saxons would have committed his definitions to their memory. Isidore sees *argumentum* as one of a three-part differentiation of history, the first of which is history proper (*historia*), defined as the things that happened in the past. The second is *argumentum*, which is defined as the things that could be, even though they did not happen, and the third *fabula*, which designates the things that ‘have not happened and cannot happen, because they are contrary to nature.’<sup>67</sup> In the next section we will see whether the truth value of creative potential inherent in

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<sup>65</sup> Lendinara, *Glosses and Glossaries*, p.72.

<sup>66</sup> R. Derolez, ‘Aldhelm and the Lexicographer’, in *Problems in Old English Lexicography*, ed. A. Bammesberger (Regensburg, 1985), pp.91-106.

<sup>67</sup> *The Etymologies of Isidore of Seville*, trans. S. A. Barney, W. J. Lewis, J. A. Beach and O. Berghof (Cambridge, 2006), p.67.

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this definition of *argumentum* had any impact on the notion of *orþanc* and its life in later Anglo-Saxon England.

### The late gloss tradition and its derivatives

Two main features set the *orþanc* glosses of the late tenth and eleventh century apart from the ones found in the earlier tradition: their abundance and their predilection for casting *orþanc* as a superlative mental faculty that is closely connected to a notion of craftsmanship. In this late tradition, *orþanc* is reclaimed as a contemporary term, and it transitions into the prose context. A modernized poetic use can also be identified in a number of Exeter Book riddles. These developments occur, however, within a closed circle of intellectuals connected to the Benedictine reform movement, and it is doubtful whether they ever gained greater currency, or moderate perpetuity. Evidence suggests they did not.

I will start with a discussion of the *orþanc* glosses in an early eleventh-century manuscript, Brussels, Bibliothèque Royale, 1650 in the light of recent research that establishes a firm connection between this manuscript and the tenth-century Benedictine Reform. The densely glossed copy of the prose *De virginitate* in Brussels 1650 survives as a monument both to the intellectual scope and interests of the English Benedictine reformers, and to the contributions of their scholarly activities to the developments of the Old English language. It is now recognised as such mainly through the work of Hofstetter and Gretsch, who through their detailed studies of the vocabulary used in manuscripts from the later Old English period, were able to link a body of texts to the reform centres at Glastonbury and Winchester, in particular to the intellectual circle of Dunstan and Æthelwold.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> Hofstetter, *Winchester und der Spätenglische Sprachgebrauch*; Gretsch, *Intellectual Foundations*.

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Brussels 1650, counting some 6000 *interpretamenta*, most of them in English, is first and foremost a testimony to the intensity of the revival of scholarly interest in Aldhelm during the tenth century. This revival has been well documented by Lapidge, who has charted a renaissance of the Latin hermeneutic style, practised in imitation of Aldhelm by almost all Benedictine reformers. However, the effects of this renewed interest in Aldhelm are not limited to the sphere of Anglo-Latin. Its impact on the vernacular is also pronounced. Hofstetter noted the incidence of what he called ‘Winchester words’ in a number of manuscripts dated from around the middle of the tenth century to the early eleventh century.<sup>69</sup> Twenty-three texts, among which Brussels 1650, revealed signs of strong Winchester usage, that is, they are characterised by their predilection for a distinctive and flamboyant vocabulary that seems to have been coined within the context of Winchester Abbey’s intellectual endeavours in the late tenth century, or a usage of existing lexis within a new semantic context, equally unique to this environment. Hofstetter’s research was limited to 13 semantic fields. Gretsch further investigated the language of the Brussels manuscript, noting a number of idiosyncratic usages, and establishing firm links between its vernacular glosses, the Royal Psalter gloss and Æthelwold’s translation of the Benedictine Rule. In comparison with the other two texts, however, she found that the Aldhelm glosses show a ‘nascent’ Winchester usage, and she thus argued that the gloss tradition in Brussels 1650 dates back to the time when a young Æthelwold was submerged in learning and scholarship in Glastonbury. Here Dunstan and Æthelwold studied Aldhelm texts together, and perhaps even convened an ‘Aldhelm seminar’ in which the Glastonbury circle studied Aldhelm’s text.<sup>70</sup> She estimates that this is the likely background for the astonishing accretion of *interpretamenta* that can be found in the Brussels manuscript.

One distinctive feature of the glossing in Brussels 1650 is a keen interest in *orþanc* and its relation to associated concepts. These include traditional couplings such as with *commentum* and *machinamentum*, but also new interpretations, both in existing and new glossing occasions,

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<sup>69</sup> Hofstetter, *Winchester*, pp.129-39.

<sup>70</sup> Gretsch, *Intellectual Foundations*, pp.382-3, and *passim*.

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resulting in a multiplication of *orþanc* glosses. The new readings which the manuscript introduces are of two kinds: those that link *orþanc* to a high mental faculty through *ingenium* glosses, and the *mechanica* glosses, where *orþancscype* is used to render a non-traditional category in the medieval division of learning. I will return to these notions presently, but I would like to preface my discussion with a note on the palaeography of the manuscript and its implication in how this eleventh-century text may relate to intellectual developments that occurred in the tenth.

Brussels 1650 contains glosses entered by as many as 4 or 5 different hands, entered A, B, C, CD, and R (though R may be identical with CD), working in chronological succession in the early eleventh century (though the relative chronology of A and B cannot be established since they never gloss the same *lemma*).<sup>71</sup> By far the greatest contribution to the vast gloss apparatus is made by scribe CD. The existence of several gloss layers is, at first sight, not consonant with the idea that these glosses represent the intellectual endeavours of one closed circle. However, we are able to see that each scribe is copying from an exemplar, that the number of corrupted forms is high, and that successive hands (C and CD) correct some of the entries of their predecessors.<sup>72</sup> This allows us to consider that scribe C was using an exemplar which contained substantial portions of the A and B gloss, and that CD might have been working with a glossed copy of a size and shape comparable to that of Brussels 1650. Moreover, since verbal links with the Rule and the Psalter can be detected in all of the above layers there are very good grounds for treating them as one.<sup>73</sup> All four main hands participate in the glossing related to *orþanc* (though B does so only very indirectly). For these reasons I shall, henceforth, consider these glosses as part of a communal intellectual project or debate, and only distinguish between hands when it would appear that they represent a misunderstanding, or a particularly distinctive position.

The Brussels gloss includes a good portion of *orþanc interpretamenta* that seem to have been derived from older Aldhelm gloss texts or glossaries, such as *commentum* and *argumentum*. These are glossed throughout, in the case of *argumentum* almost methodically. There are four examples

<sup>71</sup> Ker, *Catalogue*, no.8, pp.6-7; Goossens, *Glosses*, pp.45-52.

<sup>72</sup> Goossens, p.32, n2, pp.43, pp.45-50; S. Gwara, 'The Transmission of the 'Digby' Corpus of Bilingual Glosses to Aldhelm's *Prosa de virginitate*', *ASE* 27 (1998), 139-68, pp.161-3; Gretsch, pp.146-7.

<sup>73</sup> Gretsch, p.148.

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of the latter translating notions like logical argument or physical proof. *Argumenta* is also provided as *interpretamentum* for *commenta*. Thus far, there are distinct echoes of the earlier gloss tradition, with one distinction that glosses are multiplied. The most significant break with conformity to this early tradition comes in the form of a discrete and seemingly impervious development, in which the notion of *orþanc* becomes associated with the notion of *ingenium*, an expression for intelligence and sagacity ('*ingenii studii orþances*' 171; '*subtiliter sagaciter orþancum*' 151; '*molimen ingenium geþeoht vel orþanc*' 228).<sup>74</sup> This gloss is unattested in the preceding traditions, but it gains popularity in later glossed texts (for example in the Prudentius and Prosper glosses). Interestingly, of the three extant eleventh-century prose usages of *orþanc* all employ this term with the notion of *ingenium/intellect*:

He genam heardlice þurh heora lare on his orþance þa egeslican dæda.<sup>75</sup>

(Through their teaching, he adopted those terrible deeds into his mind to great excess.)

(Ælfric, *Letter to Sigeward*)

Oþþe hwær com heora snyttro & seo orþonce glaunes, & se þe þa gebredgen domas demde.<sup>76</sup>

(Or what became of their wisdom and of fierce intelligence and of those with keen decision-making.)

(*Blickling Homilies*, Homily 8)

Nu wolde ic þæt þa æðela clericas asceocon fram heora andgites orðance ælce slæcnysse.<sup>77</sup>

(Now I desire that those noble clerks shake from their mind's intellect each type of laziness.)

(Byrhtferth, *Enchiridion*)

<sup>74</sup> Numbers refer to Goossens's edition.

<sup>75</sup> *The Old English Version of the Heptateuch*, ed. S. J. Crawford, EETS 160; repr. with additions by N. R. Ker (London, 1969), 1.1078.

<sup>76</sup> *The Blickling Homilies*, ed. Morris, p.99.

<sup>77</sup> *Byrhtferth's Enchiridion*, ed. P. S. Baker and M. Lapidge, EETS s.s. 15 (Oxford, 1995), I.2, ll.323-4.

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These examples unmistakably use *orþanc* with the notion of *ingenium* as a mental faculty. There is no trace of awareness of the more traditional poetic usage, or the gloss tradition before the appearance of the *ingenium* gloss. A similar effect can be observed in all extant eleventh-century glossed texts and glossaries that are not related to Aldhelm's *De virginitate*. From what we can observe, this gloss entered into mainstream practice, and *orþanc* became an accepted term to express the notion of intellect. How did this happen? Since the occurrence of *orþanc* is so limited, it is of course not possible to analyse it in the same way as the lexical items with which Hofstetter established Winchester usage. However, we should not exclude the possibility that it might have played a special role in Æthelwold's environment as an *interpretamentum* for *ingenium*. Gretsche notes that, although her verbal parallels appear in all four scribal hands, the presence of Winchester words in the CD hand only indicates that his exemplar had at some point 'undergone revision at a centre where Winchester usage was taught'.<sup>78</sup> This is especially noteworthy when we look at the palaeography of the glosses that connect *orþanc* with the notion of *ingenium*. In each case (151, 171, 228, 3975) CD provides *orþanc*, either as a main gloss to *ingenium* (or *subtiliter* in 151), or on seeing a pre-existing gloss with *ingenium* as an *interpretamentum*. Such glosses do not feature in A, B or C. Thus it would appear that there is a very good chance that the tenth-century semantic change of *orþanc* into a notion of mental acuity is a product of the eclectic linguistic practices associated with the Benedictine reform and Æthelwold's circle.

Brussels 1650 and other glossed Aldhelm manuscripts may provide us with further indications about how this usage could have come about. My analysis of the use of *orþancscype* as a gloss for *mechanica* across the tradition indicates a complexity in its transmission in several manuscripts that can be linked to the Brussels manuscript. The notion of *mechanica* appears in *De virginitate* as part of a seven-fold division of knowledge which includes *arithmetica*, *geometrica*, *musica*, *astronomia*, *astrologia*, *mechanica* and *medicina*.<sup>79</sup> This is not the standard division of knowledge consisting of the seven subjects of the *trivium* (grammar, logic, rhetoric) and *quadrivium* (music,

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<sup>78</sup> p.148.

<sup>79</sup> Gwara, p. 457.

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arithmetic, geometry, astronomy), but an alternate model which featured in Isidore's *Liber numerorum*, and was favoured by early medieval Irish scholars.<sup>80</sup> It also appears in Aldhelm's *Epistola ad Acircium*.<sup>81</sup> Isidore defines *mechanica* as *quaedam peritia, vel doctrina, ad quam subtiliter fabricas omnium rerum concurrere dicunt* ('a certain practical knowledge, or the learning, in which the making of all things in a refined fashion are said to be regrouped').<sup>82</sup> This definition is very vague, and seems to include both a practical dimension (*peritia*), which presumably encompasses all varieties of craftsmanship and construction, and a theoretical dimension (*doctrina*), by which he alludes not only to the study of any codified knowledge relating to the pursuit of craftsmanship, but also, it would seem, to a more abstract inquiry into divine Creation (*fabricas omnium rerum* has a distinctively universal and abstract ring to it).

Isidore's alternative division does not make an appearance in subsequent classifications of knowledge from the continent, but for one intriguing manifestation in the work of Hrabanus Maurus in the early ninth century.<sup>83</sup> In his *De universo* and his *Schemata*, Maurus includes the alternative structure, as well as the following definition of *mechanica*, which appears to be a remodelled version of Isidore's own: *Mechanica est peritia fabricae artis in metallis et in lignis et in lapidibus* ('*Mechanica* is the pursuit of craftsmanship (lit. 'the making of art') with metals, wood and stones').<sup>84</sup> This is a much more practical definition than Isidore's, and it significantly raises the status of the applied arts. Its potential connections to Anglo-Saxon England are intriguing, though they come short of a firm proof. Both Maurus's division and his definition of *mechanica* appear to have been copied word for word from an appendix to Alcuin's *De rhetorica*. It is unclear whether

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<sup>80</sup> B. Bischoff, 'Eine verschollene Einteilung der Wissenschaften', in *Mittelalterliche Studien*, Vol II (Stuttgart, 1966-81), pp.273-88, and M. C. Díaz y Díaz, 'Les arts libéraux d'après les écrivains espagnols et insulaires aux VIIe et VIIIe siècles', in *Arts libéraux et philosophie au moyen âge : actes du quatrième congrès international de philosophie médiévale* (Paris, 1969), pp.37-46. Isidore has a more mainstream division in his *Etymologies*, cf. Books I-III, in *Etymologies*, eds. Barney et al. (esp. at pp.39, 69 and 89).

<sup>81</sup> Lapidge and Herren, *Aldhelm*, p.42.

<sup>82</sup> Isidore, *Differentiae* 2.39.151, PL 83, consulted at <http://pld.chadwyck.co.uk/>.

<sup>83</sup> E. Whitney, 'Paradise Restored: The Mechanical Arts from Antiquity through the Thirteenth Century', *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society* 80 (1990), 1-169, esp. pp.57-75. Whitney mentions the divisions found in Hrabanus Maurus and in pseudo-Alcuin on pp.62-63 and p.68. For a more general overview of classical and late antique ideas of *mechanica* see Ovitt, *The Restoration of Perfection*, pp.107-36.

<sup>84</sup> Hrabanus Maurus, *Schemata* 10 (PL 101:947-948); *De universo*, 15.1 (PL 111:413).

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the appendix should be counted among the latter's works, although it seems certain that it was Maurus's source. The earliest manuscripts containing the appendix also include the *subsidia critica* of *De rhetorica* and are thought to have been copied around the year 800, thus possibly still within Alcuin's lifetime.<sup>85</sup> Hrabanus Maurus was Alcuin's pupil in the years before the latter's death in 804, and could thus have learned the division and the definition of *mechanica* from his master, who might in turn have found it valuable to record, because he was familiar with such a distinction in the Anglo-Saxon records. Although it will be impossible to prove this, we know one thing about the fate of the alternative division in Anglo-Saxon England before the Benedictine Reform period, namely that Aldhelm's inclusion of it in his work made an impact. Thus, the late ninth-century author of the *Old English Martyrology*, who drew on a wide array of sources including Aldhelm and Isidore,<sup>86</sup> featured it as his catalogue of *weoruldwysdomas*, where he defines *mechanica* as *woruldweorc*, a term which distinctly recalls Isidore's definition.<sup>87</sup> In the Third Cleopatra Glossary, it is recorded in the *glossae collectae* to Aldhelm's work with the *interpretamentum searocraft*, with *searo* here most likely being used with its primary meaning as refined craftsmanship (Q879). In a list of sciences on a fly-leaf in an eleventh-century manuscript it is recorded with the more prosaic *weorccraft*.<sup>88</sup> These *interpretamenta* render the practical elements in Isidore's, and notably in Hrabanus Maurus's (and perhaps Alcuin's?) definitions of *mechanica*, and prove that in some Anglo-Saxon circles this term was understood as a notion of craftsmanship.

In tenth-century England, however, the Aldhelmian division of knowledge and its inclusion of *mechanica* seem to have perplexed several copyists and glossators, resulting in a number of variant interpolations, marginal annotations, and erroneous glossing, notably in manuscripts closely affiliated with Brussels 1650 with respect to their use of glosses. Thus for example, Digby 146, whose large body of vernacular glosses is almost entirely copied from Brussels, uses the traditional

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<sup>85</sup> Bischoff, 'Einteilung', p.275.

<sup>86</sup> J. E. Cross, 'On the Library of the Old English Martyrologist', *Learning and Literature in Anglo-Saxon England: Studies Presented to Peter Clemoes on the Occasion of his Sixty-Fifth Birthday*, eds. M. Lapidge and H. Gneuss (Cambridge, 1985), pp.227-49.

<sup>87</sup> *The Old English Martyrology*, ed. C. Rauer (Cambridge, 2013), section 232, p.232.

<sup>88</sup> Napier, *Glosses*, 55.6. The manuscript is British Library, Domitian I.

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subjects of the *trivium* and *quadrivium*. In other manuscripts a combination of both is used, e.g. in Royal 6. B.vii: *rhetorica, dialectica, arithmetica, geometrica, astronomia, astrologia, mechanica*. While there is confusion about the tradition that Aldhelm records, there are equally a few not unrelated mismatches in the glosses linked to these lists. Thus, for instance, the First Cleopatra Glossary contains a gloss which renders *mechanica* as *læcecræft* ('medicine'), possibly as a result of the gloss being written too close to it in an exemplar which contained the Aldhelmian division (where *medicina* immediately follows *mechanica*), a mistake facilitated by both *lemmata* starting with the letter 'm'. One might speculate also that the glossator was not familiar with *mechanica*, and simply matched it with a gloss that was in his exemplar, but did not seem to fit into the copy (if they contained differing divisions of knowledge). Such evidence is presented by a second *mechanica* gloss from the First Cleopatra Glossary where the *interpretamentum* reads *spræcecræft*, 'the skill of speech'. This gloss is harder to dismiss as a simple inadvertence, since the lists which contain *rhetorica* always place it at or towards the start of the enumeration.

In addition, it seems that this is not the only occasion where *mechanica* is cast as the power of speech. In Brussels 1650, it is glossed both as *orþancscipe* and as *getincgcræft* (B3021). The latter translates as 'the skill of the tongue'. This gloss is also copied into Digby 146 as *getingce cræft* (alongside *orþancscype*, O.3122). We have here proof that the Digby glossator thought that *mechanica* was the study of rhetoric. We know that he was fully attentive during his execution of this gloss, since he corrects the misspelling he found in Brussels by switching the letters c and g into their correct positions. Moreover, less than two folios later, the *commentis* gloss is rendered as *orþangcum* (O3225). The glossator not only here breaks from his exemplar which reads *doctrinis* and *trahtnungum* ('commentary') (B3119), whereas in general he copies in a faithful and 'systematic' way, but he also introduces, on purpose it seems, a variant spelling of the dative plural of *orþanc* (highlighted in bold) that is modelled on *geþingce cræft* and indicates he understands the headword in this compound to be *tingce* (a variant spelling of *tynge*, 'tongue'), thus interpreting *commentis* as rhetorical arguments.

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A possible source for this gloss can be found upon inspection of the Brussels manuscript.<sup>89</sup> On fol.29r, which contains the passage enumerating the seven divisions of knowledge, the C hand has copied out a list of the seven traditional sciences (of the *trivium* and *quadrivium*) into the margin to complement the Aldhelmian division. He then recopies *astrologia* and *mechanica*, the two disciplines in Aldhelm's list but not in the traditional division, below the last item of that enumeration. Underneath, he copies out *commenta* as a marginal gloss, as below (to simplify the representation I have only rendered the *interpretamenta* for the last three marginal glosses):

gramatica .rethorica .dialectica .  
 Arithmetica .musica .geometrica  
 Astronomia  
 Astrologia *tungelgescead*  
 Mechanica *orþancscype*  
*i. argumenta*  
 Commenta *orþancas*<sup>90</sup>

Throughout the manuscript, the C hand collects words from the text and writes and glosses them in the margin, generalizing their case endings as he does so, possibly in preparation for their inclusion into a glossary.<sup>91</sup> In this instance, this practice occurs in close proximity to a scholium (the traditional division), to the effect that it reads almost like an extension of it (the marginal *commenta* gloss occurs in l.12, and thus seems to be more closely related to the *mechanica* gloss right above it, than to the interlinear gloss in l.14. The Digby hand is closely influenced by this presentation. He does not normally copy the Brussels C hand's marginal collection. On this occasion, however, he is keen to note the textual difference he encounters in his own copy, where the *trivium* and *quadrivium* have replaced the Aldhelmian division (fol.51r). To this effect he writes the disciplines not included in the Digby text into the margin, as follows:

<sup>89</sup> I have only been able to consult the manuscript in facsimile form, as found in *De laudibus virginitatis; with Latin and Old English Glosses*, with an introduction by G. van Langenhove (Bruges, 1941).

<sup>90</sup> *Argumenta* is a superscript gloss for *commenta*. Note that the marginal glosses (by hand C) differ slightly from the hand A interlinear glosses in the Old English *interpretamenta*, for instance *astrologia* is glossed *tungelcraft* by A, but *tungelgescead* by C. This points to a difference in the glossing tradition in their exemplars.

<sup>91</sup> Cf. Ker, and Goossens, p.47.

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Astrologia	<i>tungolgescead</i>
Mechanica	<i>orþancscype, gepingce cræft</i>
Commenta	<i>orþancas</i>
Medicina	<i>læcecræft</i>

He copies three marginal C hand glosses, and adds the *medicina* gloss, as well as *gepingce cræft*, both interlinear A hand glosses. The inclusion of the *commenta* gloss appears to indicate that he understood it as a valuable further explanation about the nature of *orþancscype*. It seems indeed the case that his idiosyncratic ‘emendation’ of the *commentis* gloss (*orþangcum*, O3225) less than two folios later is directly guided by the marginalia on fol.51r, and that, on the basis of the information that he had gathered in his exemplar, he understood *mechanica* to be a subject closely related to or identical with the art of rhetoric. There are good reasons for such a confusion. The traditional coupling of *orþanc* with notions like *argumentum* and *commentum*, words which can refer to aspects of rhetoric, may have been an influence. Moreover, the division which incorporates *mechanica* normally leaves out the arts of the *trivium*. A reader who did not know any better might have thought that *mechanica* was a designation in which all of grammar, rhetoric and dialectic were regrouped, and could therefore be equated with *gepingce cræft*. In other words, this could have been a learned misunderstanding. However, it points to the fact that the concept of *mechanica* was not widely comprehended in Anglo-Saxon England.

The confusion of the Digby hand occurs in the early decades of the eleventh century, but, as we have seen, there is evidence that an equal misunderstanding may have existed in the mid-tenth century or earlier. In between those two points in time we witness the significant expansion of the Aldhelm gloss corpus, and the equally substantial proliferation of *orþanc* glosses. It is thus not unlikely that the two are in some way connected. The latter is, perhaps, an indication of pronounced attention to the meaning of *orþanc* around roughly the middle of the tenth century, in an effort to clear up any misunderstandings as to the nature of *mechanica*. There is evidence that Isidore was consulted in a Latin annotation, ‘.i. peritiam vel fabricam rerum’(B5319, cf. ‘peritiam fabricam rerum’ O5445), an expression which seems derived from his definition of the term. A

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second and very remarkable echo of Isidore's definition is also found in one of the newer *orþanc* glosses at the beginning of the Brussels text, where *subtiliter* is annotated with both *sagaciter* and *orþancum* by the CD hand (151; recalling Isidore's *subtiliter fabricas omnium rerum*). Could this be a direct witness of the study of Aldhelm's text, intent on establishing the full resonance of Isidore's meaning, in order to both clarify the notion of *mechanica*, and to equate it with a corresponding term in Old English? There are two more *orþanc* glosses in close proximity, both coupled with *ingenium*, to annotate a notion of intellect (*qualitatem vivacis ingenii*, the mental faculty of the commentators of Scripture) and a notion of superior craftsmanship (*artis molimen egregius*, the artful process of the bees in the construction of their honeycomb) respectively (B171 and 228). These two annotations provide a parallel to the two dimensions of *mechanica* as defined by Isidore. So, incidentally do the notions of *ingenium* (which could denote both intelligence and, more rarely, the physical product of that intelligence), and *orþanc*. The latter, as we have seen, moves from a more physical conception of craftsmanship found in its use in traditional poetic contexts to extend its range to a more abstract dimension as it becomes associated with a variety of *lemmata* in the gloss tradition. While the link with *argumentum* would have provided it with the necessary authority to designate a discipline worthy to be included among the liberal arts (and that would have given it the idea of creative potential), its association with *ingenium* might have come about in an effort to clear up any misunderstandings that arose out of existing gloss connections. The evidence outlined above that the *ingenium* gloss and the related semantic change in *orþanc* are instances of Winchester usage, corroborates this theory.

Why would the Benedictine reformers have promoted the notion of *mechanica* in this way? Their movement, which included the re-establishment of scholarship and learning in England, led to a significant increase in the creation of loan words and semantic borrowings that reflect its leaders' scholarly interests.<sup>92</sup> We know that *mechanica* was already coupled with *searocræft* before or towards the beginning of this period, and we also established the excessively pejorative use of the notion of *searo* in the translations of intellectuals associated with the Benedictine

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<sup>92</sup> Kastovsky, 'Semantics', p.307.

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Reform movement. It is therefore not surprising that they may have wished to redefine *mechanica* to move away from this association. Though *mechanica* had not featured in the more traditional division of learning known through the early Middle Ages, there is evidence that its status became more prominent towards the end of that period. The Irish-Carolingian scholar John Scottus Eriugena, for instance, coined the notion *artes mechanicae* in his commentary on Marcellinus Capella's *Marriage of Philology and Mercury*, written in the late ninth century, thereby opening up an avenue for the *mechanica* to be included in a canon of liberal arts.<sup>93</sup> It is possible that the Benedictine reformers might have become aware of such developments in their study of Isidore's concept. It is clear, however, that in their eyes, the notion of *searocraft* might not have corresponded to what they learned about the term when they read Isidore's definition of it.

The fact that misunderstandings of both *mechanica* and *orþanc* persisted in some eleventh-century manuscripts need not invalidate this theory. The numbers in which *orþanc* survives are simply too small to assume that, besides constituting a rare and archaic poeticism, the word ever gained a great currency outside of the gloss tradition or the intellectual circle of the Benedictine reformers. A scribe copying outside of this circle may well have been as puzzled by the notion of *orþanc*, as by the concept of *mechanica*. Among the three later prose usages cited above, two at least were composed by people who had good reasons to be familiar with the newly enriched meaning of *orþanc*. Hofstetter has shown that Ælfric, who studied under Æthelwold, was a formidable practitioner of Winchester usage,<sup>94</sup> and Byrhtferth is widely recognised as a hermeneutic author, with a fondness for gloss-derived words.<sup>95</sup> Ælfric might have been a good vehicle through which to popularize the use of *orþanc* as a notion of intelligence or ingenuity, but he only used it once, in a work composed towards the end of his career, and ostensibly directed at a much smaller audience than his homilies and his saints' lives. Thus, there is no clear evidence that *orþanc* as a notion of intelligence or ingenuity ever reached a sizeable audience.

<sup>93</sup> Whitney, 'Mechanical Arts', p.70. *Mechanica* becomes a liberal art (*ars mechanica*) in the age of scholasticism, cf. Whitney pp.75-128.

<sup>94</sup> Hofstetter, *Winchester*, pp.38-66. Ælfric prefers the use of Winchester vocabulary 98.27% of the time for the semantic fields that Hofstetter identifies (at p.38).

<sup>95</sup> Baker and Lapidge, eds., *Enchiridion*, pp.cvi-cxv. 'The most striking aspect of the vocabulary of E [the *Enchiridion*] is its fondness for words that are more characteristic of glosses than of prose' (p.cvi).

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We might return here to the question of how widely disseminated its poetic usage was, given that only fourteen instances of it survive. My discussion has made clear how indebted to the poetic tradition many of the early gloss and prose examples were, which suggests that the poetic meaning stayed stable over some centuries at least. We saw in Chapter Two, however, that even within the traditional and formulaic context of Old English poetry, subtle usage may allow poetic language to invoke and play with contemporary semantic developments. In the case of *orþanc* two such instances can be observed. The first occurs within the vernacular riddle tradition. I cite *Riddle 42* (W40):

Ic seah wyhte wrætlice twa  
 undearnunga ute plegan  
 hæmedlaces; hwitloc anfeng,  
 wlanc under wædum, gif þæs weorces speow,  
 fæmne fyllo. Ic on flette mæg  
 þurh runstafas rincum secgan,  
 þam þe bec witan bega ætsomne  
 naman þara wihta. þær sceal Nyd wesan  
 twega oþer ond se torhta Æsc,  
 an an linan, Acas twegen,  
 Hægelas swa some. Swa ic þæs hordgates  
 cægan cræfte þa clamme onleac  
 þe þa rædellan wið rynemenn  
 hygefæste heold, heortan bewrigene  
 orþoncbendum. Nu is undyrne  
 werum æt wine hu þa wihte mid us,  
 heanmode twa, hatne sindon.<sup>96</sup>

(I saw two wondrous creatures playing the wedlock-game outside for all to see; the fair-haired, proud under its garments, would get a woman's fullness if the work was successful. Through rune-staves I can tell those amongst the warriors in the hall who are learned in the books, the names of those coupled creatures. *Nyd* shall be there, and a second one, and the bright *Æsc* on a line, and two *Acas*, and just as many *Hægelas*. Thus with the *cræft* of a key I unlocked the treasure-door's chain, which kept the complex riddle safe from the mystery-solvers, its heart concealed with bonds of ingenuity. Now is revealed to warriors at wine what those creatures amongst us, low-minded both, are called.)

<sup>96</sup> *Riddle 42* (W40), *The Old English Riddles of the 'Exeter Book'*, ed. C. Williamson (Chapel Hill, NC; 1977), p.95. I use the number from ASPR with Williamson's number in bracket.

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This riddle is often presented as a double-entendre or ‘obscene’ riddle,<sup>97</sup> though it should more rightly be described as a mock-riddle.<sup>98</sup> The opening lines are certainly lewd, but the real explicitness starts mid-way through. The riddle-master makes no mystery of his solution, and appears to deride various elements of the riddle tradition. His intended audience is, no doubt, a group of fellow riddle-makers, perhaps picturing the social setting in which their craft was performed by calling them *weras æt winum*. The riddle is mocking the learned pretence of that group, and its predilection of elaborate language games (e.g. those involving solutions being coded in runes), by presenting a straightforward and deceptively simple solution. The point that is being made, however, is not about the solution to what happens in the opening lines, but about the nature of riddling, the concept of a solution and the riddle as base language play. In this context, *orþanc*, while still responding to its traditional role in connoting the arcane, exquisite artifact, functions as a reference to the human faculty at work in these mind-games, a meaning which must have been derived from the semantic extension of that word during the second half of the tenth century. No consensus has yet been reached about the likely date of composition of the Exeter Book riddles, and whether they constitute a single collection, or were accrued over time, however, it would be plausible to place the above riddle into the self-conscious and questioning environment of the Benedictine reform monasteries, which moreover is known to have had a predilection for language games and arcane concepts.<sup>99</sup>

The second example occurs in the extract from *The Dialogues of Solomon and Saturn* that I briefly discussed at the beginning of this chapter, noting how the use of *orþanc* here is employed within a semantic context that normally pertains to *searo*. The Pater Noster is so powerful that if spoken it *ðone cræft bricedð ond ða orðancas ealle tosliteð* (‘will break the power, and completely tear apart those chains’). As observed above, the poem plays with the poetic usage of *searo* as a concept denoting imprisonment, notably in the form of hellish chains that typically feature in

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<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*, p.276.

<sup>98</sup> J. Wilcox drew our attention to this type of riddle and to the playful, self-parodying nature of the genre by identifying two such mock-riddles among the extant Old English riddles in ‘Mock-Riddles in Old English: Exeter Riddles 89 and 19’, *SP* 93 (1996), 180-7.

<sup>99</sup> P. Conner, *Anglo-Saxon Exeter* (Woodbridge, 1993), argues that many of the poems contained in the Exeter Book are spiritually and doctrinally close to the ideals of the Benedictine Reform, esp. pp.161-4.

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contemporary accounts of the Harrowing of Hell. The use of *orþanc* here seems very educated and highly specific to an environment where the poet would have come across both terms together, and the best candidate for this place is a gloss or glossary. A de-contextualised environment would have been more favourable to such transference of meaning. Since the poem's central motif is the presentation of language as an artefact, we might also venture to note that *orþanc*, which appeared connoted at certain points in the gloss tradition with ideas of speech and argument, would have seemed an ideal word choice to the poet who wished here to depict the combat between good and evil on a material as well as on a linguistic plane. This word choice would have to be described as highly literate, arcane and hermeneutic, but this is something which must also be said of the character of the poem as a whole.

The recent edition of *Solomon and Saturn* by Anlezark makes a strong case for an early tenth-century date and West-Saxon authorship of the poem, arguing that we should look for the author of the poem among the circle of Dunstan at Glastonbury.<sup>100</sup> This is also the location for Gretsch's purported 'Aldhelm seminar', in which the gloss tradition found in Brussels 1650 first started to evolve. It is here that the young Dunstan and the young Æthelwold first conceived and developed their scholarly interests and ideas that would come to define the English Benedictine Reform. Evidence of the development of the notions of *orþanc* and *mechanica* during this period seems to offer a microscopic insight into what some of these interests and ideas might have entailed. They speak of a pronounced interest in language and the meaning of vernacular words, as well as an inquiry into philosophical and scholarly concepts. It is here, perhaps, that *mechanica* was reglossed as *orþancscype* after the distinctions between *searo* and *orþanc* had been debated and their semantic ranges established. For *orþanc* this would have included at that stage the traditional poetic meaning of ancient artefact or craftsmanship, and the more abstract meaning added through its coupling with *commentum* and *argumentum* in the gloss tradition. Both Latin terms would have given it a philosophical dimension, and *argumentum* would have additionally established its authority as a valid scholarly pursuit, which has both a historical dimension (as an Isidorian type of

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<sup>100</sup> Anlezark, *Dialogues*, pp.49-57.

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*historia*), but also a creative potential (in Isidore's definition of something that can happen in the future). However, this early concept of *orþancscype* also left it open to misinterpretations. The idea that *mechanica* is somehow linked to rhetoric would have emerged from the absence of the *trivium* in the Aldhelmian classification of knowledge, as well as from the semantic ranges of *commentum* and *argumentum*. The fact that a new type of gloss linking *orþanc* to *ingenium* appears only in the CD hand of the Brussels manuscript appears to indicate that a new interpretation of *orþanc* was established and diffused as part of the sustained preferential usage of specific vocabulary that occurred in a number of texts that have some connection with Winchester in the late tenth and early eleventh century. This Winchester usage was perhaps an attempt to resolve any confusion that might have arisen from the previous semantic relationships of *orþanc* with regard to the notion of *mechanica*, and to better capture the Isidorian definition of the term.

From the few uses that survive, we can understand that this new definition was diffused among the circle in which it first appeared, notably as a gloss in non-Aldhelmian texts, and that it transitioned into prose and poetry with this meaning. However, we can also see that many of the applied uses of this term show evidence of close connections with the circle of Winchester, an interest in late Anglo-Saxon glossary words, or, in the case of the riddle tradition, at the very least implications of a very restricted and highly educated audience. Thus we must conclude that the primary meaning of *orþanc* as '*mind, genius, wit, understanding; ingenium*', as given in *BT* is not representative of a broader understanding of the term in the Anglo-Saxon period, but that it constitutes an eclectic semantic development in the late tenth century, which, in all likelihood, never became very widely known. We may therefore point to the poetic tradition as the word's most enduring and widespread usage, and present its primary meaning as 'ancient artifice, age-old craft'. A second definition should encompass the notion of *ingenium* as a meaning that originated in the tenth century, and as a feature of the hermeneutic style during that time. This should also point to the word's association with the concept of *mechanica*. Finally, we should consider the inclusion of a third strand pointing to the erroneous conceptions of the term as a rhetorical art in

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the gloss tradition, given that there is evidence in *Solomon and Saturn* that this potential meaning was the source of a very complex poetic usage.

**CHAPTER FOUR*****Cræft* I: Previous Word Studies – *Cræft* as Craftsmanship – Magic  
(The ‘Old’ Usage)**

Although *cræft* has received a large amount of critical attention in comparison to *searo* and *orþanc*, there are still significant gaps in our understanding of the term, in particular with regard to how it is used to denote craftsmanship and skill. It would appear that our appreciation of this aspect of *cræft* has been somewhat inhibited, partly by the term’s extraordinary polysemic nature, and partly by the repeated spotlighting of the Alfredian usage, which, although ‘special’, is by no means the only distinctive usage of *cræft* in the corpus. The following study will reveal two discrete usages of *cræft* as a notion of craftsmanship: a first usage denoting magical artefacts, or the use of magic in relation to craft; a second usage, of very broad currency, which presents acts of craftsmanship within a paradigm of divine endowment. These usages are subject to heavy semantic loading – one with negative and one with positive colouring – and they exist alongside more neutral uses of *cræft* denoting craftsmanship. I will show how these usages play into the moral gulf which emerged after Chapter One, and delimit these notions of craftsmanship against the term’s near-synonyms, *searo* and *orþanc*. In order to do justice to the semantic complexity of *cræft*, my study commences with a preliminary review of existing critical material on the term.

**Critical overview of previous word-studies**

It is impossible to talk about *cræft* without taking into account the relatively extensive body of existing scholarship on the term. Its polysemy, and its deliberate usage in some texts associated with the Alfredian court, have been recognised and scrutinised since the first half of the twentieth century. Among the most important studies on *cræft* must be counted three broad semantic surveys

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(Kroesch, Mincoff, Girsch) – as well as a fourth, if we include the presentation of *cræft* in the *DOE* – and two important investigations into the usage of *cræft* in Alfredian literature (Clemoes, Discenza). The semantic surveys are by nature intent on establishing the totality of meanings which the term displays in Old English literature. If they try to comment on the relationships between the different meanings, it is mainly with the purpose of establishing the evolution from one meaning into another. This activity is often based on speculation and general assumptions on the evolution of the language. The case studies of *cræft* in Alfredian texts, on the other hand, comment in greater depth on the relationships between different senses of the term in these texts. They do not, however, investigate these relationships beyond the very idiosyncratic Alfredian usage. Overall, the studies leave an important gap, unable to account for the term's manifold, strikingly diverse denotations of craftsmanship.

**Kroesch (1928-9)<sup>1</sup>**

The earliest semantic study of *cræft* elaborated the following six meanings of the term: (1) 'strength', 'power', 'might'; (2) 'a great number', 'host'; (3) 'power of mind', 'wisdom', 'knowledge', 'intelligence', 'skill', 'ingenuity', 'craft', 'cunning', 'deceit'; (3a) 'power of evil', 'device', 'craft'; (4) 'general ability', 'faculty', 'endowment', 'talent', 'virtue', 'excellence'; (5) 'skill', 'art', 'trade', 'work', 'profession'; (6) 'a machine', 'instrument', 'engine'. Kroesch's approach is diachronic and he sees a developmental relationship between these six major sense units, with one meaning being derived, over time, from the previous one. He departs from the term's etymological root, and thus posits that the term's first and primary sense was that of 'physical strength or power'.<sup>2</sup> The other senses are gradually derived through processes of semantic borrowing. Thus, for instance, (2), a development attested in other Germanic languages (OHG, OS, and ON), is seen as having developed as a result of the original meaning's association

<sup>1</sup> S. Kroesch, 'The Semantic Development of the OE *Cræft*', *MP* 26 (1928-9), 443-41.

<sup>2</sup> p.433, cf. also Holthausen, *Wörterbuch*.

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with the Latin *virtus* and analogous terms, which could both designate physical strength, a miracle and, by extension, notions like ‘the heavenly hosts’ (Jerome, for example, frequently uses the expression *virtutes caelorum*).<sup>3</sup> The meanings under (3) are derived after (1) is abstracted to senses which denote ‘mental strength’. Kroesch sees this process as occurring in the context of the Christianisation of Anglo-Saxon England, during which spiritual and intellectual values are seen to overtake physical attributes.<sup>4</sup> It is at this stage, Kroesch assumes, that *cræft* became associated with the Latin notion of *ars*, in particular with its sense of ‘skill’ and related negative aspects, i.e. ‘being skilled at evil’, which he claims occurred through the term’s association with *searo* in heroic poetry. *Cræft* is then seen to develop further meanings through processes of semantic borrowing, expanding its meaning to parallel the semantic widening in the Latin terms with which it has become associated, notably *ars* and *virtus*.<sup>5</sup> This, according to Kroesch, is the main factor behind the term’s development to encompass meanings (4), (5) and (6). In other words, the primary notion of craftsmanship investigated in this study is seen to have been derived from a notion of mental endowment.

Kroesch’s observations regarding (2) have been categorically rejected by Mincoff, who notes that this sense is not represented in the Old English corpus.<sup>6</sup> There is one use in *Genesis B*, which is most likely adopted directly from that poem’s continental model. This sense was indeed very common in Old Saxon.<sup>7</sup> *Wigcræft* is used to denote ‘military force’, ‘host’ in the Orosius (e.g. Book 3, 9.73.11), but this is a compound use and not representative enough. The presence of Saxon scholars at the Alfredian court may present another reason to see this use as exceptional and non-native.

While semantic borrowing is a well-attested and accepted agent of semantic change,<sup>8</sup> there are several problems that arise from linking the development of *cræft* to that of Latin terms. Firstly, the varied and broad usage of *cræft* in texts of all periods and genres would speak against the

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<sup>3</sup> p.435.

<sup>4</sup> p.443.

<sup>5</sup> pp.437.

<sup>6</sup> Mincoff, p.10.

<sup>7</sup> *The Later Genesis*, ed. B. J. Timmer (Oxford, 1948), p.269; cf. Doane, *The Saxon Genesis*, note to l.269a.

<sup>8</sup> Kastovsky, ‘Semantics’, pp.309-11.

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term's evolution in close connection with the Latin. If the distribution and frequency of *cræft* were more similar to that of *orþanc* as delineated in Chapter Three, we could accept Kroesch's proposition more readily. Instead, as I will show, *cræft* assumes a strong and independent character in poetry (both heroic and biblical) and prose, thereby acquiring semantic independence from the Latin. Secondly, Kroesch's analysis is flawed by his perception of Old English poetry as a monolith preceding the development of prose writing. While it is true that the 'traditional' language and form of much Old English poetry provides a unifying aspect across the centuries that make up the Anglo-Saxon period, many studies, including my own analysis of the poetic uses of *searo* and *orþanc*, indicate that traditional language may be subtly adapted from one poem to another, whereby that semantic change can be detected.

There are other problems with his diachronic approach. For instance, a survey of the uses of *cræft* shows that it could be employed with the sense of 'physical strength' in the prose of Ælfric, a writer who is usually described as using language with precision, and abstaining from poeticisms and archaic language use. Thus, even if we wanted to accept this sense as 'original' because of its primacy in the cognate languages of OE, we would have to acknowledge it to be a functional, non-archaic sense throughout the Anglo-Saxon period. In the absence of adequate dating of the majority of Old English texts, the same applies *a priori* to all the other senses of *cræft*. It is thus impossible to ascertain which sense derived from which and in what order, at least not within the remit of Kroesch's study. The notion of craftsmanship could just as conceivably have been derived from a physical ability (of brute strength) and could in turn have inspired the term's widening into more abstract notions.

Furthermore, it stands to reason that the Latin *ars* did not develop according to the pattern Kroesch suggests. It originally designated all manner of common pursuits and handicrafts, and, with the development of Roman culture and the advent of Christianity, came to designate intellectual disciplines and spiritual pursuits (including the subjects known as liberal arts). It also acquired a moral dimension, expressing 'the moral character of a man so far as it is made known

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by actions'.<sup>9</sup> *DMLBS* cites the following: (1) 'art, skill, accomplishment', (2) 'mechanical or practical art, craft', (3) 'liberal art, comprised in trivium and quadrivium', (4) 'art of government or guidance' (post-Norman Conquest), (5) 'forbidden or black art'. There is no direct equivalent in this list of Kroesch's *cræft* sense (3) 'power of mind', 'wisdom', 'knowledge', 'intelligence'. In other words, *ars* is not attested to have been used in this way in medieval Britain, which invalidates Kroesch's argument that the notion of *cræft* as craftsmanship developed as a result of the term first denoting a more cerebral form of ability.

