

**A Vernacular and Christian Genesis: The  
Adaptation of Genesis Myths in *Beowulf* and Old  
English Old Testament Verse**

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conferment of a PhD by the Department of English within the Faculty  
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## Abstract

This study focuses primarily on two Old English Old Testament poems, *Genesis A* and *Genesis B*, as well as *Beowulf*, a narrative of vernacular origin that only makes direct reference to biblical narratives drawn from the Book of Genesis. I treat these Old English texts as cultural translations, or adaptations, of Genesis-derived or -related myths, namely the angelic creation, rebellion and fall; the Creation of Earth and humankind; the temptation and lapse of humankind; Cain and his descendants; and the Great Flood. This thesis is distinctive in its analysis and comparison of the Genesis poems and *Beowulf* in such depth, even where they belong to different genres. Different genres, however, do not preclude broadly similar approaches to biblical narrative, even where the texts in question are in no way identical in this regard.

This thesis demonstrates that *Genesis A* and *Genesis B* adapt antediluvian Genesis-derived or -related myths with reference to Christian exegesis and vernacular social conventions. This is done primarily with reference to two objectives. The first is to trace the manner whereby the two biblical poems adapt their biblical source narratives with reference to patristic interpretations of the Old Testament, including allegorical levels of meaning, and Christian concepts such as redemption. The second objective is to document the cultural translation, or adaptation, of Genesis-derived or -related myth with reference to vernacular social conventions, particularly the lord-retainer relationship, and to explain how this aspect of the Old English texts works in conjunction with their rendition of Christian concepts. While these objectives are not original, my analysis points to specific aspects of the texts that have either been overlooked or underestimated by previous researchers. These include, *inter alia*, recourse to the same narrative motifs and the similar social attitudes that underlie the *Genesis A* and *Genesis B* accounts of the angelic rebellion; the dramatic irony that undermines the rhetoric of Satan's emissary's celebratory speech after Adam's lapse in

*Genesis B*; and the same poem's representation of Adam's repentance as a process.

Moreover, I draw attention to the political ideology that underlies the representation of the lord-retainer relation in the texts, particularly in the representation of the angelic rebellion and fall. The representation of God as a king or overarching lord, and the appeal to the lord-retainer relationship by the chief rebel angel, particularly in *Genesis B*, suggests that this relationship is abused whenever directed against a king.

The third objective of this thesis is to show that *Beowulf* belongs in a poetic tradition infused with Old Testament poetry. I indicate, in this regard, that *Beowulf* makes strategic use of its narratives derived from the Book of Genesis, as well as of Christian or Christianised concepts, coupled with vernacular elements. Moreover, *Beowulf* represents the Cain theme as an archetype, or as a model for subsequent actions or events, as for *Genesis A*. This aspect of *Beowulf* points to an underlying ideology that gives chronological and thematic precedence to biblical myth over the vernacular narrative that makes up the bulk of the text. *Beowulf* thereby follows an approach that broadly recalls the Genesis poems, even where it differs, *inter alia*, in terms of the absence of the Christian notion of salvation in relation to its characters.

My study leads to the conclusion that a more comprehensive understanding of *Beowulf* may be reached through further contextualisation with reference to the broader Old English corpus dominated by Old Testament (and Christian) poetry. This study suggests, moreover, that we may speak, in the Old English poetic context, of a vernacular and Christian Genesis. However, the relationship between the vernacular and Christian aspects is asymmetrical, in that *Beowulf* gives precedence to biblical myth while the Genesis poems make use of vernacular elements to promote, *inter alia*, a monarchic ideology that is also in evidence in Anglo-Latin ecclesiastical charters.

To dearest Thomas and Ruby

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## Introduction: Scope and Context

### The Approach and Scope of this Thesis

I approach the three texts at the centre of my study, the Old English narrative poems *Genesis A*, *Genesis B* and *Beowulf*,<sup>1</sup> as cultural translations or adaptations of the myths that form part of the antediluvian Book of Genesis and related apocryphal narratives. For the purposes of this study *myth* is understood to denote a narrative set in primordial time that explains how a reality (or perceived reality) came into existence through supernatural agency,<sup>2</sup> or a combination of supernatural and human agency. While I recognise that this is not necessarily appropriate as a universal definition of myth,<sup>3</sup> it broadly encompasses the scope of the biblical and apocryphal narratives I discuss in this thesis, which explain, *inter alia*, the existence of Earth, humankind's condition, the origin of evil, and salvation. In my discussion and assessment of the process whereby Genesis-derived and -related narratives are translated or adapted by the texts at the centre of my study, I consider the transmission of these narratives from the Latin Christian to the early medieval English spheres. Hence, I assess the manner in which these narratives are Christianised and adapted to a vernacular setting by the Old English poems. I do not, however, assess their adaptation in comparison to the manner they would have been understood in their original Middle Eastern setting. I adopt this approach mainly in recognition of the fact that in early medieval England the Bible was mediated through western exegetical thinking. This is not to say, however, that an alternative approach would not be worth pursuing in future studies. The approach I pursue in my study

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<sup>1</sup> Throughout this thesis I refer to and cite the following editions of these texts: *Genesis A- A New Edition*, rev. edn. by A. N. Doane (Tempe: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2013); 'Genesis B', in *The Saxon Genesis An Edition of the West Saxon Genesis B and the Old Saxon Vatican Genesis*, ed. by A. N. Doane (London: University of Wisconsin Press, 1991), pp. 207-31; and, *Klaeber's Beowulf*, ed. by R.D. Fulk, E. Bjork and John D. Niles, 4<sup>th</sup> Edn. (London: University of Toronto Press, 2008).

<sup>2</sup> See M. Frog, 'Myth', *Humanities*, 7.14 (2018), 1-39 (p. 9).

<sup>3</sup> Frog, pp. 9-10.

broadly recalls Sidney H. Griffith's analysis of translations of the Bible into Arabic,<sup>4</sup> Cathy Hume's discussion of Middle English biblical poetry,<sup>5</sup> Elizabeth Boyle's study of Irish medieval biblical adaptations,<sup>6</sup> as well as several readings of Old English Old Testament poems and, to a lesser extent, *Beowulf*.<sup>7</sup> However, my approach differs from these studies in its book-length focus on the adaptation of antediluvian Genesis and related narratives. I also approach *Beowulf* with a focus on its biblically-derived elements which, I contend, are not simply asides but key elements to an understanding of the vernacular narrative.

The first objective of my study is to document the manner in which the three poems adapt their source narratives with reference to patristic interpretations of the Old Testament and Christian concepts such as redemption, which was typically understood to be anticipated or foreshadowed by Old Testament narratives. This objective is pursued, firstly, through an in-depth discussion of the levels of meaning in the Genesis poems, which reflect the Christian exegetical tradition in which biblical narratives are considered to have, among others, moral or tropological and anagogical significance, in addition to meaning at the literal level. The extent to which these poems resort to these allegorical levels of meaning throws light on their respective approaches to the adaptation of Genesis-derived narratives. While *Genesis A* often conveys meaning primarily at the literal level in its close rendition of the biblical original,

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<sup>4</sup> I refer to the discussion of Ibn at-Tayyib's Arabic translation of Tatian's *Diatessaron*, where this text is said to elide discrepancies between the four canonical Gospels in a cultural context dominated by the Qur'an, in Sidney H. Griffith, *The Bible in Arabic: The Scriptures of the 'People of the Book' in the Language of Islam* (Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2013), p. 158.

<sup>5</sup> See Cathy Hume, *Middle English Biblical Poetry: Romance, Audience and Tradition* (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 2021)

<sup>6</sup> See Elizabeth Boyle, *History and Salvation in Medieval Ireland* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2021).

<sup>7</sup> See Hugh Magennis, *Images of Community in Old English Poetry* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996; repr. 2006); Paul G. Remley, *Old English Biblical Verse* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); Daniel Anlezark, *Water and Fire: The Myth of the Flood in Anglo-Saxon England* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006); Samantha Zacher, *Rewriting the Old Testament in Anglo-Saxon Verse: Becoming the Chosen People* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), Patrick Mc Brine, *Biblical Epics in Late Antiquity and Anglo-Saxon England: Divina in Laude Voluntas* (London: University of Toronto Press, 2017); Tristan Major, *Undoing Babel: The Tower of Babel in Anglo-Saxon Literature* (London: University of Toronto Press, 2018); Jill Fitzgerald, *Rebel Angels: Space and Sovereignty in Anglo-Saxon England* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2019); Janet Schrunck Ericksen, *Reading Old English Biblical Poetry: The Book and the Poem in Junius 11* (London: University of Toronto Press, 2021); and, Mary Kate Hurley, *Translation Effects: Language, Time, and Community in Medieval England* (Columbus: The Ohio State University Press, 2021).

*Genesis B* modifies its source narrative to convey meaning at multiple allegorical levels. I argue that this gives us important insights into the respective poems' intended readership or audiences.<sup>8</sup> I also pursue my first objective with reference to the allusion to Christian or Christianised concepts and episodes in the *Genesis* poems and *Beowulf*. These include Heaven, Hell and the Harrowing of Hell (mainly in Chapter 1), reversals of fortune (Chapters 1-5), redemption or salvation (Chapters 1-5), readings of Old Testament narratives as archetypes (Chapters 4 and 5), as well as the presence of Christ in the Old Testament (Chapters 1, 2, 3 and 5). Hence, in the course of this thesis I set out how the three poems Christianise narratives derived from the Old Testament and related traditions. I also make reference to other Old English narratives that treat Genesis-derived narratives, even if briefly or not as extensively. These include *Andreas*, *Christ and Satan* and *Exodus*.

My second objective is to explore recourse to vernacular social conventions, notably the relationship between lord and retainer in the poems at the centre of my study. Over the course of this thesis I show that in each of the three poems adaptation to the vernacular context works in conjunction with Christian concepts or Christianisation of the narratives.<sup>9</sup> This is evident, *inter alia*, in the *Genesis* poems' rendition of the lord-retainer relationship in the context of their adaptation of the angelic rebellion, which assigns the apocryphally-derived narrative an analogical level of meaning. This level of meaning arises out of the link established between the said rebellion and social tensions that would have been known to the audience. At the same time I indicate, particularly in Chapter 1, that themes identifiable as vernacular, such as the representation of God as a king, also draw on the compatibility

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<sup>8</sup> I mention readership or audiences because at some stages in their transmission the poems at the centre of this thesis would have been read aloud to an audience. Even where the evidence for this is oblique, the indifference to visual cues in the manuscripts, or the writing of vernacular poetry in continuous lines as if it were prose, suggests that readers would have been familiar with the conventions of oral poetry, which knowledge would have facilitated the reading process. See Daniel Donoghue, *How the Anglo-Saxons Read their Poems* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2018), p. 44. Unless otherwise required by the context, I will henceforth only refer to audiences, on the understanding that this includes readers as well.

<sup>9</sup> See also Michael Lysander Angerer, 'Beyond "Germanic" and "Christian" Monoliths: Revisiting Old English and Old Saxon Biblical Epics', *Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, 120.1 (2021), 73-92 (pp. 73-75) for the adoption of a similar approach in relation to *Genesis A*, *Genesis B* and Old Saxon material.

between Old Testament representations of the deity, early medieval notions of kingship evident in ecclesiastical sources, and vernacular social values. The representation of the lord-retainer relationship in the angelic rebellion is closely linked to the representation of God as king, which suggests that this too may have been influenced by an ecclesiastical political agenda that promotes kingly authority.

My third and final objective is to demonstrate that *Beowulf*, along with the two Genesis poems, fits into a poetic tradition influenced, even shaped, by biblical and related narratives. This is the case even where *Beowulf* belongs to a different genre.<sup>10</sup> I discuss, in this regard, *Beowulf*'s strategic placement of Genesis-derived narratives, its allusion to Christian or Christianised concepts such as reversal, as well as some of its vernacular themes or elements. These constituents recall the thematic elements that make up the Genesis poems, even where *Beowulf* is a narrative of vernacular non-Christian origin. However, the heroic-elegiac poem's recourse to dramatic irony, which reveals anxiety over what may be referred to as its heroic ethos,<sup>11</sup> is neither typical of *Genesis A* nor *Genesis B*. This is the case even where dramatic irony is in evidence in the representation of Eve in *Genesis B*, as the first woman's deception is set within a narrative framework that anticipates humankind's redemption, and redemption is a consequence of her lapse. In other words, the focus on redemption shows to the audience that the Eve tempting Adam is, contrary to her own perception of events, already fallen. While we know, however, that Eve and her descendants retain the prospect of salvation, her deception notwithstanding, we are told of no such

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<sup>10</sup> In this thesis I refer to *Beowulf* as a heroic-elegiac poem. While I recognise that this term is retrospective in relation to Old English literature, it distinguishes this poem from biblical or hagiographical poetry. See Paul Battles, 'Toward a Theory of Old English Poetic Genres: Epic, Elegy, Wisdom Poetry and the "Traditional Opening"', *Studies in Philology*, 111.1 (2014), 1-33, for a discussion of genre in Old English poetry.

<sup>11</sup> See Catalin Taranu, *Vernacular Verse Histories in Early Medieval England and Francia: The Bard and the Rag-Picker* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2021), pp. 3-4, for a discussion of anxiety over the heroic ethos in narratives of vernacular origin such as the *Waltharius* (even if written in Latin), the *Hildebrandslied*, and *Beowulf* itself.

prospects in relation to the characters of the heroic-elegiac poem.<sup>12</sup> This is because the failure of these characters to understand the meaning behind the events unfolding around them is not offset by redemption. Dramatic irony in *Beowulf* is therefore more negative, and quite possibly tragic.

My research therefore aims to show, firstly, how *Genesis A*, *Genesis B* and *Beowulf* translate myths drawn from or related to the Book of Genesis culturally, in a manner that is simultaneously Christian and vernacular, and that, secondly, *Beowulf* belongs in the context of a literary tradition where biblical poetry comprises a substantial proportion of the corpus. However, the texts I focus on in this thesis are by no means the only early medieval narratives to adapt Genesis-derived narratives to a cultural context, as attested by the geographically neighbouring Irish<sup>13</sup> and the culturally close Old Saxon<sup>14</sup> literary traditions. Moreover, the Book of Genesis was also translated, as opposed to adapted, into Old English prose.<sup>15</sup> I focus on the aforementioned Old English poetic texts for three reasons, aside from the fact that they are written in verse. The first is that they are at least partly didactic in scope. Even where *Genesis A* mostly follows its source text closely, its version of events brings to the fore concepts such as loyalty and betrayal, while *Genesis B*'s didacticism emerges from its allegorical element. *Beowulf* contemplates various aspects of human behaviour, which at times recall the vices characteristic of the biblical figure of Cain or the monstrous characters.

The second reason why I focus on these three poems is that they belong to the same

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<sup>12</sup> While Leonard Neidorf, 'The *Beowulf* Poet's Sense of Decorum', *Traditio*, 76 (2021), 1-28 (p. 27) argued that the reference to the choice of God's light by King Hrethel in line 2569b, in a digression that forms part of *Beowulf*'s speech prior to his confrontation of the dragon, alludes to salvation, Linda Georgianna, 'King Hrethel's Sorrow and the Limits of Heroic Action in *Beowulf*', *Speculum*, 62.4 (1987), 829-50 (p. 849), considered that this is merely a euphemism for death. *Beowulf*'s reference to the judgement of the righteous in line 2820b, which statement, according to Neidorf, would allude to salvation in any other context, is likewise ambiguous. See Leonard Neidorf, 'Dramatic Irony and Pagan Salvation in *Beowulf*', *ANQ: A Quarterly Journal of Short Articles, Notes and Reviews*, 32.3(2019), 137-39 (p. 137), for an overview of critical opinions in relation to this half-line.

<sup>13</sup> See *Saltair na Rann*, the first three cantos of which are reproduced in *King of Mysteries: Early Irish Religious Writings*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2000), pp. 97-124.

<sup>14</sup> See 'Vatican Genesis', in *The Saxon Genesis*, pp. 232-52.

<sup>15</sup> See the Book of Genesis that forms part of the 'Old English Heptateuch', in *The Old English Version of the Heptateuch, Ælfric's Treatise on the Old and New Testament and his Preface to Genesis*, ed. by S. J. Crawford (London: Oxford University Press, 1922), pp. 81-400.

vernacular tradition, at least in the broad sense that they date back to the early medieval period and have been written, or translated into, Old English. The third reason is that these texts adapt or build upon antediluvian Genesis-derived and -related apocryphal myths in the context of their main narratives. While this statement is contentious insofar as *Beowulf* is concerned, my thesis demonstrates, in Chapters 2.3, 4.3 and 5.3, that this poem's biblical themes are more important and relevant to the main narrative than is often recognised.

Now that I have discussed the approach and scope of my thesis, I move on to a discussion of the cultural context of *Genesis A*, *Genesis B* and *Beowulf* over the next four sections, following which I describe the structure of this thesis.

## Manuscript Contexts

In this section I discuss the Junius 11 and *Beowulf* manuscripts. There are two reasons why an overview of manuscript contexts is required at this stage. Firstly, the two manuscripts point to the manner in which early medieval redactors and, quite possibly, their intended readership, would have interpreted *Genesis A*, *Genesis B* and *Beowulf*. Secondly, manuscript contexts justify the approach I pursue in this thesis, particularly insofar as I interpret the *Genesis* poems and, even more so *Beowulf*, with reference to a Christian framework.

*Genesis A* and *Genesis B* are preserved in the Junius 11 manuscript, which as for the other three codices containing a significant number of Old English poems, including Cotton Vittelius A.xv, also known as the *Beowulf* manuscript, is typically dated to the last third of the tenth or the beginning of the eleventh century.<sup>16</sup> The Junius 11 manuscript is made up of biblical poems, as the other texts in this collection are *Exodus*, *Daniel* and *Christ and Satan*. The first two texts versify narratives from the Old Testament Books of Exodus and Daniel respectively, while *Christ and Satan* deals with the Crucifixion, the Harrowing of Hell, and

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<sup>16</sup> A. N. Doane, 'Introduction', in *Genesis A- A New Edition*, rev. edn. by A. N. Doane, pp. 1-122 (p. 1). See also Leslie Lockett, 'An Integrated Re-examination of the Dating of Oxford, Bodleian Library, Junius 11', *Anglo-Saxon England*, 31 (2002), 141-73 (p. 173), who argues for the dates 960-990 for the compilation of the manuscript.

Christ's Resurrection.<sup>17</sup> The two Genesis poems have an intimate connection in the context of this manuscript, as *Genesis B* is interpolated into *Genesis A*. This does not mean that the two texts share a common origin. R.D. Fulk argues that *Genesis A* was composed (in England) before 825,<sup>18</sup> while *Genesis B* is a text of Old Saxon origin. The Old Saxon version would have been written around 850.<sup>19</sup> Yet, the manuscript presents those two texts as one narrative; so much so that the passage now known as *Genesis B* was only identified as a distinct text by Eduard Sievers in his 1875 publication *Der Heliand und die angel-sächsische Genesis*.<sup>20</sup> Sievers argued that lines 235-851 of the then so-called *Cædmonian Genesis* were translated from Old Saxon<sup>21</sup> and used the *Genesis B* appellation to distinguish the interpolated text from the rest of the narrative, which he designated *Genesis A*. Sievers reached this conclusion on the basis of a comparison of the language of *Genesis B* with that of the *Heliand*, an Old Saxon poetic account of the life of Christ. He argued, in this regard, that *Genesis B* retains characteristically Old Saxon vocabulary, very often in alliterating positions.<sup>22</sup> This hypothesis was eventually confirmed by the discovery of an Old Saxon text corresponding to lines 790-817a of *Genesis B* in Vatican, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Palatinus Latinus, 1447. While I do not engage in a discussion of the translation of *Genesis B* from Old Saxon or in a comparison of the two texts,<sup>23</sup> I examine the thematic issues posed by the Old Saxon origin of *Genesis B* and its placement within the Junius 11 manuscript. This

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<sup>17</sup> J. R. Hall, 'The Old English Epic of Redemption: The Theological Unity of MS Junius 11', *Traditio*, 32 (1976), 185-208 (p. 187).

