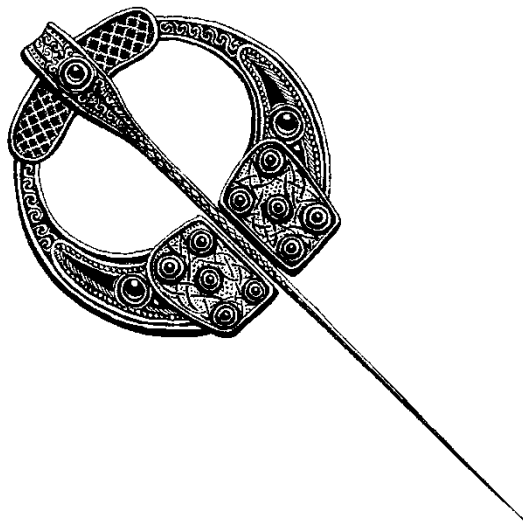


The Cambridge Colloquium in Anglo-Saxon, Norse and Celtic is a yearly spring conference organized by postgraduate students of the Department of Anglo-Saxon, Norse and Celtic at the University of Cambridge.

Information on the next Colloquium, including details of registration and submission of abstracts, may be found on the Colloquium's official website: <http://www.asnc.cam.ac.uk/ccasnc/>.

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## CONTENTS

<i>Abbreviations</i>	vi
<i>Preface</i>	vii
<i>Colloquium Report</i>	viii
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	ix
Exploring the Positive Exilic Hero in <i>Christ and Satan</i> and <i>Guthlac A</i> Nancy Jiang	1
Faith in Translation: <i>Friðþjófs saga</i> Revisited Thomas Spray	20
The <i>Fornaldarsaga</i> in a Dream: Weaving Fantastical Textures in <i>Stjörnu-Odda draumr</i> Jonathan Y. H. Hui	48
<i>Eald æfensceop</i> : Poetic Composition and the Authority of the Aged in Old English Verse Harriet Soper	74
Vain Spells or Vain Songs? The Meaning of the ‘uanissima carmina et friuoleas incantationes’ in the Hagiography of Saint Dunstan of Canterbury, 997–1130 Jesse Harrington	101

## ABBREVIATIONS

Bosworth-Toller	<i>An Anglo-Saxon Dictionary: Based on the Manuscript Collections of the Late Joseph Bosworth</i> , ed. and enlarged by T. Northcote Toller (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1898).
CCCM	Corpus Christianorum Continuatio Mediaevalis.
CCSL	Corpus Christianorum Series Latina.
DOE	<i>Dictionary of Old English: A to G Online</i> , ed. by Angus Cameron and others (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 2007) < <a href="http://tapor.library.utoronto.ca/doe/dict/index.html">http://tapor.library.utoronto.ca/doe/dict/index.html</a> >.
EETS	The Early English Text Society.
Gneuss	Helmut Gneuss, <i>Handlist of Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts: A List of Manuscripts and Manuscript Fragments Written or Owned in England up to 1100</i> (Tempe: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2001).
Holm. papp.	Stockholm, Kungliga biblioteket, pappir [= paper manuscripts].
JEGP	<i>Journal of English and Germanic Philology</i> .
MGH	Monumenta Germaniae Historica.
MS	Manuscript.
OE	Old English.

## PREFACE

It gives me great pleasure to introduce the seventeenth number of *Quaestio Insularis*, the journal of the annual Cambridge Colloquium in Anglo-Saxon, Norse and Celtic (CCASNC). Both the journal and the Colloquium, established in 1999 on the initiative of the postgraduate community of the Department of Anglo-Saxon, Norse and Celtic, have maintained an impressively high standard, driven by the enthusiasm and commitment of successive cohorts of students. The 2016 conference was highly successful and focused on the theme of Faith and Fabrication, which elicited a stimulating variety of papers given by graduates from a wide range of institutions, headed up by the plenary speaker Professor Richard Gameson, who shed new light on the St Augustine Gospels and its illustrations. The Department of Anglo-Saxon, Norse and Celtic is delighted to continue its association with CCASNC and its published proceedings. *Quaestio Insularis* 17 and all back numbers of the journal can be ordered directly from the Department's website ([www.asnc.cam.ac.uk](http://www.asnc.cam.ac.uk)).

Dr Rosalind Love  
Head of the Department of Anglo-Saxon, Norse and Celtic  
University of Cambridge



## COLLOQUIUM REPORT

The 2016 Colloquium in Anglo-Saxon, Norse and Celtic took place in Room GR 06/07 of the Faculty of English on Saturday 13 February. The audience enjoyed a day of lively discussion on the theme of ‘Faith and Fabrication’, followed by a dinner hosted at Selwyn College. We were delighted to welcome nine postgraduate speakers from institutes around the country as well as our keynote speaker Professor Richard Gameson from Durham University, who invited us to be the first to hear the results of his analysis regarding the pigmentation of the St Augustine Gospels. Our speakers approached the conference’s theme from every angle — historical, palaeographical, literary and linguistic — and the diverse exchange of ideas culminated in some common reflections on the challenges involved in the faithful translation and interpretation of medieval texts and the importance of examining the intersections of sacred and secular discourse. As the conference drew to a close, we expressed our thanks and appreciation for our speakers, the organising committee and, in particular, our tireless team of undergraduate helpers — James Miller, Amrit Sidhu-Brar, Timothy Liam Waters and Basha Wells-Dion — for their hard-working efforts which enabled the day to run so smoothly.

### Session I (*Chair: Ben Allport*)

Fraser McNair, ‘Time and Norman Sanctity in Dudo of Saint-Quentin’s *Historia Normannorum*’

Agnieszka Mikołajczyk, ‘One King to Rule them all? Papal Voice in the Negotiation of Royal Authority in Iceland in *Þórðar saga kakala* and *Hákonar saga Hákonarsonar*’

Nancy Jiang, ‘The Theme of Exile within Old English Christian Poetry: Developing the Positive Exilic Hero’

Plenary Speaker (*Chair: Katherine Olley*)

Professor Richard Gameson, 'Faith and Fabrication in the St Augustine Gospels'

Session II (*Chair: Rebecca Thomas*)

Thomas Spray, 'Faith in Translation: *Friðþjófs saga* Revisited'

Alex Sigston, 'The Fabric and Fabrication of Medieval Welsh Law: A Textual and Semantic Analysis of Nawdd, "Protection, Sanctuary"'

Jonathan Y. H. Hui, 'The *Fornaldarsaga* in a Dream: Fabricating Fantastical Textures in *Stjörnu-Odda draumr*'

Session III (*Chair: Ben Guy*)

Harriet Soper, '*Eald æfensceop*: Poetic Craft and the Authority of the Aged in Old English Literature'

Mark Laynesmith, 'The Making of a Martyr: Christian Britain and the Passion of St Alban of Verulamium'

Jesse Harrington, 'Vain Spells or Vain Songs?: The 'vanissima carmina et friuoleas incantationes' in the Hagiography of St Dunstan of Canterbury'

The members of the colloquium committee for 2015–16 were:

Ben Guy, Katherine Olley, Ben Allport, David McCay, Rebecca Thomas, Indeg Williams and Jon Wright.

#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

*Quaestio Insularis* 17 was edited by Ben Guy, Katherine Olley, Ben Allport, Rebecca Thomas, Indeg Williams and Jon Wright. The editors wish to acknowledge the assistance of Caitlin Ellis, Dr Rosalind Love and our anonymous peer reviewers. Editorial design is by Alistair Vining and the *Quaestio Insularis* logo was drawn by Katharine Scarfe Beckett. The production of this volume and the

successful running of the conference have been made possible through the generosity of the Department of Anglo-Saxon, Norse and Celtic and the support of the Faculty of English.

## Exploring the Positive Exilic Hero in *Christ and Satan* and *Guthlac A*

Nancy Jiang  
University of Oxford

The Germanic hero is fundamentally reliant upon the society within which he operates. As construed by Brian Murdoch, ‘the hero is a warrior in a realistic context [...] whose acts of fame are given meaning only within a political construct. Individual prowess is not enough’.<sup>1</sup> For Murdoch, the hero is synonymous with the warrior, who requires both a community and a shared enemy to fight against. This *comitatus* ethos shapes expressions of the Germanic heroic ideal such as that found in *Beowulf*:

Ic ðæt mæl geman þær we medu þegun  
þonne we geheton ussum hlaforde  
in bior-sele, ðe us ðas beagas geaf,  
þæt we him ða guð-getawa gyldan woldon.<sup>2</sup>

I remember the time, where we took our mead together, when  
we made promises to our prince in the beer-hall, who gave us

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<sup>1</sup> Brian Murdoch, *The Germanic Hero: Politics and Pragmatism in Early Medieval Poetry* (London: Hambledon Press, 1996), p. 4.

<sup>2</sup> *Beowulf*, ll. 2633–36, in *The Beowulf Manuscript: Complete Texts; and The Fight at Finnsburg*, ed. and trans. by R. D. Fulk (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010), p. 258. All subsequent citations from *Beowulf* are taken from this edition.

these rings — that we would pay him back for the war-equipment.<sup>3</sup>

Given the communal context of the Germanic heroic ideal, the state of exile is a particularly abhorrent concept. It is therefore essential for establishing the cultural stability of Germanic heroism, providing a negative counterbalance which reinforces the goodness of the heroic ideal.<sup>4</sup> As a result, scholarly research conducted on the exilic motifs within Old English poetry typically interprets them through predominantly negative paradigms.<sup>5</sup> However, this article will explore the emergence of a positive model of exilic heroism within *Christ and Satan* (Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Junius 11) and *Guthlac A* (Exeter Cathedral Library, MS 3501; the ‘Exeter Book’), subverting the original motifs by presenting the conditions of exile as not only desirable but also integral to the new conception of the Christian warrior.

Firstly, I reflect upon some ideas within Old English poetry which give shape to our current understanding of ‘exile’ within Anglo-Saxon culture. Building on this foundation, I provide a literary

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<sup>3</sup> Translation from Roy M. Liuzza, *Beowulf: A New Verse Translation* (Peterborough: Broadway Press, 2000), p. 134. All subsequent translations of *Beowulf* are taken from Liuzza’s translation.

<sup>4</sup> Robert E. Bjork, ‘The Voluntary Exile of the Wanderer’, in *Old English Literature: Critical Essays*, ed. by Roy M. Liuzza (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2002), pp. 315–24 (p. 316).

<sup>5</sup> There are a number of important and influential studies on the theme of exile in Old English literature. See Stanley B. Greenfield, *Hero and Exile: The Art of Old English Poetry*, ed. by George H. Brown (London: Hambledon, 1989); Andy Orchard, *Pride and Prodigies: Studies in the Monsters of the Beowulf-Manuscript* (Cambridge: Brewer, 2003). For discussions about elegy and the theme of exile, see also Anne L. Klinck, *Old English Elegies: A Critical Edition and Genre Study* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1992).

comparison between *Christ and Satan* and *Guthlac A*, demonstrating both a continuation and subversion of this important Anglo-Saxon motif within a Christianised context.

Stanley Greenfield notes that the theme of exile within Anglo-Saxon poetry is bound to a number of formulaic images.<sup>6</sup> For the benefit of this article, I highlight two essential facets of the exile theme derived from these images. Firstly, the state of exile is physical isolation from comfort and familiarity. As demonstrated in the *Wanderer*, the *anhaga*, ‘one who dwells alone’,<sup>7</sup> is described as:

wine-dryhtnes  
leofes lar-cwidum longe forþolian. (ll. 37–38)

without the councils of his beloved lord for a long time.

An emphasis on deprivation is one of the most important characteristics of the *anhaga*. The exile is ‘eðle bidæled’ [deprived of homeland] (l. 20a), deprived of his fellow retainers, ‘wineleas, wonsælig mon genimeð him wulfas to geferan’ [friendless, the unhappy man takes wolves for companions, for himself],<sup>8</sup> and deprived of his lord. In Anglo-Saxon poetry, these formulas are readily adopted into a biblical context. In *Christ I* from the Exeter Book, Christ’s coming is heralded by voices speaking in Germanic exilic tropes to express their longing to be united with God:

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<sup>6</sup> Greenfield, pp. 125–31.

<sup>7</sup> *The Wanderer*, l. 1a, in Bruce Mitchell and Fred C. Robinson, *A Guide to Old English*, 8th edn (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), pp. 279–83 (p. 279). All subsequent citations from *The Wanderer* are taken from this edition. Translations are my own.

<sup>8</sup> *Maxims I*, l. 146, in *The Exeter Book*, ed. by George Krapp and Elliot Dobbie (New York: Columbia University Press, 1936), pp. 156–62 (p. 161). Translation is my own.

gedo usic þæs wyrðe, þe he to wuldre forlet  
þa we heanlice hweorfan sceoldan  
on þis enge lond, eðle bescyrede.

Make us worthy of this, whom he let into heaven when we have had to turn away miserably into this narrow land, deprived of homeland.<sup>9</sup>

The implication that humanity in *Christ I* is in exile makes Christ's advent all the more urgent, adding a greater sense of anticipation beyond merely the *admirabile commercium*, 'wonderful exchange', described in the Advent Antiphons Lyric XII, which is one of its potential sources.<sup>10</sup>

Secondly, as Anne Klinck argues, the exile motif is often used to frame the process of internal contemplation, either in providing a route to understanding lament, as seen in the *Wanderer*, or in aiding consolation.<sup>11</sup> This is demonstrated in another Exeter Book poem, *Deor*, where the state of *winter-cealde wræce*, 'winter-cold exile',<sup>12</sup> is used to illustrate how events and sorrow come and pass quickly, with the hope that their exile too will pass: 'þæs ofereode; þisses swa mæg' [That passed; this will also] (l. 6). As in *Deor*, exile is integral to the visualisation of consolation in *Christ II*. The long and cold journey

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<sup>9</sup> *Christ I*, ll. 30–32, in *Old English Poems of Christ and His Saints*, ed. and trans. by Mary Clayton, Dumbarton Oaks Medieval Library, 27 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013), pp. 1–32 (p. 4).

<sup>10</sup> *Sources and Analogues of Old English Poetry: The Major Latin Texts in Translation*, trans. by Michael J. B. Allen and Daniel G. Calder (Cambridge: Brewer, 1976), p. 73.

<sup>11</sup> Klinck, p. 226.

<sup>12</sup> *Deor*, l. 7, in *Old English Short Poems, Volume II: Wisdom and Lyric*, ed. and trans. by Robert E. Bjork, Dumbarton Oaks Medieval Library, 32 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014), pp. 98–100 (p. 98).

over the oceans forcibly travelled by the exiles leads to a restful harbour away from the horrors of excommunication,<sup>13</sup> if one trusts in the Son of God. In *Christ II*, his spirit leads the traveller from the world's turbulence into a harbour of heavenly rest:

Godes Gæst-Sunu,    ondus giefe sealde  
þæt we oncnawan magun    ofer ceoles bord  
hwær we sælen sceolon    sund-hengestas.<sup>14</sup>

The spiritual son of God gave us the gift that we might know over the ship's side where we must moor our sea-steeds.

Exilic motifs are, therefore, not only used to describe an external condition but can operate within an internal framework. In summary, the state of exile stands for a negative movement away from comfort and community into a static solitude. The formulaic tropes of exile used within Old English poetry both express a physical condition as well as work to shape internal contemplation. These motifs can easily cross between the sacred and secular, often with little alteration.

However, in other Exeter Book poems, Christian contemplation relates to a call to action which ought to follow meditation. For example, the narrator of *Resignation* pleads for correct understanding during his contemplation, yet afterwards asks for a test to prove the efficacy of this repose:

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<sup>13</sup> See the *Seafarer*: 'þæt se mon ne wat    þe him on foldan    fægrost limpeþ, | hu ice earm-cearig    is-cealdne sæ | winter wunade    wræccan lastum' [The man on land for whom things happen pleasantly does not know how I, careworn, occupied the ice-cold sea in winter on the paths of exile]. *The Seafarer*, ll. 12b–15, in *A Guide to Old English*, pp. 285–90 (p. 286).

<sup>14</sup> *Christ II*, ll. 860b–62, in *The Old English Poems of Cynewulf*, ed. and trans. by Robert E. Bjork, *Dumbarton Oaks Medieval Library*, 23 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013), pp. 1–32 (p. 32).



Forgif þu me, min frea    fierst ond ondgiet  
ond geþyld ond gemynd    þinga gehwylces  
þara þu me, soþfæst cyning,    sendan wylle  
to cunnunge.<sup>15</sup>

Give to me, my Lord, time and insight, and patience and mindfulness about everything that you intend, righteous king, to send to me as a test.

I suggest that alongside the traditional use of the exile theme in Old English Christian poetry to shape lament and contemplation, it can also function to encourage action. In *Christ and Satan*, this is primarily achieved through the emergence of a positive heroic figure who adopts many attributes of the Germanic exile.

The emergence of this new conception of exile in *Christ and Satan* can be most acutely witnessed through a close comparison between the two titular characters, both of whom exemplify certain exilic tropes. To demonstrate this, I will begin by comparing two closely related passages, the first referring to Satan, the second referring to Christ, describing their respective descents into hell.

Hwearf þa to helle    þa he gehened wæs,  
Godes andsaca;    dydon his gingran swa  
gifre and grædige,    þa hig God bedraf  
in þæt hate hof    þam is hel nama.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> *Resignation*, ll. 22–25a, in *Old English Shorter Poems, Volume I: Religious and Didactic*, ed. and trans. by Christopher A. Jones, Dumbarton Oaks Medieval Library, 15 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012), pp. 110–17 (p. 112).

He departed into hell, when he had been overthrown, God's enemy; so too had his followers, rapacious and greedy, when God drove them into the fiery dwelling whose name is hell.

Hwearf þa to helle hæleð bearnum,  
meotod þurh mihte wolde manna rim,  
fela þusenda, forð gelædan  
up to eðle. (ll. 398–401a)

He departed then to hell, the creator by means of his power to the sons of men; he intended to lead out many thousands of people up to their homeland.

These passages are used by Charles Sleeth to demonstrate the poem's structure, in that Satan and Christ both undertake journeys towards and away from power.<sup>17</sup> However, I would argue that alongside the well-known descend-to-ascend motif, here the poet also presents a meeting point between a negative and positive exilic model. Satan's expulsion into hell is depicted as a negative state of exile, a misfortune which he continually emphasises, where he must 'wadan wræc-lastas' [wander the paths of exile] (l. 120a).

Forðon ic sceal hean and earm hweorfan ðy widor  
wadan wræc-lastas, wuldre benemed,  
duguðum bedeled, nænigne dream agan  
uppe mid ænglum, þes ðe ic ær gecwæð

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<sup>16</sup> *Christ and Satan*, ll. 189–92, in *Christ and His Saints*, pp. 301–52 (p. 314). All subsequent citations from and translations of *Christ and Satan* are taken from this edition.

<sup>17</sup> Charles R. Sleeth, *Studies in Christ and Satan* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1982), p. 19.

þæt ic wære seolfa swægles brytta  
wihta wealdend. (ll. 119–24a)

Wherefore, downcast and wretched, I must wander far, an exile journey, stripped of glory, deprived of virtue, without joy in heaven among the angels, because I said of old that I was king of glory and lord of all.

In fact, Leonard Frey uses Satan’s exilic laments as a prime example of how successfully this theme has been adapted to the religious culture, in which ultimate Christian hardship can be described through Anglo-Saxon terms.<sup>18</sup> Despite Satan’s *gingran*, ‘followers’, and his *hof*, ‘dwelling’, in hell, he still refers to himself as the exiled figure, fulfilling Robert E. Bjork’s description of the Wanderer: someone who is an ‘unwilling, miserable recipient of his society’s worst fate’.<sup>19</sup>

In lines 398–401, which I have placed parallel to the previous passage, the poet places Christ in an exilic position, separated from his homeland and isolated from community. As an individual *hæleda* without a *comitatus* Christ is also depicted as singularly disconnected from the multitude he will save, whose mass is emphasised through several measure words following *manna*: ‘wolde manna rim | Fela þusenda’ (ll. 399b–400a). These terms are used in a similar effect to demonstrate the immensity of hell: ‘to helle-duru hund þusenda | milagemearcodes’ [to the door of hell was a hundred thousand miles in extent] (ll. 720–21a). The effect of accentuating Christ’s singleness by placing him among multitudes is also seen at the precise moment of his entrance into hell in lines 365–81. Hell is peopled: ‘þa he to helle hnigan sceolde | and his hired mid hine’ [he was forced to sink

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<sup>18</sup> Leonard H. Frey, ‘Exile and Elegy in Anglo-Saxon Christian Epic Poetry’, *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* (hereafter *JEGP*), 62 (1963), 293–302 (p. 294).

<sup>19</sup> Bjork, ‘Voluntary Exile’, p. 315.

down to hell and his followers with him] (ll. 374–75a). However, Christ's lone status persists despite entering a crowd:

þæt hi mosten in þone ecan andwlitan seon  
buton endeþa, *him egsa becom*  
dyne for deman þa he duru in helle  
bræc and begde. (ll. 379–80a) [emphasis added]

They look upon the face of the eternal one, forever without end.  
Then *a terrifying thing approached them*, a din before the judge made  
when he broke and bent the doors of hell.

The B-verse of this half line is enveloped between regular A-verses so that amidst the throng of noise and people, Christ is still the individual *egsa*, 'terrifying thing', who cannot be reconciled to the scene in which he finds himself. In contrast to the *Gospel of Nicodemus*, which is a potential source for this poem, a dialogue between Satan and Christ before Christ enters hell is replaced by a general lament from the collective devils.<sup>20</sup> In doing so, Christ's singularity is emphasised even further. In *Christ and Satan*, there is only a solitary Son of God at hell's door to face a horde of demons.

When these two exilic figures are placed together, a new, positive exilic hero emerges, one which takes the conditions of exile yet moves away from the negative exilic state. Satan is in a similar hiatus to that of the Germanic exile, where their heroic purpose is suspended. He is constantly placed in a position of unknowing, unable to recognise his own identity at the beginning or that of Christ at the end.<sup>21</sup> Alongside his demons, Satan is described as incessantly

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<sup>20</sup> Robert Emmett Finnegan, *Christ and Satan: A Critical Edition* (Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1977), p. 51.

<sup>21</sup> Ruth Wenlau, "The Power of Knowledge and the Location of the Reader in "Christ and Satan"", *JEGP*, 97 (1998), 1–12 (p. 2).

wandering: ‘Blace hworfon | scinnan forscepene’ [the dark deformed demons wandered about] (ll. 71b–72a). However, he is also forever bound to the same place: ‘fæste gebunden | fyre and ligeþæt wæs fæstlic þreat’ [firmly bound in fire and flame; that was an immutable punishment] (ll. 323a–23b). It is important to note that Satan is never described as journeying into exile but his presence, as Peter Dendle notes, is simply there in a fixed space.<sup>22</sup> Andy Orchard describes this type of aimless wandering as inherent to that of the criminal, a theory which can be traced to Augustine in the Hiberno-Latin saints’ Lives: ‘Criminals wander fruitlessly round and round’.<sup>23</sup> This image originated from the Psalms: ‘the impious walk round about’ (Psalm 11. 9, Vulgate).<sup>24</sup>

Christ’s exilic journey into hell, however, has a distinctive purpose and direction. Following the descend-to-ascend motif, he exiles himself temporarily from heaven to descend into hell, where, at his lowest point, he raises the lost souls to join him in heaven. Like the Wanderer, Christ’s solitary journey is predestined: ‘þa wæs þæs mæles mearc agangen’ [then the period of appointed time had elapsed] (l. 499). However, unlike the Wanderer, Christ is the one in control, not only of himself but of all those he came to save. Christ’s entrance into hell is marked by the numerous faces, joyous at the sight of their saviour’s head destroying hell’s gates to bring them salvation: ‘Blis wearð monnum | þa hi hælendes heafod gesawon’ [happy were the people to see their saviour’s head] (ll. 380b–81). He is essentially singular, without the aid of man (‘he ana is earla gescefta’ [he alone is the lord of creation] (l. 584)), yet continually mindful of the community of people whom he has heroically rescued and for whom he is still interceding.

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<sup>22</sup> Peter Dendle, *Satan Unbound: The Devil in Old English Narrative Literature* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001), p. 5.

<sup>23</sup> Orchard, p. 60.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

Christ's heroism is one which stresses eventual community yet also a state of separation and singleness. It is this positive exilic heroism which the audience is urged to follow. The poet encourages his readers similarly to set their minds on a path towards God instead of the earthly home: 'þær is cuðre lif | þonne we on eorðan mægen æfre gestreonan' [life there is more excellent than we may ever obtain on earth] (ll. 595b–96). Like Christ, the faithful must also embark upon a journey away from the world where eventually they will be met by the gates of heaven, the ultimate homeland. In *Christ and Satan*, it is this image of the gates which becomes the climax to the description of Judgement Day:

þær is the geat gylden   gimmum gefrætewod,  
wynnum bewunden,   þam þe in wuldres leoht  
gongan moten   to godes rice. (ll. 647–49)

There is a golden gate adorned with gems, enwreathed with joy,  
for those who enter in God's kingdom.

The emphasis placed on this journey away from worldly pleasures, which all Christians ought to take, is solidified through the poem's final scene. Christ's temptation, which concludes *Christ and Satan*, breaks chronological sequence completely, effecting a transition from the Harrowing of Hell which occurs in heavenly time, to Christ's trials on earth which occur in human time.<sup>25</sup> Ruth Wenlau concludes that the poet designed the poem so that it ends with a model which the audience can emulate, encouraging a more devotional and admonishing reading.<sup>26</sup> Placing this alongside Janet Ericksen's theory that the physical state of this poem at the end of

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<sup>25</sup> Finnegan, p. 33.

<sup>26</sup> Wenlau, p. 1.

MS Junius 11 could indicate that it was more frequently read,<sup>27</sup> it is significant that the poet chooses to leave the audience with this particular image of Christ. Not one of him in heaven, but of Christ in arguably one of his most isolated moments on earth: the forty days endured in the desert. The poet stresses that the audience ought to ‘hælende heran georne | Criste cweman’ [obey the saviour eagerly, to please Christ] (ll. 594b–95a), and the Christocentrism of this command is preconfigured by this poem’s description of Pentecost. It is not the Holy Spirit which the disciples receive here but Christ’s own spirit:

nergende Crist gecwæð þæt he þæs  
ymb tene niht twelf apostolas  
mid his Gastes gife gingran geswiðde. (ll. 569–71)

Christ the saviour also said that he, after ten nights, will strengthen the twelve apostles with the gift of his spirit.

Obedience to Christ is achieved through imitating his life on earth. Therefore, since Christ embraced a life of solitude, denying all pleasures which could relieve him of that condition, the Christian must do likewise.<sup>28</sup> Germanic motifs of exile can still be witnessed in Christ’s exilic heroism but the notion of the involuntary, punished exile is completely altered. Satan, despite being furnished with all that a Germanic exile lacks, is in a state of mental exile, deprived from the glory of God. In contrast, Christ lives the path of exile yet gains the

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<sup>27</sup> Janet S. Ericksen, ‘The Wisdom Poem at the End of MS Junius 11’, in *The Poems of MS Junius 11: Basic Readings*, ed. by R. M. Liuzza, Basic Readings in Anglo-Saxon England, 8 (New York: Routledge, 2002), pp. 302–26 (p. 314).

<sup>28</sup> See Satan’s temptations for Christ: ‘Ic þe geselle on þines seolfes dom | folc and foldan’ [I will give you people and land, as much as you want]. In return, Christ says: ‘Gewit þu, awyrgda’ [Depart you cursed being] (ll. 684–90a).

ultimate reward at the end. While the wretched mental state of an exile is still an apt illustration of a separation from God, the physical conditions within the exilic motifs become a perfect environment for a Christian hero to grow.

As in *Christ and Satan*, the negative Germanic exile and the positive exilic hero run parallel to each other in *Guthlac A*, the goodness of one reinforced by the negativity of the other. This is illustrated through Guthlac's rebuke of the demons:

Gefeoð in firenum, frofre ne wenað  
þæt ge wræc-siða wyrpe gebiden.<sup>29</sup>

You rejoice in bad deeds, with no hope of relief, that you may  
experience change from your exile.

The demon's exile makes Guthlac's own solitary condition far more poignant: 'wæs se martyre from mon-cynnes | synnum asundrad' [he was a martyr, cut off from mankind's sins] (ll. 514b–15). For Bjork, saints are 'humans transcended. Beyond life, they rise above the mutable world, becoming one with the imperishable, unchanging body of Christ'.<sup>30</sup> In the final section of this paper, I demonstrate that looking at *Guthlac A* in light of the positive exilic figure aids a more coherent reading of Guthlac's development into the Christ-like exemplary that Bjork deemed essential for sainthood.

Jane Roberts notes that often *Guthlac A* is read as a collection of disparate entities rather than a unified whole, where homiletic fragments, didactic dialogues and a heroic plot-line merge disjointedly

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<sup>29</sup> *Guthlac A*, ll. 508–09, in *Christ and His Saints*, pp. 89–146 (p. 124). All subsequent citations from and translations of *Guthlac A* are taken from this edition.

<sup>30</sup> Robert E. Bjork, *The Old English Verse Saints' Lives: A Study in Direct Discourse and the Iconography of Style* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1985), p. 20.



together.<sup>31</sup> However, reading *Guthlac A* in light of the purposeful exilic figure clarifies Guthlac's development as a saint. Controversially, this reading also demonstrates a level of growth for the Old English saint, instead of simply being predestined for perfection. The most important feature of a saint is his exemplary nature, functioning neatly within the apparatus of spirituality for the Anglo-Saxon age.<sup>32</sup> The establishment of Guthlac's exemplary nature, initiating him into sainthood, begins with his choosing between these two models of exile. The conflicting voices before his journey to the fens present Guthlac firstly with the Christ-like exilic heroism which Guthlac ought to embody: 'him þas woruld | uttor lætanþonne þæt ece lif' [to give up this world more completely than eternal life] (ll. 125a–26). Secondly, Guthlac is also presented with the actual exile from heaven which he ought to reject. This is demonstrated through the demons that tempt him to 'þurh neþinge | wunne æfter worulde swa doð wræc-mægga' [through daring, strive after the world as the exiled-men do] (ll. 128a–29). In parallel to *Christ and Satan*, exilic heroism is marked by its visibility, thus propelling Guthlac into the realm of exemplary sainthood when he chooses the appropriate model to imitate. Like Christ's exilic journey into hell, Guthlac's journey into the 'dygle stow' [remote spot] (l. 215) is marked by his perceptibility, thus becoming 'bysen on Brytene, siþþan biorg gestah | eadig oretta' [an example to many in Britain when the blessed man climbed the mountain there] (ll. 174b–76). Guthlac is worthy to be a saint firstly by correctly choosing the positive exilic figure, as found in MS Junius 11, and then by fitting into its mould.