To some Anglo-Saxons who knew Latin, however, the term *ars* would have suggested, in the first instance, one of the seven liberal *artes* that constituted the traditional curriculum adopted in early English schools. Moreover, on this abstract level, they might have understood it to exclude manual occupations. Isidore's *Etymologiae*, a treatise that the educated Anglo-Saxon man would normally have been familiar with,<sup>10</sup> defines *ars* by opposition to *artificium*: *Ars est natura liberalis, artificium vero gestum manibus constat* ('The liberal arts exist by (in) nature, artifice, however, comes into existence being made by hands').<sup>11</sup> This is a complex definition, contrasting not only *ars* with *artificium*, but also *artificium* with *natura*, 'being' (*est*) with 'coming into existence' (*constat*), and a notion of freedom which seems opposed, as it were, to manual labour. The latter aspect assigns both *ars* and *artificium* to separate social strata. This is reinforced by the distal position of *liberalis* in the first clause, which allows us to read it both as 'the liberal arts exist by nature' and 'art is by its nature relating to the freeborn man'. In short, the notion of craftsmanship investigated in this thesis is excluded from Isidore's definition of *ars*, and subsumed within the notion of *artificium*. It is thus highly questionable if *cræft* could have developed as a notion of artisanship and manual labour only after becoming associated with the Latin concept of the liberal arts. If anything, such an association, had it existed before *cræft* came to denote craftsmanship, might have precluded this very development.

<sup>9</sup> Lewis and Short, *A Latin Dictionary*.

<sup>10</sup> Lapidge, *The Anglo-Saxon Library*, p.311.

<sup>11</sup> Cited by Whitney, 'The Mechanical Arts', p.68, n50.

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**Mincoff (1933)**<sup>12</sup>

A second semantic analysis of *cræft* was published just five years after Kroesch's in the context of a broader study of the development of Old English notions for 'strength' and 'power' and presented a less Latin-dependent account of semantic change. This study is an important early contribution to Anglo-Saxon word studies, not least for its cataloguing of the meanings of *cræft* by genre, dialect and authors where possible.<sup>13</sup> It is the first to note the distinctive usage of *cræft* in texts traditionally associated with King Alfred. In fact the cataloguing of the term reveals that the sense of *cræft* which renders a notion of virtue is found only in West Saxon literature, and in Alfredian texts in particular. Northumbrian and Mercian texts, on the other hand, tend to use the word almost exclusively with the sense of 'craftsmanship' or 'skill' ('Kunst', 'Geschicklichkeit').<sup>14</sup> The Alfredian usage is thus specialised, and Mincoff argues that this is due to Alfred's reliance on poetic diction and respective independence from a more clear-cut prose style in which the use of synonyms is more clearly defined.

Mincoff makes a case for the overall predominance of the sense of 'craftsmanship' ('Kunst') in *cræft* uses, claiming that poetic uses of compounds with *cræft* as headword employ the term mostly with this meaning. He believes that this constitutes proof of it being the main sense of *cræft* at the time the poetry was composed. He justifies this assertion by arguing that while a simplex can be employed throughout poetry with many senses, a compound will always be constructed with a sense that is currently dominant, otherwise intelligibility would be compromised. Although this argument is valid in itself, it fails to address issues of moral loading (evaluating positively or

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<sup>12</sup> M. Mincoff, *Die Bedeutungsentwicklung der ags. Ausdrücke für Kraft und Macht*, Palaestrea 188 (Leipzig, 1933).

<sup>13</sup> It should be noted, however, that this catalogue is far from exhaustive, mainly due to the circumstance that many texts of the corpus had not been published or even transcribed at the time Mincoff was conducting his study.

<sup>14</sup> These categories, the Northumbrian one in particular, are somewhat problematic, as the majority of vernacular texts from all corners of England have survived mainly in West Saxon manuscripts, where dialectal variations often appear standardised. Mincoff includes only the Lindisfarne glosses and the annotations to the Durham Ritual as witnesses to Northumbrian usage, while these were recorded in the late tenth century (ostensibly under the penmanship of Aldred the scribe at Chester-le-Street) at a time when Northumbria had become absorbed into the West Saxon kingdom of England, and was no longer as culturally separate from the South as it had been in previous centuries. His assertion that *cræft* was used with meanings of 'trade'/'work' ('Beruf') in Northumbrian texts should especially be considered in light of the broader development of the Gifts-of-Men paradigm, which I delineate in the next chapter.

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negatively) in compounds, and tends to consider the notion of ‘skill’ as relatively monolithic. This difficulty is compounded by the fact that, like Kroesch, Mincoff sees all Old English poetry as a unified body of expression that preceded prose writing, characterised by a ‘traditional’ language that does not evolve over time. Moreover, a great number of the compounds that Mincoff collected for the extant poetry do not seem to corroborate his observation that the headword *cræft* is employed with the sense of craftsmanship, notably *mægen-cræft*, *beaducræftig*, and *leopucræft* – at least not with the explanations he provides. According to his analysis, these compounds employ their headwords with the notion of physical strength. Despite the flaws, however, such considerations do not disprove Mincoff’s main point that *cræft* has a tendency to express craftsmanship in poetry.

Mincoff sees near-synonyms, such as *cræft* and *searo*, as belonging to a balanced system. If any part of this system is disturbed, i.e. through semantic change occurring in one word, other words in the system follow suit.<sup>15</sup> He argues that the pejoration of *searo*, which occurred before the dawn of vernacular prose, entailed a semantic shift for *cræft*, as the latter started to replace *searo* to express the senses of craftsmanship that this term had traditionally assumed. He continues to argue that this sense is the primary sense of *cræft*, and that transitions to other senses, such as ‘cunning’, ‘crafted object’, ‘machine’ occurred without influence of the Latin *ars*, but that they follow a development common to several words denoting craftsmanship in other Germanic languages (such as the OHG *list*).<sup>16</sup> While the idea that *cræft* and *searo*, along with other near-synonyms such as *orþanc* might belong to a complex interactive semantic system is worth retaining, it would seem that Mincoff’s analysis of *cræft* is too preliminary (and his analysis of *searo* virtually lacking) to provide a conclusive account of how these terms interact in the system.

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<sup>15</sup> pp.1-2

<sup>16</sup> Mincoff, pp.111-122.

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After Mincoff there is a long gap in scholarship on the semantics of *cræft*, although several onomasiological studies note the use of the term to express a range of notions, notably: ‘work’ and ‘trade’;<sup>17</sup> ‘virtue’;<sup>18</sup> ‘wisdom’.<sup>19</sup>

**Girsch (1988)<sup>20</sup>**

The third semantic study, a more recent unpublished PhD thesis by Girsch, takes a synchronic approach, thus avoiding some of the pitfalls of the earlier studies. Establishing the meaning of every single occurrence of *cræft* within its context, Girsch takes all these senses to co-exist, in the absence of irrefutable proof to the contrary.<sup>21</sup> Collecting all the meanings, she constructs a schema dividing the base meaning of *cræft* into four major sub-meanings, each of which divide further to capture all the senses that Girsch collected in her study. The four main sub-divisions of the schema are: (1) *cræft* as a physical object or concrete thing; (2) a set of activities or body of knowledge; (3) a quality of inanimate things; (4) a personal attribute, either in possession or use, or considered per se.<sup>22</sup> In the introduction to my thesis, I have already noted the usefulness of this schema – with respect to these four sub-groups – for reproducing not only the major uses of *cræft*, but also of the other terms analysed in this study. Girsch concludes that the base sense which unites these four groups, and every sub-sense of *cræft* is a notion of empowerment, which she explains as ‘the nominal counterpart to the verbal notion ‘to be able’’. Of further note is Girsch’s division of each sense into limited and non-limited uses. She argues in particular that uses of *cræft* which are limited, i.e. particularly defined by the context in which they occur, do not tend to attract negative

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<sup>17</sup> A. Szogs, *Die Ausdrücke für Arbeit und Beruf im Altenglischen*, AF 73 (Heidelberg, 1931).

<sup>18</sup> H. Käsmann, *Tugend und Laster im Alt- und Mittelenglischen: Eine bezeichnungsgeschichtliche Untersuchung* (Berlin, Freie U. diss., 1951).

<sup>19</sup> H. Schelp, *Der geistige Mensch im Wortschatz Alfreds des Grossen* (Göttingen diss., 1956).

<sup>20</sup> E. Baldwin Stevens Girsch, ‘A Semantic Analysis of the Old English *Cræft* and Related Words’, PhD diss. (University of Toronto, 1988).

<sup>21</sup> esp. p.56 and pp.65-73.

<sup>22</sup> A visual representation of this schema can be found on p.67 of her thesis. It is explained in detail on pp. 66-128.

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or positive colourings, whereas non-limited uses do. This observation seems borne out by the examples she gives, although it is not further explored.

As Girsch's study is based on the totality of extant *cræft* uses, she is confronted with some examples in which the context forces her to make very subjective inferences about the sense in which it appears. This is something she readily acknowledges as an occasional weakness of her study. More significant, however, than an occasional subjectivity in interpretation is a skewing of data which occurs through her attempt to assign each occurrence to a specific place in the schema. Thus, for instance, her assertion that in poetry the limited sense of *cræft* (2) (a specific trade, occupation, or body of knowledge) is negligible, is perhaps a little hasty, as I will show below. Moreover, her claim that in non-Alfredian prose negative meanings of *cræft* and *cræft*-compounds are more frequent than positive ones should also be considered with care. While this fact is true in absolute numbers, it should be considered that the largest part of this negative use is found in highly formulaic expressions in typical exhortation passages in homilies, to the extent that these occurrences could more fruitfully be treated as one example of negative *cræft* in non-Alfredian prose, or their number at least be recognised as a product of the accident of survival. I return to this point in my discussion of the semantic loading of *cræft* below. Questionably, Girsch also counts *un-cræft*, 'evil practice', and related forms among negative instances of *cræft*, when perhaps it should be treated as evidence for the opposite. It is, after all, the negative prefix *un-* which determines a switch in semantic loading here. Finally, my own analysis of the term below finds that her distinction between unlimited and limited *cræft*, with only the latter being subject to moral loading, does not allow for the exceptional but nonetheless distinctive case of the negative portrayal of limited *cræft* in *Genesis B*, nor does it seem to consider the possibility that semantic loading might occasionally have a limiting effect on some uses, due to wide-ranging cultural pre-conceptions.

**Studies of the Alfredian usage (1992; 1997 and 2005)**

Two of Girsch's main conclusions, that the usage of *cræft* to denote 'specific virtues' is a hallmark of the Alfredian usage, and that this usage as a whole had more in common with poetic usages than with the rest of prose,<sup>23</sup> have also been subsequently examined and developed by Peter Clemoes and Nicole Guenther Discenza. In his 1992 study, Clemoes, who appears unaware of Girsch's thesis, and indeed of the analyses of Kroesch and Mincoff, defined Alfredian *cræft* as a 'multi-faceted talent' which is 'innate and inherent',<sup>24</sup> and noted its 'synthesising power to combine spiritual, moral and material elements'.<sup>25</sup> Moreover, the human can reach out to the divine through *cræft*, and act together with God 'against the drag of this world': '*Cræft* 'virtue' was the operative word in the creative relationship between each soul and God'.<sup>26</sup> According to Clemoes, this potential inherent in the Alfredian *cræft* is derived directly from vernacular poetry, and in particular Christian narrative poetry (his example is from Cynewulf's *Elene*), where *cræft* represents not only the physical, but also the mental or spiritual activity harnessed to moral ends.<sup>27</sup> This latter point is the most important aspect in Clemoes's contribution to the study of *cræft*, shedding new light on the more positive senses of the term. My own analysis below will build on these observations to examine the positive loading with direct reference to craftsmanship.

A few years after Clemoes, in 1997, Discenza published her own study on the Alfredian usage of *cræft* as 'virtue'.<sup>28</sup> Her main point of investigation is the connection forged between the different senses of *cræft*, most notably 'virtue', 'skill' and 'power', and the effect of this connection on the presentation of rulership in the texts. Her examples reveal that *cræft* is often employed in contexts in which two or more senses are linguistically united to form a powerful new concept. Thus are forged dynamic connections between power and virtue (the virtuous man can hold power, if he is not virtuous then power is not authorized, and vice versa), and craftsmanship,

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<sup>23</sup> p.800.

<sup>24</sup> P. Clemoes, 'King Alfred's Debt...', pp.213-38; p.228.

<sup>25</sup> p.232.

<sup>26</sup> pp.232-33.

<sup>27</sup> pp.236-7.

<sup>28</sup> N. Guenther Discenza, 'Power, Skill and Virtue in the Old English *Boethius*', *ASE* 26 (1997), 81-108; cf. Discenza's monograph, *The King's English* (New York, 2005), esp. chapter 4 (pp.87-122).

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virtue and power (the exercise of craftsmanship links man to God, and its exercise is synonymous with reaching the highest good, wisdom. Thus the highest good is attainable by everyone provided they have *cræft*). Discenza cites several examples, which she attempts to explain within the broader context of Alfredian scholarship as supporting the king's cultural programme and his duties and ambitions as a ruler. This historical approach is taken further in her monograph (2005), where she reiterates her argument, but notes more explicitly here the apparent reinforcement of social hierarchies inherent in the Alfredian *cræft* usage.<sup>29</sup> She argues that by equating the exercise of a given skill with virtue and power with the help of *cræft*, the writer, whom she identifies with King Alfred throughout her work, ostensibly puts himself on the level of his people, thereby practicing a 'strategy of condescension'.<sup>30</sup> This consists in demonstrating an 'ability or willingness to negate the hierarchy that elevates him above his people.' This negation is temporary and ultimately serves to confirm and reinforce his position of power.<sup>31</sup> The usage of *cræft* also supports this position of power by affirming that every human being has a moral duty to pursue the *cræft* with which they are endowed, including the king, who has a duty to reign over others. Thus, Discenza sees *cræft* as operating as a tool of social cohesion and royal propaganda in the Alfredian usage.

While the studies of Clemons and Discenza occupy an important place in contemporary Anglo-Saxon scholarship as well as in the semantic analysis of *cræft*, their exclusively Alfredian focus has perhaps hindered our understanding of the term in the wider context of Old English literature, as if by acknowledging that the Alfredian usage is specialised and distinct, we have been led to write off the remaining uses as mainstream or banal. My own investigation of *cræft* shows that while the Old English Boethius and the translations of Gregory's *Pastoral Care* and the *Soliloquies* share a consistent, otherwise uncommon and (to all appearances) an exclusively positive interpretation of *cræft*, they are far from constituting the most representative or the most important contribution to the semantic development of *cræft* as positive notion of craftsmanship.

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<sup>29</sup> *The King's English*, pp.87-122, esp. pp.105-22.

<sup>30</sup> A concept she borrows from the sociologist Pierre Bourdieu.

<sup>31</sup> p.3.

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My analysis therefore concentrates primarily on non-Alfredian uses of *cræft*, although the Alfredian material is sometimes treated as supportive wherever it shares salient aspects of the usages I delineate.

By speaking of a semantic development of *cræft*, I indicate my conviction that the present analysis should at least partially proceed to establish a development in time wherever possible. This exercise is obviously limited, and must be approached with due caution, as I outlined above. However, it may not be as fruitless as Girsch posits in her thesis. We have been able to establish indicators through our ability to approximately date glossaries and important prose compositions throughout the Anglo-Saxon period. These are touchstones against which we can assess language use in poetic works, if we consider them alongside our understanding of the influence of genre on word choice. Being able to establish a partial chronological picture of the meaning of *cræft* in Old English texts is by no means futile. *Cræft* appears at its most polysemous or semantically suggestive in poetic texts which cannot be dated with certainty, if we exclude the Alfredian use from this observation. In a large number of prose texts for which close dates have been established, however, *cræft* and derivatives of *cræft* are used with a remarkable consistency and certainty of meaning. The same can be said for dateable glossed texts and glossaries. In these contexts, the predominant sense is *cræft* as a notion of craftsmanship. It is the aim of the remainder of this and of the next chapter to establish this point and determine what exactly this notion of craftsmanship entails.

### **The notion of ‘craftsmanship’**

The *DOE* prefaces its entry on *cræft* with a note that seems to acknowledge the predominance of the term’s use as a notion closely related to that of craftsmanship by introducing the term by its most frequent Latin equivalent, *ars*, and proposing an overall notion of ‘skill’ to unite the various

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senses it sets out underneath. However, this prefatory note seems slightly at odds with the first entry which then follows. Below is a quotation from the *DOE* rendering the note and the different meanings subsequently listed (I have left out the sub-senses to provide an easier overview):

The most frequent Latin equivalent of *cræft* is *ars*, yet neither ‘craft’ nor ‘art’ adequately conveys the wide range of meanings of *cræft*. ‘Skill’ may be the single most useful translation for *cræft*, but the senses of the word reach out to ‘strength’, ‘resources’, ‘virtue’ and other meanings in such a way that it is often not possible to assign an occurrence to one sense in ModE without arbitrariness and the attendant loss of semantic richness.

1. strength, power, might (either physical or due to the possession of resources)
2. skill, ability, dexterity, facility (physical)
3. strength, merit, excellence, power (mental or spiritual)
4. skill, ability, faculty, talent (mental or spiritual)
5. art, and organized body of knowledge, discipline, one of the seven liberal arts
6. idea, concept<sup>32</sup>

Somebody who is not overly familiar with *cræft* may struggle to comprehend the relationship between the sense given under (1.) and the notion of ‘skill’ proposed in the note. A seasoned reader having surveyed and analysed all of the occurring senses of *cræft* in the extant corpus may be perplexed to encounter at once an acknowledgement (in the note) and a rejection (in the first entry) of the primacy of the notion of craftsmanship inherent in *cræft*. The order with which meanings are listed in this entry appears to give precedence to the notion of ‘strength, power, might’, when in fact it is neither the most frequent or important, nor the earliest dateable sense among the extant material. The order given here seems to prefer more tangible, physical senses over abstract or mental or spiritual senses. It is also most likely based on observations made in earlier scholarship, notably by Kroesch, and later by Clemoes, about a primal pan-Germanic meaning from which the others originated (Kroesch), and about *cræft* as a physical quality featured in heroic verse becoming first integrated more abstractly in Alfredian prose (Clemon).

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<sup>32</sup> Compare *Thesaurus* [equivalent *DOE* senses in brackets]: ‘an intellectual faculty, talent’ (06.01.05) [*DOE* 4]; ‘knowledge, learning, erudition’, ‘a stratagem, a trick’ (06.01.07.04.02) [*DOE* 4]; ‘excellence, virtue, goodness’ (07.02.04.01) [*DOE* 3]; ‘ability, capacity, power, craft, aptitude’ (11.04) [*DOE* 2 and 4]; ‘power, might, strength’ (12) [*DOE* 1 and 3]; ‘trade, calling, craft, aptitude; skilled work, craft’ (17.02.04); ‘a work / product of art’ (17.02.05) [*DOE* 2]; ‘a machine, instrument, an engine’ (17.03) [*DOE* 2].

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Reservations about these accounts of the semantic evolution of *cræft* have been expressed both by Girsch and by myself above. In addition, one may mention the fact that the first meaning cited by the DOE is rather infrequent compared to uses of *cræft* invoking either a concrete or more abstract notion of craftsmanship (concrete manual labour, or skill at a particular activity as well as those activities themselves; the meanings listed under (2.), (4.) and (5.)).

The only texts where sense (1.) appears to be frequent are *Beowulf*, and the Old English Orosius. In *Beowulf*, *cræft* appears as a heroic quality, used incrementally to reveal not only Beowulf's strength but also to build his heroic stature. It is moreover used to describe the manifestations of brute strength by Grendel and his mother, and can be construed as an anti-heroic attribute in the case of the former. In the Orosius, the compound *wigcræft*, which appears six times in this text, designates both the (physical) practice of warfare and the force of an army/host, as well as skill at warfare.<sup>33</sup> Other than in these two texts, however, *cræft* appears only infrequently with the meanings of 'physical strength', 'power' or 'might', and the term does not appear at all in a number of texts in which a notion of heroic virtuous strength might have been appropriate (e.g. *Judith, The Battle of Maldon*).<sup>34</sup> It goes beyond the scope of this study to examine the conspicuous absence of a prolific term like *cræft* from a number of poetic works in which it might have been expected, except to note that it was perhaps not the quintessentially heroic term that Clemons esteemed it to be, at least not in its denotation of 'physical strength' or 'might'; or that this sense had become archaic by the time in which extant texts were recorded in the shape in which they have survived; or that for certain poets at certain times, it did not feature in their store of heroic lexis.

One of the most well-known uses of *cræft* is one of the few in which the term expresses a notion of worldly power. The use in question occurs in the so-called 'Means of Government'

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<sup>33</sup> In two occurrences it denotes 'skill' at warfare rather than its physical force.

<sup>34</sup> Notable exceptions include: the description of the Mermedonians in Andreas as *beorna beaducraeftig* (l.218). *Beaducraeftig* frequently denotes a spiritual battle (cf. *The Phoenix*), possibly making use of a formula from heroic poetry; *mægencræft* and *ellencræft* (a *hapax legomenon*) are also employed more abstractly, with the latter used once in Paris Psalter to denote a quality to be employed when worshipping God; but cf. *waelcraefte* (*Riddle 91*); and *wigcræft* used with a sense of host/army sense in Ælfric. Source: DOE web corpus.

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passage in the Old English Boethius where we are told that *nan mon ne mæg nænne cræft cyþan ne nænne anweald reccan ne stioran butan tolum and andweorce* ('no man can show *cræft* nor hold or rule any kingdom without tools and materials').<sup>35</sup> The passage continues to establish in greater detail an analogy between an unspecified type of manual skill or trade and the exercise of power by an earthly ruler. The strength of this analogy resides in the polysemy of *cræft*, which can designate the notion of ruling power, but appears here to be employed in an express fashion with its denotative meaning of craftsmanship. The link between the two, however, exists beyond the simile within the polysemy of *cræft*. Beyond this oft-anthologised passage, however, the use of *cræft* expressing a notion of worldly power only is very rare in the extant material, to the extent that there is but one other pertinent example, notably in Ælfric's *Interrogationes Sigeuulfi in Genesim*, where Alcuin is described departing England heading for the court of Charlemagne, *to þam snoteran cyninge Carolus gehaten, se hæfde mycelne cræft for Gode & for worulde, & se wislice leofode* ('to the wise king called Charlemagne who had great *cræft* through God and the world, and who lived wisely').<sup>36</sup> Charlemagne's earthly power is sanctioned (or 'provided') both by God and by people on earth, however, it is closely linked to his ascribed wisdom, to which this statement draws attention twice. *Cræft* may thus in fact express a notion more closely related to *DOE* senses (3.) and (4.), encompassing the notions of mental or spiritual power and faculties. In fact, there is no reason to distinguish between the meanings given under (3.) and (4.) as separate categories. This will become apparent in my argument below.

Notions of ruling power and dominion are more frequently found in *cræft* used in relation to divine governance. Here too, however, they are never confined to the *DOE*'s *cræft* sense (1.) alone. As a property of God, *cræft* functions to denote both his initial creative power, as well as his ongoing supremacy over his creation. Thus, for instance, in *Christ and Satan* God is described as *ealra gescefta / wyrhta and waldend þurh his wuldres cræft* ('the maker and ruler of all creatures

<sup>35</sup> *Boethius*, eds. Godden and Irvine, p.277.

<sup>36</sup> 'Ælfric's Version of *Alcuini interrogationes Sigeuulfi in Genesim*', ed. G. E. MacLean, *Anglia* 7 (1884), 1-59, 1.2.

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through his *cræft* of glory/the glory of his *cræft*, ll.584b-585).<sup>37</sup> The same conflation of notions of power and craftsmanship is used in *Instructions for Christians*, where *weoruldes waldend* is said to be *heahcræftig heofonas and eorðan* ('highly creative/all-powerful in the heavens and on earth').<sup>38</sup> Perhaps the strongest expression of the unity of divine power and craftsmanship is found in the liturgical prayer *The Gloria I*, where God's creation and his power are both linked to *cræft* by the copula verb *cyðað*.<sup>39</sup>

And nu and symble þine soðan weorc  
and ðin mycele miht manegum swytelað  
swa þine cræftas heo cyðað wide  
ofer ealle woruld.<sup>40</sup>

(Now and ever are your true works and your great might made visible to many, as they reveal your *cræftas* widely across the entire world.)

In the same poem, God is also described as *clæne and cræftig* ('pure and powerful/creative', l.19) during creation: *swa was on fruman / mancynnes frea* ('thus was the lord of mankind at the beginning', ll.17-18a). Here, the oneness of craftsmanship and power constitutes the essence of all being. In *Andreas*, moreover, God's governance of the world is implied in his *cræft* or skill as a helmsman during Andreas's voyage to Mermedonia (l.498). The above examples show that when notions of physical strength or earthly power, as well as divine might are conveyed through *cræft*, this word choice is usually governed by the term's ability to express notions of craftsmanship, skill or endowment and these notions constitute the main denotative value of *cræft* in these contexts.

<sup>37</sup> *The Junius Manuscript*, ed. Krapp.

<sup>38</sup> 'Instructions for Christians', ed. J. L. Rosier, *Anglia* 82 (1964), 4-22. *Heahcræftig* could be a calque of *architectus*.

<sup>39</sup> The collocation of *cræft* and *cyðan* is relatively frequent in the extant corpus. I return to this aspect in my analysis of *cræft* as divine endowment in Chapter Five.

<sup>40</sup> *The Gloria I, The Anglo-Saxon Minor Poems*, ed. Dobbie, ll.35-38a.

### The notion of divine endowment

The notion of skill or endowment is also central in what may be termed ‘Gifts-of-Men-type’ poems or poetic passages for the purpose of this analysis. Its most exemplary exponent is the Exeter Book poem variously entitled *The Gifts of Men*, *The Gifts of Mankind* or *Be manna cræftum*.<sup>41</sup> As the latter title indicates, the poem constitutes a catalogue of endowments emanating from the grace of God in the guise of *cræftas*. These endowments are extremely diverse in nature, ranging from skill at various handicrafts to intellectual aptitudes, and from physical abilities such as athleticism, equestrian skills and even tree-climbing to what we nowadays interpret as personal or social skills, such as self-discipline, good sense of judgment and leadership. The poem’s central notion of divine gifts is based on the parable of talents, as recorded in Matthew 25:14-20, and interpreted by Gregory in his *Homilia IX in Evangelia*.<sup>42</sup> This poem is extremely interesting for its portrayal of *cræft* as a divine gift, an aspect to which I will return in detail below. I am citing it here with the purpose of establishing the different senses that can be regrouped under *cræft* if it is perceived as a notion of endowment. Thus for instance in describing the warrior as *beadocræftig* (l.40) the poem uses *cræftig* with both its notions of physical strength and of endowment. The same can be said for its evocation of the wise man, *sum [...] biþ [...] gleaw / modes cræfta* (ll.32b-33a) in which the term *cræfta* describes his mental capacity, but can also be read as divine endowment, and its description of the goldsmith who is *searocræftig goldes and gimma* (ll.58b-59a), where *cræftig* expresses both his expertise at crafting intricate items, as well as the fact that this expertise is in fact a gift from God. In these three examples, as well as in other *cræft* uses in the catalogue of the gifts of men, the referent of *cræft/cræftig* is ever changing on a concrete level, but remains constant more abstractly as a notion of endowment or skill. The poem’s praise of the magnitude of God’s gifts is greatly enhanced by this shimmering in the meaning of *cræft*.

It is not too far-fetched to point to the Gifts-of-Men paradigm as a central repository of the polysemy of *cræft*. In addition to the range of human abilities and attributes mentioned above, it is

<sup>41</sup> Quotations from this poem are taken from *The Exeter Book*, eds. Krapp and Dobbie.

<sup>42</sup> J. E. Cross, ‘The Old English Poetic Theme of the ‘Gifts of Men’’, *Neophilologus* 46 (1962), 66-70.

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able to regroup notions as diverse as the practice of falconry (*hafeces cræftig*, l.81) and service to the church (*sum cræft hafað circnytta fela*, l.91). This paradigm also informs the structure of the *The Fortunes of Men*, and the notion of god-given *cræftas* is found in poems like *The Order of the World* and *Maxims*, as well as a broad range of religious and even heroic poems. Thus, for instance, Beowulf's *cræft*, his ability to be a hero, his might, can be understood as a gift from God rather than a notion of physical strength, as the following example shows:

Ac him dryhten forgeaf  
wigspeda gewiofu, Wedera leodum,  
frofor ond fultum, þæt hie feond heora  
ðurh anes cræft ealle ofercomon,  
selfes mihtum.<sup>43</sup>

(But God gave them, the people of the Wederas, the fortune of triumphs, comfort and support, that they, through one man's *cræft*, with his own might, overcame their enemies.)

The topos of divine gifts expressed through *cræft* is not confined to poetry. It can be found throughout the corpus in different genres of prose, notably in a variety of Saints' Lives, sermons, in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, as well as in Alfredian Literature (cf. Chapter Five). A very distinctive, and even surprising, use of *cræft* is found in the interlinear gloss to the mid-tenth century Lindisfarne and Rushworth Psalters where the term is used as an *interpretamentum* for the coin (*talentum*) which symbolises the notion of divine endowment in the Parable of Talents.<sup>44</sup> This is not a natural equivalence, but rather an applied understanding of the metaphorical value of the coin in the context of the parable. This adequation of *cræft* and *talentum* to designate both a coin and an endowment is not found elsewhere in the corpus.<sup>45</sup> If viewed together with the abundant evidence of the usage of *cræft* as endowment found in poetry and prose, this gloss testifies to the

<sup>43</sup> *Beowulf*, ed. Klaeber, ll.696b-700a.

<sup>44</sup> *DOE* sense 1.d.i (as a type of physical resource); The Lindisfarne gospel gloss is considered to be the source for Rushworth in this instance. In one use in Matthew 18:24, *cræft* glosses *talentum* outside of the context of the parable of talents, although it occurs within another parable in close proximity and with a theme very similar to that of its more famous counterpart.

<sup>45</sup> *DOE* sense 1.d. (resources): These examples are open to interpretation.

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wide-spread nature of that usage. In this paradigm the notion of craftsmanship, and notably our focal understanding of it as the skill of the smith, or a comparable craftsman, is but one of many of the so-called *woruldcraeftas*, which together with the *snyttucraeftas*, make up the totality of endowments God has bestowed on mankind.<sup>46</sup>

### Concrete denotations of *cræft* as craftsmanship

It stands to reason that the Gifts-of-Men paradigm did not hold a monopoly over determining the semantic range of *cræft* in Anglo-Saxon England. Indeed, this rather broad notion of *cræft* exists alongside a usage which is more directed and a lot more narrow in its application. To establish a point of comparison with the gospel gloss, we need look no further than to the co-eval, or perhaps slightly later West-Saxon gospels, in which the same instances as above prefer to gloss *talentum* with *pund*.<sup>47</sup> The same preference is also found in Ælfric's incorporation of Gregory's *Homilia IX in Evangelia* into his sermon *In Natale Unius Confessoris*:

Sum underfehð andgit boclicre lare, and se sceal oðrum cyðan ða gerynu ðe he of **Godes punde** gleawlice oncneow. Sum underfehð eorðlice aehta, and se sceal ðæs pundes spendunge Gode agifan of his æhtum. Sum ne underfeng naðor ne þæt gæstlice andgit ne ða eorðlican speda, leornode swa ðeah **sumne cræft** þe hine afet; witodlice **se cræft** him bið **for þæs pundes onfangennysse** geteald. Sum næftð nan ðyssera ðinga begyten, ac hæfð sume cyððe to ricum men; ðonne sceal se, þær ðær he mæg, earmum ðingian to ðam rican þe he cyððe to hæfð, þy læs ðe he geniðerod beo, gif he ðæs pundes rihtlice ne bricð.<sup>48</sup>

(One receives a disposition for bookish learning, and he ought to reveal to others the mysteries that he wisely perceived through God's pound. Another receives worldly possessions, and he ought to give a disbursement of that pound back to God from his possessions. Another has not received neither a spiritual disposition nor earthly riches, nevertheless he has learned some *cræft* that nourishes him; truly that *cræft* will be reckoned in his account as the receipt of the pound. Another has not received

<sup>46</sup> The *woruldcraeftas* and the *snyttucraeftas* are divisions in *The Gifts of Men*.

<sup>47</sup> *The Old English Version of the Gospels*, ed. R. M. Liuzza (Woodbridge, 2003).

<sup>48</sup> *Ælfric's Catholic Homilies: The Second Series*, ed. M. Godden, EETS s.s. 5 (London, 1979), pp.323-4 (emphases are mine).

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any of these things, but he has an acquaintance with a rich man; then he ought to intercede, wherever he can, for the poor with that rich man that he knows, lest he be condemned, if he does not make rightful use of that pound.)

Ælfric's translation follows Gregory's text closely here, but the passage is remarkable for his choice of lexis. Ælfric was very familiar with the use of *cræft* to denote divine endowment, and he used the term with this connotation on a number of occasions throughout his work (cf. below). On this occasion, however, instead of electing to express the notion of divine endowment through *cræft*, Ælfric uses *pund*, which allows him to apply *cræft* in its more narrow sense of manual trade or handicraft (rendered through *ars* in the original). The implication that *cræft* needs to be learned implies a degree of skill inherent in this occupation, and appears to exclude various types of unskilled labour. In this passage, *cræft* corresponds closely to the present-day English use of craft. It is not only precise in its denotative meaning, but because it is contrasted against other types of endowment, it by necessity excludes them. In other words, Ælfric presents us here with a use in which the sole possible denotative sense of *cræft* is the mastery and practice of a form of craftsmanship as a learned manual trade. This use is a strong and clear indication that for OE *cræft* the sense of craftsmanship predominated, even over more general or varied conceptions of skill or ability encountered as part of the Gifts-of-Men paradigm.

Many other uses of *cræft* exemplify the term's affinity with a variety of fine arts. In the Old *English Martyrology*, the entry for 8 September praises Mary's *craeftas*:

Ond on hyre mægenhade hio dyde fela wundra on webgeweorce and on oþrum cræftum ðæs þe þa ylðran don ne meahton.<sup>49</sup>

(And in her girlhood she did many marvels of weaving and other *cræftum* that the older women were unable to do.)

Although from a broader cultural perspective, it might be possible to read into this sentence that Mary was variously endowed with talents in weaving and other abilities, the context demands a

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<sup>49</sup> *Martyrology*, ed. Rauer, section 180, p.178.

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more precise interpretation of *oprum cræftum*. This expression is directly parallel to *webgeweorce*, or more precisely *cræft* is parallel to *geweorc*, both indicating a manual occupation. We may assume that the other crafts Mary excels at are other practices of female craftsmanship, such as embroidery and other trades associated with the fabrication and embellishment of textiles. The sentence further notes that Mary is able to perform these crafts whereas other women are incapable of doing so, which is highly suggestive of refined precision work that would suffer under some of the muscular and/or ocular degenerative processes that may accompany old age.<sup>50</sup>

A similar pronouncement on a degree of skill is found also in a homily on *The Nativity of Mary the Virgin* which introduces Mary's husband Joseph through his *cræft*, in a context strongly denotative of a trade or manual skill: *On þa tid, þe ðis gelamp, wæs Iosep on þam lande, þe Cafaraun hatte, ymbe his cræft. He wæs smið and mænigteawa wyrhta* ('At the time when this happened, Joseph was in the land called Capernaum, at his *cræft*. He was a smith and a skilled worker'). The syntax here suggests that *cræft* denotes his profession but also a degree of skill. The latter is made explicit through the use of *mænigteaw*, an adjective which is invariably found as an *interpretamentum* for the Latin *sollers*, 'skilled', 'dexterous', in the extant glosses.<sup>51</sup>

The notion of craftsmanship is also expressed in a use of *cræft* in a piece of functional poetry appended to an eleventh-century copy of the Alfredian Bede by a scribe responsible for recording a large portion of the text. Functional though it may be, the poem is nevertheless heavy-laden with poetic diction:

Bidde ic eac æghwlcne mann,  
 brego, rices weard, þe þas boce ræde  
 and þa bredu befo, fira aldor,  
 þæt gefyrðige þone writre wynsum cræfte

<sup>50</sup> Cf. the praise Mary receives for her superior skills in the *Nativity of Mary the Virgin* (MS Hatton 114, and MS Bodley 343), although here the syntax strongly suggests a notion of divine endowment: *Onð heo ða sona godum towcræftum onfeng, swyðor þonne ænig þara þa heora bearn wæron wifa and femnena*. (And she then immediately was endowed with good weaving skills, surpassing those of any of those who were the daughters of other women.), ed. Assmann.

<sup>51</sup> Such *interpretamenta* can be found in *Glosses*, ed. Goossens; glosses to Byrhtferth's manual, cf. *Enchiridion*, ed. Baker and Lapidge, IV.1, l.28 gloss. In Chapter Five I show how some glosses of *sollers* tend to (idiosyncratically) interpret the term as a quality of diligence, however in this case the pairing of *sollers* and *mænigteawa* appears to reflect the Latin term's prevailing sense of skill.

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þe ðæs boc awrat bam handum twam.<sup>52</sup>

(I also pray each man, prince or guardian of a realm, who may read this book and clasp the covers, guardian of men, that he may kindly further the writer for his *cræfte*, who wrote this book with his own two hands.)

The most striking feature in this poem is the reference to *bam handum twam* in the last line with its double insistence on the scribe's handiwork. *Bam* and *twam* are both adjectives indicating duality, and a more formulaic version of this half-line would normally have read *mid handum twam*, 'with my two hands', but the idiosyncratic expression chosen instead translates roughly as 'with both my two hands'. Rather than a (perhaps implausible) allusion to the scribe's ambidexterity, this could perhaps be a reference to a second scribe, however it reads persuasively as a complement to *cræfte* in the preceding line. The scribe is indeed more likely to put his own handicraft in the spotlight, insisting on the manual effort and skill involved in his *cræft* for which he is petitioning a reward or recognition. In these lines *cræfte* is strongly suggestive of a type of craftsmanship, more precisely the skilful and dedicated execution of scribal practice.

In *Elene*, the craftsmen, no doubt goldsmiths, charged with encasing the True Cross in gold and decorating it with jewels, are described as *cræftum getyde* [...] *þa selestan* ('those best trained in *cræftum*', ll.1017b and 1018b), with *cræft* designating their trade, but also a high degree of skill, a notion further conveyed by the participle *getyde*.<sup>53</sup> In the same text the poet recollects his own creation of the poem in a pseudo-autobiographical epilogue, remembering how he *wordcræft wæf* ('wove *wordcræft*'), thus likening his poetic activity to the manual industry of weaving. Similarly, Cædmon's talent is described as *songcræft* by the translator of Bede's *HE*, who throughout his account makes a point of emphasising Cædmon's art through notions of adornment not found in the original. I will look at the notion of poetry as craftsmanship in the conclusion to my thesis, but these examples are mentioned here to establish that while *cræft* is capable of denoting a range of

<sup>52</sup> 'The Metrical Epilogue to MS 41, Corpus Christi College, Cambridge', *The Anglo-Saxon Minor Poems*, ed. Dobbie, p.113, ll.1-5.

<sup>53</sup> Quotations are taken from Cynewulf, *Elene*, ed. P. O. E. Gradon (Exeter, 1977).

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artistic and other abilities/activities, its true referent in these cases is often a form of craftsmanship in the closest possible definition of the term, which is a form of manual artisanship.

Sifting through extant *cræft* and *cræft*-family uses, it becomes apparent that ‘craftsmanship’ is far from constituting a secondary sense of the term. It is the notion of skill, and most frequently that of manual skill which appears as the main, and, as far as our records are concerned, the ‘first’, denotative value of *cræft* and *cræft*-family members throughout the corpus. I use the term ‘first’ to denote the first dateable occurrence, in the full knowledge that it is impossible to establish a complete picture of early *cræft* usage. The limited evidence we have is nevertheless revealing. The earliest approximate date which can be given for a *cræft* occurrence is late 8<sup>th</sup>-early 9<sup>th</sup> century for a gloss in the Corpus glossary, containing ‘genuinely ancient’ material, as discussed in Chapter Three with reference to *orþanc*.<sup>54</sup> Here *uuyndecreft* (<w>*yndecræft*\*) glosses *ars plumaria*, in what is ostensibly a gloss to Aldhelm’s *De Virginitate* potentially dating back to that author’s lifetime.<sup>55</sup> The Latin expression, which designates a method of embroidery unknown in early medieval England (embroidery with feathers),<sup>56</sup> would have puzzled the Anglo-Saxon reader, and the gloss offers an approximate translation that establishes a contemporary parallel to this concept rather than a direct translation. There are no other *cræft* glosses in the Corpus Glossary, and *uundecreft* is indeed the only surviving *cræft interpretamentum* from the early gloss tradition. In comparison with the later gloss tradition of Aldhelm material, there is one notable absence from the early material, which is the series of *cræft*-based compounds which gloss the subjects forming part of Aldhelm’s division of knowledge, and which I treated in the context of my analysis of *orþancscipe* in Chapter Three. In other words, there appears to have been no perceived necessity or established tradition of glossing these liberal arts in the early Anglo-Saxon period.<sup>57</sup> This is not surprising if we remember that there was very little to no vernacular material in the area of learning and religious texts until the educational reform under King Alfred. Before then, everyone who had a

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<sup>54</sup> A. Campbell, *Old English Grammar* (Oxford, 1959), p.7.

<sup>55</sup> Lindsay, *Glossaries*.

<sup>56</sup> *The Lexis of Cloth and Clothing Project Database*, University of Manchester, <http://lexissearch.arts.manchester.ac.uk/>.

<sup>57</sup> This is also confirmed by the absence of these types of glosses from several other glossaries.

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need to know these scholarly concepts would have had no trouble understanding them in their Latin denomination, because it was the very language of learning and instruction. As there was no apparent need to create English terms for them until the development of a vernacular medium for the purposes of education, we may trust the gloss records to conclude that they postdate *cræft* glosses which designate forms of craftsmanship. It is also plausible to surmise that *cræft* designated skill at practical pursuits before it became attached to more abstract concepts involving the pursuit of knowledge or wisdom. The development of Old English vocabulary indicates a large number of words drawn from the Latin entering the Old English language between 800 and 1050 reflect the scholarly interest of the writers, pertaining to ‘scholarship, learning, culture and recreation and a science’, and are very often technical terms.<sup>58</sup> The extension of *cræft* to denote branches of learning is a plausible development of semantic borrowing that fits very well into this period. However, further evidence is needed in order to establish the process or processes by which this semantic extension could have come about.

In glossed texts, and glossaries, *cræft* features overwhelmingly to render the Latin *ars*, which can designate manual labour, or craftsmanship, as well as more abstract notions such as the liberal arts. In the glossary-type section contained in Ælfric’s *Grammar*, *cræft* glosses both the terms *ars* and *artificium*, thus perhaps pointing to the Isidorian distinction between *ars* as a liberal art and the notion of craftsmanship involving manual labour which Isidore invoked in his definition of *artificium* (see my discussion of Kroesch above). This distinction does not exist in Old English, and it appears to have been somewhat academic in the Latin too, with *ars* applied to handicrafts as well as to cerebral pursuits in some texts.<sup>59</sup> There is evidence that the Anglo-Saxons considered *ars* and *cræft* as convenient counterparts, but less than perfect equivalents. Thus, in the Old English version of Gregory’s *Dialogues* one use of *cræft* betrays a semantic disparity with (Gregory’s) use of *ars* in the Latin original. In a story of how Paulinus of Nola travels to Africa to

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<sup>58</sup> Kastovsky, ‘Semantics’, pp.307-8.

<sup>59</sup> It is beyond the scope of this chapter or my thesis to comprehensively assess the use of *ars* in early medieval Latin texts. However, it is apparent that it sometimes excludes (Gregory’s use here, Isidore) and at other times includes (e.g. the Benedictine Rule) the notion of the handicrafts and even basic manual labour.