<sup>18</sup> R. D. Fulk, *A History of Old English Meter* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1992), pp. 391-92.

<sup>19</sup> Michael Fox, 'Feðerhama and hæleðhelm: The Equipment of Devils', *Florilegium*, 26 (2009), 131-57 (p. 132).

<sup>20</sup> Rolf Bremmer, 'Continental Germanic Influences', in *A Companion to Anglo-Saxon Literature*, ed. by Phillip Pulsiano and Elaine Treharne (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2001), pp. 375-87 (p. 383).

<sup>21</sup> Bremmer, p. 383.

<sup>22</sup> Remley, p. 156.

<sup>23</sup> See A. N. Doane, 'The Transmission of *Genesis B*', in *Anglo-Saxon England and the Continent*, ed. by Hanna Sauer and Joanna Story (Tempe: Arizona State University, 2011), pp. 63-82, for a discussion of the translation of *Genesis B* from Old Saxon; Britt Mize, *Traditional Subjectivities: The Old English Poetics of Mentality* (London: University of Toronto Press, 2013), pp. 81-154, for a discussion of Adam's speech in *Genesis B* and lines 1-26a of the *Old Saxon Genesis*; and, Angerer, pp. 81-82, for a discussion of the rendition of personal loyalty in the two texts.



means that I treat *Genesis B* as a distinct composition, but that I also factor into the equation its extant manuscript context, which demands consideration of the way it functions in relation to *Genesis A*. For instance I observe, in Chapter 3.3, that the connection between the two narrative texts is structural, in the sense that *Genesis A* follows up on where *Genesis B* leaves off by way of logical continuation to the narrative. I also comment on the thematic similarities between the two texts, particularly in the rendition of the apocryphal angelic myth I discuss in Chapter 1.2.3. I also argue that the two texts appeal to vernacular social conventions and social relationships that would have been known to their respective audiences, notably by way of the lord-retainer relationship, throughout Chapter 1.2.

Like the *Genesis* poems *Beowulf* resorts to vernacular social conventions, including the lord-retainer relationship. This is likely to reflect the social realities, or perhaps the self-perception, of the higher classes in early medieval England. At any rate, Peter S. Baker argues that throughout this period the nobility was an elite body of warriors who sought to defend their warlike reputation.<sup>24</sup> However, ongoing debate over the dating of the poem makes the assigning of specific social contexts difficult. This has been the subject of controversy since the nineteenth century,<sup>25</sup> even if Fulk,<sup>26</sup> Leonard Neidorf and Rafael J. Pascual present valid arguments for composition at circa 725 or earlier.<sup>27</sup> The scripturally-derived and Christian themes I explore in this thesis, however, cannot be said to point towards any particular date of composition. This is not even the case for *Beowulf*'s concern over heathen worship, which I explore in Chapter 2.3, as preoccupation over such practices extends over the whole span of early medieval English history. It is very much in evidence,

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<sup>24</sup> Peter S. Baker, *Honour, Exchange and Violence in Beowulf* (Cambridge: Brewer, 2013), p. 3.

<sup>25</sup> See Robert E. Bjork and Anita Obermeier, 'Date, Provenance, Author, Audiences', in *A Beowulf Handbook*, ed. by Robert E. Bjork and John D. Niles (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1998), pp. 13-34; Colin Chase, 'Opinions on the Date of *Beowulf*, 1815-1980', in *The Dating of Beowulf*, ed. by Colin Chase (London: University of Toronto Press, 1997), pp. 3-8; and, E.G. Stanley, 'The Date of *Beowulf*: Some Doubts and No Conclusions', in *The Dating of Beowulf*, pp.197-202.

<sup>26</sup> Fulk, p. 392.

<sup>27</sup> Leonard Neidorf and Rafael J. Pascual, 'The Language of *Beowulf* and the Conditioning of Kaluza's Law', *Neophilologus*, 98.4 (2014), 657-73 (p. 672).

for instance, in Wulfstan's demonstrably late Old English sermons.<sup>28</sup> The poem's scripturally-derived themes are however important towards an understanding of the text, and of the manner whereby it would have been understood by early medieval audiences, including the Beowulf Manuscript's tenth or eleventh century audiences. While these Genesis-derived themes are delivered over just a few lines, they are conveyed at strategic points in the narrative:

- a) the Creation of Earth is mentioned in the context of Grendel's first incursion into Heorot and the *gastbona* (slayer of souls) passage that denounces the Danes' worship at pagan shrines, which I discuss in Chapter 2.3;
- b) Cain's fratricide and the beings that arise as a result of his act are alluded to in relation to Grendel's miserable existence and God's judgement of him, which I discuss in Chapter 4.3;
- c) Cain's fratricide is also mentioned in relation to Grendel's mother, which aspect I also discuss in Chapter 4.3;
- d) the Giants who perish in the Great Flood are placed in the context of Beowulf's victory over Grendel's mother, which I discuss in Chapter 5.3; and,
- e) I contend, allusions to fratricide that recall Cain's act are made, *inter alia*, in the context of the Unferth episode, ahead of the confrontation with Grendel, and in Beowulf's speech prior to his confrontation of the dragon. This speech relates the Geats' history of conflict, which is prefaced by fratricide within the Geatish royal family, as Hæthcyn shoots an arrow in the direction of his brother Herebeald, which I discuss in Chapter 4.3.4.

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<sup>28</sup> See Wulfstan, 'De Falsis Dies', in *The Homilies of Wulfstan*, ed. by Dorothy Bethurum (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1957; repr. 1998), pp. 221-24 (p. 224).

*Beowulf*'s broader manuscript context is also partly biblical, given that the Old Testament poem *Judith* is likewise preserved in Cotton Vitellius A.xv. Unlike the Junius 11 manuscript, however, the *Beowulf* manuscript is a very diverse collection.<sup>29</sup> Its remaining texts are prose pieces, namely the fragment known as *The Passion of Saint Christopher*, the illustrated *Wonders of the East* and *The Letter of Alexander to Aristotle*. The five texts have been copied by two scribes; Scribe A copied the prose texts and the first 1939 lines of *Beowulf*, while Scribe B copied the remaining lines of the heroic-elegiac poem and *Judith*.<sup>30</sup> For all that, the inclusion of *Beowulf* and *Judith* in this manuscript may not be the outcome of pure chance. The two texts, after all, share the beheading of a rival who lies prone, Holofernes in *Judith* and Grendel in *Beowulf*. Moreover, inasmuch as Grendel's head is used as a sign in *Beowulf*,<sup>31</sup> so is Holofernes's in lines 171-75 of the Old Testament poem.<sup>32</sup> These beheadings, however, do not necessarily attest to a similar thematic approach. While Grendel's head may be attributed Cainite significance, which means that *Beowulf* brings back a symbol of Cainite fratricide to the hall that houses Unferth, himself a fratricide;<sup>33</sup> the narrative context of the biblical poem does not point to any negative connotations for *Judith*'s use of Holofernes's head as a sign. Rather, the text represents *Judith* in Christian and saintly terms, as attested, *inter alia*, by the term *halige* (saintly) used in reference to her in lines 56b and 160b.<sup>34</sup> Moreover, *Judith* beseeches God for the strength to wreak vengeance on

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<sup>29</sup> The diversity of this collection is attested, *inter alia*, by commentators' disagreement over its unifying themes. Solutions offered include an interest in rulers and foreigners, material about Asia, monsters, and kingship. See Kathryn Powell, 'Mediating on Men and Monsters: A Reconsideration of the Thematic Unity of the *Beowulf* Manuscript', *The Review of English Studies*, 57.228 (2006), 1-15 (p. 10); Heide Estes, 'Wonders and Wisdom: Anglo-Saxons and the East', *English Studies*, 91.4 (2010), 360-73 (p. 370); and, Teresa Hooper, 'The Missing Women of the *Beowulf* Manuscript', in *New Readings on Women and Early Medieval English Literature and Culture: Cross-Disciplinary Studies in Honour of Helen Damico*, ed. by Helene Scheck and Christine Kozikowski (Leeds: Arc Humanities Press, 2019), pp. 161-78 (pp. 161-62).

<sup>30</sup> Andy Orchard, *Pride and Prodigies: Studies in the Monsters of the Beowulf-Manuscript* (London: University of Toronto Press, 1995), p. 2.

<sup>31</sup> See Joseph St. John, 'The Meaning behind *Beowulf*'s Beheading of Grendel's Corpse', *Leeds Medieval Studies*, 1 (2021), 49-58 (pp. 56-58).

<sup>32</sup> 'Judith', in *The Beowulf Manuscript*, ed. and trans. by R. D. Fulk (London: Harvard University Press, 2010), pp. 297-323 (p. 310).

<sup>33</sup> St. John, p. 58.

<sup>34</sup> 'Judith', pp. 302 and 310.

Holofernes, which means that it is God himself that enables her to perform her task.<sup>35</sup> A comparison of Judith and Beowulf therefore suggests that the latter's exploits, which take place in a non-Christian milieu and in the absence of any direct mention of the characters' redemption, are not as effective as those of the biblical heroine. This not only transpires from Beowulf's use of Grendel's head as a sign of victory at Heorot, but also from the resumption or continuation of conflict in the heroic-elegiac narrative. Instances of such conflict include Beowulf's prediction of the resumption of feuding between Danes and Heathobards, which I discuss in Chapter 4.3.4, and his own subsequent confrontation of the dragon. Moreover, *Beowulf* comprises other signs that attest to its characters' inability to comprehend the implications of the events that unfold around them. These include the sword hilt handed by Beowulf to King Hrothgar, which I discuss in Chapter 5.3.1. In Chapter 5.3.2, moreover, I contend that the discrepancy between the style of the speech known as Hrothgar's sermon and its thematic focus on this world similarly points to King Hrothgar's lack of comprehension, on account of his ignorance of scripture or Christianity. Therefore, it is possible that *Beowulf* and *Judith* are placed in the same manuscript to point to the limitations imposed on the pre-Christian characters in the heroic-elegiac poem. This appears to be confirmed by *Judith*'s concluding lines, 341-49, which are unequivocally positive, as the narrator tells of the protagonist's glorification of God and the renown and esteem that she enjoys, which themes are complemented by the proclamation of the Creator's glory.<sup>36</sup> Moreover, in the context of its placement at the end of the extant manuscript, *Judith* also sets out that the one who slays her enemy and survives belongs to biblical rather than vernacular tradition.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Megan E. Hartman, 'A Drawn-Out Beheading: Style, Theme, and Hypermetricity in the Old English *Judith*', *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, 110.4 (2011), 421-40 (pp. 434-35).

<sup>36</sup> Hartman, p. 322.

<sup>37</sup> Nicholas Howe, *Writing the Map of Anglo-Saxon England: Essays in Cultural Geography* (London: Yale University Press, 2008), p. 193.

While *Judith* is the only biblical text in the Beowulf Manuscript, I consider that *The Passion of Saint Christopher* contributes to an understanding of the heroic-elegiac poem in Christian terms. The prose text shares with *Beowulf* a concern with pre-Christian beliefs, as the physically monstrous<sup>38</sup> saint confronts the pagan King Dagnus.<sup>39</sup> In the context of *Beowulf* the same concern is evident in the aforementioned *gastbona* (slayer of souls) episode. Moreover, the primary purpose of the monstrous in the two texts is not the identification of the culture that produced them as normative, as may be the case for *Wonders of the East* or its Greek predecessors.<sup>40</sup> Rather, the monstrous Saint Christopher is a living manifestation of the necessity of King Dagnus's repentance and conversion. In this sense the text conforms to Augustine's and Isidore of Seville's interpretations of the monstrous, i.e. to show, *monstrare*, and to give warning, *monere*.<sup>41</sup> The Grendelkin are similar in the sense that they are also intended to show and warn. This is because they are associated with the biblical fratricide (and, in the case of Grendel's mother, the antediluvian giants) while they point to conflict within the society represented in the text. This is attested, *inter alia*, by Unferth's envy and fratricide, which equate him with Cain and, by association, with Grendel, as I argue in Chapter 4.3.4; and Grendel's mother's revenge, which lends her a human dimension, as I indicate in Chapter 4.3.1. It therefore appears that the conception of the monstrous in *The Passion of Saint Christopher* may be understood to belong with *Beowulf*, even if it associates physical monstrosity with the protagonist rather than his rival. However, Saint Christopher's physical monstrosity only points to King Dagnus's unacceptably violent behaviour, whereby

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<sup>38</sup> The extant fragment refers to Saint Christopher's gigantism, setting out that his height is 12 fathoms, and alludes to his cynocephalism when King Dagnus calls him a wild beast. See 'The Passion of Saint Christopher', in *The Beowulf Manuscript*, ed. and trans. by R. D. Fulk (London: Harvard University Press, 2010), pp. 2-13 (pp. 2 and 4). See also Susan M. Kim, "'In his heart he believed in God, but he could not speak like a man": Martyrdom, Monstrosity, Speech and the Dog-Headed Saint Christopher', in *Writers, Editors and Exemplars in Medieval English Texts*, ed. by Sharon M. Rowley (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2021), pp. 235-50, for a discussion of the prose text in the context of the broader Saint Christopher tradition.

<sup>39</sup> Orchard, p. 18.

<sup>40</sup> Asa Simon Mittman, 'Are the *Monstrous Races* Races?', *Postmedieval: A Journal of Medieval Cultural Studies*, 6 (2015), 36-51 (p.47).

<sup>41</sup> Asa Simon Mittman and Susan M. Kim, 'Monsters and the Exotic in Early Medieval England', *Literature Compass*, 6.2 (2009), 332-48 (p. 337).

paganism is associated with viciousness and cruelty.<sup>42</sup> In this context, therefore, Saint Christopher is not only a positive figure, but a figure associated with redemption, as indicated by King Dagnus's conversion and the protagonist's last prayer before the departure of his spirit.<sup>43</sup> This is where the prose text differs from *Beowulf*. The heroic-elegiac poem, after all, ends with the expectation of hardship for the Geats upon the protagonist's death, as attested, *inter alia*, by the woman's elegy sung on the occasion of his funeral in lines 3150-55a.<sup>44</sup>

My discussion of *Beowulf*'s manuscript context points, among other matters, to the absence of redemption in the heroic-elegiac poem, which offers a contrast to either *Judith* or *The Passion of Saint Christopher*. This is the case even where the heroic-elegiac poem shares with these narratives its concern with biblical and Christian themes. The absence of redemption in *Beowulf*, at least insofar as its characters are concerned, also distinguishes the heroic-elegiac text from the Genesis poems. J. R. Hall argues that *Genesis A* and *Genesis B*, along with the other poems that comprise the Junius 11 manuscript, constitute a narrative of redemption.<sup>45</sup> Insofar as the Genesis poems are concerned, this is borne out throughout my thesis, particularly in Chapters 3 and 5.2. In contrast, *Beowulf*'s *gastbona* episode equates the Danes' heathen worship with the Devil. This episode, as for others I discuss in Chapters 4.3 and 5.3, is built on the premise that the Christian audience benefits from knowledge that is not accessible to the poem's non-Christian characters. This point has also been made by previous commentators, notably by J. R. R. Tolkien, Marijane Osborn, Fred C. Robinson and Rafael J. Pascual.<sup>46</sup> The idea that *Beowulf* resorts to dramatic irony has however been challenged by Peter Ramey. Yet, this commentator neither discusses the *gastbona* episode, nor the narrator's references and allusions to Cain and the giants drowned in the Great

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<sup>42</sup> S. C. Thomson, 'Telling the Story: Reshaping Saint Christopher for an Anglo-Saxon Lay Audience', *Open Library for Humanities*, 4(2).29 (2018), 1-31 (p. 14).

<sup>43</sup> 'The Passion of Saint Christopher', pp. 10 and 12.

<sup>44</sup> *Klaeber's Beowulf*, p. 107.

<sup>45</sup> See J. R. Hall, pp. 185-208, for a detailed discussion of redemption in the Junius 11 manuscript.

<sup>46</sup> See Footnote 2 in Rafael J. Pascual, 'Two Possible Emendations of *Beowulf* 2088a', *Notes and Queries*, 66.1 (2019), 5-8 (p. 5).

Flood.<sup>47</sup> In contrast, in this thesis I contend that the poem's portrayal of two levels of knowledge emerges, *inter alia*, from these episodes and allusions, which discussion affirms that the relevant passages are far more important than their comparative brevity might suggest. The importance of the references to Cain and the Great Flood, moreover, is attested by their archetypal function in relation to the events that take place over the course of the narrative.<sup>48</sup> In other words, these passages account for and explain, *inter alia*, the existence and the attacks by the monstrous characters. I explore these aspects of the narrative in Chapters 4.3 and 5.3.

My discussion over the course of this section points to the relevance of the Junius 11 and Beowulf manuscripts to the narrative poems at the centre of this thesis. This is the case even where the respective manuscript contexts do not work out in the same way in relation to the biblical poems and *Beowulf*. While *Beowulf* offers a contrast to *Judith* and in some ways to *The Passion of Saint Christopher* as well, the Genesis poems complement the other biblical poems in their manuscript. Even where the Genesis poems and *Beowulf* do not interact with the biblically-derived and Christian elements in their respective manuscripts in the same way, this discussion shows that an analysis of the three poems with reference to a Christian framework is warranted. This is because the respective contexts suggest that broader biblical and Christian learning is directly relevant to these texts.

## Why Genesis?

The discussion of manuscript contexts in the previous section shows that biblical narratives and themes enjoyed particular importance in early medieval England, especially as one of the four major codices that contain Old English poetry is dedicated exclusively to biblical verse. The poems at the centre of this study point to the exalted position that appears to have been

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<sup>47</sup> See Peter Ramey, 'Problems with the Dramatic Irony Theory of *Beowulf*', *ANQ: A Quarterly Journal of Short Articles, Notes and Reviews*, (2022), 1-2.

<sup>48</sup> Lawrence Besserman, *Biblical Paradigms in Medieval English Literature* (Oxford: Routledge, 2012), p. 18.

enjoyed, more specifically, by the Book of Genesis. *Genesis A* and *Genesis B* are evidently based on this biblical book, while *Beowulf* only refers directly to narratives and themes drawn from this biblical text. The importance of the Book of Genesis and related apocryphal narratives is also attested, *inter alia*, by the translation of the Book of Genesis into the vernacular, and by references or allusions to these narratives in the biblical poems *Exodus* and *Christ and Satan*. I also observe, in Chapters 2.3 and 4.1 respectively, that antediluvian Genesis-derived myth is likewise mentioned or alluded to in the hagiographical *Andreas* and *Maxims I*. While I contend that this provides us with sufficient evidence as to the importance of the Book of Genesis in early medieval England, I recognise that the extant literary corpus may not fully reflect the entirety of the corpus that would have been known, in say, tenth century England, i.e. the time around which the manuscripts that have come down to us have been produced. The question that I seek to answer at this stage, however, does not relate to the importance of Genesis-derived narratives expressed quantitatively, but rather to the reason why extant Old English poetry allocates such prominence to these narratives. I address this question indirectly throughout this thesis, which explores the different facets of the adaptation of Genesis-derived or -related narratives. However, the matter also merits consideration from a wider perspective, so as to provide a broader context to the importance and relevance of Genesis-derived myth. This is what I do in the present section.