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<sup>31</sup> *The Guthlac Poems of the Exeter Book*, ed. by Jane Roberts (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979), p. 30.

<sup>32</sup> Michael Lapidge, 'The Saintly Life in Anglo-Saxon England', in *The Cambridge Companion to Old English Literature*, ed. by Malcolm Godden and Michael Lapidge, 2nd edn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), pp. 251–72 (p. 269).

Following his establishment as an exemplary figure, Guthlac's status as martyr is also achieved through a distinctive emphasis on his exilic condition. It becomes the main source for the demons' anger and fear towards Guthlac, similar to the terrifying singularity of Christ:

wæron teon-smiðas tornes fulle,  
cwædon þæt him Guðlac eac Gode sylfum  
earfeþa mæst ana gefremede. (ll. 205–07)

The evil-doers were filled with fury, said that Guthlac alone, apart from God himself, had inflicted the greatest hardships on them.

His state of singleness is also the focalised point of assault for the demons that continually tempt him away from his exilic condition: 'fela ge me eardapurh idel word | aboden habbað' [you have offered me, with your empty words, many dwelling places] (ll. 309–10a). Indeed, the word 'martyr' comes directly after Guthlac's Christ-like trials in the desert, which occur in lines 411–50. During this trial, as he is led by the demons to view all of which he is deprived in his exile, Guthlac's martyrdom is finally fully realised: 'he martyrhad mode gelufade' [he loved martyrdom in his heart] (l. 472). The demons are continually bringing Guthlac towards dwelling places, showing him houses on earth or bringing him towards the gates of hell, 'þæt atule hus' [that terrible house] (l. 562b), and his martyrdom becomes solidified through his continued rejection of the various places of dwelling, marking out his journey away from earthly pleasure towards his final resting place in heaven: 'in minum feorhlocan, | breostum inbryrded to þam betran ham' [in my heart, inspired in my breast towards that better home] (ll. 654a–55). This is in direct contrast with the state of the demons. The demons, as noted

by Manish Sharma, can only engender a circular movement.<sup>33</sup> They never successfully force Guthlac into the buildings to which they bring him, while for Guthlac these trials structure his continual progression into sainthood as well as reinstating the future destination of his solitary journey. The demons are, therefore, similarly trapped like the inert devils of *Christ and Satan*, for, while movement is granted to those in *Guthlac A*, it is still emphasised as ultimately futile. The establishment of Guthlac's martyrdom, not through the shedding of blood but by conducting a focused devotion towards God, relies essentially on the continual reinforcement of the positive exilic hero motif.

In *Christ and Satan*, Christ's exilic heroism is marked by his service to community despite being isolated from it. I would argue that, likewise, the final test that Guthlac undergoes to become part of Christ's body is defined by this attribute of the positive exilic hero. Like Christ, Guthlac is in a position of intercession: 'gesynta bædsawla gehywlcre' [praying salvation for each soul] (l. 332). However, if this poem were to demonstrate the 'theological profundity' that Laurence Shook attributes to it,<sup>34</sup> then Guthlac's intercessory powers can only work to an extent, where granting salvation is ultimately the role of Christ. Therefore, Katherine Hume, writing on the concept of the hall in Old English poetry, notes that *Guthlac A* ultimately shifts its focus away from communal solidarity; the splendour of the hall-ideal is destroyed to be replaced by an inner hall: the body which safe-guards the soul.<sup>35</sup> Linking this to Shook's analysis of Guthlac's *beorg*, a term often used to describe the Saxon

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<sup>33</sup> Manish Sharma, 'A Reconsideration of the Structure of "Guthlac A": The Extremes of Saintliness', *JEGP*, 101 (2002), 185–200, (p. 191).

<sup>34</sup> Laurence Shook, 'The Burial Mound in "Guthlac A"', *Modern Philology*, 58 (1960), 1–10 (p. 2).

<sup>35</sup> Kathryn Hume, 'The Concept of the Hall in Old English Poetry', *Anglo-Saxon England*, 3 (1974), 63–74 (p. 71).

burial mound,<sup>36</sup> the life of Guthlac literally becomes an illustration of death to society and community. However, I would argue that Guthlac's emanation of the exilic hero presents an alternative argument. When Guthlac first steps into his exilic journey, the poet refers to him as a *bytla*, 'builder':

[...] Wæs seo londes stow  
bimipen fore monnumoþ þæt meotud onwrah  
beorg on bearwe, þa se bytla cwom  
se þær haligne ham arærde. (ll. 147b–50)

That spot in the country was hidden from men, until the creator revealed the hill in the wood, when the builder who erected his holy home there.

And again at the end when his trials are all completed: 'Sige-hreðig cwom | bytla to þam beorge' [triumphant, the builder came to that hill] (ll. 733b–34a). This image of Guthlac as builder, which has been thus engrained into his identity, unites him with all the other saints evoked by the poet at the end of the poem, who are preparing and building a house in heaven: 'fusne on forð-weg to Fæder eðle, | gearwaþ gæstes hus' [eager to depart to the Father's home, preparing the soul's house] (ll. 801–02a). Guthlac's exilic heroism is marked by the idea of building his path towards heaven through his hermetic dwelling, yet the aim and destination of his journey is not void of community but is one which strengthens it; he is actively taking part in building the house wherein the heavenly community will dwell in the nearing future. In *Christ and Satan*, Christ's exilic condition eventually sees him leading the destitute souls into the home he has built in heaven. Similarly, Guthlac, in exiling from community, is in fact moving towards it and becoming a kingdom builder for God's

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<sup>36</sup> Shook, p. 6.

people. This unites him not only with the other saints before and after him but ultimately to Christ himself.

There are different ranks under heaven: ‘Monge sindon geond middan-geard | hadas under heofonum’ [there are many, through this middle-earth, ranks under the heavens] (ll. 30–31a). The lowest are those who do not know God, then those active in a Christian community who ‘sellað ælmessan’ [give alms], ‘earme frefrað’ [console the wretched] and ‘dæghwam Dryhtne þeowiap’ [daily serve the Lord] (ll. 77–80) and finally those who ‘wuniað on westenumm’ [dwell in the wilderness] (l. 81). For these, the poet ascribes a new level, true warriors who serve the everlasting king.

[...] þa gecostan ceman þa þam cyninge þeowað  
se næfre þa lean alegað þam þe his lufan adreogeð (ll. 91–92)

[...] the tried champions who serve the king, never ending are the rewards of those who show their love to him.

By reading *Guthlac A* in light of the exilic heroism exemplified also by the character of Christ in *Christ and Satan*, the superiority of Guthlac’s eremitic existence is enriched even more. His solitary state becomes not only an attribute to his identity, but the exilic heroic model structures the development of his sainthood, thus effectively becoming his identity and the identity of those who wish to follow in his footsteps. John Damon notes how the poet in the *Guthlac A* ‘carves out a space between the monastic institutions and the secular orders for an independent holy man’.<sup>37</sup> However, I would argue that it is not merely a position between the different orders that the poet creates, but rather, through subverting the conditions of exile for the

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<sup>37</sup> John Edward Damon, *Soldier Saints and Holy Warriors: Warfare and Sanctity in the Literature of Early England* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003), p. 141.

glory of God, the poet raises a platform for the solitary life, as the highest *hadas under beofonum* possibly reached by mankind.

One of the defining elements for Greenfield in interpreting *Beowulf* as an epic tragedy is the inevitable futility of Beowulf's endeavours to save his people without leaving an heir.<sup>38</sup> The hero of *Beowulf*, despite being the pinnacle of Germanic heroism, not only needs the support of his fellow retainers around him, but even his death must be cushioned by the security of heritage. In the new developments to the Christian exilic hero in *Christ and Satan* and *Guthlac A*, one can see the poet distinctly moving away from this idea. The successful Christian hero must take on many of the attributes of the Germanic exile to imitate Christ completely in his literal 'death to the world' that he achieved on the cross. They are therefore relinquished from a dependence on brittle humanity, instead transferring that need to an all-powerful God. However, far from the solitary destitution which the Germanic exile connotes, this model of exilic heroism is essential to the Christian warrior because it functions within, as well as pointing towards, the social construct which provides their identity: the transcendent instead of transitory homeland of heaven. Michael Swanton argues that 'the saint stepped easily into the hero's niche'.<sup>39</sup> However, while the Christian hero does need to maintain many attributes traditional to the Germanic hero to sit comfortably within existing cultural paradigms, these new warriors must become their Germanic counterparts' superiors for the 'warfare of the *milites Christi*' to be truly pursued with determination.<sup>40</sup> The development of the positive exilic hero is a definitive way in which this can be achieved.

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<sup>38</sup> Greenfield, p. 16.

<sup>39</sup> Michael Swanton, *English Literature Before Chaucer* (London: Longman, 1987), p. 15.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*

## Faith in Translation: *Friðþjófs saga* Revisited

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*Friðþjófs saga ins frækna* has a unique place in the recent history of the Old Norse sagas. Its short yet intense rise to fame began in 1825, when Esaias Tegnér's poetic adaptation *Frithiofs saga* soared in popularity all across Europe, in turn inspiring a wealth of artistic interpretations.<sup>1</sup> In response to this mounting interest, the Stockholm-based Englishman George Stephens published *Frithiof's Saga, A Legend of the North* (1839), a work which contained the first complete translation of an Old Norse saga into English.<sup>2</sup> In *Frithiof*, readers found a protagonist who displayed the very finest features of the ancient North alongside the meditative maturity of their own age. In his 1994 essay on *Friðþjófs saga*, Andrew Wawn suggests that in nineteenth-century Europe the tale of *Friðþjófr* was 'better known than any other medieval Icelandic narrative except the *Prose Edda*'.<sup>3</sup>

Yet how much of what was known was truly accurate? In an age before Old Norse grammars, and in the face of often unreliable source texts, could a Swedish bishop or a British antiquarian really be expected to give readers a faithful account of heathen Norway? This paper will examine the presentation of Northern pre-Christian faith in

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<sup>1</sup> Esaias Tegnér, *Frithiofs Saga, med teckningar af A. Malmström* (Stockholm: Norstedt & Söner, 1868).

<sup>2</sup> *Frithiof's Saga, a Legend of Norway. Translated from the Swedish of Esaias Tegnér, and the Icelandic Friðþjófs saga*, trans. by George Stephens (London: Black and Armstrong; Stockholm: Bonnier, 1839).

<sup>3</sup> Andrew Wawn, 'The Cult of "Stalwart Frith-thjof" in Victorian Britain', in *Northern Antiquity: The Post-Medieval Reception of Edda and Saga*, ed. by Andrew Wawn (Enfield Lock: Hisarlik Press, 1994), pp. 211–54 (p. 222).

the original saga alongside that presented in its early nineteenth-century translations and adaptations. It will explore both the artistic expansion of the saga and the incorporation of erroneous notions of saga-age heathenism, arguing that, from its temple(s), to Baldr, to its hero's agnostic philosophy, *Friðþjófs saga* has been a mistranslated and misunderstood text.

*Friðþjófs saga* is considered one of the *fornaldarsögur*, with the original thought to date to around the year 1300.<sup>4</sup> It is not commonly read these days, so a short summary may be worthwhile.

The saga tells of the childhood foster-siblings Friðþjófr and Ingibjörg, whose love for each other is thwarted by Ingibjörg's brothers, the kings Helgi and Hálfðan. The rival king Hringr defeats the brothers in battle and demands their sister's hand in marriage. Meanwhile, Friðþjófr has been wooing Ingibjörg regardless at the nearby temple to Baldr, but now sails to Orkney to fetch the dowry for the arranged wedding. While he is at sea the brothers burn his family estate and hire witches to sink his ship, but he and his crew survive and safely collect the dowry. On arriving back in Norway, Friðþjófr discovers the full extent of the brothers' treachery and confronts them at the temple. He assaults Helgi with the bag of Orcadian silver and knocks down a statue of Baldr on the way out. Now an outlaw, Friðþjófr lives as a virtuous viking until he eventually travels to the court of King Hringr where, after a series of tests of character, he is reunited with his true love.

By the early years of the twentieth century this fairly simple saga had seen seven separate publications in the original Old Norse, derived from two main redactions: an older and shorter version, represented, for example, by the manuscripts AM 510 4to, fols 91<sup>v</sup>–96<sup>r</sup> (1540–60) and AM 568 II 4to, fols 83<sup>r</sup>–87<sup>v</sup> (1612–50); and a

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<sup>4</sup> Jonathan D. M. Evans, 'Friðþjófs saga ins frækna', in *Medieval Scandinavia: An Encyclopaedia*, ed. by Phillip Pulsiano and Kirsten Woolf (New York: Garland, 1993), p. 221.



younger, expanded version found in Holm. papp. 17 4to.<sup>5</sup> The later redaction of the saga appears to have acquired a number of plot features from *Dorsteins saga Víkingssónar* (which tells the tale of Friðþjófr's father) and the *Friðþjófsrímur* (AM 604 c 4to, fols 40–50).<sup>6</sup> Despite being included alongside the fictional *fornaldarsögur*, *Friðþjófs saga* was clearly not imagined as a lone work. It has literary connections to *Gautreks saga*, which relates the highly unsuccessful careers of Friðþjófr's sons and grandsons, and to *Hrómundar saga*

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<sup>5</sup> Note that all of the AM manuscripts cited in this article may be found in the Stofnun Árna Magnússonar í íslenskum fræðum in Reykjavík. 'Holm. papp.' refers to the paper manuscripts in the Kungliga biblioteket in Stockholm. For details of the manuscript history, see Halldór Hermannsson, *Bibliography of the Mythical-Heroic Sagas*, ed. by George William Harris, *Islandica*, 5 (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Library, 1912), pp. 13–17 (which, however, contains numerous errors); *Friðþjófs saga ins frækna*, trans. by Ludvig Larsson (Halle: Niemeyer, 1901); and *Sagan ock rimorna om Friðþjófr hinn frækni*, trans. by Ludvig Larsson (Lund: Malströms bogtryckeri, 1893), pp. i–ii. The majority of academic work on the actual manuscripts of *Friðþjófs saga* has been done by German scholars: see Franz Eduard Christoph Dietrich, *Altnordisches Lesebuch: aus der skandinavischen Poesie und Prosa bis zum XIV. Jahrhundert zusammengestellt und mit übersichtlicher Grammatik und einem Glossar versehen* (Leipzig: Brockhaus, 1843); Hermann Lüning, *Altnordische Texte: Grimnismál – Fridthjofs saga ens froekna – Krókr hinn svartí* (Zürich: Zürcher und Furrer, 1859); and Gustaf Wenz, *Die Friðþjófs saga* (Halle: Niemeyer, 1913).

<sup>6</sup> *Friðþjófs saga ins frækna*, pp. xviii–xix. Examples include the fact that the ship *Ellidá* can understand human speech in the later recension, a feature borrowed from the more fantastical *Dorsteins saga*.

*Gripssonar*, which details the story of Friðþjófr's prized golden arm-ring.<sup>7</sup>

In the early 1800s, there were two editions of the Old Norse text with which translators could work: Erik Julius Björner's *Nordiska Kämpa Dater*, and Carl Christian Rafn's *Fornaldur sögur Norðrlanda*, the latter containing both redactions.<sup>8</sup> From these, *Friðþjófs saga* saw four independent English translations in the space of just under sixty years.<sup>9</sup> But the tale's transmission was not limited to translations.

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid., p. vi. See also *The Sagas of Fridthjof the Bold*, trans. by Ben Waggoner (New Haven, CT: The Troth, 2009). The original *Hrómundar saga Gripssonar* is no longer extant; the surviving later version is taken from a series of *rímur*. See Ursula Brown, 'The Saga of Hrómund Gripsson and Þorgilssaga', *Saga-Book of the Viking Society*, 13 (1947), 51–77 (pp. 52–53); Judith Jesch, 'The Lost Literature of Medieval Iceland: Sagas of Icelanders' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University College London, 1984), p. 299; Judith Jesch, 'Hrómundr Gripsson Revisited', *Skandinavistik*, 14 (1984), 89–105.

<sup>8</sup> Erik Julius Björner, *Nordiska Kämpa Dater: i en sagoflock samlade om forna kongar och hjältar* (Stockholm: Horn, 1737); Carl Christian Rafn, *Fornaldar Sögur Norðrlanda*, 3 vols (Copenhagen: Poppsku, 1829–30), II (1829), 61–100.

<sup>9</sup> *Frithiof's Saga*, trans. by Stephens; William Morris [and Eiríkur Magnússon], 'The Story of Frithiof the Bold', *Dark Blue*, 1 (1871), 42–58 and 176–82 (repr. in *The Collected Works of William Morris, with Introductions by his Daughter May Morris*, 24 vols (London: Longmans, Green, 1910–15), x: *Three Northern Love Stories; The Tale of Beowulf* (1911), pp. 48–80); *Viking Tales of the North. The Sagas of Thorstein, Viking's Son, and Fridthjof the Bold, Translated from the Icelandic by Rasmus B. Anderson, A.M., and Jón Bjarnason. Also, Tegnér's Fridthjof's Saga, Translated into English by George Stephens*, 1st edn (Chicago: Griggs, 1877), pp. 75–111; and *A Translation of the Saga of Frithiof the Fearless*, trans. by John Sephton (Liverpool: Liverpool Literary and Philosophical Society, 1894). Part of William Morris and Eiríkur Magnússon's translation is republished in *Great Sea Stories of All Nations*, ed. by H. M. Tomlinson (London: Harrap, 1930), pp. 993–99. In addition to these works, there were several Tegnér-inspired re-imaginings, such as George

*Friðþjófs saga* in its various forms was one of the great success stories of Victorian saga reception, the subject of musicals, operas, theatrical works, children's books, travel literature, sea-faring anthologies, engravings, paintings, statues and undergraduate textbooks. Poems about its hero were dedicated to Queen Victoria and attracted the admiration of fans such as William Morris, Kaiser Wilhelm II, Selma Lagerlöf and Johann Wolfgang Goethe.<sup>10</sup> Much of this admiration was based on an assumption that the saga presented a faithful account of Viking Age Norway. Even up to the 1930s, the saga was certainly seen as a faithful depiction of pre-Christian religious practices; as one of its later translators Margaret Schlauch explained, whilst the saga was 'probably more fictitious than not', she nevertheless deemed it worthy of study for its 'presentment of superstitions and heathen customs, quite apart from the narrative itself'.<sup>11</sup> Yet this attitude has changed, and the general reception of *Friðþjófs saga* since the nineteenth century has been rather limited. Writing at the start of the twentieth century, W. A. Craigie remarked that the saga was 'attractively written, but has not the slightest historical value'.<sup>12</sup> Craigie regarded the scenes involving Baldr's temple as interesting but ultimately fanciful, and probably an

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W. Cox and Eustace Hinton Jones, *Tales of the Teutonic Lands* (London: Longmans, Green, 1874), pp. 210–46.

<sup>10</sup> Johann Wolfgang Goethe, *Sämtliche Werke nach Epochen seines Schaffens*, ed. by Karl Richter and others, 21 vols in 33 (Munich: Hanser, 1985–98), XIII.1: *Die Jahre 1820–1826*, ed. by Gisela Heckmann and Irmela Schneider (1992), pp. 393–97.

<sup>11</sup> Margaret Schlauch, *Medieval Narrative: A Book of Translations* (New York: Prentice-Hall, 1928; repr. New York: Gordian Press, 1969), p. 4. Although, see footnote 81 below.

<sup>12</sup> W. A. Craigie, *The Icelandic Sagas* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1913), pp. 94–95.

invention of the saga author.<sup>13</sup> The majority of modern scholars appear to feel the same way, but there are exceptions to the rule. Alongside the better-known works on reception theory,<sup>14</sup> the saga and its various renditions have in fact fed into works on the poetry of Longfellow,<sup>15</sup> cross-cultural appropriation,<sup>16</sup> bridal-quest romance,<sup>17</sup> Victorian visions of Norway,<sup>18</sup> folklore-inspired national epics,<sup>19</sup> and

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid., p. 95; Craigie makes no mention of which version of the saga he has read but his comments suggest that it was the later, longer version. It also seems likely that he based his views on English translations of Tegnér's poem.

<sup>14</sup> Andrew Wawn, *The Vikings and the Victorians: Inventing the Old North in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (Cambridge: Brewer, 2000); *Medievalism in England II*, ed. by Leslie J. Workman and Kathleen Verduin, *Studies in Medievalism*, 7 (Cambridge: Brewer, 1996); and Hans Kuhn, 'Frithjof and Röde Orm: Two Swedish Viking Impersonations', *Scandinavica*, 52.1 (2013), 6–16.

<sup>15</sup> Edward Thorstenberg, 'The Skeleton in Armour and the Frithiof Saga', *Modern Language Notes*, 25 (1910), 189–92.

<sup>16</sup> Marina Mundt, 'Zur Adaption orientalischer Erzählstoffe im hohen Norden. Der Fall der Friðþjófs saga', in *Deutsch-nordische Begegnungen. 9. Arbeitstagung der Skandinavisten des deutschen Sprachgebietes 1989 in Svendborg*, ed. by Kurt Braummüller and Mogens Brøndsted (Odense: Odense University Press, 1991), pp. 164–76; Chester Nathan Gould, 'The Friðþjófs saga, an Oriental Tale', *Scandinavian Studies*, 7 (1923), 219–50; Margaret Schlauch, *Romance in Iceland* (New York: American Scandinavian Foundation; Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1934), p. 26.

<sup>17</sup> Marianne E. Kalinke, *Bridal-Quest Romance in Medieval Iceland*, *Islandica*, 46 (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1990).

<sup>18</sup> Peter Fjågesund and Ruth A. Symes, *The Northern Utopia: British Perceptions of Norway in the Nineteenth Century*, *Studia Imagologica*, 10 (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2003); and Peter Fjågesund, *The Dream of the North: A Cultural History to 1920* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2014).

<sup>19</sup> Thomas A. Dubois, 'Frithiof's Motley Cousins: On the Perils of Using Folklore to Create a National Epic', in *The Nordic Storyteller: Essays in Honour of*

the history of ice-skating,<sup>20</sup> to name but a few. Clearly, the tale possesses some aspects worthy of examination.

FAITH IN *FRIDÞJÓFS SAGA*

The older text of *Friðþjófs saga* is considerably shorter than its younger recension. This shorter version has traditionally had few fans, but can count among those few Guðni Jónsson, who considered it superior to its flashy younger sibling, and the saga's most recent translator, Ben Waggoner. The chief difference between the two recensions is that the older one does not contain many of the more fantastic *fornaldarsögur* elements of the later narrative. Yet the older recension has numerous intriguing features of its own. It contains several points of pre-Christian faith that are modified or left out of the later recension; for example, on falling fatally ill at the start of the poem, King Beli instructs his sons that they must not place any of his moveable wealth alongside him in his grave-mound: 'Ekki skal fé bera í haug mér'.<sup>21</sup> Whether or not this is a specific refusal of pagan mortuary practices is unclear but the shorter redaction does frequently stress the importance of earthly pursuits over goods taken to the afterlife. While at a party in Friðþjófr's halls, Ingibjörg comments on the quality of his ancestral arm-ring; Friðþjófr replies:

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*Niels Ingwersen*, ed. by Susan Brantly and Thomas A. DuBois (Newcastle-upon-Tyne: Cambridge Scholars, 2009), pp. 178–210.

<sup>20</sup> Beverly A. Thurber, 'A New Interpretation of Frithiof's Steel Shoes', *Scandinavica*, 50.2 (2011), 6–30.

<sup>21</sup> 'Do not put riches in my burial mound'. *Friðþjófs saga ins frækna*, ch. 1, in *Fornaldarsögur Norðurlanda*, ed. by Guðni Jónsson, 4 vols (Reykjavík: Bókaútgáfan Forni, 1950), III, 78. All translations are my own unless otherwise stated; with Tegnér's poetry, I provide page references for Stephens's translation alongside my own for comparison. Canto and verse references for Stephens's translation match those of Tegnér's original except where noted.

“Ekki á ek þat, er ek hafi eiga aflat.” Hún svarar: “Þat er mál manna, at sá eigi fé, sem lifir, en ekki dauðir men.”<sup>22</sup> The mantra here is common throughout saga literature and is recognisable from elsewhere in earlier heroic Germanic writings, although in the nineteenth-century adaptations of these texts the notion was often given a political, anti-inheritance context.

The passage concerning the temple to Baldr is left until the second chapter, where we find it presented as a handy solution to the paternal woes of Ingibjörg’s brothers. The temple, we are told, is a haven of celibacy, and therefore an undoubtedly safe location for the brothers to deposit their sister away from the affections of Friðþjófr:

Eftir þat bjuggust þeir til ferðarinnar ok kváðu þat mundu ráð at flytja systur sína í Baldrshaga ok átta konur með henni, — “því at þar er engi svá djarfr, at þar grandi neinu,” því at þar var hof mikit ok goðablót ok skíðgarðr um hofit, ok skyldi þar ekki saman koma konur ok karlar.<sup>23</sup>

As it turns out, however, the protagonist cares very little for pagan sacrifice or whatever sanctity it bestows. The temple here serves a double narrative function: both as a convenient solution for the brothers’ need to hide Ingibjörg from Friðþjófr, and as a stage on which Friðþjófr can prove his daring nature. When asked by Ingibjörg how he dares to visit her in a place held sacred by the gods, Friðþjófr replies: ‘Ekki hirði ek um Baldr eða blót yður. Jafngóðir eru

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<sup>22</sup> “I do not own that which I have not earned.” She replied, “It is said by many people, that those who are living should own wealth, but not dead men.” Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> ‘After that they prepared for their journey and gave the command to move their sister to Baldr’s Meadow, and eight women with her — “because there is no one so brash that they would defile it” — for there was a large temple there with sacrifices to the gods, and a boarded fence around the temple, and women and men could not meet together there.’ Ibid., ch. 2, p. 80.

mér þínir málsendar hér sem heima.<sup>24</sup> Later on in the saga, in the face of a fearsome tempest conjured by the villainous Helgi (with the help of some whale-surfing witches), Friðþjófr recollects his time spent at the temple in what can only be called a taunt to the god Baldr:

Saman höfum brennda bauga  
í Baldrshaga lagða.  
Var-at vilgi fjarri  
vörðr Hálfðanar garða.<sup>25</sup>

The hero's hostility towards the god Baldr comes to a head at the temple, as Friðþjófr returns to Norway after his excursion to the Orkney Islands. Finding his homestead burnt to the ground by the treacherous brothers Helgi and Hálfðan, Friðþjófr confronts the two at the temple and violently throws the newly acquired bag of silver in Helgi's face. He then spots the arm-ring which he had given as a gift to Ingibjörg but which is now in the possession of Helgi's wife:

En Friðþjófr gekk at eldinum ok sá hringinn á hendi konu Helga ok greip til hennar, ok dragnaðist hún, en goðit valt út á eldinn, ok er hann kom at dyrunum, raknaði hringinn af hendi henni.<sup>26</sup>

It is interesting to note that in this version of the saga, the protagonist does not (intentionally or otherwise) burn down the temple; the idol

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<sup>24</sup> 'I do not care for Baldr, nor for your sacrifices. It is just as well with me to talk to you here as it is at home.' *Ibid.*, p. 81.

<sup>25</sup> 'Together we wore pure rings in Baldr's Meadow. The warden of Hálfðan's stronghold was then far away.' *Ibid.*, ch. 3, p. 86.

<sup>26</sup> 'And Friðþjófr walked by the fires and saw the ring around the hand of Helgi's wife, and he grabbed her, and she was dragged along, but the god fell into the fire, and when he came to the doors he pulled the ring off her hand.' *Ibid.*, ch. 4, p. 94.

or carving of Baldr held by Helgi's wife is the only casualty of this symbolic and physical struggle. Indeed, the only suggestion of the hall burning is in Friðþjófr's orders to his friend Björn, whom he instructs to throw fire onto the roof should he fail to return by evening:

Verpi þér eldi  
í jöfra bæ,  
ef ek kem eigi  
aftr at kveldi.<sup>27</sup>

As it is, Friðþjófr completes his act of vengeance and escapes at a leisurely pace. This telling of the saga completely obviates the necessity for repentance on Friðþjófr's part. If Friðþjófr has violated the temple at all, he has only done so in the name of love, and the consequences of his actions seem not to lie too heavily on his conscience. Thus the older version ends with no mention of Friðþjófr atoning for his past sins, and the Christian prayer with which the saga concludes overrules any need for a reconciliation with Baldr:

Ok endidt svá sjá saga  
at várr herra gefi oss alla góða daga  
ok vér megum fá þann frið,  
allt gott gangi oss í lið.  
Geymi oss Mária móðir  
ok mektugir englar góðir.  
Leiði lausnarinn þjóðir  
lífs á himna slóðir.  
Ljúfstr mun oss minn lávarð senda  
mér lífit gott án enda,  
í frið fyrir farsæld venda  
*Amen ad eterne*  
*et mi pater et mater,*

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<sup>27</sup> "Throw fire into the kings' building, if I do not return by evening." Ibid.



*bona soror et frater.*<sup>28</sup>

In the younger *Friðþjófs saga* a number of these references to both early pre-Christian and Christian faith are removed or modified. In Björner's edition, which derives from AM 109 a II 8vo, fols 143<sup>r</sup>:1–153<sup>v</sup>:3 the temple to Baldr has become a key factor, and we find depictions of a more fully conceived pre-Christian belief system.<sup>29</sup> The younger *Friðþjófs saga* introduces the temple at the start of the narrative between the descriptions of Ingibjörg and Friðþjófr, and the temple is therefore positioned as an obstacle to the lovers from the outset:

Þar geck strond nockur fyrer vestann fiorþinn, þar var bær stor sa bær var kallapur i Ballþurs haga, þar var griþastapur ok hof mikit ok skyþgarþur mikill um, þar voru morg goþ þo var af Ballþur mest hallþit, þar var sva mikit vandlæti giort af heiþnum monnum, at þar skyllþi aungvo granþ giora hvorki fe nie monnum, einginn viþskipti skyllþu þar karlar viþ konur eiga.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> 'And thus ends this saga, that our Lord may send us all good days and we may receive that peace, and all may go well with us in life. Mother Mary and the mighty, good angels protect us. The Redeemer leads people in their life on the trail to Heaven. My most beloved Lord, may you send to me a good life without end, and turn in peace towards happiness. *Amen in eternity, and my father and mother, good sister and brother.*' Ibid., ch. 5, pp. 103–04.

<sup>29</sup> *Sagan ock rimorna*, p. ii.