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trade his own person for the freedom of a young man from his bishopric taken captive and kept as slave by the king of the Vandals, Paulinus answers the king's question about his abilities thus:

‘Artem quidem aliquam nescio, sed hortum bene excolere scio.’<sup>60</sup>

(‘I do not know any art, but I know how to keep a garden well.’)

The Old English equivalent reads as follows:

‘Ne can ic nænigne oþerne cræft buton þone, þæt ic mæg wyrta wel begangan.’<sup>61</sup>

(‘I know no other *cræft* except this: I can cultivate plants well.’)

The syntactical structure of the Latin indicates that *ars* excludes the concept of horticulture, while the Old English *cræft* use includes Paulinus's ability. By referring to the activity of cultivating plants, rather than the more general undertaking of keeping a garden, the phrasing of the vernacular is much more suggestive of manual work than the Latin. The original, on the other hand, appears to abide by the Isidorian opposition between *ars* (as a liberal art) and the manual arts. The Old English translator overrides this distinction because it is impossible to use *cræft* to exclude the notion of craftsmanship. Found in one of the earliest translations of a Latin text into Old English, this variation between the two versions is especially interesting, as it seems to indicate that *cræft* was associated both with more skill-intensive forms of craftsmanship alongside a range of other human abilities, as well as with more basic manual skill from an early date, and no later than the dawn of vernacular prose-writing.

The theory of semantic development proposed in Kroesch's analysis of *cræft* suggested that once *cræft* became associated with *ars* through the practice of glossing and the translation of Latin texts into the vernacular, it came to gradually encompass all the meanings of the latter term.<sup>62</sup> The direction in which this transference of meaning, or semantic borrowing, is estimated to have taken

<sup>60</sup> Gregory, *Dialogues*, Book 3, Chapter 1, PL database.

<sup>61</sup> *Dialogue*, ed. Hecht, p.180.

<sup>62</sup> Kroesch, ‘Semantic Development’.

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place is from an abstract notion of *cræft* as liberal arts to more practical interpretations of the term as a so-called *ars minoris*, encompassing a range of manual pursuits. While the study by Girsch cited above does not support the diachronic aspect of this account and is primarily interested in establishing and cataloguing the various meanings of *cræft*, and not how they relate, it nevertheless tacitly endorses this argument due to Girsch's frequent references to *cræft* as a translation sense of *ars*. These references are accompanied by ever-present warnings not to read anything more than an automatic word-choice into *cræft* whenever it appears as an equivalent of *ars* in a gloss or a vernacular translation of a Latin text.<sup>63</sup> While it is true that the use of *cræft* as an *interpretamentum* for *ars* may on occasion have been motivated by an accepted history of translating the term, and indeed by a perceived equivalence between the two terms, oversubscribing to this view leads to a disregard of the semantic independence of *cræft* – which we must accept because of its high frequency in the corpus – and to a lack of appreciation of its denotative and connotative range. The example from the translation of Gregory's *Dialogues* is a case in point. It reveals that *cræft* had already experienced some degree of semantic widening (to denote a broad concept of craftsmanship including a great variety of manual occupations), but that this occurred quite separately from *ars*. There must also be at least some *cræft* glosses which are 'original' or primal, i.e. which represent more than a routine translation of *ars*. It is reasonable to assume that this independence applied to our earliest surviving gloss; that when the *lemma* and the *interpretamentum* were put side by side, at a time when there was neither an established gloss tradition nor a vernacular language designed to match Latin texts being translated into English, they met because of some common aspect in their denotative ranges rather than because of a perfect agreement of both ranges. The common aspect in that scenario would have been the notion of craftsmanship. The above-mentioned points on lexical development would support this point. This study is therefore not convinced about the utility of distinguishing possible translation senses from other uses of *cræft*.

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<sup>63</sup> Girsch, 'Cræft', pp.131-2 and *passim*.

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A feature emerging from my analysis of *cræft* so far is its versatility, which is not just evident in its polysemy, but also in its wide-ranging application as a notion of craftsmanship, as in the above examples, where it was applied to weaving and other types of cloth-making and -ornamentation, the occupation of a smith and other types of handicrafts, as well as scribal practice and the poetic vocation. Through this breadth of reference, *cræft* can be contrasted with *searo*, a notion with a close semantic relationship to the work of smiths. Another defining feature of *cræft* as a notion of craftsmanship is that while we may find it subsumed within a broader notion of skill as divine endowment, it also has a strong independent existence as a term denoting specific forms of manual expertise. This sense alone is present in the earliest gloss material, and is shown to assume primacy over the more general notion of ability (as divine gift) in the example by Ælfric.

### The denotative ranges of *cræft* derivatives

The broad range of *cræft* is shared, on the other hand, by its primary adjectival derivative *cræftig*. This is notably apparent in a frequent grammatical structure in which *cræftig* is followed by a prepositional or a genitive construction, as in the following example, taken from the Blickling Homily for the Third Sunday in Lent:

& æghwylcum men is beboden þe on ænigum þingum cræftig sy, oþþe on maran wisdome oþþe on læssan, þonne agife he symle Drihtne þone teoþan dæl, for his ðæm eorþlicum gestreonom, & for þæs ecan lifes wæstmum.<sup>64</sup>

(And each person who is *cræftig* in any thing or has more wisdom or less, is ordered to always to give the Lord the tenth part, for the worldly treasures he owns, and as an investment in the eternal life.)

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<sup>64</sup> *Blickling Homilies*, ed. Morris, ll.194-8.

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In this context, *cræftig* is the adjectival equivalent of *cræft* as a divine gift, and can be rendered as ‘endowed with’. In its use it refers directly to the Parable of Talents. This use of *cræftig* is extremely common.

Unlike the simplex and the adjectival derivative, which can express notions of physical strength and moral virtue in addition to craftsmanship, the derivative *cræftiga* is relatively restricted in its denotative sense. It seems to exclusively refer to a craftsman or skilled worker. I shall briefly cite examples from glosses, prose and poetry. *Cræftica* glosses *artifex* in Ælfric’s *Grammar*, and *opifex* in a glossary found in Plantin-Moretus MS. 32, where it is listed among other terms denoting craftsmen, such as *lignarius*, glossed by *treowwyrtha* (266) and *naucularius*, glossed by *scipwyrtha* (268).<sup>65</sup> Both times the Latin *lemma* would probably have denoted an artisan, thus incorporating the notion of specialized skill.<sup>66</sup> As such this derivative of *cræft* is employed much more narrowly than the simplex, which can extend to designate a broad range of abilities including occupations requiring little formal skill. *Cræftiga* on the other hand appears specifically to designate tradesmen with a high degree of expertise in the fabrication of items. It is thus applied to Tubalcain (*smiðcræftega*) as a founder of the handicrafts through his invention of farming implements (*Genesis A*, l.1084), whereas in the story of the *Quattor Coronati* (8<sup>th</sup> November) in the *Old English Martyrology*, the protagonist martyr-masons are termed *stancræftigan*, and are counted among a number of 622 *cræftigan* specially selected for their superior craftsmanship (*næron nane oðre him gelice*, ‘there were to others that compared to them’).<sup>67</sup> The idea that *cræftiga* involves a special type of skill or a higher degree of craftsmanship is also inherent in two further glosses, both from Ælfric’s *Grammar* and *Glossary*: in the former *cræftica* is used as *interpretamentum* for *architectus* (p.215, l.9), which in the latter is also glossed by *yldest wyrhtena* (p.301, l.18), indicating that *cræftiga* designates a seasoned, and therefore

<sup>65</sup> L. Kindschi, ‘The Latin-Old English Glossaries in Plantin-Moretus MS. 32 and British Museum MS. Additional 32246’, unpubl. PhD dissertation (Stanford, 1955). The numbers identifying the glosses represent the line numbers assigned by the *DOE*, following the lineation of Kindschi’s dissertation.

<sup>66</sup> In Antiquity there was a distinction of value between *artifex* and *opifex*, with *artifex* denoting a master of the liberal arts, whereas *opifex* was applied to those skilled in the *artes sordidae*, literally ‘dirty arts’, a collective term designating the manual arts. It would appear that the distinction between those two terms had disappeared by the Middle Ages.

<sup>67</sup> *Martyrology*, ed. Rauer, section 222, p.212.

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probably more experienced craftsman, worthy to be singled out from his co-workers through a superlative (*yldest*), and given a special status by this very term.<sup>68</sup> Judging from the surviving uses of this derivative of *cræft* it appears abundantly clear that the term was used for those who were masters of a special skill, of such note that they merited to be styled as *cræftiga*. It is moreover apparent that *cræftiga* was used exclusively as a designation for craftsmen, and that, unlike *cræft*, it was not applied to those possessing other talents or abilities (such as intellectual faculties or moral qualities).

Further derivatives of *cræft* appear to emulate the range of *cræftiga* and are more restricted in meaning, and closely connected to human creativity and craftsmanship. Thus for instance the adverb *cræftlice* appears as an *interpretamentum* for *affabre* in the Plantin-Moretus glossary and in Ælfric's *Grammar*. The root of the *lemma* refers to the Latin word for smith, and the term is also closely connected to craftsmanship in its only extant application in prose which is to be found in Ælfric's *Life of Saint Martin*, where it is applied to express admiration for the artistry of a heathen shrine that is described as *mid wundorlicum weorcstanum geworht cræftlice* ('constructed *cræftlice* with wondrous workstones').<sup>69</sup>

A second adjectival derivative *cræftlic* is also closely related to the adverb. In the first of two occurrences in the corpus, it describes the product of God's creation,<sup>70</sup> whereas in the second, found in Byrhtferth's *Enchyridion*, it is applied as a technical term to translate *dies* as a notion of daylight (the antonym of 'night'), opposing it to *dies* defined as a period of twenty-four hours (*dies artificialis* as opposed to *dies naturalis* in the Latin).<sup>71</sup> As Girsch noted in her discussion of this occurrence, it would appear that the use of the term is a very literal translation of the Latin *artificialis*, and both the Latin and its vernacular equivalent may have been used because they presented a semantic opposition to the notion of *naturalis* (as witnessed by Isidore's quotation

<sup>68</sup> *Ælfrics Grammatik und Glossar*, Sammlung englischer Denkmäler 1, ed. J. Zupitza; repr. with intro. by H. Gneuss (Berlin, 1966).

<sup>69</sup> *Ælfric's Lives of Saints*, 4 vols., ed. W. Skeat, EETS 76, 82, 94, 114 (London, 1881-1900), vol.2, 1.1230.

<sup>70</sup> A. S. Napier, ed., 'Altenglische Kleinigkeiten', *Anglia* 11 (1889), 1-10 (at p.1, 1.12).

<sup>71</sup> *Enchyridion*, ed. Baker and Lapidge, II.3, ll.15-16.

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analysed above).<sup>72</sup> It thus seems to indicate a human (and thus ‘man-made’) definition and use of the concept of ‘day’, as opposed to its natural span (as a 24-hour unit of time).

The uncommon verbal derivative, *(ge)-cræftan* is intimately connected with notions of ‘creating’ and, more abstractly, with ‘bringing about’. Thus, in one occurrence *cræftan* expresses the action of constructing edifices,<sup>73</sup> while in a second the reinforced derivative *gecræftan* is employed to express Satan’s instrumentality in the Passion of Christ in *Juliana*, *ða gen ic gecræfte þæt se cempa ongon waldend wundian* (‘moreover I *gecræfte* that the warrior began to wound the ruler’, ll.290-91a). It thus appears both limited to craftsmanship in the simple derivative, and applied more generally to a human action brought about through supernatural influence in its use with the reinforcing prefix *ge-*.

The evidence presented thus far, although by necessity limited to representative examples of *cræft* from the extant corpus, shows a term which operates within at least two distinct semantic ranges to denote a sense of craftsmanship or skill. In the first, *cræft* is unambiguously a term for the primary sense of craftsmanship as defined under the parameters of this thesis, a term referring to the execution of manual labour with a degree of skill. It is used to this effect with great precision in concrete examples, and this sense often appears as the main, denotative meaning where *cræft* is employed in a metaphorical sense to describe a broad range of abilities and qualities (e.g. poetic craftsmanship, rulership in the Boethius). A number of *cræft*-derivatives, notably the noun *cræftiga* and the adverb *cræftlice*, appear to be entirely used within this first semantic range. In this range *cræft* does not generally extend to denote more abstract notions of skill.

The second semantic range also incorporates a notion of craftsmanship, but presents it among a much broader spectrum of human ability. Often this occurs within an overarching paradigm of divine gifts, where the notion of universal individual talent is predominant. In this semantic range, any type of human ability is given the same recognition as the different types of manual pursuits

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<sup>72</sup> Girsch, ‘*Cræft*’, p.487.

<sup>73</sup> *Ælfric's Grammatik*, ed. Zupitza, p.215, l.9.

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which are the sole expression of the *cræft*-family usage in the first semantic range. The adjectival derivative *cræftig*, often followed by a complement, is also frequently used within the second semantic range. Many, if not most, of *cræft*'s denotative senses are regrouped in this range under the Gifts-of-Men paradigm, where they are presented as human abilities obtained as divine endowments. It is not implausible that a number of the various senses of *cræft* we now seek to meaningfully arrange under a definition of this term directly originate within this paradigm. As it emerges as a force with major impact on the semantic nature of *cræft*, the notion of divine endowment will be analysed in detail in Chapter Five.

Before moving on, I would like to briefly return to the more narrow sense of craftsmanship which has become so evident in this section. The evidence of the early gloss tradition and the very precise Ælfrician use discussed above, as well as the uses of a number of *cræft*-derivatives – *cræftiga* in particular – which are entirely limited to the narrow sense, corroborate the suggestion that it assumes primacy over the broader sense. It is important therefore to temporarily exclude the notion of divine endowment, and to investigate what type of craftsmanship *cræft* was able to denote outside this very Christian conception of skill.

To do so is not a straightforward task. The more strongly independent uses encountered thus far tend to be extremely neutral, with their main feature a focus on expertise, which is not by itself very helpful in delineating a notion of craftsmanship. Close analysis of the uses of the term throughout the corpus, however, reveals the existence of another principal usage of *cræft* as a notion of craftsmanship. It survives in a small number of examples only, and is in most cases subject to negative loading. In this usage *cræft* is employed in contexts which express a supernatural control or exploitation of the natural world through magic. It appears as a simplex, but is mostly confined to a range of *-cræft* compound nouns and a related collocation. Though at first sight it would seem to have no direct relationship to the above usages of the simplex *cræft* and its derivatives, it offers a fascinating glimpse into historical semantics by presenting evidence of a pre-Christian and/or proto-Christian *cræft* usage. This usage may ultimately be responsible for the predominance of the narrow sense of craftsmanship apparent in the corpus.

### The notion of magical craftsmanship (The 'old' usage)

In one broad group of compound nouns and collocations *cræft* frequently expresses the idea of an (often illegitimate) control of the natural world through magical or supernatural forces. These include *wiccecræft*, *drycræft*, *scincræft*; *galdorcræft*, *gedwolcræft* and *deofolcræft*, as well as the genitival phrase *deofles cræft*. The usage can also be established in some (though not all) uses of *searocræft*. In the *DOE*, these terms are regrouped under (4) denoting mental or spiritual skills and faculties, however, as I show below, they may also extend to *DOE* (1) and (2), i.e. the physical, concrete denotations of power and ability.

These expressions are mostly employed with varying degrees of negative loading. I will briefly comment of their general usage, before analyzing examples denoting craftsmanship. *Wiccecræft*, a term entirely confined to prose and glosses, is employed in the sense of witchcraft involving necromancy or the invocation of demons.<sup>74</sup> *Drycræft* expresses much the same, though it can in addition be found in poetry, notably in the description of the Mermedonians in *Andreas* (1.765). *Scincræft*, present in prose and gloss texts, is similar in meaning to the above, while it is emphasised as the power to create illusions or the practice thereof.<sup>75</sup> These three terms are often attributed explicitly to heathens or the devil, and often severely condemned. The uses of *galdorcræft* also appear to indicate that it involves necromancy,<sup>76</sup> whereas *gedwolcræft* frequently applies to those practicing magic, but emphasising the errors of their ways, and the deception involved in their practices (cf. *Andreas*, examples discussed in Chapter Two). *Deofolcræft* is less precise in its application, though in the Orosius it also involves the consultation of an oracle.<sup>77</sup> The phrase *deofles cræft(as)*, and the seemingly synonymous *deofles searocræft(as)*, occurring around 50 times throughout the corpus, constitute formulaic expressions in homiletic literature and

<sup>74</sup> See examples in *CathHom* I.17 ('Easter'), cf. *Ælfric's Catholic Homilies: The First Series*, ed. P. A. M. Clemoes, EETS s.s. 17 (Oxford, 1997), p.542, l.245.

<sup>75</sup> See *Glosses*, ed. Napier, 177 (glossing *praestigia*).

<sup>76</sup> See *Confessionale Pseudo-Ecgberti*, in *Das Altenglische Bussbuch*, ed. R. Spindler (Leipzig, 1934), pp.176-94, l.189.

<sup>77</sup> Book 3, Ch.10, p.76.

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beyond.<sup>78</sup> They lack precision, sometimes denoting actual machinations of God's antagonist, or his influence over people, at other times not bearing any relation to the devil, merely indicating human deception or folly.<sup>79</sup>

These negative compounds and the collocation with *deofol* represent a distinct usage which appears at first to be completely unrelated to either *craft* as a notion of craftsmanship or to the concept of divine endowment evinced above. However, a close reading of the extant examples reveals an intriguing connection to craftsmanship in some remarkable passages. Thus for instance, in the anonymous *Life of Saint Margaret* (CCCC 303), the martyr saint refuses to make offerings to pagan idols, and declares her refusal to pray to them *forþon hi syndon dumbe and deafe and blinde and mid drycraft geworhte* ('because they are dumb and deaf and blind and made with *drycraft*?').<sup>80</sup> The use of *drycraft* in a specific context of object-making clearly demonstrates a relation between craftsmanship and magic. The type of magic at work here does not meet our modern, dynamic expectations of the art of deception, with *drycraft* appended somewhat underwhelmingly to the observation that the idols were 'dumb, deaf and blind'. This description leaves us under no illusion that the artefacts are man-made (rather than of divine origin: only God has the power to infuse objects with life) and considered with a degree of contempt. *Drycraft* denotes a creative endeavour in competition with God's own primary act and his very primacy as the Lord and creator of all. It is negatively connoted as incapable of matching God's creativity. The very concept of rivalry with God's creation carries suggestions of unlawfulness and deception, paralleling elements borne out in God's altercation with his brightest angel. More concretely, however, it is possible that the use of the headword *craft* and the verb *geworht* might have suggested a direct application of this *drycraft* in the process of creation, either in terms of skill, material, decoration or other ingredient used in the making of the object, an application which would have suggested allegiance to a power other than God.

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<sup>78</sup> Abundant in Ælfric (e.g. CathHom I.31, 'Bartholomew', l.309) and Wulfstan (e.g. *Homilies*, ed. Bethurum, 5, 'The Last Days', l.68).

<sup>79</sup> Cf. the use of *feonda searo* discussed in Chapter Two.

<sup>80</sup> *The Old English Lives of St. Margaret*, ed. M. Clayton and H. Magennis (Cambridge, 1994), 9.10.

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The use of craftsmanship for supernatural purposes is denoted in a further use of *drycraeft*. In the *Old English Martyrology*, in the entry for 21<sup>st</sup> October, a man is said to engrave *drycraeftas* words on a brass tablet (*ærenum brede*) to help him seduce a woman to intercourse.<sup>81</sup> One may recognise in this a reference to a magical use of (runic?) inscription. Additionally, however, the reference to brass in this passage suggests that the said manipulation of the brass tablet would ask for the skills of a craftsman. This reference is supported by Anglo-Saxon material culture in which traces of so-called magical inscriptions and engravings abound. It is generally agreed that the function of many early artefacts, besides indicating wealth and status, was apotropaic.<sup>82</sup> Brooches, swordhilts, helmets, and other trappings of the Anglo-Saxon warrior were decorated with patterns and engraved with images or words to assure good fortune and protection to the wearer. Among the artefacts contained in the recently discovered Staffordshire Hoard, dated to the early seventh century, a cross-arm fragment bears an inscription consisting of a biblical quotation from Numbers 10:35 calling for the scattering of God's enemies. The text is framed by an incised figure with a triple-forked tongue. The function of the cross to which this piece of metal once belonged is thought to have been complex, serving to affirm both worldly and divine power, as well as to ward off evil.<sup>83</sup> Words were also engraved for seemingly magical purposes into much later artefacts, as suggested by the discovery of two ninth-century rune rings (the Kingmoor and Branham Moor Rings) each incorporating the same sequence from a charm from *Bald's Leechbook*.<sup>84</sup> While the charm itself is magical gibberish, the rings seem nevertheless to have functioned as amulets, testifying to the enduring conviction harboured by at least some Anglo-Saxons in the magic potential of craftsmanship. The brass-tablet inscription in the *Martyrology* recalls this particular use of craftsmanship. The use of *drycraeft* here represents a comparable faith in the power of craftsmanship to bring about desired, but seemingly unattainable results by supernatural means.

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<sup>81</sup> *Martyrology*, ed. Rauer.

<sup>82</sup> Webster, *Anglo-Saxon Art*, pp.17, 29-30.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, p.125.

<sup>84</sup> B. Dickins, 'Runic Rings and an Old English Charm', *Archiv für das Studium der neueren Sprachen und Literaturen* 167 (1935), 252; R. I. Page, *An Introduction to English Runes*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (Woodbridge, 1999), pp.112-113.

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The compound conveys this notion of craftsmanship, here applied to nefarious ends, as coupled with deceit and unlawfulness.

While real-life artefacts are mainly interpreted in connection with protective magic, the use of magical craftsmanship for evil ends is amply documented in both native and other Germanic literature. Two such intriguing uses of *cræft* appear in *Beowulf*. After his successful expeditions against Grendel and his mother in Hrothgar's kingdom, Beowulf returns to Hygelac's court as a carrier of gifts bedecked with precious artefacts and heirlooms and proceeds to speak of his exploits before handing over the royal gifts. After the presentation of the first group of items the poet briefly pauses the narrative by interjecting:

Swa sceal mæg gedon,  
nealles inwitnet oðrum bregdon  
dyrnum cræfte, deað renian  
hondgesteallan.<sup>85</sup>

(So shall a kinsman do, not at all weave a net of malice for others with secret *cræfte*, plot his companion's death.)

On the surface, *cræft* is used to underscore the deception involved in plotting to kill one's own kinsmen, figuratively trapping them in a 'net of malice', a cryptic reference to the wider theme of betrayal in the poem's subplots. There is, however, a strong allusion to craftsmanship arising from the poet's word-choice in these particular lines. Not only has he previously referred to a coat of mail as a 'net' (*searonet*, l.406; *breostnet*, l.1548; *herenet*, l.1553; also subsequently *hringnet*, l.2754), but this comment comes shortly after Beowulf presents Hygelac with the *breost-gewædu* given to him at Hrothgar's court. Intriguingly, we learn in an earlier passage in which Wealhtheow bestows treasures on Beowulf (*Bruc ðisses beages [...] / [...] ond þisses hrægles neot, / þeodgestreona*, ll.1216a, 1217b-1218a), that this is also the corselet which Hygelac is to wear along with the great torque on the fated Frisian expedition in which he meets his end: *Gehwearf þa*

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<sup>85</sup> ll.2166b-2169a.

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*in Francna fæþm feorh cyninges, / breostgewædu, ond se beah somod.* ('Then the body of the king passed into the clutches of the Frisians, together with the coat of mail and that collar', ll.1210-1).

The poet's aside can thus be read as a reminder of the corselet's ill-fated destiny at the time it is first bestowed on Hygelac, perhaps suggestive of the fact that the mail-shirt itself was a net woven with bad intent. A further detail linking the transfer of the mailcoat to the moment of Hygelac's death might help to clarify this idea. Explaining the ancestry of the gift, Beowulf tells Hygelac of the deceased king Heorogar who did not want to let go of this shirt, even refusing to confer it upon his own son, thereby becoming one of the many negative exponents of the monopolising of treasure in the poem. Later in the narrative, the messenger who announces Beowulf's death proceeds to recount the Frisian expedition, pointing out that the late king's predecessor, Hygelac, was *nalles frætwe geof / ealdor dugoðe* ('the lord never gave treasure to his retainers', ll.2919-20). Like the previous owner of the chainmail, Hygelac turns out to be an avaricious king, resulting in the loss of his retainers' support, and thus in his demise.<sup>86</sup> It has been suggested that Hygelac thus inherited more than a simple corselet, and that with it came the avaricious spirit of its former owner.<sup>87</sup>

It is a feature of Germanic mythology, as of the legends of other cultures, that artefacts or manufactured objects may possess a supernatural quality which may affect the owner of the object. The necklace Brosingamene, referenced by the poet in relation to the above-mentioned gifts offered to *Beowulf* by the Danish queen, exercises power over a number of people in the legends in which it features. Other objects appear to be specially designed to incorporate supernatural features that are then transposed onto the owner of the object. Thus for instance in Norse myth, Thor's three material attributes, Mjöllnir (his hammer), Megingjörð (his belt) and Járngreipr (iron gloves), greatly amplify his strength. These supernatural attributes are often the result of a special process

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<sup>86</sup> Cf. T. Mizuno, 'The Magical Necklace and the Fatal Corselet in *Beowulf*', *ES* 80 (1999), 377-97, at p.391. The fact that he was also wearing Wealhtheow's torque at the time of his death, when Beowulf had given this gift to his wife Hygd, has further been interpreted as a result of his greedy appropriation of this gift, and thus as evidence of his avarice (Mizuno, p.392).

<sup>87</sup> Mizuno p.380, citing Grønbeck, *The Culture of the Teutons*, 3 vols, tr. W. Worster (Copenhagen, 1909-12; London, 1931), vol II, p.16: 'A gift carries with it something from the former owner, and its former existence will reveal itself, whether the new possessor wishes or not'.

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of creation, or the product of the works of an exceptionally talented smith. In the anecdote of its creation in Snorri Sturluson's Edda, Mjöllnir is decreed the best out of all the precious things made by smiths for the God.<sup>88</sup> Likewise the chain Gleipnir forged to be indestructible in order to bind the indomitable wolf Fenrir till the end of time, is made from six ingredients (the sound of a cat's footfall, a woman's beard, a mountain's roots, a bear's sinews, a fish's breath and a bird's spittle) that suggest that it acquired its mythical-magical character through the very process of its creation.<sup>89</sup> When the *Beowulf* poet speaks about treachery as the weaving or joining of a *net* shortly after Beowulf's transferral of the gifted corselet to his king, he may thus be alluding to the magical and ultimately fatal properties this piece of armour seems to possess, attributes which became inherent in its very creation through *dyrnum cræfte* (l.2168a), and were transmitted to subsequent wearers. The poet is by no means implicating Beowulf in this treachery. He is in fact exonerating him by pointing out his allegiance to Hygelac and his decorum as a retainer in the presentation of gifts (*swa sceal mæg gedon*), and presents the treachery as something extraneous to the hero through the conjunction *nealles*. While we cannot doubt Beowulf's loyalty here, there may be some intended irony in the fact that the transmission of the mailshirt to Hygelac will lead to his death, despite best intentions, because of the fated properties of the armour.<sup>90</sup>

I already examined, in Chapter Three, the *Beowulf* poet's intriguing description of Grendel's glove, in which he uses all three of the terms analysed in this thesis, though I purposely omitted to discuss the implications of the use of *cræft* in this passage: *Glof hangode sid on syllic*,

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<sup>88</sup> *Skáldskaparmál*, ch.34.

<sup>89</sup> *Gylfaginning*, ch.34.

<sup>90</sup> There is some ambiguity about the story of Heorogar, and his apparently short-lived reign. As Hrothgar's elder brother he must have been his immediate predecessor, though he is omitted from the line of succession at the beginning of the poem. After his death, kingship is assumed by Hrothgar rather than his son. Hrothgar refers to him only once (l.467), exclaiming that his brother was a better king than himself, although at Hygelac's court, Beowulf is quick to point out Heorogar's greedy flaw with regard to the mailcoat. In the subtle allusive style he employs throughout the poem, the poet may, in the above-discussed aside, be pointing to a potential coup in the Scylding dynasty involving perhaps the commissioning of an enchanted corselet that would lead to the king's demise. It is moreover unclear why Heorogar's corselet was not bestowed on his son upon his death. The editors of Klaeber's *Beowulf* (Fourth Edition) suggest that he might have been too young, or been held in disrespect (Introduction, p.lii), although there is a third possibility that Hrothgar or a supporter in his entourage (perhaps displeased at Heorogar's lack of generosity) schemed to usurp his brother's throne, and with it also gained possession of the corselet. In the surviving analogues the immediate family history of Hrothgar frequently contains fratricides, or other acts of treachery against kin for the purpose of gaining the throne.

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*seorobendum fæst; / sio wæs orðoncum eall gegyrwod / deofles cræftum ond dracan fellum.* ('A glove was hanging down, wide and wondrous, fastened with intricate bonds; it was all adorned with ancient skill, the devil's *cræft* and a dragon's fell.') (ll.2086b-88). I argued in my previous analysis that the notion of *searo* implies technical precision and intricacy in the making of the glove, as well as emphasising the notion of joining different elements into a solid new entity, while the use of *orþanc* underscores the ancestral character of the artefact. I also noted that *orðoncum*, *deofles cræftum* and *dracan fellum* all depend on *gegyrwod*, indicating that they are methods, ingredients or ornaments used in the construction of the glove. The use of *cræft* in this example shares several characteristics with the negative uses of *cræft* proffered in my discussion above, the most important being that it is a negatively associated creative process, expressed in an established formula usually connected with treachery, deceit and sinfulness (*deofles cræft*). On this occasion, however, the expression transcends the merely formulaic character it possesses in numerous examples of homiletic literature. Grendel's affiliation with the stock of Cain and his kinship with *untýdras ealle* ('all kinds of evil offspring', l.111) make a devilish origin of his accoutrement plausible. As such the glove is not only mythic but also bears magical properties associated with the other negative *cræft* uses analysed so far. Grendel is of course an antagonist of superhuman strength, but the poet insinuates that his power is to a degree derived from magic manipulation. Thus his immunity to weapons is explained as follows: *ac he sigewæpnum forsworen hæfde, / ecga gehwylcre* ('but he had used enchantments against victory-weapons, every type of blade', ll.804-5a). Here *forsworen* appears to indicate the enchantment of weapons.<sup>91</sup> Given the supernatural power of artefacts in accounts of Germanic mythology, and evidence of the application of such a power in the fabrication of the glove through the element of *cræft*, it is possible to read the glove as a device that gave its owner supernatural control over man-made weapons, and thus added to his fearsome strength. By making *cræft* dependent on *gegyrwod*, the poet suggests that it is a method

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<sup>91</sup> P. G. Thomas, 'Further Notes on *Beowulf*', *MLR* 22 (1927), 70-73 finds further reference to spells in *Solomon and Saturn*. The reading of *forsworen* as evidence for the use of magic is supported by Chambers (in A. J. Wyatt and R. W. Chambers, eds., *Beowulf* (Cambridge, 1914)); and Klaeber (note 804b), who also points out the use of *forsuor* as *interpretamentum* for *de[v]otabat* ('bewitched, cast a spell on, cursed') in the Corpus Glossary (2, 4.84). For an alternative interpretation for *forsworen* see E. D. Laborde, 'Grendel's Glove and His Immunity from Weapons', *MLR* 18 (1923), 202-4.

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of ornamentation or decorative detail. Although we are left to imagine the nature of this enhancing element, it is possible to speculate that it refers to an inscription or symbolic engraving that would add a magical property to the artefact, comparable to the functions ascribed to some decorative elements on early Anglo-Saxon metalwork.

This implication is comparable to the use of *drycraeft* in the example from the *OE Martyrology* discussed above. A similar use is found in the same text in the entry for 5<sup>th</sup> November, where four *stancraeftigan* ('stonemasons'), operating under the jurisdiction of a pagan emperor, are accused of *drycraeft* for standing out among the rest by excelling at their work and having the sign of the cross (a symbol of their Christian faith) marked on their tools. Once more, though from an inverted perspective of pagans being suspicious of Christianity, craftsmanship appears intimately connected with magical or supernatural abilities, and it is highly relevant that here too these powers are perceived as embodied in something engraved on an object, in this case the tools of the craftsmen.

The above evidence shows that there was a distinct sense of *cræft* as a relatively negative type of craftsmanship, with the negative loading being the product of a reprehension or fear of a perceived magical power inherent in certain forms or types of craftsmanship, as well as a perception of illegitimacy in the use of such powers. A physical mark of the magical power or potential of craftsmanship is often present in the form of an ornamentation or engraving on an artefact or tool. In this usage, *cræft* is intimately connected to a range of compound nouns and the formula *deofles cræft*, which are used more widely throughout the corpus to indicate the use of magic and deception. There can be no doubt, however, that in the examples examined above the use of *cræft* is more precise than this, and is dictated by the wish to express the magical potential of craftsmanship in particular. Found both in poetry and prose as well as in religious and heroic literature, this use appears to be not limited to a particular genre or mode of expression, although the prose appears to favour the compound *drycraeft*, with the use of the simplex confined to poetry. We should also note that although it appears distinctly in the above examples, this perception of

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craftsmanship is relatively rare in the extant material. The reason for this is perhaps that the use was rather antiquated by the time our records came into existence, simply because the belief in the magical power of craftsmanship had been largely eradicated, or principally confined to the realm of myths and legends. This would also explain why the prose examples rely on the use of a *cræft* compound normally denoting magical practice, whereas *cræft* alone was sufficiently resonant in the context of a heroic poetry like *Beowulf*. The use of negatively coloured compounds in prose also carries a greater degree of condemnation of this use of craftsmanship, and serves to differentiate it from the more legitimate and desirable forms of craftsmanship which the simplex is capable of denoting.

I prefaced my discussion of this usage by characterizing it as ‘old’, implying that it appears somewhat antiquated in the uses which survive. They do indeed point to an older, largely defunct sense in which *cræft* was able to denote magical craftsmanship without the weighty semantic loading it acquires in the compounded usage. The uses in *Beowulf* may represent the closest we have to this old usage. As evidence suggests, the usage was intimately connected to the imputed power of decorative elements gracing artefacts, and as such it connects to a period of time which preceded the recording of vernacular verse. Artefacts with apotropaic elements and decorative symbols referencing the supernatural world belong to the earliest period of Anglo-Saxon England, and have been dated mainly from 5<sup>th</sup> century to the late 7<sup>th</sup>. Several artefacts from the 7<sup>th</sup> century suggest that in this age the symbolism of sacred art was used alongside and later replaced the magical symbolism of the earlier decoration. The cross-arm fragment from the Staffordshire Hoard, the Dinham Pommel which boasts crucifixion imagery alongside protective animal images, and a great number of contemporary and later artefacts testify to the imputed apotropaic power of sacred art and its role in secular contexts.<sup>92</sup> As God becomes the protector of warrior-bands both in the material arts and in literature, this *cræft* sense loses its predominance and is replaced by a new understanding of craftsmanship in which *cræft* is subsumed under a divine paradigm. The old *cræft*

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<sup>92</sup> Webster, *Anglo-Saxon Art*, pp.31 and 126.

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is relegated to a range of compounds as a practice to be scorned and avoided by the children of God.

Finally, this ‘old’ understanding of craftsmanship appears very close to the term’s etymological roots of power and potential, without passing through notions of skill or endowment, as *cræft* does in uses within the Gifts-of-Men paradigm or in occurrences where it simply denotes excellence in a manual vocation. This fact is the closest possible connection of the term’s imputed Germanic root with a notion of craftsmanship, and it is possible to speculate about the range of the ‘old’ usage having included different types of power exercised by the protagonists of heroic tales. Given the close connection between artefacts and power in this world – the power of weapons to dominate through violence, the power of ornaments to symbolise wealth and status as well as the imputed magical power of decorative elements – it is not surprising that *cræft* came to denote a specialised sense of craftsmanship. It is also interesting to note that the connection between a cognate of *cræft*, magic and a form of art also exists in Old Icelandic, where we find the term *kraftaskald*, defined by Cleasby-Vigfusson as a ‘poet whose song has a magical power’.<sup>93</sup> Whatever the origin of this *cræft* sense, it seems to have had its heyday in a pre- or proto-literate period and appears to have fared badly after Christianity had become fully established in Anglo-Saxon England. Besides featuring among negative compound uses, it survived in the traditional language of heroic verse and may have been used in lost poems similar to *Beowulf*.

Recognising the existence of this sense is important not just for a full reading of the examples examined above, but perhaps also for our understanding of *cræft* in places in which it would otherwise not be suspected. Thus, for instance, in a penitential ascribed to Theodore, the following instruction is given: *þa þe oðre men on ðam drycræft gebringað, gif hy on mynstre syn, syn hy ut aworpene* (‘those that introduce other men to *drycræft*, if they live within the monastery, they shall be expelled’).<sup>94</sup> As it is hard to imagine a reality of full-scale magical practice within an Anglo-Saxon monastic community, could this injunction perhaps refer to the methods and intentions of a

<sup>93</sup> *An Icelandic-English Dictionary*, R. Cleasby and G. Vigfusson (1874), p.354.

<sup>94</sup> F. J. Mone, *Quellen und Forschungen zur Geschichte der deutschen Literatur und Sprache* (Aachen, 1930), section 209, p.526.

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monastic craftsman, or his use of certain types of decorative marks? While it is impossible to come up with a definitive answer here, it will be evident, I hope, how an understanding of *cræft* as supernatural craftsmanship may have influenced both the translation of the Old Saxon Genesis, as well as its reception in the form of the poem that is now known as *Genesis B*. Since this poem displays an intriguing and deliberate use of *cræft*, I will analyse it in detail below.

### **The theme of *cræft* in *Genesis B***

In a 1981 article, R. E. Finnegan noted the deliberate use of *cræft* in *Genesis B*. As the action unfolds, the term emerges as Satan's *modus operandi* and is opposed to God's *handmægen*.<sup>95</sup> Finnegan convincingly shows that the clear-cut association of the former term with the Devil and the latter with God is a narrative device through which the two protagonists' struggle for power is brought into relief. However, he is seemingly unaware of the semantic studies of Kroesch and Mincoff, and omits to associate the notion of *cræft* with craftsmanship, thereby leaving the full import and impact of this narrative device unexplored. Instead, his brief introductory survey of the uses of *cræft* across Old English poetry contains only abstract translations, 'cunning', 'strength of an army', 'virtue', 'power', a very broad sense of 'skill' and 'knowledge'. Seeing the use of term in *Genesis B* as expressing one side of a conflict for power, a first power *per se*, and later power over God's creation (Adam and Eve), Finnegan concludes by defining *cræft* as 'a term whose connotations combine reasoning that has as its foundation a proud and mistaken apprehension of the self and its power, an action which, when motivated by anger and frustration, seeks destructive vengeance against God through man.' This conclusion falls short of satisfactorily explaining the usage of *cræft* in *Genesis B*, a poem which provides highly idiosyncratic account of the fall of the angels and the temptation of man.

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<sup>95</sup> R. E. Finnegan, 'God's *handmægen* versus the Devil's *cræft* in *Genesis B*', *English Studies in Canada* 4 (1981), 1-14.

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I have already shown, in the first chapter, how the poet of *Genesis B* presents Lucifer's fall in terms of an activity of craftsmanship, evidenced in the following example:

þohte þurh his anes cræft  
 hu he him strenglicran stol geworhte,  
 heahran on heofenum. cwæð þæt hine his hige speonne  
 þæt he west and norð wyrcean ongunne,  
 trymede getimbro;<sup>96</sup>

(He pondered how he through *cræft* of his own/his unique *cræft* could make a stronger throne for himself, higher up in the heavens; he said that his mind urged him to begin building in the northwest, to set up a construction.)

The poet's use of *cræft* here can be characterised as a stylistic device by which a poetic word is employed in a context in which a more prosaic meaning ('craftsmanship') takes precedence over its traditional poetic sense ('power'), which, however, remains on the surface, due to the audience's familiarity with and expectations of the language of traditional verse.<sup>97</sup> There is indeed a struggle of power between God and his brightest angel, but it is not a struggle merely borne out, as some have suggested, as a form of rebellion or treachery of a retainer or servant against his lord.<sup>98</sup> Instead, Lucifer is enacting a strong desire to compete with God's own creation. This competition is brought to life in opposing two forms of craftsmanship through the attributes of *handmægen* and *cræft*. The first projected exercise of Lucifer's *cræft* is very physical, not to say manual, as he plans to construct a throne which will surpass God's own in robustness and stature (note the use of comparatives here: *strenglicran*, *heahran*). It is not a rebellious attempt through brute force or cunning.

<sup>96</sup> *Genesis B*, ll.272b-76a. Quotations are taken from Doane, *The Saxon Genesis*.

<sup>97</sup> Note that this is a limited sense of *cræft*, i.e. a concrete denotation of *cræft* as craftsmanship. In her thesis, Girsch argues that only unlimited uses of *cræft* (which do not denote a concrete skill but a vague attribute) are subject to loading, while limited uses are neutral. However, *cræft* features as a negative attribute of Satan throughout *Genesis B*. Therefore, it is one of the instances where Girsch's theory breaks down (although this goes unnoticed in her thesis as Girsch interprets the uses of *cræft* in *Genesis B* more abstractly than I do). The negative loading of this concrete denotation can be compared – and is possibly related – to the negative representation of craftsmen observed in Chapter One.

<sup>98</sup> See my discussion of this argument in Chapter One; cf. Michelet, *Creation*, p.6; Evans, 'Genesis B', p.119; Doane, *The Saxon Genesis*, pp.118-9 and p.126.

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Lucifer is not the only craftsman in heaven. God himself has been busy with his hands, as the creation of mankind and that of the angels are both described as occurring through *handmægen* (ll.241b and 247a). The latter act is emphasised a further time with the half-line *mid his handum gesceop* ('shaped with his hands', l.251a).<sup>99</sup> Although Lucifer is presented as one of these articles of God's handicraft, he does not see himself as such, but instead perceives his own creative faculties as besting God's workmanship: *þuhte him sylfum / þæt he mægyn and cræft maran hæfde*, 'he believed himself to have higher power and more skill' (ll.268b-269). He also opines: *ic mæg mid handum swa fela / wundra wyrcean*, 'I can work as many wondrous things with my hands' (ll.279b-280a), emulating the language used to describe primeval creation, and thereby laying claim to God's creative faculty. It is at this stage that God enters the artistic competition. He not only ejects the angels from heaven, but he 're-models' them into devils: *and heo ealle forsceop / drihten to deoflum* (ll.308-309a) and erects a new dwelling for them (*worhte man hit him to wite*; 'it was constructed for their punishment', l.318a). God finishes his act of craftsmanship by 're-fashioning' Lucifer's name into Satan (*and sceop him naman siððan (...) Satan*, l.343b and l.45a). Satan's capacity to work wonders with his hands is forthwith severely curtailed, as he lies chained up in hell, in what constitutes another idiosyncratic interpretation of the biblical Genesis story (cf. Chapter Two). His *cræft*, however, does not end here, although it is severely altered by his inability to use his hands. Nonetheless, the reference to craftsmanship remains apparent throughout the ensuing action. As Satan plots his next move the qualitative disparity between God's creation and his own becomes apparent:

[...] þæt me is sorga mæst  
þæt adam sceal, þe wæs of eorðan geworht,  
minne stronglican stol behealdan,  
[...]<sup>100</sup>

('[...] that is my greatest sorrow, that Adam, who was made of earth, shall hold  
my robust throne, [...]')

<sup>99</sup> Cf. the description of Adam as *Godes handgesceaft* (l.455); and a few lines later another reference to God's creativity as the reader is reminded that God *handum gesette* the trees of Good and Evil (l.463).

<sup>100</sup> ll.364b-366.

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This sentence shows his contempt for God's creation, which is seen as inferior to his own, simply because it was made of a less robust material (earth),<sup>101</sup> which echoes his previous concern at surpassing God's craftsmanship through technical superiority.<sup>102</sup> At no stage does he seem to be aware that he himself is a product of God's *handmægen*.