The importance of the Book of Genesis in an early medieval context emerges from analysis of Daniel of Winchester's letter to Boniface written in 723 or 724<sup>49</sup> in preparation for the latter's proselytising mission to the continent. In this letter the Bishop of Winchester set out that the Book of Genesis would enable the missionary to dispel the old gods and their cosmology from the minds of the common people.<sup>50</sup> The letter, in other words, appeals to the presumed superiority of the cosmology of the biblical text. Daniel of Winchester argued that

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<sup>49</sup> Anlezark, *Water and Fire: The Myth of the Flood in Anglo-Saxon England*, p. 14.

<sup>50</sup> Anlezark, *Water and Fire: The Myth of the Flood in Anglo-Saxon England*, p. 293.



the people would be unable to identify a place where their gods dwelt before God's creation of the universe.<sup>51</sup> It may be presumed, on the basis of this letter, that the missionary's efforts would have been directed at the substitution of vernacular cosmological myth with biblical cosmology. At any rate, this may well have been the theoretical approach to missionary work. Hence, a similar approach may have been adopted in the earlier conversion of the English themselves. This is the case even where the reality behind the conversion is likely to have been more nuanced, in that it would have entailed inculturation, syncretism and assimilation.<sup>52</sup>

I argue, on the basis of this discussion, that the importance of the Book of Genesis to missionaries would have been derived from its perceived function as a comprehensive myth of origin. It is ironic, in the context of the present thesis, that this perception appears to be contradicted by the extensive recourse to apocryphal material in the Genesis poems. Be that as it may, even where Daniel of Winchester's letter relates specifically to conversion, it also points to the importance accorded the Book of Genesis in ecclesiastical circles more broadly. There is, after all, no reason to think that the role of the Book of Genesis as a myth of origin would have diminished following the conversion. The fact that the poems at the centre of this thesis have been preserved in manuscripts typically dated to a circa tenth century date attests that this is not the case. In the course of this thesis, moreover, it is established that the Genesis poems and *Beowulf* build on the function of the biblical book (and the related apocryphal tradition) as a collection of myths that explain, *inter alia*, the Creation of Earth, humankind's existence, and the origin of evil. It appears, therefore, that the function of these myths remains similar after the conversion, in that they explain how the audience's reality came to be. This process entails a degree of cultural adaptation, as illustrated by the aforementioned connection between the renditions of the angelic rebellion in *Genesis A* and

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<sup>51</sup> Anlezark, *Water and Fire: The Myth of the Flood in Anglo-Saxon England*, p. 14.

<sup>52</sup> Michael D. J. Bintley, *Trees in the Religions of Early Medieval England* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2015), p. 1.

*Genesis B* and social situations that would have been known to the audience. Hence, these myths also acquire a more ostensibly ideological function, which I explore in this thesis, particularly in Chapters 1 and 3 in relation to both *Genesis* poems. This approach is rendered possible by the flexibility that inheres to mythical systems, including *Genesis* myths, which ‘can be used in a variety of improvised combinations to create new meanings’.<sup>53</sup>

This discussion explains why narratives derived from the Book of *Genesis* would have been considered important at the conversion stage. It also hints at why they would have retained importance well beyond that into a circa tenth century date in England. This is not surprising, as the need to explain the existence of the audience’s world by means of myth does not end with the conversion, while the flexibility that inheres to myth enables its adaptation to prevailing social circumstances where this is needed.

## Authorship and Audience

My discussion over the previous two sections points to the continued relevance of *Genesis A*, *Genesis B* and *Beowulf* in a circa tenth century context. However, comparatively little can be said with any certainty about the origins of these texts, or about authorship and the poets’ intended audiences. Admittedly, this statement holds more true of *Genesis A* and *Beowulf* than it does of *Genesis B*’s Old Saxon original. This is because the circumstances of the Old Saxon conversion preclude composition before capitulation to the Carolingian Empire in 797,<sup>54</sup> while the dialect of the continental text can be securely dated to around 850.<sup>55</sup> For all that, it cannot quite be stated that we have conclusive and direct evidence for the composition and intended audience of *Genesis B*. Notwithstanding the limitations imposed by this general

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<sup>53</sup> Claire Sponsler, ‘In Transit: Theorizing Cultural Appropriation in Medieval Europe’, in *The Postmodern Beowulf: A Critical Casebook*, ed. by Eileen A. Joy and Mary K. Ramsey (Morgantown, West Virginia University Press, 2006), pp. 25-48 (pp. 30-31) (first publ. in *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies*, 32.1 (2002), 17-39).

<sup>54</sup> James E. Cathey, ‘Introduction’, in *Heliand Text and Commentary*, ed. by James E. Cathey (Morgantown: West Virginia University Press, 2002), pp. 1-28 (p. 11).

<sup>55</sup> Fox, p. 132.

absence of direct evidence, the question of authorship and audience is worth taking up in view of the indirect evidence offered by early medieval texts that refer or allude to vernacular poetry or related themes.

The biblical and related knowledge in evidence in Old English poetry would have been readily available within monastic precincts. It is therefore not surprising that scholars generally envisage a monastic setting for these texts, including the texts at the centre of this study.<sup>56</sup> This is confirmed by similarities between these texts and Latin Classical texts, particularly *Beowulf* on the one hand and Virgil's *Aeneid* and Statius's *Thebaid* on the other.<sup>57</sup> While these texts are not Christian in origin, within an early medieval context they would have been transmitted through and as part of a literate Christian culture.<sup>58</sup> Hence, any similarity between them and *Beowulf* is indicative of monastic influence. This is not to say, however, that all the concepts explored in a text like *Beowulf* are invariably Christian. *Beowulf*'s expression of the notion of *wyrd* (fate), for instance, remains controversial and

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<sup>56</sup> See Magennis, p. 10; Remley, p. 63; Bremmer, p. 383; Jodi Grimes, 'Tree(s) of Knowledge in the Junius Manuscript', *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, 112.3 (2013), 311-39 (p. 319); and Zacher, p. 3.

<sup>57</sup> See Tom Burns Haber, *A Comparative Study of the Beowulf and the Aeneid* (New York: Phaeton Press, 1968), pp. 45-67; Richard J. Schrader, 'Beowulf's Obsequies and the Roman Epic', *Comparative Literature*, 24.3 (1972), 237-59; Theodore M. Andersson, *Early Epic Scenery: Homer, Virgil, and the Medieval Legacy* (London: Cornell University Press, 1976), pp. 145-59; R.J. Schrader, 'Sacred Groves, Marvellous Waters, and Grendel's Abode', *Florilegium*, 5 (1983), 76-84; Magennis, p. 136; Richard North, *The Origins of Beowulf From Vergil to Wiglaf* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), pp. 80-94; Daniel Anlezark, 'Poisoned Places: The Avernian Tradition in Old English Poetry', *Anglo-Saxon England*, 36 (2007), 103-26; Andrew Scheil, 'The Historiographic Dimensions of Beowulf', *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, 107.3 (2008), 281-302; and, Edward Currie, 'Hygelac's Raid in Historiography and Poetry: The King's Necklace and Beowulf as "Epic"', *Neophilologus*, 104 (2020), 391-400. See also the overview of criticism dealing with Classical influence on *Beowulf* up to the 1990s by Andersson, 'Sources and Analogues', in *A Beowulf Handbook*, ed. by Robert E. Bjork and John D. Niles (Exeter University Press, 1998), pp. 138-42.

<sup>58</sup> Michael D. Cherniss, *Ingeld and Christ: Heroic Concepts and Values in Old English Christian Poetry* (The Hague: Mouton, 1972), p. 9.

critics have adopted widely different views as to its meaning.<sup>59</sup> Disagreement over this point, however, does not suggest an alternative source for the origin of the extant written text of the heroic-elegiac poem or, for that matter, the Genesis poems. Rather, the case for monastic origin for the extant written texts and for the composition of *Genesis A* and *Genesis B* is strong. This is the case even if extant evidence is indirect.

Bede's Cædmon narrative in the *Historia Ecclesiastica Gentis Anglorum* functions as a myth of origin for biblical poetry.<sup>60</sup> The cowherd is inspired to compose religious verse in a dream, following which he takes up monastic life,<sup>61</sup> whereupon he produces poetry that is made up, *inter alia*, of 'the subject matter of all the Old Testament poems of Junius 11, with the possible exception of *Daniel*'.<sup>62</sup> Bede's account also attests to the didactic function of Cædmon's poetry, in that its purpose is to induce listeners to shun sin and inculcate a love of good works.<sup>63</sup> I observe, in the course of this thesis, that the Genesis poems share in this didactic function, which is expressed, in particular, at the moral or tropological level. While Bede's account has a miraculous tinge in its opening, as also illustrated by Cædmon's lack of poetic competence before his dream,<sup>64</sup> the idea expressed later in the text, after the cowherd's admission to the monastery, of an oral poet receiving scholarly instruction, is plausible. This

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<sup>59</sup> Wyrð in *Beowulf* is discussed, *inter alia*, in: Margaret E. Goldsmith, 'The Christian Theme of *Beowulf*', *Medium Ævum*, 29.2 (1960), 81-101 (p. 86); Mary C. Wilson Tietjen, 'God, Fate, and the Hero of *Beowulf*', *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, 74.2 (1975), 159-71; Jon C. Kasik, 'The Use of the Term Wyrð in *Beowulf* and the Conversion of the Anglo-Saxons', *Neophilologus*, 63.1 (1979), 128-35; Susanne Weil, 'Hand-Words, Wyrð, and Free Will in *Beowulf*', *Pacific Coast Philology*, 24. 1-2 (1989), 94-104; Andrew Galloway, 'Beowulf and the Varieties of Choice', *PMLA*, 105.2 (1990), 197-208; Christopher M. Cain, 'Beowulf, the Old Testament and the *Regula Fidei*', *Renascence: Essays in Literature*, 49.4 (1997), 227-40; Jos Bazelmans, *By Weapons Made Worthy: Lords, Retainers and their Relationship in Beowulf* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 1999); Salena Sampson Anderson, 'Saving the "Undoomed Man" in *Beowulf* (572b-573)', *Studia Anglica Posnaniensia*, 49.2 (2014), 5-31; Melissa Ann Mayus, 'Accepting Fate and Accepting Grace: Conceptions of Free Will in Anglo-Saxon Poetry' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Notre Dame, Graduate School, 2015), pp. 211-28, who also gives an overview of critical opinions on the matter; and, Thijs Porck, 'Undoomed Men do not Need Saving: A Note on *Beowulf*, ll. 572b-3 and 2291-3a', *Notes and Queries* (2020), 1-3.

<sup>60</sup> Remley, p. 36.

<sup>61</sup> Bede, *Bede's Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, ed. by Bertram Colgrave and R.A.B. Mynors (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969), pp. 416 and 418.

<sup>62</sup> Remley, p. 35.

<sup>63</sup> Anlezark, *Water and Fire: The Myth of the Flood in Anglo-Saxon England*, p. 175.

<sup>64</sup> Emily Thornbury, *Becoming a Poet in Anglo-Saxon England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), p. 5.

suggests that Old English Old Testament poetry originates in a monastic context, where it may have been composed orally with the assistance of scholars.<sup>65</sup> This does not mean, however, that all extant biblical poetry would necessarily have been composed orally. Such a method of composition may well be unlikely in the case of *Genesis A*, which mostly follows its original closely.

Ælfric's *Letter to Sigeweard* and his preface to the Old English translation of the Book of Genesis likewise point, even if rather less directly, to a monastic origin, as well as a lay audience, for the Genesis poems. The *Letter to Sigeweard* is a catechetical prose narrative focused on key biblical episodes, which gives us insight into early medieval instruction for laypersons in England.<sup>66</sup> I observe, in Chapter 2.2, that the narrative approach pursued in *Genesis A* is comparable to this prose text, which would point to a monastic origin for the poem. This approach also suggests that the poem, as for the prose text, is meant for the instruction of laypersons, or perhaps for members of the clergy unable to read Latin fluently, or at all.<sup>67</sup> Moreover, in Chapter 1.2.3 I indicate that the account of the angelic rebellion in the *Letter* is in some key respects strongly reminiscent of the one in *Genesis B*, which again points to similar origins, objectives and audiences. Ælfric's Preface to the vernacular translation of the Book of Genesis similarly offers indirect evidence for monastic composition and a lay audience for the Genesis poems. While the preface does not discuss poetic texts, it suggests that the vernacular translation will reach a wider audience. This audience, Ælfric fears, may misinterpret the biblical text out of a lack of exegetical

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<sup>65</sup> Mechthild Gretsch, 'Literacy and the Uses of the Vernacular', in *The Cambridge Companion to Old English Literature*, ed. by Malcolm Godden and Michael Lapidge, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), pp. 273-91 (p. 275). See also Colin A. Ireland, *The Gaelic Background of Old English Poetry before Bede* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2022), p. 362, who argued that this mode of composition in the Cædmon narrative points to Gaelic influence.

<sup>66</sup> Remley, pp. 88-89.

<sup>67</sup> See Alaric Hall, 'Interlinguistic Communication in Bede's *Historia Ecclesiastica Gentis Anglorum*', in *Interfaces between Language and Culture in Medieval England* (Leiden: Brill, 2010), pp. 37-80 (p. 47), for a discussion of knowledge of Latin in ecclesiastical circles.

knowledge.<sup>68</sup> It is not to be excluded that the poems, likewise composed in the vernacular, would also have elicited such fears. Their omission or elision of certain passages from the biblical book, such as *Genesis A*'s omission of Adam and Eve's unashamed nudity in Gen 2.25, which I discuss in Chapter 2.2, suggests that this is the case. The Preface and the poem therefore appear to be informed by the same concerns, which again point, even if tentatively, to similar sources of composition and intended audiences.

The *Praefatio in librum antiquum lingua saxonica conscriptum* attests to the composition of vernacular poetry about the Old and New Testaments for the benefit of the literate and the illiterate in the Old Saxon context of the source text for *Genesis B*.<sup>69</sup> This *Praefatio*, a late Carolingian document, attributes the decision to compose such vernacular verse to *Ludouuicus*, i.e. Louis the Pious or Louis the German, who died in 840 and 876 respectively.<sup>70</sup> It is possible that this document refers, *inter alia*, to the passage we now know as *Genesis B*, or rather to its Old Saxon source, even if this cannot be ascertained. Be that as it may, the statement that vernacular poetry is intended for the literate and the illiterate corresponds with a statement I make in Chapter 3.2.2 about *Genesis B*, namely that this text addresses, at different allegorical levels, the exegetically-minded and those whose knowledge of scripture would have been fairly rudimentary. The royal intervention implied by the *Praefatio* also appears to be reflected in *Genesis B* as this narrative, as I set out in Chapter 1.2.3, may be understood to promote the imperial *status quo*.

Asser's biography of King Alfred is also relevant to the present discussion, for the king's biographer writes that the young Alfred, and later his children Edward and Ælfthryth,

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<sup>68</sup> See Ælfric, 'Preface to Genesis', in *The Old English Version of the Heptateuch, Aelfric's Treatise on the Old and New Testament and his Preface to Genesis*, ed. by S. J. Crawford (London: Early English Text Society, 1922), pp. 76-80 (p. 76).

<sup>69</sup> A. N. Doane, 'Introduction', in *The Saxon Genesis An Edition of the West Saxon Genesis B and the Old Saxon Vatican Genesis*, pp. 3-141 (p. 4).

<sup>70</sup> Doane.

read vernacular poetry.<sup>71</sup> While Asser gives no indication as to genre, Remley argued that we may safely infer that this poetry would have been Christian, for the biographer consistently makes the case for the king's piety.<sup>72</sup> While this is certainly possible, even probable, the only certainty that arises from the biography is that vernacular poetry would have enjoyed a royal (and possibly a wider higher-class) readership. Given that Asser does not provide any information about genre, it is quite possible that the poetry that would have been read by the young Alfred or his children would have included biblical, as well as Christianised vernacular narratives like *Beowulf*.

I conclude, on the basis of this discussion, that the composition, redaction and preservation of poems like *Genesis A* and *Genesis B* makes sense within a monastic context, which would have supplied the poets, the scholarly knowledge, and, quite possibly, the audience required for this poetic tradition to flourish. At the same time Asser's biography points to a royal readership for vernacular poetry, while the other texts I discuss in this section allow for the possibility that biblical poems would also have targeted a wider lay audience. This is the case, in particular, for the Carolingian *Praefatio*. While this discussion does not, predictably, give rise to any certainties as regards the poems' precise authorship and audience, it provides enough information to demonstrate that exegetical considerations and didacticism are central to an understanding of biblical poetry. The *Praefatio*, moreover, justifies an approach that takes into account vernacular social structures in the assessment of biblical poetry, for in addressing the illiterate these texts address an audience that may have been under the influence of social norms that are not specifically Christian. Biblical poetry, however, does not necessarily appeal to these social norms innocently, or merely to bridge the gap between Christianity and vernacular values. Rather, in so doing, it may also be pushing a royal agenda, which is likewise affirmed by the context of the *Praefatio*. This is

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<sup>71</sup> *Asser's Life of King Alfred*, ed. by William Henry Stevenson (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1904), p. 20 and pp. 58-59.

<sup>72</sup> Remley, p. 31

evident in my *Genesis B* discussions of the angelic rebellion in Chapter 1.2.3 and Adam as God's royal retainer in Chapter 3.2.2. While the *Praefatio* is a Carolingian text, and it therefore cannot be assumed that a similar political context would have existed in early medieval England, it is not to be excluded that a broadly similar political agenda also underlies *Genesis A*. At any rate, my discussion of the angelic rebellion in *Genesis A* in Chapter 1.2.3, where I draw comparisons with *Genesis B*, strongly suggests that this is the case.

### ***Beowulf's* Broader Cultural Context**

My discussion of the *Genesis* poems and *Beowulf* considered the cultural context offered by the respective manuscripts in which these narratives are preserved. However, my discussion of authorship and audience in the previous section mainly focused on the *Genesis* poems rather than *Beowulf*. This is because the texts I discussed in that section, such as Bede's *Historia Ecclesiastica*, are in and of themselves more relevant to biblical poetry than a narrative of vernacular origin. It is therefore worth considering, at this stage, the broader cultural context specific to the heroic-elegiac poem.

The cultural context for *Beowulf* is difficult to pin down, mainly because this text is notoriously difficult to date. It is tempting, in this context, to postulate that this poem would have been composed for an audience made up of recent converts, who would have to be gradually inculcated with basic Christian precepts by means of a vernacular narrative. However, the extant Old English textual record provides no evidence for this hypothesis; nor does, for that matter, the related Old Saxon tradition. This is the case even where the only extant poetic texts in Old Saxon, namely the fragments that make up the *Old Saxon Genesis* and the *Heliand*, would have been composed within a few years of the conversion. While the *Old Saxon Genesis* adapts passages from the corresponding Old Testament text, the *Heliand* is a gospel harmony. The Old High German *Hildebrandslied*, which would have been written



around 820,<sup>73</sup> may be regarded as an exception. Albrecht Classen argues that in its representation of violent confrontation between father and son this narrative of vernacular origin offers a warning to what he identified as a ‘still-heathen audience’ of ‘the destructive force inherent and endemic in their own culture’.<sup>74</sup>

For all that, a narrative of vernacular origin need not have been composed or otherwise intended for a still-heathen or newly converted audience, as attested by the Carolingian *Waltharius*, written in Latin for a Court audience made up, *inter alia*, of the clerical elite.<sup>75</sup> I contend that a broadly similar scenario is likely for *Beowulf*, as in the course of this thesis I argue for the poem’s meaning to a Christian audience in terms that go well beyond its perception as an antiquarian piece. In this context, the negativity that inheres to *Beowulf*’s portrayal of the ancestral pre-Christian past, or certain aspects of it, such as the absence of redemption, may well have drawn attention to the importance of the Christian message that is at the disposal of the audience. At the same time, the poem’s negative aspects in its representation of the pre-Christian past are to a degree offset by God’s control of this past and his mercy, as attested by the assistance given to Beowulf in the confrontation of Grendel’s mother, which I mention in Chapter 4.3.2. Here again, the text appeals to the audience’s knowledge of its privileged position on account of the Christian faith, which enables it to fully recognise God’s mercy. At the same time, the narrative’s positive connotations appeal to the audience’s nostalgia<sup>76</sup> for an imagined past. Therefore, the choice of a pre-Christian protagonist and narrative may have been driven by authorial knowledge of the audience’s understanding of basic biblical and Christian tenets on the one hand, and their

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<sup>73</sup> Albrecht Classen, ‘Poetic Reflections in Medieval German Literature on Tragic Conflicts, Massive Death, and Armageddon’, in *The End-Times in Medieval German Literature*, pp. 72-97 (p. 75).