<sup>30</sup> 'The shoreline stretched for some distance on the western side of the fjord, and there was a large estate there which was called Baldr's Meadow, where there was a sanctuary and a great temple with a high-boarded fence around it. Many gods were worshipped there, although Baldr was the most praised. This temple was held in such devotion by heathen men that no injury was allowed there to beast nor man, and men could not have dealings with women.' *Friðþjófs saga*, ch. 1, in *Nordiska Kämpa Dater*, section 6, pp. 1–2.

Whilst spending more time describing the temple, this version of the saga clearly marks it out as heathen in the process. In this tale, pagan rites are a pastime for the wicked. The sinister King Helgi is characterised as villainous through his faith in pagan rituals: ‘Helgi Belason giorþist snemma blotmaþur mikill, eki voru þeir bræpur vinsællir.’<sup>31</sup> The juxtaposed remark that the brothers were not ‘lucky in friends’ appears to be a subtle deprecation of these practices. On the other hand, the hero Friðþjófr is increasingly presented as being indifferent to the gods; when asked by his companions whether or not wooing Ingibjörg at the temple will anger the gods, he replies ‘virþi ek meira hilli Yngibiargar enn Balldurs’.<sup>32</sup> Friðþjófr’s indifference turns to outright scorn when his life is put in danger by a violent storm brought about through Helgi’s dabbling in black magic with the help of two witches, where Friðþjófr boasts that he and Ingibjörg enjoyed the seclusion of Baldr’s temple at Hálfðan’s expense.<sup>33</sup>

The Baldr-burning episode in this version is a dramatic, if comic and almost farcical, account, with much slapstick humour and accidental destruction. The saga author modifies the outcome from one toasted idol to the entire temple going up in flames:

Enn þegar Friþþiofur geck utar eptir golfinu, sa hann hringinn goþa a hond konu Helga er hun bakaþi Balldur við ellþinn. Friþþiofur greip til hringsins enn hann var fastur a hendinni, ok

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<sup>31</sup> ‘Early on Helgi Belason became a zealous sacrificer; the brothers were not well-liked.’ Ibid., ch. 1, p. 2.

<sup>32</sup> ‘I value Ingibjörg’s favour more than Baldr’s.’ Ibid., ch. 4, p. 9; see also ch. 3, p. 6 and ch. 5, p. 10.

<sup>33</sup> ‘Saman hofum brenda bauga | i Balldurs haga lagþa, | var þar Vigli færi, | vorþur Halfðanar jarða.’ [‘Together we wore pure rings in Baldr’s Meadow. The warden of Hálfðan’s lands was then far away.’] Ibid., ch. 6, p. 18.

dro hann hana utar eptir golfinu at dyrunum, enn Balldur fiell ut a elldinn, kona Hálfðanar griep til hennar, skiott fiell þa þat gopit ut a elldinn er hun hafði bakat. Lystir nu elldinum i bæði gopin, enn þau voru aþur smurð, ok sva up i riafrit sva at logaði hufit.<sup>34</sup>

Helgi is naturally outraged (once he recovers from being hit in the face by a sack of silver), and orders that Friðþjófr should be outlawed from the entire kingdom: ‘Hefur sa maður fyrirgiort sier er hann hlifði aungvum griðastopum.’<sup>35</sup> Friðþjófr himself reflects on the significance of the event in marking his passage to (temporary) outlawry. He has become the ‘Temple-Wolf’, defined by his anti-heathen arson:

Enn nu tekur bal at brenna  
i Balldurs haga meþian,  
þvi mun ek Vargur i veum,  
veit ek þvi mun heitit.<sup>36</sup>

There is no effort on the part of Friðþjófr to rebuild the temple, and we are told that its destruction has hit Helgi the hardest, which is hardly a surprise, considering his devotion to the pagan gods thus

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<sup>34</sup> ‘And when Friðþjófr then walked out over the floor, he saw the good ring around the hand of Helgi’s wife, as she warmed Baldr by the fire. Friðþjófr grabbed for the ring but it was fast on the hand, and he dragged her out across the floor to the doorway, but Baldr fell into the fire. Hálfðan’s wife grabbed for it, and quickly the god which she had been warming also fell into the fire. Now the fire lit up both of the gods — as they had previously been anointed with oil — and so too up to the roof so that the ceiling blazed.’ *Ibid.*, ch. 9, p. 28.

<sup>35</sup> ‘Such a man forfeited his life when he spared not even the most peaceful of places.’ *Ibid.*, ch. 10, p. 29.

<sup>36</sup> ‘But now the hall begins to burn in the middle of Baldr’s Meadow; I know that for this I will be called the wolf in the temple.’ *Ibid.*, ch. 10, p. 31.

far.<sup>37</sup> At the end of the longer recension, the heathen Helgi is not bought off or forced to surrender; unlike his brother Hálfðan, he is clearly seen as being too wicked to live, and so he is killed in combat with Friðþjófr during the saga's climatic battle. There is no prayer (Christian or otherwise) to end the longer redaction.

#### TEGNÉR'S FABRICATED NORTH

It was in the guise of the Swedish bishop Esaias Tegnér's epic poem of 1825 that *Friðþjófs saga* first came to the attention of nineteenth-century British readers. In the nineteenth century alone there were some fifteen separate translations of the poem into English, but the poem was also immensely popular all across Europe, being translated into almost every major European language.<sup>38</sup> Tegnér (1782–1846) received his higher education at Lund University, where he was appointed Professor of Greek in 1811. From an early age Tegnér held the sagas in high regard. In this sense he followed the lead of fellow Swedish poets Pehr Henrik Ling (1776–1839) and Erik Gustaf Geijer (1783–1847) in using the legends and myths of the North to write

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<sup>37</sup> 'Sva bættu þeir bræpur upp allann Balldurs haga, ok var þat langt ápur elldurinn var sloktur. Þat fell Halga kongi vest at goþinn voru uppþrend, varþ þat mikill kostnaður ápur Balldurs hagi var upp bygður til fuls jafnt ok ápur.' [And so the brothers completely rebuilt Baldr's Meadow, and it was a long time before the fire was put out. It sat worst with king Helgi that the gods were burnt; the cost of the repairs was very expensive before Baldr's Meadow was restored to the same state as before.] *Ibid.*, ch. 10, p. 31.

<sup>38</sup> The exact number of English translations is unclear; some claimed that the number was more like twenty. See Adolph B. Benson, 'A List of English Translations of the *Frithiofs Saga*', *The German Review*, 1.2 (1926), 142–67 (p. 142).

about the modern nations of Scandinavia and Northern Europe.<sup>39</sup> In 1812 he was invited to become a member of the group *Göther* ('The Goths'), a Swedish literary collective whose expressed goal was 'knowledge and employment of the Ancient Northern Myth and Saga in the Fine Arts'.<sup>40</sup> From these roots, it is perhaps unsurprising that Tegnér's approach to northern literature was to highlight its underlying potential as nationalist material.<sup>41</sup>

Tegnér asserts that he was not merely aiming to create a poetic version of the saga, but more to capture the spirit of the age represented by *Frithjófr's* tale. He was not interested in what we might see as a psychological profile of his protagonist, nor was he interested in presenting a true history of events. Instead, it was a 'poetical image of the old Northern Hero-Age' that Tegnér sought to depict; in Stephens' edition of the poem, Tegnér tells readers: 'It was not Frithiof, as an individual, whom I would paint; it was the epoch of which he was chosen as the Representative.'<sup>42</sup>

Even so, it appears Tegnér experienced some difficulty in marrying the *Zeitgeist* of legendary Scandinavia with his romantic-nationalist hero. In a letter sent as an introduction to Stephens' translation, the poet discusses the complexity of dealing with a subject matter that encompasses both 'much that is high-minded and heroic' and also 'instances of the raw, the savage, the barbarous'.<sup>43</sup> It was clear that one had to find the correct balance:

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<sup>39</sup> Tegnér readily admits that it was in fact the Danish nationalist poet Adam Oehlenschläger whose 'Helge' inspired his 'Frithiof'; see Tegnér in *Frithiof's Saga*, trans. by Stephens, p. 44.

<sup>40</sup> *Frithiof's Saga*, trans. by Stephens, pp. xxv–xxvi.

<sup>41</sup> Tegnér in *Frithiof's Saga*, trans. by Stephens, p. xxx.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 44.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 45.

On the one hand the Poem ought not too glaringly to offend our milder opinions and more refined habits; but on the other hand it was important not to sacrifice the national the lively the vigorous and the natural. There could, and ought to, blow through the Song that cold winter-air, that fresh Northwind which characterizes so much both the climate and the temperament of the North.<sup>44</sup>

Stephens himself recognised this dichotomy, writing that the poem reflected ‘an age remarkably Homeric in its barbaric civilization and its pirate independence’.<sup>45</sup> The problem does not seem to have troubled Stephens, but Tegnér was after all a bishop and this conflict of translation had come to a head in matters of religion.<sup>46</sup> Tegnér wanted to convey the essence of the text, but felt differences in religious temperament might hamper understanding.

Thus when in 1825 Tegnér published his full verse translation of *Friðþjófs saga* — now a two-hundred-page epic poem — in the *Götheb’s* journal *Iduna*, the subject matter of his masterpiece was in more than one sense a matter of faith. One of the most notable divergences from the later redaction of the original saga is Tegnér’s treatment of pagan religion. Firstly, it should be noted that there is far more of it. Whilst the saga’s later redaction itself could be said to use the Norse gods’ and goddesses’ names only superficially (and even then only Baldr and the sea-goddess Rán), Tegnér’s poem is awash with mythological references. Balder plays a central role (his name or synonyms of it appears well over seventy times), but also frequently mentioned are Odin, Thor and Freya (each more than ten times),

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid. See also DuBois, p. 210 for a discussion of Tegnér’s enthusiasm for nationalist poetry.

<sup>45</sup> *Friðþjófs Saga*, trans. by Stephens, p. 28.

<sup>46</sup> For more on Tegnér and (primarily Christian) religion see Joh[an] Lindblom, *Tegnér och Bibeln* (Lund: Håkon Ohlssons Boktryckeri, 1946).

while Frey, Saga, Brage, Hel and Ran join a host of other deities depicted with knowing nods to their respective roles and characteristics. Tegnér presented a North in which the Norse gods were an integral part of Viking-Age life.

Secondly, Tegnér refuses to let good faith go to waste — even heathen faith. He made the burning of Balder's temple an accidental act, and filled his hero with pious remorse thereafter. He even has him try to put out the fire.<sup>47</sup> At the end of the poem Frithiof humbly rebuilds the temple to Balder. Tegnér's *Frithiofs Saga* may have portrayed the two young foster-siblings as a northern Romeo and Juliet — Frithiof is the embodiment of a type of northern bravado and self-made strength, Ingeborg that of unparalleled northern beauty and steadfastness — but importantly they both start the poem morally innocent and both reach its conclusion deeply faithful (and open to the incoming Christian teaching).<sup>48</sup>

Frithiof, being told at an early age that he is an unsuitable match for Ingeborg, decides that both the whims of the gods and the regulations of hereditary power are flawed, and that he will try his luck with her nonetheless.<sup>49</sup> This indifference is somewhat tempered through the wary, parental tone of Ingeborg, but at the poem's start Frithiof still prefers his own might to godly support. Yet Tegnér does not present his protagonist as an atheist, but as a studied interpreter of Norse cosmology:

Hvad hviskar du om Balders vrede?  
Han vredgas ej, den fromme Gud,  
den älskande, som vi tillbede,  
vårt hjertas kärlek är hans bud;

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<sup>47</sup> Tegnér, *Frithiofs Saga*, canto XIII, v. 20, p. 100.

<sup>48</sup> See for example the description of Ingeborg in Tegnér, *Frithiofs Saga*, canto VII, vv. 1–24, pp. 39–46.

<sup>49</sup> Tegnér, *Frithiofs Saga*, canto I, vv. 36–39, pp. 7–8; cf. trans. by Stephens, p. 11.

den Gud med solsken på sin panna,  
med evig trohet i sin barm:  
var ej hans kärlek till sin Nanna,  
som min till dig, så ren, så varm?<sup>50</sup>

Balder, Tegnér's Frithiof argues, is the god of love. If anything he should support the lovers' argument. Meanwhile the characterisation of the villainous brothers Helge and Halfdan turns the former's pagan sensibilities into a perversion. If Frithiof's lack of pagan faith proves problematic for Tegnér, that is nothing compared with having too much:

Då trädde de i salen, som kung befallt,  
och främst bland dem gick Helge, en mörk gestalt.  
Han dvaldes helst bland spåmän kring altarrunden,  
och kom med blod på händern ur offerlunden.<sup>51</sup>

Clearly being a follower — however devout — of the Norse gods did not guarantee one a virtuous life in Tegnér's North. King Beli's advice to his eldest son carries the same warning, the gods may be found in the sacrificial circle, but it would be highly unhealthy for one

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<sup>50</sup> 'What do you whisper about Baldr's anger? He is not angry, the pious god, at the lovers, like us two; our hearts' love is his command. The god with sunshine on his brow, with eternal faith in his breast — was not his love to his own Nanna like mine to you, so pure, so warm?' Tegnér, *Frithiofs Saga*, canto VII, v. 11, p. 42; cf. trans. by Stephens, p. 66.

<sup>51</sup> 'Then they came into the hall, as the king commanded, and foremost among them went Helgi, a dark figure. He most often could be found among spearmen around the altar-circle and came with blood on his hands from the sacrificial graves.' Tegnér, *Frithiofs Saga*, canto II, v. 5, p. 11; cf. trans. by Stephens, p. 16.



to spend one's entire life there.<sup>52</sup> Throughout the poem, Helge's spirituality is linked with foul sorcery and sacrifice. He uses his affinity with the otherworldly spirits to call down a storm on Frithiof's ship:

Men på stranden stod  
kung Helge och qvad  
med förbittradt mod,  
och till trollen han bad.<sup>53</sup>

The overall message is clear: heathen faith was a vessel for wickedness and perversion.

Yet evidently even something of this approach still rankled with Tegnér's religious sensibilities. Faith was still faith — Christian or otherwise — and Tegnér's protagonist is taught religious piety. Tegnér seized on the later version's temple-burning scene to paint Frithiof as a horrified accidental arsonist, he and Björn markedly shuddering at the horror of their crime: 'Dödsblek Björn vid porten står, | Frithiof blygs att han darrar.'<sup>54</sup> Desperately trying to put out

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<sup>52</sup> Tegnér, *Frithiofs Saga*, canto II, v. 12, p. 11. This turns out to be appropriate advice for Tegnér's Helge, who meets his end exploring an ancient heathen altar when the doorway collapses on him.

<sup>53</sup> 'But on the shore stood King Helgi and spoke with embittered temper, and begged to the trolls.' Tegnér, *Frithiofs Saga*, canto X, v. 1, p. 68; cf. trans. by Stephens, p. 97.

<sup>54</sup> 'Björn stands pale at the door, and Friðþjófr feels so ashamed that he trembles.' Tegnér, *Frithiofs Saga*, canto XIII, v. 17, p. 99; cf. trans. by Stephens, p. 132. The fact that even Björn is unsettled by this turn of events is noteworthy; throughout the rest of Tegnér's poem, Björn conforms to our modern notion of a violent viking far more so than Frithiof. See Hjalmar Hjorth Boyesen, *Essays on Scandinavian Literature* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1895), pp. 260–61.

the fire he unwittingly started, the hero mounts the roof and, like an inversion of *Grettla's Glámr*, attempts to save the hall: 'Frithiof sitter, som regnets Gud, | högt på bjelken och flödar.'<sup>55</sup> Now an accidental sinner, Frithiof's attitude to Balder takes a dramatic turn:

Du tempelrök,  
flyg högt och sök,  
sök upp Valhalla  
och nederkalla  
den Hvites hämnd  
åt mig bestämd!<sup>56</sup>

The monologue sets the tone for the rest of Frithiof's wanderings. No longer is he an arrogant youth; now he is haunted by his sin against Balder at every turn. 'Kan ej glömma Balders hage', Frithiof laments in canto nineteen: the god's temple can never be forgotten.<sup>57</sup> In the final canto Frithiof prays to Balder at the site of the old temple and through divine magic a new, everlasting temple appears.<sup>58</sup> In the final canto Frithiof's prayers to Balder at the site of the old temple are answered, through the handy materialisation of a high priest of Balder; the white god becomes a symbol for the trial against and victory over the forces of evil in each individual human soul. 'Hvart

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<sup>55</sup> 'Frithiof sits, like a rain god, high on the beam and pours.' Tegnér, *Frithiofs Saga*, canto XIII, v. 20, p. 100; cf. trans. by Stephens, p. 133.

<sup>56</sup> 'You temple-smoke, fly high and seek, seek out Valhalla and call down the white god's revenge on me.' Tegnér, *Frithiofs Saga*, canto XIV, v. 2, pp. 102–03; cf. trans. by Stephens, p. 137.

<sup>57</sup> 'Baldr's Pasture cannot be forgotten.' Tegnér, *Frithiofs Saga*, canto XIX, v. 8, p. 131; cf. trans. by Stephens, p. 175.

<sup>58</sup> Tegnér, *Frithiofs Saga*, canto XXIV, v. 2, pp. 154–55.

hjerta har sin Balder’, readers are told.<sup>59</sup> True Norse faith becomes a prequel for Christian piety.

FRIDÞJÓFR THE ENGLISH

When George Stephens came to attempt the first English translation of *Friðþjófs saga*’s later redaction in 1839 it would have been almost impossible for him not to have been influenced by the Swedish versions of the text — firstly in Björner’s translation (which contained both Latin and Swedish translations on the same page) and secondly in Tegnér’s poem. The first translation into English of Tegnér’s poetic version was by the Reverend William Strong in 1833.<sup>60</sup> There followed another two translations before Stephens’s 1839 edition: an anonymous 1835 publication, and R. G. Latham’s 1838 translation.<sup>61</sup> On top of these, one could consult several partial translations, musical adaptations, and artistic engravings, all inspired by Tegnér’s original. Nor could one simply ignore *Frithiofs Saga* by living abroad. By the time Stephens was working on his own translation of the saga, Tegnér’s poetic adaptation had gone through four German translations, three in Danish, and one in French.<sup>62</sup> According to Stephens, his original knowledge of the saga was passed down to him in the manner of ancient tradition, via oral narration. His brother, the Rev. J. R. Stephens, provided the necessary dramatic inspiration:

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<sup>59</sup> ‘Every heart has its own Baldr.’ Tegnér, *Frithiofs Saga*, canto XXIV, v. 2, p. 158; cf. trans. by Stephens, v. 17, p. 215.

<sup>60</sup> *Frithiofs Saga: A Skandinavian Legend of Royal Love*, trans. by William Strong (London: Wacey, 1833).

<sup>61</sup> *Frithiofs Saga or The Legend of Frithiof*, ed. by W. E. F[rye] (London: Bailey, 1835); *Frithiof, A Norwegian Story*, trans. by R. G. Latham (London: Hookham, 1838).

<sup>62</sup> *Frithiofs Saga*, trans. by Stephens, pp. xxi–xxxii.

He it was who recommended to my eager study the literature of the north in general, and Frithiof's Saga in particular — which he unrolled before me by an oral translation — at a time when far away from the shores of the North, and when the work was altogether unknown in England.<sup>63</sup>

Whether or not this is true is up for debate. Later, however, Stephens admits using Björner's text, a copy of which was then available in the main library in Stockholm, where he was living. He also mentions referring to the Latin translation to assist him, and it seems unlikely that he would not have also made use of the Swedish.

Stephens clearly had a reverence for Tegnér, writing that the Swede was a 'Mighty Genie who organizes even disorder', while he himself was merely 'an unknown and undistinguished student'.<sup>64</sup> That said, Stephens's translation of Tegnér's poem appears to have enjoyed a wide reception itself, being reprinted in 1877 alongside Rasmus B. Anderson and Jón Bjarnason's saga translation. In 1839 the attached translation of the saga's later redaction, while far more important in terms of the history of the reception of Old Norse literature in Britain, was something of a sideshow to the poem. Taking up a mere thirty-nine pages in a three-hundred-and-forty-nine-page book, the translation could be easily overlooked. Stephens viewed the saga less as an independent work and more as a necessary piece of background reading for a true appreciation of Tegnér's poem (although he ranked the saga as being one of the finest examples of the genre):

Conceiving it necessary to a proper appreciation of the Poetic Legend, we have appended a Translation of the Prose Icelandic

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<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, p. ix.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, p. v.

Saga, in itself one of the most beautiful in the whole Cycle of Icelandic Literature.<sup>65</sup>

Stephens's edition also came with a forty-six-page introduction, the original musical accompaniment from Bernhard Crusell, and a concise appendix.<sup>66</sup> He stresses that he limited the notes and glossary not for a want of personal knowledge or enthusiasm, but because he did not think the British public will appreciate it due to the 'low state of Scandinavian Literature generally in Great Britain', which 'induces the idea that the majority of our readers will thank us for our otherwise thankless trouble'.<sup>67</sup>

In terms of the translation style, Stephens comments that it is 'as literal as a due regard to the genius of the two languages would admit'.<sup>68</sup> Meanwhile he stresses that the only editorial changes on his part have been to modernise spelling to a certain extent (an unusual move for Stephens, who often did the opposite in his academic work) and to filter out some of the text's more obscure terminology: 'The text has been rendered in a style rather antique,' Stephens remarks, 'but old-fashioned spellings, and Archaisms decidedly unintelligible to a common Reader, have been purposely rejected.'<sup>69</sup> For readers of Stephens's later works, this approach would undoubtedly have jarred with their experiences of his translating style. In actual fact what Stephens considered to be a literal translation with as much

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<sup>65</sup> Ibid., p. vi.

<sup>66</sup> On Crusell and Max Bruch's musical adaptations of *Frithiofs Saga*, see Ola Nordenfors, 'Adaptationer av Esaias Tegnér's *Frithiofs Saga*', in *Gränser i Nordisk Litteratur, Borders in Nordic Literature*, ed. by Clas Zilliacus, Heidi Grönstrand and Ulrika Gustafsson, 2 vols (Åbo: Åbo Akademis förlag, 2008), I, 197–208.

<sup>67</sup> *Frithiofs Saga*, trans. by Stephens, p. ix.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., p. 39.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

adherence to the original as possible often displayed a large degree of poetic license.

If we examine the now familiar introduction of the temple from the longer recension Stephens provides the following:

There, west of the frith, stretched the strand, and thereupon stood a considerable village called Balder's Hage, where was a Sanctuary and a great Temple, hedged round about with a lofty plank-work. Here were many Gods, but Balder was the most honoured among them all; and so zealous were those heathen men, that they had forbidden any harm being done there to either man or beast, nor could a male have any converse with a woman.<sup>70</sup>

The text contains a few oddities; a modern translator might think twice before opting for 'frith' (an archaic version of 'firth') or 'lofty plank-work', but by and large the style is modern, particularly for Stephens. As another example we might take the temple-burning scene. As previously mentioned, Stephens used the longer and better-known version of the saga found in Björner's edition when recounting the incident:

Now directly as Frithiof was going out along the floor, he saw that the wife of Helge wore his Ring of the Good, as she was warming Balder before the fire. Frithiof griped [*sic*] the Ring tightly, but it was fastened to her, and he drew her out along the floor towards the door. Balder fell into the fire, and as Halfdan's wife hastily laid hold of it to save it, that image which she was warming fell also down among the flames. Soon now began both the Gods to blaze, for they were both anointed with oil. The flames then caught the roof, and the whole building was on fire.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> Ibid., p. 3.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., pp. 25–26.

Once again the tone is remarkably modern. The initial confusion at Helgi's wife 'warming Balder before the fire' is explained by the following reference to one of the idols as 'that image'. Even in direct speech, where other Victorian translators were inclined to adopt a Shakespearian register (George Webbe Dasent's 1861 *Burnt Njal* springs to mind), Stephens maintained a modern tone.<sup>72</sup> While somewhat antiquated, the translation style is frequently eloquent; the description of Helgi and Hálfdan as 'but little friend-fortunate' being particularly effective.<sup>73</sup>

Where Stephens's edition stands out most from the fifteen or so translations of Tegnér's poetic adaption is in its sheer amount of contextual information: the translation of the original saga and the material in the appendices. From consulting these, the nineteenth-century English reader could find out a great deal about the religious context of Friðþjófr's world. Two entries from the appendix have particular bearing on the current discussion:

BALDER, (THE POTENT) related to *Bel, Baal, &c. Lord*, a title of the Sun. Hence Baldr is the Source of light and life, the delight of Gods and men, the good.<sup>74</sup>

BALDER'S HAGE, — 'at Sogn, in Norway, a Sanctuary consecrated to Balder, was surrounded by an extensive enclosure, and consisted of buildings constructed with great cost. There was

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<sup>72</sup> For an example of Stephens's translation of direct speech in a passage already addressed, see *ibid.*, p. 9.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 4.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 251.

one temple for the Gods, and another for the Goddesses of Valhall, — the latter, especially, extremely high'.<sup>75</sup>

What one has here is a scholarly authentication of the saga's passages on pagan faith. Typical antiquarian comments on the name of Baldr are juxtaposed with a contemporary romantic appraisal of Norse mythology from Icelander Finnur Magnússon (1781–1847). In the latter we can see that numerous features from the saga have been placed in a scientific or archaeological framework — the temple's primary dedication to Baldr, the large fence around the boundary of the site, and the high cost of the buildings. Readers of Stephens's saga translation were reassured of the historical accuracy of the embedded descriptions of pagan religion, and the value of the saga as a historical source.

Much as the perceived value of *Frithjófs saga* has decreased since the early twentieth century, so the influence of Stephens in laying the flagstones for English-Old Norse translation is by now debatable. Wawn argues that Stephens does not achieve his goal in establishing a set style for saga translation, at least not the style he was to champion later in life for his Old English scholarship.<sup>76</sup> As the years passed, his translation of Tegnér's poem received equally cool criticism. One hundred years on from the publication of Tegnér's poem, Charles Dealtry Locock commented that 'of the earlier versions that of professor Stephens (1839) is in some respects the most remarkable', but he evidently did not mean 'remarkable' in any positive sense.<sup>77</sup> Locock acknowledged that Tegnér was an early fan of Stephens' work but that the bishop later went back on his compliments:

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<sup>75</sup> Excerpt from Finn Magnússon, *Bidrag til Nordisk Archaologie: meddeelte i Forlæsninger* (Copenhagen: Becker, 1820), cited in *Frithjófs Saga*, trans. by Stephens, pp. 252–53.

<sup>76</sup> Wawn, *The Vikings and the Victorians*, p. 134.

<sup>77</sup> *Frithjófs Saga*, trans. by C. D. Locock (London: Allen & Unwin, 1924), p. 7.



Two years later we find him writing to Longfellow, ‘Where the translator has understood the meaning, which has not always been the case, the translation has often suffered from ignorance of technicalities or insufficient command over his own language.’ Stephens’ versification can, in fact, only be described as ludicrous.<sup>78</sup>

This is a far cry from the recommendation found in Stephens’ original translation, where Tegnér claimed that no other translator had ‘inträngt så som Herr Professoren i Originalets ursprungliga anda och så respekterat dess Nordiska egenheter’.<sup>79</sup> Dubious translations of Tegnér’s Swedish aside, it could be argued that the *Nordiska egenheter* mentioned by Tegnér (undoubtedly referring to those embodied by the eponymous hero and his *fornaldarsaga* society) were in fact captured by Stephens after all. His collected volume purported to tell the Victorian reader everything they could possibly want to know about the sea kings of Sognefjord. It was a true ‘legend of the North’.<sup>80</sup>

#### FAITH IN TRANSLATION

After including *Frithjofs saga* in her book of medieval texts for undergraduate students, Margaret Schlauch appears to have gone back on her positive remarks concerning the temple episode and its value as a source for studying Norse paganism. ‘*Frithjofs saga* is merely

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<sup>78</sup> Ibid., p. 8.

<sup>79</sup> ‘explored so deeply as the professor the defining spirit of the original, and thus respected its Nordic characteristics’. Tegnér, cited in *Frithjof’s Saga*, trans. by Stephens, introductory letter [unmarked].

<sup>80</sup> The subtitle of Stephens’ volume, in line with Tegnér’s poem. Stephens’ second edition saw the subtitle changed to *A Legend of Norway*. Benson, p. 149.

fiction, and foreign fiction at that', she states.<sup>81</sup> Most scholars would agree with her revised opinion. If this paper has shown anything it is hopefully that the saga's approach to pagan faith has been part of a process of continued fabrication over many centuries. From the earlier recension's comparative lack of references to a prominent pagan faith, the saga's later recension demonised and parodied heathen practices for comic effect. Where Esaias Tegnér removed the farcical elements and tried to cultivate a pan-religious notion of purity, George Stephens instead offered readers a quasi-encyclopaedic handbook to pre-Christian religion. Clearly the tale that the English reader received in the Victorian period was not the same as its Old Norse original ('what indeed', we might ask, 'was the original?') and thanks to poetic license it could often be very far from it. It is possible to argue that *Friðþjófs saga's* descendants are successful as works of art (on the basis of their nineteenth-century popularity they evidently were successful) yet equally possible to say they led a misleading double-life as trusted historical sources for the study of paganism.

Umberto Eco's collection of essays *Faith in Fakes* contains an early commentary on the now widely recognised field of Medievalism, a phenomenon Eco defined as the continual rewriting of the middle ages in the present day.<sup>82</sup> The literary history of *Friðþjófs saga* appears to be a classic case of this artistic practice. One could accuse its adaptors of presenting an unrealistic view of pre-Christian faith, but their sources are just as much fabrications of the past. Yet far from being useless, *Friðþjófs saga* in its various forms is clearly a worthy source for research, not as Schlauch originally suggested, as a medieval account of faith, but as a faithfully reworked piece of medievalism.

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<sup>81</sup> Schlauch, *Romance in Iceland*, p. 26.

<sup>82</sup> Umberto Eco, *Faith in Fakes: Travels in Hyperreality*, trans. by William Weaver (London: Minerva, 1995; repr. London: Vintage, 1998), pp. 59–85.

The *Fornaldarsaga* in a Dream: Weaving Fantastical Textures in *Stjörnu-Odda draumr*

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*Stjörnu-Odda draumr* ('Star-Oddi's dream') is a relatively little-known *Íslendingapáttir* ('tale of Icelanders') which dates from the late fourteenth century at the latest but which no longer survives in any manuscripts predating the seventeenth century.<sup>1</sup> It is the only known Norse text in which a character dreams of being in and participating in an embedded, custom-written *fornaldarsaga* ('saga of an ancient time', or legendary saga), making it, in the words of Ralph O'Connor, a 'literary *tour de force* and altogether unique in the saga corpus'.<sup>2</sup> Although it has been translated twice into English,<sup>3</sup> many of its numerous points of interest have yet to receive wider scholarly

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<sup>1</sup> Ralph O'Connor, 'Astronomy and Dream Visions in Late Medieval Iceland: *Stjörnu-Odda draumr* and the Emergence of Norse Legendary Fiction', *Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, 111 (2012), 474–512 (p. 475). For the spelling of *Stjörnu-Odda draumr* and the names within it, I have followed the conventions of the *Íslenzk fornrit* edition of the text in *Harðar saga*, ed. by Þórhallur Vilmundarson and Bjarni Vilhjálmsson, *Íslenzk fornrit*, 13 (Reykjavik: Hið íslenzka fornritafélag, 1991), pp. 457–81. Thus, I use 'Hléguðr' and 'Hildiguðr' rather than the unassimilated 'Hlégunnr' and 'Hildigunnr' (or 'Hlégunnur' and 'Hildigunnur'). This will be the edition of *Stjörnu-Odda draumr* quoted throughout the discussion.