In hell, Satan's *cræft* has changed. In an unusual narrative detail, *Genesis B* presents the devil as completely confined by a multitude of chains and fetters, deprived of *minra handa gewæld* ('the power of my hand', ll.368b, 388b) (cf. Chapter Two). In his fallen state, Satan's *cræft* takes on a new form as he turns to spoil God's creation. Unfortunately, the manuscript is defective at a crucial moment in the narrative (2 leaves having been cut out),<sup>103</sup> and the action skips from Satan's speech trying to persuade one of his companions to undertake the task at hand to *Godes ansaca* ('God's enemy') preparing his ascent from hell to earth. It is at this point that a secondary demon, who throughout his expedition very much acts as Satan's physically unbound alter ego, takes over.<sup>104</sup> Though we cannot appreciate the full details of this demonic relay, a codicological appreciation of the lacuna indicates that the missing text must have extended between 125 to 250 verses.<sup>105</sup> It is perhaps not impossible to proceed to an informed appreciation of a certain element the missing text might have contained.

While still chained and looking for a helper, Satan proposes a way in which his potential minion could escape hell, namely that he *hæfde cræft mid him / þæt he mid feðerhoman fleogan meahhte* ('he would have (a) *cræft* with him, so that he could fly with a feather-cloak', ll.416b-417).

<sup>101</sup> As R. Frank, 'Some Uses of Paronomasia in Old English Scriptural Verse', *Speculum* 47 (1972), 207-226, points out (at p.217), the poet appears to be playing with the etymology of Adam's name (Heb. *adamah*, 'earth').

<sup>102</sup> Equally, some 40 lines later, Satan imagines escaping hell to *þær geworht stondað / adam and eue on eorðrice / mid welan bewunden* ('where Adam and Eve stand created in the earthly kingdom, wound with riches', ll.418b-420a). The lexis is strongly suggestive of adornment: *bewunden* could be translated simply as 'clad' (*mid welan*: 'with rich garments'). However, the term is also often used to refer to how an artefact is enhanced: e.g. the Cross is *mid seofre bewunden* in Ælfric's 'Exaltation of the Holy Cross' (*Lives of Saints*, ed. Skeat, l.6); the helmet given by Hrothgar to Beowulf as a victory gift is *wirum bewunden* (l.1031). The notion of creative adornment is probably the one intended, since Adam and Eve are well-known not to have worn clothes before the Fall.

<sup>103</sup> Doane, *The Saxon Genesis*, p.31.

<sup>104</sup> The epithets used to describe this demon during his stint in Paradise are very general (*Godes ansaca* l.442, *se laða* l.496, *se forhatena* l.609) and could in every case be applied to Satan himself. He is only referred to as Satan's messenger as he returns to Hell after the Fall (*boda*, l.763).

<sup>105</sup> Doane, *The Saxon Genesis*, p.31.

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Before his ascent the emissary-devil is also said to don a *hæleðhelm* (l.444), a term which previous editors and translators have taken as a scribal variant of *heoloðhelm*, an object associated with the devil elsewhere in the OE corpus.<sup>106</sup> The first element of *heoloðhelm* is related to the OE *helan*, ‘to hide’, and the helm has thus been interpreted as having the property to conceal the devil from elements that may prevent his escape, in the manner of a Sigfriedian *Tarnkappe* (invisibility cloak).<sup>107</sup> When the *andsaca* performs his journey he is twice said to do so through *feondes cræfte* (ll.449 and 453). Thus, while the exact nature of the escape is not clear (a fact compounded by the textual lacuna), it is possible that a feather-coat, or a type of cloaking device, or both, might have played a role. It is certain, however, that the escape occurs through *cræft*. Satan has thus resumed his artistic struggle with God, albeit more indirectly, and with the help of a surrogate. We might expect that after the fall he is greatly diminished in his power to create. However, it is at this point that both Satan and the poet appear to become their most creative.

Numerous scholars have commented on the idiosyncratic depiction of the temptation of Adam and Eve in the illustrations of Junius 11 in which the satanic demon can be seen talking to the couple in angelic form.<sup>108</sup> Although not everyone agrees, several studies of the poem point to the fact that this is a detail derived from the text itself, and that the devil did in fact take on the shape of an angel in order to trick God’s creations into believing that he was a divine messenger, and that they would be obeying God’s order by eating the forbidden fruit.<sup>109</sup> This unusual detail further serves to support another significant deviation from orthodox accounts of the fall, namely the repeated insistence that Eve did not give in to the devil’s suggestion because she was morally weak, but because she thought she was bidden to do so by God himself through an angelic

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<sup>106</sup> Cf. *The Whale*. For discussion of *hæleðhelm* see Doane, *The Saxon Genesis*, p.277, n444a; and Timmer, *Genesis*, p.106, n444.

<sup>107</sup> Timmer, *Genesis*, p.106, n444.

<sup>108</sup> The emissary-devil is depicted as an angel on pp.24, 28, 31 and 36 of the Junius manuscript. On page 20 the bottom part of the illustration depicts an angel wearing a feathercoat escaping hell; the top part depicts a serpent.

<sup>109</sup> Cf. Woolf, ‘The Devil’, pp.2-3; Ohlgren, p.36, n3; Evans, p.4, n2; Schottmann, pp.9-10. The usual objection to the idea that the messenger is in angelic form is the brief statement that he *wearp hine þa on wyrmes lic* (‘he turned himself into a worm’s likeness’, l.491); he does not, however, appear as a serpent to either Adam (who sees through his disguise noting he does not quite look like one of God’s angels) or Eve (who refers to him as *þes boda sciene / godes engel god*, ‘the bright messenger, God’s good angel’, ll.656b-7a). The poet appears to be confusing or amalgamating two traditions here.

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messenger, and that her trespass as well as her persuasion of her husband to do the same were performed in good faith (*burh holdne hyge*, ‘with a loyal heart’, l.708a). Evans went as far as to compare the poet’s insistence on her innocence to a Wagnerian *leitmotif*.<sup>110</sup> Although he provides no direct parallel for this exoneration of Eve, his subsequent analysis convincingly argues that we should not search for a theological basis for the poet’s account of the Fall, but rather see these features as emanating from the poem’s literary environment. According to Evans, this means that the poem, as a Germanic heroic epic, reflects, ‘the values and conventions of a society whose moral code was that of the *comitatus* and whose social structure revolved around the wine-hall’, an observation which he then proceeds to support by interpreting not only Eve’s behaviour, but also Satan’s initial treachery, his temptation of Eve, as well as Adam’s reactions and reflections as elements of the traditional heroic code, or, in the case of Satan’s behaviour, a deliberate betrayal of that code. Evans’ reading of *Genesis B* is valid, but it can, I believe, be complemented by an approach which highlights how both the fall of Satan and the temptation of Eve are alluding to another Anglo-Saxon narrative: that of the demonic craftsman.

As the narrative resumes after the textual lacuna, we meet Satan’s helper who begins to *gyrwan* himself, *fus on frætwum* (‘eager in his apparel’, ll.442-443). According to Evans, we should read these lines as ‘a warrior’ donning the ‘trappings of heroic mythology’, getting ready for a ‘military operation’. While it is true that the battle preparation or arming scene is a topos in heroic verse,<sup>111</sup> and there is no doubt an element of ‘God’s antagonist’ (*Godes ansaca*, l.442) readying himself for a fight here (mainly suggested through *fus*), the terms *frætwa* and *gyrwan* are more suggestive of robing a dress and of adornment than of putting on armour.<sup>112</sup> We should therefore not dismiss so easily Satan’s promise of a *feðerhoma* to whoever would undertake the

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<sup>110</sup> Evans, ‘*Genesis B*’, p.114.

<sup>111</sup> Cf. *Beowulf*, ll.1441b-6.

<sup>112</sup> In *Old English Poetics: The Aesthetics of the Familiar* (York, 2006), E. Tyler concludes that *frætwe*, a term used to describe forms of treasure, denotes ornamentation mainly. It collocates with words denoting shine/brilliance (*beorht*, *blican*), beauty (*fæger/fægre*) and occurs in contexts which describe God’s creation of the earth as an act of craftsmanship (collocating with *land*, *eorðe*, *folde*). However, it occasionally appears to collocate with terms for lordship indicating their apparel (pp.89-100). Ohlgren repeats Evans’s militaristic interpretation of the passage, but then calls the messenger’s action an ‘act of sartorial preparation’. (‘The Illustrations...’, p.204; or p.15)

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mission he proposed, nor should we ignore the potential relevance of this feather-coat as more than just a method of propulsion out of hell and consider its role as an engine of deception in the devil's interaction with Adam and Eve. In her analysis of the uses of *cræft* in *Genesis B*, Girsch finds that the instances discussed here, notably 'the uses of the simplex in lines 449, 446, 453 and 491 illustrate a specific sense of the word that Finnegan does not treat in detail [...]: illicit control of the physical world, or supernatural power'.<sup>113</sup> Girsch sees the justification for this use in the fact that Satan (or his minion) is attempting to trick Adam and Eve by disguising himself as an angel. Taking these observations further, our understanding of the application of *cræft* in the first three items cited by Girsch can be further refined by reading it as an instance of the *cræft* use I delineated in the previous section, combining the notions of magic and craftsmanship. I already pointed to the magical potential of the *hæleðhelm*, and its purported role in the emissary-devil's escape from hell. The so-called *feðerhoma* might equally have supernatural properties. Thus, Satan's desire *þæt he mid feðerhoman fleogan meahte* (l.417) might be read as a variation of the previous line [*þæt...*] *he hæfde cræft mid him* (l.416b). As *cræft*, the feather-coat takes on the dimensions of a magical artefact, capable of transcending its initial technical function as a method of propulsion and even exceeding its appearance of an alar attachment by giving the emissary-devil the presence of one of God's bright angels.

This interpretation of the present instance of *cræft*, and the supernatural effect of the feather-coat seems to be confirmed by the illustrator put in charge of the accompanying decoration in Junius 11. Also called Artist A (sharing the task of illustrating Junius 11 with Artist B), he seems to understand this magical power of *cræft* and expresses it through his inkwork. Throughout he draws the fallen Satan and his minions in a brownish tint, whereas all heavenly subjects and the prelapsarian couple are outlined in red.<sup>114</sup> The fallen angels appear crooked and small in size. They are all winged, though their wings appear far less magnificent than those of God's servants. In the illustrations in which the emissary-devil interacts with Adam and Eve (pp.24, 28 and 31), his

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<sup>113</sup> 'Cræft', pp.693-4.

<sup>114</sup> A Digital Facsimile of Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Junius 11, ed. B. Muir, software by N. Kennedy (Oxford, 2004) [CD-ROM], 'The Artists'; T. H. Ohlgren, 'Visual Language in the Old English "Caedmonian Genesis"', *Visible Language* 6 (1972), pp.253-276.

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feather-coat is in action, deceiving its beholders. Here, Artist A depicts him as a tall, graceful figure drawn in red, indicative of the false illusion he represents.<sup>115</sup> The wings appear fuller and more splendid than in previous scenes. In contrast to their wearer, however, they are delineated in the brownish ink otherwise pertaining to the devils, which draws attention to their instrumentality in this deception. The feather-coat is seen as a mechanism of deceit rather than as a mere disguise. In addition to adding wings it transforms the shape, stature and expression of the demon. It therewith fits the notion of *cræft* as a product of craftsmanship melded with magic. The feather-coat has supernatural properties and the ability to hide the physical defects the devils acquired as they fell from heaven, thus becoming the engine of the fall of mankind.<sup>116</sup> The illustrator, a witness to how contemporary Anglo-Saxons might have understood the poem, thus appears to share our reading of the feather-coat as *cræft* in the sense which I marked out above.<sup>117</sup>

The maker of the wings is not named, although it is potentially Satan himself, since he is the one who promises the use of the feather-coat to the demon willing to assist him. The same could apply to the enigmatic *hæledhelm*. Though we may only speculate, the missing text between lines 441 and 442 could conceivably have referred to these objects and their origin in greater detail. The two subsequent references to the formulaic *feondes cræft* as the emissary-devil journeys upward from hell to heaven (*swang þæt fyr on twa feondes cræfte*, l.449; *he þa geferde þurh feondes cræft*, l.453) both appear to refer quite literally to the instrumentality of the ‘antagonist’s craft’, the devil’s continued artistic struggle with God. At this instant, it is worth noting how strongly this narrative, if read in the manner I propose, compares to the legend of Weland the smith. Both

<sup>115</sup> Cf. the depiction of the emissary-devil on p.24 and p.28 of Junius 11.

<sup>116</sup> C. Karkov interprets the illustration on p.20 as the devil’s unsuccessful initial temptation of Adam in *Text and Picture in Anglo-Saxon England: Narrative Strategies in the Junius 11 Manuscript* (Cambridge, 2001).

<sup>117</sup> B. Raw convincingly argued the derivation of most of the illustrations in Junius 11 from a Frankish (Saxon) model, which may have come to England together with the Saxon Genesis poem (of which *Genesis B* is a translation). However, on the subject of the scenes depicting Satan’s helper as an angel she remarks that there is less of a connection to a continental model, and that they ‘have been invented for the purpose, though it seems likely that at least one had a model’ (‘The probable derivation of most of the illustrations in Junius II from an illustrated Old Saxon *Genesis*’, *ASE* 5 (1976), 133-48, at p.141). Even if these drawings were derived from a model, it is useful to bear in mind C. Karkov’s observation that ‘in the Anglo-Saxon world an image was rarely intended as nothing more than a literal illustration of an accompanying text, and an illustration or illustrated cycle was rarely nothing more than a copy of its model.’, in *Text and Picture*, p.7.

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stories feature a confined/bound craftsman, to a degree physically disabled by his captor, who continues his artistic pursuits in captivity, while plotting his revenge through a form of craftsmanship, and escaping his imprisonment in spite of physical limitations (Satan through a proxy) by the means of a feather-coat, in order to bring his revenge to completion. In *Velents Þáttur* the smith is said to make a bird suit with the help of his brother Egill escaping by flying like a bird with the help of what seems a very mechanical contraption (sections 112-113). On the Franks Casket, a detail in the scene depicting Wayland in his smithy shows a male figure, most probably representing Egill, capturing birds for the likely purpose of fashioning his brother's wings. *Völundarkviða* describes the smith's escape in an allusive fashion, making several references to him rising in the air. Although there is no explicit reference that he was like a bird or flying, Völundr tells Níðuðr that he has *vél*, a term which Ursula Dronke suggested should be read simultaneously as 'trick' (played on his captor), as well as 'device' or 'machine' to refer to the traditional artefact. Dronke also notes that a third meaning is possible, namely 'bird's tail', which could be read together with the reference to *fitiom* ('webbed feet') as alluding to a birdlike contraption. The allusive way in which this contraption is presented and the use of *vél*, appears to indicate a flight occasioned by a combination of craftsmanship and magic. Dronke sees this as the reconciliation of two styles of flying (mechanical and magical).<sup>118</sup> However, we might also consider these elements to combine to denote a form of magical craftsmanship, comparable to the notion evinced in this chapter.<sup>119</sup> It is apparent that the use of *craft* throughout *Genesis B* forms part of a running theme of craftsmanship and contributes to the story of the fall of Lucifer and the temptation as an artistic struggle between God and his creation.

This struggle is, however, set in a reality in which it is ultimately vain. This is apparent in the poet's use of variation in the following passage:

<sup>118</sup> Dronke, *Edda* II, pp.265-7 and pp.321-22. Dronke also points to the characterization of Völundr as a superhuman being (*álfa lióði, vísi álfa*), and speculates that his flight might have borne a resemblance to shaman flight (invoking the poem's Lappish connection).

<sup>119</sup> But cf. Finnegan interprets *craft* as 'physical skill and perverted courage the journey [to paradise] requires.' (p.7, of ll.416b, 449b and 453b). The devil in *Solomon and Saturn* also appears as bird.

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þa he forlearde mid ligenwordum  
 to þam unræde idese sciene,  
 wifa witegost þæt heo on his willan spræc,  
 wæs hine/him<sup>120</sup> on helpe handgeweorc godes  
 to forlæranne.<sup>121</sup>

(Then, with lying words, he led the brilliant lady, the most beautiful of women, astray to that ill-advised course, so that she spoke as he intended, and was a help to him in deceiving God's handiwork /so that she, God's handiwork, was a help in deceiving him (=Adam).)

In this passage *handgeweorc godes* can function both as the object of deception, and, in the form of a variation for Eve, as the subject who is leading astray. Thus it appears as a reminder of the final twist in the story of the artistic struggle between God and the devil, as an indication that after all of Satan's efforts, the creative control remains in the hands of God (through his handiwork). Satan's *cræft* is at all times subordinated to his *handmægen*. Although the poem mainly uses *cræft* in the sense featured in this section, denoting 'magical' or 'illicit craftsmanship', it is possible that another usage of *cræft* is filtering through here. Anglo-Saxon audiences are likely to have been familiar with the notion of *cræft* as a divine endowment by the time *Genesis B* was transposed into the English language.<sup>122</sup> Even though the poem does not allude to this meaning directly through context, the use of *cræft* to carry the essence of Satan's struggle, its limited nature, and the common referential base of craftsmanship between the two usages might have reminded the audience throughout that his *cræft* was subsumed *a priori* into God's creative impetus and grand design.

<sup>120</sup> The MS reads *hire*, but this is probably some corruption. Most editors prefer to emend to *him*, which presents Eve as the agent of corruption and Adam, God's handiwork, as the object. Doane's emendation to *hine* enables us to read Eve as God's handiwork and the agent of corruption. Cf. Doane, *The Saxon Genesis*, pp.294-5, n702-703a.

<sup>121</sup> *Genesis B*, ll.699-703a.

<sup>122</sup> Although the poem survives in a manuscript from around the turn of the first millenium, it is thought that the Old Saxon poem was transposed into English in the late ninth or early tenth century. My discussion of the notion of *cræft* as divine endowment indicates that it was widely used by that time, but continued to develop into an even stronger concept in the context of the Benedictine Reform (cf. Chapter Five below). For the date of *Genesis B*, cf. R. Derolez, 'Genesis: Old Saxon and Old English', *ES* 76 (1995), 409-423.

### Old English *cræft* or Old Saxon *kraft*?

*Genesis B* has been discussed on a number of occasions in this thesis, without consideration of the fact that it is closely derived from a continental poem conventionally called the Saxon Genesis. Although the points I have made are in any case valid from a reader- or audience-response point of view (as evidenced for instance by the illustrator of Junius 11), ascertaining in how far they may be termed evidence of Anglo-Saxon perceptions of craftsmanship, and, in this chapter, evidence of the semantic range of the OE term *cræft* in particular, is dependent on whether we think these elements were added by the translator or whether they derive from a poem written in Old Saxon on the continent. It is not my intention to debate the intricacies of this argument in great detail, but I shall briefly review the main strands of current opinion on the topic, before making a few points that are specifically relevant to the section discussed here.

In 1875, Eduard Sievers first hypothesised that lines 235-851 of the poem then known as the 'Caedmonian Genesis' (in other words what we now know as *Genesis B*, forming part of a separate, longer poem on the same subject, now termed *Genesis A*, in the Junius manuscript) constitute an interpolation, and deduced from anomalies in the lexis and metre that they were originally composed in Old Saxon.<sup>123</sup> This deduction was shown to be a stroke of brilliance in 1894, when Karl Zangemeister discovered excerpts of this lost Saxon poem in a Vatican Library manuscript (Palatinus Latinus 1447).<sup>124</sup> Due to the fragmentary nature of this witness (numbering 377 lines in all), however, we do not have more than 20-odd overlapping lines between the OS and OE texts (Vatican Fragment I overlaps with ll.790-817 of *Genesis B*; those lines come long after the section discussed in this chapter). Unsurprisingly, these lines have been studied with great exactitude in order to provide an answer to the question of how much the latter is based on the former. The generally accepted answer, in short, is that the correspondence between the two poems is quite close, and that *Genesis B* is more Saxon than English. Nevertheless, scholars have taken care to point out the need to 'recognize the contributions of Anglo-Saxon culture to the poem we

<sup>123</sup> E. Sievers, *Der Heliand und die angelsächsische Genesis* (Halle, 1975).

<sup>124</sup> Derolez, 'Genesis'.

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now possess'.<sup>125</sup> Based on the overlap, we may deduce that the two main changes performed were the replacement of some OS words (presumably because they were not at all recognizable to an Anglo-Saxon audience), and adaptations to make the new version conform to a native metre ('Entschlackung') and style ('Glättung').<sup>126</sup>

The evidence of lexical modifications is particularly interesting in our case. The replacement of one word for another can entail much more than just the conversion of one foreign notion to a more familiar one. This is especially true if the word is polysemous, like *craft*. But what is the likelihood that our term was such a replacement? Firstly, let us consider the possibility that the term employed in the original was its Old Saxon equivalent, *kraft*. This term and its derivatives occur three times in the fragments of the Saxon Genesis, though not in the overlapping lines. It is also attested in the one other surviving witness of OS alliterative verse, *The Heliand*. In these examples, its use conforms without exception to two of the senses pertaining to the usage of this word recorded in OHG texts: (1) physical power (strength, power, violence) and (2) (heavenly) host, horde, group.<sup>127</sup> Neither the OS nor the OHG usage of *kraft* indicate that the term was capable of carrying connotations of craftsmanship.<sup>128</sup> Moreover it connotes positively or neutrally, encompassing concepts such as the might of God (minus any explicit references to the act of creation) and the power to do good, and is incapable of expressing notions of deceit. In other words, if *kraft* was the word used in the ancestor of the Old English poem, it would not have led its OS audiences to the same interpretation which *Genesis B* would have elicited in English readers or listeners.

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<sup>125</sup> Doane, ed., *The Saxon Genesis*, intro.

<sup>126</sup> Doane, p.56; U. Schwab, *Einige Beziehungen zwischen altsächsischer und angelsächsischer Dichtung* (Spoleto, 1988), p.93.

<sup>127</sup> Although I have attempted to consult all the instances of OS *kraft* in their original context, I have also relied on the following comprehensive dictionaries to compensate my lack of proficiency in OS: E. H. Sehr, *Vollständiges Wörterbuch zum Heliand und zur altsächsischen Genesis* (Göttingen, 1966), H. Tiefenbach, *Altsächsisches Handwörterbuch: A Concise Old Saxon Dictionary* (Berlin, 2011). For the usage of *kraft* in OHG I have primarily relied on the entry for *kraft* in the dictionary produced in the extensive and ongoing project studying the OHG lexicon: *Althochdeutsches Wörterbuch*, eds. E. Karg-Gasterstädt (Berlin, 1968- ), Band 5. The Old Saxon senses correspond to OHG senses (1) and (8) respectively.

<sup>128</sup> Its main Latin equivalent is *virtus*. It never glosses or translates *ars*. Cf. *Althochdeutsches Wörterbuch*; H. Götz, *Lateinisch – Althochdeutsch – Neuhochdeutsches Wörterbuch* (Berlin, 1999).

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Since the uses of *cræft* in *Genesis B* hardly ever alliterate within the line (without thereby breaking the rules of OE alliterative verse: they are never in positions where alliteration is required through the laws of metre), it is hard to assess whether it constitutes a transliteration of OS *kraft* or a lexical substitution. We might speculate about the latter possibility, in which case we would consider whether it replaced one or the other of two OHG/OS terms for craftsmanship: *list* and *kunst*. The former term corresponds closely to the OE notion of *cræft* as craftsmanship, indicating various types of manual labour and a range of other abilities. It is the main gloss for *ars* in the OHG corpus.<sup>129</sup> It may also carry negative connotations of magic and deception.<sup>130</sup> However, *list* is also a (neutral) Old English poetic term denoting craftsmanship (with a limited number of occurrences in the corpus, see Introduction), which moreover occurs in other places in *Genesis B* (1.239, 1.517, 1.588, 1.687). It is thus unlikely that OS *list* would have called for substitution, especially in selected cases only. This leaves us with OHG/OS *kunst*, a term which denotes knowledge and learning and by all appearances did only start acquiring (weak) notions of craftsmanship, through denoting ability, during the 9<sup>th</sup> century. This may have been around the time that the Saxon *Genesis*, a poem usually dated to the early or mid 9<sup>th</sup> century, is thought to have been composed.<sup>131</sup> Although the term is associated with the devil as well as God a few centuries later, there is no indication that this was the case in early occurrences of the term.<sup>132</sup> We may especially question the possibility of the use of *kunst* as an attribute of the devil in the Saxon *Genesis* on the basis that it is very unlikely that a term primarily connected with knowledge and understanding at that time should be attached to a character that ostensibly lacks these qualities. We cannot however, resolve this question for certain.

One observation that can be made, however, is that an equivalent to the formulaic *feondes cræft* exists in Old Saxon, namely the expression *fiundo craftu*, found twice in *The Heliand*. Thus

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<sup>129</sup> Goetz, *Corpus*.

<sup>130</sup> *Althochdeutsches Wörterbuch*.

<sup>131</sup> Cf. Doane, p.46 for date. On *kunst*, see E. Seebold *et al*, *Chronologisches Wörterbuch des deutschen Wortschatzes*, v1 (2001) and v2 (2006).

<sup>132</sup> H. Manuwald, 'Gotes Kunst – Des Tiuvells Kunst: Zum Kunstdiskurs in „Barlaam und Josaphat“ Rudolfs von Ems', *Zeitschrift für deutsche Philologie*, Sonderheft zum Band 128 ('Interartifizialität') (2009), pp.49-69; *Chronologisches Wörterbuch*.

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there is a great likelihood that at least two instances of *cræft* in *Genesis B* rendered OS *kraft* in the original. However, while the correspondence between the two terms appears close at first, both collocations are fundamentally different. The OE expression is a variant of the negatively loaded *cræft* compounds and collocations discussed above, abstractly indicating deceit, while in more concrete cases denoting a magical, deceitful, or devilish form of craftsmanship. The OS phrase is different, not just from a semantic, but also from a grammatical point of view. *Fiundo* is a genitive plural, not a singular like its OE equivalent, a detail through which the expression acquires a different character entirely. In both instances, the phrase is used with OS *kraft* meaning (2), and thus denotes a horde of devilish followers.<sup>133</sup> It is surely also this denotation that the expression carried in the OS ancestor of *Genesis B*. In this version, the emissary-devil would have thus been accompanied on his journey to paradise by a host of fallen angels supporting him by pushing back flames, and enhancing the military allusions made in the preparation scene by having the proxy-devil ascend with an army towards its next battle. From what we can gather the militaristic diction was indeed a feature of the Saxon poem, and it seems to have constituted an extended metaphor of combat from the fall of Lucifer to the fall of mankind. I argued above that, while it is still perceptible in *Genesis B*, it appears to run alongside a narrative of creative altercation. The OE rendering of *fiundo craftu* exemplifies how the translator himself, having encountered an unfamiliar, non-native application of *kraft* as ‘host’, but guided by a current OE usage of *cræft*, seems to have created this narrative based on his own interpretation of the poem.<sup>134</sup> It is in details like these that we recognise a domestic influence and the contribution of Anglo-Saxon culture to *Genesis B*.

In the light of this we might also consider whether there are other details that could have been added or changed, that would have enhanced the narrative function of *cræft* in the OE poem. In her seminal study of the relationship between the two poems, Schwab reminds us that the evidence we use to analyse the method of translation, i.e. the twenty-odd overlapping lines, is too meagre to

<sup>133</sup> *Heliand*, l.3032, a variation of *uuamscaðun* (l.3033) and l.2274, a variation of ‘*Satanases feknea iungeron*’ (‘Satan’s deceitful followers’) (ll.2273-4).

<sup>134</sup> For the debate about the nationality of the translator see Doane, *The Saxon Genesis*, p.xi; Schwab, *Einige Beziehungen*, pp.90-117.

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infer much about the translation or transposition process for the remainder of *Genesis B* from it.<sup>135</sup> She further points out that translation practices may change within a text, and that we cannot exclude the possibility that there was more than one translator at work, a theory which she herself subsequently explains as likely.<sup>136</sup> Hence, we need to allow for the fact that in some places, the method of translation may have differed from the one attested in the overlapping lines. In this context, it is appropriate to cite the number of studies which have proposed the existence of an interpolation within *Genesis B*. Sievers first noted this possibility in the same study in which he predicted the Saxon origin of the poem, finding that some passages appeared essentially Old English, while others seem derived from OS word for word. In particular he singled out ll.371-420 as a passage which he deemed wholly Anglo-Saxon, and surmised that it might have been interpolated by the translator of *Genesis B*.<sup>137</sup> This theory is especially interesting in relation to our discussion of a 'native' *cræft* use in the poem. The proposed interpolation would encompass the part of Satan's lament featuring the information that he is fettered, and include the impressive catalogue of terms for chains as well as his evocation of the feather-coat (as a variation *cræft*, ll.416-7; cf. above) – in other words those aspects which transform the prelude to the Fall of Man into an analogue of the Wayland story, thereby reinforcing the narrative of creative conflict, as well as those elements which support an interpretation of a supernatural, superhuman form of craftsmanship at work after Satan's fall and imprisonment in Hell. Though Siever's proposition has not been without its detractors,<sup>138</sup> it now stands with other claims for interpolations in *Genesis B*,<sup>139</sup> as well as the poem's own status as an interpolation within *Genesis A*, as a reminder that this practice was extremely common, and may possibly have been used at the time of composition as a means of stylistic and semantic smoothing of the continental text for Anglo-Saxon audiences.<sup>140</sup>

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<sup>135</sup> Schwab, p.89.

<sup>136</sup> pp.110-111 in particular.

<sup>137</sup> p.15.

<sup>138</sup> Doane, p.272, n371.

<sup>139</sup> M. Benskin, 'An Argument for an Interpolation in the OE Later Genesis', *NM* 72 (1971), 224-45.

<sup>140</sup> It is most probable, however, that the text was translated into Old English before it was interpolated into *Genesis A*. Cf. Doane pp.48-9.

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This evidence is highly suggestive of changes occurring at the moment of translation that would have transformed the continental account of the Fall. It is likely, given the indications of militaristic diction and the denotation of ‘host’ inherent in the uses of OS *kraft*, that this account was narrated as a story of a feudal uprising, disloyalty and deceit. These themes have been noted by several scholars mentioned above as features of the Old English version of the Genesis poem and they do indeed still transpire here. However, it is important to acknowledge that the semantic range of OE *cræft* differed markedly from the one employed in the original and there is hard evidence that the translator made syntactical changes to transform an alien sense into a native meaning of *cræft*, thereby bolstering a motif of craftsmanship. This may possibly have been accompanied by deliberate interpolations and other changes designed to sustain a narrative filled with allusions to a well-known myth of craftsmanship with details matching the imprisonment and creative escape of Wayland the smith. Although throughout there are overtones of lord-retainer relationships (both between God and Lucifer, and God and Adam and Eve) playing into a theme of broken loyalties – no doubt key elements in the Old Saxon narrative – the Old English poem portrays Satan’s fall as a the result of a creative altercation with God. In this altercation two forms of craftsmanship are opposed. Satan’s *cræft* is competitive, striving for superior technical excellence, claiming higher artistic merit. God’s *handmægen* is absolute and defines the order into which Satan’s *cræft* is ultimately subsumed. While Satan is busy planning the construction of a better, sturdier throne, God simply sits *on þam halgan stole* (1.206). While the devil’s *cræft* is relative (to that of his maker), God’s might is absolute. He retains creative dominance at all times, even during Satan’s temptation of mankind, which is instrumentalized with *handgeweorc Godes* (Eve).

It is apparent that the use of *cræft* in the Old English poem is much more than ‘a certain superficial skill with words, [...] a low rhetorical cunning’.<sup>141</sup> Rather, it combines a technical conception of the term as an attribute of manual skill, comparable to the concrete neutral uses observed in a number of examples above, with a negatively loaded notion of craftsmanship akin to

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<sup>141</sup> Finnegan’s claim, p.6.

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the special usage outlined in this section. This usage, which survives mainly with connotations of unlawfulness and deceptive practices, denotes a supernatural form of craftsmanship which materializes in the *hæleðhelm* and the feather-coat. Through these artefacts Satan can overcome the physical limitations imposed by his imprisonment and continue his creative struggle with God. The supernatural aspect of this *cræft* consists both in its ability to surmount these ‘natural’ constrictions, but also its deceptive powers over Adam and Eve. As the illustrations in Junius 11 suggest, this *cræft* could be interpreted to denote an artefact capable of changing the emissary-demon’s crooked appearance back into his beautiful, radiant prelapsarian appearance. This is consistent with other uses of *cræft* throughout the corpus denoting a form of magical craftsmanship. In *Genesis B*, it is specifically used in the manner of the collocation *deofles cræft*, though it transcends the largely formulaic nature of this expression by quite literally denoting an act of craftsmanship by the devil specifically for the purpose of his primary act of deceiving mankind. It is apparent that, whatever the corresponding term for *cræft* in the Old Saxon Genesis, the use of the term in the Old English poem is highly attuned to a native usage not found in the Old Saxon corpus.

The opposition between two types of creative endeavour, denoted by God’s *handmægen* and the devil’s *cræft*, is also replicated in a formulaic opposition found in other Old English texts, e.g. in the prose *Life of Guthlac* (*Godes miht vs deofles cræft*, p.17, ll.13-8),<sup>142</sup> in the work of Wulfstan (*deofles cræftan vs healice mægnu þurh Godes mihte*, ‘The Christian Life’, ll.65-8), and elsewhere.<sup>143</sup> It is clear that the poet is aware of this opposition as he is of the ability of *cræft* to denote supernatural craftsmanship, and that he combines general connotations with a literal use. However, there are indications that he was cognizant of another *cræft* usage, which presented the term as a divine endowment and as an essential force within the divine plan for salvation. This is particularly evident in the fact that Satan’s *cræft* is unable to dominate and is supported throughout by a higher power (as evident in the instrumental role of Eve as God’s *handgeweorc*). The next

<sup>142</sup> *Das angelsächsische Prosa-Leben des heiligen Guthlac*, ed. P. A. Gonser, AF 27 (Heidelberg, 1909).

<sup>143</sup> *The Homilies of Wulfstan*, ed. Bethurum; cf. Ælfric, ‘Passion of Saint Crysanthus and his Wife Daria’, *Lives of Saints II*, ed. Skeat: *drycræft/scincræft vs godes miht* (ll.152-8); cf. ‘Homily 58’, *Homilien*, ed. Napier: *drycræft vs godes mihta* (ll.4-9).

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chapter will show how the notion of *cræft* as divine endowment constitutes an important redefinition of *cræft* within a Christian framework, presenting in particular an orthodox redefinition of skill and a conception of craftsmanship as assisting the establishment of religion and supporting faith in God's earthly realm. It will become apparent how an Anglo-Saxon audience would also have understood Satan's behaviour in *Genesis B* as an improper use of divine endowment, notably through his pride and his emphasis of his *anes cræft* (l.272), denoting the misuse of God's gift for selfish purposes instead of its application for the communal good.<sup>144</sup> These would, however, have constituted overtones of a term which primarily complies with an older usage, exploiting the formulaic remains of this usage to provide an account of a powerful struggle of craftsmanship, which perhaps was symptomatic of a much broader opposition of notions of skill in Anglo-Saxon England.

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<sup>144</sup> This expression verbally echoes the line *Christ II* which comments on the balanced apportioning of *cræft* with the intent to forestall pride: *Nyle he ængum anum ealle gesyllan / gæstes snyttru, þy læs him gielp sceþþe / þurh his anes cræft ofer oþre forð.* ('He does not wish to give the wisdom of the mind entirely to one person alone, lest pride injure him through his own *cræft* alone over others', ll.683-5). I will discuss the concept of the apportioning of *cræft* in the Chapter Five.

## CHAPTER FIVE

*Cræft* II: Craftsmanship as Divine Endowment (The ‘New’ Usage)**The source of *cræft***

In medical literature, notably in texts detailing methods of healing, *cræft*, both as a simplex and in the compound *læcecræft*, is often used to designate remedies, or the inherent therapeutic power of cures which involve ingredients gleaned from the natural world. The following example is taken from *Bald’s Leechbook*:

Eft æþele cræft, genim balsami & huniges teares emmicel gemeng togædere & smire mid þy.<sup>1</sup>

([Here is] another natural *cræft*: take balsam and drops of honey – the same amount of each – mix them together and rub [the eyes] with it.)

This example constitutes an exponent of a marked usage which is limited to extant medical texts, but appears particular and distinctive enough within this body of literature.<sup>2</sup> It conveys both the notion of recipe or method (where recipes are complemented by instructions as to how the resulting concoction is to be applied), while at the same time expressing the curative power inherent in the natural remedy or attributed to the concoction thus prepared.

<sup>1</sup> *Bald’s Leechbook* I, 2.2.1, quoted from *Leechdoms, Wortcunning, and Starcraft of Early England*, ed. O. Cockayne (London, 1864-6, repr. 1965).

<sup>2</sup> Examples of a similar usage of the simplex *cræft* include but are not limited to: Lch II: (1 Head) 15.1, 16.1, 17.1, 20.1, 21.1, 25.1, 26.1, 27.1, 28.1, 29.1, 33.1, 44.1, 45.4, 48.1, 50.1, 61.1, 63.1, 64.1, 65.1, 67.1, 68.1; (1) 2.2.1, 3.1.1., 4.1.1; (2 Head) 6,8,26, 27, 30, 33, 36, 39, 41, 51, 53, 58, 59, 60; Med 5.6: 1; Examples of a similar usage with the compound *læcecræft* include but are not limited to: Med 5.6: 2; Med 5.8: 2.4, 4.8 (Source: *DOE* web corpus).

It is this particular usage that Ælfric appears to have in mind in his homily on the *Passion of St. Bartholomew the Apostle*, where he admonishes his audience to seek cures for any illness by putting their faith in God (*se soða læce*), forbidding them to rely on the use of natural remedies (*Nis nanum cristenum men alyfed þæt he his hæle gefecce æt nanum stane, ne æt nanum treowe, buton hit sy halig rodetacen* [...], ll.312-3), a practice which he dubs *deoflescræft* (having invoked the notion of *wiccecræft* to describe heathen medical practices just a few lines earlier). This does not, however, mean that earthly medicine is without purpose in the Christian world. Hence, while the sick should fully trust in the power of God to restore their health, the use of *cliðan to* [...] *dolge*, a ‘plaster for a wound’ is permitted (l.318) after the example of the poultice which the prophet Isaiah prepared for King Hezekiah in the Bible (Isaiah 36-39). This precedent notwithstanding, we should not place our hopes for healing in natural remedies:

Deahhwæðere ne sceole we urne hiht on læcewyrstum besettan: ac on þam  
ælmihigum scyppende þe ðam wyrstum þone cræft forgeaf.<sup>3</sup>

(Nevertheless we should not set our hope in medicinal herbs, but in the almighty creator who gave those herbs their *cræft*.)

Ælfric speaks out not just against practices surviving from pre-Christian times, in which the use of so-called medical charms may have had a perceived magical dimension, but he also appears to take issue with the above-noted medical usage of *cræft*. The sick who place their faith in such cures are guilty of *heaðengild*, ‘idolatry’, because they misidentify the source of *cræft*, putting their faith in herbs or the earthly *læce* preparing and administering the cure. In truth, according to Ælfric, the cure is of a heavenly origin, and the notion of *cræft* as remedy is thereby presented as a notion of divine endowment.

Ælfric’s injunction is the only instance in the surviving corpus where two different semantic dimensions of *cræft* are directly juxtaposed. In the first dimension, *cræft* appears negatively loaded as a form of magic, yet it is also apparent that this colouring is an effect of the author’s judgment

<sup>3</sup> Ælfric’s *Catholic Homilies: The First Series*, ed. Clemoes, 31, p.450, ll.321-2.

on secular medical traditions in which the term *cræft* has a rather neutral function. From the term's usage here it is apparent that this dimension is broadly identical to the one defined above in my discussion of negatively loaded craftsmanship involving the use of magic.<sup>4</sup> In both instances, *cræft* designates an aggregate or aggregation with supernatural properties (either perceived on its own or as conducted by a skilled individual). In Ælfric's world, this semantic dimension of *cræft* is not compatible with mainstream Christian living, and is therefore substituted by another dimension in which the term is used to express the notion of divine endowment.

In the following section I will consider this usage in much greater detail, showing that, despite being a likely agent of the semantic widening of *cræft*, it remains primarily a notion of craftsmanship. I show that as such it incorporates not only the moral of the biblical Parable of Talents, but it also conforms to the ideology of labour at the core of the monastic reform, and by extension of mainstream religious thought in late Anglo-Saxon England. I examine how it emerges as the first notion of craftsmanship characterised by openness and inclusivity before concluding that it occasionally retains traces of elitism that go back to the very origin of this usage. In addition to providing a theory of how and when it emerged, I argue that the notion of *cræft* as divine endowment arose in an effort to reinvent a secular and heroic term within a Christian paradigm, and to provide a concept of craftsmanship that would fit into the Christian culture of Anglo-Saxon England.

### **Divine endowment and the notion of craftsmanship**

In my initial assessment of the prevalence of the notion of craftsmanship in the broad semantic range of *cræft* I showed how the term became deeply associated with the notion of divine endowment, in particular as manifested in the Parable of Talents (as evidenced for instance in the

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<sup>4</sup> Cf. Chapter Four.

idiosyncratic glossing of the symbolic coin of that parable, *talentum*, with *cræft*). This usage is abundantly represented in the existing literature and merits closer analysis. Its most impressive witnesses are found in poetry, notably *The Gifts of Men* (cf. above), though it is also central to *The Fortunes of Men*, and to a prominent passage in *Christ II*. These poems describe how God honours all creatures with liberal gifts (*Christ II*, ll.686-691a), *Gifts*, ll.1-7), decreeing each man's destiny (*Fortunes*, ll.64-96, *Gifts*, l.16, *passim*). For this he ought to receive back honour, praise (*Gifts*, l.110-3) and thanks (*Fortunes*, l.97-8). In each poem these reflections on divine gifts are complemented by a catalogue of divine endowments which lists different types of human abilities, illustrating their variety and the magnanimity of the dispenser. In these examples, *cræft* becomes a universal attribute. This entails not just a semantic widening of the term, but also a broadening of the notion of skill to include not just the prized abilities of the craftsman, but also every type of human aptitude. My analysis will reveal that this semantic and ideational extension of *cræft* and the notion of craftsmanship it represents are not merely features of these poems, but they are broadly represented and indeed further developed throughout the corpus. In fact, they constitute a remarkable facet among Anglo-Saxon conceits of craftsmanship.

We have already seen above how as an attribute of Beowulf's person *cræft* represents not merely a notion of strength but a heroic quality guaranteeing his success, which is understood as being granted to him by God. A similar notion is found in *Exodus*, where God is said to have strengthened Moses with *soðum cræftum* (l.30). In these examples, the hero's source of strength is divine, and what we may imagine was a more physical attribute of the hero in pre-Christian stories becomes an almost abstract expression of his heroic value. It stands to reason that the pre-Christian *cræft* was more than just a physical quality of the hero. The above analysis of the purposely termed 'old' usage of *cræft* strongly suggests that it could be applied to the supernatural, magical powers of objects, as well as to the ability of those who could engraft (or perhaps engrave?) those properties into (onto) the object. This notion of craftsmanship would have to be Christianized, too. Ælfric's condemnation of the (otherwise morally neutral) concept of the intrinsic power of natural remedies can serve as a guide here. In both contexts there is a perceived association of the

reprehensible type of *cræft* with magic, and moral objection to it is expressed through the use of negative compounds (*drycræft* and *wiccecræft*) and collocations (*deofles cræft*). Like the medicinal *cræft*, which allows for a relatively neutral expression of the same meaning through the simplex, the notion of magical craftsmanship was probably attached to the use of simple *cræft* alone also. Before the moralising filter of Christianity was applied to these usages, the simplex was likely sufficient to express the above concepts, and it would have done so without immediately conveying a value judgment. Within a Christian moral framework, however, the concepts are no longer orthodox, and are relegated to the realm of the sinful and the forbidden through the use of negative compounds and through collocating *cræft* with *deofol* in a fixed expression. This compounded *cræft* is at all times separated from and on occasion (such as in Ælfric's instruction on the perceived power of natural remedies) directly contrasted with divine *cræft*, which is the notion of heavenly endowment. The semantic richness of *cræft* allows us to ascertain that it became the vehicle for Christianizing the notion of craftsmanship by redefining this notion within the Gifts-of-Men paradigm. I will now examine in detail how this is achieved.