<sup>74</sup> Classen, p. 78.

<sup>75</sup> Rachel Stone, ‘*Waltharius* and Carolingian Morality: Satire and Lay Values’, *Early Medieval Europe*, 21.1 (2013), 50-70 (p. 56).

<sup>76</sup> Roy M. Liuzza, ‘*Beowulf*: Monuments, Memory, History’, in *Readings in Medieval Texts: Interpreting Old and Middle English Literature*, ed by David Johnson and Elaine Treharne (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), pp. 91-108 (p. 100).

interest in their own continental heritage on the other. This interest is at any rate attested by poems like *Deor* and *Widsith*,<sup>77</sup> which mention several ancestral figures from the continental past including, in the case of the latter poem, the Danes Hrothulf and Hrothgar<sup>78</sup> who also feature in *Beowulf*.

This discussion affirms and confirms that *Beowulf* would have been relevant among an established Christian audience, a point that also emerges from discussion of its manuscript context. This point is also confirmed in the body of this thesis. I now turn to the structure of the thesis.

## The Structure of this Thesis

As I indicated in the opening to this discussion the present study focuses on *Genesis A*, *Genesis B* and *Beowulf*, which share a concern with antediluvian Genesis and related apocryphal narratives. The discussion of these poems is hereby conducted over the course of five chapters, structured according to the said biblical and apocryphal themes, which are followed by a general Conclusion.

In Chapter 1 I discuss the Genesis-related account of the angelic creation, rebellion and fall, which exegetes understood to be implied by Gen 1.1 and 1.4. In the first place, I give an overview of the cultural context that informs the angelic rebellion and fall, which is followed by in-depth discussions of the rendition of this myth in *Genesis A* and *Genesis B*. I place particular emphasis on the similarities between the accounts in the two poems, which suggest that they belong to the same monastic tradition. While previous commentators often drew attention to the differences between the two narratives, the similarities have mostly been overlooked or underestimated. This is the case even where commentators acknowledged that

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<sup>77</sup> Thomas D. Hill, 'The Christian Language and Theme of *Beowulf*', in *Beowulf: A Verse Translation*, trans. by Seamus Heaney and ed. by Daniel Donoghue (London: Norton and Company, 2002), pp. 197-211 (p. 198) (first publ. in *Companion to Old English Poetry*, ed. by Henk Artsen and Rolf H. Bremmer (Amsterdam: VU University Press, 1994), pp. 63-77).

<sup>78</sup> Lines 45-49 of 'Widsith', in *Old English Shorter Poems: Volume II Wisdom and Lyric*, ed. and trans. by Robert E. Bjork (London: Harvard University Press, 2014), pp. 44-55 (p. 46).

the narratives fulfil similar functions, as attested by the way they relate to the episodes that follow them in the chronology of the respective narratives, i.e. the Creation in the case of *Genesis A* and the temptation and lapse of humankind in *Genesis B*. This discussion is important to the present thesis because it attests to the Christianisation of the Genesis-related narrative and, by inference, to the Christianisation of the Genesis-derived narratives that follow. In this chapter I also discuss the representation of Hell in *Genesis B* with reference to apocryphal and patristic traditions, as well as vernacular non-Christian elements. I also analyse the Hell of *Genesis B* with reference to the Hell of *Christ and Satan* and I conclude, on the basis of their similarities, that the two poems express the same tradition for the representation of this location. I also observe, throughout this chapter, that the common elements across the poems I discuss, particularly the two Genesis poems, are not limited to exegetical points or allegorical levels of meaning, but also comprise vernacular social values. This not only attests to an attempt to bridge vernacular social values and Christian narrative but, practically as importantly, to the respective texts' ideological, or political, scope.

In Chapter 2 I address the very different expressions of the creation of Earth in *Genesis A* and *Beowulf*. The account of the Creation in the biblical poem has two facets, for the text reproduces the hexameral narrative of the Book of Genesis, while it renders Creation in terms that recall the construction of a building. This latter mode of representation is analogical, in that it invites the audience to compare the biblically-derived act to humankind's transformation of the natural environment. This depiction of the Creation has an ideological purpose, in that it frames humankind's colonisation and transformation of the natural landscape within a sacred context. It implies, in other words, that the transformation, or exploitation, of the natural environment is divinely sanctioned. The text also alludes to the Trinity in the act of Creation, which Christianises the Old Testament narrative and gives it a redemptive or salvific dimension. In contrast, *Beowulf* renders the act of Creation in the

context of a sequence that highlights the limitations imposed on the poem's characters by their ignorance of scripture. This is achieved, *inter alia*, through the combination of the Creation narrative with an account of heathen worship, i.e. the *gastbona* (slayer of souls) episode that I mentioned earlier in this discussion. *Genesis A* and *Beowulf*, however, are not the only Old English poems to adapt the Creation narrative. Cædmon's *Hymn* and *Christ and Satan* also deal with the Creation, even if briefly. Their approach broadly recalls *Genesis A*, particularly in the emphasis on the redemptive aspect of the biblically-derived narrative. While my discussion in the course of this chapter is mostly built on the work of previous commentators, my comparison of *Genesis A* (and by inference, its analogues) and *Beowulf* draws attention to the manner in which the heroic-elegiac poem makes use of the Creation theme, and homiletic techniques, to highlight the contrast between its characters on the one hand and its audience on the other. This, I argue, suggests that *Beowulf*'s use of the Creation theme is unique in the context of the Old English poetic corpus.

In Chapter 3 I discuss the levels of meaning in the temptations of Adam and Eve in *Genesis B*. I argue that this text simultaneously appeals to audiences whose exegetical knowledge would have been rudimentary and to others who would have been more knowledgeable. The representation of an Adam who does not readily succumb to temptation, for instance, appeals to vernacular notions of loyalty. Moreover, the postlapsarian Adam's self-perception as an exile, in terms that broadly recall vernacular representations, calls attention, even if perhaps indirectly, to the importance of the audience's loyalty to its king. The narrative therefore advocates the socio-political *status quo*. At the same time, *Genesis B*'s expression of the *tribus modis* rationale, or the idea that the tempter represents desire, Adam reason, and Eve the senses, appeals to more exegetically inclined audiences. Moreover, I discuss the aftermath of the temptation in *Genesis A*, not only independently, but also as a continuation of the events told in *Genesis B*. While the arguments I make throughout this

chapter mostly draw on the contributions made by previous commentators, my analysis of *Genesis B* suggests that the temptation of Eve jointly draws on exonerative and more judgemental traditions relating to her lapse. Both of these traditions stem from the verses of the terse biblical account, which explains why it does not necessarily make sense to explain the representation of Eve in *Genesis B* in binary terms as either exonerative or condemnatory. I also discuss the representation of the tempter before he leaves Hell and the irony that inheres to his speech when he expresses readiness to return to Hell immediately after his temptation of Adam and Eve. I argue that the themes evoked in this speech, such as the bound Satan, point to humankind's redemption, and therefore, to the pyrrhic nature of the tempter's self-proclaimed victory. The import and significance of this episode has seldom been given due recognition by previous commentators. My discussion of Adam's postlapsarian speech as a thought process that leads all the way from misogyny to genuine repentance in his readiness to undergo penance also furthers the discussion of the themes at the centre of *Genesis B*. In this instance, I argue, the poem offers up Adam as a model, in that the context of the narrative suggests that this process should be emulated by the Christian audience.

In Chapter 4 I discuss the Cain theme in *Genesis A* and *Beowulf*. I argue that these texts integrate this narrative into an archetypal structure, in the sense that they replicate its elements in the representation of other events. *Genesis A*, for instance, replicates Cain's sinful ways in the representation of his descendants. I argue, moreover, that the Cain episode in *Genesis A* also looks back to the angelic rebellion, which suggests that the apocryphal narrative is an archetype for Cain's fratricide in as much as the fratricide is an archetype for later events. This point has not always been given due attention by previous commentators, yet it is central to an understanding of the manner whereby the poem adapts its biblically-derived narratives. Likewise, *Beowulf* replicates the envy that prompts Cain to kill his

brother, as well as his violence. These traits are very much in evidence in the monstrous figure of Grendel, but also in Unferth, the Dane who challenges Beowulf's reputation at King Hrothgar's hall. I also argue that the Cain narrative is an archetype for other episodes in the poem, including Beowulf's tale of fratricide within the Geatish royal line, which is told ahead of the Geats' history of conflict and the confrontation of the dragon.

In Chapter 5 I deal with the Great Flood in *Genesis A* and *Beowulf*. I argue that *Genesis A*, as for *Exodus*, which also refers to this biblical myth, conveys the redemptive aspect of the Great Flood, including by way of its allusions to the saviour, i.e. Christ, and its focus on the figure of Noah. Moreover, I discuss the inundation in *Genesis A* as a consequence of the lapse of the descendants of Seth, which entails archetypal representation, in the sense that Seth's descendants replicate the fall of the rebel angels. While previous commentators have also drawn attention to this aspect of the narrative, its full implications, which make a case for *Genesis A* as more than a plain sequential rendition of the biblical original, are not always fully appreciated. The point is that *Genesis A* entails extensive archetypal representation and a salvific or redemptive rendition of the Great Flood. This latter aspect is conspicuously absent in the adaptation of the same biblical episode in *Beowulf*. The short allusion to the Great Flood in the heroic-elegiac poem is exclusively concerned with its punitive element. The poem, after all, only makes direct reference to the giants drowned by the waters of the flood in the context of a description of the hilt of the sword with which Beowulf kills Grendel's mother. My discussion of this aspect of *Beowulf* draws extensively on previous commentators' work; however, I make a case for how this biblical allusion points towards the characters', including Beowulf's, lack of comprehension of the events unfolding around them. I also argue that King Hrothgar's inability to comprehend the sign that is the sword is complemented by his inability to understand other signs, as well as by the incongruity between the homiletic tone of his speech addressed to Beowulf known as

Hrothgar's sermon, and its thematic focus on this world. I also briefly deal with Grendel's mother's refuge which, I argue, offers a literal explanation for her survival of the Great Flood.

In my Conclusion I give an overview of the main points discussed throughout the thesis in relation to the objectives outlined in the beginning of this discussion.

# 1 Rebellion, Angelic Fall and Hell in *Genesis A* and *Genesis B*

## 1.1 Background

In this chapter I explore the adaptation of the angelic creation, rebellion and fall in the Genesis poems. While this myth does not form part of the Book of Genesis, *Genesis A* and *Genesis B* adapt it in the context of Genesis-derived narratives, ahead of the Creation of Earth and the temptation and lapse of humankind respectively. This myth is therefore represented as an extension of biblically-derived narratives. One of my main objectives in this chapter, which I pursue in section 1.2, is to document the manner in which the Genesis poems adapt this myth, and to explain the similarities between them, even where I also recognise their differences. This discussion is crucial to an understanding of how the Genesis poems adapt their source narratives with reference to Christian concepts and vernacular social values. It also throws light on the ideologies that inform the two narratives. I also discuss, in section 1.3, the representation of Hell in *Genesis B*, whereby the poem Christianises its source narratives. While I discuss this aspect of the narrative with reference to previous commentators' contributions, I also contextualise it within the Old English poetic corpus. I compare the Hell of *Genesis B* with the representation of this mythical location in *Christ and Satan* because I contend that the two texts share important motifs. I argue that these motifs originate and belong in a Hell that postdates Christ's Harrowing of Hell, and that recognition of this point leads to a better understanding of the significance of the Hell of *Genesis B* as a location that Christianises the poem's source narratives. This comparison also throws light on poetic traditions for the representation of Hell that span across Old Saxon and Old English literary contexts.

In the present section I discuss *Genesis A* and *Genesis B*'s wider cultural framework, or the traditions that inform the representations of the angelic creation, rebellion and fall in the two texts. I also touch upon traditions that the poets may have been familiar with, but that



do not inform their representations of this myth. As I indicate in this section there are different sources for the angelic myth, and these do not necessarily agree on all the details of the narrative. Hence, the manner in which the Genesis poems adapt this myth is by no means the only one that would have been theoretically possible.

There is no single scriptural source for the angelic creation, rebellion and fall, and even where the apocryphal Books of Enoch deal with this myth in some detail, they were not considered authoritative by Christian thinkers.<sup>1</sup> At the same time, the canonical bible does not offer a clear account of the angelic myth, even if selected verses from the Old and New Testaments were understood to refer or allude to it.<sup>2</sup> Isaiah 14.12-15 relates that Lucifer fell to Earth after he thought to raise his throne above God's in the mountain of the covenant, to the north. This text also prophesises that Lucifer shall be brought down to Hell.<sup>3</sup> Ezechiel 29.1-19, which tells of the reversal to be suffered by the Prince of Tyre, has also been interpreted as an allusion to the angelic fall. Verses 14-16 refer to their subject as a cherub who was perfect in his ways from the day of his creation, but who sinned and was consequently cast out from God's mountain. Verses 17-19 tell of the loss of beauty and wisdom, punishment by fire, and annihilation, as a consequence of sin and iniquity.<sup>4</sup> In the New Testament, Luke 10.18 mentions Satan's fall from Heaven,<sup>5</sup> 2 Peter 2.4 sets out that the sinful angels were drawn down to Hell by infernal ropes,<sup>6</sup> and Jude 6 narrates that the angels lost their dwelling and were chained until the day of judgement.<sup>7</sup> The Book of Revelation may also be understood to allude to the angelic fall, in 12.3-4 and 7-9. The former verses tell of a dragon that drew a third part of the stars and cast them down to Earth, while the latter

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<sup>1</sup> David F. Johnson, 'The Fall of Lucifer in *Genesis A* and Two Anglo-Latin Royal Charters', *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, 97.4 (1998), 500-21 (p. 504).

<sup>2</sup> Johnson.

<sup>3</sup> 'Isaiah', in *The Parallel English-Latin Vulgate Bible* (Toronto: Publishing Toronto, 2016). Kindle edition.

<sup>4</sup> 'Ezechiel', *The Parallel English-Latin Vulgate Bible*.

<sup>5</sup> 'Luke', in *The Parallel English-Latin Vulgate Bible*.

<sup>6</sup> '2 Peter', in *The Parallel English-Latin Vulgate Bible*.

<sup>7</sup> 'Jude', in *The Parallel English-Latin Vulgate Bible*.

relate that Michael and his angels fought the dragon and his angels, and that the dragon, the old serpent who is called the Devil and Satan, was cast out unto Earth along with his angels.<sup>8</sup> The *Genesis* poems replicate some of the elements in these narratives, such as the theme of reversal (Ezekiel 29.1-19), the rebel angel's attempt to set up a throne to the north (Isaiah 14.12-15), and the rebel angels' fall to Hell (2 Peter 2.4), while *Genesis B* relates that Satan is chained (Jude 6). These aspects of *Genesis A* and *Genesis B* are discussed in the course of this chapter. On the other hand, neither *Genesis A* nor *Genesis B* attributes the fall of the chief rebel angel and his followers to the archangel Michael or to a confrontation with the loyal angels (Rev 12.7-9). Moreover, neither poem subscribes to the tradition that the rebels fell to Earth (Isaiah 14.12-15; Rev 12.3-4 and 7-9). The poetic texts therefore entail a selective use of source material, in that not even details from authoritative scriptural sources are necessarily utilised. At the same time, overall similarities in the selection of sources, including those of scriptural derivation, suggest that *Genesis A* and *Genesis B* draw on a shared tradition for the representation of the angelic creation, rebellion and fall. This interpretation is supported by the detailed analysis in section 1.2.

I indicated, earlier in this discussion, that in the context of *Genesis A* the angelic creation, rebellion and fall precede God's creation of Earth and humankind, and that this myth thereby functions as an extension of the biblical narrative. In this section, I discuss the chronology of these events in the biblical poem to demonstrate that the text is not only selective in its utilisation of scriptural, but also of exegetical sources, and that the representation of this myth may have also been determined by narrative convenience. I also compare the angelic myth in *Genesis A* to two versions of the narrative recorded in Anglo-Latin charters. This comparison demonstrates that the manner in which this myth is represented in Old English texts points to their ideological agendas, and quite possibly throws

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<sup>8</sup> 'Revelation', in *The Parallel English-Latin Vulgate Bible*.

light on the origin of the narrative as rendered in *Genesis A*. I also discuss the rendition of the angelic fall in Old English poetry other than the Genesis poems, which throws light on both Genesis poems, but mostly on the integration of motifs drawn from Christ's Harrowing of Hell in the representation of the pre-Harrowing Hell of *Genesis B*. The text's utilisation of material that is from a purely chronological viewpoint misplaced, points to a moral or tropological approach. This is on account of the Christological, and salvific, associations of Harrowing motifs, which remind the audience that the Devil will not succeed in his attempt to thwart God's plan. In the context of *Genesis B* these motifs are tropological because they establish a connection between the Genesis-related narrative and 'the moral experience of the individual Christian in the present'.<sup>9</sup> The representation of the Hell of *Genesis B* is therefore the outcome of a selective approach to source and exegetical material. In this instance, the choices made in the composition of the poem appear to be governed by exegetical and didactic considerations.

I discuss, firstly, the chronology of *Genesis A*, where the angelic creation, rebellion and fall take up the bulk of its largely extra-biblical opening 111 lines. This text is broadly in line with exegetical tradition even if extra-biblical, as the narratives in question were 'universally thought of as part of the literal sense though not appearing in the text of Genesis'.<sup>10</sup> At the same time however, the sequence of events in *Genesis A* does not tally with one of the major exegetical conceptions of this myth. This is the notion that the angelic creation, rebellion and fall take place over the course of the six days of the Creation of Earth, thereby forming an integral part of the hexameral account in the Book of Genesis, even if only implicitly so. The hexameral interpretation of this myth, on the other hand, appears in other Old English sources, such as the first picture in the *Hexateuch*, a translation of the first

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<sup>9</sup> Calvin B. Kendall, 'Introduction', in *On Genesis*, by the Venerable Bede (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2008), pp. 1-64 (p. 2).

<sup>10</sup> A. N. Doane, 'Introduction', in *Genesis A- A New Edition*, rev. edn. by A. N. Doane (Tempe: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2013), pp. 1-122 (p. 93).

six books of the Old Testament in a manuscript dating back to around the same time as Junius 11, the manuscript containing *Genesis A*. This picture shows God at the top, surrounded by his adoring angels, while Satan is imprisoned upside down. The rebel angels are represented in the middle space, on their way down to Hell. The context suggests that the artist represented an interpretation of Gen 1.4, whereby God's separation of light from darkness was understood to refer to his separation of the loyal and rebel angels. This representation also draws on the related notion that Gen 1.1 refers to God's creation of the spiritual Heaven.<sup>11</sup> In contrast, the chronological sequence in *Genesis A* postulates that the angels existed, and that the rebels fell, before God's creation of Earth. The poem's version of events is therefore not in line with Augustinian and Gregorian exegesis,<sup>12</sup> following instead the sequence of events in the writings of Origen.<sup>13</sup> It is not to be excluded, however, that this choice may have been governed by narrative convenience rather than any exegetical preference. This is because the separation of the two myths enables a sequential and close rendition of the biblically-derived narrative relating to the creation of Earth. This is corroborated by my discussion of the angelic fall in the hagiographical *Andreas* and *Christ and Satan* later in this section, where I show that the representation of the angelic myth in these poems reflects the prevailing themes in the respective main narratives. It therefore appears that poets may have enjoyed some flexibility in the representation of the angelic myth.