<sup>2</sup> O'Connor, 'Astronomy and Dream Visions', p. 474.

<sup>3</sup> The *páttir* was translated by Marvin Taylor in *The Complete Sagas of Icelanders*, ed. by Viðar Hreinsson, 5 vols (Reykjavik: Leifur Eiríksson, 1997), II, 448–59, and by Ralph O'Connor in his *Icelandic Histories & Romances*, 2nd edn (Stroud: Tempus, 2006), pp. 93–113.

attention. For instance, its *Piers Plowman*-esque shifts between the state of wakefulness and the extended dream-vision make it an extremely valuable text for consideration as part of comparative discussions on medieval dream theory.<sup>4</sup> Related to this is the presence of two skaldic poems, a *flokkr* and a *drápa*, each of which is recited in Oddi's state of wakefulness while commemorating the events that occurred within the dream; this adds a prosimetric dimension to the text's peculiar intrigue.<sup>5</sup> The author's metatextual manoeuvring between the layers of the *þáttr* also invites examination of the fabric of the dream itself, and this will be the aim of the discussion. More specifically, I wish to focus on the construction of the fantastical textures of the dream-saga. Although it has been noted previously that the dream-saga has been constructed to be reminiscent of a *fornaldarsaga*,<sup>6</sup> the constituent components that form its legendary

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<sup>4</sup> *Stjörnu-Odda draumr* has seldom been discussed even in the context of dreams in Old Norse literature. It was not covered in Georgia Dunham Kelchner's *Dreams in Old Norse Literature and their Affinities in Folklore* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1935), and was afforded only a brief mention in Gabriel Turville-Petre's 'Dreams in Icelandic Tradition', in *Nine Norse Studies*, ed. by Gabriel Turville-Petre, Viking Society for Northern Research, Text Series, 5 (London: Viking Society for Northern Research, 1972), pp. 30–51 (p. 42). Recently, however, Ralph O'Connor considered it alongside the three other Norse dream-*þáttir* with which it travelled in the lost manuscript Vatnshyrna, in 'Astronomy and Dream Visions', pp. 484–97.

<sup>5</sup> Future exploration of the prosimetrum of the *þáttr* will be greatly helped by Tarrin Wills's forthcoming edition of the verses in volume five of the Skaldic Poetry of the Scandinavian Middle Ages project, *Poetry in the Sagas of Icelanders*.

<sup>6</sup> *Harðar saga*, pp. ccxiii–ccxiv; Vésteinn Ólason, 'Íslendingasögur og þættir', in *Íslenskt bókmenntasaga*, ed. by Vésteinn Ólason and others, 2 vols (Reykjavík: Mál og menning, 1992–93), II (1993), 25–163 (p. 159), and O'Connor, 'Astronomy and Dream Visions', p. 474.

texture have not been substantially discussed, and this discussion will seek partially to address this.

There have been two main interpretative approaches to *Stjörnu-Odda draumr*, which are not entirely mutually incompatible. The first is the search for historical allegories underpinning the *þáttr*. Þórhallur Vilmundarson, who co-edited the text for the *Íslenskt fornrit* series, suggested that the *þáttr* might have been written to reflect the political scene of the Reykjadalr district in the early twelfth century. Among his evidence, he notes the striking geographical parallels between the Gautland of the dream-saga and the real-world route of Oddi's journey to Flatey in the frame narrative, as well as suggesting that Þórðr of Múli, the farmer for whom Oddi works in the frame narrative of *Stjörnu-Odda draumr*, might be based on a real-life figure (or figures) of the same name documented in the 1123 and 1124 entries of the *Konungsannáll*.<sup>7</sup> In a similar interpretative vein, Anders Andrén posited the intriguing but problematic argument that the dream-saga could be an allegory of late fourteenth-century Gotlandic history; he associated the heroic king of the dream-saga, Geirviðr, with the Gotlandic magistrate Gervid Lauk, the main antagonist Hléguðr with the Danish Queen Margaret I, and the final battle with

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<sup>7</sup> *Harðar saga*, pp. ccxiv–ccxxii. Þórhallur's analysis of the geographical parallels between the Gautland of Oddi's dream and the real-world geography implicitly evoked in his journey is compelling, and is strengthened by the fact that it is extremely unusual for Gautland to be associated with such a specific level of geographical and onomastic detail in legendary narratives.

the 1404 Battle of Slite.<sup>8</sup> The second approach was presented by Ralph O'Connor, who argued that the *þátr* was first and foremost a work of conscious literary fiction. O'Connor's comprehensive analysis, the longest discussion on *Stjörnu-Odda draumr* to date, considered numerous structural and thematic aspects of the *þátr* in wider literary contexts, from focalisations of narration in the *þátr* to wider connections between dream-narratives in Old Norse literature, to contemporary understandings of astronomy. This discussion will seek to complement the overarching framework of fictionality that O'Connor identifies by examining the fabrication of legendary textures within it, not only in terms of elements borrowed from or influenced by known legendary traditions, but also the invention of original elements. Of specific interest will be the *þátr*-author's selection and use of character names and motifs, particularly in relation to the literary analogues and legendary allusions behind them. Because the legendary textures in *þátr* primarily operate in Oddi's dream, this discussion will only concern the events of the saga-in-a-saga, referred to as the 'dream-saga' throughout.<sup>9</sup>

A brief summary of the whole *þátr* will firstly be provided, in order to situate the plot elements, characters and relationships that

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<sup>8</sup> Anders Andrén, 'Is It Possible to Date a Fornaldarsaga? The Case of *Star-Oddi's Dream*', in *Nordic Mythologies: Interpretations, Intersections, and Institutions*, ed. by Timothy R. Tangherlini, Wildcat Canyon Advanced Seminars, Mythology, 1 (Berkeley: North Pinehurst Press, 2014), pp. 173–83 (pp. 176–83). Andrén's argument is problematic because it is based on the core premise that the dream-saga is set on the Baltic island of Gotland rather than the mainland region of Gautland. His assumption seems to be based on Marvin Taylor's translation of the *þátr*, which renders 'Gautland' as 'Gotland', probably due to the region's old name of 'Götland'. All manuscript witnesses and Old Norse editions of the text indicate that the dream-saga is set in 'Gautland' and not 'Gotland'.

<sup>9</sup> An alternative name for the dream-saga is *Dagfinns saga*, as coined by O'Connor ('Astronomy and Dream Visions', p. 477).

will be discussed. The protagonist of the *þáttr*, Oddi Helgason, or Stjörnu-Oddi (‘Star-Oddi’) — so named for his skill at astronomical calculations — was a twelfth-century Icelandic farmer who made impressive computational observations in a work known as *Oddatal* (‘Oddi’s reckoning’).<sup>10</sup> In *Stjörnu-Odda draumr*, however, Oddi’s astronomical skills are not central to the narrative, although they are mentioned. The character of Oddi has two main roles: firstly, as the dreamer of the dream-saga; and secondly, as the communicator of poems supposedly dreamed up and later written down by Oddi, concerning the events that occur in the dream. Oddi is introduced as a farm-hand in Múli in northern Iceland. He is sent west to Flatey on a fishing trip. That evening on the island, he falls asleep and dreams that he is back at Múli, and that a storyteller is telling a saga. The narrator then recounts this saga:

King Hróðbjartr of Gautland has a son named Geirviðr, and his jarl Hjörvarðr has a daughter called Hléguðr. Hléguðr’s headstrong and impetuous behaviour causes her to leave the jarldom, and she embarks on a successful career as a viking raider. Hróðbjartr dies and the extremely young Geirviðr ascends to the throne. With the kingdom stagnating due to his inexperience, the young king decides to find and defeat two dangerous and troublesome robbers, Garpr and Gnýr, with just one man for company. His poet, Dagfinnr, volunteers to join him. At this point the narrator interrupts and states that Oddi,

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<sup>10</sup> See Björn M. Ólsen, ‘Um Stjörnu-Odda og Oddatölu’, in *Afmalísrit til Dr. Phil. Kr. Kálunds bókavardar við safn Árna Magnússonar 19. ágúst 1914* (Copenhagen: Hið íslenska fræðafélag, 1914), pp. 1–15, and Þorsteinn Vilhjálmsson, ‘Time-Reckoning in Iceland before Literacy’, in *Archaeoastronomy in the 1990s: Papers derived from the third “Oxford” International Symposium on Archaeoastronomy, St. Andrews, U.K., September 1990*, ed. by Clive L. N. Ruggles (Loughborough: Group D Publications, 1993), pp. 69–76.

the dreamer, imagines himself to be Dagfinnr for the rest of the dream. Dagfinnr turns out to be useless as a fighter, so Geirviðr defeats the robbers on his own and reclaims their wealth for his kingdom. Jarl Hjörvarðr, now a widower, marries Hróðbjartr's widow and fathers a daughter, Hlaðreið, and he dies soon afterwards. Hléguðr, now leader of shield-maidens, conquers her late father's former jarldom and issues King Geirviðr an ultimatum: either to grant her half of Gautland; or to meet her in battle at an inlet. He decides to fight, and at this point Oddi awakes.

Oddi recites a *flokkr* that his dream-persona Dagfinnr had supposedly composed in the dream, celebrating Geirviðr's victory over the two robbers. After this, he falls back asleep and returns to the dream as Dagfinnr.

During the battle, Hléguðr is nowhere to be seen during the battle on the ships, and only Dagfinnr is able to see her: she now appears to have an enormous she-wolf's head, and is wreaking havoc by biting the heads off Geirviðr's soldiers. Dagfinnr reveals her to Geirviðr, who charges towards her and beheads her. After the victory, Dagfinnr is given Geirviðr's half-sister Hlaðreið in marriage, and Oddi awakes once again.

Oddi recites a *drápa* that his dream-persona Dagfinnr had supposedly composed in the dream, celebrating the victory over Hléguðr, and thus ends the tale.

On the most basic textural level, it is clear that the dream-saga has structural and narrative elements which are intended to parallel those of legendary and romance sagas. Unlike the *Íslendingasögur*, which are, like the frame narrative of *Stjörnu-Odda draumr*, primarily based in Iceland, the legendary sagas are mostly based in continental Scandinavia. Gautland has strong legendary resonance across these



sagas, being at least mentioned in eighteen texts in the *fornaldarsaga* corpus as edited by Guðni Jónsson,<sup>11</sup> as well as playing a distinct role in other notable texts beyond this corpus, such as *Harðar saga* (an *Íslendingasaga* with a fantastical episode set in Gautland) and *Úlfhams saga* (a *fornaldarsaga* reconstructed from *rímur*). The very word *fornaldarsaga*, meaning ‘story of an ancient time’, indicates a setting in the indeterminate haze of ancient prehistory, and the vast majority of them open with the direct introduction of a Scandinavian king,<sup>12</sup> with similar wording to the opening of the dream-saga: ‘Hróðbjartr hefir konungr heitit’.<sup>13</sup> As O’Connor notes, the use of romance-influenced vocabulary, particularly towards the happy ending of the dream-saga, makes dream-Gautland reminiscent of the lavish kingdoms of younger *fornaldarsögur* and *riddarasögur* (romance sagas).<sup>14</sup> In all these aspects, the *páttir*-author has constructed a narrative style and tone imitating the general style of legendary and romance sagas. There are, however, individual textural elements with much more specific effects on this basic legendary texture, and the most obvious of these is character names. Three names, Hjörvarðr, Hjörguðr and Hléguðr, will be examined in order to elucidate their varying roles in this legendary texture.

Especially in the case of the younger legendary sagas, character names are often borrowed from the older legendary traditions. Elizabeth Ashman Rowe has shown that among the ways in which the Völsung legend was used in other *fornaldarsögur* was the impulse of

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<sup>11</sup> These are indexed in *Fornaldar sögur Norðurlanda*, ed. by Guðni Jónsson, 4 vols (Reykjavik: Íslendingasagnaútgáfan, 1950), IV, 414.

<sup>12</sup> Ruth Richter-Gould, ‘Fornaldar Sögur Norðurlanda: A Structural Analysis’, *Scandinavian Studies*, 52 (1980), 423–41 (pp. 425–26). Many *riddarasögur* also open with this formula, but with non-Scandinavian kings and lands.

<sup>13</sup> ‘A king was called Hróðbjartr’. *Stjörnu-Odda draumr*, ch. 2, in *Harðar saga*, p. 460. All translations are my own unless otherwise specified.

<sup>14</sup> O’Connor, ‘Astronomy and Dream Visions’, pp. 502–03.

association through naming, with Sigurðr being the most common legendarily charged name to be recycled or adapted.<sup>15</sup> The name Hjörvarðr is not an uncommon one in a legendary context; characters with that name appear in *Völsunga saga*, *Ynglinga saga*, *Hrólfs saga kraka*, *Hervarar saga ok Heiðreks* and *Örvar-Odds saga*, and the Hjörvarðr-characters in the latter three sagas are also attested in the corresponding episodes in Saxo Grammaticus' *Gesta Danorum*. There is, however, another high-profile Hjörvarðr found in a legendary context: this time not in *fornaldarsögur*, but in the eddic poem *Helgakviða Hjörvarðssonar*, which is connected to the Völsung tradition. In this poem, a certain King Hjörvarðr fathers the legendary hero Helgi with his fourth wife Sigrlinn. This Hjörvarðr is noteworthy for his unheroic passivity, which is emphasised in the prose passages at the beginning of the poem and after stanza five. In these passages, it is Atli, the son of his jarl, who not only initially travels as proxy-suitor to seek Sigrlinn's hand for the king, but also ends up defying danger to bring Sigrlinn physically to the king in the safety of his army camp.<sup>16</sup> Years later, King Hjörvarðr's lack of heroic desire is then directly criticised by his own son.<sup>17</sup> What then is King Hjörvarðr good for? His narrative role is to father numerous offspring, including Heðinn and the hero Helgi, through multiple marriages. His thematic role is the enhancement of his young son's heroism through contrast with his own passivity. King Hjörvarðr may thus be characterised as a 'useless progenitor', a background character who is made significant through his insignificance.

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<sup>15</sup> Elizabeth Ashman Rowe, 'Formaldarsögur and Heroic Legends of the Edda', in *Revisiting the Poetic Edda: Essays on Old Norse Heroic Legend*, ed. by Paul Acker and Carolyne Larrington (London: Routledge, 2013), pp. 202–18 (pp. 205–14).

<sup>16</sup> *Helgakviða Hjörvarðssonar*, prose, in *Edda: die Lieder des Codex Regius nebst verwandten Denkmälern*, ed. by Gustav Neckel, 4th edn, rev. by Hans Kuhn, 2 vols (Heidelberg: Winter, 1962–68), I (1962), 140–49 (140–42).

<sup>17</sup> *Helgakviða Hjörvarðssonar*, stanzas 10–11, in *Edda*, I, 143.

Jarl Hjörvarðr of the dream-saga in *Stjörnu-Odda draumr* bears a striking resemblance to King Hjörvarðr of the eddic poem. Jarl Hjörvarðr also occupies a high social position, albeit as jarl rather than king. He is married twice, firstly to Hjörguðr, and then to Queen Hildiguðr after the insignificant and rather convenient deaths of Hjörguðr and the king.<sup>18</sup> Figure 1 below shows a family tree demonstrating how Hjörvarðr, as a simple background character, ties together the families of Geirviðr and Hléguðr:

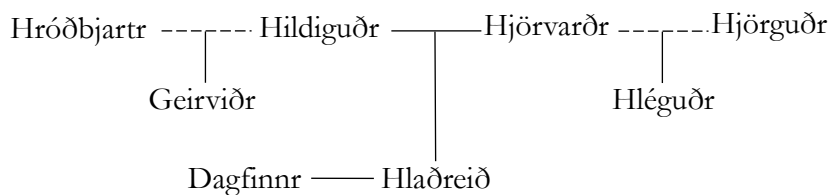


Figure 1: Family tree of the major characters in the dream-saga in *Stjörnu-Odda draumr*. Dotted lines indicate previous marriages ended by death.

Jarl Hjörvarðr’s role as background progenitor is his key function in terms of narrative progression, as he fathers the antagonist extraordinaire, Hléguðr, as well as the rather less important Hlaðreið, whose only role is to be married to Dagfinnr as both heroic reward and standard narrative closure. However, the most crucial similarity of all is that he is a notably passive character, and that this passivity manifests itself in precisely the same two ways as King Hjörvarðr from the eddic poem. Firstly, the passivity of both Hjörvarðr-characters is emphasised through the extreme youth of the active

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<sup>18</sup> The death of Hjörguðr is in fact so insignificant that the narrator feels the need to say that ‘þarf þar eigi at gera mikinn orðahjaldr, at þessi sótt leiðir Hjörgunni til bana’ [there is no need to fashion great wordiness about the fact that this disease led to Hjörguðr’s death]. *Stjörnu-Odda draumr*, ch. 6, in *Harðar saga*, p. 469.

hero.<sup>19</sup> As aforementioned, King Hjörvarðr is rebuked by his young son over his lack of interest in avenging Sigrlinn's father. In the dream-saga of *Stjörnu-Odda draumr*, the young king Geirviðr is said to struggle at first with the demands of kingship: 'En er svá fór fram um hrið, at svá ungr maðr skyldi höfðingi vera ok stjórna mörgu fólki sem Geirviðr var, þá gerðist brátt landsstjórnin lítil, sem líkligt var.'<sup>20</sup> This is the point at which Geirviðr, just twelve years old,<sup>21</sup> decides to

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<sup>19</sup> Rory McTurk notes the motif of the outstanding twelve-year-old in *Stjörnu-Odda draumr* in his review of *Harðar saga. Bárðar saga. Þorskefirdinga saga. Flóamanna saga. Þórarins þátr Nefjólfssonar. Þorsteins þátr uxafóts. Egils þátr Síðu-Halls sonar. Orms þátr Stórolfssonar. Þorsteins þátr tjaldstæðings. Þorsteins þátr forvitna. Bergbúa þátr. Kumlbúa þátr. Stjörnu-Odda draumr*, ed. by Þórhallur Vilmundarson and Bjarni Vilhjálmsson (1991), *Saga-Book*, 24 (1994–97), 164–71 (p. 171). The motif is found in legendary contexts, for instance the eddic poem *Helreið Brynhildar*, the *fornaldarsaga* *Egils saga einbenda ok Ásmundar berserkejabana*, and *Piðreks saga af Bern*, but also in the context of historical *konungasögur* such as *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar*. For more, see Judith Jesch, “‘Youth on the Prow’: Three Young Kings in the Late Viking Age”, in *Youth in the Middle Ages*, ed. by P. J. P. Goldberg and Felicity Riddy (Woodbridge: York Medieval Press, 2004), pp. 123–40 (p. 125).

<sup>20</sup> ‘But when things had gone thus for a while — with such a young man as Geirviðr being chieftain and ruling over as many people as he did — the governance of the land quickly diminished, as was to be expected.’ *Stjörnu-Odda draumr*, ch. 3, in *Harðar saga*, p. 462.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 463. Another notable similarity between Geirviðr and Helgi is the presence of a mound-sitting episode. This motif also appears in *Haralds saga hárfagra* and the legendary *Gautreks saga*, *Göngu-Hrólfs saga*, *Friðþjófs saga* and *Völsunga saga*, as well as in the eddic poem *Þrymskviða*. In the case of Geirviðr in chapter five of *Stjörnu-Odda draumr*, the narrator stresses his mound-sitting to be a sign of the king's judicial authority, which we also find in the case of Hrollaugr in chapter eight of *Haralds saga hárfagra*, in *Heimskringla*, ed. by Bjarni Aðalbjarnarson, *Íslensk fornrit*, 26–28, 3 vols (Reykjavik: Hið íslenska

undertake a quest to defeat two troublesome and socially disruptive robbers, in order to restore some stability to his kingdom. The success of his mission, and the establishment of his kingly credentials, is marked by the conspicuous absence of Jarl Hjörvarðr, an absence punctuated when the jarl resurfaces afterwards simply to marry the widowed queen and father Hlaðreið (who, as stated, also has an extremely nominal role). Figure 2 below demonstrates the similarities in the structural roles played by Jarl Hjörvarðr and King Hjörvarðr:

	Jarl Hjörvarðr in the dream in <i>Stjörnu-Odda draumr</i>	King Hjörvarðr in <i>Helgakviða Hjörvarðssonar</i>
Position	Jarl	King
Marriages	2	4
Children	2 daughters, including antagonist Hléguðr	4 sons, including hero Helgi and Heðinn, who marries Helgi's widow
Manifestation of passivity	Never mentioned when young Geirviðr protects Gautland from vikings	Sends subordinate both to court and then fetch his fourth wife; later criticised by his own young son Helgi for unheroic inactivity

Figure 2: The structural parallels of Jarl Hjörvarðr and King Hjörvarðr.

Unlike *Helgakviða Hjörvarðssonar*, there is no moral criticism attached to Jarl Hjörvarðr's passivity, and this highlights the fact that his main importance is structural: his only role is as a progenitor. He is essentially a utility character who is flexible according to the overarching demands of the narrative. Therefore, for the author of

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fornritafélag, 1941–51), I (1941), 100. In *Helgakviða Hjörvarðssonar*, the mound-sitting episode seems to play a more sacral role, similar to the version of the motif in the first chapter of *Völsunga saga*, in which Óðinn's descendant Rerir sits on the mound and is delivered an apple of fertility by one of Óðinn's valkyries. See *Völsunga saga*, ed. and trans. by R. G. Finch (London: Nelson, 1965), pp. 2–3. For more on this motif, see Axel Olrik, 'At sidde på høj', *Danske Studier*, 6 (1909), 1–10, with specific mentions of *Stjörnu-Odda draumr* and *Helgakviða Hjörvarðssonar* at pp. 2–4.

*Stjörnu-Odda draumr*, ‘Hjörvarðr’ may have been a useful name for a character significant in his insignificance; that is to say, the significance of the name ‘Hjörvarðr’ may have been the narrative insignificance associated with it. After all, Jarl Hjörvarðr is a minor character and the dream-saga would not be substantially affected were he named differently.

Further evidence for the reasons behind the naming of Jarl Hjörvarðr can be found in the name of his first wife, Hjörguðr. According to Þórhallur Vilmundarson, her name is unattested elsewhere in Old Norse literature.<sup>22</sup> It combines the common valkyrie element, *-gunnr* (or *-guðr*), meaning ‘battle’, with the first constituent element of her husband’s name, *Hjör-*. We might speculate that her unique name was specifically coined to correspond to Hjörvarðr’s, and this could support the notion that Hjörvarðr’s name was chosen for its allusive weight.

Recalling Rowe’s identification of the impulse of association through naming, it is informative that this same impulse still applies to a name with far less attested resonance. As legendary figures go, King Hjörvarðr is no Sigurðr. If we accept that Jarl Hjörvarðr in *Stjörnu-Odda draumr* has been named after King Hjörvarðr, it would emphasise how deeply this particular legendary echo was entrenched in the authorial psyche, and presumably the cultural psyche as well. This deliberate allusion would then reveal, in addition to the general textural elements mentioned earlier, an impulse towards a further degree of authenticity, and a clear intention on the part of the author of *Stjörnu-Odda draumr* to cut the dream-saga from the same cloth as existing legendary traditions.

Like her mother Hjörguðr, Hléguðr’s name is also unattested elsewhere in Old Norse literature.<sup>23</sup> It appears to be a combination of

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<sup>22</sup> *Harðar saga*, p. 460, n. 4.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*

*Hlér* and *-gunnr*. The former element is one of the names of *Ægir*,<sup>24</sup> a *jötunn* strongly associated with the sea; indeed, both *ægir* and *hlér* are also common nouns meaning ‘sea’.<sup>25</sup> *Hléguðr*’s name, which therefore seems to mean ‘sea-battle’, is in fact conveniently appropriate for all of her exploits as detailed in the dream-saga, as all of her deeds involve naval warfare. As an impetuous and troublesome youth, she leaves home to embark on viking raids with three longships — raiding being, in *fornaldarsögur*, a common rite of passage for heroes (and a heroine in *Hervör* of *Hervarar saga ok Heiðreks*). Later, having become a shield-maiden-king, she conquers her late father’s jarldom by harrying, with the verb *herja* commonly used in a naval context. Finally, she demands that the final battle be held on ships, at an inlet named *Sildasund*. The strong association between *Hléguðr*’s name and her deeds invites an interpretation of her as an embodiment of naval warfare, and this might be seen as an extension of the strong poetic tradition of physical personifications of the sea.<sup>26</sup>

Out of all her exploits, *Hléguðr*’s name epitomises the final battle most of all. It might therefore be suggested that the coinage of the name was a deliberate construction to encapsulate fully the nature of the final battle, with *Hléguðr*’s previous exploits then specifically tailored to follow this association. In other words, her youthful

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<sup>24</sup> The equation of *Hlér* with *Ægir* is stated in the openings to both *Skáldskaparmál* and *Orkneyinga saga*. See Snorri Sturluson, *Edda: Skáldskaparmál*, ed. by Anthony Faulkes, 2 vols (London: Viking Society for Northern Research, 1998), I, 2, and *Orkneyinga saga*, ed. by Finnbogi Guðmundsson, *Íslensk fornrit*, 34 (Reykjavik: Hið íslenska fornritafélag, 1965), p. 3.

<sup>25</sup> *Skáldskaparmál*, ch. 61, ed. by Anthony Faulkes, I, 92, and John Lindow, *Norse Mythology: A Guide to Gods, Heroes, Rituals, and Beliefs* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 119.

<sup>26</sup> On poetic personifications of the sea, see Judy Quinn, ‘Mythologizing the Sea: The Nordic Sea-Deity *Rán*’, in *Nordic Mythologies*, ed. by Tangherlini, pp. 71–97.

exploits may be dictated by her name, which is itself dictated by the nature of her ultimate battle with Geirviðr. This could account for the drastic development of her character: from troublesome youth in the vein of other famous *fornaldarsaga* heroes and heroines, to overbearing shield-maiden, to monstrous troll. In coining Hléguðr's name, the author adds a strong symbolic dimension to her character that is missing from Hjörvarðr, which suits the fact that Hléguðr is by far the more important character of the two. The addition of a functional level of symbolism to Hléguðr is an important feature to which the discussion will return.

Each of the three names of Hjörvarðr, Hjörguðr and Hléguðr, then, appears to have been chosen for very specific reasons, as each of them functions through a different literary process. The actions of Hléguðr and the inactions of Hjörvarðr correspond directly to associations with their names, albeit in different ways; Hjörvarðr's name was probably borrowed from an existing tradition for legendary resonance with a specific character, while Hléguðr's name was probably coined to reflect the originality of her character, and her actions consistently defined by it thereafter. It is thus possible to see different creative processes at work even on the same textural layer, and this inevitably adds to the complexity of inter-textural interactions within the dream-saga.

Character names are just one aspect of a character, and the evidence discussed is just one textural layer in the literary tapestry of the dream-saga. As each character in the dream-saga has just one name, without nicknames, cognomens or name-changes, character names may be considered to form a discrete and relatively straightforward textural layer. Associations drawn from character-based motifs and actions are more complex, as these directly influence the interactions between characters, thereby shaping the dynamic of the narrative as a whole. The rest of this discussion will be devoted to the dream-saga's use of motifs, focussing in particular on several striking motifs associated with the two separate sets of



antagonists in the dream-saga. The first set of antagonists consists of the two robbers, Garpr and Gnýr, who provide the first test for the twelve-year-old Geirviðr. When they are introduced, they are referred to by the narrator as *illvirkjar*, *víkingar* and *nálíga berserkeir* ('evildoers', 'raiders' and 'nearly berserkers').<sup>27</sup> This use of these three terms, especially the last phrase, is extremely interesting, because it implies that berserkers occupy a position on a continuous scale of crime. In *fornaldarsögur*, berserkers exist exclusively as an obstacle, against whom heroes can usually prove their martial abilities. These berserkers can be identified by any combination of invulnerability to iron and fire; superhuman strength; and the sudden descent into *berserkesgangr* ('berserker-fury') which is often characterised by howling and biting on shields.<sup>28</sup> These characteristics are often further supplemented with animalistic or superhuman qualities designed to reinforce 'the notion of ugliness and concomitant horror'.<sup>29</sup> On occasion, characters may be called berserkers despite never actually displaying any of the above characteristics in the narrative,<sup>30</sup> and this suggests that berserkers are so standard a trope in *fornaldarsögur* that even a nominal berserker is still supposed to evoke the same associations and represent the same level of opposition to the hero. Therefore, in *fornaldarsögur*, there is usually a very clear distinction between

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<sup>27</sup> *Stjörnu-Odda draumr*, ch. 2, in *Harðar saga*, pp. 462–63.

<sup>28</sup> Not only are these characteristics visible through berserkers in action in *fornaldarsögur* and *Íslendingasögur*, but they are also described by Snorri's narrator in *Ynglinga saga*, ch. 6, in *Heimskringla*, I, 17.

<sup>29</sup> Otto J. Zitzelsberger, 'The *berserkeir* in the *fornaldarsögur*', in *Fourth International Saga Conference: München, July 30th–August 4th, 1979* (Munich: Institut für Nordische Philologie der Universität München, 1979), pp. 7–10.

<sup>30</sup> Examples of berserkers without any of these characteristics explicitly shown include the berserkers of the courts of King Aðils and King Hrólfr in *Hrólfs saga keraka*, as well as those in *Egils saga einhenda ok Ásmundar berserkejabana*.

characters who are intended to be berserkers — however nominal — and those who are not.