The previously analysed notions of craftsmanship, that is *searo*, *orþanc*, and the 'old' usage of *cræft*, tend to express the notions of manual creation and superior skill virtually simultaneously. When applied in relation to human or legendary craftsmen or the artefacts they create, they tend to underscore their excellence, setting them apart not just from the rest of mankind, through their ability to deftly combine separate entities into a new whole, through being masters of a craft no longer accessible to mankind, or through their ability to convey supernatural properties onto the artefacts they create. The objects produced by these types of craftsmanship – Weland's superior mail-shirt, Grendel's glove, the edifices of ancient civilisations, the tablets on which the ten commandments are inscribed, to name but a few of those analysed so far – have a special, quasi-mythical or legendary status. These types of craftsmanship are extraordinary and very often individualising. They emphasize the singularity and the superlative aspects of craftsmen and craftsmanship. *Cræft* as a divine endowment, on the other hand, shifts the alignment of craftsmanship and special skill, and becomes the first notion of craftsmanship embracing not just

all types but also all degrees of ability. In *Gifts*, a royal butler may possess *cræft* as much as a stonemason, an athlete as much as a poet, a man or woman of charitable disposition as much as a smith. God's gifts are distributed variously to every human being, and they should all be valued for what they are. All who honour their *cræft* and use it correctly are deserving of an equal amount of merit in the eternal kingdom.<sup>5</sup>

Within the Gifts-of-Men paradigm the more traditional notion of craftsmanship may be shifted to one side to accommodate a greater variety of skill, but, curiously, it is not entirely sidelined. I already noted above how in an Ælfrician homily reflecting on the Parable of Talents, *cræft* is used to specifically denote a type of endowment corresponding to the mastery of a manual trade. This is just one example of a wide range of *cræft* uses that describe a sense of craftsmanship without conflicting with the Gifts-of-Men paradigm. A number of homilies enjoin that no *cræft* be performed on the Sabbath, referring to the biblical dictum to cease all kinds of manual labour on the designed day of rest. Thus, there is a certain prevalence of assigning *cræft* to a range of manual trades. However, human craftsmanship no longer dominates over other types of ability, but becomes a humble exercise of a skill received from God.

Within the paradigm the definition of human skill is extended to be virtually universal in the abilities included. In spite of this, and somewhat paradoxically, *cræft* remains a primordial notion of craftsmanship, a fact which emerges not just in the preferential use of *cræft* to denote manual occupations. Craftsmanship is also embedded in the very essence of the notion of divine gift. The following example from *The Fortunes of Men* is a case in point:

Swa wrætlice weoroda nergend  
geond middangearð monna cræftas  
sceop ond scyrede ond gesceapo ferede  
æghwylcum on eorþan eormencynnes.<sup>6</sup>

(So wondrously did the Keeper of Hosts throughout middle-earth shape and trim the *cræftas* of men and direct his dispensations/hand his creations to everyone of humankind on earth.)

<sup>5</sup> For more details on how to use one's *cræft* properly see below.

<sup>6</sup> *Fortunes of Men*, ll.93-6, *The Exeter Book*, ed. Krapp and Dobbie.

In this poem, God's gifts to mankind, the *cræftas*, are portrayed as artful objects carefully fashioned by a master craftsman, which are then dispensed to humans, just as the king of heroic poetry would distribute gifts to his loyal retainers. The fusion of the traditional image of God as a gift-giver with that of a master craftsman provides an overarching framework for human craftsmanship within the paradigm. Thus, a skilled smith producing objects of great intricacy would merely be fashioning objects in the image of the talent that was granted to him by God in the first place. By implication, God does not only give the ability but also the blueprint for the exercise of human craftsmanship, which occurs in the image of divine creativity. God is the master craftsman, and the human artisan his earthly appointee. A similar notion of God as a craftsman working with his gifts in his personal workshop may be found in a post-Alfredian psalm:

Se god me gegyrde mid mægnum and mid cræftum and gesette minum wegas  
unwemme.<sup>7</sup>

(God adorned me with strengths/virtues and with *cræftas* and set me spotless on my way).

The language of this psalm appears to be distinctly Alfredian with *cræft*, as well as *mægen*, referencing a notion of virtue, as indicated by the use of *unwemme*. However, by using the verb *gegyrwan*, 'to adorn', to express God's attribution of *cræftas* to the first-person persona, the psalm seems to also make use of *cræft*'s creative denotation, while the idea of attribution in itself reminds us of the Gifts-of-Men paradigm. We thus have another image of God as the master craftsman gracing man through *cræftas*, this time with a strong link to the idea of virtue. It is possible to understand the *cræftas* here also as an endowment typically associated with the paradigm we are analysing, particularly if we consider the virtuous element inherent in it.

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<sup>7</sup> *Liber Psalmorum: The West-Saxon Psalms, Being the Prose Portion, or the 'First Fifty' of the So-Called Paris Psalter*, ed. J. W. Bright and R. L. Ramsey (Boston, 1907), Psalm 17.31.

### Virtuous *cræft* outside the Alfredian context

While the notion of virtue is primarily associated with the Alfredian *cræft* usage (cf. ‘Overview of Word Studies’ in Chapter Four), it is not altogether extraneous to the notion of *cræft* as divine endowment. In fact, many texts using *cræft* to denote a divine gift emphasize that the endowment represents a mandate for virtuous living. Indeed, the bestowal of the gift is virtually synonymous with an imperative to make use of it. In the Parable of Talents, the slave who did not invest the coin given to him by his master, but instead buried it in the ground, is severely reprimanded, deprived of all his possessions and cast out of society into darkness. Similarly each person receiving *cræft* from God is obligated to pursue and perfect it throughout their lifetime. This point is found throughout the corpus, but is specially emphasized in the writings of Ælfric and Wulfstan. Thus, for instance, in his introduction to his *Grammar*, Ælfric explains his purpose for providing his compatriots with a vernacular grammatical treatise with the following observation:

Ælcum men gebyrað, þe ænigne godne cræft hæfð, þæt he ðone do nytne oðrum  
mannum and befæste þæt pund, þe him god, sumum oðrum men, [...] <sup>8</sup>

(It is fitting for every man who has any good *cræft*, that he put it to use for other men  
and entrust to others that pound that God entrusted to him,)

lest he should fall to eternal damnation. Having previously expressed the notion of grammar as *stæfcræft*, and further referred to it as *cræft*, Ælfric explains here how a *cræft* (alluding in this specific case to his knowledge of grammar) should not be self-serving, but instead be made available to serve the community at large. In this instance, the imperative to make use of *cræft* is achieved through translating a Latin treatise into the vernacular. Wulfstan also addresses the need to utilise one’s *cræft*, emphasizing in particular the spiritual benefits that can be derived from it. Thus, he frequently addresses the importance of manual labour in monastic and canonical life,

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<sup>8</sup> Ælfrics *Grammatik und Glossar*, ed. Zupitza, *Grammar*, p.2, ll.19-20.

noting that the pursuit of *cræftas* protects against idleness.<sup>9</sup> In Homily 11, Wulfstan uses the notion of *cræft* to transpose a passage from Isaiah, reminding his listeners of their moral duty to heed the *opus domini*: *Hearpe & pipe & mistlice gligamen dremað eow on beorsele; & ge Godes cræftan nan ðing ne gyma* ('The harp and the pipe and the various types of revelries delight you in the beer-hall; and you do not make use of God's gifts at all').<sup>10</sup> There is a tone of reproach in this passage, with Wulfstan pointing out a neglect of duty in those that find too much pleasure in entertainments. In the biblical source, which Wulfstan himself provides as *lemma* to his own text, *cræft* corresponds to *opus*, denoting 'work', 'art' or 'duty'. The Old English term conveys those notions by referring them within the Gifts-of-Men paradigm, a context conjured up by the phrase *Godes cræftas* and the suggestion that they need to be acted upon and placed in the service of the Lord. In his *Polity*, Wulfstan goes further by equating failure to make use of *cræft*, here in the monastic community, with a breakdown of civilisation warranting doomsday predictions:

Eall hit færeð yfele ealles to wide; swa swyðe hit wýrsað wide mid mannum, þæt þæs hades men, þe þurh Godes ege hwylum wæron nyttoste and geswincfulleste on godcundan þeowdome and on boccræfte, þa syndon nu wel forð unnyttaste gewelhwær and ne swincaþ a swiðe ymbe ænige þearfe for Gode ne for worulde.<sup>11</sup>

(Everything everywhere is going to evil; so severely and pervasively is the situation worsening among men, that those belonging to a holy order, who through fear of God were once most useful and diligent in godly service and in *boccræfte*, now are continually most useless everywhere and do not ever labour at anything useful for God or for the world.)

The use of *boccræfte* here is particularly interesting. Elsewhere this compound denotes an ability or power derived from knowing the Bible, used as a metonymy for affiliation to the Christian

<sup>9</sup> See, for example, *Institutes of Polity: Eac him gerisað handcræftas gode, and þæt man on his hirede cræftas begange, huru þæt ænig to idel ne wunige*, 'Also befitting to him [the canon] are good *handcræftas*, and (ensuring) that each man of his house pursue *cræftas*, so that indeed none of them should remain idle', quoted from 'Die *Institutes of Polity, Civil and Ecclesiastical*', ed. K. Jost, *Swiss Studies in English* 47 (Bern, 1959), 39-164 (Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS. Junius 121, section 80).

<sup>10</sup> *The Homilies of Wulfstan*, ed. D. Bethurum (Oxford, 1957), ll.144-5.

<sup>11</sup> Wulfstan, *Polity*, ed. Jost (Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS. Junius 121, section 181).

faith.<sup>12</sup> Wulfstan, however, does not hesitate to use this term in a context in which it designates a useful activity or an exercise of duty in the Christian community, emphasising the need for those belonging to orders to convert their theoretical knowledge into actions that serve the good of the larger community. The function of the headword *cræft* is thus far more specific here than in other uses of the compound, connoting a key aspect associated with the use of *cræft* in the Gifts-of-Men paradigm. Similarly the poem called *Judgement Day II*, surviving in a collection of Wulfstanian homilies, describes personified Sloth as *uncræftiga slæp sleac mid sluman*, ‘*uncræftiga* sloth, sluggish from slumber’.<sup>13</sup> In this example too, the moral nature of *cræft*, or that of its opposite *uncræft*, is defined in terms of activity, or lack thereof, and in terms of utilising *cræft*, or failure to make use of it. Rather than denoting any type of virtue or vice, as in the Alfredian usage, *cræft* and *uncræft* are narrowed to express notions of diligence and assiduity, sloth and inactivity on the moral compass of the Gifts-of-Men paradigm. More broadly, the virtuous exercise of *cræft* underpins Christian civilisation, while neglect of the duty to utilise it well is associated with its breakup.<sup>14</sup>

As *cræft* emerges as a fundamental aspect of Christian living, it is not surprising to find that the imperative to use it for the benefit of all acquires a real-life application. Indeed, a concept closely connected to the imperative to make use of God’s gift to bring about returns, is the early medieval tithing system, or the practice of paying one tenth of one’s earnings to the Church.<sup>15</sup> This obligation is frequently referenced in homilies in close connection to the broad conception of *cræft* as endowment, as for instance in this example:

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<sup>12</sup> See *Juliana* (l.16) where it simultaneously denotes a heroic quality and the God-given ability to stand against pagans, cf. below (‘Link to God’).

<sup>13</sup> *The Anglo-Saxon Minor Poems*, ed. Dobbie, ll.240b-41a.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. *Instructions*, ll.163-6: *Ne scealt þu beon to sene ne to siðgeare, / ne to slapor ne to slaw, gif þu sigedrihten / mid cræfte on gecampe gecweman þæncest* (‘You must neither be too *sene* (sense uncertain: obvious? lazy? superficial?) nor too impatient, not too sleepy or too sluggish, if you intend to please the Lord of victories with *cræft* in the struggle’).

<sup>15</sup> Such as the system proposed in Æthelstan’s first edict, see S. Foot, *Æthelstan: The First King of England*, (New Haven, 2011), pp.136-140.

Ælcum men þe ænige tilunge hæfð, oððe on cræfte, oððe on mangunge, oððe on oðrum begeatum, ælcum is beboden þæt hy þa teoðunge gode glædlice syllan of heora begeatum oððe cræftum þe him god forgeaf.<sup>16</sup>

(To any man who has anything in terms of work or in terms of any *cræft* or in any other activity it is commanded that he gladly give to God the tenth part from his activities or from the *cræft* that God gave him.)

A sterner warning to observe the duty of tithing is contained in the so-called ‘Sunday Letter’, a homily purporting to be a letter from Christ to the Christian community:

And gif ge getreowlice & rihtlice þa frumsceattas eowre teoþunga of eallum eowrum geswincum, oððe on landes teolunge, oððe on ænigum cræfte, on ælmihtiges Godes naman to ðam cyrican ne bringað þe eow to gebyreð, þonne anime ic eow fram þa nigon dælas [...].<sup>17</sup>

(And if you do not truly and rightly bring the first-fruits of the tenth part of all that you get from your labours, either from working the land or from any *cræft*, to the church that you belong to in the name of God almighty, then I will take from you the (other) nine parts.)

The duty to return the tenth part of the income derived from one’s *cræft* is here presented as a strict obligation, and failure to observe it is accompanied by a particularly harsh punishment of complete disownment, comparable to the fate attributed to the servant who failed to invest his coin in the Parable of Talents. The act of not sharing one’s *cræft* is unchristian, and is even equated with heathen attitudes in ‘Sunnandæges spell’ (Napier Homily XLIV), where those who do not believe in the gospels are compared to *þam bocerum [...] þa ðe nellað heora boccræftas godes folce wel nytte gedon* (‘those learned people that do not want to apply their *boccræftas* for the use of God’s

<sup>16</sup> *Homilies of Ælfric: A Supplementary Collection*, 2 vols, ed. J. C. Pope, EETS 259, 260 (London, 1967-8), ‘De virginitate’, pp.804-8, ll.99-102.

<sup>17</sup> ‘Sunday Letter’, printed as ‘Be þam drihtenlican sunnandæg folces lar’ in ‘Contributions to Old English Literature 1: An Old English Homily on the Observance of Sunday’, ed. A. S. Napier, in W. P. Ker and A. S. Napier, eds., *An English Miscellany Presented to Dr. Furnivall* (Oxford, 1901), pp.355-62, ll.99-103.

people’).<sup>18</sup> Making use of one’s *cræft*, sharing one’s *cræft* with the community are pillars of the Christian society of Anglo-Saxon England.

While the Parable of Talents appears to be the most important frame of reference for this interpretation and application of *cræft*, it is not the only one. The Benedictine Reform in England, and the concurrent glossing and translating of the monastic order’s rule, may have had an important influence on the interpretation of *cræft* as a useful occupation that needs to be put at the service of the larger community and whose rightful exercise is spiritually ennobling. The various vernacular versions of the Benedictine Rule, as well as the existing glossed copies of the Latin text, use *cræft* consistently to render the Latin *ars*, in its sense of ‘manual labour, art, trade’.<sup>19</sup> Rather than interpreting these uses as mere translation senses, however, it might be useful to see how they relate to the usage of *cræft* within the Gift-of-Men paradigm, and how they might have supported or influenced this usage.

The Benedictine Rule constitutes the most prominent medieval text to reconcile personal spiritual needs with the practical and economic needs of a religious community. One of its most famous tenets is the instruction that monks ought to pursue various manual occupations within their community to protect against idleness, as a means of spiritual fulfilment, as well as to serve the practical needs of the monastery and to support the wider community. After its famous motto *Ora et Labora*, the order understands spiritual devotion and manual labour to go hand in hand. The Rule does not just comment on the moral benefits of labour, but also describes spirituality in terms of craftsmanship in chapter 4, where it advises a path to spiritual attainment through *gæstlices cræftes tol and gebytla*, ‘the tools and constructions of the spiritual *cræft*’ (4.59).<sup>20</sup> In (Old) English Benedictine thinking the real and spiritual value attached to manual labour and craftsmanship is translated into *cræft*, coinciding with the virtuous connotations the term acquired within the Gifts-of-Men paradigm. In addition, the Rule also obliges the monks to share the profits

<sup>18</sup> *Wulfstan: Sammlung*, ed. Napier, pp.205-15, ll.256-8.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. Girsch, ‘*Cræft*’, pp.467-8.

<sup>20</sup> *Die angelsächsischen Prosabearbeitungen der Benediktinerregel*, ed. A. Schröer, BaP 2; repr. with appendix by H. Gneuss (Darmstadt 1964); Cf. Ovitt, *The Restoration of Perfection*, chapter 3 (‘Labour and the Foundations of Monasticism’).

derived from their manual trade with the needy, thereby echoing the principle of using the endowed *cræft* for the benefit of the Christian community.<sup>21</sup> The uses of *cræft* in this text must be understood as expressive of connotations that transcend a mere translation sense of *ars*. While other vernacular versions of ecclesiastical texts contain similar ideas rendered through the notion of *craft* (translating *ars*),<sup>22</sup> the Benedictine Rule, with its widespread circulation and cultural significance in tenth- and eleventh-century England, likely provided an important substantiation of the moral values and virtues that became attached to the ‘new’ usage of *cræft*.

The virtuous exercise of *cræft*, consisting in the utilisation of one’s God-given ability and the investment or donation of some of the rewards derived from it within the Christian community, provides the craftsman with a new social obligation, but also grants him social validation. The use of *cræft* within the Gifts-of-Men paradigm is not just of semantic but also of cultural and societal significance.

### The virtue of openness

While the above-discussed elements defining the virtuous exercise of *cræft* are derived from lessons applied to the Parable of Talents, as well as supported by Benedictine precepts, another feature commonly found with this *cræft* sense is a more idiosyncratic extension of the above connotations: the virtue of openness. *Cræft* is found to collocate about 30 times with the verb *cyðan*, ‘to show’ or ‘to reveal’ (lit. ‘to make known’), in the surviving corpus.<sup>23</sup> This is enough for this pairing to be a salient feature of Old English literary language. Since it alliterates, it possibly originated as a poetic formula, but it is also, though to a lesser extent, found in prose. In the surviving examples, this collocation is much more than just a formula, however, and is

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<sup>21</sup> *Benediktinerregel*, 57.95.

<sup>22</sup> Notably the *Capitula* of Theodulf and the Rule of Chrodegang, cf Girsch, ‘*Cræft*’, p.460.

<sup>23</sup> Source *DOE* Web Corpus, Proximity search.

complemented by a large number of diversely worded emphases on openness in relation to *cræft*. This feature is especially relevant to the notion of *cræft* as divine endowment.

More broadly, *cræft* collocates with terms denoting openness (throughout the corpus) but also its opposite, secrecy (mainly in poetry). While the former collocation connotes mostly positively, negative colouring is common in the latter. In the examples analysed so far, the notion of *dyrne cræft*, ‘secret *cræft*’, was applied to the use of magical *cræft* for purposes of treachery – objectified through the *inwitnet* – in *Beowulf*. Further examples of the collocation of *cræft* and *dyrne* in the poem are equally negative. It is found in the passage narrating the theft of a piece of treasure in the dragon’s lair, where by its grammatical form and position it might denote the dragon (and associate with its evil nature?), the treasure (as cursed or magical artefact?), or the manner of the thief’s approach (stealth and surreptitiousness?). Much earlier in the poem, on the morning after Grendel’s very first rampage in Heorot, as the Danes awaken to behold the wrecked mead hall and slaughtered retainers, Grendel’s *guðcræft*, ‘slaughter-*cræft*’, is said to be *undyrne*, ‘unconcealed’ (l.127). Rather than read *undyrne* solely as a circumlocution for openness, we may interpret it as drawing attention to the fact that Grendel’s nocturnal spree of destruction was indeed *dyrne* before it was revealed to others at dawn. His later onslaughts bear anti-heroic motifs, for instance his attack on Heorot right before his fight with Beowulf, which is narrated with allusions to a heroic feast. In l.127 too, the emphasis on the secrecy of his *guðcræft* contrasts with Beowulf’s open display of heroic *cræft* throughout the poem. I have already discussed several examples of Beowulf’s *cræft* in my analysis of the polysemy of *cræft* above, observing how it denotes his (god-given) ability to be a hero, so I shall document only briefly here how it is frequently described as an ‘open’ quality: It is widely known even among the wise men of Beowulf’s people, leading to his being sent to Hrothgar’s support (*forþan hie mægenes cræft mine cuþon*, l.418); in her speech during the victory celebrations, Wealhtheow calls on Beowulf to reveal himself through *cræft*, (*cen þec mid cræfte*, l.1219); Beowulf’s superhuman feat of swimming through the Northern sea with thirty mailcoats on his back on his return to his homeland after the Frisian raid, is openly narrated by Wiglaf as a public demonstration of the hero’s superhuman prowess (*sylfes cræfte*, l.260).

Grendel's own, misguided *cræft*, as well as that of several anonymous shady and treacherous figures in the poem, is exercised in darkness and in secrecy and thus stands in direct contrast to Beowulf's open use of *cræft*.

Though she did not investigate the notion of openness beyond noting its existence, Girsch reasons that its significance in examples of positively coloured *cræft* is derived from the high value attached to outward display (of riches or abilities) in Germanic societies.<sup>24</sup> This is broadly plausible, though it ignores the value of secret thought displayed both in Germanic culture (figuring for instance in Icelandic texts as a quality that allows one to outwit a scheming enemy) as well as elsewhere in Old English texts. Of particular relevance here is one area in which inward, non-open activity is often valued positively, namely the exercise of mental faculties. Locking thoughts or received knowledge in the mind, especially temporarily, appears to be a desired and positive course of action, especially where the attainment of greater knowledge or wisdom are concerned. Thus the mind is frequently described as a sealed coffer or treasure-chest safely guarding its contents often preceding a moment of release.<sup>25</sup> As a component denoting the power of mind, we may assume that *hygecræft* shares these values; however, the surviving examples tend to connote secrecy in a neutral to negative fashion, while they associate with openness on a neutral to positive scale. The following maxim expresses the two-way process of the revelation of one's inner thoughts in a double-negative structure ('not tell' versus 'hide' = 'not reveal') which results in a rather neutral statement, though it may be read as a warning against withholding secrets with a mildly negative flavour: *Nelle ic þe min dyrne geseccan, gif þu me þinne hygecræft hylest ond þine heortan gepohtas* ('I will not tell you my secret, if you hide your mind-*cræft* and your heart's thoughts from me', *Maxims I*, ll.2-4). Displaying one's *hygecræft* on the other hand is associated with an expression of faith in God in the Paris Psalter: *Ealle þeode ecne drihten mid hygecræfte herigan wordum*, 'The entire nation shall praise the eternal lord with mind-*cræft* in words' (l.16.1).

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<sup>24</sup> 'Cræft', pp.108-9.

<sup>25</sup> Thus, for instance, in *The Wanderer* the mind is described as *ferðloca* and *hordcofa* that needs to be firmly bound (ll.13-4) until a state of greater insight is attained: *Beorn sceal gebidan, þonne he beot spriced, oþþæt collenferð cunne gearwe hwider hrebra gehydg hweorfan wille* (ll.70-2). For a detailed analysis of this concept, see Mize, 'The Mind as an Enclosure'.

In *Christ I* the adjectival derivative is used to describe attempts to explain the (unfathomable) mystery of the original act of creation within a Christian community (ll.241-3b). Although the surviving occurrences of *hygecræft* are few, one may conclude that the use of *cræft* in this compound appears to inspire an emphasis on mental openness as positive and desirable. It would also appear from the contexts in which these examples occur that this openness is less of a Germanic, and more of a Christian ideal.<sup>26</sup>

Indeed, positive openness appears to connect closely at times with the ideas of the making use of and the sharing of *cræft*. Thus for instance, in the Old English translation of the *Pastoral Care*, an adapted proverb questions the utility of hidden *cræft* by likening it to hidden gold, echoing the double reading of the *talentum* in medieval interpretations of the Parable of Talents: *Be ðæm cwæð Salomon: Hu nytt bið se forholena cræft oððe ðæt forhydde gold?* ('About this Solomon says: How useful is the concealed *cræft* or the hidden gold?').<sup>27</sup> What is remarkable about this passage, although less so for Alfredian literature in general, is that this is the only time in the *Pastoral Care* that the translator has chosen *cræft* to render the Latin *sapientia*, 'wisdom'. The proverb is written into the text to illustrate how those who have a capacity for teaching but refuse or neglect to do so ought to be admonished to mend their ways. Although the Old English version refers to *cræfte* [*þæs*] *lareowdomes* ('the *cræft* of teaching', translating *vim praedicationis*) in the preceding chapter, thereby using *cræft* to describe the activity of imparting knowledge or wisdom, one may argue that in the rendering of the proverb, *cræft* reads as a more general faculty or endowment rather than specifically as wisdom. The term may have been chosen specifically here because of its polysemy and association with notions such as an intricate object (and by extension an object of value, to parallel the comparison with *forhydde gold*), a god-given ability, an occupation, as well as wisdom and a moral quality, thus linking the ideas in the original to a more well-known topos in vernacular Anglo-Saxon culture. The word choice in the Old English translation is thus arguably

<sup>26</sup> There is one instance in the entire corpus where *cræft* collocates with openness to express a negative idea. In *Genesis A*, the builders of the Tower of Babel *cyðdon cræft* in a negative fashion (l.1674). It must be stressed that this example is uncharacteristic and it is possible that it is not *cræft cyðan* in itself but the pride (*wonhygdum* = carelessness, recklessness) with which it is displayed that determines the negative colouring here. It may also be explained as motivated by alliterative concerns.

<sup>27</sup> *Pastoral Care*, ed. Sweet, chapter XLVIII, p.377.

more elegant and persuasive in its message than the Latin, especially for an Anglo-Saxon audience familiar with the Gifts-of-Men motif.

We are reminded in this example of the above-mentioned observation by Ælfric, in his introduction to his *Grammar*, of the obligation to impart wisdom to others. By sharing his own knowledge of grammar, Ælfric opens his *cræft* to others, thereby fulfilling his Christian duty to employ his endowment for the benefit of the community. The language further used in this preamble is highly suggestive.<sup>28</sup> Thus, by providing this access to knowledge, Ælfric enables the reader to open themselves up to far greater possibilities:

Ic Ælfric wolde þas lytlan boc awendan to engliscum gereorde of ðam stæfcraeft, þe is gehaten grammatica, syððan ic ða twa bec awende on hundeahtigum spellum, forðan ðe stæfcraeft is seo cæg, þæt ðæra boca andgit unlicð[.]<sup>29</sup>

(I, Ælfric, wished to translate in the English language this little book about the *cræft* of letters, which is called *grammatica*, after I translated the two books in one hundred and eighty stories, because the *cræft* of letters is the key that unlocks the understanding/meaning of those books.)

I suggest that by alliterating (*stæf*)*cræft* and *cæg* Ælfric relies not just on similarities of sound, but also on the convergence of meaning between the two words, demonstrating an awareness of the strong correlation between *cræft* and openness in Old English literature. Given his flair for a clear and precise usage of language, it is reasonable to suggest that he understood this correlation as a fundamental characteristic of *cræft*.

The power of *cræft* to provide openness in the form of access or release is indeed a feature accentuated – and played with – in a number of texts. The most striking and sustained examples of

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<sup>28</sup> The vernacular introduction is one of the work's two prefaces – the other one being in Latin – each 'incorporating different material for different audiences'. While the Latin preface strikes a formal pedagogical tone, underlining the work's place in the grammatical curriculum, the vernacular is addressed to the learner. The place of Ælfric's grammar in the grammatical culture of ninth- and tenth-century England is described in M. Irvine, *The Making of Textual Culture: 'Grammatica' and Literary Theory 350-1100* (Cambridge, 1994), at pp.412-5.

<sup>29</sup> *Ælfrics Grammatik*, ed. Zupitza, p.2, ll.13-18.

this usage occur in *Daniel* and *Elene*. In *Daniel*, *cræft* primarily denotes the wisdom with which Daniel and his three companions are endowed, which in the reported words of Nebuchadnezzar is defined as the ability to possess wisdom in *boca bebodes*, ‘the command of books’ (1.82). This means that it is intended to denote advanced knowledge of the Torah as well as other lore, as the Jews were often described as the people of the book. In reality, however, Daniel’s *cræft* transcends this narrow definition, as it is further qualified by the poet as heaven-sent, thus becoming established as a divine endowment conferred on Daniel by the Holy Spirit (*Him wæs gæst geseald, / halig of heofonum, se his hyge trymede. / On þam drihtenweard deopne wisse / sefan sidne geþanc and snytro cræft, / wisne wordcwide*, ‘A holy spirit was given to him from heaven, strengthening his mind. In him the ruler was aware of deep and ample thought, wise *cræft* and sagacious eloquence’, ll.532b-6a). This faculty allows Daniel to become an interpreter of God’s law and to transmit access to this law to Nebuchadnezzar. In this capacity, he is further called *æcræftig ar* (‘a messenger *cræftig* of the Law’, 1.549) and *æcræftig ... Godes spelboda* (1.741, ‘God’s ambassador/mouthpiece, *cræftig* of the Law’). Daniel acts as God’s interpreter as his *cræft* or faculty of discernment makes him privy to the divine messages contained in Nebuchadnezzar’s dreams, thereby opening up a path of redemption for the king. That the latter chooses not to follow this route (until after a long period of suffering) is repeatedly emphasized to be his failing (*No þæs fela Daniel to his drihtne gespræc / soðra worda þurh snytro cræft, / þæt þæs a se rica reccan wolde, / middangeardes weard, ac his mod astah, / heah fram heortan; he þæs hearde ongeald*, ll.593-7). This might have struck an Anglo-Saxon audience as a point of dramatic irony, since at the start of the poem the king explicitly calls on Daniel and the boys to reveal *cræft* to him (*wordum cyðan, higecræft heane*, 1.96), a call which Daniel heeds, providing the correct interpretation for the king’s dreams and visions. Nebuchadnezzar, however, fails to appreciate the deeper significance of these revelations and indeed the true meaning of *cræft*. His affliction is described as a perverted state of mind (*wodan gewittes*, 1.626), which goes hand in hand with his inability to grasp the true meaning of *cræft*, affecting his capacity to turn his mind to God. The role of *cræft* as a key to understanding or access of meaning is confirmed at the end of the poem, as

Belshazzar, one of Nebuchadnezzar's successors, calls on Daniel to decipher the meaning of a cryptic message on the palace walls. The king's own wise men are incapable of reading the hieroglyphs, but Daniel possesses the ability to do so as *ðam wæs on gaste godes cræft micel* ('God's great *cræft* was in his spirit') (l.737). Here too, the poet emphasizes the fact that Daniel's *cræft* is divinely endowed, and it is this quality whereby it is set apart from worldly wisdom, and whereby it acquires its power to open up and to reveal. *Cræft* is applied three times to the Babylonians, but never in the sense of a divine endowment. The negative collocation *deofles cræft* (l.28) is used to describe the moral degeneracy of the people of Israel referred to at the beginning of the poem. Another negative use of *cræft* appears very closely connected to the negative sense of craftsmanship I analysed in Chapter Four: as the three young boys refuse to worship the idols, the king gets angry *forðam þe hie his cræftas onsocon* ('because they rejected his *cræftas*'), where *cræftas* could denote the golden artefacts in question. The third use occurs towards the end as Daniel's exercise of his god-given *cræft* is indirectly contrasted to the inferior abilities of the *runcræftig* Chaldeans (l.733). It is certainly not by mistake that this compound describing the Chaldeans invokes a notion of secrecy (*run*) in opposition to Daniel's power to reveal God's truth. There is a clear divergence between Nebuchadnezzar's understanding and expectations of *cræft*, respectively the capabilities of his *runcræftig* men on the one hand, and Daniel's divinely endowed faculty on the other.<sup>30</sup>

The play on *cræft* in *Daniel* is the more significant if we remember that the plot can be read as a king attempting to usurp the *cræft* of Daniel and the three boys by keeping them prisoners, thus providing a parallel to the story of the imprisoned craftsman. This parallel, vaguely implicit in the narrative of the three boys made captive for their skill, but ultimately unconfined, is made explicit by a deft exploitation of the semantic range of *cræft*. While Nebuchadnezzar attempts to hold the boys down with *guðsearo* ('malice', 'betrayal', 'chains') it is God's *cræft* which releases

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<sup>30</sup> Cf. Ælfric: wise men *sceolon cyðan heora word openlice, and þa ðe manegum rædap, na mid runungum*, suggesting an incompatibility between *cræft* (as endowment) and *run*; in *Homilies*, ed. Pope, 'Dominica post Ascensionem Domini', ll.31-6. The Chaldeans' *cræft* implies a cult of secrecy and differs in scope from Daniel's, and is possibly more similar to the 'old' usage delineated in Chapter Four, implying the use of magical or unlawful practices.

them from their predicament. Azarias calls on God to reveal his *cræft* (*cyð cræft*, l.327), after which an angel is sent to protect the boys from the flames. They then perform a song which starts by acclaiming God through his *woruldcræftas*, and continues, in a manner reminiscent of *The Gifts of Men*, to reflect on the praise due to God for his dispensation of gifts (*þec haligra heortan cræftas*, [...] *lofiað liffrean*, ll.393 and 395). This laudation leads to their full release from the fire. The poet is ostensibly playing with notions of craftsmanship, using a compound of *searo* to provide further contrast with divinely endowed *cræft*. It is likely that this sub-text would have been immediately recognisable to an Anglo-Saxon audience. As argued in Chapter One, Bede conflates the capture of the smiths in 4 Kings 24:14 and the capture of the boys in Daniel 1:1-2, in interpreting the smiths as ‘spiritual teachers’ in captivity in his exegetical commentary. The poet of *Daniel* borrowed frequently from 4 Kings 24 to bolster his narrative.<sup>31</sup> Though his use of 4 Kings 24:14 has not been noted, it is apparent that he has amalgamated this verse through his exploitation of the lexical layers of *searo* and *cræft*, appealing to the narrative of the captured smith experiencing an act of redemption. (True) *cræft* is the very mechanism through which this redemption is achieved.

### ***Cræft and openness in Elene***

Various scholars have noted the emphasis on revelation in Cynewulf’s *Elene*, with Heckman going as far as calling the poem an *inventio*, showing that its narrative mirrors a rhetorical argument that proves a truth.<sup>32</sup> The poem’s subject matter is, of course, the search and discovery of the True Cross, played out on both the literal and the metaphorical levels. The figurative search for the Cross is indeed the quest for a validation of Christianity, and the Cross serves as a symbolic foundation for the faith. The role of *cræft* in this ‘uncovering’ of the True Cross – left unaddressed

<sup>31</sup> D. Anlezark, ‘The Sources of *Daniel* (Cameron C.A.1.3)’, 1999, *Fontes Anglo-Saxonici: World Wide Web Register*, <http://fontes.english.ox.ac.uk/>.

<sup>32</sup> C. M. Heckman, ‘Things in Doubt: *Inventio*, Dialectic, and Jewish Secrets in Cynewulf’s *Elene*’, *JEGP* 108 (2009), 449-80.

in Heckman's study – has not yet received due attention. In my analysis below I show that much can be gained from reading the uses of *cræft* in *Elene* as a philosophical abstraction of the Gifts-of-Man paradigm.

*Elene* contains 17 representatives of the *cræft*-family, including 7 uses of the simplex (ll.154, 374, 558, 595, 1017, 1058, 1171), a variety of compounds (ll.380, 408, 435, 592, 1025, 1237, 1250), and several examples of the adjectival derivative (ll.314, 315, 419). Although they are not completely homogenous in meaning, all of these uses concur in representing the truth value of the Cross or the means to uncover it. The first occurrence of *cræft* designates the subject and driving force of the enquiries of the wise men in Constantine's court, by which Constantine is able to discover the role of the Jews in the Crucifixion and thus narrow down his search for the Cross to the Holy Land. The emphasis is on the role of enquiry and dialogue in the process of discovery. Thus, the king's advisers are described as *þa wisestan [...] þa þe snyttro cræft þurh fyrngewrito gefrigen hæfdon* ('the wisest men who had learned through inquiry the *cræft* of wisdom through ancient writings', ll.153b, 154b-155).<sup>33</sup> By imparting their *cræft* to Constantine they launch a dialogue or exchange of ideas which ultimately results in the identification of the location and the elucidation of the history of the True Cross. In this passage the poet appears to draw out a metaphor of craftsmanship to describe the process of finding the truth, by calling the wise men *larsmiðas* (l.203b), and by describing the Jewish people as having been led astray by the devil's *ligesearwum*, 'lying *searwum*' a few lines later (l.208a). The latter term appropriately references an epistemological constraint afflicting the Jewish people. Much can be gained here too from reading the *searo*-compound literally as a fabricated means of imprisonment, especially since it is followed by a reflection on the consequence of the Jews' treatment of Christ for which they must endure affliction for all eternity (*þæs hie in hynðum sculon / to widan feore werğðu dreogan*, ll.210b-211). The devil's *searo* constricts them to eternal misery, but it also constitutes a confinement of the truth about Christ's divinity and the legitimacy of the Christian faith. *Cræft*, on

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<sup>33</sup> Cynewulf, *Elene*, ed. P. O. E. Gradon (Exeter, 1977).

the other hand, functions as the force intent on overcoming these constraints and revealing the veracity of Christianity.

In her first address to a selection of three thousand of the most knowledgeable Jewish citizens, Elene asks them to find the wisest among them, twice referring to these men as *cræftige* (*wordes cræftige*, *aeðelum cræftige*, ll.314 and 315) (1). Both uses fulfil a hortative function, and describe a positive attribute of her interlocutors that will allow them to divulge the object of her inquisition (*andsware cyðan*, l.318), demonstrating a link between *cræft* and openness. In the first of these uses, the collocation *wordes cræftige* indicates an association between this attribute and the spoken word, thus establishing a connection between dialogue and truth-seeking which is fundamental to the dialectical method.<sup>34</sup> Unsuccessful in extracting knowledge about the True Cross from the smaller delegation of one thousand wise men, Elene once more demands that they select the wisest among them who may answer her (*purh snyttro cræft*, l.374) (2). The Jews select five hundred *þa þe leornungcræft [...] mæste hæfdon* (ll.380 and 381), but this delegation is once more incapable of revealing the truth about the Cross. As a result, Elene makes a third bid to access knowledge, again calling for a stricter selection by asking to speak to individuals among the group who *mægen and modcræft mæste hæbben* ('who might have the most strength and *cræft* of mind', l.408) (3). This leads to a direct confrontation with Judas who is described as *wordes cræftig* (l.419a). In each of Elene's requests to access the ancestral knowledge and wisdom of the Jewish people, she thus appeals to their *cræft*. The narrative structure within which this episode is presented is best described as incremental repetition. It highlights the gradual approach to the truth, accentuated by the fact that each of Elene's three requests is introduced by the same formula: (1) *Gangap nu snude* (l.313a), (2) *Nu ge raþe gangap* (l.372b), (3) *Ge nu hraðe gangað* (l.406b). The rhythm thus instilled into the narrative serves to further enhance the prominence of the above-discussed uses of *cræft*, which closely follow upon these introductory formulae. *Cræft* animates the process of discoursing with the Jews in order to unearth the truth. In these examples the term is associated with the possession of knowledge, but also with the ability to sustain a discourse and thus

<sup>34</sup> Dialectic was 'apparently known and to some extent studied in Anglo-Saxon England', according to G. Knappe, 'Classical Rhetoric in Anglo-Saxon England', *ASE* 27 (1998), p.13.

participate in the dialectical process. It also collocates strongly with terms or expressions denoting openness ((*ge*)*cyðan*, *þurh sidne sefan*) and truth (*soðlice*, *untraglice*), indicating that the use of *cræft* will lead to the revelation of the truth, represented by the True Cross in its material form.

The Jews need to reveal their secrets, employ and show their *cræft* so that the cross may be found, and Christianity confirmed. As Heckman argued: ‘For the church to be established, secrets must be revealed, doubts resolved, all hidden things made plain in the light of Christ’.<sup>35</sup> This insight is greatly enhanced by my analysis of the semantic role of *cræft* in *Elene*. *Cræft* is the force or method by which secrets hidden in the deepest recesses of the (collective) mind can be revealed. For the Jews, the truth about the Cross is the subject of a repressed memory, deeply buried in their collective unconscious. They are constantly described with expressions associating them with secrecy (*þa wisestan wordgeryno*, l.323). The poet also uses a compound of *searo* to express how they search for this deeply buried secret, noting that they *sohton searoþancum*, ‘searched in *searo*-thoughts’ (l.414a), where *searo* aptly denotes difficulty of access to the concealed knowledge.<sup>36</sup> The poet of *Elene*, like the poet of *Daniel*, thus appears to use *cræft* and *searo* to form an antithesis, with both terms constituting opposites of openness and closure. I will elaborate further on this usage at the end of this chapter. It is possible to note at this stage that four occurrences of this antithesis in three distinct texts (the third being the so-called *Lorica* riddle, which I refer to in the conclusion to my thesis) likely to be by different authors speaks in favour of the fact that Anglo-Saxons writers came to view these two terms for craftsmanship, including their more abstract meanings, as opposing types. However, we may best consider how and why this occurred at the end of a full analysis of *cræft*.

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<sup>35</sup> ‘*Inventio*’, p.456.

<sup>36</sup> A further compound of *searo* is used later on in the poem to denote restriction of access. Thus the nails used to attach Jesus to the cross are said to have been hidden *þurh nearusearwe* (l.108a), where *nearu*, a term denoting narrowness but also frequently imprisonment, is used to reinforce the notion of *searo* as a force of restraint. Compare also a similar use of the phrase *þurh Nerones nearwe searwe* in Cynewulf’s *The Fates of the Apostles* (l.13), an appropriate use of the instrumental to describe Nero’s character and his persecution of saints. Compare the use of the compound *nearocraft* in *Beowulf* in l.2243, possibly denoting difficulty of access, where *cræft* appears to be closer to the sense of supernatural craftsmanship analysed in Chapter Four.

In *Elene*, *cræft* is associated with openness and constitutes a possibility to affirm Christianity, its values and its tenets. While the True Cross is hidden, it is Elene's dialogue with the Jews and her repeated call for *cræft* that lead, if not to the truth directly, to the man holding the truth inside him. In the narrative that follows, *cræft* continues to be applied with the same reference. I shall limit myself to citing the remaining instances with brief comments, illustrating the points made above. In the remaining narrative, Judas continues to be described with references to his *cræft* and his power to reveal the truth. Thus, he is a man who can *soð gecyðan* (1.588b), and who is *wordcræftes wis* (1.592a). The Jews present him to Elene as a person who through an innate quality of *cræft* may reveal to her what she seeks to know:

him gebyrde is  
 þæt he gencwidas gleawe hæbbe  
 cræft in breostum; he gecyðeð þe  
 for wera mengo wisdomes gife  
 þurh þa miclan miht swa þin mod lufað.<sup>37</sup>

(He is innately disposed to have wise answers, to have *cræft* in his breast; he, instead of a crowd of men, will reveal to you wisdom's gift through that great might just as your heart desires)

Judas's *cræft* is at once his rhetorical competence (*wordcræftes wis*), but also, in the context of the search for the cross, his knowledge of its location, and his ability to reveal the answer to Elene's question. These two senses meet within a narrative framework based on the dialectical method. Within these lines, however, *cræft* transcends its functional role to become an expression for the object of Elene's quest. The *cræft* contained in Judas's breast is at once his ability to help Elene, and the answer to her question. A variation on this *cræft* a few lines later, *wisdomes gife*, is likely an accusative rather than an instrumental dative use, as the latter function is assumed by the phrase *þurh þa miclan miht*.