Secondly, I consider the angelic myth in *Genesis A* in relation to Anglo-Latin prose texts in order to throw light on the ideological aspect, and quite possibly, on the origin of the narrative as expressed in the poem. David F. Johnson engages in a detailed comparison of the narrative in the poem with those in two tenth-century Anglo-Latin charters, namely King

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<sup>11</sup> Mary Olson, 'Genesis and Narratology: The Challenge of Medieval Illustrated Texts', *Mosaic: An Interdisciplinary Critical Journal*, 31.1 (1998), 1-24 (p.4).

<sup>12</sup> Scott Thompson Smith, 'Faith and Forfeiture in the Old English *Genesis A*', *Modern Philology*, 3.4 (2014), 593-615 (p. 605).

<sup>13</sup> Johnson, p. 501.

Edgar's Privilege to New Minster, Winchester, and the Burton Abbey Charter in Peniarth Cartulary,<sup>14</sup> a grant of lands by Æthelred II.<sup>15</sup> The sequence of events in the three texts is essentially the same:

- a) the creation of the spiritual realm and the angels' worship of God;
- b) the proud and disdainful angels' rebellion;
- c) God's anger at the rebel angels and their expulsion from Heaven; and,
- d) God's determination to fill the vacated thrones in Heaven; hence his creation of Earth and humankind.<sup>16</sup>

Johnson also observes that the texts share their cosmological perspective, for they give precedence to spiritual reality in both chronological and thematic terms.<sup>17</sup> The texts, in other words, express the same narrative model and ideology for the rendition of the angelic myth. Johnson also went one step further, in that he argues that that these texts 'used a common formulation of this myth as their source. This "text" could be a catechetical narrative concerning creation' or 'an elaborated liturgical text of some sort'.<sup>18</sup> This is a plausible proposition, particularly when considering that no literary sources for the account of the rebellion in *Genesis A* are known,<sup>19</sup> and where, as I already explained, the text is selective in its use of scriptural and exegetical material. This suggests that the similarities between *Genesis A* and the Anglo-Latin texts are relevant and significant. While it may be countered that Johnson's argument for the origin of *Genesis A* and the Anglo-Latin texts is purely conjectural, as it postulates the existence of an unknown source, a known catechetical text, namely Ælfric's *Letter to Sigeweard*, is the product of a similarly selective approach to

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<sup>14</sup> Johnson, p. 512.

<sup>15</sup> Johnson, p. 515.

<sup>16</sup> Johnson, p. 516.

<sup>17</sup> Johnson, p. 516.

<sup>18</sup> Johnson, p. 519.

<sup>19</sup> D. G. Calder and M. J. B. Allen, *Sources & Analogues of Old English Poetry* (Cambridge: Brewer, 1976), p. 2.

source material. This narrative text, which gives a chronological overview of major episodes from the Old and New Testaments, also mentions the angelic creation, rebellion and fall. Like *Genesis A*, however, it does not attribute Lucifer's fall to the archangel Michael.<sup>20</sup> Moreover, my discussion in section 1.2.3, which considers similarities, *inter alia*, between Ælfric's narrative and *Genesis B*, demonstrates that narrative elements and motifs may have been transmitted across catechetical narratives and poetry.

Thirdly, I discuss Old English narrative poems other than *Genesis A* and *Genesis B* that relate or allude to the angelic myth. While this discussion throws light on the representation of this myth in both Genesis poems, it mainly points to the representation of the Hell of *Genesis B* as quintessentially tropological.<sup>21</sup> The angelic myth is related at length in *Christ and Satan*, which poem, however, is not focused on narratives derived from the Book of Genesis as for the Genesis poems. Other poems refer or allude to this myth comparatively briefly. These include, *inter alia*,<sup>22</sup> *Andreas* (lines 1376-85), *Guthlac A* (lines 618-36) and *Solomon and Saturn* (lines 442-74, or lines 272-302 if *Solomon and Saturn II* is classified as a separate text).<sup>23</sup> While C. Abbetmeyer identified lines 529-656 of *Guthlac A* as allusive of the angelic myth,<sup>24</sup> which would suggest that the text treats this narrative at length, this is not the case. These verses mostly describe Guthlac's virtue and the devils' wickedness as they trouble the saint. The account of the angelic rebellion only takes up lines 618-36,

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<sup>20</sup> See Ælfric, 'On the Old and New Testament', in *The Old English Version of the Heptateuch, Ælfric's Treatise on the Old and New Testament and His Preface to Genesis*, ed. by S. J. Crawford (London: Oxford University Press, 1922), pp. 15-75 (p. 20), which sets out that no part of Heaven would bear Lucifer and that therefore he fell.

<sup>21</sup> The reader may wish to refer to Table 1 at the end of this chapter. This table lays down the different permutations of the angelic myth in the narratives I discuss, particularly as they relate to the expression of the tropological dimension.

<sup>22</sup> See C. Abbetmeyer, *Old English Poetical Motives Derived from the Doctrine of Sin* (Minneapolis: Wilson, 1903), p. 9, for a more comprehensive list.

<sup>23</sup> 'Solomon and Saturn II', in *The Old English Dialogues of Solomon and Saturn*, ed. and trans. by Daniel Anlezark (Cambridge: Brewer, 2009), pp. 78-95 (pp. 92 and 94).

<sup>24</sup> Abbetmeyer, p. 9.

where Guthlac describes the devils as traitors who turned against God in days gone by.<sup>25</sup> Guthlac's earlier statement about the devils' defeat at the hands of Christ, over the course of lines 592-98,<sup>26</sup> appears to allude to Christ's descent into Hell rather than the angelic rebellion and fall. This poem keeps the two episodes distinct. For this reason, it is not of particular interest in the context of the present discussion. On the other hand, the brief allusion to the angelic rebellion and fall in lines 1376-85 of *Andreas* presents interesting complexities that are directly relevant to *Genesis B*, particularly in view of the mention of the binding of the Devil in both narratives. The saintly protagonist addresses the same devil who previously prompted the Mermedonians to torture him. Andrew reminds his antagonist that he scorned God's word, and he identifies this as the origin of evil, which affirms that Andrew is alluding to the angelic rebellion and fall. The protagonist also states that the Devil has been fettered by burning bonds ever since he scorned God's word. At the same time, the saint mentions the *neregend* (saviour),<sup>27</sup> an allusion to Christ. While this allusion may appear anachronistic and out of place, it expresses the doctrine of Christ's presence in the Old Testament.<sup>28</sup> The reference to the binding of the Devil is also ostensibly anachronistic in the context of the angelic rebellion setting of the narrative told by the saint. This is because this motif relates to Christ's descent into Hell in the apocryphal *Gospel of Nicodemus*.<sup>29</sup> This text appears to have enjoyed prominence and authority in early medieval England, as attested by its translation into the vernacular, which I briefly consider in section 1.3. For all that, mention of the binding of the Devil in the context of the angelic rebellion and fall (rather than the Harrowing) is not unique to *Andreas*, for this is also the case for lines 278b-80 of *Solomon*

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<sup>25</sup> 'Guthlac A', in *Old English Poems of Christ and His Saints*, ed. and trans. by Mary Clayton (London: Harvard University Press, 2013), pp. 89-146 (p. 132).

<sup>26</sup> 'Guthlac A', p. 130.

<sup>27</sup> *Andreas*, ed. by Richard North and Michael D. J. Bintley (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2016), pp. 191-92.

<sup>28</sup> Bernard F. Huppé, *Doctrine and Poetry: Augustine's Influence on Old English Poetry* (New York: State University of New York, 1959), p. 110.

<sup>29</sup> See Peter Dendle, *Satan Unbound: The Devil in Old English Literature* (London: University of Toronto Press, 2001), p. 68.

and *Saturn II*,<sup>30</sup> as well as for Fitts I and III of *Christ and Satan*, and *Genesis B*. I now take up the question as to why these poems place this motif in a context alien to its Harrowing of Hell setting. It is worth noting, in the first place, that the connection between the binding motif and the Harrowing is not only indicated in the mentioned apocryphal gospel, but is also in evidence in Gregory the Great's *Moralia in Iob*, II, Ch. 22, where this exegete held that the Devil's dominion was only curbed after the coming of Christ.<sup>31</sup> Similarly, the first fitt of the Old Saxon *Heliand* mentions the Augustinian notion of the six ages of the world,<sup>32</sup> the last of which is marked by the coming of Christ and humankind's salvation, to which the binding motif relates. Even if the *Heliand* is an Old Saxon, rather than an Old English text, it is likely to have been written in a monastery with strong insular connections, such as Fulda, Corvey or Werden.<sup>33</sup> It therefore points to knowledge of such notions in insular monasteries as well. For all that, *Andreas*, *Solomon and Saturn II*, Fitts I and III of *Christ and Satan* and *Genesis B* place the binding of the Devil in the beginning of time rather than in the context of Christ's descent into Hell. I do not think that this should be attributed to a lack of exegetical knowledge, as the texts appear to entail deliberate conflation of the angelic fall and the Harrowing of Hell. At any rate, allusion to the Harrowing renders the angelic rebellion in a manner directly relevant to the audience, who belong to the sixth age, when the power of the Devil is diminished and his rebellion is known to be futile. This is confirmed by my discussion in section 1.3, where I dwell in detail on the similarities between the representations of the Hell into which the rebel angels are cast in Fitt III of *Christ and Satan* and *Genesis B*.

While the bound Satan in *Christ and Satan* recalls his counterpart in *Genesis B*, *Christ and Satan*'s representation of the angelic creation and rebellion differs markedly from that in

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<sup>30</sup> 'Solomon and Saturn II', p. 92.

<sup>31</sup> See Abbetmeyer, p. 29.

<sup>32</sup> See Note 7 in *The Heliand*, trans. by G. Ronald Murphy (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), p. 5.

<sup>33</sup> Rolf Bremmer, 'Continental Germanic Influences', in *A Companion to Anglo-Saxon Literature*, ed. by Phillip Pulsiano and Elaine Treharne (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2001), pp. 375-87 (p. 383).



the Genesis poems. In this narrative the account of the rebellion is neither associated with the Creation nor the fall of humankind, but rather with the Last Judgement.<sup>34</sup> Moreover, lines 19-21, which form part of the exordium praising the creator, set out that:

Drēamas hē gedēlde duguðe and geoguðe:

Ādam ærest, and þæt æðele cyn,

engla ordfruman, þæt þe eft forwarð.<sup>35</sup>

(He dealt out joys to old and young: To Adam first and that noble kin, foremost of the angels, who then came to ruin.)

The text suggests, therefore, that Adam's creation occurs before Lucifer's fall,<sup>36</sup> or perhaps that the first man is accorded precedence over the angelic creation. Moreover, *Christ and Satan* differs from the Genesis poems in its identification of Christ as the Trinitarian figure who expels the rebel angels (CS, l. 67b-68a). This representation of the myth may be traced back to Jude 6, where Christ chains the rebels until Judgement Day.<sup>37</sup> In this respect, Fitt I of *Christ and Satan* recalls the aforementioned passage from *Andreas*, as it is also based on the notion of Christ's presence in the Old Testament. I conclude, on the basis of the relevant passages from *Andreas* and *Christ and Satan*, that the rendition of the angelic myth in Old English poetry would have been influenced by the specific narrative context in which it is placed. A tropological account that brings together the angelic rebellion and Christ's descent into Hell, which respectively recalls the origin of evil and salvation, makes sense in the context of *Andreas*, a hagiography centred on a proselytising mission in which cannibals are redeemed. The same argument applies to Christ's presence in the first fitt of *Christ and*

<sup>34</sup> Janet Schrank Ericksen, *Reading Old English Biblical Poetry: The Book and the Poem in Junius 11* (London: University of Toronto Press, 2021), p. 59.

<sup>35</sup> *Christ and Satan: A Critical Edition*, ed. by Robert Emmett Finnegan (Ontario: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1977), p. 68. All references to *Christ and Satan* from this edition shall henceforth be given parenthetically in the main text, indicated by the abbreviation CS). All translations of *Christ and Satan* are mine.

<sup>36</sup> Thomas H. Morey, 'Adam and Judas in the Old English *Christ and Satan*', *Studies in Philology*, 87.4 (1990), 397-409 (p. 401).

<sup>37</sup> Robert Emmett Finnegan, 'Introduction', in *Christ and Satan: A Critical Edition*, pp. 1-63 (p. 39).

*Satan*. Robert Emmett Finnegan argues, in this regard, that the poem moulds its source materials to fit the needs of the narrative.<sup>38</sup> Indeed, the poem's identification of Christ as the Trinitarian Person who defeats the rebels may be seen in relation to his confrontation with Satan in the desert in its concluding episode.<sup>39</sup> As I observed earlier in this discussion, the extra-hexameral representation of the angelic myth in *Genesis A*, where this narrative is chronologically placed before the account of the Creation of Earth, may also have been governed by narrative considerations. It therefore appears that the angelic myth in Old English poetry is adapted in such a manner as to complement the biblical and hagiographical themes in the respective texts.

I conclude, on the basis of the above overview, that the expressions of the angelic myth in *Genesis A* and *Genesis B* are likely to derive from a catechetical or liturgical source or sources. This conclusion is also borne out by the rest of this chapter. Moreover, the narrative sequence in *Genesis A* appears to be ideologically driven, in that it prioritises the spiritual, or heavenly, over the earthly. In the rest of this chapter I demonstrate that ideology in this poem extends beyond the realm of the spiritual into the manner the audience's society is governed. The above overview also shows that the representation of the angelic myth in the Old English poetic tradition, including *Genesis A*, is determined by the exigencies of the broader narratives. This is attested, *inter alia*, by the identification of Christ as the Trinitarian figure who expels the rebel angels in *Christ and Satan*. Moreover, I indicated that the representation of the bound Devil in *Genesis B* is quintessentially tropological, in that it invites the audience to interpret events in the light of the sixth age, the age of the coming of Christ. I elaborate on this point in section 1.3. The representations of the angelic rebellion in *Genesis A* and *Genesis B* are therefore thoroughly Christianised. They also Christianise the Genesis-derived narratives that follow in the respective poems. This emerges primarily from

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<sup>38</sup> Finnegan, p. 42.

<sup>39</sup> Thomas D. Hill, 'The Fall of Satan in the Old English *Christ and Satan*', *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, 76.3 (1977), 315-25 (p.322).

my discussions in the chapters that follow. In the remainder of this chapter I explore in detail the Christianisation of the angelic myth, as well as its placement in a vernacular context that assigns added ideological significance.

## 1.2 Rebellion and Angelic Fall in *Genesis A* and *Genesis B*

In this section I demonstrate that notwithstanding their differences *Genesis A* and *Genesis B* adopt a similar approach to the angelic myth. This not only emerges from their use of narrative or exegetical sources, as I also indicate in the previous section, but also from, *inter alia*, the analogical level of meaning in the respective texts. This level of meaning points to similar ideological functions. At the same time, I do not overlook the differences between the renditions of the angelic myth in the two texts. Rather, I draw attention, as for previous commentators, to the focus on the chief rebel angel in *Genesis B* as opposed to the more collective representation of the rebel angels in *Genesis A*. I also assess, on the basis of manuscript evidence, the importance that may have been assigned by the manuscript redactor to the two versions of the angelic myth. While I suggest that the *Genesis B* narrative would have been accorded priority, I argue that this does not compromise the coherence of the composite text. Nor is this coherence compromised by stylistic differences between the two renditions of the myth. I contend, rather, that previous commentators may have overemphasised these stylistic elements to the detriment of thematic considerations that led the redactor to interpolate *Genesis B* into *Genesis A*.

In sections 1.2.1 and 1.2.2 I engage in detailed discussions of the angelic myth in *Genesis A* and *Genesis B* respectively, particularly with a view to illustrate their themes, levels of meanings and ideological functions. In section 1.2.3 I compare the renditions of the angelic myth in the two poems, while I bring into the equation Ælfric's *Letter to Sigeweard*, which indirectly points to the likely liturgical or catechetical origin of the angelic myth as conveyed in the two Genesis poems.

### 1.2.1 The Angelic Myth in *Genesis A*

The opening 111 lines of *Genesis A* are not directly derived from the Book of Genesis and they mostly relate to this biblical text only indirectly. I discuss lines 103-11, which deal with the creation of Earth, even if extra-biblically, in Chapter 2. In this section I discuss the first 102 lines as they deal with or closely relate to the angelic myth. My classification of these lines does not fully correspond with Paul G. Remley's, who places the poem's opening 91 lines in a single category. This, he argues, comprises the exhortation to praise God, the void before Creation, the fall of the rebel angels, and Creation as a response to angelic apostasy.<sup>40</sup> Remley classified lines 92-102 in a separate category that pertains to the Creation;<sup>41</sup> however, I contend that these lines bridge the poem's opening and God's creation of Earth. This means that they may be classified under either category. These lines tell of the angelic rebellion and God's act of Creation; they also set out God's intention to fill the heavenly thrones vacated by the rebel angels with a better creation.<sup>42</sup> I discuss these lines in this section (and this chapter) because they set out an important function of the angelic myth as conveyed in *Genesis A*, i.e. to provide a framework and explanation for the creation of Earth that follows. I first discuss, however, the poem's opening 46 lines, where I show that this passage functions as an exordium in a manner that recalls the opening 41 lines of *Daniel*. This discussion also demonstrates that the opening 46 lines of *Genesis A* are built on the themes of obedience and disobedience, as well as reversal. These themes recur throughout the poem. I follow up this discussion with an analysis of Heaven and the angelic rebellion's analogical level of meaning, which I also pursue with particular reference to the opening 46 lines. In this discussion I highlight the ideological elements of the narrative. Finally, I discuss lines 47-

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<sup>40</sup> Paul G. Remley, *Old English Biblical Verse* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 101.

<sup>41</sup> Remley, p. 101.

<sup>42</sup> *Genesis A- A New Edition*, rev. edn. by A. N. Doane, pp. 147 and 149. All references to *Genesis A* from this edition shall henceforth be given parenthetically in the main text, indicated by the abbreviation Gen A. All translations of *Genesis A* are mine.

102, which are primarily informed by biblical exegesis, as in the case of the aforementioned connection between the angelic myth and the creation of Earth.

Thematically, *Genesis A*'s opening 46 lines are split in the middle, in that the first half of the passage is focused on obedience and the blessedness it confers. The first five lines, which exhort the audience to praise God, adapt the Latin Preface to the Mass:<sup>43</sup>

Vere dignum et iustum est, aequum et salutare, nos tibi semper et ubique gratias  
agere: Domine, sancte Pater, omnipotens aeternae Deus.<sup>44</sup>

(It is indeed right and fitting, our duty and salvation that we should always and  
everywhere praise you, Lord, Holy Father, Almighty and Eternal God.)

However, *Genesis A* embellishes its source by means of epithets, for the text to read as follows:

Us is riht micel ðæt we rodera weard,  
wereda wuldor-cining, wordum herigen,  
modum lifien. He is mægna sped,  
heafod ealra heahgesceafta,  
frea ælmihtig. (Gen A, l. 1-5a)

(It is very right for us that we should praise the guardian of the heavens, the glorious  
king of hosts, with our words and in our hearts. He is very powerful, the head of all  
high creation, lord almighty.)

The Old English text emphasises God's power in the present tense, thereby 'outside temporality',<sup>45</sup> and it refers to the deity as lord and king rather than father. Moreover, it elevates the status of his Creation, which is referred to as high Creation. God's kingly and lordly role tallies with the representation of the rebellion, particularly the rebel angel's quest

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<sup>43</sup> Huppé, p. 134.