The phrase *nálíga berserkeir* suggests that the *pátr*-author has incorporated the berserker-figure in a more nuanced manner, and here, Garpr and Gnýr resemble more closely the berserkers of *Íslendingasögur*. Apart from *Stjörnu-Odda draumr*, we find another reference to a supposedly partial berserker in *Svarfdæla saga*, a relatively late *Íslendingasaga* dating to the fourteenth century.<sup>31</sup> Here, the villain is named Moldi, and although he is strikingly described as ‘víkingr eðr hálfberserkr, ef svá vill kalla’,<sup>32</sup> he turns out to be as stereotypical a berserker as they come: he roams in a pack of twelve berserkers; he arrives as a suitor;<sup>33</sup> he is immune to fire and iron; and he habitually bites his shield-rim. Nonetheless, the berserkers of *Íslendingasögur* tend to be more varied than those of *fornaldarsögur*, often being ‘a part of the human sphere’,<sup>34</sup> and, although their martial prowess remains important, their socially disruptive qualities are foregrounded in more varied ways than in the legendary sagas; characters and narrators often express concern over the potential eruption of these qualities.<sup>35</sup> Garpr and Gnýr are never stated to have any of the aforesaid characteristics associated with berserkers — they are not said to be affected by the *berserkesgangr*, for instance — and their social impact seems to be primarily economic. In fact, while Geirviðr, like many a *fornaldarsaga* hero, does prove his martial abilities by defeating the robbers, the narrator instead places a firm emphasis

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<sup>31</sup> *Eyfirðinga sögur*, ed. by Jónas Kristjánsson, Íslensk fornrit, 9 (Reykjavik: Hið íslenska fornritafélag, 1956), pp. lxx–lxxiv.

<sup>32</sup> ‘a raider or a half-berserker, if one wants to call him that’. *Svarfdæla saga*, ch. 7, in *Eyfirðinga sögur*, p. 142.

<sup>33</sup> On this motif, see Benjamin Blaney, ‘The Berserk Suitor: The Literary Application of a Stereotyped Theme’, *Scandinavian Studies*, 54 (1982), 279–94.

<sup>34</sup> Zitzelsberger, p. 2.

<sup>35</sup> Examples of such berserkers include Halli and Leiknir in *Erbyggja saga*.

on the social consequences of the confrontation, even making a conscious effort to downplay the fight itself: ‘mun ek þar gera skjóta frásögn, því at þar er frá lyktum at segja, at svá skipti hamingjan með þeim, því at konungi varð lagit líf ok lykka, at hann bat af báðum illvirkjunum’.<sup>36</sup> Much greater emphasis is placed on Geirviðr’s generosity and responsibility in handling the reparations reclaimed in the aftermath of this quest — in fact, the entirety of chapter five of the *þáttur* is devoted to rewards of various kinds: Geirviðr receives gifts, a royal mound, adulation and praise poetry, while Dagfinnr is given a golden ring.<sup>37</sup> The episode is constructed in order to convey the growth of Geirviðr from an inexperienced king to a responsible one, and it therefore makes sense to have him solve a social problem, such as crime, in a relatively realistic mode — such a propagandistic construction certainly supports a reading of the *þáttur* as an allegory of real-life political events. In giving Geirviðr’s character-development absolute primacy in this episode, the portrayal of Garpr and Gnýr inevitably functions in a subordinate role. It therefore makes sense for the *þáttur*-author to incorporate a type of stock antagonist who is both readily compatible with the overall legendary setting and sufficiently flexible in the nature of his transgressions — transgressions which inevitably define the hero as much as the villain.

Hléguðr is a much more complex antagonist than the two robbers, not least because she is associated with two intriguingly distinct motifs in the final battle. The first of these is the method through which Dagfinnr enables Geirviðr to share his ability of

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<sup>36</sup> ‘I will cut a long story short, because the story goes that in the end fate divided them as follows: the king was granted life and luck, in that he defeated both of the evildoers’. *Stjörnu-Odda draumr*, ch. 4, in *Harðar saga*, pp. 466–67.

<sup>37</sup> *Stjörnu-Odda draumr*, ch. 5, in *Harðar saga*, pp. 467–68.

second sight and thereby spot the monstrous Hléguðr:<sup>38</sup> the motif of spotting an invisible enemy by looking under an ally's arm. This motif is sparsely attested. Apart from *Stjörnu-Odda draumr*, it features in two texts: in the version of the *Bjarkamál* found in Saxo Grammaticus's *Gesta Danorum*, and in *Örvar-Odds saga*.<sup>39</sup> Both are legendary texts. The account in the *Gesta Danorum*, which takes place during the final stand of the Danes of Roluo (known in Norse as Hrólfr kraki, of *Hrólfs saga kraka*), is as follows:

At Biarco:

‘[...] Et nunc ille ubi sit, qui uulgo dicitur Othin  
Armipotens, uno semper contentus ocello?  
Dic mihi, Ruta, precor, usquam si conspicias illum.’

Ad hec Ruta:

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<sup>38</sup> O'Connor sees astronomical allusions in the ability of second sight that initially enables Dagfinnr alone to see Hléguðr. See ‘Astronomy and Dream Visions’, pp. 498–99.

<sup>39</sup> Inger M. Boberg, *Motif-Index of Early Icelandic Literature* (Copenhagen: Munksgaard, 1966), p. 86. There are two motifs that may be related to this. The first involves a character gaining sight by looking in the hollow of their hand, as found in the younger redaction of the legendary *Bósa saga ok Herrauds*; see *Die Bósa-saga in zwei Fassungen*, ed. by Otto L. Jiriczek (Strasbourg: Trübner, 1893), pp. 84–85. The second involves a character looking between their own legs to gain special sight. According to Boberg, there are three instances of this second motif in Old Norse literature, and in each case the character is a witch: in chapter 17 of *Gull-Þóris saga*, in *Harðar saga*, p. 216; chapter 180 of the Sturlubók version of *Landnámabók*, in *Íslendingabók. Landnámabók*, ed. by Jakob Benediktsson, *Íslenzk fornrit*, 1 (Reykjavik: Hið íslenzka fornritafélag, 1968), p. 222; and chapter 26 of *Vatnsdala saga*, ed. by Einar Ól. Sveinsson, *Íslenzk fornrit*, 8 (Reykjavik: Hið íslenzka fornritafélag, 1939), pp. 69–70, which recounts the same episode as *Landnámabók*.

‘Adde oculum propius et nostras perspice chelas,  
Ante sacraturus uictrici lumina signo,  
Si uis presentem tuto cognoscere Martem.’<sup>40</sup>

The motif as it appears in *Örvar-Odds saga* is noticeably different:

‘Þat fylgir ok,’ sagði Oddr, ‘at ek þykkjust allt ryðja fram at merkjum Álfs, en þó sé ek hann hvergi.’ [...] Þá bregðr sá maðr hendi sinni yfir höfuð Oddi ok mælti: ‘Líttu heðan undan hendi mér.’

Ok þegar sér Oddr Álfr ok þat með, er honum var til merkja sagt.<sup>41</sup>

Jakob Grimm connected the motif as it appears in the *Gesta Danorum* with German superstitions associated with Óðinn,<sup>42</sup> but there is

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<sup>40</sup> ‘But Biarki retorted: | “[...] But now, where is the one whom the people call Odin, | powerful in arms, content with a single eye? | Tell me, Ruta, is there anywhere you can spy him?” | Ruta replied: | “Bring your gaze nearer and look through my arms akimbo; | you must first hallow your eyes with the sign of victory | to recognise the war god safely face to face.” Saxo Grammaticus, *Gesta Danorum: The History of the Danes*, II, 7, ed. by Karsten Friis-Jensen and trans. by Peter Fisher, 2 vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), I, 138–39. I have quoted Fisher’s translation here.

<sup>41</sup> ““And something else,” said Oddr, “I thought I could clear a path all the way to Álf’s banner, but I do not see him anywhere.” [...] Then the man raised his hand over Oddr’s head and said: “Look from under my hand.” And immediately Oddr saw Álf and the other things that he had been told about.’ *Örvar-Odds saga*, ch. 41, ed. by Richard C. Boer, *Altnordische Saga-Bibliothek*, 2 (Leiden: Brill, 1888), p. 178.

<sup>42</sup> Jakob Grimm, *Deutsche Mythologie*, 3rd edn (Göttingen: Dieterich, 1854), pp. 891–92. See also Axel Olrik, *The Heroic Legends of Denmark*, trans. by Lee M.

nothing overtly Odinic about the motif as it appears in *Örvar-Odds saga*. Whether or not this specific motif still retained its mythological meaning by the fourteenth century is difficult to say because of the sheer scarcity of attestations. However, the fact that the motif survives in more than one legendary context suggests that it could have been seen as a traditional legendary motif which belonged in the fantastical mode. The evidence of the dream-saga in *Stjörnu-Odda draumr* supports this possibility, and it is very tempting to speculate that this motif was incorporated in the *þáttr* for that very reason.

The second distinct motif in the final battle of the dream-saga is Hléguðr's *ylgjarhöfuð* ('she-wolf's head'), which is described as 'geysimikit ok tröllsligt'.<sup>43</sup> Although the compound word *ylgjarhöfuð* only appears in *Stjörnu-Odda draumr* according to the Dictionary of Old Norse Prose, there are six other sagas listed in which *ylgjar* ('she-wolves'; singular *ylgr*) are mentioned:<sup>44</sup> three *riddarasögur* (*Mírmanns saga*,<sup>45</sup> *Ectors saga* and *Gibbons saga*), one *fornaldarsaga* (*Völsunga saga*),<sup>46</sup> one saga somewhere between a *fornaldarsaga* and a *riddarasaga* (*Þjalar-*

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Hollander, *Scandinavian Monographs*, 4 (New York: American-Scandinavian Foundation, 1919), pp. 151–53.

<sup>43</sup> 'very large and trollish'. *Stjörnu-Odda draumr*, ch. 8, in *Harðar saga*, p. 474.

<sup>44</sup> *Dictionary of Old Norse Prose*, ed. by Aldís Sigurðardóttir and others <<http://onp.ku.dk/>> [accessed 3 September 2016], s.v. *ylgr*.

<sup>45</sup> No *ylgr* actually appears in *Mírmanns saga* — Mírmann simply uses the term to insult his mother, calling her 'mesta ylgi á Norðurlönd' [the greatest she-wolf in the northern lands] in an attempt to justify the murder of his father. See *Riddarasögur*, ed. by Bjarni Vilhjálmsson, 6 vols (Reykjavik: Íslendingasagnaútgáfan, 1949–51), III (1949), 34.

<sup>46</sup> Of these sagas, *Völsunga saga* is the only one to contain consistent wolf imagery, most of which is likely to be of traditional origin; indeed, at least one of the other *ylgjar*, that of *Þjalar-Jóns saga*, has clearly borrowed directly from it. See Aðalheiður Guðmundsdóttir, 'The Werewolf in Medieval Icelandic Literature', *Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, 106 (2007), 277–303.

*Jóns saga*), and a translated saint's life, *Plácíðus saga*. There is at least one other *ylgr* in saga literature which the Dictionary does not list: in *Sírgarðs saga frækna*,<sup>47</sup> which, like *Þjalar-Jóns saga*, is seen as both a legendary and a romance saga. The mentions of *ylgjar* in *Mírmanns saga* and *Plácíðus saga* are anomalies: in the former, the term is simply used as an insult, and in the latter, the *ylgr* features as part of a direct translation from the saga's Latin source. Excluding these two sagas, it is apparent that the only sagas in which an *ylgr* physically appears are legendary or romance sagas. In all of these, the *ylgr* is a lone, physical monster for the hero to slay, lacking in overt metaphoric value — not substantially different in narrative function from other monstrous creatures found in legendary and romance sagas. The emphasised physicality of Hléguðr's wolf-headed form must be considered in this regard. The narrator remarks that it seems to Dagfinnr as though she 'biti [...] höfuðin af konungsmönnum'.<sup>48</sup> The graphic nature of this scene is then reiterated in an entire verse of the *drápa* at the end of the *þáttr*:

Hlégunnar leit ek hingat  
harðráðar ódáðir;  
ýfð með ylgjar höfði  
eiskranlig réð geisa;  
trölls kjapta sá ek tyggja  
tönnum hold af mönnum;  
með hnitgeirum hvápta

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<sup>47</sup> Alaric Hall, Steven D. P. Richardson and Haukur Þorgeirsson, 'Sigrgarðs saga frækna: A Normalised Text, Translation, and Introduction', *Scandinavian-Canadian Studies*, 21 (2013), 80–155 (pp. 132–33).

<sup>48</sup> 'bit [...] the heads off the king's men'. *Stjörnu-Odda draumr*, ch. 8, in *Harðar saga*, p. 474.

harða sókn of gerði.<sup>49</sup>

However, the *ylgr* image in Old Norse literature has a second established usage. In skaldic verse, it functions in a much more symbolic role than the literal, physical *ylgr* of the fantastical narrative mode of *fornaldarsögur* and *riddarasögur*. The Skaldic Poetry of the Scandinavian Middle Ages database shows twenty-one occurrences of some form of the word in skaldic poetry.<sup>50</sup> In each case it is mentioned as a symbolic representative of battle. One example is Sigvatr Þórðarson's verse describing St Óláfr's battle at Fetlafjörðr (modern-day Betanzos) in north-west Spain, as found in *Óláfs saga helga*:

Tõnn rauð tolfða sinni  
tírfylgjandi ylgjar  
(varð) í Fetlafirði  
(fjörbann lagit mǫnnum).<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> 'Now I witnessed clearly | The cruel crimes of Hlegunn — | Bristling, with a wolf's head, | I saw her raging frenzy; | I saw her sharp-toothed troll-jaws | Chewing human charnel; | She made a fierce foray | With her snapping spear-gape [JAWS]'. *Stjörnu-Odda draumr*, ch. 9, in *Harðar saga*, p. 480. For this verse, I have quoted O'Connor's translation, from *Icelandic Histories & Romances*, p. 112.

<sup>50</sup> *Skaldic Poetry of the Scandinavian Middle Ages*, ed. by Tarrin Wills and others <<http://www.abdn.ac.uk/skaldic/db.php?id=95846&if=default&table=lemma&val=ylgr>> [accessed 31 July 2016].

<sup>51</sup> 'The glory-follower [WARRIOR] reddened the tooth of the she-wolf for the twelfth time in Fetlafjörðr; a life-ban [DEATH] was imposed on men'. *Vikingavísur*, stanza 12, ed. and trans. by Judith Jesch, in *Poetry from the Kings' Sagas 1: From Mythical Times to c. 1035*, ed. by Diana Whaley, Skaldic Poetry of the Scandinavian Middle Ages, 1, 2 vols (Turnhout: Brepols, 2012), II, 552: I have quoted Jesch's translation here. See also *Heimskringla*, II (1945), 24.



It is notable that this strong poetic association of the *ylgr* with battle does not appear in explicit form in any of the sagas listed above, where, as stated, the *ylgr* is simply a lone monster to be slain. Having suggested earlier that the coinage of Hléguðr's name served to build a symbolic conceit within her character as the personification of naval warfare, it seems appropriate that her appearance in the final fight should also resemble a symbolic representative of battle. The transformation of the shield-maiden-king into a foe with an *ylgjarhöfuð* may be utilising a strong poetic image to reinforce the idea of Hléguðr as the personified embodiment of battle.

It is worth dwelling momentarily on the fact that Hléguðr is not a full *ylgr*, but only appears to have an *ylgjarhöfuð*. There is one other instance of wolf-headedness in Old Norse literature, and, intriguingly, it also occurs in a dream.<sup>52</sup> This dream is found in *Gísla saga*, an *Íslendingasaga* which probably dates to the first half of the thirteenth century.<sup>53</sup> In this case, it is not an *ylgr* but a *vargr*, an evil (male) wolf. The seemingly wolf-headed man in Gísli's prophetic dream refers to Njósнар-Helgi ('Helgi the Spy'), whose actual physical form is disappointingly regular. Gísli's dream is as follows:

‘Þat dreymði mik,’ segir Gísli, ‘at menn kæmi at oss ok væri Eyjólfr í for ok margt annarra manna ok hittimsk vér, ok vissa ek, at áburðir urðu með oss. Einn þeira fór fyrstr, grenjandi mjök, ok þóttumk ek hoggva hann sundr í miðju, ok þótti mér vera á

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<sup>52</sup> Boberg, *Motif-Index*, p. 41. Boberg does not list *Stjörnu-Odda draumr* as part of this motif.

<sup>53</sup> Emily Lethbridge, ‘*Gísla saga Súrssonar*: Textual Variation, Editorial Constructions and Critical Interpretations’, in *Creating the Medieval Saga: Versions, Variability and Editorial Interpretations of Old Norse Saga Literature*, ed. by Judy Quinn and Emily Lethbridge, Viking Collection, 18 (Odense: University Press of Southern Denmark, 2010), pp. 123–52 (p. 127).

honum vargs höfuð. Þá sóttu margir at mér; ek þóttumk hafa skjöldinn í hendi mér ok verjask lengi.<sup>54</sup>

In Gísli's dream, the wolf-headed man does not put up much of a fight. Accordingly, when the events of Gísli's dream come to fruition, Helgi is also easily overcome. It is therefore unlikely that the wolf-head in the dream denotes a particularly strong agent of battle, but is instead more generally indicative of the aggressive intent of Eyjólfur's men, and it is possible that the Hléguðr's *ylgjarhöfuð* is supposed to represent the same. It is difficult to draw any direct connection between the *vargs höfuð* of *Gísla saga* and the *ylgjarhöfuð* of *Stjörnu-Odda draumr* given that they are the only two examples of the motif in Old Norse literature. One tenuous possibility is the connection with outlawry; the term *vargr* could mean both 'outlaw' and 'wolf',<sup>55</sup> and, as it happens, there is a precedent for a clear and codified association between outlawry and the specific image of a wolf's head in a legal system of the thirteenth century, although this is found not in Iceland

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<sup>54</sup> 'I dreamed', said Gísli, 'that some men came at us — Eyjólfur was in their company, along with many others — and we met and I know that there was fighting between us. One of them came first, howling a lot, and it seemed that I hewed him in two at the middle, and he seemed to me to have a wolf's head. Then many attacked me; it seemed to me that I had a shield in my hand and defended myself for a long time.' *Gísla saga*, ch. 33, in *Vestfirðinga sögur*, ed. by Björn K. Þórólfsson and Guðni Jónsson, Íslensk fornrit, 6 (Reykjavik: Hið íslenska fornritafélag, 1943), p. 105.

<sup>55</sup> See Gabriel Turville-Petre, 'Outlawry', in *Sjötú ritgerðir: helgæðar Jakobi Benediktssyni 20. júlí 1977*, ed. by Einar G. Pétursson and Jónas Kristjánsson, 2 vols (Reykjavik: Stofnun Árna Magnússonar, 1977), II, 769–78.

but in England.<sup>56</sup> However, Hléguðr does not seem to have been designed to conform to the strong tradition of outlaws in Old Norse literature, so any association between her *ylgjarhöfuð* and outlawry is a stretch. At the very least, what is notable is the symbolic framing common to both of wolf-headed figures in the dreams in *Gísla saga* and *Stjörnu-Odda draumr*. Gísli states that ‘þótti mér vera á honum vargs höfuð’,<sup>57</sup> using an impersonal construction to emphasise the psychological otherness of the dream vision. A third-person form of this grammatical construction is, as Ralph O’Connor notes, also used liberally at the beginning of the dream in *Stjörnu-Odda draumr*,<sup>58</sup> and, similarly, it is crucial that the description of Hléguðr’s *ylgjarhöfuð* is also framed through the phrase ‘honum sýndist’ (‘it seemed to him [Dagfinnr]’).<sup>59</sup> Through this construction, the wolf-headed characters in both *Gísla saga* and *Stjörnu-Odda draumr* are being framed as symbolically significant; they play similar narrative roles as imaginative elements. In the case of Hléguðr, this augments the traditional poetic associations between the *ylgr* figure and battle. The *ylgjarhöfuð* of Hléguðr, therefore, is both symbolically charged and tangibly physical. The *páttr*-author has combined the physical monster found almost exclusively in legendary and romance sagas with the poetic representative of battle found in skaldic verse; and in doing so,

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<sup>56</sup> The phrase ‘caput gerat lupinum’ [may he have a wolf’s head] was a decree of outlawry in England in the thirteenth century. See *De Legibus et Consuetudinibus Angliae*, ed. by George E. Woodbine and trans. by Samuel E. Thorne, 4 vols (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1968–77), II (1968), 362; cf. Frederick Pollock and Frederic William Maitland, *The History of the English Law Before the Time of Edward I*, ed. by S. F. C. Milsom, 2nd edn, 2 vols (London: Cambridge University Press, 1968), I, 449.

<sup>57</sup> ‘there seemed to me to be a wolf’s head on him’. *Gísla saga*, ch. 33, in *Vestfirðinga sögur*, p. 105.

<sup>58</sup> O’Connor, ‘Astronomy and Dream Visions’, pp. 476–77.

<sup>59</sup> *Stjörnu-Odda draumr*, ch. 8, in *Harðar saga*, p. 474.

Hléguðr is presented as a character balanced by the weight of poetic association on the one hand and the colours of legendary imagination on the other.

Although the dream-saga in *Stjörnu-Odda draumr* is a simple, linear narrative, analysis of the construction of its fantastical textures reveals the discretion behind authorial decisions as simple as choices of names. Indeed, the richness of the dream-saga's layers is made all the more remarkable for the *þátttr*'s relative brevity. The combination of legendary tropes, social themes and symbolic imagery is made more complex by the multivalence with which some of the chosen elements are traditionally imbued, and it is hoped that this study will encourage future consideration of the *þátttr* alongside the *fornaldarsögur*, potentially illuminating common questions of genre, contemporary reception and the construction of fantastical modes. Ultimately, it should not be forgotten that, in creating the reflexive narrative that is the saga-in-a-saga, the author of *Stjörnu-Odda draumr* has chosen a medium through which the potential of literary multivalences can be embraced and explored. From the varying thought processes behind the names to the considered uses of the berserker and *yǫgr* figures, the uniquely imagined world could quite easily represent that of a dream or of a conventional *fornaldarsaga*. All of the different narrative textures, motifs and motivations that have been discussed, as well as the complexities and compatibilities between them, thrive on the basic duality that the fantasies of dream and legend can be cut from the same cloth.

*Eald æfensceop*: Poetic Composition and the Authority of the Aged in Old English Verse

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The ability to compose and perform poetry or song is repeatedly linked with a state of old age in the Old English poetic corpus. This paper will highlight in turn the presentation of elderly, lyrically gifted individuals in *Beowulf*, Cynewulf's epilogue to *Elene* and Riddle 8 of the *Exeter Book*.<sup>1</sup> All assert a relationship between ideas of advanced age and poetic compositional ability, one which relies upon complex ideas of wisdom and sagacity, accumulation of knowledge and access to memory of various past experiences. This aspect of the poet's identity in Old English literature has not yet been fully investigated by scholars.<sup>2</sup> Equally, studies of ideas of old age in the poetry have not

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<sup>1</sup> *Klaeber's Beowulf and the Fight at Finnsburg*, ed. by R. D. Fulk, Robert E. Bjork and John D. Niles, 4th edn (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008), diacritics omitted in quotations; Cynewulf, *Elene*, ed. by P. O. E. Gradon, rev. edn (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1977); *The Exeter Book*, ed. by George Philip Krapp and Elliott Van Kirk Dobbie, *The Anglo-Saxon Poetic Records*, 3 (New York: Columbia University Press; London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1936). All translations are my own unless otherwise stated.

<sup>2</sup> Early efforts sought to locate the romantic figure of the oral bard or *scop* as a historical figure in Anglo-Saxon England; on this tradition, see Roberta Frank, 'The Search for the Anglo-Saxon Oral Poet', *Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester*, 75 (1993), 11–36 (p. 12). More recently, Emily V. Thornbury has compiled a balanced overview of the scholarly literature surrounding the figure of the Anglo-Saxon poet as well as a detailed survey of references to poets in Old English literature, both forming part of a larger study

focused on poetic aptitude.<sup>3</sup> The implications of such a connection nonetheless resonate widely across the body of vernacular verse surviving from Anglo-Saxon England.

First, the two most extended descriptions of elderly people in *Beowulf* both have vocal expression, specifically poetic performance, at their centres.<sup>4</sup> The earlier of these depicts a *gomel*, or ‘old’, figure,<sup>5</sup>

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of the identities of poets in pre-Conquest England: *Becoming a Poet in Anglo-Saxon England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

<sup>3</sup> On ideas of old age in Anglo-Saxon literature, see most recently M. H. Porck, ‘Growing Old Among the Anglo-Saxons: The Cultural Conceptualisation of Old Age in Early Medieval England’ (unpublished doctoral thesis, Leiden University, 2016). See also J. A. Burrow, *The Ages of Man: A Study in Medieval Writing and Thought* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), pp. 107–09, 162, 164, 168; Jordi Sánchez-Martí, ‘Age Matters in Old English Literature’, in *Youth and Age in the Medieval North*, ed. by Shannon Lewis-Simpson (Leiden: Brill, 2008), pp. 241–63 (especially pp. 218–22); Philippa Semper, ‘Byð se ealda man ceald and snoflig: Stereotypes and Subversions of the Last Stages of the Life Cycle in Old English Texts and Anglo-Saxon Contexts’, in *Medieval Life Cycles: Continuity and Change*, ed. by Isabelle Cochelin and Karen Smyth (Turnhout: Brepols, 2013), pp. 287–318.

<sup>4</sup> For discussion of old age in connection with well-considered verbal expression in *Beowulf* (particularly at ll. 1842b–45a), see Britt Mize, ‘Manipulations of the Mind-as-Container Motif in *Beowulf*, *Homiletic Fragment II* and Alfred’s *Metrical Epilogue to the Pastoral Care*’, *Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, 107 (2008), 25–56 (especially p. 36); Sánchez-Martí, p. 219.

<sup>5</sup> Analysis of *gomel* and the rest of the vocabulary of old age in Anglo-Saxon writings is provided by Porck, pp. 59–71, 239–94; Ashley Crandell Amos, ‘Old English Words for Old’, in *Aging and the Aged in Medieval Europe: Selected Papers from the Annual Conference of the Centre for Medieval Studies, University of Toronto, Held 25–26 February and 11–12 November 1983*, ed. by Michael M. Sheehan, *Papers in Mediaeval Studies*, 11 (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1990), pp. 95–106. Both Porck (pp. 264–65) and Amos (p. 97) agree that the sense of

possibly Hrothgar, entertaining others in the hall after the victory over Grendel.<sup>6</sup> The account is nested in Beowulf's direct speech, part of his description of his experiences with the Danes at the point of returning to Hygelac:

Me þone wælræs wine Scildunga  
 fættan golde fela leanode,  
 manegum maðmum, syððan mergen com  
 ond we to symble geseten hæfdon.  
 Þær wæs gidd ond gleo; gomela Scilding, 2105  
 felafricgende feorran rehte;  
 hwilum hildedeor hearpan wynne,  
 gome(n)wudu grette, hwilum gyd awræc  
 soð ond sarlic, hwilum syllic spell  
 rehte æfter rihte rumheort cyning; 2110  
 hwilum eft ongan, eldo gebunden,  
 gomel guðwiga giogude cwiðan,  
 hildestrengo; hreðer (in)ne weoll  
 þonne he wintrum frod worn gemunde.  
 Swa we þær inne andlange dæg 2115  
 niode naman, oð ðæt niht becwom

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*gomel* (or *gamol*, a variant) as 'old' is clear, but its etymology remains uncertain. See also Ferdinand Holthausen, *Altenglisches etymologisches Wörterbuch* (Heidelberg: Winter, 1934), s.v. *gamol*.

<sup>6</sup> On this passage, see Arthur Gilchrist Brodeur, *The Art of Beowulf* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1959), pp. 237–38; *Klaeber's Beowulf*, pp. 233–34. For those who believe that the unnamed performer is not Hrothgar, see Ernst A. Kock, 'Interpretations and Emendations of Early English Texts: X', *Anglia*, 46 (1922), 173–90 (p. 175); Johannes Hoops, *Kommentar zum Beowulf* (Heidelberg: Winter, 1932), p. 233; *Beowulf and Judith*, ed. by Elliott Van Kirk Dobbie, *The Anglo-Saxon Poetic Records*, 4 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1953), pp. 225–27.

oðer to yldum.<sup>7</sup>

For that slaughter-rush, the friend of the Scyldings rewarded me with much plated gold, many treasures, when morning came and we had sat down to the feast. There was song and music; the old Scylding, when many asked,<sup>8</sup> told of far-off things; sometimes the battle-bold one plucked the merry-wood, the joy of the harp, sometimes he expressed a poem, true and sad, sometimes the roomy-hearted king told rightly a strange tale; sometimes, again, the old warrior, bound with age, would lament his youth, his battle-strength; his heart welled within when, wise with winters, he remembered many things.

So all day long we took pleasure in there, until another night came to men.

The second extended passage focusing on an elderly figure is likewise placed within Beowulf's direct speech, just before his fight with the dragon.<sup>9</sup> This passage follows the experiences of another man who is *gomel*, here bereaved and unable to avenge his son's death, due, apparently, to his being legally executed, as argued by Whitelock.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> *Beowulf*, ll. 2101–17, in *Klaeber's Beowulf*, pp. 71–72.

<sup>8</sup> On this translation of *felafricgende*, see Alfred Bammesberger, 'Fela Fricgende: Royal Entertainment in the Hall Heorot (*Beowulf*, lines 2105–14)', *Notes and Queries*, 61 (2014), 3–8.

<sup>9</sup> For a discussion of this passage, see Dorothy Whitelock, 'Beowulf 2444–2471', *Medium Ævum*, 8 (1939), 198–204. For arguments that the figure of the old man is Hrethel himself, see Arnold R. Taylor, 'Two Notes on *Beowulf*', *Leeds Studies in English*, original ser., 7–8 (1952), 5–17 (pp. 5–13), as well as Francesca Chiusaroli, *Storia, memoria e conoscenza nell'Inghilterra medioevale* (Rome: Il Calamo, 1995), p. 73. See also *Klaeber's Beowulf*, pp. 245–48.

<sup>10</sup> Whitelock, building on Rudolf Imelmann, *Forschungen zur altenglischen Poesie* (Berlin: Weidmannsche Buchhandlung, 1920), pp. 268–71.



The old man is, in this respect, like King Hreðel, who in the second part of the passage mourns that he cannot settle the *fæghð*, ‘feud’ or ‘state of enmity’ (2465b), with the *feorhbona*, ‘life-slayer’ (2465a), of Herebeald, as this is Hæthcyn, another of his sons:<sup>11</sup>

Swa bið geomorlic gomelum ceorle	
to gebidanne, þæt his byre ride	2445
giong on galgan. Þonne he gyd wrece,	
sarigne sang, þonne his sunu hangað	
hrefne to hroðre, ond he him helpe ne mæg,	
eald ond infrod, ænige gefremman,	
symble bið gemyndgad morna gehwylce	2450
eaforan ellorsið; oðres ne gymeð	
to gebidanne burgum in innan	
yrfewardas, þonne se an hafað	
þurh deaðes nyd dæda gefondad.	
Gesyhð sorhcearig on his suna bure	2455
winsele westne, windge reste,	
reot[g]e berofene; ridend swefað,	
hæleð in hoðman; nis þær hearpan sweg,	
gomen in geardum, swylce ðær iu wæron.	
Gewiteð þonne on sealman, sorhleoð gæleð	2460
an æfter anum; þuhte him eall to rum,	
wongas ond wicstede.	