These lines are particularly layered with meaning. On one level they play with the notion of *cræft* as divine endowment. Judas's unique faculty to reveal the True Cross is God-given, a fact

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<sup>37</sup> *Elene*, ll.593b-595, 596a-597.

which provides a typological argument linking Jewish history to the development of Christianity, as part of God's overarching providential plan. The description of Judas' *cræft* as a gift places it within the Gifts-of-Men paradigm. This is repeated later as Judas's election as bishop is said to have occurred *þurh Gastes gife*, 'through the Spirit's gift' (l.1057a), and that he was chosen *cræftum* (l.1058a), because of his 'endowments'. These may be moral (virtue) or intellectual (wisdom, rhetorical powers), or more aptly the role God chose for him by giving him the ability of providing access to the Cross. On a second level, *cræft* stands for the (material and symbolic) object of Elene's quest, the True Cross itself figuratively located in Judas's breast. By finding him, she has found it, though she still needs to work to extract it from his breast by breaking him through torture. This extraction parallels the actual unearthing of the Cross which follows. The process of Judas's unearthing of the Cross, and his own conversion are both described in terms of his *inbryrded breostsefa*, 'his breast-mind pricked' (ll.841a and 1045a), where *inbryrded* denotes a state of having been pricked or pierced.<sup>38</sup> This expression continues the emphasis on openness associated with the use of *cræft* in *Elene*.

Two further instances of *cræft* in *Elene* can be cited in relation to these. The first occurs in the self-referential epilogue to the poem, in which a poet-persona addresses the difficulties faced during the composition of the poem. The epilogue parallels the process of finding the True Cross and contains two *-cræft* compounds (ll.1237a and 1250a) as well as an emphasis on revelation and opening. These uses, as well as the process of poetic composition thus described, are analysed in detail in the *coda* following the conclusion to my thesis. The second instance occurs in a speech by Judas in which he praises Elene, remarking how God has granted her victory and *snyttro cræft* (l.1171b). This can be read as the *cræft*, or gift of wisdom, but in relation to the immediate action of the poem, it is also a reference to the discovery of the Cross and the newly-found nails. God has granted her an answer to her question, success in her quest for the Cross, as well as validation of

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<sup>38</sup> Cf. E. Thornbury, 'Aldhelm's Rejection of the Muses and the Mechanics of Poetic Inspiration in Early Anglo-Saxon England', *ASE* 36 (2007), 71-91. Thornbury discusses this term in relation to the state of compunction. The term 'compunction' does in fact etymologically and doctrinally denote the piercing of a heart swollen with unease at the conscience of being wrong.

the fundamentals of Christianity. Through the poet's deft use of *cræft*, all these meanings become inherent in a single term.

Before concluding our analysis of the use of *cræft* in *Elene*, it is important to briefly consider how the more abstract meanings of *cræft*, such as the ability to access the Truth, are not used to the exclusion of the term's ability to denote a form of craftsmanship, but that this latter notion is sustained as a connotation of *cræft* in the poem. Not only does the poet show awareness of the polysemy of *cræft* while playing with connotations the term acquired within the Gifts-of-Men paradigm, but his uses of the term acquire additional depth through his exploitation of the literal and figurative levels of narrative. Furthermore, the poem promotes the role of craftsmanship in the establishment of the Christian faith through *cræft*.

The first of these two observations emerges from a point which I have already made during my analysis of *Elene*. While the poem refers to the Cross as an object it also uses it as a symbol for the Truth and for Christianity itself, and its narrative can be read on both levels. A further meta-level, to which I will turn my attention in the Conclusion, is added by the epilogue, where the poet describes the finding of the Cross as an integral part of poetic creation. *Cræft* contributes to the multi-layered narrative through its polysemy. Throughout *Elene*'s repeated demands for *cræft* in her dialogues with the Jews, and especially those examples in which *cræft* is clearly used as the object of her quest, it transcends the meaning it derives from its more immediate context, reminding the reader of its material meaning as a created object, a product of craftsmanship. In a similar vein, Judas refers to the cross as *goldhord* or treasure, underscoring its value for Christian society: *Ic þe [...] biddan wille / þæt me þæt goldhord gasta scyppend, / geopenie, þæt yldum wæs / lange gehyded* ('I wish to pray to you, Creator of Spirits, that you open up to me the gold-hoard that was long concealed from men', ll.788a, 789b-792a). Interestingly, the Cross finally becomes this treasured product of craftsmanship on the orders of *Elene*: *Ða seo cwen bebead cræftum getyde / sundor asecean, þa selestan [...]; heo þa rode heht / golde beweorcean 7 gimcynnum, / mid þam æðelstum eorcnanstanum, / besettan searocræftum 7 þa in seolfren fæt / locum belucan* ('Then the queen commanded that the best-trained in *cræftum* should be selected (...); she ordered

them to adorn that cross with gold and gemstones, to decorate it with the most splendid jewels through *searocræftum* and to lock it with silver metal plates', ll.1017-18 and ll.1022b-1026a).

This fluidity between the literal and metaphorical levels, sustained by the polysemy of *cræft*, allows craftsmanship to play a central role in the establishment/reinforcement of the Christian faith. My second observation rests on the exceptional depiction of the structure of faith in *Elene*. The Cross is the main exponent of this theme. Its unearthing is but the first step in bringing it to light. Only after it has been encased and decorated by the finest craftsmen can it fully reveal its might. The use of *cræftum* and *searocræftum* in these lines would traditionally refer to the skill these craftsmen exhibit in their smithing. In the context of the poem, however, the audience is likely to link these examples to use of *cræft* to denote an ability to provide access, to 'open up' the truth regarding the Cross and the Christian faith. Thus the *cræftas* and *searocræftas* of the craftsmen immediately translate as their power to reveal the full Truth about the Cross, its splendour and infinite value through their handiwork. The use of the compound *searocræft* is particularly interesting. Most often figuring in negative contexts (Cf. Chapter Four), its uncharacteristically positive colouring here alerts the reader to its use, all the more so as the poem makes a point of opposing the components *searo* and *cræft* in the search which precedes the exaltation of the cross. The use of this compound here underscores the principle that both elements are necessary for the confirmation of Christianity as 'things hidden' are 'made plain in the sight of Christ'. It is here also that the quest for the Cross turns full circle. It had begun, after all, by Constantine seeking advice from his *larsmiðas*, and it ends with the decorative craftsmanship of another set of smiths.

The role of craftsmanship in the establishment of Christianity is further confirmed by the construction of a church on the spot where the Cross was found, as well as the integration of the nails used in the Crucifixion into a bridle which will be used by Constantine in his wars against the pagan enemies of the Christian world and thus serve to further increase the dominion of Christianity. The bridle becomes *beacen Gode* ('an ensign of God') said to grant him victory and *cræft* in battle (*God sealde / sawle sigesped 7 snyttro cræft*, ll.1170-71; *se hwæteadig / wigge*

*weorðod se þæt wicg byreð*, ll.1194b-1195), with the use of *cræft* here not just denoting martial strength, but also the potential to ‘reveal’ or ‘open up’ Christianity to the conquered nations. In addition to these, craftsmanship plays a special role in the epilogue to the poem, discussed below.

In sum, the use of *cræft* in *Elene* exploits the traditional Gifts-of-Men topos in a deliberate fashion. It is original because of the scope of the image presented, and because of its relevance on both the literal and the figurative levels on which the story is narrated. *Cræft* functions as an endowed faculty that plays a primordial role in the search for the Cross. It animates the dialectical engine, and represents both the process of searching for the Truth as well as the Truth/Cross itself. It collocates with terms denoting openness and revelation to such an extent that it figures as an antonym to secrecy, confinement and constraint, which at times are represented by the notion of *searo*. However, both notions are not mutually exclusive, but one is necessary for the other. Without the secrecy of the Jews there would be no revelation of the truth of Christianity. This antithesis is inherent in the dialectical process of truth-finding but it pervades the poem on other levels. Thus, for instance, it is manifest in the enhancing of the Cross through craftsmanship in which the act of binding, constraining, concealing serves to further reveal and open up the truth about Christ. In the semantic context of *Elene*, the compound *searocræft* constitutes an oxymoron revealing an apparent paradox. Beyond the antithesis, *cræft* is the dominant *modus operandi* in the poem. It is the primary force driving acts of craftsmanship and the establishment of Christianity. It is presented as a God-given ability that must be put to use to further the poem’s story, to realise one’s personal vocation (in the case of Elene, Judas and the poet-persona) and to expand the Christian narrative.

### Link to God

In *Elene*, the exercise of *cræft* by humans contributes to the establishment of the Christian religion, thereby enabling more humans to become united with God. A good example is provided by Judas, who although Jewish, was endowed with a God-given faculty, which as he came to use it to find the Cross united him with God. It resulted not just in his conversion but it also confirmed the Christian message which in return led to an expansion of Christianity through the establishment of a church in Jerusalem and through Constantine's projected conquests, thus interconnecting more people with the Divine. As my analysis of the poem shows, *cræft* plays a major role in each of these developments. My investigation of the term in the wider corpus reveals a great number of examples where it denotes the potential to form a special link to God. This link is established as a result of the exercise of an (endowed) ability and provides one of the strongest advocacies for the centrality of craftsmanship in the Christian culture of the Anglo-Saxons.<sup>39</sup>

The compound *boccræftige* (l.16a) is used in *Juliana* to describe the faithful and distinguish them from the villainous heathen. The compound serves to denote knowledge of the Bible, but in the context of the metaphor employed by the poem it is a variation of *Godes ceman* ('God's warriors', l.17a), thus implying special strength or ability in the fight against the pagans. It amplifies a traditionally heroic use into an instance of divine endowment. The ability of Christian martyrs to establish a link to God is referenced later in the poem through the use of the compound *wundorcræft* (l.575), a term normally employed with positive connotations of exceptional skill,<sup>40</sup> but applied here to the fabrication of an instrument of torture by heathen craftsmen. Although it

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<sup>39</sup> This link is also expressed in more abstract terms. Two salient expressions of an abstract link are found in *Christ II* and in the OE *Boethius*. At the very beginning of *Christ II* the reader is asked to inquire with *modcræfte* (l.441b) into spiritual mysteries in order to know how they came about, suggesting that through the use of *cræft* the reader can penetrate divine wisdom. In his analysis of the Alfredian usage of *cræft*, Clemons, 'King Alfred's Debt', noted that the term is capable of expressing a link between the human and the divine in an abstract fashion while denoting 'virtue'. He called *cræft* 'the operative word in the creative relationship between the soul and God', noting that 'through *cræft* (...) the soul could commune with God mind to mind'. This link is wonderfully illustrated in the following quotation from the OE *Boethius*: *swa hwa swa willnað þæt he cræftig sie, he willnað þæt he wis sige; swa hwa swa þonne cræftig bið, he bið wis, and se þe wis bið he bið god. Se þe þonne god bið, se bið gesælig, and se þe gesælig bið, se bið eadig, and se þe eadig bið, se bið god*. Quoted from *Boethius*, ed. Godden and Irvine, B-Text: Chapter 36, pp.343-4 (emphases are mine).

<sup>40</sup> See, for example, *The Exeter Book, Riddle 40*, l.85.

may at first appear as an incongruous qualification for an object whose purpose is the infliction of a painful death, the use of both *wundor* and *cræft* also remind the reader of its other function, which becomes apparent through the Saints' Life: its potential to bring about *imitatio Christi* and to thereby strengthen and expand the Christian faith.

Elsewhere in the corpus the formula *mid wundorlicum cræfte* survives 4 times (in the works of Ælfric), on each occasion referring to the construction of a religious edifice.<sup>41</sup> Thus, for instance, in the collection of Ælfrician homilies published in an edition by Pope, Solomon is said to erect his temple *mid wundorlicum cræfte, to wurðmynte Gode* 'with wondrous *cræft*, for the glory of God'.<sup>42</sup> Here too *cræft* collocates with *wundor* to denote a form of craftsmanship which unites humans with God. A very similar use, though this time not collocating with *wundor*, is provided in Ælfric's *Catholic Homilies*, 'Assumption of St John', as newly-converted pagans start their Christian life by building a church:

[...] hi æfter ðam fulluhte towurpon eal hyra deofulgyld and mid heora maga fultume and mid eallum cræfte arærdon gode mære cyrcan on þes apostoles wurðmynte;<sup>43</sup>

([...] after the baptism they destroyed all their idols, and with the aid of their kinsmen and with all *cræfte* they erected a great church for God and in honour of the apostle.)

The exercise of *cræft* not only corresponds to a well-defined activity here, but it is also, by contrast with the pre-conversion acts of craftsmanship (the production of *deofulgyld*), a Christian endeavour. An audience familiar with the notion of *cræft* as divine endowment would no doubt have registered the use of this term following an act of baptism as an expression of the newly-

<sup>41</sup> The *DOE* web corpus brings up the following references for this collocation: ÆHom 3, ÆHom 22, ÆHomM 15 (Ass 19), ÆLet 4 (SigewardZ) (*mid wunderlicum cræfte*). In ÆHom 22 ('De falsiis diis') the edifice is a heathen temple, but the tone of the description is neutral.

<sup>42</sup> Ælfric, *Homilies*, ed. Pope, 'Feria VI in secunda ebdomada Quadragesimae' (ÆHom 3), l.86.

<sup>43</sup> Ælfric, *Catholic Homilies*, ed. Clemons, 'Assumption of St John' (ÆHom I, 4), p.214, ll.241-4.

formed link with God and the due application of a divine gift to (literally and figuratively) cement the foundations of this relationship.<sup>44</sup>

As a final example of the relational aspect of this usage of *cræft*, we can cite a further instance from the work of Ælfric, this time from the ‘Life of St Thomas the Apostle’. Although frequently rendering *ars* from the Latin source,<sup>45</sup> *cræft* unfolds its connotative possibilities, combining the notion of divine endowment with the notion of openness and linking the notion of craftsmanship to the creation of a bond with God. The Saint’s Life narrates the story of Jesus’s apostle St Thomas as a missionary by presenting him as a skilled craftsman. This is in line with several accounts of St Thomas’s Indian mission, first narrated in the apocryphal third-century text called *Acts of St Thomas*. St Thomas is presented as a talented worker in stone and wood to an Indian merchant in search of a craftsman for his king. Christ describes him as a loyal workman (*æne wyrhtan wurðfulne and getreowne*): *swa hwæt swa he begit his swinces to medes he hit bringð to me butan swicdome* (‘whatsoever he earns as a reward for his labour he brings to me without deceit’).<sup>46</sup> The wording of this presentation is strongly reminiscent of the requisition to share the fruits of one’s divine endowment, made in the Parable of Talents and exegetical works, as well as the need to make use of one’s *cræft* for the benefit of the community ordained within the Gifts-of-Men paradigm. Thomas’s description of his endowment reprises the language and ideas found in these texts:  *Ic eom an his þeowena of þam ungerimum / and we ealle cunnon cræftas on weorcum / (...) and butan swicdome / bringað eft urum hlaforde þæt þæt we ge-earniað* (‘I am one of his countless servants and we all have skill/knowledge of (diverse) *cræftas* in works (...) and we return to our lord that which we earn without deceit’). On hearing these precisions the Indian merchant is

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<sup>44</sup> Cf. Ælfric’s ‘Life of Saint Denis and his Companions’ (*Lives of Saints*, ed. Skeat), ll.150-3, where a church is erected after the conversion of heathens. His ‘Life of St Martin’ describes a pagan shrine (*deofolgild*) as *mid wundorlicum weorcstanum geworht cræftlice* (‘wondrously made *cræftlice* with workstones’, ll.1229-30). This pagan shrine, and its use by Christian monks, appears reprehensible to Martin who destroys it. It is noteworthy that Ælfric does not use his habitual formula but instead uses the adverb *cræftlice*. As I have noted in Chapter Four, this adverb does not seem to adopt the full semantic range of the simplex, but probably denotes a neutral manner of skill. The phrasing here implies a certain distance – underscored by the suffix *-lic* – from the connotative richness apparent in the uses of the simplex and the adjectival derivative.

<sup>45</sup> The likely source is an unpublished life in a Hereford MS, but the corresponding life in Bonino Mombrazio’s *Sanctuarian seu Vitae sanctorum* is considered the closest printed source.

<sup>46</sup> Quotations are taken from *Lives of Saints*, ed. Skeat.

surprised and proceeds to question the readiness with which Thomas's master is willing to dispense with his high-calibre workers: *Gif þu canst on cræftum swa swa þu cwæde nu ær / hwi wolde þin hlaford þe alætan to me* ('If you are as able in *cræftas* as you have told me just now, why would your Lord give you up to me?'). Thomas's reply explains the full scope and quality of his craftsmanship:  *Ic lecge þa grund-weallas þe gelæstað æfre, and ic sette þone wah þe ne asihð næfre* ('I lay the foundations that last forever, and I build the walls that never collapse'). Thomas continues to describe the perfection of the windows he forms and the flawlessness and beauty of his construction as a whole before finishing his speech with the offer to teach his building skills to any disciples willing to learn. In his words craftsmanship becomes a metaphor for establishing the Christian faith, and his *cræft* comes to symbolise his ability and duty to do God's work. One of the key implications of his reply is that the sharing of his *cræft* is self-evident, inherent in the very notion of the term. This is underscored by the fact that he does not directly answer the merchant's question and by his willingness to further bestow his knowledge on anyone who desires to receive it.

While they do not always use *cræft* explicitly within a Gifts-of-Men type context, the above-discussed examples nevertheless display to varying degrees aspects strongly associated with this particular usage, such as the notion of divine endowment, the duty to make use of *cræft*, the exercise of *cræft* for the benefit of the (Christian) community, and *cræft* as an open store of knowledge or skill. Above all, however, the use of *cræft* here appears to connote the ability to build or enhance a link to God, and to describe acts of craftsmanship that unite humans with their creator. The above-evinced characteristics of *cræft* thus combine to provide an orthodox form of craftsmanship, both as manual or as a different type of human skill or ability. This usage of *cræft* corresponds to the exercise of human skill within the parameters of Christian dogma.

### Teaching and learning

Given the focus on openness and sharing which accompanies the uses of *cræft* within the Gifts-of-Men paradigm, it is not surprising that this usage becomes especially associated with teaching and learning. Ælfric's justification for providing a vernacular text on grammar is a case in point. It is interesting to note that the emphasis on teaching and learning is more than just a logical implication of the above aspects, constituting a key feature of this *cræft* usage. Its distribution in the corpus suggests that it is a derivative of the Latin *ars* usage, but shows that it becomes integrated into the paradigm. It can be found both in vernacular prose and in poetry.

The idea that a term denoting divine endowment is associated with teaching and learning may at first seem paradoxical. Indeed our modern notion of talent often describes an innate aptitude by excluding knowledge or abilities acquired through training or work, although the latter may of course play a role in enhancing that aptitude. In the Old English texts that use the notion of *cræft* as endowed skill in connection with teaching or learning, they act as fundamental companions. Thus, for instance, in his sermon based on Gregory's exegesis on the Parable of Talents, Ælfric uses the notion of *leornian* and *cræft* together, advising that those who are not blessed with mental faculties or possessions of wealth are able to realise their divine gift in a manual trade: *leornode swa ðeah sumne cræft þe hine afet; witodlice se cræft him bið for þæs pundes onfangennysse geteald* ('nevertheless he has learned some *cræft* that nourishes him; truly that *cræft* will be reckoned in his account as the receipt of the pound).<sup>47</sup> Here, Ælfric directly equates the learning of a *cræft* with the reception of a divine gift. Similarly, the Old English version of the Rule of Chrodegang, discussing inexperienced singers, advises those *þe þises cræftes cræftican ne synt* ('those that are not *cræftig* of this *cræft*') to keep silent *oð þæt hi hit bet geleornian* ('until they learn it better'). A few sentences later, further guidance is given on the singers' use of *cræft*: *Gif þonne sangeras modige beon, 7 gif hi þone cræft þe hi þurh Godes gife geleornodon oðrum forwyrnan, þreage hi ma teartlice, þæt hi, gebete 7 gerihte, þæt pund oðrum dælan þæt him God befæste rihtlice to dælenne* ('If the singers are proud, and if they deny to

<sup>47</sup> *Catholic Homilies*, ed. Godden, pp.323-4, compare the discussion of this passage in Chapter Four.

others the *cræft* that they learned through God's gift, rebuke them more sharply, so that they, bettered and corrected, share with others that pound which God entrusted them to share rightfully'.<sup>48</sup> Both the sermon and the rule clearly describe *cræft* in terms of divine endowment, but this endowment can only be fully accessed by learning. In order to become *cræftig*, to correctly make use of *cræft*, and fulfil their role in the community, men (and women) need to make a personal effort. Thus for instance, Ælfric advises a prospective stoneworker with the following words: *Gif ðu þencst to wyrccenne stænen weorc mid cræfte, þonne scealt þu ærest embe þone grundweal smeagan* ('If you intend to undertake stonework with *cræft*, then you must first enquire into the fundamentals'), i.e. study the trade.<sup>49</sup>

For learning to occur, teaching must take place. In the *Canons of Edgar*, the association of *cræft* as a divinely sanctioned and useful form of craftsmanship with teaching describes how a monastic community may perpetuate a fruitful mode of living. The text rules that priests should be taught a handicraft (*handcræft*) as well as lore, and that those priests should then teach the youth in return (*læran, and to cræftum teon*) so that they may be useful to the priests.<sup>50</sup> Teaching is described as the *cræft ealra cræfta* in the Old English *Pastoral Care*, suggesting its function as a vehicle for the transmission and development of *cræft*, and its embodiment of a key aspect of this usage.<sup>51</sup> The possession of *cræft* comes with an obligation not to hide it, which includes sharing knowledge about the *cræft*: *Gerysenlic þ[i]s þing byð þam lareowe, þæt he na forhele his hlosnere þæt riht þe he on þam cræfte can* ('It is a fitting thing for a teacher not to conceal from his disciple such accurate knowledge that he possesses of the *cræft*'; Byrhtferth, *Enchyridion*, I.2 ll.232-33); *Simul erunt rei in conspectu iusti arbitris qui nolunt scire et qui nolunt docere* ('Those who do not want to know and those who do not want to teach will both be deemed guilty in the

<sup>48</sup> *The Old English Version of the Enlarged Rule of Chrodegang: Edited together with the Latin Text and an English Translation*, ed. B. Langefeld, Münchener Universitätschriften, Texte und Untersuchungen zur Englischen Philologie, Band 26 (Frankfurt am Main, 2003), ch.48, ll.16-32.

<sup>49</sup> Ælfric, 'Letter to Wulfgeat', ll.261-2.

<sup>50</sup> *And we lærað þæt preosta gehwilc toeacan lare leornige handcræft georne* (11); *And we lærað þæt preostas geoguðe geornlice læran, and to cræftan teon, þæt he ciricfultum habban* (51).

<sup>51</sup> Cf. my conclusion below.

eyes of just judges'; *Ibid.*, I.4, ll.5-6). The transmission of knowledge is linked to the mandate to share *cræft*, and conveys the communal aspect inherent in the notion.

All but one of the above examples are derived from texts translated from, or loosely based on, Latin models (the exception being Ælfric's letter), and it would appear that the emphasis on teaching and learning was initially an import from the Christian-Latin culture of Anglo-Saxon England.<sup>52</sup> However, it also became integrated into the vernacular concept of *cræft*, and can be found in poetic works such as *Daniel* (*Wolde þæt þa cnihtas cræft leornedon*, l.83) or *Elene* (in which the process of acquiring *cræft* involves a long stage of inquiring and learning (cf. above); where the poet-persona describes his consultation of books before being able to weave his *wordcræft*, cf. the *coda* to my thesis).

The aspect of teaching and learning is of course closely connected to the notion of sharing *cræft* with others, but it goes a little further by presenting craftsmanship as a form of knowledge that can be passed on. Possession of a *cræft* skill in itself – as far as the term is employed with the meaning of divine endowment or with the definition of skill derived from it – is thus far less elusive and exclusive than possession of *searo* or *orþanc*. This quality of endowed *cræft* is closely related to another aspect frequently associated with it: the need for humility in the exercise of craftsmanship. The above-cited example from the Rule of Chrodegang, for instance, considers a situation where singers demonstrate pride by withholding their *cræft* from others, even though, the text emphasises, they learned it as a gift from God. The insistence of the learned and endowed character of *cræft* in this example can be read as a premise for rejecting pride, in portraying the singers as but apprentices deriving their skill from a master artist, and thus in no position to puff themselves up.

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<sup>52</sup> It is perhaps a by-product of the association of *cræft* with the liberal arts, but it is later associated with a great variety of *cræftas*. Compare uses such as the one found in the entry on St Crysanthus in the OE *Martyrology*: *Pone hys yldran befæston on his cnyhthade to Alexandria ceastre sumum woruldwysan men þæt he æt þam leornode þa seofon cræftas on þam beoð gemeted ealle weoruldwysdomas*; cf. Ælfric's 'Life of St Crysanthus'.

### Humility

The subject of pride and the importance of humility are central to the Gifts-of-Men paradigm. Thus in *Christ II* the poet explains how God distributed his gifts so as to guard his creation against undue pride: *Nyle he ængum anum ealle gesyllan / gæstes snyttru, þy læs him gielp sceþþe / þurh his anes cræftofer oþre forð.* ('He will not give all the cleverness of the spirit to any one person alone, lest pride should harm him through his *craft* of himself alone beyond others', ll.683-685).<sup>53</sup> A very similar passage is found in *Gifts of Men*, where the poet notes that God will not give so much *snyttrocraft* or *woruldcræftas* to any one person that everything falls under the control of this man alone, *þy læs for wlence wuldorgeofena ful, / mon mode swið of gemete hweorfe / on þonne forhygge heanspedigran* ('lest full of pride of those gifts of glory, / he, overbearing, should turn his mind away from moderation and despise the more scantily endowed, ll.24-6). Instead

[...] he gedæleð, se þe ah domes geweald,  
missenlice geond þisne middangeard  
leoda leopocræftas londbuendum.<sup>54</sup>

(he, who has the power of judgement, distributes variously throughout this middle-earth the *leopocræftas* of men among the inhabitants of the land.)

The use of the compound *leopocræftas* is striking here. It is usually translated as 'skill of the hand', or more closely as 'limb-skills' or 'bodily skill', to indicate a notion of (manual) agility or talent at a given craft, activity or occupation.<sup>55</sup> However, this compound of *craft* likely alludes to the Pauline analogy of the body.<sup>56</sup> The fundamental idea behind this analogy, expressed in the Pauline epistles in Romans 12:3-8, I Corinthians 12:12-30 and Ephesians 4:12-16, is that we humans are all members of Christ's body, and just as each member of a body has different

<sup>53</sup> Cf. the description of Lucifer's rebellion as fuelled *þurh his anes cræft* in *Genesis B*, ll.272b.

<sup>54</sup> ll.27-29.

<sup>55</sup> *BT*: 'bodily skill, skill in the use of the limbs'; Clark Hall: *leopucraft*: skill of hand, *leodcraftig*: agile; Grein-Köhler (C. W. M. Grein, *Sprachschatz der angelsächsischen Dichter*, unter Mitwirkung von F. Holthausen, neu herausg. von J. J. Köhler (Heidelberg, 1912)): *membraorum facultas*.

<sup>56</sup> D. Short, 'Leodocræftas and the Pauline Analogy of the Body in the Old English *Gifts of Men*', *Neophilologus* 59 (1975), 463-65.

functions to fulfil, so do humans have various roles to play within the Christian community. These roles are ordained through God's various dispensations of his gifts (Romans 12). The concept of *leopocræftas* thus reminds the reader of the societal and religious purpose of *cræft*. Each member must provide their due service for the whole to function. All parts need one another equally (I Corinthians 12). The use of the analogy in Romans 12 is prefaced by a warning against pride and a recommendation to stay humble for exactly those reasons. Perfection only exists in the unity of all in the body of Christ. With the use of *leopocræftas*, the poet of *Gifts* thus ingeniously alludes to these elements of biblical lore to support his own musings on *cræft* and humility.

*Cræft* is occasionally presented as a limited, slightly less than perfect human attribute, especially when measured against God's own faculties. Thus for instance in *Exodus*, the Israelites struggle to fully grasp the entity of the pillar of cloud and fire that God sends them for their protection and guidance, despite trying to comprehend it *ealle cræfte*. In *Christ and Satan*, the poet reflects on our human inability to fully fathom the nature of heaven, noting that *nis nænig swa snotor ne swa cræftig, / ne þæs swa gleaw, nymþe god seolfa, / þæt asecgan mæge swegles leoman* ('there is no-one so wise nor so *cræftig* nor so understanding, but God himself, that he may be able to tell of the radiance of heaven', ll.348-50).<sup>57</sup> Human *cræft*, though it may strive towards perfection, is outdone by God's all-powerful, all-perfect mind.<sup>58</sup>

The subject of pride in relation to the exercise of *cræft* as a form of craftsmanship is also addressed in the Benedictine Rule. *Cræft* is used to render the Latin *ars*, which denotes the activity exercised by *artifices* in the section in question ('*Be mynstres cræftigum*'). The text recommends that evidence of pride or raising oneself above one's station because of one's *cræft* should be countered with disallowing the person from pursuing his *cræft* until he seeks permission from the abbot with a show of great humility:

<sup>57</sup> *The Junius Manuscript*, ed. Krapp.

<sup>58</sup> Cf. OE Boethius, C-Text: Metre 20, ll.36-66a, where God is termed *ælcræftig*, and his creation is favourably compared to others as being far superior. Although God's creation is praised in the original, the relative merit of his art is not considered here. This metre as a whole considerably expands on its Latin model.

Gif hwylc hyra for ðæs cræftes þingon hine toþundenlice onhefð, for þæs cræftes truan and forðy, þe he by dæle þære stowe mid his cræfte framað, sy he ascyred from þam cræfte, and he natopyshwon eft þone cræft ne beginne, butan he mid micelre eaðmodnesse þæs abbodes unnan begyte.<sup>59</sup>

(If any of these should exalt themselves with arrogance by reason of his *cræft*, through conviction in his *cræft*, and because [he believes that] he has provided the place [i.e. the monastery] some benefit through his *cræft*, let him be separated from that *cræft*, and he shall not by any means pursue it again afterwards, unless he obtains permission from the abbot with (a show of) great humility.)

Complementing my previous observations on the convergences between the most important aspects of *cræft* in the Gifts-of-Men paradigm and the ideals found among the tenets of the Benedictine Rule, this example demonstrates an intriguing lexical relationship between certain literary, poetic texts and Christian dogma. Apart from raising questions about a possible indebtedness of the use of *cræft* within the Gifts-of-Men paradigm to the Benedictine Reform in England, it reminds us that *cræft* here transcends its translation sense of *ars* and represents a concept with considerable presence in vernacular culture. Furthermore, while pride is in the first instance a moral failing, most of the examples cited above appear to indicate that it is also consistent with one reaching over one's station in society or within a community. The example from *Gifts* points to a well-defined position a holder of *cræft* occupies in relation to the wider society. The possession or exercise of *cræft* does not warrant self-importance, and should not enhance one's self-worth. For one, *cræft* is but a limited faculty, significantly inferior to God's perfection. Secondly, God distributed *cræftas* in such a way that not one person should be above everyone else. Consequently, any one *cræft* does not confer a higher degree of merit to its owner, and simply does not warrant pride. The Benedictine tenet to desist from *cræft* should pride manifest itself in one way or another underlines the moral nature of *cræft* as human skill or more specifically as a form of craftsmanship. Pride and *cræft* are as incompatible in day-to-day life as they are in the realm of semantics.

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<sup>59</sup> *Benediktinerregel*, ed. Schröer, chapter 57, p.95, ll.4-10.

### Labour versus skill

Consistent with the discourse on humility *cræft* is very frequently employed both literally and metaphorically as the work or work product of a lowly peasant class, or a skill or ability pertaining to a manual labourer. More often than not, the emphasis is on work and toil, rather than on skill or quality. The strongest emphasis on the aspect of labour is found, perhaps unsurprisingly, in the vernacular version and the glossed text of the Benedictine Rule. The pursuit of manual tasks and the application of physical effort (within moderation) is an integral part of the Benedictine *horarium* or daily schedule, alongside *lectio divina* (ch.48). The notion of manual labour is firmly integrated into the Benedictine ideal, with chapter 4 of the Rule presenting its ethics, desirable spiritual values and behavioural modes with the vocabulary of craftsmanship. Inversely, manual labour is valued for its positive impact on the soul. Chapter 48 opens with the stark observation that ‘idleness is the enemy of the soul’ (*Otiositas inimica est animae; A bið idelnes þære saule feond*) prescribing a strict work schedule for the monks.

*Cræft* is consistent with a variety of occupations to be assumed by members of the Benedictine community – the Rule ascribes this term to cooks, storekeepers, occupations relating to the ministry, bakers and gardeners (ch.48) as well as to the *artifices*, presumably referring to smith, carpenters and other artisans (ch.57). The spiritual gain of labour is achieved not through display of extraordinary skill but through the usefulness of the undertaking, and through dedication and hard work. The craftsmen of Ælfric’s *Colloquy*, whose trades have been argued to represent the ‘manifold activities of a monastic house’ in a text subsequently argued to strongly emulate Benedictine ideals, all maintain their usefulness to the *collegium* which they belong.<sup>60</sup> Their occupations are all rendered as *cræft* in the interlinear Old English gloss. The Benedictine Rule itself ordains that brethren shall be *abysegode mid heora handa geswince* (‘kept busy with the hard labour of the hands’) whenever they are not occupied by scriptural reading, meditation or prayer (ch.48). Craftsmen permitted to exercise their craft within the monastery shall *georne wyrčen*

<sup>60</sup> G. N. Garmonsway, ‘The Development of the Colloquy’, in *The Anglo-Saxons: Studies in some Aspects of their History and Culture presented to Bruce Dickins*, ed. P. Clemoes (London, 1950); E. Anderson, ‘Social idealism in Ælfric’s *Colloquy*’, *ASE* 3 (1974), 153-162.

(‘work diligently’), in a significant deviation from the Latin (*cum omni humilitate*, ‘with utter humility’).<sup>61</sup>

In accordance with this emphasis on labour, *cræft* collocates with *swincan*, ‘to work hard, to toil’, seven times in the surviving corpus. Five instances are found in later prose works (the Benedictine Rule (1), the vernacular gloss to this text (1), anonymous homiletic literature (2), Wulfstan (1), while one is from the OE Boethius and another is found in the didactic poem *Instructions for Christians*. Of particular note are the two homilies and the poem. *Instructions* recommends: *Sceal æghwylc man ælne swincan on swylcum cræfte swa him Crist onlænð, þæt willan his gewyrce georne* (‘Each man shall at any time labour at such *cræft* as Christ has granted him, so that he may diligently work (i.e do) his will’, ll.150-2).<sup>62</sup> This guideline conflates the Benedictine ideal of hard labour (*cræft*, *swincan* and *gewyrce georne*, a precise verbal echo of the Rule) with the notion of divine endowment (*cræfte swa him Crist onlænð*). The homilies, ‘Sunday Letter’ (HomU 53 (NapSunEpis)), and an anonymous homily published by Priebisch (HomU 54 (Priebisch)), also fuse these elements from both traditions by invoking the duty to share one’s *cræft* through giving part of the fruits of one’s labour to the Church community.<sup>63</sup>

Several homilies use *cræft* to express the idea that no work should be performed on the Sabbath. In this context too, *cræft* appears associated primarily with the notion of work or labour as an opposite of rest and inactivity, rather than with the execution of a particular skill.<sup>64</sup> In the homily entitled ‘Sermo ad populum Dominicis diebus’ (HomU 46), for instance, *cræft* collocates with *tylian*, a near-synonym of *swincan* (*oððe ænig cræftig man him on his cræfte tylige*, ‘or if any *cræftig* man /craftsman should toil at his *cræft*?’).<sup>65</sup>

Most curiously, evidence from the late gloss tradition indicates that as *cræft* became associated with diligence and toil, so did some Anglo-Saxons’ interpretation of Latin terms normally indicating skill and proficiency. Thus among glosses to the *Colloquia difficiliora* (CD) of

<sup>61</sup> *Benediktinerregel*, ed. Schröer, ch.567, p.95, l.3.

<sup>62</sup> ‘Instructions for Christians’, ed. Rosier.

<sup>63</sup> ‘An Old English Homily on the Observance of Sunday’, ed. Napier, ll.99-103; R. Priebisch, ‘The Chief Sources of Some Anglo-Saxon Homilies’, *Otia Merseiana* 1 (1899), 129-47.

<sup>64</sup> HomU 53, ll.67-72; HomU 46 (Nap 57), ll.136-42.

<sup>65</sup> Published in *Wulfstan*, ed. Napier, no 57, pp.291-9, at ll.136-42.

Ælfric Bata, a text found in a single copy in Oxford, St John's College, MS. 154, we find the following annotations for the adjective *sollers* and the adverb *sollerter*, normally expressing a quality or degree of skill or ability (translated as 'skilled, skilful, clever, dexterous, adroit, expert' and 'skilfully, dexterously, shrewdly, sagaciously, ingeniously' respectively in Lewis and Short):

on fol.199r : *sollerter*: *geor* (short for OE *geornlice*) || *sollertius*: *georli* (for *geornlicor*);  
 on fol.200r: *sollertissime*: *cræftig* (for *cræftigestan*)  
 on fol.200v: *sollicite*: *georn* (for *geornlice*)

These glosses are written in the hand of the scribe that copied the main text of *CD*, dating s.xi<sup>in</sup>.<sup>66</sup>

This is also the time during which Bata is thought to have composed his work (fl. s.xi<sup>1</sup> according to Lapidge).<sup>67</sup> The glosses thus emanate from the same cultural period and field in which the text was composed, which was in all likelihood a monastic environment devoted to Benedictine ideals.<sup>68</sup>

The annotation on fol.200r represents a gloss which at first sight is not unusual. Both *sollers* and *cræftig* translate – in principle – as 'skilful'. The text, however, attributes the adjective to bees gathering nectar to build their beehouse (*apiarium*), in an expression (and image) borrowed from Aldhelm's prose *De Virginitate* (*sollertissime apes*, *CD* 7/1-2, cf. *PdV* 231.12).<sup>69</sup> In Bata's text the reference to the industry of bees is a simile for young students' innocent and diligent dedication to spiritual learning. Aldhelm's passage on the bees is much more profound, describing at length their artful elaboration of a honeycomb, admiring how they *cerea castra conficiunt*, 'build waxen castles', and how they *multiformem favorum machinam angulosis et opertis cellulis construunt*,

<sup>66</sup> R. Hanna, *A Descriptive Catalogue of Western Medieval Manuscripts of St John's College, Oxford* (Oxford, 2002), pp.221-22.

<sup>67</sup> M. Lapidge, 'Ælfric Bata', in *The Blackwell Encyclopaedia of Anglo-Saxon England*, ed. M. Lapidge, J. Blair, S. Keynes and D. Scragg (Oxford, 1999), pp.7-8.

<sup>68</sup> Bata frequently incorporates elements from the Benedictine Rule in his texts. Cf. *Latin Colloquies from Pre-Conquest Britain*, ed. S. Gwara (Toronto, 1996), 'Introduction', esp. p.15.

<sup>69</sup> Ælfric Bata's Latin style is hermeneutic, and his *Colloquia* are heavily influenced by the Carolingian *Hermeneumata Pseudodositheana*. He must also have been familiar with Aldhelm's prose *De virginitate*, given its importance within the circle of tenth-century Anglo-Latin writers, and the profuse glossing of the text during the Benedictine Reform (cf. above Chapter Three). As a student of Ælfric the homilist and the grammarian, Bata probably had access to these and other materials. From his written work it is evident that he was closely familiar with, and borrowed from a large number of Latin writings. Cf. *Latin Colloquies from Pre-Conquest Britain*, ed. Gwara, 'Introduction'.

‘construct their honeycomb artefact with a great number of corners and hidden cells’. For Aldhelm the honeycomb is a creation of great intricacy, testimony to the superlative skill of the bees. It stands as a comparison for the intellectual skill, the capacity for wisdom of monks, as well as the social construct of monastic life, among other things.<sup>70</sup> Aldhelm’s use of the expression later borrowed by Bata is found in the more complete phrase *sollertissimae apīs industriam* (‘the diligence of the highly ingenious bee’), with *industria* constituting the major reference to intellectual assiduity, and the superlative of *sollers* being used with the term’s traditional sense of distinctive skill, ability, proficiency, a concept on which Aldhelm insists throughout the passage. This sense is also confirmed by the fact that with this phrase Aldhelm reprises a statement made in the preceding sentence concerning *sagacissimam animi industriam*, ‘the highly sagacious industry of the mind’. Just falling short of being perfectly symmetric, both phrases exhibit a certain parallelism, displaying a reference to industriousness (*industriam*) together with what is arguably in both cases a superlative expression of ability (*sollertissimae*, *sagacissimam*). In other words, context suggests that Aldhelm uses *sollers* with its common meaning of skill or ability, while Bata, though employing the term in what is ostensibly a direct reference to the use in *PdV*, applies it with the understanding that it denotes the diligence of the learner (represented by the bee). This is also consistent with his omission of any details appraising the honeycomb in terms of the bees’ artistry. Bata’s use of *sollers*, and the accompanying gloss of *cræftig* thus most likely emphasize a notion of craftsmanship grounded in labour and hard work, rather than defined by a degree of skill. The glossing of the adverbial form *sollerter* with *geornlice*, a term clearly denoting a diligent manner, confirms this.<sup>71</sup>

Bata’s use of *sollers* and the accompanying gloss of *cræftig* are instances of a semantic widening in the notion of *cræft* analysed in this section. They are representations of a different but

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<sup>70</sup> For a full analysis of Aldhelm’s image see A. Casiday, ‘St Aldhelm’s bees (*De uirginitate prosa* cc.IV-VI): some observations on a literary tradition’, *ASE* 33 (2004), 1-22.

<sup>71</sup> On the question of why the adjectival gloss and the adverbial glosses use different *interpretamenta*: my initial assessment of *cræft* and its derivatives indicated that the adjective *cræftig* is able to take on the broad semantic meanings and connotations of the simplex, whereas the adverbial derivatives are much more specific in denoting the creative or artificial quality of an action. An adverbial derivative of *cræft* would thus not be appropriate as an *interpretamentum* for a Latin term used to denote industriousness, and thus the choice of a different OE term imposes itself quite naturally.

equally positive understanding of craftsmanship which emphasises dedication and industry over artistic prowess, finesse or the special nature of skill. While this interpretation is by no means an integral feature of the usage of *cræft* within the Gifts-of-Men paradigm, it is nevertheless an important extension of it. Thus, some of the above-cited homilies, for instance, mention only labour-intensive trades while referencing some of the more salient aspects of the Gifts-of-Men paradigm, such as the need to make use of *cræft* in order to provide a tithing to the community. There are close bonds between this insistence on manual work and the aspects frequently encountered in relation to the concept of divine endowment. The use of *cræft* to denote a positive ideal of labour is after all the inverse expression of the idea that the exercise of one's *cræft* is a moral necessity and the positive equivalent of the Wulfstanian notion *uncræft* or sloth.<sup>72</sup>

The shift is one of emphasis. *Cræft* in *The Gifts of Mankind* forms part of a celebration of the diversity and abundance of divinely endowed skill rather than designating a notion of hard work. Similarly, to single out an author cited frequently in this chapter, Ælfric's use of *cræft* tends to denote skill and ability – often from an ideological perspective emphasising themes pertaining to the Gifts-of-Men paradigm – rather than insist on it as a concept of toil. There is, however, a common denominator in the uses of *cræft* which primarily denote a form of endowed skill and those emphasizing the need for hard work. This is the fact that they both express a notion encompassing diverse types of human ability whose exercise is consistent with God's divine plan and constitutes a moral duty. Using one's *cræft* means fulfilling an important social function within the Christian community. The representation of the virtuous aspect of the exercise of one's *cræft* in Old English literature appears to have two different sources: Gregory's homily on the Parable of Talents on the one hand, and the Benedictine Rule on the other. Many, even most, of the *cræft* uses in this section transcend dependence on those sources, however. The aspect of toil and dedication is intimately connected not just to the virtuous element of *cræft*, but it is also consistent

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<sup>72</sup> Wulfstan's notion of *uncræft* is possibly heavily influenced by the ideal of manual labour in the Benedictine Rule. He was a confirmed reformer, and perhaps the author of prose sections of the Benedictine Office. Cf. D. Whitelock, 'Archbishop Wulfstan, Homilist and Statesman', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, Fourth Series, Vol. 24 (1942), pp.25-45, esp. pp.32-36.

with the idea that it is a quality to be learned until it is mastered. Equally, emphasis on the labour involved in the exercise of *cræft* guards this notion of craftsmanship against connotations of virtuosity or distinction in the exercise of skill. Human *cræft* is imperfect and requires effort. Any praise attached to it should be directed to God as the dispenser of *cræft*. There is no reason for mankind to derive pride from their use of *cræft*. Furthermore, *cræft* does not distinguish itself through its refinement or artistry, but in its ability to enhance life in a Christian community or create links with the divine. This can be done through employing one's *cræft* at stonemasonry to establish a church as much as by labouring away as a baker in a Benedictine community as a guard against sloth, by facilitating other people's comprehension of religious works through making a grammatical treatise accessible in the vernacular, or by providing a tenth of one's earnings as a tithe to the Church. The aspect of dedication and hard work is an important element in the larger Gifts-of-Men paradigm: the bigger the effort, the greater the return, the stronger the bond with God.