<sup>44</sup> As cited and translated in Barbara C. Raw, *The Art and Background of Old English Poetry* (London: Edward Arnold Publishers, 1978), p. 21.

<sup>45</sup> Renée Rebecca Trilling, *The Aesthetics of Nostalgia: Historical Representation in Old English Verse* (London: University of Toronto Press, 2009), chapter 2, section II, paragraph 3, Kindle edition.

to establish a separate kingdom (Gen A, l. 31b-34a) and God's violent crushing of the rebellion later in the course of the narrative (Gen A, l. 61b-64). The high status accorded God's Creation may be understood as a reference to the angels, who are mentioned in the lines that follow. However, it could likewise refer to humankind, given the origin of the text in the Preface to the Mass and the explicit reference to humankind as the account of the angelic rebellion segues into the creation of Earth in lines 92-102. Be that as it may, the allusion to the Preface, along with the representation of God's power in the present tense, universalises the narrative by associating it with the audience's liturgical experience.<sup>46</sup> This is in keeping with the exegetical tradition whereby the Book of Genesis was not only seen as an account of humankind's fall, but also as one that anticipates its redemption.<sup>47</sup> At the same time, the rendition of the Preface in *Genesis A* draws on vernacular poetic convention. In her analysis of the poem's opening two lines Roberta Frank draws attention to the terms *weard* (guardian), *weroda* (people) and *wordum* (word) and argues that triple paronomasia makes the relation between these three terms, and the corresponding concepts, appear natural.<sup>48</sup> Frank expresses the view that this technique may be traced back to magical thinking, where like was thought to produce like. Hence, in the *Nine Herbs Charm* the herb that repels (*stunun*) pain is called *stune* and grows on *stane* (stone).<sup>49</sup> The opening lines of *Genesis A* thereby also affirm the biblical-Christian message by means of a poetic technique that is not confined to, and which probably did not originate, with biblical poetry.

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<sup>46</sup> Catherine E. Karkov, *Text and Picture in Anglo-Saxon England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), p. 47.

<sup>47</sup> Huppé, p. 135.

<sup>48</sup> Roberta Frank, 'Some Uses of Paronomasia in Old English Scriptural Verse', in *The Poems of MS Junius 11*, ed. by R. M. Liuzza (London: Routledge, 2002), pp. 69-98 (p. 73) (first publ. in *Speculum*, 47.2 (1972), 207-226).

<sup>49</sup> Frank, p. 70.

In lines 5b-18a the narrator praises God and tells of the creation of the blessed angels.<sup>50</sup> Lines 18b-23 mark the turning point of the passage, as the audience is told that the angels only knew what was right and true until they dealt in error out of pride. The lines that follow tell of the angelic rebellion, including the chief rebel angel's intention to carve a kingdom out of the northern part of Heaven (Gen A, l. 31b-34a). The only outcome is however punishment and exile in Hell, which culminates in three hypermetrical lines:<sup>51</sup>

[...] heht þa geond þæt rædleas hof  
 weaxan witebrogan. Hæfdon hie wrohtgeteme  
 grimme wið god gesomnod. him þæs grim lean becom. (Gen A, l. 44-46)  
 ([God] ordered that monstrous tortures would intensify in that abode devoid of  
 counsel. Together, they fiercely offended against God. They got a grim reward for  
 that.)

Therefore, the poem's opening 46 lines may be read as a unit, in that they comprise the opening praise of God coupled with the full course of the rebellion, from the moment the instigator thought that he would establish a kingdom in the northern part of Heaven right up to the rebels' exile in Hell. This is also confirmed by the internal structure of the passage and its shift to temporality following the angelic creation. Lines 12b-14 set out the blessedness of the angels in the past:

[...] hæfdon gleam and dream  
 and heora ordfruman, engla þreatas,  
 beorhte blisse. wæs heora blæd micel. (Gen A, l. 12b-14)  
 (In the beginning the hosts of angels had joy and delight and bright bliss. Their glory  
 was great.)

<sup>50</sup> See Robert Getz, "'Guardians of Souls' or 'Host(s) of Spirits'?" (*Genesis A* 12a and 41a), *The Journal of English and German Philology*, 112.2 (2013), 141-53, for a discussion of the phrases 'gasta weardum' and 'gasta weardes' in lines 12a and 41a respectively.

<sup>51</sup> A. N. Doane, 'Commentary', in *Genesis A- A New Edition*, pp. 285-400 (p. 291).



The temporal representation of angelic bliss conforms to the Augustinian conception that ‘the angels occupy a temporal space somewhere between the eternity of God and the temporality of humankind’.<sup>52</sup> Temporality is also attested by the lapse that follows: ‘hæfdon gielp micel | þæt hie wið drihtne dælan mæhton’ (Gen A, l. 25b-26) (They had great boastfulness; they thought that they could share out with the Lord). The introduction of temporality over the course of these lines makes it possible for a lapse to occur, which lapse culminates in the reversal suffered in lines 44-46. These lines, however, are not only interesting from a thematic viewpoint, in that they draw attention to the rebels’ intensified punishment. They also have structural significance in that, being hypermetrical; they have a lingering effect when recited.<sup>53</sup> Moreover, as I already suggested, the poem’s opening 46 lines are split into two roughly equal thematic parts, marked by the turning point of the narrative: ‘ær ðon engla weard<sup>54</sup> for oferhygde | dæl on gedwilde’ (Gen A, l. 22-23a) (until the angels dealt in error out of pride), where half-line 23a attests to the use of homiletic diction to denote heresy and heretics.<sup>55</sup> While the text that precedes these lines exhorts the audience to praise God and describes the glory of the loyal angels; lines 23b-46 relate the plight and punishment of the rebel angels. This structure is also to be found in the exordium to *Daniel*, which provides external evidence for a reading of the opening 46 lines of *Genesis A* as an exordium. Moreover, the stylistic similarities between the two texts point to similar, though not necessarily identical, thematic approaches.

As for the opening 46 lines of *Genesis A*, *Daniel*’s opening passage focuses on obedience and disobedience, as well as reversal. Phyllis Portnoy observes that this passage, like the biblical original, ‘contrasts the corruption of Babylon with the steadfast purity of

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<sup>52</sup> Trilling, chapter 2, section II, paragraph 3, Kindle edition.

<sup>53</sup> Raw, p. 98.

<sup>54</sup> See Alfred Bammesberger, ‘A Note on *Genesis A*, Line 22a’, *Notes and Queries*, 50.1 (2003), 6-8, for a discussion of the emendation of the term *weard* in the original manuscript.

<sup>55</sup> Robert DiNapoli, ‘Preaching and Poetry in Anglo-Saxon England’ (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Toronto, Department of English, 1990), p. 95.

Daniel and the Three Hebrew Youths, but [...] re-works the story to include the *Israelites* in the negative part of the exemplum'.<sup>56</sup> The Israelites are said to prosper as long as they keep to the Covenant; however, they eventually reject the wise counsels sent by God.<sup>57</sup> The turning point in the exordium is marked by lines 16b-17a, where it is established that the Israelites are taken over by pride and that they do not remain faithful to God.<sup>58</sup> The resultant fall from God's favour leads to the loss of Salem in lines 37b-41a.<sup>59</sup> Hence, the *Genesis A* and *Daniel* exordia are characterised by the same general structure and themes. In *Daniel* the Israelites' lapse results in conquest by a foreign people, while the angelic rebellion leads to exile in Hell. The angelic rebellion in *Genesis A* is however more universal in scope in view of the text's opening allusion to the Preface to the Mass and the status of Genesis as a myth of origin. This assigns to the *Genesis A* passage a tropological dimension, in that it is rendered in a manner directly relevant to a Christian audience. Moreover, the placement of the angelic rebellion at the head of a broader narrative drawn from the Book of Genesis suggests that this narrative is the source of all disobedience.<sup>60</sup> This is confirmed by the recurrence of this theme, and reversal, in the poem's Genesis-derived passages, as well as in the composite Old English Genesis that also comprises *Genesis B*. This is indicated throughout my analyses of the relevant texts, particularly in Chapters 3-5; however, it is best illustrated by the representation of Seth's descendants in *Genesis A* itself. The poem explicitly identifies Seth's descendants as those who lose God's favour when they marry the daughters of Cain. This means that *Genesis A* establishes a direct connection between the lapse of Seth's kinsmen and the onset of the Great Flood (Gen A, l. 1248-305). This entails interpretation rather than

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<sup>56</sup> Phyllis Portnoy, *The Remnant- Essays on a Theme in Old English Verse* (London: Runetree Press, 2005), p. 163.

<sup>57</sup> Portnoy, p. 164.

<sup>58</sup> 'Daniel', in *Old Testament Narratives*, ed. and trans. by Daniel Anlezark (London: Harvard University Press, 2013), pp. 247-300 (p. 248).

<sup>59</sup> 'Daniel', p. 250.

<sup>60</sup> Carl Kears, 'Darkness and Light in Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Junius 11', in *Darkness, Depression, and Descent in Anglo-Saxon England*, ed. by Ruth Wehlau (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 2019), pp. 209-36 (p. 210).

reproduction of the biblical original, which tells, in Gen 6.1-2, of the sons of God who took the daughters of men to wives.<sup>61</sup> The disobedience and reversal that characterise the exordium are therefore replicated, and emphasised, in the Genesis-derived narrative that follows. It could be argued that the narrative only marks a definitive structural break with reversal in its concluding lines, given that Isaac's interrupted sacrifice that brings it to a close anticipates and foreshadows humankind's redemption through Christ.<sup>62</sup>

Now that I have identified and discussed the main themes of the exordium, I turn to the analogical level of meaning in *Genesis A*'s representation of the angelic myth. This aspect of the narrative deserves attention for two reasons. Firstly, it renders the angelic myth in a manner relatable to early medieval audiences' vernacular social values. Secondly, it is built on a conception of kingship that recalls its expression in royal charters. The analogical level of meaning therefore points to the narrative's political ideology or scope. This level of meaning emerges from the poem's representation of Heaven as an idealised city, which recalls Augustine's notion of the City of God.<sup>63</sup> Heaven is represented as a city because it is described in material terms, as indicated by the term *heofenstolas* (heavenly seats) (Gen A, l. 8a), God's rule over the expanses of Heaven (Gen A, l. 9b), and his dominion that ranges far and wide (Gen A, l. 10b). The representation of Heaven as a city fulfils two primary functions. The first is to posit the angelic myth as the originator of the social hierarchy and world order known to the audience. The second is to elicit respect for that hierarchy and world order, which is given, as it were, sacral status. This is confirmed by the poem's opening lines, which highlight God's power and lordly status as opposed to his representation

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<sup>61</sup> 'Genesis', in *The Vulgate Bible Vol. I The Pentateuch*, ed. by Swift Edgar (London: Harvard University Press, 2010), pp. 1-274 (p. 27). All citations and translations from the Vulgate Genesis are taken from this edition.

<sup>62</sup> Huppé, p. 135. See also Brandon W. Hawk, 'Ælfric's Genesis and Bede's *Commentarius in Genesim*', *Medium Ævum*, 85.1 (2016), 208-16 (pp. 210-211), who argued that the closure of a Genesis account with Isaac's story may have been an English tradition, as attested by Bede's *In Genesim*, Ælfric's translation of Alcuin's *Interrogationes Sigewelfi* and his translation of the Book of Genesis, and *Genesis A* itself.

<sup>63</sup> Jacek Olesiejko, 'Heaven, Hell and *Middangeard*: The Presentation of the Universe in the Old English *Genesis A*', *Studia Anglica Posnaniensia*, 45.1 (2009), 153-62 (pp. 154-55).

as a father, even where these lines are based on the Preface to the Mass. While the circa tenth century context of the Junius 11 manuscript does not suggest that the extant written poems, including *Genesis A*, were meant for converts, this representation is consistent with James C. Russell's observation that English missionaries in the Continent emphasised God's omnipotence and his ability to reward his followers.<sup>64</sup> It is likely that *Genesis A* appeals to similar vernacular values in Christian England, whereby a lord was expected to reward his followers.

The same argument may be made in relation to the angelic rebellion, which likewise delivers a culturally specific message in its representation of Heaven as a court beset by treachery.<sup>65</sup> This theme is also prevalent in narratives of vernacular origin. Godric's cowardly escape from the battlefield in lines 187-90 of *The Battle of Maldon* is represented as a betrayal,<sup>66</sup> while Wiglaf's words in *Beowulf*'s lines 2864-72, which address the protagonist's cowardly retainers, point to betrayal of their lord's trust. This is because they abandon the lord who gave them treasure and armour, which means that his gifts prove useless.<sup>67</sup> The prominence of betrayal in these narratives suggests that early medieval audiences would have readily recognised the meaning behind the representation of the rebellion in *Genesis A*, particularly as the *Genesis A* exordium contrasts obedience, or loyalty, and disobedience, or betrayal. In other words, *Genesis A* reproduces social situations characteristic of narratives of vernacular origin. This makes the poem quintessentially analogical, for its rendition of the angelic rebellion connects with the world known to the audience, even if that world is, in this instance, a fictional construct. This means that the representation of the angelic myth in *Genesis A* not only explains the origin of evil, but also the aetiology of social situations

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<sup>64</sup> James C. Russell, *The Germanization of Early Medieval Christianity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), p. 23.

<sup>65</sup> Olesiejko, p. 155.

<sup>66</sup> 'The Battle of Maldon', in *Old and Middle English c. 890- c. 1450 An Anthology*, ed. by Elaine Treharne, 3<sup>rd</sup> edn (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), pp. 150-70 (p. 164).

<sup>67</sup> *Klaeber's Beowulf*, ed. by R. D. Fulk, Robert E. Bjork and John D. Niles, 4<sup>th</sup> Edn. (London: University of Toronto Press, 2008), pp. 97-98.

known to the audience. In other words, *Genesis A* posits the angelic myth as the point of origin, and explanation, for the existence of vernacular social norms and their infringement.

The ideological agenda behind the analogical representation of the angelic rebellion in *Genesis A* is all the more evident when this text is compared with the forfeiture of lands in the charters of King Æthelred II. The rebellion in the biblical poem is ‘driven by greed for power and land’,<sup>68</sup> as shown by lines 32b-34a, which establish that the chief rebel angel seeks to set up his throne and secure land in the northern part of Heaven. This leads to the forfeiture of land, as the rebel angels are punished a few lines later (Gen A, l. 44b-46). The charters also comprise these notions, for they are not merely legalistic texts that document the king’s conferral of land. These texts also tell of past forfeitures of the land conferred by the king, which accounts would have served an ideological purpose<sup>69</sup> in that they highlight that ‘all land comes from the king and [that] its possession remains contingent on the holder’s loyalty and service to his person’.<sup>70</sup> Inasmuch as *Genesis A* sets out that humankind takes over the heavenly thrones lost by the rebel angels (Gen A, l. 86a-97a), which motif recalls the Augustinian doctrine of replacement,<sup>71</sup> the charters ‘replace old apostates with more fit landholders’.<sup>72</sup> The representation of the angelic rebellion in *Genesis A* therefore matches notions of land ownership and loyalty to the king. This does not necessarily mean that the charters influenced *Genesis A*, or that the poem influenced the charters, but rather that the analogical aspect in the representation of the angelic rebellion is affirmed by its conceptual similarities with these texts. At any rate, it is likely, or at least possible, that the circa tenth century audience of the Junius 11 manuscript would have read the *Genesis A* angelic

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<sup>68</sup> Thompson Smith, p. 598.

<sup>69</sup> See Thompson Smith, p. 597, who refers, in particular, to S 883, 886, 877, 896, 926, 927, and 934, in Simon Keynes, *The Diplomas of King Æthelred “the unready,” 978-1016: A Study of their Use as Historical Evidence* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980).

<sup>70</sup> Thompson Smith, p. 598.

<sup>71</sup> Dorothy Haines, ‘Vacancies in Heaven: The Doctrine of Replacement and *Genesis A*’, *Notes and Queries*, 44.2 (1997), 150-54 (p. 152).

<sup>72</sup> Thompson Smith, p. 606.

rebellion in this manner. The charters, after all, are roughly contemporary with this manuscript, given that King Æthelred II reigned between 978 and 1016.<sup>73</sup> The analogical reading of the angelic myth in *Genesis A* therefore explains why the text may have remained socially relevant in a circa tenth century context, inasmuch as the themes of obedience and disobedience, and reversal, in the exordium account for the text's didactic and tropological scope.

I now turn to lines 47-102, which as for the poem's opening 46 lines tell of the rebellion that culminates in exile to the torments of Hell (Gen A, l. 71-77b). This account is however followed by new themes, such as the restoration of peace and friendship in Heaven (Gen A, l. 78-91), which is an obvious consequence of the rebel angels' eviction. The audience is also told that God enhances the powers of the loyal angels (Gen A, l. 78-81), which may reflect Augustine's *De civitate Dei XII. 9* and Pseudo Bede's *Questiones super Genesim*. These texts set out that the angels were strengthened or confirmed so that they would never fall.<sup>74</sup> This may be said to place Heaven outside the temporal sphere, at least insofar as the elimination of the possibility of disobedience precludes reversal and, therefore, change. In this context, the only possible change that may take place in Heaven is the creation of new beings who would occupy the thrones vacated by the rebel angels. This will be achieved through the creation of Earth (Gen A, l. 92-103). These lines reproduce a patristic theme; however, they go beyond patristic tradition by ascribing all physical creation, rather than only humankind's creation, as a consequence of the rebellion.<sup>75</sup> This innovation enables *Genesis A* to establish a direct thematic link between the angelic rebellion and the creation of Earth, in that it posits the rebellion as an explanation for physical creation. The new themes hereby considered may therefore either be attributed to the logic of the narrative, to patristic

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<sup>73</sup> Thompson Smith, p. 597.

<sup>74</sup> Charles D. Wright, "'Fægere þurh Fordgesceaft': The Confirmation of the Angels in Old English Literature", *Medium Ævum*, 86 (2017), 22-37 (p. 22).

<sup>75</sup> Jill Fitzgerald, *Rebel Angels: Space and Sovereignty in Anglo-Saxon England* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2019), pp. 26-27.

tradition, or to a combination of the two. Lines 47-64, on the other hand, replicate the angelic rebellion and punishment first conveyed in lines 22-46. It is worth drawing attention, however, to a passage that appears to convey the expulsion of the rebel angels in terms that recall God's defeat of Pharaoh's army in the Book of Exodus. In the biblical poem God, angered by his enemies:

[...] grap on wraðe

faum folmum and him on fæðm gebræc

yr' on mode. æðele bescyrede

his wiðerbrecan wuldorgestealdum. (Gen A, l. 61b-64)

(Gripped them wrathfully in the hostile palm of his hand and crushed them in his grasp, wrathful in mood. He deprived his adversaries of nobility and of their glorious dwellings.)

In Exodus 15.6-7 Moses describes the punishment inflicted upon Pharaoh and the Egyptians as follows:

Dextera tua, Domine, magnificata est in fortitudine. Dextera tua, Domine, percussit inimicum. Et in multitudine gloriae tuae, deposuisti adversaries tuos. Misisti iram tuam quae devoravit eos ut stipulam.<sup>76</sup>

(Thy right hand, O Lord, is magnified in strength. Thy right hand, O Lord, hath slain the enemy. And in the multitude of thy glory, thou hast put down thy adversaries.

Thou hast sent thy wrath which hath devoured them like stubble.)

While imagery that places emphasis on God's strength, his superiority over his adversaries and their powerlessness may be considered typical of the Old Testament, both texts cited make specific reference to God's hand. Moreover, biblical exegetes typically associated

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<sup>76</sup> 'Exodus', in *The Vulgate Bible Vol. I The Pentateuch*, pp. 275-499 (p. 354). The bracketed translation is from the same edition.