Swa Wedra helm

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<sup>11</sup> Porck (pp. 185–213, especially pp. 204–05) sees the following passage as supporting a broad contrast in the poem between Hrothgar as a largely negatively presented, passive old king (implicitly aligned with King Hrethel, similarly characterized by inaction) and Beowulf as a positively presented, active old king, as part of a wider scheme by which *Beowulf* forms a ‘mirror of elderly kings’. In this respect he follows and develops the position of Adrien Bonjour, *The Digressions in Beowulf* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1950), p. 52.

æfter Herebealde heortan sorge  
weallinde wæg; wihte ne meahte  
on ðam feorhbonan fæghðe gebetan; 2465  
no ðy ær he þone heaðorinc hatian ne meahte  
laðum dædum, þeah him leof ne wæs.  
He ða mid þære sorhge, þe him sio sar belamp,  
gumdream ofgeaf, Godes leoht geceas;  
eaferum læfde, swa deð eadig mon 2470  
lond ond leodbyrig, þa he of life gewat.<sup>12</sup>

In the same way, it is miserable for an old man to endure that his son should swing young on the gallows. Then he may express a poem, a sorry song, when his son hangs, a pleasure for the raven, and he, old and very wise, cannot provide him with any help; always each morning he is reminded of his offspring's journey elsewhere; he does not care to wait for other heirs within the stronghold when one has through death's compulsion experienced deeds. In anxious sorrow, he sees in his son's chamber an abandoned wine-hall, the windy resting place deprived of joy; the riders sleep, heroes in darkness; there is no sound of the harp, merriment in the courts, as there was before. Then he goes to his couch, sings a sorrow-lay, one after the other. To him the land and dwelling-place seemed all too roomy.

So the Weders' guardian carried sorrow welling in the heart for Herebeald; he could in no way settle the feud with the life-slayer; yet nor could he abuse the warrior with deeds of loathing. He, whom that sorrow befell, then on account of that suffering gave up men's joys, chose the light of God. To his offspring, as a prosperous man does, he left his land and peopled towns, when he departed this life.

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<sup>12</sup> *Beowulf*, ll. 2444–71, in *Klaeber's Beowulf*, pp. 84–85.

Tonal differences between this passage and the description of Hrothgar are obvious. As both are spoken by Beowulf, there is potentially space for a reading which privileges the hero's individual psychological development. His attitude may be seen to shift towards a more pessimistic view of old age, centred upon negative attributes of helplessness and vulnerability in contrast with the pleasures and social centrality which characterise Hrothgar's performance.<sup>13</sup>

However, some more general observations can also be made of the two passages when held against one another. In the first, the description of the *gomela Scilding* is firmly orientated around poetic performance; all of the activities taken up by the elderly figure are artistic or communicatory in function. Previously, this passage has been scrutinised as revelatory of Old English literary genres, with the different performance-related words including *gyd* [...] *soð ond sarlic*, 'a poem, true and sorrowful' (2108b–09a), *syllic spell*, 'a strange tale' (2109b), as well as the verb *cwiðan*, 'to lament' (2112b), applied to the topics of lost youth and strength in battle.<sup>14</sup> Whether or not these labels are generalised by scholars into broader significance, they stress the performer's command over a broad range of genres of composition. Throughout the passage, emphasis is also placed on change, opportunity and the presence of choice; this is seen for instance in the structuring device of *hwilum*, 'sometimes' or 'for a time', as activities are selected and dropped (2107a; 2108b; 2109b; 2111a). The second passage, so different in tone, is characterised by a concern with compulsion and absence of choice, seen clearly in the

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<sup>13</sup> Such an interpretation would accord well with readings of *Beowulf* which focus on Beowulf's absence of male heirs at the end of the poem. See Francis Leneghan, 'The Poetic Purpose of the Offa-Digression in *Beowulf*', *Review of English Studies*, 60 (2009), 538–60.

<sup>14</sup> See Klaeber's *Beowulf*, p. 233; Earl R. Anderson, *Understanding Beowulf as an Indo-European Epic* (Lewiston, NY: Mellen, 2010), p. 176; David Howlett, *British Books in Biblical Style* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 1997), pp. 531–33.

old man's inability to avenge his son's death; equally he cannot provide his son with *helpe* [...] *ænige*, 'any help at all' (2448b–49b), when he is on the gallows. The absent potential for choice asserts itself in this passage in subtler ways. Contrast with the first passage can be seen, for instance, in the difference between the temporal adverbs employed. Where the first uses *hwilum*, 'sometimes', which is not clearly located within any chronological sequence, the second uses *þonne*, which is more clearly sequential and linear. Thus instead of *hwilum gyd awræc*, 'sometimes he expressed a poem' (2108b), in the first passage, the second offers *Ðonne he gyd wrece*, 'then he may express a poem' (2446b). The subjunctive verb does dislocate the song-act from a specific moment in time, introducing an element of conditionality, but it also may be seen to communicate the propriety or fittingness of the singing, creating a space for potentially habitual and repetitious behaviour.<sup>15</sup> Throughout the rest of the passage, terms of chronological sequence preside: *ða* (2469a) and *þonne* (2447b; 2453b; 2460a). Similarly, the half-line *an æfter anum* (2461b) is taken by the most recent editors of *Klaeber's Beowulf* as referring to the old man's series of laments, such that the songs are sung 'one after the other', 'in sequence'.<sup>16</sup> In the old man's situation of restriction and compulsion, even his performance of verbal art can be seen as organised in a less eclectic, impulsive manner. In the same vein, the first episode commences on a single morning, *syððan mergen com*, 'when morning came' (2103b), a single event of individual importance; the old man's experience after the death of his son is contrastingly

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<sup>15</sup> *Gyd*, in its broad semantic range, is also translatable as 'song', 'riddle' or 'proverb': *Dictionary of Old English: A to G Online*, ed. by Angus Cameron and others (hereafter *DOE*) (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 2007) <<http://tapor.library.utoronto.ca/doe/dict/index.html>> [accessed 2 August 2016], s.v. *gydd*, 1; 1. a.; 5.

<sup>16</sup> *Klaeber's Beowulf*, p. 247.

partitioned into a sequence of mornings, *morna gebnylce*, ‘each or every morning’ (2451b).

Both passages nonetheless share the same interest in performance and communication, to the extent that they employ that one very similar half-line, *hwilum gyd awræc* (2108b) and *Donne he gyd wrece* (2446b).<sup>17</sup> Where the first passage invokes the contested ‘genre’ descriptions *gyd [...] soð ond sarlic, syllic spell*, and the verb *cwiðan*, in the second passage the old man *gyd wrece, | sarigne sang*, ‘expresses a poem, a sorry song’ (2446b–47a), and later *sorhleoð gæleð*, ‘sings a sorrow-lay’ (2460b). Although the passages present the two old men markedly differently, particularly with respect to dynamics of volition and constraint, they both foreground the shared figure of a verbally, artistically adept old man.

Juxtaposed with these, it is profitable to consider Cynewulf’s epilogue to *Elene*, which draws to a close a poem full of references not only to old poets, but also insistently to interrelationships between words, oldness more generally, and concepts of ‘wisdom’.<sup>18</sup> The epilogue itself shares territory with other works signed by Cynewulf in associating wisdom with accomplished speech and song. *Christ II*, for example, asserts the following:

Se mæg eal fela  
singan ond secgan þam bið snyttru cræft  
bifolen on ferðe.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>17</sup> The noun *gyd* is frequently paired with *wrecan* or *awrecan* in the poetic corpus, including elsewhere in *Beowulf* at 2154b (*gyd æfter wræc*) and 3172a (*wordgyd wrecan*), and in *Vainglory* (*Exeter Book*, pp. 147–49) at 51b (*ond þæt gyd awræc*), where the speaker is a *frod wita on fyrndagum* (‘wise man experienced in the old days’ or ‘an experienced wise man, in the old days’).

<sup>18</sup> For example, on the significance of *frod fyrngewritu* (431a) and *frod fyrmwiota* (438a) in the poem, see Thornbury, *Becoming a Poet*, pp. 129–32.

<sup>19</sup> *Christ II*, ll. 666b–68a, in *Exeter Book*, p. 21.

The man whose mind has been given the art of wisdom can sing and say all kinds of things.

*Elene's* epilogue is particularly concerned with the notion that poetry is associated both with wisdom and with experience over time and over a life course:

Ɔus ic frod ond fus, þurh þæt fæcne hus,  
wordcræftum wæf ond wundrum læs,  
þragum þreodude ond geþanc reodode,  
nihtes nearwe; nysse ic gearwe,  
be ðære rode riht ær me rumran geþeajt, 1240  
þurh ða mæran miht on modes þeajt,  
wisdom onwreah; ic wæs weorcum fah,  
synnum asæled, sorgum gewæled,  
bitrum gebunden, bisgum beþrunge,  
ær me lare onlag þurh leohtne had, 1245  
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, 1250  
willum in worlde.<sup>20</sup>

So I, wise in years and ready, through that treacherous house, wove with the craft of words and wondrously gathered it together; at times I have meditated and sifted my thought in the closeness of the night; I did not fully know the truth about the cross until wisdom revealed wider knowledge through its

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<sup>20</sup> Modified from *Elene*, ll. 1236–51a, ed. by Gradon, pp. 71–72 (including 7 expanded, *g* for *Ʒ*, *w* for *ƿ*, diacritics omitted).

glorious power into my heart's thought. I was stained with deeds, bound by sins, torn by sorrows, fettered by bitterness, surrounded by afflictions, until in majesty the King of Glory granted learning to me as a comfort for old age, measured out the unflawed gift and invested it in my heart, revealed its brightness, in time broadened it, freed my body, unfastened my breast-enclosure, and loosed the craft of song; this I have used happily, with delight in the world.

Initially the speaker is *frod ond fus* (1236a).<sup>21</sup> *Frod* here is seemingly used in its broad sense of 'old, aged; worthy of veneration/respect on account of age/experience/wisdom'.<sup>22</sup> It is then linked by Cynewulf

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<sup>21</sup> Earl R. Anderson understands this part of Cynewulf's epilogue as participating in a self-disparaging 'aged author' topos, connected to 'problems of composition', which developed under the influence of the funeral oration of Gregory Nazianzus (c. 329–89) in praise of Basil (*Funebris oratio in laudem Basili magni*, in *Patrologiae cursus completus, series Graeca*, ed. by J. P. Migne, 161 vols (Paris, 1857–66), XXXVI (1858), 493–606), attested also in the ending to the sixth-century *Vita sanctae Mariae meretricis* (*Patrologiae cursus completus, series Latina*, ed. by J. P. Migne, 221 vols (Paris, 1844–64), LXXIII (1849), 659–60; trans. by Daniel G. Calder and Michael J. B. Allen, *Sources and Analogues of Old English Poetry: The Major Latin Texts in Translation* (Cambridge: Brewer, 1983), pp. 59–60, 68–69). See Earl R. Anderson, *Cynewulf: Structure, Style and Theme in His Poetry* (Rutherford: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1983), pp. 18–19. Anderson's trope is, however, fundamentally concerned with a state of being plagued by compositional difficulty — a tradition that does not sit well with the free-flowing ease of poetic creation described in the epilogue to *Elene*.

<sup>22</sup> *DOE*, s.v. *frod*, 2. a. On *frod*, see Amos, p. 102: 'the sense "wise through age and experience" underlies OE *frod*, although its primary sense is simply "old".' See also Zwikstra, 'Psychology of Wisdom', pp. 97–134, 221–22; Corey J. Zwikstra, "'Wintrum Frod': Frod and the Aging Mind in Old English Poetry', *Studies in Philology*, 108 (2011), 133–64; Porck, p. 264.

to the body's proximity to death and decay, established in the following half-line, *þurb þæt fæcne hus*, 'through this treacherous/deceitful house' (1236b).<sup>23</sup> Previous discussion of this passage has revolved around the language of meditation used by Cynewulf. Éamonn Ó Carragáin argues that the use of the verb *lesan*, 'to gather, collect', in the second line 'could [...] refer to the process of associating disparate texts by verbal reminiscence which is central to monastic meditation'.<sup>24</sup> P. O. E. Gradon takes the verb *reodode* (1238b) as deriving from *brīðian*, 'to sift', and Ó Carragáin interprets these lines as 'Cynewulf's urgent efforts to sift out what is valuable from his texts and to write what is true about the Cross'.<sup>25</sup> But these themes of discernment and discrimination, established as part of the poetic compositional process, are also firmly set within a framework of reference to the poet's age. The gift of *lare* is described as *gamelum to geoce*, 'a comfort for old age' (1246a), compensating for implicit negative attributes of later life, the details of which are left unclear. What is clear is the concomitance of old age and skills of judicious selection and combination as part of the weaving of *wordcraft*.

In its description of the process of poetic composition, the coda to *Elene* has been discussed in relation to ideas of poetic inspiration within the Latin tradition. Ziolkowski focuses particularly on

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<sup>23</sup> Anderson argues that this half-line is inspired by Ecclesiastes 12. 1–4 (*Cynewulf*, p. 17), but Porck (p. 106) considers it more likely that it reflects the common metaphor of the body-as-house in Old English (as in *banhus*).

<sup>24</sup> Éamonn Ó Carragáin, 'Cynewulf's Epilogue to *Elene* and the Tastes of the Vercelli Compiler: A Paradigm of Meditative Reading', in *Lexis and Texts in Early English: Studies Presented to Jane Roberts*, ed. by Christian J. Kay and Louise M. Sylvester, Costerus New Series, 133 (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2001), pp. 187–202 (p. 196); *An Anglo-Saxon Dictionary: Based on the Manuscript Collections of the Late Joseph Bosworth*, ed. and enlarged by T. Northcote Toller (hereafter Bosworth-Toller) (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1898), s.v. *lesan*.

<sup>25</sup> Gradon, p. 71; Ó Carragáin, p. 189.



Cynewulf's composition in *nihþes nearwe*, translated as 'in the anguish of the night'; he explores the extensive background of the composition-at-night motif in Latin literature, though ultimately concluding that as 'the brew of possible classical, local, Christian and individual influences is thick, early medieval occurrences of night-time composition cannot be traced to a single source'.<sup>26</sup> Thornbury draws attention to this motif along with the rhyme scheme of the passage and also the trope of the poet's 'unworthiness' as all likely influenced by Latin models.<sup>27</sup> But despite the language of sinfulness and inadequacy present in Cynewulf's epilogue, the 'unworthiness' trope which Thornbury identifies, described by Curtius as 'affected modesty' or 'the modesty topos', does not map precisely onto Cynewulf's presentation of his age and its relation to his poetic gifts.<sup>28</sup> The poet's compositional activity in *Elene* is not anxiously sought from a position of disadvantage, but rather presented as habitual and immediate, much in the manner of the aged poets in *Beowulf*. Both of the vernacular poems associate individuals advanced in age with seemingly related skills of verbal communication and poetic craft.

The nature of this conceptual connection in vernacular poetry should nonetheless be considered further in relation to comparable motifs in contemporary Latin writings. The poetry of Alcuin may be seen to contain the clearest parallel to the figure of the poetically

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<sup>26</sup> Jan M. Ziolkowski, 'Classical Influences on Medieval Latin Views of Poetic Inspiration', in *Latin Poetry and the Classical Tradition: Essays in Medieval and Renaissance Literature*, ed. by Peter Godman and Oswyn Murray (Oxford: Clarendon, 1990), pp. 15–38 (p. 20).

<sup>27</sup> Emily Thornbury, 'Aldhelm's Rejection of the Muses and the Mechanics of Poetic Inspiration in Early Anglo-Saxon England', *Anglo-Saxon England*, 36 (2007), 71–92 (p. 89).

<sup>28</sup> Ernst Robert Curtius, *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*, trans. by Willard R. Trask, with a new introduction by Colin Burrow, Bollingen Series, 36 (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2013), pp. 83–85.

gifted old person in the vernacular corpus. Alcuin's poem to Charlemagne, *Carmen 40*, opens with the figure of an aged poet in a state of deprivation:

Nix ruit e caelo, gelidus simul ingruit imber  
non fuit Albino, 'Exspecta paulisper in urbe'  
qui iam dixisset, 'donec pertranseat imber,  
et calido pectus Parnasi fonte refirma'.  
Tristis abit senior ieiuno uentre poeta, 5  
et pueri tristes planxerunt carmine Flaccum.<sup>29</sup>

Snow falls from the sky, while freezing showers mount their attack: the person who had said to Albinus, 'Wait a little while in the town until the shower passes, and restore your spirits from the warming fountain of Parnassus' was not present. The sad old

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<sup>29</sup> Alcuin, *Carmen 40*, ll. 1–6, in *Poetae Latini aevi Carolini tomus I*, ed. by Ernst Dümmler, MGH, *Poetae Latini medii aevi*, 1 (Berlin: Weidmann, 1881), p. 253. For discussions of Alcuin's poetry, see F. J. E. Raby, *A History of Christian-Latin Poetry from the Beginnings to the Close of the Middle Ages* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1953), pp. 159–62; P. D. Scott, 'Alcuin as a Poet: Rhetoric and Belief in his Latin Verse', *University of Toronto Quarterly*, 33 (1964), 233–57; *Poetry of the Carolingian Renaissance*, ed. and trans. by Peter Godman (London: Duckworth, 1985), pp. 16–22; Andy Orchard, 'Wish You Were Here: Alcuin's Courtly Poetry and the Boys Back Home', in *Courts and Regions in Medieval Europe*, ed. by S. R. Jones, R. Marks and A. J. Minnis (Woodbridge: York Medieval Press, 2000), pp. 21–43. On Alcuin's relationship with Old English poetry, see J. D. A. Ogilvy, 'Alcuin's Use of Alliteration', *Modern Language Notes*, 46 (1931), 444–45; W. F. Bolton, 'Alcuin and Old English Poetry', *The Yearbook of English Studies*, 7 (1977), 10–22; W. F. Bolton, *Alcuin and Beowulf: An Eighth-Century View* (London: Arnold, 1979).

poet departs on an empty stomach, and the mournful children lament Flaccus in their verses.<sup>30</sup>

Here is presented an image of a *Tristis* [...] *senior* [...] *poeta*, ‘a sad old poet’ (5), suffering from a lack of patronage, seemingly striking a note of accord with the references to old poets in the vernacular verse. But although Alcuin’s figure is both old and a poet, it is not clear how far these two ideas are interlinked. It could well be argued that Alcuin’s figure of the aged poet functions as a general marker of deficit rather than a more specific, self-contained theme. *Carmen 40* goes on to describe a hypothetical change of fortunes in which ‘Dum redeunt iterum calidi bona tempora Phoebi, | Mox pristina redit virtus in carmine Flacco’ (10–11) [the warm sun and good times return again | former vigour will return to Flaccus’s verse]; increased age is here a hindrance to poetic success rather than a facilitator.<sup>31</sup> Alcuin’s picture of the aged poet is heavily intertwined with other images, forming one component of a larger contrast — seasonal, meteorological, social, interpersonal and economic. His tendency to use old age as part of a larger symbolic reversal is attested elsewhere, including in part of his much-discussed *O mea cella* (*Carmen 23*):

Qua campis cervos agitabat sacra iuventus,  
Incumbit fessus nunc baculo senior.

In the fields where the holy youths chased the stag

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<sup>30</sup> Translation modified from Michael Lapidge, *Anglo-Latin Literature, 600–899* (London: Hambledon Press, 1996), p. 63, n. 84 (I have omitted Lapidge’s clarification that *Albinus* is a nickname of Alcuin’s).

<sup>31</sup> Trans. by Lapidge, p. 63, n. 84.

the old man now leans wearily on his staff.<sup>32</sup>

In this text the image is once again surrounded by broader reflections on worldly transience. The rhetorical stance is immediately broadened in the next two lines:

Nos miseri, cur te fugitivum, mundus, amamus?  
Tu fugis a nobis semper ubique ruens.

Why do we wretches love you, fugitive world?  
You always flee headlong from us.<sup>33</sup>

The contrast between the *sacra iuventus* and the *baculo senior* thus nestles alongside other perceived indicators of mutability. Indeed, Scott regards the ‘old man with the staff’ here as a ‘commonplace allusion’ which in Alcuin’s hands ‘symbolizes [...] brief mortality’.<sup>34</sup> Godman makes a parallel point in rejecting critical interpretations of the poem which celebrate its descriptions of nature. He argues instead that in this text ‘idyll is subordinated to personal lament’ which ‘leads in turn to the central theme of temporal mutability’, characteristic of the lyric poetry of the last decade of Alcuin’s life.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Alcuin, *Carmen 23*, ll. 29–30, in *Poetry of the Carolingian Renaissance*, pp. 124–27 (pp. 124–25). On this poem, see Scott, especially pp. 236–42; Peter Godman, ‘Alcuin’s Poetic Style and the Authenticity of “O mea cella”’, *Studi Medievali*, 3rd ser., 20 (1970), 555–83; *Poetry of the Carolingian Renaissance*, pp. 18–19; J. I. McEnerney, ‘Alcuini, Carmen 23’, *Res Publica Litterarum*, 8 (1985), 179–85; C. E. Newlands, ‘Alcuin’s Poem of Exile: *O mea cella*’, *Mediaevalia*, 11 (1985), 19–45; Joseph Pucci, ‘Alcuin’s Cell Poem: A Virgilian Reappraisal’, *Latomus*, 49 (1990), 839–49.

<sup>33</sup> Alcuin, *Carmen 23*, ll. 31–32, *Poetry of the Carolingian Renaissance*, pp. 124–25.

<sup>34</sup> Scott, p. 242.

<sup>35</sup> *Poetry of the Carolingian Renaissance*, p. 19.

When considering Alcuin's figure of the *senior poeta*, then, its semantic resonance may be seen as similarly supporting a large tonal reversal rather than constituting any particularly unique connection between advanced age and poetic aptitude. Simultaneously, Alcuin's use of the old poet motif can be understood as wholly continuous with his own personal posturing in epistolary contexts, resonating with the emphasis he strategically places on the 'infirmity of Flaccus' in his letters.<sup>36</sup> The old poet motif in Alcuin's poetry thus seems to engage with wider conceptual scripts of decline and inadequacy, vulnerability and modesty. Cynewulf's epilogue does also move into a collection of meditations upon the transience of the world, as part of which *geoguð is gecyrred*, 'youth is changed' (1264b), and which Porck suggests could show influence from Alcuin.<sup>37</sup> Nonetheless, Alcuin's use of the 'old poet' figure can be seen as distinct. In a further example of the figure of an aged man set amidst a scene of worldly dissolution in Alcuin's work, his poem on the destruction of Lindisfarne presents its vision of old age as marked by diminished orality and audibility:

Clarior ecce tuba subito vox faucibus haesit,  
 Auribus adpositis murmura clausa ciet.  
 Quid iam plura canam? Marcesit tota iuventus

Voices, clearer than trumpets, suddenly stick in the throat  
 summoning up a subdued whisper for attentive listeners.

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<sup>36</sup> Alcuin, *Epistola 145*, in *Epistolae Karolini aevi tomus II*, ed. by Ernst Dümmler, MGH, *Epistolae*, 4 (Berlin: Weidmann, 1895), p. 233, line 36: 'Quid valet infirmitas Flacci inter arma?' [Of what use is the infirmity of Flaccus in times of war?]. See Mary Alberi, 'Jerome, Alcuin and Vergil's "Old Entellus"', *Journal of Medieval History*, 17 (1991), 103–13.

<sup>37</sup> Porck, pp. 101–08.

Let my poem be brief. All youth fades away<sup>38</sup>

The shift to the first-person poetic voice in this passage, announcing ‘Let my poem be brief’ or, more literally, ‘What more can I now sing?’, strongly asserts the idea of encroaching verbal paucity as characteristic of the poet’s belated stage of life.<sup>39</sup> In Alcuin’s symbolic scheme, song is not expansively loosed in the breast of the elderly as it is for the speaker of the epilogue to *Elene*. It is rather presented as limited, endangered and imminently to be finished.

The Old English poets are working within a conceptual framework which differs substantially from this model. Thornbury has suggested that the role of skill and technical ability plays a greater role in the compositional process as understood in a Germanic tradition than in more inspiration-driven Classical models.<sup>40</sup> It may follow logically that, from the perspective of texts such as *Elene* and *Beowulf*, this skill is associated with those who in temporal terms have had a chance to hone it, congruous with a state of advanced age. Rather than threatening poetic skill (and thereby making any

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<sup>38</sup> Alcuin, *The Destruction of Lindisfarne*, ll. 109–11, in *Poetry of the Carolingian Renaissance*, pp. 126–39 (pp. 132–33). It may nonetheless be worth noting a possible analogue to the *nihetes nearwe* in Cynewulf’s poem (1239a) in the diminished light of Alcuin’s old speaker (ll. 105–06): ‘Longa dies oculos atra caligine claudit | Solivagos athomos qui numerare solent’ [The long day closes in black darkness eyes | which used to count each solitary wandering mote]. A clear analogue can also be seen in Bede’s story of Cædmon (*Bede’s Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, iv. 24, ed. and trans. by Bertram Colgrave and R. A. B. Mynors (Oxford: Clarendon, 1969), pp. 414–21).

<sup>39</sup> In this regard, Alcuin’s characterization here has much more in common with the self-effacing, compositionally afflicted ‘old author’ topos which Anderson sees as distinguishing Cynewulf’s voice in the epilogue to *Elene* (see note 21 above).

<sup>40</sup> Thornbury, ‘Aldhelm’s Rejection of the Muses’.

achievements in verse seem all the more remarkable), old age in the vernacular passages discussed above is seen distinctly to enhance skill. Cynewulf and the *Beowulf*-poet appear to be drawing upon a largely separate tradition of poetic composition to that which Alcuin invokes. Their connection of old age with skilled poetic craft is internally coherent and comfortable, not fraught with tension and discord.

This connection in the vernacular poetry furthermore relies upon crucial notions of thoughts and experience gathered over time in the form of concept or concepts of ‘wisdom’.<sup>41</sup> In exploring this network of association, one key aspect of the historical Anglo-Saxon poet’s profession might be considered, namely the connection of poets with teaching and, relatedly, with age difference.<sup>42</sup> Links between wisdom poetry and the instruction of youth have been well established with

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<sup>41</sup> On concepts of ‘wisdom’ in Anglo-Saxon literature, see Corey J. Zwikstra, ‘The Psychology of Wisdom in Old English Poetry’ (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Notre Dame, 2009). Charles Dunn and Morton Bloomfield take a broadly cross-cultural approach in their chapters entitled ‘The Notion of Wisdom’ and ‘Wisdom Genres and Types of Literature’ in *The Role of the Poet in Early Societies* (Cambridge: Brewer, 1989), pp. 106–49. Russell Poole provides an overview of scholarship on Anglo-Saxon wisdom poetry in *Old English Wisdom Poetry* (Cambridge: Brewer, 1998).

<sup>42</sup> On poets and pedagogical work, see Thornbury, *Becoming a Poet*, pp. 40–65. An explicit link between advanced age and the role of teacher can be found in the *Canons of Edgar* when Wulfstan declares that it is fitting that ‘læran þa ylðran georne heora gingran’ [the elders earnestly teach their youngsters]: Wulfstan, *Canons of Edgar*, ed. by Roger Fowler, EETS, original ser., 266 (London: Oxford University Press, 1972), p. 2. Similarly, Ælfric states in the preface to his *Grammar* that ‘ðam ealdum gedafenað, þæt hi tæcon sum gerad heora junglingum, forðan ðe ðurh lare byð se geleafa gehealden [diacritics omitted]’ [for the old it is fitting that they teach some counsel to their children, because the faith is preserved through teaching]: Ælfric, *Grammatik und Glossar*, ed. by

reference to the Old English corpus.<sup>43</sup> A link between poetic craft and pedagogy may furthermore be seen to underlie yet another representation of verbally skilled old age in the Old English corpus. This is situated in the *Exeter Book* riddles, which on the whole do not focus on entities occupying a state of old age.<sup>44</sup> The only riddle to use the term *eald* to describe a riddle-creature is also a text profoundly concerned with vocal expression, poetry and song. This is the nightingale riddle, Riddle 8:<sup>45</sup>

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Julius Zupitza (Berlin: Weidmann, 1880; repr. 1966), pp. 2–3. Both translations are my own.

<sup>43</sup> See particularly Elaine Tuttle Hansen, ‘Precepts: An Old English Instruction’, *Speculum*, 56 (1981), 1–16; Elaine Tuttle Hansen, *The Solomon Complex: Reading Wisdom in Old English Poetry* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988), pp. 126–52.

<sup>44</sup> One apparent reference to an aged state in the *Exeter Book* riddles can be found in Riddle 74, which describes a nebulous creature temporarily taking up the form of a *feaxbar cwene*, ‘grey-haired woman’ (2b). John D. Niles solves this riddle as *ac*, ‘oak’ or ‘a ship made of oak’, with *feaxbar* describing the appearance of the fully grown tree: *Old English Enigmatic Poems and the Play of the Texts*, Studies in the Early Middle Ages, 13 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2006), pp. 11–56. The stag which grows the horns destined to hold ink in Riddle 93 is described as *dægrieme frod*, ‘wise in the count of days’ (7a). Riddle 93 was first given its ‘inkhorn’ solution by Franz Dietrich in ‘Die Räthsel des Exeterbuchs. Würdigung, Lösung und Herstellung’, *Zeitschrift für deutsches Altertum*, 11 (1859), 448–90 (p. 486).

<sup>45</sup> On this poem, see Jean I. Young, ‘Riddle 8 of the *Exeter Book*’, *The Review of English Studies*, 18 (1942), 308–12; Richard Wells, ‘The Old English Riddles and their Ornithological Content’, *Lore and Language*, 2 (1978), 57–67; Mercedes Salvador-Bello, ‘The Evening Singer of Riddle 8 (K-D)’, *SELIM: Journal of the Spanish Society for Medieval English Language and Literature*, 9 (1999), 57–68; Audrey L. Meaney, ‘Birds on the Stream of Consciousness: Riddles 7 to 10 of the *Exeter Book*’, *Archaeological Review from Cambridge*, 18 (2002), 119–52; Dieter



## Eald æfensceop

Ic þurh muþ sprece    mongum reordum,  
wrencum singe,    wrixle geneahhe  
heafodwoþe,    hlude cirme,  
healde mine wisan,    hleoþre ne miþe,  
eald æfensceop,    eorlum bringe                    5  
blisse in burgum,    þonne ic bugendre  
stefne styrme;    stille on wicum  
sittað nigende.    Saga hwæt ic hatte,  
þa swa scirenige    sceawendwisan  
hlude onhyrge,    hæleþum bodige                    10  
wilcumena fela    woþe minre.<sup>46</sup>

I speak through my mouth with many voices, sing in modulations, change head-sounds frequently, cry loudly, maintain my ways, do not conceal my song, old evening-poet; I bring bliss to men in the towns when I call out with varying voice. Still in the buildings, they sit in silence. Say what I am called, who, like an actress, loudly imitates the ways of a jester, bids men many welcomes with my voice.