### **Social position and status**

A craftsman whose *cræft* traditionally draws a high degree of admiration is no more useful than a learned monk, a farmer tilling the field, or a cook providing physical sustenance in God's earthly community. Poems like *The Gifts of Mankind* or *Christ II* present the notion of divine endowment through a catalogue of human skill and abilities. This device accentuates the message of universal endowment displayed in these poems and elsewhere, and echoes the tenet of collective obligation to make use of one's *cræft* derived from the instructive principle of the Parable of Talents. Based on this presentation of the notion of *cræft* as an endowment, one might argue that at the heart of the Gifts-of-Men paradigm there lies a fundamentally socialist, or even communist, understanding of skill. One might even surmise that the focus on humility and on the idealisation of effort

associated with manual labour appears to make this notion of *cræft* somewhat subversive, as embodying a paradigm that supports the lower social strata and flattens a hierarchical social structure. Certainly, poems like *Gifts* appear to place *snytttrucræft* and *woruldcræftas* on the same level, and the Benedictine Rule describes spiritual *cræftas* as the ‘non-physical counterpart of manual *cræftas*’<sup>73</sup> in addition to relating spiritual goals through the lexis of craftsmanship. These categorisations create the impression that any social distinctions between more learned (often perceived as ‘better’) occupations and manual vocations is superseded in the notion of *cræft* as endowment. The idea that *cræft* involves a process of learning and perfection both in scientific and in practical pursuits helps further diminish any distinction. In Chapter Four I discussed how influential authors such as Isidore maintained a clear distinction between liberal arts (*ars*) and craftsmanship (*artificium*), with the latter concept being dismissed as somewhat inferior by virtue of being of human rather than of natural (divine) origin. The notion of *cræft* as divine endowment precludes such a distinction. As I have shown above, *cræft*, the term most frequently used to translate *ars* (including in passages where the latter expressly excludes any form of craftsmanship), is generally employed to include rather than exclude manual pursuits. It thus constitutes a much more egalitarian conception of human ability.

In fact, as evidenced in Chapter Four and attested throughout the present chapter, the primary denotative meaning of *cræft* is a notion of craftsmanship rather than an abstract conception of intellectual pursuits. As shown by the famous representation of the exercise of kingship through the image of a craftsman making use of his tools found in the Old English Boethius, the pragmatic presentation of spiritual aims in chapter 4 of the Benedictine Rule, as well as many other examples, the manual occupations serve as the ideational standard through which *cræft* acts as polysemous denotation of human ability. The traditionally more high-brow or socially elevated vocations are conceived through a lens of craftsmanship. It would be wrong, however, to suggest that they are in any way debased by association with a more low-status occupation. It is obvious that they consciously evoke this association to reflect well on the activities being thus compared.

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<sup>73</sup> Girsch, ‘*Cræft*’, p.472.

In fact, it is clear, through repeated praise and positive connotations associated with the notion of divine endowment, that any *cræft* is meritorious. The term's connotations of craftsmanship, and more specifically of day-to-day workmanship, labour and toil, serve to convey the aspect of modesty and dedication required in the exercise of *cræft*. At the same time, however, each of the human *cræftas* is a superior gift from God. This quality is especially evident in the uses which describe the *cræftas* as marvellous artefacts fashioned by a divine craftsman. Although imperfect in human hands, these endowments are comparable to the intricate perfection of created objects described throughout the corpus of Old English literature. There is also grandeur in the purpose of *cræft*. Associated with openness, the execution of *cræft* can lead to the discovery of epistemological truths and the creation of a bond with God, elevating the human soul. *Cræft* is thus at once a humble and a superior conception of human skill. Those who practice it (correctly) are equally lowly as imperfect humans striving to fulfil a duty to their divine master and exalted in their reception of the divine gift (cf. *Christ II*: God *cræftum weorðað / eorþan tuddor*, 'honoured/ennobled the children of the earth with *cræftum*', ll.687b-688a) and the possibilities inherent in its correct use.

It is equally apparent, however, that this ideological egalitarianism is but one understanding of the social structures evoked under the Gifts-of-Men paradigm. Even when they specifically use *cræft* as a notion of divine endowment, or within the referential frame of the paradigm by insisting on one or more of the aspects commonly associated with it, a number of Anglo-Saxon authors appear to grade different types of *cræft* against each other. Thus, for instance, in Ælfric's *Colloquy* not only do the interlocutors attempt to determine the most useful of the vocations represented, but they are clearly construed as inferior to a set of (undefined) *cræftas* which consist in *Godes þeowdom* ('the service of God', l.213). It is these that the *geþeahta* or counsellor deems *betweoh þas cræftas ealdorscype healdan* ('to have supremacy among the *cræftas*', ll.213-4). Whereupon the teacher attempts to draw back attention to the initial contention by rephrasing his question: *hwilc þe gepuht betwux woruldcræftas heoldan ealdordom* ('which among the *woruldcræftas* do you consider to reign supreme?', l.218). The wordly *cræftas*, in this case

unequivocally designating the manual trades featuring as an object of discussion in the *Colloquy*, are thus pronounced as inferior to those *cræftas* directed to the service of God. This judgement is conferred by no other than the authoritative figure of the counsellor brought in to pronounce a final judgement on whose skill is the best in terms of its societal value. Considering the didactic purpose of the entire text, it possibly also represents the view of the author.<sup>74</sup>

Divergences between more egalitarian and more hierarchical perceptions of skill or endowment are equally apparent in the use of the compound *sundorcræft* ('special *cræft*', lit. 'apart-*cræft*'). This term is capable of indicating a graded conception of skill where one type of ability or endowment is set apart from the rest. This implication can be found the Old English *Boethius*, where *gesceadwisnes*, or wisdom, is described as *se selesta sundorcræfta*, 'the best of all the special *cræfta*' in the prosimetrical version (*synderlic cræfta* in the prose text, ch.33), with *cræft* denoting a quality of the human soul (wisdom or reason is one of three, together with concupiscence and irascibility).<sup>75</sup> The *sundor*- element both alliterates and semantically associates with the superlative form *selest*. Although the quality in question is not explicitly cast as divine gift, the soul is described as a work of divine origin, and we are thus presented with a situation in which some of God's endowments are better than others. This use of *sundorcræft* provides a marked contrast to how the term is employed in later ecclesiastical and homiletic texts. Thus, for instance, Wulfstan uses it nearly synonymously with the notion of *cræft* as vocation, specifying that every person adopting a canonical life ought to pursue a *sundorcræft*, taking care to choose one which benefits the monastery.

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<sup>74</sup> It is generally agreed that the main aim of the *Colloquy* was to provide a practical exercise for pupils in which they could practise previously acquired Latin vocabulary (possibly learned from Ælfric's *Grammar* and *Glossary*, which teaches a great number of words used in the *Colloquy*), as well as deepen their knowledge of Latin grammar and syntax. The focus would likely have been on 'correct pronunciation and clear enunciation' too. In addition to its linguistic teaching aims, the text contains strong elements of catechism; cf. Garmonsway, ed., *Colloquy*, 'Introduction', especially pp.8-14. It is clear that the text reflects the pedagogical (and social) structure of a Benedictine monastery, and it also references, as I have shown above, key aspects of the Gifts-of-Men paradigm. It is possible that the aim of the text was to inculcate, or at least to reflect, a number of behavioural and societal points alongside imparting knowledge of Latin.

<sup>75</sup> *Boethius*, ed. Godden and Irvine, C-text: Metre 20, 1.203; B-text: Chapter 33, 1.225.

Ne beo æfre ænig canonic life þæt sundercræfta sumne ne cunne, ac began georne mynsterlice cræftas & gearnian mid þam þæs ðe hig big beon & eac æt Gode sylfum ece mede.<sup>76</sup>

(Nor shall there ever be anyone in canonical life who does not master a certain *sundercræft*, but he shall diligently pursue *cræftas* appropriate to the monastery and earn with them that by which they may live and also for God's eternal reward for himself.)

The excerpt uses key aspects of the Gifts-of-Men paradigm, including features observed in texts influenced by Benedictine ideals (*cræft* as a universal attribute indicated through use of the indefinite pronoun *ænig*; *georne*; putting one's *cræft* to use for the community; intensifying one's link to God by paying towards an eternal reward). The notion of *sundercræft* does not indicate a special distinguishing aptitude which would make its possessor stand above the rest of the community. Rather it denotes one type of activity among a variety of similar ones. The *sunder-*element serves to suggest a sense comparable to the diversity in the divine appointment of skills central to the Gifts-of-Men paradigm, or the pragmatic division of labour instituted in the Benedictine Rule, meaning that each member of a community will acquire a specific skill that will be used together with the skills of others for common gain. A similar sense is most likely also implied in Vercelli Homily IX (HomS 4), in a passage I analysed in Chapter One, in which the devil tries to tempt an anchorite with a description of Paradise that evokes scenes of bliss, sensuality and perfection. One of the imagined allurements of this place is that man is able to have all *sundercræfte* gathered in himself there (*þeah þe <him> syn ealle sundercræftas & wuldorsangas in gesamnode*, l.192). Like in Wulfstan's homily, the compound is used to denote human *cræftas* as they are portrayed in the Gifts-of-Men paradigm. In fact, by hypothesizing the god-like perfection of a combination of all the human *cræftas* as an ideal absolute, this use is indirectly referencing the limitation of the endowment each man receives individually from God, recalling the notion of *leopocræftas*.

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<sup>76</sup> *Homilies*, ed. Bethurum, 'A Rule for Canons' (Homily 10a), ll.51-4.

A comparison between these two uses of the compound with the one observed in the Old English *Boethius* reveals that they operate on a different sphere. In the homilies *sundorcræft* is used to connote the fragmentary, hence limited nature of earthly abilities, all of which need to be put to use conjointly to effectively manage a human community. This use subscribes to a humble, communal, non-elitist notion of skill. The Boethian text uses the term in a superlative phrase, emphasising the superiority of reason as a human faculty. The *sundor-* element serves to denote a quality which is distinctive from others by virtue of being better than them.

This hierarchical view of human attributes is also found elsewhere. Both the prose and the prosimetrical versions of the Old English *Boethius* do not shy away from employing *cræft* and its derivatives in comparative and superlative modes. Thus, while the notion that there is no-one *ælcræftigre* or *cræftigra* than God is not unusual (insofar as even in the egalitarian conception God's *cræft* is superior to human *cræft*), the phrase *Omerus wæs east mid Crecum on ðæm leodscipe leoða cræftgast* ('In the East among the Greeks Homer was the *cræftgast* of songs in that nation', Metre 30, ll.1-2; cf. prose version, *Omerus se goda sceop þe mid Crecum selest was*, ch.41, p.374) stands out from the general usage of *cræft* which tends to avoid degrees of comparison between humans. This fact is even more noteworthy if we consider that the Old English text introduces this comparison in a derivation from the Latin (which only briefly refers to Homer's honied tongue), showing that it is an original contribution and not a translation sense.

The use of *cræft* or its derivatives in a superlative structure is not frequent, and generally limited to early prose texts (texts usually considered 'Alfredian') and poetry (e.g. *Elene*, the craftsmen who adorn the cross are *selestan*, 'the best', l.1018). These occurrences can possibly be traced back to the pervasiveness of the comparative and superlative mode and form in heroic poetry, a genre which is widely accepted to have left a strong mark on both the poetry of other genres (e.g. religious poetry, riddles, ...) as well as the early prose style.<sup>77</sup> This graded understanding of *cræft* as human skill is thus possibly indicative of the influence of an older tradition on what was, at the time of Alfred, still a developing paradigm. In this older tradition,

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<sup>77</sup> A. Leslie Harris, 'Litotes and superlative in *Beowulf*', *ES* 69 (1988), 1-11.

*cræft* would have been, similarly to *searo* and *orþanc*, a distinguishing attribute evoked to praise those who set themselves apart through their skill. As the term came to denote divine endowment, it might have retained this aspect, common in these other notions of craftsmanship. If *cræft* first acquired the sense of endowment in poetry, as I argue below in the concluding section, then it would have been slow to shake off associations with these other terms. The use of traditional formulae as well as the technique of variation make Old English poetry somewhat impervious to change.

There are indications that *Gifts*, the poem which now best represents the paradigm within which the notion of *cræft* as divine endowment operates, was based on a model intimately connected with a very secular, aristocratic worldview. Russom argued that the talents of *Gifts* represent a catalogue of aristocratic pastimes or ‘gentlemanly accomplishments’ (*íþróttir*) adapted to fit into a Christian framework. Citing ample evidence for the prestige attached to skills as diverse as swiftness of foot, swimming or talent at handicrafts in the shared inheritance of England and Scandinavia, Russom shows that many of the so-called gifts, notably the ability to be *gewittig at winþege* (‘wise at wine-taking’, l.74) or *hafeces cræftig* (‘skilled with a hawk’, l.81) are indeed more desirable and useful in a heroic, aristocratic world than in the every-day life of later Anglo-Saxon England.<sup>78</sup> He also notes that ‘never once in *Gifts* is a talent described as a way of earning a living’.<sup>79</sup> The Old English poet might have been attracted by the catalogue format of his source text because it does not subordinate one talent to another,<sup>80</sup> a fact which is consistent with the general presentation of divine endowment in the Gifts-of-Men paradigm. The aristocratic nature of the gifts, however, points to syncretic practice, and reveals that the universal attributes which would come to be known as *cræftas* were once skills and talents ascribed to a select few. Similarly the notion of *cræft*, though most likely not capable of denoting as great a variety of attributes as the ones in the catalogue before becoming a Christian notion, was once attached to specific

<sup>78</sup> G. Russom, ‘A Germanic Concept of Nobility in *The Gifts of Men* and *Beowulf*’, *Speculum* 53 (1978), 1-15.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, p.13.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, p.15. Russom notes the important role of catalogues combining *íþróttir* with other kinds of select attributes in Norse literature (historical writing and skaldic poetry), thereby establishing that the poet’s source was likely a catalogue too, p.5.

distinguishing skills and abilities (among them must have been the senses of physical prowess and supernatural craftsmanship), but acquired a broader, more general sense of skill within the paradigm. This was likely a gradual process – fuelled first by the spread Christian doctrine and later by intellectual output associated with the Benedictine Reform movement in England – which saw sporadic hierarchical uses of *cræft* as a notion of divine endowment.

One of the main divergences between *cræft* as endowment and other notions of craftsmanship is that it designates a notion of skill attributable to anyone and everyone. Even so, it seems incapable of fully eliminating social hierarchy and of preventing opinions on the superiority of some forms of craftsmanship over others. It would seem that while trying to portray an understanding of skill that offers a more equal playing field among practitioners, *cræft* sometimes participates in a discourse in which different skills are pitched against each other, debasing some and elevating others.

### ***Cræft ealra cræfta: the archetypal craft – revisited***

In Chapter One I portrayed perceptions of craftsmanship by concentrating on smiths because this trade enjoyed pride of place among the various manual arts depicted in Anglo-Saxon literature, acquiring a very broad and especially varied representation in the written records we retain of the period. The analysis pointed to divergences in attitudes towards smiths, ranging from the highly positive to the starkly negative. The latter attitudes anticipated aspects of negative semantic loading in *searo*, a concept of craftsmanship strongly connected with the art of the smith. As a notion which replaces *searo* as the main understanding of craftsmanship and skill during the course of the Anglo-Saxon period, *cræft* also provides a fresh interpretation on the merits of different forms of craftsmanship and skill. This reinterpretation is most obvious in Ælfric's *Colloquy*, which, I argued, takes the smith's superior attitude to court, and through the

authoritative judgement of the King's Counsel pronounces the ploughman to have the most useful skill. It is obvious that the judgment is made through the framework of *cræft* (as divine endowment). Here the criterion by which the trades are assessed is not refinement or artistic merit but usefulness, a key aspect of the virtuous exercise of *cræft*. Moreover, the choice of the ploughman over all the other trades emphasises the aspect of lowliness of *cræft*, while also connecting with the New Testament tenet that the humble shall be exalted (and those who exalt themselves shall be humbled, in the case of the smith).<sup>81</sup> Within the Gifts-of-Men paradigm, the smith thus loses his traditional prerogative of being the Anglo-Saxons' archetypal craftsman.

Elsewhere too, the smith's grand position is squeezed (with greater or lesser ease) into the framework of endowment. In her analysis of *cræft*, Girsch notes how the description of the smith in the catalogue of endowments in *The Gifts of Mankind* 'receives unusual emphasis' because he is described as *modcræftig*, rather than by virtue of his occupation. Bosworth and Toller gloss this term, a hapax legomenon, as mentally talented or more generally skilful, trying to do justice to this particular context in which it functions as the attribute of a skilled smith. Girsch on the other hand recognises the potential force of *mod* in the compound and translates the adjective as 'proud', adding that perhaps 'the smith may enjoy a little *mod*, or pride, in his gifts' because of his usefulness to Anglo-Saxon society.<sup>82</sup> Girsch readily admits that her interpretation may appear a bit 'fanciful', and that her reason for offering it is because no other interpretation is 'readily apparent' to her. While her explanation of *modcræftig* is incongruous with the fact that the poem contains a twofold insistence on *cræft* being distributed in such a way that no-one becomes proud, her perception that the term may relate to the issue of pride or exaltation of one's status may not be entirely misguided. In fact, the poem uses *mod* in each of the two references to pride. In both instances, however, *mod* does not designate pride directly (as it can do in certain contexts) as this concept is primarily expressed through *wlencu* and *gilp* in the poem (l.24 and ll.100, 105). Instead *mod* is used with its primary meaning of 'mind' and occurs in phrases indicating how the mind might experience changes as a result of pride: *þy læs [...] mon mode swið of gemete hweorfe*, 'lest

<sup>81</sup> Matthew 23:12, Luke 14:11, 1 Peter 5:6, James 4:10 among other places.

<sup>82</sup> 'Cræft', p.736.

[...] man stern/arrogant in his mind turn away from moderation' (ll.24-5); *þy læs him [...] mod astige*, 'lest [...] his mind be puffed up' (ll.100-1). Pride is expressed through verbal phrases in which the verb indicates a transformative effect on *mod*. If we combine our understanding of how *mod* operates in relation to pride elsewhere in *Gifts* with our knowledge of the connotative aspects of *cræft* as a notion of divine endowment, we must read *modcræftig* not as pride, but as its opposite. The smith in the catalogue of *Gifts* is not proud but rather approaches his vocation with a *cræftig* mental attitude. For an Anglo-Saxon audience familiar with the concept of endowed *cræft*, *modcræftig* would have suggested a stance of humility, and it would probably have reinforced the statement of the smith's usefulness to the community made in the previous line (*to nytte*) by connoting dedication and effort. In other words the smith portrayed in this catalogue is a typification of the virtuous craftsman delineated within the Gifts-of-Men paradigm. Thus, while the use of *modcræftig* seems initially surprising within the immediate context of the catalogue, it is not out of place there if we consider that the inclusion of the smith in this catalogue might have warranted a moral defining of his person to preclude traditional connotations of superiority of skill, or the pursuit of artistic goals incompatible with the Christian concept of *cræft*. In contrast to many of the smiths discussed in Chapter One, who are portrayed as spurred on to an act of craftsmanship through a type of mental energy, the *modcræftig* smith of *Gifts* keeps his mind firmly in check, and thus comes to represent Cuicuino's vernacular counterpart.

A further association between a smith and *cræft* in the prose and prosimetrical versions of the Old English Boethius betrays a lack of confidence in the coupling of the two. I discussed the reference to the 'wise' Weland's *cræft* in Chapter One, noting the fact that the author of the prose text appears somewhat apologetic in his depiction of Weland, with the need to justify his reference to the fabled smith through a digression on how he may be called wise: *Forþi ic cwæð þæs wisan forþy þam cræftegan ne mæg næfre his cræft losigan ne hine mon ne mæg þonne eð on him geniman ðe mon mæg þa sunnan awendan of hiere stede* ('I say the wise one because that craftsman can never ever lose his *cræft*, nor can anyone take it off him any more easily than they

may divert the sun from its course', chapter 19).<sup>83</sup> I argued that this reference follows a reflection on fame which is much softer than in the original: while the Latin text categorically decries earthly fame, the Old English appears to differentiate between righteous earthly fame and false glory. As a result, the reference to Weland reads more as an incitement to remember the fabled artist, and as a defence of the opinion that he is deserving of his fame beyond his death. Indeed, it reads almost as a statement of defiance to those who would like to deprive the great craftsman of his deserved admiration.

In contrast to the prose, the prosimetrical version (Metre 10) makes some fundamental changes to the passage, notably by opening the metre with an additional philosophical reflection on the vanity of fame in general, which also first introduces the notion of wisdom so prominent in the reference to Weland. The wise, it maintains, recognise the vanity of fame. This addition pre-empted the application of this quality to the smith and predefines its impact: if Weland is wise this implies that he himself acknowledges that the significance of his work is extremely small in the face of eternity. Several other crucial changes occur in the reference itself. It is evident that the elaboration on Weland's *cræft* has been adapted to fit more readily into the Gifts-of-Men paradigm. While the prose makes it specific to the craftsman himself (cf. the very specific denotation of *þam cræftegan*, cf. Chapter Four) and his unique skill, the metrical version dilutes the impact of the prose by generalising it into a notion of divine endowment (applied to *ængum*, 'any'): *Forþy ic cwæð þæs wisan Welandes ban, / forþy ængum ne mæg eorðbuendra / se cræft losian þe him Crist onlænð* ('I say the wise Weland's bones, because no-one of the earth-dwellers may lose/waste the *cræft* that Christ has granted them', ll.35-7). Here, Weland has become one of mankind, each endowed by God with a *cræft* which they are duty-bound to make use of in this life. The text appears to rely on the dual meaning of *losian* ('to be lost'/'to be taken' as well as 'to be wasted' i.e. not made use of)<sup>84</sup> to sustain this reference further. Weland, like everyone else within the Gifts-of-Men paradigm, accepts and fulfils this earthly role in the full knowledge of its

<sup>83</sup> *Boethius*, ed. Godden and Irvine, B-Text: p.283.

<sup>84</sup> My translations of both the prose and metrical versions of this passage invert the indirect (passive) construction found in the Old English to adapt the meaning of the original to modern English syntax.

limitations, and this is what makes him ‘wise’, according to the statement in the preamble.

Through the replacement of *foremere* (‘most illustrious’, ‘eminent’) with *geo mærest* (‘formerly most famous’), Weland’s eminence among men and craftsmen is dismissed as a thing of past. He is now but a worker among many, pursuing their *cræft* within a divine framework.

While the creative predominance of the smith is suppressed and his craft redefined within the Gifts-of-Men paradigm, other trades become more prominent. In addition to the ploughman, whose vocation was exalted in the *Colloquy*, the stonemason’s skill is brought into the spotlight in association with *cræft*. This is especially true in prose. This prominence may or may not be causally related to the fact that many of the texts featuring *cræft* or one of its derivatives to denote a manual trade which is not part of a catalogue of skills or a group of craftsmen, tend to talk about the establishment of churches, temples or sculptures more often than about other types of craftsmanship. This notably applies to a number of lives of saints and other texts concerned with the expansion of the Church after the death of Christ. Examples include the story of the four *stancræftigan* in the *Martyrology* (cf. Chapter One); the team of craftsmen (*cræftena*) building the temple of Solomon in an anonymous Life of Saint Michael (LS 24 (MichaelTristr)),<sup>85</sup> the numerous uses of *cræft* in relation to the description of religious edifices discussed or mentioned above (‘Link to God’). It should be noted, however, that whatever the reason for this correlation of *cræft* and stonemasonry, it appears to have become so ingrained into general use that Ælfric, an author who insists on the clarity of his diction and correct use of the English language, does not hesitate to use *cræft* and its derivatives in this very specific sense without further precision. In his *Grammar*, Ælfric glosses *architectus* with *cræftica* and *architector* with *ic cræfte* (215.9). While another gloss in the same text has *cræftica* as *interpretamentum* for *artifex* (76.5), the lack of specification in the Old English *interpretamenta* in the *architectus* group is nevertheless surprising. *Artifex* is a general term for a craftsman, so a general gloss is appropriate. *Architectus*, however, denotes people involved in the erection of buildings and is much more specific. By contrast, other *lemma* for more specific trades are conjoined with specific *interpretamenta*.

<sup>85</sup> ‘Life of Saint Michael’, ed. H. Tristram, in ‘Vier altenglische Predigten aus der heterodoxen Tradition’ (Freiburg i. Br. diss., 1970), pp.152-61.

Examples are *figulus*, glossed by *crocwyrhta* ('potter') and *faber*, glossed by *smið*. The *architectus* gloss appears comparatively vague, unless we accept that *cræft* was able to precisely denote activities associated with the art of erecting buildings, or that stonemasons enjoyed a special status in the context of this usage.

This possibility is sustained by a similar occurrence found in the *Life of Thomas*, where Ælfric renders *hominem arte architectoria eruditum* simply as *sumne wyrhtan þe wel cunne on cræfte*.<sup>86</sup> It is noteworthy that this translation helps emphasise the fact that the skill at the centre of the saint's life consists of much more than just technical proficiency in building, as it involves laying the foundations for a religious communion with God. It is perhaps in this very association that we may find the reason for this particularly specific use of *cræft*. There is after all no more suitable form of craftsmanship for building direct links to God than the trade of the stonemason erecting churches. Within a Christian context the very essence of this trade is virtually indistinguishable from one of the central aspects of the Gifts-of-Men paradigm. This very specific use of *cræft* and its derivatives may thus stem from the semantic intersection of these two domains.<sup>87</sup> Although our limited evidence indicates that the strongest incidence of this sense is in the lexicon of Ælfric and in Old English saints' lives, it nevertheless shows that another trade developed as a contender for the crown of craftsmanship. Ælfric's virtually synonymous use of the stonemason's trade and the simplex form of *cræft* is a testimony to the fact that for some writers this trade represented the essence of craftsmanship as defined within the Gifts-of-Men paradigm, that is the earthly establishment of the foundations of belief. The rise of the stonemason/architect as an archetypal craftsman in the writings Ælfric parallels the appearance of the architect's compass in a range of eleventh-century Anglo-Saxon manuscripts mentioned in Chapter Two (Eadui Gospels (fol.9v), in the Tiberius Psalter (fol.7v), and BL Royal 1 E (fol.1v)). It also seems to occur at a time when

<sup>86</sup> *Life of Saints*, ed. Skeat, vol. II, pp.398-424, l.20.

<sup>87</sup> Cf. *Andreas: Þa se modiga het, cyninges cræftiga, ciricean getimbran, gerwan godes tempel* ('Then the brave one, the king's architect, ordered that churches be built, that God's temple be adorned', ll.1632-3).

there were major programmes of church-building and -rebuilding as well as sculpture-making, mainly associated with Æthelwold's leadership of the Benedictine Reform movement.<sup>88</sup>

Finally a fourth and last occupation to lay express claim to the status of representing the archetypal *cræft* is teaching. While the inspiration for this claim lies in a Latin work, it is put forward most strongly in the Old English translation of this text. The vernacular version of Gregory's *Pastoral Care* is generally 'Alfredian' in its *cræft* use, frequently employing the term in the sense of 'virtue', as well as synthesising a range of Latin terms (*virtus*, *vis*, *ars* and *sapientia* are the main ones) into a single concept. At the same time the Old English text shows an awareness of the usage of *cræft* denoting a divinely endowed human ability. This is evident in its translation of Gregory's references to divine endowment. In a passage condemning the act of hiding divine gifts by not putting them to use, the Latin *dona* is circumscribed as *Godes gifa [...]* *ge on cræftum ge on æhtum* ('God's gifts [... consisting] either in *cræftum* or in possessions', where *cræftum*, which has no counterpart in the Latin text, appears to denote human skills, abilities, and other types of non-material assets in contrast to *æhtum* (material assets).<sup>89</sup> This elaboration shows that the translator was aware of *cræft*'s ability to denote divinely endowed skill, and was moreover compelled to use this term upon recognising a clear reference to the Gifts-of-Men paradigm (*percepta dona sub otio lenti torporis abscondere*, 'to hide received gifts under the listlessness of sluggish torpor': failure to make use of the gift, characterised as sloth and described by words describing a lack of openness). Similar freely added uses of *cræft* in relation to the notion of divine gifts are also found in a subsequent passage of the *Pastoral Care* (Tertia Pars, Caput XXIII, p.107).

The translator's semantic awareness of *cræft* is especially interesting considering his idiosyncratic take on one of the most famous statements from the *Cura Pastoralis*. In the first few lines of the treatise, introducing the concept of pastoral care and warning against assuming pastoral

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<sup>88</sup> Dodwell, *Anglo-Saxon Art*, pp.109-19; E. Coatsworth, 'Late Pre-Conquest Sculptures with the Crucifixion South of the Humber', in *Bishop Æthelwold: His Career and Influence*, ed. B. Yorke (Woodbridge, 1988), pp.161-93.

<sup>89</sup> *Pastoral Care*, ed. Sweet, chapter IX, p.59, ll.14-5, translating Gregory's Prima Pars, Caput IX. The Latin text quoted is *Sancti Gregorii Magni Regula Pastoralis Liber*, PL 77 (1862).

authority without the necessary qualification and learning, Gregory affirms by means of a rhetorical question that *ars est artium regimen animarum* ('the governance of souls is the art of all arts', Primera Pars, Caput I). The Old English translator provides a much more general introduction to the subject, stating that in order to teach a *cræft* one has to first thoroughly learn it, and rendering the above statement as *se cræft ðæs lareowdomes bið cræft ealra cræfta*. This modification is subtle and yet substantial. The Latin text places pastoral care at the pinnacle of all the *artes*, a term by which it most likely designates the liberal arts formally taught in the medieval education system. By eliminating any reference to pastoral rule, the translator transforms not only Gregory's phrase but also the general tenor of the introductory passage. It is no longer about the office of pastoral care, but about passing on a *cræft*, any type of *cræft*, through the *cræft* of teaching. While the Latin text has three uses of *ars*, the Old English translation repeats *cræft* four times within the first sentence. This aural intensification leads the reader to focus on the import of *cræft* and to consider the central theme of learning and teaching in relation to this term. As noted in my discussion above, both teaching and learning constitute important aspects of the *cræft* use within the Gifts-of-Men paradigm. The former connects both with the need to make use of one's *cræft* and with the virtue of openness, while the latter constitutes a way of actuating or perfecting a divine gift. Together they form a cycle through which God's endowments can be fully realised on earth. By making the introductory passage about *cræft* (and the role of teaching as *cræft*) in general rather than specifically about the office of pastoral care, the Old English text is able to emphasise the crucial nature of teaching (and learning) in the Gifts system.<sup>90</sup>

This intention is confirmed at the beginning of chapter V, where a similar generalisation transforms the message of the original. In the Latin, chapter V opens with a note on how some men, distinguished in *virtus* through divine gifts are elevated to high office in order to train others, referring again to the office of pastoral care (*Nam sunt nonnulli, qui eximia virtutum dona percipient, et pro exercitatione caeterorum magnis muneribus exaltantur*, Primera Pars, Caput V).

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<sup>90</sup> Cf. an interlinear gloss from *Liber Scintillarum*: *Nan cræft butan lareowe byð geleornud*, 'No *cræft* is learned without teacher' (glossing *ars*); quoted from *Liber scintillarum*, ed. H. M. Rochais, CCSL 117 (Turnholt, 1957), ch.77, sentence 9.

The Old English text adapts this utterance by generalising it into the Gifts-of-Men paradigm. There are not just some but ‘many’ (*monige*) who are *mid miclum gifum monegra mægena & cræfta geweorðode* (‘exalted with great gifts in virtue and in *cræfta*’), and they ought to teach others.<sup>91</sup> Only after this general introductory sentence does the Old English concern itself with the office of pastoral care. Its concept of gifts applies to the many, not just the few; the gifts come in many forms (*monigra*), including different types of *mægen* (virtue?) and *cræft* (skills?). The vernacular seizes the notion of gifts found in the original and develops it into a full image consonant with the Gifts-of-Men paradigm. While the remainder of the text is about the office of the pastor, these statements are general enough to convey the message that every person ought to perfect and later pass on their *cræft*. This generalisation seems consonant with the imputed purpose of the Old English text. In its stated effort (if Alfred’s preface is to be believed) to translate those *books ða ðe niedbeðearfosta sien eallum monnum to wiotonne* (‘which are most needful for all men to know’, Preface to the *Pastoral Care*),<sup>92</sup> the translation appears to target a general audience, not just pastors looking to be guided in their profession. It is thus not surprising to encounter these general images referring to divine endowments, containing instructional messages which are applicable to all.

The three occupations thrust into prominence within the Gifts of Men paradigm – those of the ploughman, the stonemason/architect and the teacher – all epitomise key aspects emphasized within the paradigm: humility, the establishment of a link to God, and the duty to share *cræft* through teaching and learning respectively. Their claim to being the most useful, most representative or best *cræft* is ultimately grounded in the very definition of the concept, rather than based on superiority of skill. Arguably, the judgment reached towards the end of the *Colloquy* is just as much about humbling the smith and bringing low his self-importance as it is about exalting the ploughman above everyone else. Boosting the paragon of humility in this way, while putting the oft aggrandized person of the smith in his place has a neutralizing effect. The judgment is reminiscent of a recommendation made in chapter XXXII of the *Pastoral Care*: *Ðætte on oðre*

<sup>91</sup> *Pastoral Care*, ed. Sweet, chapter V, p.41.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, ‘Preface’, p.7.

*wisan sint to manianne ða ofermodan & ða upahafenan on hiora mode, on oðre ða earmheortan & ða wacmodan* ('That the proud and the haughty ought to be admonished in one way, and in another the humble and faint-hearted').<sup>93</sup> Accepting the prominence of the *cræft* of teaching, beyond facilitating the exchange of knowledge needed to fully make use of one's *cræft*, also entails being able to link craftsmanship to a set of moral guidelines taught by Christian doctrine. For instance, according to the moral definition of skill presented through *cræft*, Bede's smith, discussed at the beginning of my thesis for being highly talented yet infamously prone to *uitae remissioris incelebris*, would not be truly skillful; he would not be *cræftig*, because in addition to his drunken antics he rejects the communal aspect of his role in the monastery. If the smith was indeed a layman, tolerated in the monastery for the artefacts he provided, there might have been a concern that had he been willing to open himself up to God, or pass on the knowledge that allowed him to produce his art, his function could have become more integrated into the Christian community.

This brings us to the final question about the Gifts-of-Men paradigm, which concerns issues of when and how it developed or became a dominant *cræft* usage. I have often referred to convergences between Benedictine ideology and important aspects of the paradigm. This is evident especially in the English version of the Benedictine Rule, as well as in the writings of a number of authors intimately connected with the Benedictine movement, such as Ælfric and Wulfstan. While *Gifts* contains the traditional catalogue of *íþróttir*, it is possible that the incorporation of this traditional, rather secular catalogue into the Christian gifts frame was a product of the Benedictine Reform too.<sup>94</sup> While metre and language point to an early date (late eighth, or early ninth century),<sup>95</sup> an older piece might simply have been moulded into the core of a new poem at a much later date. However, the theme of gifts as human faculties was not a tenth-

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, ch. XXXII, p.209; cf. D. Short who notes the similarities between this chapter and ll.8-26 of the Gifts-of-Men paradigm, 'The Old English *Gifts of Men* and the pedagogic theory of the *Pastoral Care*', *ES* 57 (1973), 497-501.

<sup>94</sup> M. Drout, 'Possible Instructional Effects of the Exeter Book "Wisdom Poems": A Benedictine Reform Context', in *Form and Content in Anglo-Saxon England in the Light of Contemporary Manuscript Evidence*, ed. P. Lendinara, L. Lazzari, and M. A. D'Arónico (Turnhout, 2007), 447-66.

<sup>95</sup> *The Exeter Book*, ed. Krapp and Dobbie, p.xliii.

century novelty. It can be found in Anglo-Latin culture as early as Aldhelm and Bede. The former appeals to God: *Munera nunc largire* ('Now bestow [your] gifts [on me]', *Aenigmata*, 1.5).<sup>96</sup> The latter refers to God as *spiritualium largitor charismatum* ('the giver of spiritual gifts') in his letter to Ecgberht.<sup>97</sup> He also repeatedly refers to Caedmon's talent as a *canendi donum* ('the gift of song'). One might note how both of these authors tend to apply the Latin notion of gift to spiritual or cerebral abilities, and it is thus conceivable that they understood them as gifts of the Holy Spirit through divine grace (cf. Caedmon *diuinitus adiutus gratis canendi donum accepit* 'he received the gift of song freely assisted by divine intervention'), but not necessarily in the context of the paradigm detailed above. Although they must have been familiar with Gregory's exegesis on the Parable of Talents, it is not clear whether either of them knew the vernacular concept of divine endowment denoted in the Gifts-of-Men paradigm. It is possible that it had not yet developed or risen to great prominence by that time. It is also uncertain whether *cræft* had already acquired the sense of 'gift', although, in principle, nothing speaks against this possibility. The Old English translation of the *Pastoral Care* does not just display a clear desire to portray the notion of divine gift more broadly and generally than the original, but it also betrays a familiarity with the notion of *cræft* as divine endowment, by inserting in this term as an extra qualification in phrases connected with gifts (notably where these are translated by *giefu*, see above) specifically to denote abilities or skill (as opposed to possessions). As it is generally accepted that the translation of the *Pastoral Care* is one of the earliest Old English prose texts, it is highly probable that this notion developed before the dawn of vernacular prose writing. Consequently we must conclude that it evolved in all likelihood in poetry.

Perhaps, though, the type of poem in which this occurred did not survive to tell the tale. *The Gifts of Men* is doctrinally and structurally complex, suggestive of a mature rather than a nascent paradigm. Moreover it does not provide any indication as to how *cræft* came to denote the overarching concept of gifts. It is thus perhaps more plausible to imagine a simpler form of poetry,

<sup>96</sup> Aldhelm, *Riddles* published in *Through a Glass Darkly: Aldhelm's Riddles in the British Library MS Royal 12.C.xxiii*, ed. N. P. Stork (Toronto, 1988).

<sup>97</sup> Bede, 'Epistola ad Ecgberctum antistitem 2', in *Venerabilis Baedae Opera Historica*, ed. C. Plummer (Oxford, 1896), pp.405–23.

one taking formulae from the heroic tradition to reinvent them in a Christian framework, a poem not unlike Caedmon's *Hymn*, which redefined the notion of lordship.<sup>98</sup> This poem would have used *cræft*, then a key heroic concept most likely denoting a concept of power connected with the heroic world, to redeploy it as a Christian concept, involving a sense of divine grace. This notion could have included both the seemingly antiquated usage of *cræft* as physical power, as well as the idea that craftsmanship could include a magical function, for instance through the apotropaic quality of an artefact or by enhancing a warrior's *cræft* on the battlefield. Evidence from material culture shows that these features were readily integrated by the new religion, with Christian iconography replacing Germanic motifs found on battle-gear and related artefacts. Bede's story of the battle of Heavenfield – where the Northumbrian King Oswald is said to be granted an unlikely victory against a Welsh army after erecting a wooden cross in the manner of a battle standard – is indicative of this new, superior protective power. According to Bede, the victory is instrumental in restoring Christianity to the Northumbrian region.<sup>99</sup> Two of the poems (*Gifts* and *Fortunes*) elaborating the Gifts-of-Men motif note how God ought to be praised and thanked for his generosity in dispensing gifts. Quite conceivably, these references could allude to a tradition of panegyric, in the vein of Caedmon's *Hymn*, incorporating praise of God as a provider of *cræft*, notably in relation to his perceived support in battles such as the one at Heavenfield (cf. also my discussion of ll.696b-700a of *Beowulf* above, Chapter Four). We know battle poems commemorated victories praising those instrumental in the success.<sup>100</sup> It is not improbable that triumphs such as the one witnessed at Heavenfield would have called forth the composition of a panegyric praising the role of God's *cræft* in this battle, especially given its stated effect on the Christianisation of Northumbria. Beyond the term's 'traditional' meaning of 'physical strength', the connection of supernatural support (a bolstering of that strength) – both from pagan and

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<sup>98</sup> Cf. E. G. Stanley, 'New Formulas for Old: *Cædmon's Hymn*', in *Pagans and Christians: The Interplay between Christian Latin and Traditional Germanic Cultures in Early Medieval Europe*, ed. T. Hofstra *et al.* (Groningen, 1995), pp.131-48.

<sup>99</sup> *HE*, iii.1-2.

<sup>100</sup> As evidenced by *Beowulf*, the poems recorded in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, etc.

Christian sources – with artefacts is likely to have played a key role in determining the semantic range of this new *cræft*.

While polysemy is an integral feature of all the *cræft* usages investigated in this chapter, it has also come to light that the notion of craftsmanship was a dominant *cræft* sense both in the neutral and the ‘new’ usage, and that it featured strongly in the ‘old’ usage. This points to the role of this notion in the evolution of *cræft*, and may indicate a redefinition of the ‘old’ usage to provide not just a divinely sanctioned notion of craftsmanship but also an alternative concept of human skill. The evidence presented above suggests a gradual development of a paradigm through which *cræft* could offset itself from other notions of ability. If it started as a concept in early religious praise poetry, it would have developed into an early form of the paradigm by denoting a greater range of skill in the fashion of divine *vocationes*, most likely before the advent of prose writing. Lastly, some of the salient aspects of the paradigm, notably the emphasis on diligence and lowliness in relation to *cræft*, are probably evidence of an amplification of the topos during the Benedictine Reform period.

In contrast to *searo* and *orþanc*, which are defined through their usage as highly distinguished and singular attributes, *cræft* is universal and non-exclusive. Out of the two former terms, *searo* appears to form a particularly marked contraposition to *cræft*, with the two terms forming an antithesis which is exploited in several texts. The former is associated with secrecy, a connotation no doubt derived from the negative use of *searo* to denote scheming and deceit, while it is indirectly a reflection of the unfathomable intricacy and complexity that is expressed through *searo* as a notion of craftsmanship. As an attribute of a person or a thing it connotes an exclusive and hermetic quality. *Cræft* on the other hand is characterised by openness and is freely available to all, albeit in diverse guises. Knowledge or possession of *cræft* is unrestricted, and it should be passed on. Thus, Thomas freely imparts his knowledge of stonemasonry (standing for knowledge of and faith in God), while Ælfric comments on the fitness of sharing the *cræft* of grammar, providing further access to the meaning of books and by implication to the holy story and the word of God. In *Elene*, in order for Christianity to be validated both *cræft* and the Cross must be

unearthed and the latter revealed to all as an artefact. The open use of *cræft* establishes or strengthens the bond between humans and God.

The development of the usage analysed in Chapter Five is consonant with a strongly positive valuation of craftsmanship, paralleling the negative extension of *searo* analysed in Chapter Two. I have shown that both *cræft* as a notion of endowment and the pejorated concept of *searo* – just like the more hermeneutic usage of *orþanc* – are consciously explored and shaped through the literary productions of Anglo-Saxon England. The conflicting representations of the craftsman analysed in Chapter One are thus complemented by a morally charged mediation taking place in the realm of semantics. *Cræft* ultimately emerges as the strongest contender and becomes the dominant paradigm for craftsmanship by incorporating the Gifts-of-Man topos. Like the other two terms it is subject to semantic shifts during the Anglo-Saxon period. Unlike them, it successfully incorporates religious and political ideals that lead to a fundamental redefinition of the concept of craftsmanship.