Pharaoh with the sin of pride and the Devil.<sup>77</sup> It is therefore possible that *Genesis A* also implicitly builds on the theme that the Devil is Pharaoh's archetype. Be that as it may, the primary importance of lines 47-102 lies in the connection they establish between the rebellion and the creation of Earth. This indicates that the angelic rebellion as conveyed in *Genesis A* is inextricably linked to the act of Creation that follows, which I discuss in Chapter 2.

I conclude, on the basis of my threefold discussion of the angelic myth in *Genesis A*, that the exordium is focused on the themes of obedience and disobedience, as well as reversal. These themes attest to the poem's didactic function and tropological dimension, particularly in view of the allusion to the Preface to the Mass and the direct address to the audience: 'Us is riht micel' (Gen A, l. 1a) (It is very right for us). The positive example of the loyal angels and the negative example of the rebel angels, in other words, relate directly to the audience's experience as Christians. Secondly, the narrative has an analogical dimension, in that Heaven and the rebellion allude to social conventions. These allusions posit the angelic rebellion as a myth that accounts for the origin of social conflict, whereas Heaven offers a positive social model. Thirdly, lines 47-102 convey the transition from angelic myth to physical Creation. Therefore, they establish that this myth is an extension of the Genesis-derived narrative. In this section I have therefore demonstrated that the angelic myth in *Genesis A* amalgamates exegetical and didactic elements with a political ideology built on loyalty to the king, or that it may have been read in this manner by a tenth century audience. I also suggest that the focus on obedience in the text appears to draw on the importance assigned to loyalty in the context of vernacular narratives. However, *Genesis A*'s exegetical bent, didacticism and focus on kingly authority in terms that recall the Anglo-Latin charters emerge more clearly. My analysis therefore supports Johnson's statement that the angelic rebellion in *Genesis A* is likely to have been derived from a catechetical or liturgical source.

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<sup>77</sup> Godfrey Shepherd, 'Scriptural Poetry', in *Continuations and Beginnings: Studies in Old English Literature*, ed. by Eric Gerald Stanley (London: Nelson and Sons, 1966), pp. 1-36 (p. 23).



### 1.2.2 The Angelic Myth in *Genesis B*

Commentators have not always taken kindly to the editorial interpolation of *Genesis B* into *Genesis A*. Remley argues that *Genesis B* disrupts the *Genesis A* narrative and that the interpolation ignores the poetic qualities of the passage known as *Genesis B*,<sup>78</sup> while Samantha Zacher brands the interpolation awkward and repetitive.<sup>79</sup> It cannot be denied that there are significant differences between the two *Genesis* poems and that the composite narrative is repetitive. However, I contend that the assessment of the quality of the interpolation is not straightforward. In the first place, the transition between the two texts is not likely to have been as abrupt as it appears now. While the transition from *Genesis B* back to *Genesis A* is smooth even in the extant manuscript, between one and three leaves are missing at the point when *Genesis B* takes over from the *Genesis A* account of the Creation.<sup>80</sup> The surviving text does not appear to suggest that the transition from *Genesis A* to *Genesis B* would have been abrupt, given that the extant passage known as *Genesis B* opens with God's command to desist from the fruit of the forbidden tree in lines 235-45,<sup>81</sup> which follows the Creation in the biblical narrative. It is therefore likely that the narratives would have been bridged by the text in the manuscript leaves that went missing. Secondly, early medieval criteria for judging the characteristics of different texts, or even what constitutes a unified narrative, do not necessarily correspond to present-day expectations. It may be relevant that commentators have also expressed reservations in relation to the placement of the Guthlac poems in the Exeter manuscript. David Calder goes as far as to suggest that the compiler's

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

<sup>79</sup> Samantha Zacher, *Rewriting the Old Testament in Anglo-Saxon Verse: Becoming the Chosen People* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), p. 6.

<sup>80</sup> Doane, 'Introduction', in *Genesis A- A New Edition*, p. 6.

<sup>81</sup> 'Genesis B', in *The Saxon Genesis An Edition of the West Saxon Genesis B and the Old Saxon Vatican Genesis*, ed. by A. N. Doane (London: University of Wisconsin Press, 1991), pp. 207-31 (p. 207). All references to *Genesis B* shall henceforth be given parenthetically in the main text, indicated by the abbreviation Gen B. All translations of *Genesis B* are mine.

efforts should be ignored, as the poems are best read independently of one another.<sup>82</sup>

However, Benjamin D. Weber argues that the two poems may have been brought together precisely because of their differences, in that *Guthlac A* offers the ideal of the anchoritic monk, or hermit, whereas *Guthlac B*, in representing Guthlac as a teacher, encompasses the ideal of the cenobitic monk<sup>83</sup> characteristic of the Benedictine reform. Weber suggests that by ‘placing *Guthlac B* after *Guthlac A*, the compiler would allow the cenobitic ideal to have the last word, perhaps using these texts to appropriate Guthlac for the Reform movement’.<sup>84</sup> I contend that thematic considerations would also have been at play in the *Genesis B* interpolation, including in the repetition of the angelic myth, given that the two versions in the composite narrative function purposefully in their respective contexts.<sup>85</sup> I have already indicated that the angelic myth in *Genesis A* segues into the Creation, while in Chapter 3.2.2 I observe that themes characteristic of the angelic rebellion in *Genesis B* recur in the temptation and lapse of humankind. In this section I argue that the angelic myth in *Genesis B* explores different nuances of the rebellion, even where there are similarities between this version of the myth and the one in *Genesis A*, which suggests that the two narratives have different functions but are consistent with one another. I go on to explore these similarities more in detail in section 1.2.3. In this section I also contend that the Junius 11 pictures suggest that the redactor meant the two versions of the angelic rebellion to be read as part of a single narrative, a point that appears to have been overlooked or underestimated by previous commentators. I also briefly consider the sources for the angelic rebellion in *Genesis B*. While I draw no specific conclusions on the sources of this text, I argue that the themes and motifs in the narrative are by and large conventional as for those in *Genesis A*.

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<sup>82</sup> Benjamin D. Weber, ‘A Harmony of Contrasts: The Guthlac Poems of the Exeter Book’, *Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, 114.2 (2015), 201-18 (p. 203).

<sup>83</sup> Weber, p. 218.

<sup>84</sup> Weber, p. 218.

<sup>85</sup> Ericksen, *Reading Old English Biblical Poetry: The Book and the Poem in Junius 11*, p. 64.

The Junius 11 pictures offer unique first-hand evidence of the reception of *Genesis A* and *Genesis B* in early medieval England. They also shed light on thematic considerations that may have informed the interpolation. The account of the angelic rebellion in *Genesis B* has clearly had more of an impact on the corresponding drawings produced by the artist.<sup>86</sup> This is also true of the first two pictures that represent this myth, which are placed alongside the *Genesis A* text on the second and third pages of the manuscript.<sup>87</sup> A. N. Doane observes that both pictures feature Lucifer/Satan, who is not explicitly mentioned in *Genesis A*,<sup>88</sup> which suggests that the pictures are based on *Genesis B*, where the chief rebel angel is prominent. The full-page picture on page 3 of the manuscript<sup>89</sup> represents the angelic rebellion and fall over four tiers:

- a) in the top tier the rebel angels pay homage to Lucifer, who is rendered as a warrior or nobleman pointing towards a throne;<sup>90</sup>
- b) in the second tier the chief rebel angel receives an offering of palm fronds;<sup>91</sup>
- c) in the third tier Christ, who is identifiable, *inter alia*, by his cross nimbus,<sup>92</sup> throws darts at the rebels; while,
- d) the fourth tier is made up of two scenes,<sup>93</sup> namely the chief rebel angel's fall, and his subsequent binding by the neck, hands and feet<sup>94</sup> in a Hell-mouth.<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> Doane, 'Introduction', in *Genesis A- A New Edition*, p. 27.

<sup>87</sup> Doane, p. 29.

<sup>88</sup> Doane, p. 29.

<sup>89</sup> See Appendix, Plate I.

<sup>90</sup> Fitzgerald, pp. 32-33.

<sup>91</sup> Asa Simon Mittman and Susan M. Kim, 'Locating the Devil *Her* in MS Junius 11', *Gesta*, 54.1 (2015), 3-25 (p. 3).

<sup>92</sup> Footnote 2 of Mittman and Kim, p. 3.

<sup>93</sup> Mittman and Kim, p. 3.

<sup>94</sup> See K. Cherevatuk, 'Standing, Turning, Twisting, Falling: Posture and Moral Stance in *Genesis B*', *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen*, 87.4 (1986), 537-44 (p. 537), for a discussion of the contrast offered by the bound Satan and Adam and Eve's prelapsarian upright posture in l. 241b-45 of the same poem.

<sup>95</sup> See Gary D. Schmidt, *The Iconography of the Mouth of Hell* (London: Associated University Presses, 1995), pp. 64 and 71, for a discussion of the origin of Hell-mouth iconography in early medieval England and the consistency between such iconography and the description of Hell in the *Genesis* poems.

The first and second tiers, which convey the chief rebel angel's reliance on his followers, may be considered closer to *Genesis B*, even if the same scenario could have been inferred from *Genesis A*. The fourth tier only corresponds to the narrative in *Genesis B*, which as I observed in section 1.1 represents Satan bound in Hell. The third tier stands out in that it does not correspond to either of the two narratives. *Genesis B* does not specify how God evicts the rebel angels, while in *Genesis A* God grabs the rebels in his hands and throws them down to Hell (Gen A, l. 61b-63a). Moreover, the iconography suggests that the figure throwing the darts is Christ, yet neither of the two poems represents an angelic rebellion directed against this figure of the Trinity. It is possible that, in this instance, the artist relied on a pictorial model, which is known common practice for this period.<sup>96</sup> Be that as it may, the representation of Christ in this tier is also consistent with the notion of Christ's presence in the Old Testament, which I discussed in section 1.1. The angelic fall is also represented in page 16 of the manuscript, where a Hell-mouth devours the fallen angels as Satan is bound hands and feet in the bottom section of the drawing.<sup>97</sup> In page 17 there is a two-tiered picture. The upper tier represents God flanked by the angels, while in the lower tier Satan is bound hands and feet with a halter round his neck, surrounded by the rebel angels.<sup>98</sup> These pictures, which flank *Genesis B*, are evidently also based on the account in this poem.

The artist's representation of the angelic myth mainly as rendered in *Genesis B* may be attributed to the fact that this version is more detailed, and that it thereby lends itself more easily to pictorial representation. Yet, in the context of the composite narrative the *Genesis A* version of this myth may have been read as an exordium that anticipates, or foreshadows, the more detailed version that forms part of *Genesis B*. At any rate, this would explain why the artist relates the version of events in this poem even where the drawings flank *Genesis A*.

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<sup>96</sup> Herbert R. Broderick, 'Metatextuality, Sexuality and Intervisuality in MS Junius 11', *Word and Image*, 25.4 (2009), 384-401 (p 387).

<sup>97</sup> See Appendix, Plate II.

<sup>98</sup> See Appendix, Plate III.

This leads me full circle to the critical assessment of the quality of the *Genesis B* interpolation. Unlike modern commentators the manuscript redactor, and quite possibly the artist, need not have seen the repetition of the angelic myth as a narrative defect. The drawings suggest, rather, that the *Genesis B* version would have carried more weight. At the same time, the angelic rebellion in *Genesis A* offers a prelude to God's Creation. This fits in with the patristic idea, which I discussed in section 1.2.1, that God sought to fill the heavenly thrones vacated by the rebel angels. Moreover, the angelic rebellion in *Genesis A* introduces the themes of obedience and disobedience, as well as reversal. These themes recur in *Genesis A* itself as well as in the *Genesis B* representation of the angelic myth. The same may be said of the theme of redemption, which is first conveyed by the allusion to the Preface to the Mass, but that recurs in both poems, particularly *Genesis B*'s adaptation of the temptation and lapse of humankind and *Genesis A*'s rendition of the Great Flood, as I observe in Chapters 3.2 and 5.2 respectively. The angelic rebellion in *Genesis A* therefore functions as an exordium in relation to both Genesis poems, which suggests thematic continuity across the two texts. At the same time, the version of the myth in *Genesis B* is not only more detailed, but it also presents 'a psychological portrait of Lucifer/Satan, complete with human motivations, desires and faults'.<sup>99</sup> Hence, the two renditions of the angelic myth explore the different nuances of the angelic rebellion,<sup>100</sup> which means that the repetition of the myth has a thematic purpose in the context of the composite narrative. It therefore appears that the redactor intended the two versions of the angelic myth to be read as part of a single narrative. However, the aforementioned lacuna in the transition from *Genesis A* to *Genesis B* renders the interpolation abrupt, while the different styles of the two texts may not correspond to modern ideas of a unified text. For all that, the manuscript context requires a reading of the two poems as a single text. I suggest that this state of affairs is the outcome of the redactor's

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<sup>99</sup> Karkov, *Text and Picture in Anglo-Saxon England*, p. 66.

<sup>100</sup> Karkov, p. 67.

prioritisation of thematic and narrative as opposed to stylistic considerations. This is not only in view of the points I mention above, but also in recognition of the similar themes that characterise the two versions of the angelic myth. In the discussions that follow I observe that both versions of the angelic myth draw on the same patristic and exegetical traditions, as well as similar notions of kingship. The two narratives, in other words, are consistent even where they are different.

I now engage in a discussion of the nuances of the angelic rebellion in *Genesis B*, which requires analysis of its narrative style. I already indicated that this narrative focuses on the chief rebel angel and his motivations. While the audience is told that God arrayed the angels into ten orders and that he trusted them to obey him, as he ‘him gewit forgeaf | and mid his handum gesceop’ (Gen B, l. 250b-51a) (had given them intelligence and shaped them with his hands), the focus shifts to the chief rebel angel in lines 252-77, where hypermetrical lines highlight this character’s physical and intellectual qualities.<sup>101</sup> The angel, who is not identified by the name Lucifer, is said to be ‘mihtigne on his modgeþohte’ (Gen B, l. 253a) (mighty in his faculty of thought), so much so that ‘he (God) let hine swa micles wealdan | hehstne to him on heofona rice’ (Gen B, l. 253b-54a) (he [God] granted him wide rule, highest after him in the kingdom of Heaven). The angel should therefore have been thankful to God.<sup>102</sup> Had this been the case he would have continued to enjoy his exalted position (Gen B, l. 256b-58).

The relationship between God as king of Heaven and the angel at this point, before the rebellion, is expressed in terms that broadly recall gift-giving, lordship and loyalty in a vernacular narrative like *Beowulf*, and the emphasis placed by English missionaries on God’s omnipotence and his readiness to reward his followers. This is because the text emphasises

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<sup>101</sup> Fitzgerald, p. 89.

<sup>102</sup> See also Daniel Thomas, ‘Revolt in Heaven: Lucifer’s Treason in *Genesis B*’, in *Treason: Medieval and Early Modern Adultery, Betrayal and Shame*, ed. by Larissa Tracy (Leiden: Brill, 2019), pp. 147-69 (pp. 153-54) for a discussion of the rebel angel’s obligations towards God.

God's power and the privileges accorded to the angel, which creates a legitimate expectation of loyalty. In the previous section I made similar observations in relation to the kingly representation of God in *Genesis A*, where the appeal to kingship and, quite possibly, vernacular social values, attests to the narrative's analogical dimension. In the case of *Genesis B*, conceptual similarity to culturally-related English vernacular narratives and an Old Saxon post-conversion context, where a key objective would have been facilitation of a full transition to Christianity, suggests that the text accommodates vernacular social norms relating to kingship or lordship with a view to facilitating such transition, and also points to an analogical level of meaning in its appeal to known social hierarchies. However, the representation of a God who rewards his followers is also characteristic of Old Testament narratives. This is evident, *inter alia*, in the story of Noah adapted in *Genesis A*, which I discuss in Chapter 5.2. It is therefore likely that the representation of God as king in both poems draws on the compatibility between Old Testament representations of the deity, early medieval notions of kingship, and vernacular social values.

The above context suggests that the rebellion in *Genesis B* is motivated exclusively by the chief rebel angel's treachery and self-perception (Gen B, l. 265-66a), which recalls the portrayal of Lucifer in Ælfric's *Letter to Sigeward*.<sup>103</sup> Moreover, as for the rebel in *Genesis A* the *Genesis B* character aims to erect a stronger throne, this time in the west and north of Heaven (Gen B, l. 272b-76a).<sup>104</sup> This highlights the rebel angel's pride, as well as his guilt in terms of the conventions that govern the relationship between the king, or lord, and his retainer, who should be loyal. This is because *Genesis B*'s emphasis on the rebel angel's high status and favour suggests that God as king treats him fairly and generously. The attitude of

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<sup>103</sup> Michael Fox, 'Ælfric on the Creation and Fall of the Angels', *Anglo-Saxon England*, 31 (2002), 175-200 (p. 186).

<sup>104</sup> According to Thomas D. Hill, 'Some Remarks on "The Site of Lucifer's Throne"', *Anglia*, 87 (1969), 303-11 (pp. 309-10) the north-westerly direction referred to in *Genesis B*, as opposed to the northerly direction in *Genesis A*, derives from one of the Latin versions of the *Visio S Pauli* tradition, wherein St Paul reaches the depths of Hell in the northwest.

the rebel angel is also indicated by his direct address in lines 278-91, where he states that he may also be a god (Gen B, l. 283b). He also expresses himself in military terms, as he declares that his companions have chosen him as their lord, and that they would not fail him (Gen B, l. 284-85a). This further attests to the analogical dimension of the narrative, in that the rebel angel is represented in terms that recall a retainer who rebels against his king. The rebel's boastful speech is followed by the narrator's anticipation of his punishment (Gen B, l. 292-297a), when he is compared to a human sinner, which points to a tropological level of meaning in addition to the analogical one:

[...] swa deð monna gehwilc  
 þe wið his waldend winnan ongynneð  
 mid mane wið þone mæran drihten. (Gen B, l. 297b-99a)

(So does each person who begins a sinful struggle against his ruler, the glorious lord.)

This statement is followed by the fall of the rebel angels and their banishment in Hell (Gen B, l. 304b-08a), where they have to endure intense cold and heat (Gen B, l. 313b-17). The plight of the rebel angels is also contrasted to the loyal angels who enjoy the kingdom of Heaven (Gen B, l. 320b-23a), before the focus shifts once more to the chief rebel angel, now renamed Satan (Gen B, l. 344-45a), when the audience is told that he is confined to a corpse-bed (Gen B, l. 342b-43a). In his subsequent speech, which I discuss in section 1.3, Satan bemoans his plight and regrets the exaltation of humankind (Gen B, l. 359-68a). He also relates that he has been bound (Gen B, l. 377b-85a), a motif that is central to the expression of the poem's moral or tropological dimension.