The half-line *eald æfensceop* (5a) has long been a bone of contention. *Eald* here is usually translated as ‘traditional’, and scholars such as Williamson claim that the word in this context does not otherwise

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Bitterli, *Say What I am Called: The Old English Riddles of the Exeter Book and the Anglo-Latin Riddle Tradition* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009), pp. 46–56. The solution ‘nightingale’ was first proposed by Dietrich (pp. 462–63).

<sup>46</sup> Riddle 8, in *Exeter Book*, p. 185.

readily make sense.<sup>47</sup> But if we turn to Pliny's *Natural History*, seemingly a source for the parts of the poem about the nightingale's song, we can find (toward the end of the passage) evidence for the nightingale being itself, personally, old:<sup>48</sup>

Luscinis diebus ac noctibus continuis xv garrulus sine intermissu cantus densante se frondium germine, non in novissimis digna miratu ave. primum tanta vox tam parvo in corpusculo, tam pertinax spiritus; deinde in una perfecta musicae scientia: modulatus editur sonus, et nunc continuo spiritu trahitur in longum, nunc variatur inflexo, nunc distinguitur conciso, copulatur intorto, promittitur revocato; infuscatur ex inopinato, interdum et secum ipse murmurat, plenus, gravis, acutus, creber, extentus, ubi visum est vibrans — summus, medius, imus; breviterque omnia tam parvulis in faucibus quae tot exquisitis tiliarum tormentis ars hominum excogitavit [...] meditantur aliae iuveniores versusque quos imitentur accipiunt; audit discipula

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<sup>47</sup> *The Old English Riddles of the Exeter Book*, ed. by Craig Williamson (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1977), p. 157: 'The adjective *eald* does not mean *old in years* so much as *old in time, familiar*' [Williamson's emphasis]. A. E. H. Swaen argued that there 'is no reason for calling a nightingale old': 'Riddle 9 (6, 8)', *Studia Neophilologica*, 14 (1941–42), 67–70 (p. 68); see also Friedrich Klæber, 'Das 9. altenglische Rätsel', *Archiv für das Studium der neueren Sprachen und Literaturen*, 182 (1943), 107–08 (p. 108). Salvador-Bello (p. 58) follows Williamson's interpretation.

<sup>48</sup> Williamson (p. 155) cites Pliny as a possible influence on the poem in general and particularly on the riddle's presentation of the bird as poet, reciting memorised songs in a competitive manner. Salvador-Bello (pp. 58–59) develops Williamson's discussion, noting similarly informed analogues in Alcuin's *De luscinia* (in which the nightingale is likened to a devout Christian praise-poet), as well as in later medieval Western European poetry. For an edition and translation of *De luscinia*, see *Poetry of the Carolingian Renaissance*, pp. 144–45.

intentione magna et reddit, vicibusque reticent; intellegitur emendatae correctio et in docente quaedam reprehensio.

Nightingales pour out a ceaseless gush of song for fifteen days and nights on end when the buds of the leaves are swelling — a bird not in the lowest rank remarkable. In the first place there is so loud a voice and so persistent a supply of breath in such a tiny little body; then there is the consummate knowledge of music in a single bird: the sound is given out with modulations, and now is drawn out into a long note with one continuous breath, now varied by managing the breath, now made staccato by checking it, or linked together by prolonging it, or carried on by holding it back; or it is suddenly lowered, and at times sinks into a mere murmur, loud, low, bass, treble, with trills, with long notes, modulated when this seems good — soprano, mezzo, baritone; and briefly all the devices in that tiny throat which human science has devised with all the elaborate mechanism of the flute [...] Other younger birds practise their music, and are given verses to imitate; the pupil listens with close attention and repeats the phrase, and the two keep silence by turns: we notice improvement in the one under instruction and a sort of criticism on the part of the instructress.<sup>49</sup>

The last line presents an explicit association between older birds and improved musical skill. In light of this aspect of the source, it seems at least possible to posit that *eald* is capable of functioning in Riddle 8 as a marker of advanced age and its concomitant qualities, rather than as a broad comment on the ‘traditional’ nature of the *æfensceop* role.

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<sup>49</sup> Pliny, *Natural History*, x. 43, ed. and trans. by H. Rackham, W. H. S. Jones and D. E. Eichholz, Loeb Classical Library, 330, 352–53, 370–71, 392–94, and 418–19, 10 vols (London: Heinemann, 1938–63), III: *Libri VIII–XI*, ed. and trans. by H. Rackham (1940), pp. 344–47.

These qualities are specifically related by Pliny to the older nightingale's role as a teacher within a pedagogical framework. Riddle 8, however, does not choose to focus on this association attached to nightingales. The riddle turns instead around the continually changing voice of the bird, a contrast with the men sitting quietly inside the buildings of the town. Throughout, the Old English text prioritises the plurality, modulation and change within the nightingale's song, as does the earlier part of Pliny's description above. In the Old English the bird sings in *wrencum*, 'modulations' or possibly 'twists' (2a);<sup>50</sup> 'changes' its vocalisations through the verb *wrixlan* (2b); calls out with a *bugendre | stefne*, a 'varying' or 'bending voice' (6b); mimics or imitates (*onbyrge*) the ways of a *scirenige*, 'actress' or possibly 'jester' (9a–10a);<sup>51</sup> and offers men *fela wilcumena*, 'many welcomes' (11a). This poem is awash with references to variations of tone and register, multiple utterances, and quotational speech.

It may be here that the significance of the *eald* poet lies, rather than in the pedagogical association which Pliny invokes in his description. The riddle's emphasis on amassed options for speech is as congruous with the conceptual scheme of the mind-as-container motif which Mize has identified in Old English literature; multiple items of knowledge are collected together, providing opportunities for selection and vocalisation in communication with others.<sup>52</sup> Throughout all the passages discussed in this paper, patterns of modulation and variety have been persistently foregrounded in representations of verbally skilled old age. In the first passage, the range and variations of Hrothgar's performance in *Beowulf* are core to the description at 2105–14. Through the repetition of *hwilum* and the

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<sup>50</sup> In light of the verb *wrencan*, 'to twist': Bosworth-Toller, s.v. *wrencan* I.

<sup>51</sup> On the ambiguity of *scirenige*, see Williamson, p. 158.

<sup>52</sup> Britt Mize, 'The Representation of the Mind as an Enclosure in Old English Poetry', *Anglo-Saxon England*, 35 (2006), 57–90; Mize, 'Manipulations of the Mind-as-Container Motif'.

identification of various different kinds of poetic art, the passage is sharply focused upon change and alteration. At the same time, it is charged with references to multiple previous experiences and memories: ‘gomela Scilding, | felafricgende, feorran rehte’ [the aged Scylding, when many having asked, told of far-off things] (2105b–06);<sup>53</sup> ‘he wintrum frod worn gemunde’ [wise with winters, he remembered many things] (2114). These two ideas appear interrelated, with the range of poetic and verbal ability interwoven with the collection of various experiences over time. In the second passage from *Beowulf* the element of choice and change is framed differently; the old man’s familial situation is one of passivity and constriction and in his singing is more linear and sequential. Emphasis is nonetheless placed on modulation within this framework: the passage diversifies in time and place as the old figure invokes the conceptual space of the deserted hall (2556–59) and of the land more broadly (2461–62a), meanwhile passing through more domestic living spaces in the form of the son’s chamber (2455b) and the couch (2460a). The poem simultaneously offers a range of terms for verbal and musical expression, including *gyd*, ‘poem, song’ (2446b) and *sorhleoð*, ‘sorrow-lay’ (2460b), as well as the absent *hearpan sweg*, ‘sound of the harp’ (2458b).

In the epilogue to *Elene*, the poet’s creative process is clearly presented as one of variation and readjustment: Cynewulf, with his status as *frod ond fus*, claims that he ‘wordcræftum wæf ond wundrum læs’ [wove with the craft of words and wondrously gathered it together] (1237), processing thoughts through the verbs *lesan*, ‘to gather, collect’ (1237b), and *reodian*, seemingly ‘to sift’ (1238b), both of which foreground processes of reconsideration and

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<sup>53</sup> On *felafricgende* as an absolute participle, ‘when many asked’, see Bammesberger, pp. 3–8.

rearrangement.<sup>54</sup> The epilogue then goes on to explore the divine knowledge which Cynewulf has received and which has enabled him to compose his verse: experience and the acquisition of knowledge are once again linked to the plurality of understandings and approaches to which this poet has access. These connections are attested also in the passage from *Christ II*: ‘The man whose mind has been given the art of wisdom [*snyttru craft*] can sing and say all kinds of things [*eal fela*].’ Perhaps Riddle 8 is more revelatory than has been credited in its highlighting of the manner in which access to multiple perspectives informs the poetic gifts of aged individuals. Poets who are late in their life courses seem fundamentally attuned to plural discourses.

The connection between Anglo-Saxon ideas of wisdom and the significance of multiple perspectives in the form of dialogue and interpersonal exchange has often been noted. Repeatedly in Old English texts, dialogue is figured as the ultimate facilitator of enhanced insight, or ‘wisdom’. Elaine Tuttle Hansen, in her study of wisdom literature in Anglo-Saxon England, concludes that, across the poems that she discusses, ‘wisdom is inseparable from its verbal expression in and through the communicative process’.<sup>55</sup> After a study of some of the relationships between speaker and solver in the *Exeter Book* riddles, Hansen concludes the following:

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<sup>54</sup> Zwikstra notes that the reflection on the past in *The Wanderer* is ‘filtered through the internal person and processed mentally by means of thought (*geþohþe*, *geondþenceð*) and memory (*gemon*), by means of thoughtful memory’: ‘Psychology of Wisdom’, p. 133. Zwikstra earlier observes that *frod* seems to designate ‘a wisdom [...] born of process not of state’ (p. 99).

<sup>55</sup> Hansen, *Solomon Complex*, p. 143. Paralleling Hansen’s references to multiplicity and contingency, Poole (p. 16) argues that ‘wisdom will come more readily if [an] elderly person has not simply lived for many winters but also as a matter of deliberate policy cultivated an awareness of vicissitudes, mutability, and the world’s few stable principles’.

The Old English riddles as a genre begin to construct, however tentatively, the reassuring notion that the power of the human intellect resides in its ability to engage in a communicative act (with other human beings and with God) to solve the problems that threaten communication, to interpret and learn from the multiplicity of possible perspectives, and in doing so to see that change and contingency are the stable part of human experience.<sup>56</sup>

Wisdom can here be understood as dependent primarily on the interaction of various modes of perspective, an appreciation of which is honed by prolonged existence in the world. This aligns neatly with what we have seen of the link between poetic skill and awareness of plurality present in the depictions of aged speakers.

In the light of the extracts discussed above, set alongside parallel observations in the scholarship attendant on wisdom literature, it can be posited that poetic composition and the practices of nurturing and exercising wisdom both hinge upon the possibilities afforded by processes of modulation, adjustment, and review. These skills are enhanced through exposure to many and various experiences and points of view over time, and, seemingly, over a life course. Multiple perspectives form the heart of the connection, bringing together issues of age, wisdom and poetic compositional ability. Further studies might productively consider exploring this network of association when approaching Old English verse.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> Hansen, *Solomon Complex*, p. 143.

<sup>57</sup> I am grateful to the Arts and Humanities Research Council and the Isaac Newton Trust for the doctoral studentship (2014–17) that has allowed me to conduct the research necessary for this article. I am furthermore indebted to my supervisor, Dr Richard Dance, for his generous guidance and advice. I wish finally to thank Professor Emily V. Thornbury for her invaluable feedback on earlier drafts of this paper.

Vain Spells or Vain Songs? The Meaning of the ‘uanissima carmina et friuoleas incantationes’ in the Hagiography of Saint Dunstan of Canterbury, 997–1130

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To this day, Saint Dunstan stands out as the most famous native Anglo-Saxon archbishop of Canterbury, and as one of the most outstanding churchmen and statesmen of tenth-century England.<sup>1</sup> Elected in succession to the posts of abbot of Glastonbury, bishop of Worcester, bishop of London and finally archbishop of Canterbury itself, he has been described as ‘one of the principal ecclesiastical figures in the tenth-century English church: a scholar of very considerable learning, a vigorous proponent of Benedictine monasticism, a stately and revered churchman, [who] presided over the Anglo-Saxon church at a crucial period of intellectual and disciplinary renewal’.<sup>2</sup> The earliest of his hagiographers represented

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<sup>2</sup> Michael Lapidge, ‘Dunstan [St Dunstan] (d. 988)’, in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, ed. by H. C. G. Matthew and Brian Harrison, new edn, 60 vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), xvii, 347–53 (p. 353). See also *Memorials of Saint Dunstan, Archbishop of Canterbury*, ed. by William Stubbs, Rolls Series, 63 (London: Longman, 1874; repr. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), pp. lxxiii–cvii, cxvii–cxxi; J. A. Robinson, *The Times of Saint Dunstan*, Ford Lectures, 1922 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1923); D. Knowles,



him as an accomplished scholar, harpist, painter and embroiderer.<sup>3</sup> His contemporaries Abbo of Fleury and Wulfstan of Winchester depicted him as an angelic and admired white-haired figure.<sup>4</sup> The striking development and diffusion of his cult in the eleventh century owed a particular debt to the reign of Cnut, who raised his feast-day to a preeminent national status in England by royal decree a generation after Dunstan's death, though in practical terms the celebration of the feast seems to have been largely 'confined to the

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*The Monastic Order in England: A History of its Development from the Times of St Dunstan to the Fourth Lateran Council, 943–1216*, repr. with corrections (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1949), pp. 31–57; Douglas Dales, *Dunstan: Saint and Statesman* (Cambridge: Lutterworth Press, 1988); Nicholas Brooks, 'The Career of St. Dunstan', in *St. Dunstan: His Life, Times and Cult*, ed. by Nigel Ramsay, Margaret Sparks and Tim Tatton-Brown (Woodbridge: Boydell, 1992), pp. 1–23; and in particular the more recent note of caution sounded by Nicola Robertson, 'Dunstan and Monastic Reform: Tenth-Century Fact or Twelfth-Century Fiction?', *Anglo-Norman Studies*, 28 (2005), 153–67.

<sup>3</sup> B., *Vita Dunstani*, §12, in *The Early Lives of St Dunstan*, ed. by Michael Lapidge and Michael Winterbottom, Oxford Medieval Texts (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2012), pp. 40–42.

<sup>4</sup> Abbo of Fleury, *Passio S. Eadmundi Regis et Martyris*, prologue, in *Three Lives of English Saints*, ed. by Michael Winterbottom, Toronto Medieval Latin Texts, 1 (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1972), pp. 67–87 (pp. 67–68); Wulfstan of Winchester, *Narratio metrica de S. Swithuno*, ll. 71–72, in *The Cult of St. Swithun*, ed. by Michael Lapidge, Winchester Studies, 4.ii (Oxford: Clarendon, 2003), pp. 372–551 (p. 376). See also discussion by Charles D. Wright, 'Vercelli Homily XV and The Apocalypse of Thomas', in *New Readings in the Vercelli Book*, ed. by Samantha Zacher and Andy Orchard, Toronto Anglo-Saxon Series, 4 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009), pp. 150–84 (pp. 176–77).

choral liturgy of the great churches of the realm'.<sup>5</sup> Though the evidence for Dunstan's status in the life and liturgy at Canterbury is difficult to assess from the early twelfth century onwards, his cult appears to have retained for him a special position as Christ Church's most popular saint until the death of Thomas Becket, and only began to be displaced as part of the reordering of the administrative life at the cathedral priory in the late twelfth century.<sup>6</sup>

But the saint was also depicted by his hagiographers in a way which to modern biographers has sometimes given the impression of a frantic and often divisive zealot. This Dunstan was prone to visions: a feature which in the hagiographical tradition was to be taken as a wholly positive aspect of the ascetic model of sanctity,<sup>7</sup> but which to Michael Lapidge suggested an 'eccentric personality', even approaching 'the appearance of a madman, as in the stories [...] of Dunstan being pursued by the devil in the shape of a bear, or swinging his staff at ever-present demons and disturbing the sleep of his monks by whacking the walls of the cloister with it'.<sup>8</sup> Whatever one may choose to infer of the 'historical' Dunstan, what was of crucial importance to his contemporaries and to later hagiographers

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<sup>5</sup> Alan Thacker, 'Cults at Canterbury: Relics and Reform under Dunstan and his Successors', in *Dunstan*, ed. by Ramsay, Sparks and Tatton-Brown, pp. 221–45 (pp. 242–43, quoted at 243); David Rollason, 'The Concept of Sanctity in the Early Lives of Dunstan', in *ibid.*, pp. 261–72 (p. 264).

<sup>6</sup> Nigel Ramsey and Margaret Sparks, 'The Cult of St. Dunstan at Christ Church, Canterbury', in *ibid.*, pp. 311–23 (pp. 311, 318–19, 323); Jay Rubenstein, 'The Life and Writings of Osbern of Canterbury', in *Canterbury and the Norman Conquest: Churches, Saints and Scholars, 1066–1109*, ed. by Richard Eales and Richard Sharpe (London: Hambledon Press, 1995), pp. 27–40 (p. 40).

<sup>7</sup> Rollason, pp. 263–64, 266–69.

<sup>8</sup> Michael Lapidge, 'B. and the Vita Dunstani', in *Dunstan*, ed. by Ramsay, Sparks and Tatton-Brown, pp. 247–59 (pp. 247–48, 259); Lapidge, 'Dunstan [St Dunstan] (d. 988)'.

was his perceived status as a prophet, a saintly charisma seen as ‘inseparable’ from his authority of office, and which in the twelfth century especially came to be associated with a fearsome reputation for pronouncing divine vengeance in the form of terrible curses.<sup>9</sup>

In the present paper I am concerned in particular with two episodes in the written tradition of the Life of Dunstan that modern scholars have most recently taken to refer to the incantation of charms and magic: one concerning the harp of Dunstan, which while hanging on a wall began miraculously to play without human intervention, and the other concerning the charges against Dunstan that led to his earliest periods of banishment.<sup>10</sup> The two episodes appear with some variation in the Lives composed from 997 to 1130 by the hagiographers B., Osbern and Eadmer of Canterbury, and William of Malmesbury, while the miracle of the harp is also recounted in the Lectons on the feast of Dunstan composed by Adelard of Ghent. In the following discussion, I aim to trace the transmission and development of these episodes through the manuscript evidence of the hagiographical tradition, in order to determine their precise meaning for their original and subsequent hagiographers. In so doing, I will also attempt to establish whether they can be considered evidence of clerical concerns regarding incantation in the late Anglo-Saxon and early Anglo-Norman periods respectively.

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<sup>9</sup> Catherine Cubitt, ‘Archbishop Dunstan: A Prophet in Politics?’, in *Myth, Rulership, Church and Charters: Essays in Honour of Nicholas Brooks*, ed. by Julia Barrow and Andrew Wareham (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008), pp. 145–66 (pp. 146–55, 166, quoted at p. 146).

<sup>10</sup> Jeff Opland, *Anglo-Saxon Oral Poetry: A Study of the Traditions* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1980), pp. 178–80; *Early Lives of St Dunstan*, p. 21, n. 60.

I

The investigation begins with the account of Dunstan's early career given by the hagiographer B., the secular clerk of Liège who composed his *Life of the saint* c. 997 × 1002.<sup>11</sup> B. records two early instances where vicious lies spoken against the saint by colleagues jealous of his piety led to his brief banishment and violent overthrow: one taking place during his education at Glastonbury (§6), the other taking place during his time at the court of King Edmund (§13). The exact nature of the lies told against him at the royal court is not specified, but the charges at Glastonbury concerned the content of his education. B. recounts how Dunstan read diligently the scriptures, the writing of the church fathers and the books brought to Glastonbury by pilgrims from Ireland (§5). While engaged in these good works and refreshing labours, Dunstan's comrades and kinsmen concocted unexpected lies against him: 'dicentes illum ex libris salubribus et uiris peritis non saluti animarum profutura sed auitae gentilitatis uanissima didicisse carmina, et histriarum friuoleas coluisse incantationes.'<sup>12</sup> Michael Lapidge and Michael Winterbottom have translated the reconstructed passage, with admitted uncertainty, as 'saying that from those healthful books, from those wise men, he had learned not things that would help to save souls but the vain spells of ancestral heathendom and the empty incantations of wizards'. Their translation hinges on the interpretation of *friuoleas* [...] *incantationes* as 'magical incantations', and from that they infer that by *histriarum* (a non-existent word in Latin and presumed corruption in St Gallen MS 337 of the noun *histrio*, a play-actor), B. intended the sense of a 'wizard'.<sup>13</sup>

Lapidge and Winterbottom's conjecture may be supported by the sense provided by the *Dictionary of Medieval Latin from British Sources* of

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<sup>11</sup> *Early Lives of St Dunstan*, p. lxiv.

<sup>12</sup> B., *Vita Dunstani*, §6, in *Early Lives of St Dunstan*, p. 20.

<sup>13</sup> *Early Lives of St Dunstan*, p. 21, n. 60.

*incantatio* as a pagan incantation, magic charm or spell, and that of *incantator* in like kind as a pagan sorcerer or performer of magic arts.<sup>14</sup> It can also be supported by the predominant usage of the word *incantatio* and its cognates in the Vulgate Bible, where it appears alongside cognates of *maleficus*, grounding it in reference to Pharaoh's magicians or other enchanters, in six of its dozen instances.<sup>15</sup>

This is not however the only possible interpretation of B.'s writing. The primary sense of *carmen* is that of a poem, song or dramatic performance rather than a spell, and the whole section must be read in light of the variant readings in the manuscript tradition that give the sentence its meaning.<sup>16</sup> Of the three extant manuscripts of the text, all written *c.* 1000 at St Augustine's Canterbury, one, MS

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<sup>14</sup> One may also compare the entries in *A Latin Dictionary*, ed. by Charlton T. Lewis and Charles Short (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1879), p. 917, of *incantatio* as 'an enchanting, enchantment', and that of *incantator* in like kind as 'an enchanter, wizard'. Note however that the entries for the root verb *incanto* at *ibid.*, p. 917, and in *Oxford Latin Dictionary*, ed. by P. G. W. Glare, 8 parts (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968–82), IV (1973), 862, are 'to sing in or on'; and that the monumental *Thesaurus linguae Latinae*, series in progress (Leipzig: Teubner, 1900–), VII.1 (1964), col. 845, lists *incantatio* as 'incantamentum, cantus, carmen, fascinatio' — i.e., a song or chant as much as a charm or spell.

<sup>15</sup> Exodus 7. 11, 7. 22, 8. 7, 8. 18; II Chronicles 33. 6; Isaiah 47. 9–12. Cognates of *incantatio* additionally appear without cognates of *maleficus* in Deuteronomy 18. 11; (Vulgate) Psalm 57. 6; Ecclesiasticus 12. 13; Isaiah 8. 19; Jeremiah 8. 17; Daniel 5. 11, though again referring nonetheless to an enchanter or enchantment.

<sup>16</sup> The three manuscripts are St Gallen, Kantonalsbibliothek, Vadianische Sammlung MS 337 (Gneuss 928); London, British Library, MS Cotton Cleopatra B. xiii (Gneuss 323); and Arras Bibliothèque municipale (Médiathèque), MS 1029 (812) (Gneuss 781). From Arras 1029, the relevant now-lost quire ('H') was transcribed by Godefroid Henskens and printed in the *Acta sanctorum*. See *Early Lives of St Dunstan*, pp. lxxviii–lxxxix.

Cotton Cleopatra B. xiii, omitted *histriarum* entirely, thereby rendering interpretation of the problematic phrase moot. The third manuscript however, Arras MS 1029, rendered the passage's conclusion as 'historiarum friuolas colere incantationum naenias'.<sup>17</sup> Though the manuscript in question has been shown to represent on the whole a thoroughgoing revision of the original text best reflected in the St Gallen manuscript,<sup>18</sup> it was the Arras text that was transcribed and printed in the *Acta sanctorum* by Godefroid Henskens and erroneously presented as the base text in the *Memorials of Dunstan* by William Stubbs, and it was therefore the version on which modern scholars writing before Lapidge and Winterbottom based their conclusions. Jeff Opland, who has given the fullest discussion of the episode, read the passage as referring to the 'songs (or poems) of ancient heathendom', and to the performance of 'the frivolous incantations of charms from histories'.<sup>19</sup> Opland argued that from Dunstan's skill at harping, recorded further on in B.'s text, his opponents 'were able to insinuate that his knowledge of vernacular poems or songs embraced non-Christian material, and that these ancient and traditional texts, whether learnt from books or through oral transmission, were associated with paganism'.<sup>20</sup> John Stevens, following Opland, argued that the *carmina* 'must surely have been epic narratives';<sup>21</sup> while James Campbell, focusing on the primary sense of *naenias* as funeral-songs, interpreted the passage as referring to 'songs

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<sup>17</sup> B., *Vita Dunstani*, §6, in *Early Lives of St Dunstan*, p. 20, n. 'm-m'.

<sup>18</sup> *Early Lives of St Dunstan*, pp. lxxxiv–xcv.

<sup>19</sup> Opland, pp. 178–80 (quoted at p. 178).

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>21</sup> John Stevens, *Words and Music in the Middle Ages: Song, Narrative, Dance and Drama, 1050–1350*, Cambridge Studies in Music (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), p. 205.

about the ancestral race and worthless funeral songs of a historical or narrative nature'.<sup>22</sup>

Whether one reads the accusation as involving play-actors (*histrionum* for *histriarum*) or narrative histories (*historiarum* [...] *naenias*) obviously gives a different colouring, but both modern interpretations have hitherto focused on the illicit practice of *incantationes* and on their presumed link with the charms or spells of pagan magic. It is however also possible that B. intended *incantationes* either in a more strictly etymological sense or, alternatively, in a looser figurative one: referring not to pagan magic per se but instead to the recitations or 'enchantments' of secular entertainments, of which the secular songs or poems of the heroic past and the performances of the actors who enacted or declaimed them aloud would have formed part.<sup>23</sup> The criticism of secular entertainments as opposed to the Christian or

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<sup>22</sup> James Campbell, *The Anglo-Saxon State* (London: Hambledon and London, 2000), p. 171, suggesting that these *naeniae* may have been poems 'not too unlike *The Battle of Maldon*'. The identification of the *naenias* as funeral-songs hearkens back to older scholarly citations of the *Vita Dunstani*, such as Jacob Grimm, *Tentonic Mythology*, trans. by James Steven Stallybrass, 4 vols (London: Bell, 1882–88; repr. London: Routledge, 1999), III, 1229: "'neniae" are "carmina funebria", hymns in honour of the dead.'

<sup>23</sup> The possibility of a figurative sense of the root-verb *incantare* is admitted by the *Dictionary of Medieval Latin from British Sources*, ed. by D. R. Howlett and others, 17 vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975–2013), v (1997), 1286; and is admitted of *incantatio* by Albert Blaise and Henri Chirat, *Dictionnaire latin-français des auteurs chrétiens* (Strasbourg: Le Latin chrétien, 1954), p. 420; it thus becomes a matter of 'charming an audience' rather than 'placing charms upon an audience'. The more strictly etymological sense for *incantare* of 'to sing in or on' is provided by *Latin Dictionary*, ed. by Lewis and Short, p. 917; *Oxford Latin Dictionary*, p. 862; Albert Blaise, *Lexicon Latinitatis Medii Aevi: Dictionnaire latin-français des auteurs du moyen-âge*, CCCM (Turnhout: Brepols, 1975), p. 463; see above, n. 14.

monastic life can be traced back to patristic writers, who repeatedly condemned such non-Christian practices as songs, poems and theatre as potentially idolatrous and as morally degenerating.<sup>24</sup> Augustine in his *Confessiones* warned of the dangers of theatre, which he identified in particular with tragedy, and decried the education of his wayward youth as having been misspent ‘ad theatricos plausus et contentiosa carmina’ [applauding theatrical performances and competitive compositions].<sup>25</sup> In the hands of a twelfth-century novice-master, Aelred of Rievaulx, the passages would later be reworked as a condemnation of *tragoedia* and *carmina* as inappropriate to the monastic life.<sup>26</sup> The *Confessiones* have not been hitherto identified as part of B.’s reading, but if the idiosyncratic reading of Arras MS 1029 is either original to B. or deliberate on the part of the Canterbury scribe, it is possible that a similar consideration lies at the root of its condemnation, as *uanissima carmina*, ‘vain songs,’ and *friuolas naenias*, ‘frivolous tragedies,’ would correspond well with the categories of secular composition and tragedy known from Augustine.<sup>27</sup> Augustine’s opposition to tragedy moreover stemmed from its distracting capacity to stir up feelings of pity and distress without serving any direct spiritual good (iii. 2. 2), of which the choice of diction in *colere*, ‘to cultivate’ (though not a term used by Augustine in

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<sup>24</sup> J. K. Tahkokallio, ‘Fables of King Arthur: Aelred of Rievaulx and Secular Pastimes’, *Mirator*, 9.1 (2008), 19–35 (p. 21); James McKinnon, *Music in Early Christian Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1987), pp. 1–3.

<sup>25</sup> Augustine of Hippo, *Confessions*, III. 2. 2–4, IV. 1, ed. by W. H. D. Rouse, Loeb Classical Library, 26–27, 2 vols (London: Heinemann, 1912), I, 92–96, 132; quoted at IV. 1 (I, 132).

<sup>26</sup> Aelred of Rievaulx, *Speculum Caritatis*, II. 17. 50, in *Aelredi Rievallensis opera omnia*, ed. by A. Hoste and C. H. Talbot, CCCM, 1 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1971), pp. 3–161 (p. 90); translated in *The Mirror of Charity*, trans. by Elizabeth Connor, Cistercian Fathers Series, 17 (Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 1990), pp. 198–99; cited in Tahkokallio, pp. 25–27.

<sup>27</sup> On B.’s reading, see *Early Lives of St Dunstan*, pp. xcvi–xcvii.



those passages), may loosely reminisce. It is notable also that Augustine condemns the performance of tragedy recounting historical and fictitious human disasters equally (iii. 2. 2), which would make the appellation *historiarum* — the plausible narration of events real or imagined — directly applicable. A reading of Arras MS 1029 would suggest therefore that Dunstan's illicit pastimes did not necessarily consist in heathen magic at all, but rather in 'the frivolous funeral-songs from the chantings of histories'.