## CONCLUSION

### Smiths and myths

When thinking about narratives of craftsmanship from the early medieval period, the first thing that often comes to mind is the story of Weland the smith in the form in which it now survives, recorded in two Old Norse witnesses with analogues in a number of European folktales. There can be no doubt that the Anglo-Saxons were familiar with this story in the broad outlines of the common narrative of those tales. However, an Anglo-Saxon version of this narrative has not survived in any form. Although it is right to evoke the accident of survival here, it is still surprising, given the apparent popularity of the tale, that we have nothing apart from the allusive references discussed in Chapter One. These references are indicative of the tale's celebrity, its ability to transcend genres, and its general relevance in the culture of Anglo-Saxon England. Its depiction on the Franks Casket presumes a familiarity with the tale as early as the year 700. In this earliest witness, however, the myth of Weland is already placed in a Christian framework in which the smith, though depicted as submitting to Christ only with reluctance, is associated with redemption obtainable in the new faith. This suggests that from a very early point in the Old English period, Anglo-Saxons were interested in contrasting Weland's craftsmanship with the divine. Alongside references to the superlative nature of his craft, this narrative established a pattern for many representations of smiths in Anglo-Saxon literature.

My discussion of the evidence shows that it is the references which survive in texts like *Deor* and the Old English Boethius, and not the fuller versions of the myth recorded in cognate languages, which are closest to the Weland narrative which the Anglo-Saxons were most fascinated by. This narrative depicts the smith as a fallen type fettered by his sinfulness. His creative output is

symptomatic, and in some cases possibly causative, of his fallen nature. Though this myth conflates with another unusual tradition depicting the fall of the angels in terms of craftsmanship and which may ultimately be derived from 1 Enoch, Weland appears to be portrayed as an example of fallen humanity, dwelling in Hell but ultimately granted a chance of redemption. Smiths may either be fallen humans, or demonic figures. Where they are depicted as fallen angels, they are in hell, and usually antagonistic to the fallen humans which populate it. However, they are often instrumental in bringing about redemption or salvation, as for instance in the narrative of *Andreas*. The smiths often display a strong creative impetus which is at odds with God's own creation. Although this impetus is usually characterised by a high degree of skill or technical ability, it is always described as inferior to the craftsmanship of God.

While the dichotomous representation of the smith analysed in Chapter One is bridged by the narrative of redemption, it is retained throughout the period through various permutations of the story of the fallen smith. These are best understood as a multitude of subplots uniting under a supra-textual story arc. Some smiths are congenial figures wrongfully – and temporarily – imprisoned by evil kings, queens, or devils: Weland in *Deor*, the boys in *Daniel*, Judas in *Elene*, and, it may be argued, the devil in *Genesis B*, at least according to his own opinion. Others are represented as the forgers of the chains made to wrongfully imprison others: the smiths trying to fetter Wilfred, the Mermedonians in *Andreas*, God himself from the viewpoint of Satan in *Genesis B*, the Israelites in *Exodus*. While the Jews are fettered by the devil in *Elene*, they are also binders themselves, wrongfully (according to the Christian perspective of the poem) enclosing the knowledge of the Cross in their hearts. In all these narratives there is a conscious and often deliberate confusion of the figure who binds and the figure who is bound. As the archetypal maker of *searo*, the smith is the prime binder, but his inevitable fate is to be bound himself. Both the active binding and the passive binding can feature on literal or abstract levels. They may signify craftsmanship, imprisonment, sinfulness, introversion but can also feature less negatively as concepts of stability, protection and permanence. Although the idea of binding as a force of cohesion and protection is most strongly associated with the role of smiths in more secular types of literature (e.g. *Beowulf*), it is equally

adopted into the narrative of redemption as a process necessary to achieve it, as symbolised, for instance, in the binding (encasing) of the Cross in *Elene*.

On the lexical level the narrative of redemption is enacted by the semantic antithesis of *searo* and *cræft* II, as well as the opposition of other notions of craftsmanship (such as *mægen* and *cræft* I in *Genesis B*, or *cræft* I and *cræft* II in *Daniel*). A number of Old English texts oppose two senses of craftsmanship indicating a continued struggle between creative freedom and creative orthodoxy or misguided and rightful craftsmanship depending on the perspective of the text. It is usually the orthodox position which obtains or retains the upper hand. As craftsmanship is redeemed, it changes in nature: from *searo* or *cræft* I into *cræft* II. The semantic variations to which these terms are subject in the Old English language are indicative of the fact that the smith narrative is not just determined by a collection of idiosyncratic tales, but constitutes an important cultural paradigm.

### **The lexis of craftsmanship**

In my thesis I have shown how *searo* mutates from a neutral to highly positive appreciation of craftsmanship as an act of binding – indicative of creative refinement and quality – into a more sinister notion of deceit in the prose tradition. A connection between both usages is most evident in *Andreas* where *searo* functions as an inverted, anti-heroic form of craftsmanship connected with the devil, but where it retains significance as a force closely associated with redemption. In the context of the smith narrative, this notion comes to designate the sinful nature of craftsmanship exercised in antagonism to the divine, but ultimately fulfilling a function in the larger narrative of salvation. Here, I have also shown, there is a special emphasis on the play with notions of binding. As a notion primarily connected with the smith it reflects the smith's special connection with hell, and comes to signify his fallen state.

The evidence of semantic change in *cræft* provides a fascinating parallel to the pejoration of *searo*. While the term appears to have lent itself to a very early, pre-Christian notion of magical craftsmanship (*cræft* I), it suffers from its integration into a Christian moral framework, surviving mainly in the form of negative compounds and collocations which establish a link between this form of craftsmanship, witchcraft and devilish powers of unnatural manipulation. Even more surprisingly, however, this sense is virtually purged from the uses of the simplex, which is appropriated by Christian culture as a notion of divine endowment. Though it may have originated in a representation of divine power impacting beneficially on human affairs, this notion emerges as central to the wide-ranging Gifts-of-Men paradigm. I have shown that *cræft* II is primarily a notion of craftsmanship, but constitutes an important redefinition of human skill. This notion is able to accommodate an orthodox form of craftsmanship and is the second force in the fall-and-salvation pattern. Through *cræft* smiths can become fully redeemed and can re-integrate into a society which values a range of types of craftsmanship for their ability to form links with God.

Both the poetic and the hermeneutic usages of *orþanc* analysed in Chapter Three are removed from the main narrative of craftsmanship elucidated in this thesis, they nevertheless inform about Anglo-Saxon attitudes to, and obsession with, craftsmanship. The slight engagement of *orþanc* with the dominant narrative is probably due to its infrequent occurrence in the corpus. The notion of ancient craftsmanship appears to be somewhat antiquated in poetry and occurs in a relatively low proportion of extant texts. The hermeneutic and restricted usage which evolved in the gloss tradition was also too exclusive for the term to gain any greater currency through this semantic change. It is not surprising therefore that it is not directly involved in the cultural discourse set up by *searo* and *cræft*. It is, however, an important testimony to the Anglo-Saxons' continued fascination with the semantics of craftsmanship. The *orþanc* uses in *Solomon and Saturn* and *Riddle 42* attempt a refined play on meaning which relies to an extent on the other two notions being known to the reader as well. The fact that *orþanc* did not succumb to semantic pejoration in poetry, where it was associated with ante-Diluvian craftsmanship and thus indirectly with the negative portrayals of smiths which gave rise to the pejoration of *searo*, is equally significant. This shows the Anglo-Saxons' ability to

engage with all forms of craftsmanship, Christian, pre-Christian or even anti-Christian, in a neutral, or even positive way. The same resistance to pejoration is found in the term's life in the gloss tradition from which, although linked with *searo* and potentially negative Latin concepts, it emerges unscathed. The association of *orþanc* with a concept of ingenuity also provides a neutral term to gloss *mechanica*. As a rather exclusive concept, *orþanc* fills a gap left by the pejoration of *searo* outside of heroic verse, by constituting a term to denote a select concept of ability distinguishing the few from the many. As such, its evolution testifies to the continued need for such a concept in Anglo-Saxon intellectual circles, despite the widespread predominance of the Gifts-of-Men paradigm. The fact that both *orþanc* as ingenuity and the notion of *cræft* as divine endowment are especially, though in the case of *cræft* not exclusively, connected with the Benedictine Reform movement is interesting. While the Benedictine movement preached a notion of craftsmanship associated with humility, hard labour and devotion to God, some of its practitioners, who were fond of linguistic experimentation and delighted in composing a highly artificial Latin (and possibly Old English) poetry and prose, might have needed a notion of skill which accommodated the arcane, idiosyncratic nature of their pursuits.

My analysis of these notions of craftsmanship and the processes of semantic change which they experienced confirms the theory that near-synonyms are interlinked in a complex system.<sup>1</sup> The semantic evolution of *searo*, *orþanc* and *cræft* is linked in as far as changes in one notion seem to answer to changes in another, as a readjustment takes place to accommodate cultural perceptions of craftsmanship within language. Although it is difficult to assess the reasons for semantic change from such a distance, it is reasonable to assume that the initial catalyst for these changes was the Christianization of the Anglo-Saxons, as many of the responses to craftsmanship appear conditioned by the need to accommodate it within Christian culture. It is evident that this process of semantic change, once initiated, continued to engage and obsess an important number of Anglo-Saxon poets and writers, who persisted in redefining craftsmanship and in illustrating the varying roles and positions of craftsmen in their culture.

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Mincoff, pp.1-2.

### Further applications

My thesis constitutes an attempt to delimitate the precise senses of three near-synonyms usually read to denote skill or feigning in a negative context as notions of scheming, cunning and deceit. I hope to have shown that there is merit in establishing their discrete meanings through a combination of close reading and attention to contextual paradigms. Our ability to read these terms as concrete denotations of craftsmanship and understand the cultural context which has shaped their meaning greatly enhances our understanding of Old English texts, as my detailed discussions of their applications throughout this thesis show. Beyond these, there is, in particular, great value in applying these readings to the topic of poetic craftsmanship. I can only touch on this topic briefly here. To look at one example, all three terms appear to play an important role in Old English riddles where they seem to operate as self-conscious riddling mechanisms. Thus, in accordance with the broader usages delineated in this thesis, but more precisely adapted to the riddle genre, *searo* and *orþanc* are employed to denote opacity of meaning (restriction and/or hermeneutism / ingenuity of the riddler) and *craft* is used to refer to the solution or ‘key’ of a riddle (cf. Riddle 42, discussed in Chapter Three). Recognising these shades of meaning allows us to be particularly sensitive to the wordplay that the riddlers engage in. The translator of Aldhelm’s *Lorica* riddle, for instance, plays with the audience’s expectations, announcing that his item is not made by *heahcraft*, or ‘high skill’, a term usually denoting refined textile work. As the translator literally refers to a woven garment, he no doubt consciously but opaquely alludes to the comparison of high-quality chain-mail with fine woven cloth, comparable to the references to the hero’s armour found in *Beowulf*. Dwelling on the paradox for another six lines without offering a ready solution, the translator then exhorts the reader to come up with a conclusion. Instead of proffering the traditional *craft*-based formula as a solution, the translator enjoins the reader thus:

Saga soðcwidum searoþoncum gleaw,  
wordum wisfæst, hwæt þis gewæde sy.<sup>2</sup>

(Say truthfully, astute with *searo* in your thoughts, wise in words, what this garment is.)

The riddler has here inverted the traditional roles of *cræft* and *searo*, with *cræft* being employed to mystify the reader into searching for a type of fabric. *Searo*, on the other hand, functions both literally and the solution to the riddle, and as the means by which the solution can be found.

Denotations and connotations of *searo* and the notion of binding are also useful in re-approaching the use of interlace technique in traditional heroic verse. All three terms may help illuminate the different conceptions of poetic composition which have come down to us in the extant material. I hope to show the relevance of my analysis to the appreciation of Anglo-Saxon poetics through a final excursus on the depiction of poetic craftsmanship in the epilogue to *Elene*.

### ***Coda: Poetic craftsmanship in Cynewulf***

Cynewulf offers a representation of poetic identity which appears as unusually fulsome among the ruins of Old English poetry. Not only did he leave his name scattered in runes among the moral endings of his poems, but he also engaged in personal reflections in the guise of a poet-persona, doing so most elaborately in *Elene*. I have discussed this poem in Chapter Five, pointing out its deliberate use of *cræft* as a dialectical force, as well as its simultaneous application of the term to connote a material sense of craftsmanship. These two senses come together in the figure of the Cross. In this *coda*, I will examine how this usage of *cræft* carries over into the pseudo-autobiographical epilogue to the poem, denoting the poet's craft (described as *wordcræft* and *leoðucræft*) as a faculty of the mind as well as of the hand. My discussion shall investigate how the

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<sup>2</sup> *Riddles*, ed. Williamson, *Riddle 33* [35], ll.13-4.

epilogue continues the *searo* (binding)/*cræft* dichotomy observed in the poem in the antithesis between the secrecy of the Jews and the openness of Christian *cræft*. In this, Cynewulf also aligns himself with the figure of the fallen craftsman ultimately redeemed through his craft. In as far as this craft is described as a divine gift, the redemption can be seen to occur in an act of divine grace. This account is particularly interesting for two reasons. First, it is described, as I shall argue, as occurring in a state of compunction in which the poet's mind is compressed and then 'pricked' and slowly opened. Second, it represents a highly contrived image of craftsmanship drawing on a metallurgical metaphor found elsewhere in the poem. In presenting the process of poetic creativity in this way Cynewulf establishes a unique concept of poetic craftsmanship based on the notion of *cræft*.

The first part of the epilogue is quoted in full to aid my discussion below:

Þus ic frod ond fus þurh þæt fæcne hus  
**wordcræft** wæf ond wundrum læs  
 þragum þreodude ond geþanc reodode  
**nihtes nearwe**; nysse ic **gearwe**  
 be ðære rode riht ær me **rumran geþeaht**  
 þurh ða mæran miht on modes þeaht  
**wisdom onwreah**; ic wæs weorcum fah  
 synnum **asæled** sorgum gewæled  
 bitrum **gebunden** bisgum beþrunge  
 ær me lare **onlag** þurh leohtne had,  
 gamelum to geoce **gife unscynde**  
 mægencyning amæt ond **on gemynd begeat**  
**torht ontynde** **tidum gerymde**  
**bancofan onband** **breostlocan onwand**  
**leoðucræft onleac** þæs ic lustum **breac**  
 willum in worlde; ic þæs wuldres treowes  
 oft nales æne hæfde **ingemynd**  
 ær ic þæt **wundor** **onwripen** hæfde  
 ymb þone beorhtan beam swa ic on bocum fand,  
 wyrda gangum on gewritum **cyðan**  
 be ðam sigebeacne.<sup>3</sup>

(Thus have I, old and ready (to depart?) because of that old carcass, woven *wordcræft* and wondrously collected and long pondered and chewed over my thoughts/gone over my thoughts again and again in the narrowness of night;<sup>4</sup> I did

<sup>3</sup> Cynewulf, *Elene*, ed. Gradon, ll.1236-56. The punctuation and emphases are my own.

<sup>4</sup> See n13 below.

not readily know the truth about this rood, until wisdom revealed to me an ampler (a roomier) understanding in my mind through that illustrious might; I was guilty through my deeds, afflicted by my sins, tormented with cares, chained by acute pangs of pain,<sup>5</sup> bound with troubles before the Mighty King bestowed knowledge on me in the form of light, a solace to an old man, meted out his flawless gift and poured it into my mind, revealed its brightness, opened it up further at times, unfettered the container of my bones, unbound my breast-coffer, and unlocked *leoducraeft*, which I have made use of joyfully and willingly in this world; I often had inner thought about that tree of glory until I had uncovered that miracle about that famous timber, according to what, in the course of events, I had found in books, revealed in writings about the token of victory.)

Because it stands out as one of the few literary testimonies about poetic activity in the extant Old English corpus, this account has frequently garnered attention from scholars trying to formulate approaches to processes of poetic creativity in Anglo-Saxon England. Drawing on the four-fold method of exegetical interpretation prevalent in medieval monastic circles, as well as modern semiology, M. Irvine sees the poet's activity, described as *wordcraeft webban* (l.1237), as a complex interweaving of discourses and codes from the ecclesiastical, hagiographical, heroic, historical and enigmatic traditions.<sup>6</sup> The process of uncovering of the cross in the text corresponds to a revelation of its true meaning as a sign for the essence of the Christian faith. Building on Irvine's analysis, Harbus sees the passage as a 'conscious parallel' to the relation of Constantine's vision of the Cross at the beginning of the poem. By comparing *Elene* to its source text (which has been identified as the anonymous *Acta Cyriaci*),<sup>7</sup> she shows that Cynewulf manipulated his model to make Constantine experience the vision of the cross in a state of mental clarity instead of a dream.<sup>8</sup> This passage and the colophon form an arch underneath which the action of the poem unfolds, and the quest for the Cross is informed by an active, conscious search for its substance through a number of allegorical

<sup>5</sup> *Bitrum* is a *hapax legomenon* and may be an adverb or a dative plural noun denoting an acute element.

<sup>6</sup> M. Irvine, 'Anglo-Saxon Literary Theory Exemplified in Old English Poems: Interpreting the Cross in *The Dream of the Rood* and *Elene*', *Style* 20 (1986), 157-81, reprinted in *Old English Shorter Poems: Basic Readings*, ed. K. O'Brien O'Keefe (London, 1994), pp.31-63.

<sup>7</sup> *Elene*, ed. Gradon, intro., esp. p.15; cf. S. Borgehammar, *How the Holy Cross was Found* (Stockholm, 1991), Appendix, for an edition of the putative source text.

<sup>8</sup> A. Harbus, 'Text as Revelation: Constantine's Dream in *Elene*', *Neophilologus* 78 (1994), 645-53.

connections, which the reader is invited to open his mind to in a cerebral act which fulfils the meaning of the poem.<sup>9</sup>

In an article on the Anglo-Saxon perception of poetry as an artistic activity, Thornbury sees Cynewulf's *coda* to *Elene* as a manifestation of an Anglo-Saxon rejection of the Latin tradition of poetical inspiration. She notes Cynewulf's use of *inbryrdan* – a verb that can be translated as 'to spur on', while clearly denoting the action of 'pricking' – interpreting it as a mechanism of divine inspiration. The verb occurs three times in *Elene*, but is absent from the epilogue, a fact which Thornbury sees as evidence that Cynewulf did not wish to apply any notion of divine inspiration to his own poetry, but rather conceived of it exclusively in the 'vocabulary of technical ability' – an idea she sees as representative of Anglo-Saxon ideas about poetic composition.<sup>10</sup> In this she aligns herself with Faulkes, who argues for a Northern (Germanic) 'aesthetic preference for complexity and puzzlement' which overrides any Mediterranean notions of supernaturally inspired composition.<sup>11</sup> Referring to the large body of skaldic verse composed in the medieval North, Faulkes shows that metrical and verbal skill are seen to form the essence of a good poem, to the extent that admiration for content is more often than not relegated to third place. Faulkes discusses the myth about the origin of poetry recorded in Snorri Sturluson's *Edda*, noting that the gods, and in particular Odin, are the guards of the mead of poetry, an alcoholic concoction brewed from honey and the blood of Kvasir, who was an immensely wise person created from the spit of the Æsir and the Vanir. However, Norse poets refer to composition as a pouring-out of Odin's mead, not as drinking it, revealing their unfamiliarity with or distance from the notion of divinely inspired composition. Faulkes believes this to be characteristic of all Germanic verse.<sup>12</sup> While Faulkes refers little or not at all to Old English poetry beyond his introduction, Thornbury seeks to close the gap he leaves by claiming a similar intent behind Cynewulf's *coda* to *Elene*. Her assessment, however, contradicts an earlier conclusion reached by Anderson, who finds that Cynewulf sees divine inspiration as a clear

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<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, esp. p.651.

<sup>10</sup> Thornbury, 'Aldhelm's Rejection of the Muses'.

<sup>11</sup> A. Faulkes, 'Poetical Inspiration in Old Norse and Old English Poetry', *The Dorothea Coke Memorial Lecture in Northern Studies 1997* (London, 1997).

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, esp. p.5.

ingredient of poetic art. Indeed, Anderson believes that it is possible to equate this inspiration with the gift of the Holy Spirit, and that this constitutes a conception which is shared by other Anglo-Saxon writers (notably by Bede in his account of Cædmon).<sup>13</sup>

Thus, the epilogue to *Elene* has given rise to conflicting opinions with regards to the artistic self-conception it displays. In the light of this discrepancy between well-formed and convincing arguments I will closely reconsider the passage in question by utilizing interpretations of craftsmanship formulated in this thesis. A reader of *Elene*, having reached the end of the plot proper at l.1235 and embarking on the more reflective coda would find the contrast between the two parts strongly marked, not only by the switch from third-person to first-person narrative, but also by the sudden aural intensification arising from the introduction of leonine rhyme into the alliterative line, used up to l.1250. Although Cynewulf uses the same technique elsewhere, it is clear that the passage is self-consciously stylized, giving us the impression that the poet understood part of his skill to be stylistic distinction as a form of technical ability.

The passage stands out not only aurally but also syntactically, as ll.1236-51 constitute one large unit of sense, made up of two parallel clauses. Each is divided (by the word *ær* in l.1245) into two sub-clauses that in turn are formed of a number of parallel structures, many of which serve to repeat a similar idea: the mental activity/formations of thoughts and the periods of suffering and confinement before, and the act of poetic creativity described in terms of release after the pivotal conjunction. In each of the clauses the oppositional force of *ær* is reinforced through antitheses such as darkness and light, but especially oppression and delivery. Thus the condition before the turn is described through a range of terms denoting binding and imprisonment (*nearwe*, the negation of *rumran geþeaht, asæled, gebunden, beþrunge*), while the subsequent process is worded in terms of opening up and openness (*ontynde, gerymde, onband, onwand, onleac, onwrigen, cyðan*). This structure is one that mirrors both preceding and succeeding individual scenes - the hidden Cross and its revelation, Judas's incarceration and release, the eschatological vision at the end - as well as the movement of the poem as a whole (the tale begins with the night before a threatening battle, and

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<sup>13</sup> E. Anderson, *Cynewulf: Structure, Style and Theme in His Poetry* (London, 1983), p.42.

ends in bright daylight celebration). As these parallels make clear, the apparent *ars poetica* must be seen as an intrinsic part of the plot, rather than as a separate statement on poetic composition. In order to fully understand the importance of this observation, we need to consider the intertextual references of the epilogue.

While intimately married to the poem as a whole, the passage also engages in a dialogue with a wider body of lore. Anderson has identified the epilogue to the *Vita sanctae Mariae meretricis* as a parallel, which features the image of nocturnal meditation as well as showing an aged poet struggling to execute the poetic talent with which he has been blessed.<sup>14</sup> Here, there are perhaps more contrasts than points of comparisons. While the speaker in *Elene* fights on, wrestling with thoughts and old age, the Latin author fails to live up to the challenge. A more significant parallel may be Bede's account of how Cædmon received and used his poetic gift. Both texts show an interesting convergence in their conception of what elements contribute to the creative act. Anderson has argued that these elements are memory, wisdom or understanding, and inspiration, and presents them as occurring sequentially in the creative act.<sup>15</sup> I would argue that while these accounts share several elements, they differ substantially in how they present them as operating.

The first of these is the role of thought processes in the creative act. Bede seems to isolate the inspirational event as a one-time occurrence, bestowing poetic talent upon Cædmon, and allowing him to take up the habit, and compose poetry through meditation in accordance with monastic practices. The 'birth' of *Cædmon's Hymn* is portrayed as a miraculous event occurring through the grace of God, as the cowherd suddenly acquires the ability to compose religious verse fusing Germanic and Christian elements in a highly pertinent manner. The process of nightly meditation and composition that Cædmon subsequently engages in, however, is hardly marked by inspiration or a talent for extemporisation. The epilogue seems to lean on the description of Cædmon's cogitative practices, (*rememorando secum et quasi mundum animal ruminando*) as the poet-persona notes how he *þragum þreodude ond gebanc reodode*, 'long pondered and went over his thoughts again and

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<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p.42.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.37-41.

again', before composing his poem.<sup>16</sup> These nightly ponderings and meditations occur at a different time in relation to the climactic breakthrough that leads to the creative act. Cædmon's thought processes have been linked to the practice of monastic meditation,<sup>17</sup> a fitting occupation for someone who has taken up the habit, while the reference to animal digestion appears to recall his former occupation as a cowherd. In *Elene*, the ruminations emphasize two aspects of the creative process. As with Cædmon's post-inspirational poetic career, the process of composition in *Elene* is an act of labour rather than a spontaneous outpouring of song. The poet of *Elene* thus aligns his *wordcraft* with a well-known insular tradition of Christian verse. In doing so he may also consciously refer to the significance of labour as an aspect of *craft* in the Gifts-of-Men paradigm, building up the notion of divine endowment which I will analyse below.

This reference to a laborious process carries another significance, connecting with the narrative of the poem. It takes place before the poet's inspiration and appears to be a symptom of this early phase characterised by suffering and constrictions. The heavy consonance of line 1238 marked by seven /d/ and /p/ sounds underscores what appears as the compulsive and apparently unrelenting character of these thought-processes, revealing an epistemological constraint similar to the one Elene encounters in her search for the Cross. At the same time they are a necessary ingredient of the creative process leading the speaker to his eventual release. As noted in my discussion of the poem in Chapter Five, the condition of secrecy and restraint is necessary for the Cross/truth to be revealed.

The second element which can benefit from a comparison with Cædmon is the role of emotions in poetic composition. *Elene*'s account makes explicit something that Bede barely alluded to. Prior to the creative breakthrough the speaker in *Elene* is in a state of emotional distress. Interpretations of

<sup>16</sup> The meaning of \**reodian*, a *hapax legomenon*, has never been clearly identified, and lexicographers usually propose 'sift' as a possible translation. I suggest that it is possible to translate *r-eodode* as 'went over again and again', with the 'r' functioning as a reinforcing particle indicating repetition, possibly modelled on Bede's use of *rememorando*. It is of course not customary in Old English to indicate reinforcement or repetition in this manner. However, there is at least one other verb which seems to function in the same way, namely *ræfian*, a reinforced version of *æfian*. The reinforcing 'r' particle came to English through Latin (and later French) and it is possible Cynewulf's affection for Latin styles is to be held accountable for this term. While it diverges from the simplex with the repetition of the '-od-' particle, the verb ending instances a rhyme with the 'a-line', and aurally intensifies the repetitive notion of the verb, thus emphasising the unrelenting thought processes of the speaker. It is not inconceivable that Cynewulf sought to embellish this stylistically and aurally exuberant passage with a clever play on word form.

<sup>17</sup> M. Carruthers, *The Craft of Thought: Meditation, Rhetoric and the Making of Images* 400-1200 (Cambridge, 1998).

Bede's account have inferred that Cædmon was similarly affected, citing drink and feelings of inadequacy as a reason for his abrupt departure from the gathering and the subsequent dream.<sup>18</sup> This is of course not verifiable in the account itself. However, Bede hints at some emotional influence in Cædmon's act of composition when he claims that the poet's works were *compuntione compositis*, 'composed through compunction'. Compunction, originally an 'attack of acute pain' in the physical sense, was adopted into the Christian vocabulary as a spiritual suffering, figuratively understood as an insistent 'pressing' or pricking of the soul originating out of a 'desire for God'.<sup>19</sup>

The spiritual suffering experienced by the speaker in *Elene* is described in terms which allude to the physical description of compunction. His mental affliction occurs in the 'narrowness of night' (*nihtes nearwe*), and his relation of the onslaught of cares, sorrows, and acute pain (*bitrum*) is qualified by terms indicating a pressing and squeezing action (*geprungen*). When release arrives, it occurs as an opening in the compressed space of the mind (*gemynd ontynde, gerymde, onleac*, etc.), indicating that the mind has been pricked through to provide an opening. This is indeed what compunction is meant to bring about: a greater openness to the message of faith. Although Cynewulf does not make use of the term *on-/inbryrdan* in his colophon, the imagery he uses in this passage is strongly suggestive of this act taking place. Indeed, it provides a breakthrough, releasing the speaker from the meditative phase, and initiating the second stage of the creative act. This stage begins with the acquisition of knowledge or greater understanding by the speaker, before God bestows his *gife* ('gift') upon him.

What is most interesting is the way this gift is meted out. God *begeat* the gift into the speaker's mind. Gradon translates this verb as the third person singular preterite form of *begitan*, to mean 'get' or 'receive'.<sup>20</sup> However, the syntax of the sentence unambiguously shows *mægencyning* to be the subject of this verb. Translating *begeat* as the third person singular preterite of *begeotan*, 'to pour', would resolve this conflict. This translation is also supported by the fact that *begeotan* is commonly

<sup>18</sup> Cf. *Cædmon's Hymn: A Multi-Media Study, Archive and Edition*, ed. D. O'Donnell (Cambridge, 2005), introduction.

<sup>19</sup> J. Leclercq, *The Love of Learning and the Desire for God*, trans. by C. Misrahi (New York, 1961).

<sup>20</sup> *Elene*, ed. Gradon, cf. n1247b.

found to collocate with *on*.<sup>21</sup> By accepting this sense, we are presented with a stunning image of poetic craftsmanship. During the creative act, God pours his gift (the gift of poetry) into the speaker's mind, which is then followed by the speaker releasing it in the form of *leoðucraeft* to the world. The act of pouring implies that the gift comes in the form of a liquid substance, an image almost reminiscent of Odin's mead. However, I suggest that this is not an Old Norse brew, but a liquid of a very different kind. Recognising its nature depends on understanding that the poem operates with very fluid boundaries between the literal and the abstract. I have discussed this fluidity with a number of examples relating to *craeft*, craftsmanship and the Cross in Chapter Five.

There is one other remarkable scene in *Elene* where compunction seems to lead to creation. Towards the end of the plot, when the news of the discovery of the cross is brought to Elene, the queen is overcome with emotion and starts to cry:

Ða wæs wopes hring  
hat heafodwylm, ofer hleor goten;  
nalles for torne tearas feollon  
ofer wira gespon;<sup>22</sup>

(Then there was a ring of weeping, a hot welling from the head poured over the cheeks;  
but the tears did not fall for grief over the filigree clasp;)

This is also reminiscent of a scene in *Christ II*, where the apostles are led to tears over the ascension of Christ:

Ðær wæs wopes hring,  
torne bitolden; wæs seo treowlufu  
hat æt heortan.<sup>23</sup>

(There was a ring of weeping, overcome with grief; true love was hot at heart.)

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<sup>21</sup> *DOE* Web Corpus.

<sup>22</sup> ll.1131b-1134a.

<sup>23</sup> *Christ B, The Exeter Book*, ed. Krapp and Dobbie, ll.537b-539a.

The *hring* of weeping has been interpreted on the literal level as referring to the queen's tears in *Elene*, and to the circle formed by the apostles around Jesus in *Christ II*.<sup>24</sup> Both contexts play with the reference to the artefact on the symbolic level, an image of the bond of love and loyalty in the lord/retainer relationship of heroic lore. Elene and the apostles are moved by a strong love for God, and their desire is realized in their symbolic creation of the ring, signifying a perfect mutual bond, applied here to the relationship between the human and the divine. Both passages indicate the fervour of this love with the adjective *hat* ('hot'). By additionally using a verb – *goten* – that is part of the traditional vocabulary of metalworking,<sup>25</sup> the passage in *Elene* alludes to the process of ring-making by conjuring up the image of molten metal being cast into a mould. This artefact is further developed by a reference to filigree ornament in l.1134.<sup>26</sup>

*Elene* is a poem in which the boundaries between the real and the symbolic are constantly blurred, starting with Constantine's vision of the cross:

He wæs sona gearu  
 Ðurh þæs halgan hæs – hreðerlocan onspeon –  
 up locade swa him se ar ahead,  
 fæle friðowebba, geseah he frætsum beorht  
 wliiti wuldres treo ofer wolcna hrof  
 golde geglenged; gimmas lixtan;  
 wæs se blaca beam bocstafum awriten  
 beorhte ond leohte.<sup>27</sup>

(He was ready straight away through the holy one's command, his mind-coffer was opened up. He looked up as the noble one, true peace-weaver, had commanded, he saw the beautiful tree of glory over the roof of heaven, gleaming with treasures, decorated with gold, shining with jewels. The glittering tree was brilliantly and radiantly inscribed with letters.)

<sup>24</sup> Cf. Gradon, *Elene*, n1131b, p.67.

<sup>25</sup> Cf. Coatsworth and Pinder, *Goldsmith*, Appendix A: 'The Anglo-Saxon Vocabulary of Metalworking'.

<sup>26</sup> This reference has also caused problems of interpretation. Cf. Gradon, n1134a, 'Perhaps, as the tears fell over St Helena's breast, a pendant ornamented with filigree or gold thread'. It makes more sense to read the filigree ornament as decorating the ring which we see being made here.

<sup>27</sup> ll.85b-92a.

In terms reminiscent to those of the colophon, Constantine is presented as opening up his mind, to make it receptive to the vision of the Cross. The mind, here rendered as *hreðerloca* is represented as a container, akin to a closed chest.<sup>28</sup> Again, Cynewulf seems to play with heroic overtones as the vision Constantine experiences is of a magnificent, intricately decorated artefact. This is a very militaristic exchange, the cross a gift signifying Constantine's imminent victory in battle (a replica of the Cross is made to replace the battle-standard) in exchange for loyalty to the giver (cf. the language of command and obeisance: *sona gearu, haes, abæd*). There are strong parallels to the speaker's reception of his poetic gift at the end of the poem. Constantine, with the help of Elene, and later Cyriacus, fulfils the pact of loyalty through the pursuit of *cræft* leading to the eventual discovery of the cross of his vision. After the cross is unearthed, smiths are instructed to encase it in gold and decorate it with jewels, thus realizing the exact object of Constantine's vision. Similarly, the poet persona toils to find the reality of the Cross within his mind before he can create a poetic artefact, encasing the Cross's true meaning. The description of the Cross in Constantine's vision as being *bocstafum awriten* seems to anticipate the conflation of the poetic and the material arts in the epilogue.

The central notion of poetic creation in the *coda* to *Elene* is an image of craftsmanship. [*B*]egeat, as a preterite form of *begeotan*, indicates the casting of molten metal into a form. The creation of the artefact depends on the poet's success in realizing the true meaning of the cross within his mind. This occurs after a period of intense searching, possibly in books (*swa ic on bocum fand, wundrum læs*), a period which is characterized by confinement, unrest and spiritual suffering. This state of suffering is described in terms of binding, but it also describes a notion of compunction, a feeling of desire for God. This allows Cynewulf to portray the pivotal moment of release as an act of pricking, which initiates the act of composition.

This act is described as an instance of divine endowment. God, *mægencyning*, is the dispenser of *leoðucræft*. The very use of *leoðucræft* ('limb-cræft') here has stumped past editors and

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<sup>28</sup> Cf. Mize, 'The Representation of the Mind as an Enclosure'.

translators of the poem, who concluded that it denotes the art of poetry, reading it as *leoðcræft*.<sup>29</sup> While Cynewulf is no doubt punning on the concept of song here,<sup>30</sup> it makes more sense to read *leoðucræft* as a term through which the poet aligns his account with the notion of *cræft* as divine endowment and the Gifts-of-Men paradigm through invoking this Pauline concept of God's distribution of his gifts among all his children (cf. Chapter Five, 'Humility'). I have already noted the possible link of the references to labour in the first phase of the creative process to this topos. In addition, Cynewulf seems to evoke another aspect of the paradigm by noting that he made use of his gift (*þæs is lustum breac / willum in worlde*). References to another key feature – openness – are of course abundant in the passage. As an example of God as a dispenser of *cræft*, the epilogue to *Elene* appears close to the passage from *The Fortunes of Men*, which describes God as an artisan fashioning the individual *cræftas* before distributing them among humans (cf. Chapter Five, 'Divine Endowment and the Notion of Craftsmanship') in that he is seen in his role as a master-craftsman who determines the nature of human craftsmanship. In *Elene*, the image developed is rather remarkable.

I have already noted the metallurgical register of *begeotan*. On close comparison of Cynewulf's description of the process of poetic composition with techniques used by Anglo-Saxon smiths, it is apparent that the poem is drawing parallels with the processes of mould construction and mould casting. Based on Coatsworth and Pinder's explanation of this process, I have established the following correspondences: (1) A model is pressed into clay, and a second pad of clay is pressed on top. The clay pads surround the model closely and the clay takes on the model's form. This corresponds to the process of the poet's attempt to find *wuldres treow* in his mind (*ingemynd*), and the processes of meditation and rumination he undergoes in order to establish the true nature (shape) of the Cross in his mind. The imagery of restraint corresponds to the enclosure of a model by the clay pads. (ll.1236-44) (2) An ingate is created to remove the model, then the mould is dried and

<sup>29</sup> See, for instance, Gradon; Bradley, *Anglo-Saxon Poetry*.

<sup>30</sup> For more on Cynewulf's predilection for paronomasia, see S. Zacher, 'Cynewulf at the Interface of Literacy and Orality: The Evidence of Puns in *Elene*', *Oral Tradition* 17 (2002), 346-87.

fired. The clay now bears the shape of the future artefact on the inside. The poet indicates that the turn in his condition comes as *me lare onlag þurh leohtne had* (God ‘bestowed knowledge (of the Cross) on me through a form of light’) (l.1245). This seems to parallel the creation of the ingate, exposing the form of the artefact inside the mould for the first time to a ray of light. (3) The casting process is next. It involves pouring molten gold, or silver, or another refined substance (as mould casting was used with precious metals) into the mould, leaving it to solidify. This corresponds to the poet’s description of God’s dispensation of his gift, which is poured into his mind (ll.1246-7). (4) After the metal has solidified, the mould is broken open to reveal the artefact. The poet’s ample insistence on the process of release parallels this last stage in the fabrication of the artefact (ll.1248-50).<sup>31</sup> All the stages of the creation of an artefact through mould manufacturing and mould casting are neatly alluded to one by one in Cynewulf’s account of poetic composition. The artefact cast in this act of craftsmanship is of course the Cross which both the protagonists of *Elene* and the poet himself try to find in the poem. This symbolic act of craftsmanship parallels the casting of the Cross which occurs towards the end of the narrative and is another instance of the conflation of the material and immaterial throughout the poem.

Cynewulf’s portrayal of God as the master craftsman reflects the Gifts-of-Men paradigm’s tenet of the limitation of human skill. Human creativity is subsumed under the agency of an all-powerful artisan, who owns the blueprints and decides at what point a mould is ready for casting (once it has formed an orthodox ‘shape’). The subtle change of pronouns (there is a return to the first person as the agent of revelation in l.1253, *ær ic þæt wundor onwripen hæfde*) indicates that the creative process is a joint effort between God and the poet, but with God in overall control of the creative act. Indeed, the main goal for Elene and for the poet, and the primary purpose of the poem, is to recover the vision which God himself laid into Constantine’s mind at the outset. The prescribed *modus operandi* is therefore an act of *cræft*.

While *cræft* is the predominant notion of craftsmanship in *Elene*, it is not the only one. The description of the process of poetic craftsmanship is divided into two, with the first half

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<sup>31</sup> The technical information is based on Coatsworth and Pinder, *Goldsmith*, pp.64-84.

characterised as a state of sinfulness, emotional distress and a personal constraint described with the notion of binding. This two-fold distinction mirrors the division between the Jewish people who are described as condemned to endure affliction for all eternity and are said to be led astray by the devil's *searwum* (*searo*) and the Christians who, having found *craft*, or the Cross, have opened a path to salvation. In the previous chapter I pointed out that *searo* is used to denote the Jewish people's epistemological constraint. I also observed how the poem accepts this constraint as a necessity for the truth of Christianity to be established. On the lexical and artistic levels, this co-dependence finds its representation in the encasing of the Cross in gold and its adornment with gems through the smiths' *searocraftum* to underline the paradoxical truth of how the True Cross, once it is unearthed, must be concealed in order to be revealed. Similarly, the poet-persona's suffering at the beginning of the epilogue appears to be an integral part of the creative process. He is engaged in an intense mental process which seems to guide him towards the Cross, while simultaneously being led to a state of compunction through a combination of his sinfulness, his emotional suffering, and maybe his incipient knowledge of the Cross. This precise description of the poet-persona's mental state is an interesting addition to the numerous portrayals of smiths as possessing a distinctive mental faculty, occasionally seen as defining their craftsmanship (Chapter One). In this instance, the mental state which initiates the act of craftsmanship, a form of compunction, constitutes a desire or love for God. This love is rewarded with wisdom (God *wisdom onwreah*, l.1242), a quality frequently invoked in the most positive depictions of smiths in the corpus. The epilogue to *Elene* provides us with a unique view into what may constitute the elusive artistic impetus, one specifically associated with the exercise of *craft*.

At the same time the integration of the binding motif into the state leading up to the reception of *craft* recalls the tradition of craftsmanship examined in Chapter Two. While *craft* is the main form of craftsmanship, *searo* is necessary for *craft* to occur. In this the poet-persona may be likened to Weland, the bound craftsman who shaped superlative artefacts in captivity. The poem also validates the darker tradition of the fallen craftsman by depicting craftsmanship as an engine of redemption. In fact, in Cynewulf's vision of the Last Judgement at the very end of the poem, human souls have to

pass through a furnace in which they are *asodene* ('purified in the fire by seething'), which the poet likens to the process of gold being *amered* ('purified by fire') and *gemylded* ('melted').<sup>32</sup> Cynewulf chooses vocabulary from a very technical register, indicating the process of refining metal through melting it at a hot temperature.<sup>33</sup> By extending his metallurgical metaphor thus, the poet shows a link between craftsmanship and redemption and displays his awareness of different notions of craftsmanship and how they interact. Cynewulf too is keenly aware of the myth of the fallen craftsman who may find redemption through directing his art towards God.

In Cynewulf's poetics, the poet receives a gift from God. This gift must be differentiated from inspiration, as it comes in a very material form. The fact that its consistency is liquid may be a remote reference to the Germanic myth of Odin's mead. However, it takes on a decidedly Anglo-Saxon consistency. In spite of Cynewulf's ambitions of stylistic excellence, his vision of poetic creation is not written with a reference to the 'traditional' vocabulary of technical ability. If anything, his emphasis on the search for knowledge, and his image of the poetic gift as a substance transferred into the 'container' of his brain, indicate that the gift of poetry is as much about content as it is about style. The process of poetic composition involves thought processes on a variety of ideas from different sources in search for a truth which has to be found before the creative process can be initiated. This notion is far removed from the theories of oral poetry which imply spontaneous composition, enabled by a high degree of technical versatility.

Although judgements about artistic merit must be personal, Cynewulf excels at binding this poem together as an artefact, deftly manipulating the layers of the verbal and material realities that represent the Cross. One of the most fundamental contributions to literary theory comes from St. Augustine, who maintained that *verbum est uniuscuiusque rei signum*, 'the word is a sign of any kind of thing'.<sup>34</sup> In Elene's epilogue on the process of poetic composition, as well as the image of the ring of weeping and the cross of Constantine's vision, the abstract notions of poetic inspiration, religious fervour and heavenly support become reified to take on the shape of artefacts. In the latter

<sup>32</sup> *Hie asodene beoð, / asundrod fram synnum, swa smæte gold / þæt in wylme bið womma gehwylcres, / þurh ofnes fyr, eall geclænsod / amered ond gemylded* (ll.1308b-1312a).

<sup>33</sup> Cf. Coatsworth and Pinder, *Goldsmith*, Appendix A.

<sup>34</sup> Augustine, *De Dialectica*, ed. J. Pinborg, trans. B. Darrell Jackson (Dordrecht and Boston, 1975), p.5.

instances, but also in numerous other examples of craftsmanship, and numerous uses of *searo*, *orþanc* and *cræft* examined in this thesis, the material realities seem indeed more real than the words that create them.

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