In the other direction, the possible condemnation of *histriones* in St Gallen MS 337 is even more suggestive given Dunstan's skill as a harpist, as harps were connected with theatrical performances in patristic literature. An important instance can be found in Augustine's *Enarrationes in Psalmos*, a text with which it has been suggested that B. may have been directly familiar.<sup>28</sup> In his second commentary on Psalm 32, Augustine distinguished the cithara, the secular lyre, from psaltery, rejecting the former with the dictum: 'Nemo conuertat cor ad organa theatra' [Let none turn his heart to theatrical instruments].<sup>29</sup> The opposition continued into the Middle Ages; at the end of the eighth century, Alcuin of York had warned in a letter of the dangers both of *citharistae*, 'harpists', and of *istriones*, 'play-actors'.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid., pp. xcvi and 9, n. 19.

<sup>29</sup> Augustine of Hippo, *Enarrationes in Psalmos*, In Eundem Psalmum 32, Enarratio II, Sermo I, §5, ed. by Eligius Dekkers and I. Fraipont, CCSL, 38–40, 3 vols (Turnhout: Brepols, 1956), I, 250, glossing Psalm 32. 3; quoted in translation only in McKinnon, p. 156.

<sup>30</sup> Alcuin, *Epistola 124*, IV. 2, in *Epistolae Karolini aevi tomus II*, ed. by Ernst Dümmler, MGH, Epistolae, 4 (Berlin: Weidmann, 1895), pp. 181–84 (p. 183): 'Melius est pauperes edere de mensa tua quam istriones vel luxuriosos quoslibet [...] verba Dei legantur in sacerdotali convivio. Ibi decet lectorem audiri, non citharistam; sermones patrum, non carmina gentium' [Better it is that the poor eat from your table than play-actors or such extravagant ones as please you [...] Let the word of God be read in the priestly banquet. There it is proper that the

It is notable that Osbern of Canterbury, when comparing Dunstan's skill at the harp to that of David in his rewriting of B.'s Life, felt the need to underline that Dunstan's skill at the harp was not an idle luxury;<sup>31</sup> while William of Malmesbury, two generations after him, commented that Dunstan's attention to the music of the harp and organ derived 'non ad lenocinium uoluptatum sed ad diuini amoris incitamentum, ut etiam ad litteram impleretur illud Dauiticum "Laudate Dominum in psalterio et cithara; laudate eum in chordis et organo"' [not because of its enticing pleasures, but to arouse love for God, so that also the injunction of David might be fulfilled to the letter: 'Praise the Lord with psaltery and harp [*psalterio et cithara*]. Praise him with stringed instruments and organs'.<sup>32</sup> Similarly, when Adelard of Ghent recounted the miracle of the auto-playing harp, he framed it through other accounts of heavenly music. Though Adelard's account stands somewhat apart from the Lives as it was arranged for the purpose of lectionary material, the miracle in question is immediately preceded by an account of how in prayerful sleep Dunstan was rapt

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reader be head, not the harp; the words of the fathers, not the songs of the peoples]; cited in E. K. Chambers, *The Mediaeval Stage*, 2 vols (London: Oxford University Press, 1903), I, 32, n. 3, without translation.

<sup>31</sup> Osbern, *Vita Dunstani*, §8, in *Memorials of Saint Dunstan*, p. 78: 'sicut David psalterium sumens, citharam percuciens, modificans organa, cimbala tangens; non sicut hii quorum inertiam et luxuriosum otium propheticus noster increpat armentarius.' [like David undertaking psaltery, plucking the cithara, regulating the organs, grasping the cymbals; but not like those whose idleness and extravagant indulgence our prophetic herdsman rebuked.]

<sup>32</sup> William of Malmesbury, *Vita Dunstani*, I. 4. 4, in *Saints' Lives: Lives of Ss. Wulfstan, Dunstan, Patrick, Benignus and Idract*, ed. by Michael Winterbottom and R. M. Thomson, Oxford Medieval Texts (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), pp. 178–80. See also William of Malmesbury, *Vita Dunstani*, I. 5. 3, in *Saints' Lives*, p. 180, where William's use of *psallebat* of the voice, harp and drum suggests that the pair of sung and instrumental psaltery was intended.

to heaven to be soothed by the angelic harmonies of the Kyrie, thereby setting up the auto-playing harp as a heavenly instrument unquestionably played by an angelic harpist visible only to Dunstan.<sup>33</sup>

One final possible influence on B.'s narrative can be put forward. In his *Ecclesiastical History*, Bede told of the Northumbrian Cædmon, the celebrated monk of Whitby. Cædmon had lived in secular life until he was advanced in years and in all that time had 'never learned any songs' [*nil carminum aliquando didicerat*], such that he used to flee in shame whenever the harp was brought to him at social gatherings for his 'turn at singing' [*per ordinem cantare*]. Having removed himself to a cowshed on one such occasion, in sleep he heard a voice calling upon him to sing, and he miraculously began to sing original verses in English vernacular in praise of God. On being presented later to the abbess of Whitby, he undertook through God's grace to reproduce passages of sacred history and doctrine in vernacular metre and became a monk. It was by translating in this way that Cædmon was able to lead others more easily to salvation.<sup>34</sup> The importance of this aetiological narrative for Bede, like the later narrative of the heavenly harp in Adelard's *Lectures*, was that it served to distinguish and

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<sup>33</sup> Adelard, *Lectures*, §9, in *Early Lives of St Dunstan*, pp. 134–35: 'Quod nocte quadam sancto sopori deditus, tanquam ad superna raptus, angelicis mulcebatur concentibus; ibi sanctos spiritus sanctissimae trinitati in laudem et hominibus in salutem audiuit modulantes et dicentes: "Kyrie eleyson, Christe eleyson, Kyrie eleyson."' [One night, while deep in holy slumber, as though rapt to the heavens, he was soothed by angelic harmonies. He heard there the holy spirits singing in praise of the Holy Trinity, and for the salvation of men, saying: 'Kyrie eleison, Christe eleison, Kyrie eleison.']

<sup>34</sup> Bede, *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, IV. 24, ed. by Bertram Colgrave and R. A. B. Mynors (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969; repr. 1991), pp. 414–20. See also discussion of the passage in Opland, pp. 106–20; Emily V. Thornbury, *Becoming a Poet in Anglo-Saxon England*, Cambridge Studies in Medieval Literature, 88 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), pp. 5–8.

therefore justify Cædmon's pure and divinely-inspired art of poetry against the secular songs with which he might otherwise have been corrupted:

Namque ipse non ab hominibus neque per hominem institutus canendi artem didicit, sed diuinitus adiutus gratis canendi donum accepit. Vnde nil umquam friuoli et superuacui poematis facere potuit, sed ea tantummodo, quae ad religionem pertinent, religiosam eius linguam decebant.

For he did not learn the art of singing [*canendi artem*] from men nor through a man, but he received the gift of singing [*donum canendi*] freely by the grace of God. Hence he could never compose any frivolous or useless poems [*friuoli et superuacui poematis*], but only those which were concerned with religion and so were fitting for his religious tongue to utter.<sup>35</sup>

B. knew the *Ecclesiastical History* and reminisces of it at the beginning of the Life.<sup>36</sup> The Bedan formula of *friuoli et superuacui poematis* in the context of *carmina* being distinguished from works concerned with religion moreover seems sufficiently close in theme and style to B.'s *vanissima carmina et friuoleas incantationes* to invite fruitful comparison. It is notable then that in this setting the terms *carmen*, *canendi* and *cantare* for Bede clearly refer to a song or poem rather than a spell, and B. seems to be deploying much the same sense with his use of *carmen*

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<sup>35</sup> Bede, *Ecclesiastical History*, IV. 24, ed. by Colgrave and Mynors, p. 414. The theme of a gift and mission received not from men but God is an allusion to Galatians 1. 1. See J. M. Wallace-Hadrill, *Bede's Ecclesiastical History of the English People: A Historical Commentary*, Oxford Medieval Texts (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), pp. 165–66.

<sup>36</sup> B., *Vita Dunstani*, §2, in *Early Lives of St Dunstan*, pp. 8–10; *Early Lives of St Dunstan*, pp. xcvi, 8 (ns 16–18), 9 (n. 22), 10 (n. 25).

and *incantatio*.<sup>37</sup> The difference between Bede's Cædmon and B.'s Dunstan, of course, is that the latter figure lacked the earlier poet's immediate justifying defence, in that Dunstan learned from books and men whereas the untaught and apparently illiterate Cædmon learned from God directly, though Dunstan is later vindicated by other miraculous means. Recognising Bede's influence thus serves to clarify B.'s stylistic allusions and the general sense of his terms, though it is only in the broader patristic context already discussed that the variations on the theme and the exact implications of the accusations in B.'s Life and its individual redactions may be fully understood.

On these bases, a possible reading of B.'s original text and route of transmission can now be suggested. The passage may be read as 'the vain compositions (poems or songs) of ancestral heathendom and the empty chantings (or figurative enchantments) of play-actors'. The word *histriarum* was used mistakenly for *histrionum*, either by B. in the original manuscript or in a corruption by a later copyist. The redactor of Arras MS 1029 misunderstood and corrected it as *historiarum* and, possibly thinking along the same lines as Augustine, supplied *naenias* to clarify its presumed sense. The redactor of the Cotton manuscript for his part chose to omit the word along with *frinoleas* entirely, which in removing the context of *incantationes* would indeed have given the charges against Dunstan a much graver colouring and implied that they were nothing other than those of magic incantation.

## II

Whatever modern scholars' readings have made of B., the sense that *incantationes* refers to illicit magic is nonetheless one implicitly shared

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<sup>37</sup> For discussion of Bede's usage and of the relationship here between *carmina* and *poematis*, see Opland, pp. 114–15.

by the monks Osbern and Eadmer of Canterbury. Osbern's *Life of Dunstan* (1089 × 1093) omits any criticisms of Dunstan's education, which is presented in altogether laudatory terms, and conflates the two early banishments in a single episode, sited at the court of king Edmund and prompted by Dunstan's jealous rivals:

Inflammat itaque invidentiae stimulos, operarios iniquitatis, qui conflictu mendacio opinionem juvenis apud regem laedant; asserentes illum malis artibus imbutum, nec quicquam divino auxilio sed pleraque daemonum praestigio operari.

[The Devil] inflamed therefore the pricks of envy and the labours of iniquity, in order that they should wound the king's opinion of the young man with argued falsehood; asserting that he was imbued with evil arts, and that he worked not by any divine help whatsoever but almost all by the illusions of demons.<sup>38</sup>

While it is possible that Osbern derived parts of his account from the other now-lost writings at Canterbury on Dunstan that he alludes to in his prologue, the content of the accusations is at least suggestive that Osbern may have taken his cue from B. and read the *uanissima* [...] *carmina* and *friuoleas* [...] *incantationes* as referring to allegations of illicit magic.<sup>39</sup> This would have been all the more likely if Osbern had used a manuscript which omitted the key word *histriarum/historiarum*, as such a reading would have detached the charge of absorption in *incantationes* from the patristic and contemporary context of criticisms of secular entertainment, and opened it to the more 'traditional' biblical reading of the term *incantatio*. It is notable to that end that the sole extant manuscript of B. known to have remained at St

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<sup>38</sup> Osbern, *Vita Dunstani*, §11, in *Memorials of Saint Dunstan*, p. 81.

<sup>39</sup> On the conjectured vernacular Life 'Eng.', see *Saints' Lives*, pp. xviii–xxi.

Augustine's after the Conquest is the Cotton manuscript, which, as already noted, does indeed omit that key word.<sup>40</sup>

The accusation of *daemonum praestigio* is, however, tellingly new to Osbern's account. B. had recounted instances of demonic illusions designed to test Dunstan, but had not linked them with the specific charges against the saint. By accusing him of complicity in demonic illusion, Osbern was the first to imply that the charges were causally linked not simply with the practice of empty incantation or with musical talent but with some specific miraculous event. That event seems implicitly to have been the miracle of the auto-playing harp, which immediately precedes the accession of Edmund and the banishment of Dunstan from the royal court. The same narrative order is present in B. (§§12–13), but in B. it is implied that the miracle — in which the harp begins to play the antiphon from Nocturns for the feast of All Saints, recognisable from its melody as referring to the sufferings of the martyrs — portends but does not cause Dunstan's banishment. The bystanders are struck with wonder at what the miracle might signify, but its meaning is soon explicated in the following chapter as Dunstan is driven unwillingly into exile.

If Osbern implicitly links accusations of evil arts and demonic illusion with the miracle of the harp, Eadmer's *Life of Dunstan* (1105 × 1109) makes that connexion explicit. Drawing on all three earlier accounts, Eadmer claims that the saint's enemies accused him of practising *sinistris artibus*, 'sinister arts', and that the miracle's novelty was presented as proof of Dunstan having played a *diabolico carmine*, 'demonic song', on his instrument:

Nunc prouectibus ipsius inuidere, et eum sinistris artibus uti, ac mansuetum ad omnes habitum eius hipocrisi et quorumque simplicium deceptioni, magis quam alicui religioni, inseruire conuitiari coeperunt. Ad cuius calumniae firmamentum, id quod

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<sup>40</sup> *Early Lives of St Dunstan*, pp. lxxix–lxxxiii.

in cithara factum fuit uelut quoddam argumentum inducunt, astruentes in huiusmodi instrumento nil tam insolitum fieri potuisse, nisi constaret aliquo diabolico carmine illud per eum, cuius erat, antea tactum fuisse.

[His former companions] now began to envy Dunstan's advancement and charge that he practised sinister arts, and that his gentle behaviour towards everyone was in the service of hypocrisy and deception of simple people rather than any kind of religion. In support of this vile charge they cited what had happened with the harp as if it were a proof, adding that on an instrument of this kind nothing so unaccustomed could have happened unless it stood that it had been touched beforehand by some demonic song [played] by him whose it was.<sup>41</sup>

The accusations of sinister arts and demonic influence clearly follow Osbern, but the justification of doubts on account of the miracle's novelty is unique to Eadmer. It may be that this ascribed criticism is partly the result of more general twelfth-century scepticism toward individual miracles, and, elsewhere in his writings on Anselm, Eadmer reveals his patron's discomfort with the ascription of certain events either as miracles or as a result of his own personal charisma.<sup>42</sup> On the other hand, the charge of novelty does serve to clarify why Dunstan's colleagues should have questioned the miracle as demonic illusion, and it seems likely that here Eadmer is following a passage of Adelard in order to bring clarity to Osbern: 'Dulcedo cytharae aures

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<sup>41</sup> Eadmer, *Vita Dunstani*, §9, in *Lives and Miracles of Saints Oda, Dunstan, and Oswald*, ed. by A. J. Turner and B. J. Muir, Oxford Medieval Texts (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2006), pp. 60–62; translation adapted from Turner and Muir's translation (which renders *carmine* as 'spell').

<sup>42</sup> Eadmer, *The Life of St Anselm, Archbishop of Canterbury*, II. 40–42, ed. by R. W. Southern, Oxford Medieval Texts (Oxford: Clarendon, 1962), pp. 117–21.



omnium delectabat, sed signum sine exemplo stupidos reddebat' [the sweet strains of the harp pleased the ears of all, yet the sign without precedent left them stunned].<sup>43</sup> Adelard for his part omits any references to accusations of magic or to Dunstan's early exile. If he had access to a continental manuscript of B. containing the reading herein argued, the absence of any reference to magic incantations would be expected, though it is more likely that the episodes would have been omitted in any case on account of their unsuitability for lectionary material: something which Eadmer would have understood. In resupplying those episodes based on Osbern and the Cotton recension of B., Eadmer created a narrative synthesis drawing on all three earlier accounts: with allegations criticising Dunstan's performance of *diabolico carmine* in place of *uanissima* [...] *carmina* (B.) and *daemonum praestigio* (Osbern), *sinistris artibus* in place of *malis artibus* (Osbern), and *nil tam insolitum* in place of *signum sine exemplo* (Adelard). Taken together, such accusations made little immediate sense in a passage concerning Dunstan's reading of sacred scriptures (B.), but made much more sense when transposed to the miraculous episode of the auto-playing harp, and with the two early banishments collapsed into the same episode.

The episode received its final treatment by William of Malmesbury (1129 × 1130), who had at his disposal the works in Canterbury of all the known hagiographers of Dunstan who went before him. William's synthesis is the same in its essential narrative as Eadmer's, and could hardly have been otherwise given the apparent consensus among his sources. Dunstan is first unsuccessfully accused by envious relatives at court of relying on *maleficis artibus* in securing the king's favour through his talents at psaltery with harp or drum for any occasion: 'nunc ut curas depelleret, nunc ut soporem induceret, plerumque etiam ut torporem somni discuteret' [to drive care away, to

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<sup>43</sup> Adelard, *Lectiones*, §9, in *Early Lives of St Dunstan*, p. 134.

bring on slumber, often too to dispel drowsiness].<sup>44</sup> The auto-playing harp which followed these frustrated accusations is seen as both a cause and portent of Dunstan's banishment, understood fully only to the saint, with the miracle represented to the royal court immediately by his detractors not as a mark of divine favour, but 'quasi Dunstani malefitium' [as if the evil art of Dunstan].<sup>45</sup> William seems to have been aware that the aforementioned charges in the Cotton manuscript of songs and writings 'non saluti animae profutura' [that would not profit the health of the soul] might have included charges of excessive devotion to secular literature and entertainments, as he refers in the section on Dunstan's education to the poetry 'that rings with fable' alongside the rhetorical arts that 'arm the speaker without benefitting his soul', and contrasts them with the legitimate arts of arithmetic, geometry, astronomy and music, which he claims 'provide great training in knowledge and sound purity of truth, and turn the mind to profitable [*non uana*] consideration of the wonders of God.'<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> William of Malmesbury, *Vita Dunstani*, I. 5. 3, in *Saints' Lives*, p. 180.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, I. 6. 2, p. 182.

<sup>46</sup> For the variant reading in the Cotton manuscript, see B., *Vita Dunstani*, §6, in *Early Lives of St Dunstan*, p. 20, n. 'k'. For the later reading, see William of Malmesbury, *Vita Dunstani*, I. 4. 2–3, in *Saints' Lives*, p. 178: 'Poetarum siquidem scripta, dumtaxat quae fabulis strepunt, et artes quae citra utilitatem animae armant eloquium transeunter audiuit. Arithmetica porro, cum geometria et astronomia et musica quae appendent, gratanter addidit et diligenter excoluit. Est quippe in illis et magna exercitatio scientiae et ueritatis integra castitas, et mirabilium Dei non uana consideratio.' [The writings of the poets, at least those which ring with fable, and the arts that arm the speaker without benefitting the soul, he heard only in passing. Arithmetic, with its appendages geometry, astronomy and music, he learned with pleasure and cultivated diligently. They provide great training in knowledge and sound purity of truth, and turn the mind to profitable consideration of the wonders of God.] Cf. Eadmer, *Vita Dunstani*, §5, in *Lives and Miracles*, p. 56, on the 'mundi uanitates' [the vanities of

The phrase *non uana* in connection with music is a recognisable echo of B.'s *uanissima carmina*: a charge that William here pre-empts first by drawing a category distinction among the disciplines and claiming that Dunstan was exposed to the less profitable arts of rhetoric and fable only in passing (*transeunter audiuit*), and then by drawing a second distinction within music itself, claiming that Dunstan's studious attention to it was entirely as a psalmodist rather than for its enticing pleasures. The only charges that are actually brought against Dunstan by his detractors in William's account therefore are those of prohibited magic itself.

If Osbern and Eadmer are illustrative of the largely unintentional editorial process that led to the charges of magic coming to the fore, William is illustrative of the new context in which the older charges were now irretrievably, and perhaps deliberately, submerged. One reason for omitting the earlier charges of secular reading and entertainments was that William was himself sympathetic to the reading of non-Christian and secular writings and took a polymathic approach toward the liberal arts.<sup>47</sup> William of course knew from Bede the story of Cædmon, 'illius monachi quem diuino munere scientiam cantus accepisse Beda refert' [that monk who received the science of song by divine gift as Bede relates], though he viewed the poet's merits as unusual and glosses over him only briefly in the *Gesta*

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the world]; and *ibid.*, §7, p. 58, on Dunstan's use of music 'in meditationem caelestis armoniae' [in meditation of the celestial harmony].

<sup>47</sup> On William of Malmesbury's attitudes toward the pagan classics, see R. M. Thomson, *William of Malmesbury*, rev. edn (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2003), pp. 8–13, and in particular William's famous dictum in his preface to the works of Cicero, quoted at p. 52: 'nullo modo eum de lectione gentilium librorum peccare crediderim.' [In no way have I believed that he sins by reading the books of the pagans.]

*Pontificum*.<sup>48</sup> A more telling passage occurs later in that work where he argued in his writings on Malmesbury's patron Aldhelm, whom he considered to have been unrivalled in vernacular song and poetry, that pastoral and instructional value could be found even in songs 'his quae uideantur friuola' [which appear to be frivolous].<sup>49</sup> The paradigmatic illustration was the story of how in response to the people of his day's disinterest in the word of God and tendency to return home immediately after the singing of Mass, Aldhelm would afterwards stand on the bridge linking the city and country and sing in the vernacular. These entertainments won the crowd's regular attention, and after several occasions of this the saint would gradually

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<sup>48</sup> William of Malmesbury, *Gesta pontificum Anglorum*, III. 116. 2–3, ed. by Michael Winterbottom and R. M. Thomson, Oxford Medieval Texts, 2 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2007), I, 386.

<sup>49</sup> William of Malmesbury, *Gesta pontificum*, v. 190, ed. by Winterbottom and Thomson, I, 506: '[...] adeo ut, teste libro Elfredi, de quo superius dixi, nulla umquam aetate par ei fuerit quisquam poesim Anglicam posse facere, cantum componere, eadem apposite uel canere uel dicere. Denique commemorat Elfredus carmen triuiale, quod adhuc uulgo cantitatur, Aldelmum fecisse, aditiens causam qua probet rationabiliter tantum uirum his quae uideantur friuola instituisse.' [Indeed, as we are told in the book by Alfred concerning which I spoke above, no one in any age was equal to him in the ability to make poetry in English, to compose songs, and to recite or sing them as occasion demanded. Moreover Alfred relates that Aldhelm made a popular song that is here [still] sung often by the people, adding a story which proves that the great man was justified in spending time on those things which appear to be frivolous.] Cf. William's citation of Bede's praise of Aldhelm's secular learning in *Gesta pontificum*, v. 195, ed. by Winterbottom and Thomson, I, 514–16.

insert the words of scripture into his playful performances and so by degrees lead his people back to their salvation.<sup>50</sup>

On the other hand, accusations against high church officials of witchcraft and incantation were pressingly familiar to William from his non-hagiographical writing. In the *Gesta regum*, written before he turned to the Lives of Dunstan on behalf of the monks of Glastonbury, William reported the subsequently famous story of the tenth-century Gerbert of Aurillac, later Pope Sylvester II, and his legendary adventures among the Saracens in Spain:

Ibi quid cantus et uolatus auium portendat didicit, ibi excire tenues ex inferno figuras, ibi postremo quicquid uel noxium uel salubre curiositas humana deprehendit; nam de licitis artibus, arithmetica musica et astronomia et geometria, nichil attinet dicere.

There he learned what the song and flights of birds portend, there he learned to summon ghostly forms from the nether regions, everything in short, whether harmful or healthful, that has been discovered by human curiosity; for of the permitted arts, arithmetic, music, astronomy, and geometry, I need say nothing.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> William of Malmesbury, *Gesta pontificum*, v. 190, ed. by Winterbottom and Thomson, I, 506: 'Hoc commento sensim inter ludicra uerbis scripturarum insertis, ciues ad sanitatem reduxisse.' [By this device, gradually inserting the words of the scriptures into his playful acts, he led the inhabitants back to salvation.]

<sup>51</sup> William of Malmesbury, *Gesta regum Anglorum*, II. 167. 3, ed. by R. A. B. Mynors, R. M. Thomson and Michael Winterbottom, Oxford Medieval Texts, 2 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998–99), I, 280.

Gerbert, in William's story, was a man who worked by necromancy and who 'summoned the devil by incantations' [*per incantationes diabolo accersito*] in order to secure for himself the papal office.<sup>52</sup> Though William believed the story to be likely given Gerbert's grim death and frantic deathbed plea for forgiveness, he also accepted that it was natural for the envious to slander the learned and to accuse them of achieving their success through illicit arts, citing Boethius's complaint to that effect in the *Consolation of Philosophy*:

'Non conueniebat', inquit, 'uilissimorum me spirituum presidia captare, quem tu in hanc excellentiam componebas ut consimilem deo faceres. Atqui hoc ipso uidemur affines malefitio, quod tuis imbuti disciplinis, tuis instituti moribus sumus.'

'It could not be right', he says, 'for me to seek the support of most worthless spirits, when you were shaping me to such a degree of excellence that you would make me resemble God. And yet this is the very point at which I am thought to be akin to evil-doing: that I am steeped in your teaching and trained to follow your way of life.'<sup>53</sup>

The Boethian terms of accusation against the holy man, *affines malefitio*, are the same in their essentials as that *quasi* [...] *malefitium* which William applies to Dunstan.

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<sup>52</sup> William of Malmesbury, *Gesta regum*, II. 167. 5, II. 168. 3, ed. by Mynors, Thomson and Winterbottom, I, 282, 284.

<sup>53</sup> William of Malmesbury, *Gesta regum*, II. 167. 6, ed. by Mynors, Thomson and Winterbottom, I, 282; the original text is Boethius, *The Consolation of Philosophy*, I. 4. 143–52, trans. by S. J. Tester, Loeb Classical Library, 74 (London: Heinemann, 1973), pp. 130–435 (p. 156).

Despite the temptation to draw a more direct parallel between the respective contents of the accusations against the tenth-century pope and the tenth-century archbishop, the Gerbertian legend unfortunately has no known precedent before William, and indeed more likely reflects the preoccupations and concerns of the twelfth century to safeguard against necromancy than it does those of the tenth.<sup>54</sup> The twelfth century in England was a period both of classical revival and of increased access to new or forgotten scientific texts from non-Christian sources on the continent, whether pagan, Arabic or Jewish, with the result being a heightened clerical anxiety about illicit knowledge of which William was well aware.<sup>55</sup> Misapplied curiosity and the magic arts were thus more natural and pressing concerns in the twelfth century than those of ‘ancestral heathendom’ or secular entertainments more generally had been in earlier times, and B.’s *incantationes* were now liable to be read in those terms.<sup>56</sup> In the *Gesta pontificum*, William recorded the sudden death of Archbishop Gerard of York in 1108, ‘said to have sown the evil arts’ [*maleficiis dicitur inseruisse*] by reading the late antique astrologer Julius Firmicus Maternus in secret, and who was found with a ‘a book of curious arts’ [*curiosarum artium codicem*] on his pillow when he died.<sup>57</sup> The incident

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<sup>54</sup> Mynors, Thomson and Winterbottom, II, 151; see also C. S. Watkins, *History and the Supernatural in Medieval England*, Cambridge Studies in Medieval Life and Thought, 4th ser., 66 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 129–33.

<sup>55</sup> Watkins, pp. 161, 164–68; Richard Kieckhefer, *Magic in the Middle Ages*, Canto Classics, 2nd edn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), pp. 118–19. This is yet another context in which William’s remarks quoted by Thomson, p. 52, may be suggestive.

<sup>56</sup> Watkins, pp. 139–40.

<sup>57</sup> William of Malmesbury, *Gesta pontificum*, III. 118\*. 2–3 (β text), ed. by Winterbottom and Thomson, I, 392–94: ‘Qui etiam maleficiis dicitur inseruisse, quod Iulium Firmicum secreto et postmeridians horis lectitaret. Decessit

caused such a scandal that the clergy of York initially refused to let the archbishop be buried on church ground, and Eadmer, a man intimately connected with the politics of Canterbury and York, along with William after him, may even have had the incident in mind when he composed his own *Life of Dunstan*.<sup>58</sup> Such anxieties could explain why the Anglo-Norman hagiographers, Eadmer and William in particular, might have been keen to disassociate the charges against Dunstan from the content of his reading — a charge which could have brought their subject's sanctity into doubt without an obvious means of refutation, or lent implicit support to activities of which the hagiographers themselves disapproved — and to reattach them instead to a specific, unquestionably miraculous event. In that sense, contemporary patterns and events may have shaped the reading and progressive re-writing of the recorded past in as far as it applied to Saint Dunstan, both consciously and subconsciously, on top of the more accidental, cumulative editorialisation of the hagiographical tradition.

In conclusion then, while it cannot conclusively be shown that B.'s text contained allegations against Dunstan of magic incantation, and indeed the text may more likely refer to generic criticisms of

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insperate [...] et post epulas reuersi fleuerunt dominum exanimem, et puluillo, ut ferunt, appositum curiosarum artium codicem. Vtinam haec rumor finxerit, nec tantum uirum pontificalis gratiae polluerit.' [He is also said to have sown the evil arts, because he used to read eagerly Julius Firmicus in secret and in the afternoon. He died unexpectedly [...] and when [his attendants] returned after their meal, they lamented their master dead, and found on his pillow, so they say, a book of curious arts. If only rumour had fabricated this, and not stained a great man graced with a bishopric!]

<sup>58</sup> Though the probable date of composition for Eadmer's *Vita Dunstani* is 1105 × 1109, the autograph manuscript, Cambridge, Corpus Christi College MS 371, may not have been completed until 1116, with Eadmer making 'fastidious changes' until that time. See *Lives and Miracles*, pp. lxxvii–lxxix, ci–ciii.



secular entertainments, later hagiographers did however take it to mean such. Osbern and Eadmer may have based their narrative on a defective reading in the British Library Cotton manuscript that rested at their disposal in Canterbury, providing an account which would have been less likely had they had either of the two other extant manuscripts of the text. Eadmer's account built on the accretions of later tradition in such a way as to distort its narrative force from a condemnation of secular entertainments and a miracle portending Dunstan's banishment into a miracle itself eliciting Dunstan's condemnation and banishment on grounds of demonic magic, a revision that was taken up and reinforced by William in his turn in the new context of twelfth-century clerical concern about necromancy. The changes over the century between B. and Eadmer were not deliberate, and therefore cannot be used to identify any particular programme on the part of those later hagiographers as the driving force in those revisions, though new concerns may have helped shape the final framing that was put on it at the end of the Dunstan tradition. What the changes between B. and Eadmer do however reveal is how the minor omissions and accretions of later redactions twisted the narrative into an account that was internally consistent, but nonetheless very different from the 'historical' root from which it ultimately sprang. It was, in other words, an accidental fabrication.