This discussion shows that the angelic rebellion in *Genesis B* explores betrayal, and that it conveys meaning at the analogical and tropological levels. In these respects, the text recalls the approach pursued in *Genesis A*. However, as I already indicated, *Genesis B* differs markedly in its focus on the chief rebel angel. This discussion therefore affirms the points I



made earlier about the compatibility, but also the different functions, of the two narratives in the composite text. At the same time, the focus on the chief rebel angel in *Genesis B* may well be one of the reasons why early criticism of the poem was centred on discussion of literary models.<sup>105</sup> Alcimius Ecdicius Avitus's apocryphally and biblically based-poems, known as *De Spiritualis Historiae Gestis*,<sup>106</sup> were generally considered the most relevant source texts for *Genesis B*.<sup>107</sup> It cannot be denied that there are some fairly close parallels between the narrative of the rebellion in *Genesis B* and the second book of the Latin poem. In the first place, the sequence of events in *Genesis B* follows Avitus, for the Latin poet relates God's gift of the Creation to humankind, coupled with the original sinless state, before his narrative of the angelic rebellion.<sup>108</sup> Secondly, Avitus's account emphasises the arrogance of the rebel angel, who believes that he has made himself.<sup>109</sup> Similarly, the chief rebel angel in *Genesis B* sets out that he can be like God. On the other hand, while the Satan of *Genesis B* is bound the Devil in the Latin poem is not. While the former resorts to an emissary to tempt Adam and Eve, which I discuss in section 1.3, his counterpart in the Latin poem tempts Eve himself.<sup>110</sup> For all that, the two incarnations of the Devil share at least two important characteristics. Firstly, both characters denounce the exaltation of humankind, made out of clay or soil, while they lament their own rejection and exile (Gen B, l. 356-68a).<sup>111</sup> Secondly, both characters perceive the prospect of a human fall as consolation for their plight (Gen B, l. 433b-34).<sup>112</sup> Yet, the similarities between the two narratives are hardly so pronounced as to qualify the Latin poem as a certain source for *Genesis B*. D. G. Calder and M. J. B. Allen

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<sup>105</sup> Calder and Allen, p. 3.

<sup>106</sup> Michael Lapidge, 'Versifying the Bible in the Middle Ages', in *The Text in the Community: Essays on Medieval Works, Manuscripts, Authors, and Readers*, ed. by Jill Mann and Maura Nolan (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2006), pp. 11-40 (p. 17).

<sup>107</sup> Calder and Allen, p.3.

<sup>108</sup> Alcimius Ecdicius Avitus, 'Original Sin', in *The Poems of Alcimius Ecdicius Avitus*, ed. and trans. by George W. Shea (Tempe: Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies, 1997), pp. 80-88 (pp. 80-81).

<sup>109</sup> Avitus.

<sup>110</sup> Avitus, p. 83.

<sup>111</sup> Avitus, p. 82.

<sup>112</sup> Avitus.

reach a similar conclusion, for they recognise that Avitus's account is only a distant analogue.<sup>113</sup> This does not mean that the similarities identified above are unimportant or irrelevant. Rather, the themes shared with Avitus's text suggest that, at least in places, *Genesis B* draws on conventional sources in its representation of the angelic rebellion. This also applies to those themes that are not rendered in Avitus's narrative but that clearly derive from patristic sources, such as the rebel angel's attempt to establish a separate kingdom in Heaven. This discussion therefore suggests that the representation of the angelic rebellion in *Genesis B*, as opposed to its depiction of Hell that I discuss in section 1.3, draws on conventional sources as for the rendition of the myth in *Genesis A*.

In this section I have shown that *Genesis B*, unlike *Genesis A*, represents the rebellion narrative from the viewpoint of the chief rebel angel, and that it therefore explores different nuances of the rebellion. In my discussion of the pictures that flank the composite Genesis narrative I indicated that the *Genesis A* version of the angelic myth functions as an exordium, and that it anticipates the more detailed version that forms part of *Genesis B*. Both versions of the angelic myth therefore have a distinct role to play in the composite narrative. This suggests that the *Genesis B* interpolation is informed by thematic and narrative considerations, and that the two versions of the angelic myth, and poems, may be read as a single narrative. I also briefly pointed to the similarities between the two renditions of the angelic myth, which resort to the same extra-literal levels of meaning and similar conceptions of kingship. I further explore similarities between the two versions of the angelic myth, and their implications, in section 1.2.3.

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<sup>113</sup> Calder and Allen, p. 5.

### 1.2.3 Shared Themes and Motifs in *Genesis A* and *Genesis B*: A Tradition for the Representation of the Angelic Myth

In this section I argue that notwithstanding their stylistic differences the representations of the angelic myth in the Genesis poems explore the same themes. While previous commentators discussed the angelic myth in the two Genesis poems, including Jill Fitzgerald in a recent monograph dedicated to the rebel angels,<sup>114</sup> the similarities between the two texts and, even more so, their significance, deserves more attention. These common elements, along with the similarities between *Genesis B* and Ælfric's *Letter to Sigeweard*, which I also discuss in this section, point to an Old English-Old Saxon monastic tradition for the representation of the angelic myth. I hereby explore this adduced tradition and its characteristics, which may not have been emphasised by previous commentators because the similarities across the respective texts have often been underestimated.

The themes and motifs shared by *Genesis A* and *Genesis B* are the following:

- a) the rebel angels' failure to act to their own advantage by turning away from God (Gen A, l. 23b-25a) and the rebel angel's choice of the worse course of action (Gen B, l. 259a) due to his rebellion against God (Gen B, l. 259b-60);
- b) the establishment of a kingdom to the north (Gen A, l. 32b-34a) and to the north and west (Gen B, l. 274b-76a) of Heaven, which attests to an analogical level of meaning;
- c) the tropological expression of the fall of the rebel angel and his followers. In the opening 46 lines of *Genesis A* the contrasting fates of prelapsarian and rebel angels are set within the framework of the Preface to the Mass, as I indicated in section 1.2.1. Similarly, in *Genesis B* the explicit comparison between the rebel

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<sup>114</sup> See Fitzgerald, particularly pp. 1-113.

- angel and those who strive against God (Gen B, l. 295b-99a) is tropological, in that it suggests that every sin motivated by pride recapitulates the angelic fall;<sup>115</sup>
- d) the description of Hell. God in *Genesis A* makes a 'wræcligne ham' (Gen A, l. 37a) (a home of exile) for the rebels, which is pervaded by fire, intense cold, fumes and red flame (Gen A, l. 43-44a). The Hell of *Genesis B* is similarly conceived,<sup>116</sup> for an east wind brings forth frost and cold, as well as fire (Gen B, l. 315-16). Again as in *Genesis A*, Hell is made specifically for the torture of the rebel angels (Gen B, l. 318-20a); and,
- e) juxtaposition of the adverse fate of the rebel angels in Hell and the continued bliss enjoyed by those who remain loyal to God (Gen A, l. 71b-81) (Gen B. l. 320b-23a).

While these themes and motifs are quintessentially didactic, the *Genesis* poems do not necessarily convey the angelic rebellion in the manner characteristic of the Latin Christian late antique poetic tradition. At any rate, the establishment of a kingdom to the north, the description of Hell, and the juxtaposition of the fates of rebel and loyal angels are not to be found in Avitus's narrative, which also lacks anything comparable to the *Genesis A* exordium.<sup>117</sup> Hence, the similarities between the *Genesis* poems are distinctive, as they are not essential to the representation of the angelic myth. J. M. Evans attributed the different approach pursued by Old English and Latin poets to the perceived need to represent 'the stories and doctrines of the new religion in the forms and diction of the old'.<sup>118</sup> In other words, he suggested that the two poetic traditions adopt a different approach because of the different non-Christian traditions that preceded them. This point may be illustrated with

<sup>115</sup> Thomas D. Hill, 'The Fall of Angels and Man in the Old English *Genesis B*', in *Anglo-Saxon Poetry Essays in Appreciation*, ed. by Lewis E. Nicholson and Dolores Warwick Frese (London: University of Notre Dame Press, 1975), pp. 279-90 (p. 287).

<sup>116</sup> Abbetmeyer, p. 16.

<sup>117</sup> See Avitus, pp. 80-88.

<sup>118</sup> J. M. Evans, *Paradise Lost and the Genesis Tradition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1968), p. 143.

reference to Karla Pollmann's discussion of poetic authority in late antiquity. This commentator observes that, like their non-Christian predecessors, Christian Latin poets made reference to divine inspiration, which is also characteristic of New Testament texts.<sup>119</sup> The idea of divine authority or inspiration in a poetic context, however, primarily looks back to Classical poetry, which the early Christian poets emulated.<sup>120</sup> In this vein, Juvencus replaced the pre-Christian and Classical muses with the Holy Spirit,<sup>121</sup> while in an Anglo-Latin context Aldhelm rejected the muses in favour of God.<sup>122</sup> Even though divine authority or inspiration was known in early medieval England, it is not availed of in Old English poetry. Indeed, *Genesis A* conveys authority with reference to books—*þæs þe us secgað bec* (as books tell us)—as in the case of lines 227b and 1723b.<sup>123</sup> In line with Evans's thinking, the omission of divine inspiration in *Genesis A* may be attributed to the absence of any deities comparable to the muses in the pre-Christian poetic tradition that may have existed in England. This, however, is not necessarily the case. Rather, authorisation in *Genesis A* may be attributed exclusively to the sufficiency of scripture as a source of authority. Moreover, my discussion of kingship and social norms in the previous sections, including the similarities between *Genesis A* and the Anglo-Latin charters, suggests that the *Genesis* poems appeal to what would have been relevant at the time the poems were composed, and what would have remained relevant at the time the Junius 11 manuscript was compiled. I therefore conclude that the angelic rebellion narratives in *Genesis A* and *Genesis B* do not draw extensively on Christian Latin poetry due to different stylistic conventions and, more importantly, their analogical representation of the prevailing social circumstances in the early medieval period.

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<sup>119</sup> Karla Pollmann, 'Establishing Authority in Christian Poetry of Latin Late Antiquity', *Hermes*, 141:3 (2013), 309-30 (pp. 315-16).

<sup>120</sup> Pollmann, p. 315.

<sup>121</sup> Emily V. 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. 77).

<sup>122</sup> Thornbury, p. 73.

<sup>123</sup> Jeffrey Alan Mazo, 'Compound Diction and Traditional Style in *Beowulf* and *Genesis A*', *Oral Tradition*, 6.1 (1991), 79-92 (p. 89).

This is evident in the two poems' representation of the chief rebel angel's intention to establish a kingdom to the north, which deserves further attention due to its narrative implications.

In *Genesis A* the intention to establish a new kingdom is combined with the representation of God as a lord or king, while in *Genesis B* the rebel angel recalls a leader of a retinue of men intent upon betrayal of their king. Doane interpreted the rebellion in *Genesis B* as an attempt to replace Heaven's hierarchical system of government with what he described as the older idea of the *comitatus* made up of a lord and his retainers.<sup>124</sup> However, the narrative may be better understood as an analogical expression of the tensions inherent to Old Saxon society at least since 782, when Charlemagne 'installed Saxons from notable families as dukes on the Frankish model in an effort to co-opt at least part of the previously loosely-organized political system'.<sup>125</sup> This attempt at centralisation of power caused civil unrest, so much so that Charlemagne had to launch fresh campaigns against the Old Saxons in 783 and 784.<sup>126</sup> The Carolingians eventually prevailed and the *Capitulatio de Partibus Saxoniae* of 28<sup>th</sup> October 797 prescribed, *inter alia*, that the Saxon assembly could only be convened by Charlemagne. Moreover, attendance at mass became compulsory.<sup>127</sup> In this context, the Old Saxon *Heliand* was 'part of the effort of persuasion and pacification when it was composed some forty years after Widukind's baptism'.<sup>128</sup> This socio-political history suggests that the angelic rebellion in *Genesis B* may well have been intended to help preserve the imperial *status quo* through the representation of the rebel angel as a treacherous leader. One of the main functions of the poem in an Old Saxon context, therefore, would have been

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<sup>124</sup> A. N. Doane, 'Introduction', in *The Saxon Genesis An Edition of the West Saxon Genesis B and the Old Saxon Vatican Genesis*, pp. 3-141 (p. 123).

<sup>125</sup> James E. Cathey, 'Introduction', in *Heliand Text and Commentary*, ed. by James E. Cathey (Morgantown: West Virginia University Press, 2002), pp. 1-28 (p. 11).

<sup>126</sup> Cathey, p. 11.

<sup>127</sup> Cathey, pp. 11-12.

<sup>128</sup> Cathey, p. 12.

to remind the audience of their duties as loyal subjects<sup>129</sup> and to evoke the prospect of damnation in the event of disobedience,<sup>130</sup> given that disobedience of the king is analogically equated with rebellion against God.<sup>131</sup>

At the same time, as I already indicated in the previous section, the *Genesis B* rendition of the angelic myth may be said to entail accommodation of vernacular social norms. These norms are therefore co-opted in the service of the said ideological objective. The poem's appeal to such norms, as in the representation of a lord-retainer relationship between God and his angel before the rebellion, echoes the *Heliand*, where the vernacular ethos is evident in the portrayal of Christ as a warrior lord.<sup>132</sup> *Genesis B* must also have been relevant, however, in the English tenth-century context demanded by the Junius 11 manuscript. This is clearly the case, as indicated by the concern with loyalty evident in the Anglo-Latin charters I discussed in the previous sections. These charters retell the angelic rebellion and fall, where this narrative serves an ideological function, in that it sacralises the notion that land-ownership emanates from the king and is therefore dependent on continued loyalty to him. The representation of the lord-retainer relationship in *Genesis B*, where the angel's place and prominence in Heaven is dependent on his continued loyalty towards God, would therefore have retained relevance even if it would not necessarily have reflected real-life power relations in the society that produced the Junius 11 manuscript; a society that would have been familiar with bureaucracy, including proxy military service. In this context, such a relationship would perhaps have served as an idealised recollection of a past

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<sup>129</sup> R. Derolez, 'Genesis: Old Saxon and Old English', *English Studies*, 76.5 (1995), 409-23 (p. 416).

<sup>130</sup> Elan Justice Pavlinich, 'Revolting Sites', *Postmedieval: A Journal of Medieval Cultural Studies*, 11.4 (2020), 416-24 (p. 417).

<sup>131</sup> A. N. Doane, 'The Transmission of *Genesis B*', in *Anglo-Saxon England and the Continent*, ed. by Hanna Sauer and Joanna Story (Tempe: Arizona State University, 2011), pp. 63-82 (p. 75).

<sup>132</sup> Russell, p. 24.

characterised by simpler one-to-one relationships.<sup>133</sup> These notions would have been familiar in the monastic setting in which the poems were composed, for ultimately scribes and artists belonged to wider society.

The rebel angel's intention to establish a separate kingdom, and the related themes I discuss above, therefore appeal to ideas of kingship and loyalty in both continental and insular contexts. In an English context, expressed in *Genesis A*'s location of this kingdom in the north, this motif may also have been relevant in view of the threats posed by the north in the form of Pictish, Scottish and Norse attacks.<sup>134</sup> While, from a continental perspective, England itself was located at the edge of the world, the term *north* is ultimately relative to the audience's perspective,<sup>135</sup> which means that it would have been possible for English audiences to think of this direction as one associated with otherness and evil. Be that as it may, the two *Genesis* poems share a similar approach which, I contend, suggests that they belong to the same tradition for the representation of the angelic rebellion. This tradition would have been the product of monastic relations involving Insular and Continental institutions, which should not be surprising in the light of the English missionary efforts I mentioned in the Introduction to this thesis.<sup>136</sup> The monastic origin of this tradition is attested by its reliance on didactic themes and motifs, which are combined, *inter alia*, with early medieval ideas of kingship that are also to be found in the Anglo-Latin charters. This view of the angelic rebellion in the *Genesis* poems is also supported by the distinctiveness of the similarities between them, which I have already explored. It is also supported by a cursory look at the *Saltair na Rann*, which I mention in view of its potential to represent Irish

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<sup>133</sup> John D. Niles, 'The Myth of the Anglo-Saxon Oral Poet', *Western Folklore*, 62.1-2 (2003), 7-61 (p. 39). See also T. Shippey, 'Hell, Heaven, and the Failures of *Genesis B*', in *Essays in Old, Middle, Modern English and Old Icelandic in Honor of Raymond P. Tripp, Jr*, ed. by Loren C. Gruber et al (New York: Lampeter, 2000), pp. 151-76, where it is argued that *Genesis B* fits the pattern of the society that produced it.

<sup>134</sup> Irmeli Valtonen, *The North in the Old English Orosius: A Geographical Narrative in Context* (Helsinki: Société Néophilologique, 2008), p. 155.

<sup>135</sup> Valtonen, p. 157.

<sup>136</sup> See also Francesca Tinti, *Europe and the Anglo-Saxons* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021), p. 33, for a discussion of cultural exchange between English and continental monastic institutions.



influence on early medieval English Christianity. In this text the angelic rebellion is traced back to God's command to give reverence to Adam, in that Lucifer refuses to submit on account of his seniority.<sup>137</sup> Needless to say, this narrative differs significantly from either *Genesis* poem and it is unlikely that it would have effectively accommodated the lord-retainer relationship in the manner that *Genesis B* does in its emphasis on God's generosity towards his angel before the rebellion. This not only confirms that the similarities between the *Genesis* poems are distinctive and relevant, but also that other accounts of the angelic rebellion do not have the same analogical and ideological purpose.

I now consider the similarities between the two *Genesis* poems in relation to the idea I mentioned earlier in this chapter that *Genesis A* is based on a lost liturgical original. It is also relevant that *Genesis A* shares its narrative sequence with King Edgar's Privilege to New Minster. This charter, dated 966, and almost certainly the work of Bishop Æthelwold,<sup>138</sup> compares the ejection of the secular canons with the fall of Lucifer.<sup>139</sup> It also represents the angelic myth tropologically, in that the king is said to have cleansed the filth of evil deeds in his kingdom just as God did in Heaven.<sup>140</sup> The angelic myth, in other words, stands for the individual Christian's behaviour in the present, in this case the king's. This approach, which may well have originated in a liturgical text, is also evident in the opening 46 lines of *Genesis A*, which frame the angelic creation and rebellion in the context of the Preface to the Mass. As I observed in the course of this chapter *Genesis B* also represents the angelic myth analogically and tropologically, while it shares some of its main themes with *Genesis A*. It is significant that *Genesis B* also shares themes and motifs with Ælfric's treatise *On the Old and*

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<sup>137</sup> [www.dias.ie/wp-content/uploads/2011/03/canto001-010.pdf](http://www.dias.ie/wp-content/uploads/2011/03/canto001-010.pdf) [accessed 23 January 2019] The English translation of the fourth canto of the *Saltair na Rann* by Prof. David Greene is part of an unpublished typescript posted online by the Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies: <https://www.dias.ie/celt/celt-publications-2/celt-saltair-na-rann/>.

<sup>138</sup> Alexander R. Rumble, 'A.D. 966, Refoundation Charter of the New Minster Granted by King Edgar', in *Property and Piety in Early Medieval Winchester*, ed. by Alexander R. Rumble (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), pp. 65-73 (p. 65).

<sup>139</sup> Rumble, pp. 67-68.

<sup>140</sup> 'Eadgar Rex Hoc Priuilegium Nouo Edidit Monasterio ac Omnipotenti Domino Eiusque Genitrici Marie Eius Laudans Magnalia Concessit', in *Property and Piety in Early Medieval Winchester*, pp. 74-97 (p. 80).

*New Testament*, which is also known as the *Letter to Sigeweard* on account of its preface in MS Oxford, Bodleian Laud, Misc. 509.

The similarities between *Genesis B* and Ælfric's treatise may be summed up as follows:

- a) the ten angelic orders (Gen B, l. 248-49a),<sup>141</sup> which are also mentioned by Gregory the Great;<sup>142</sup>
- b) the description of the rebel angel as mighty, shining and bright in his many hues (Gen B, l. 265-66a);<sup>143</sup>
- c) the rebel angel's belief that the worship of God is beneath him (Gen B, l. 278-83b);<sup>144</sup>
- d) the rebel angel's refusal to accept God as his lord (Gen B, l. 288b-91)<sup>145</sup> and his intention to establish a separate kingdom (Gen B, l. 272b-76a);<sup>146</sup> and,
- e) the rebel angels' transformation into devils (Gen B, l. 304b-06a).<sup>147</sup>

However, Ælfric does not describe the plight of the rebel angels in Hell, as he goes on to paraphrase narratives directly derived from the Book of Genesis.<sup>148</sup> For all that, the similarities between the two texts are, to an extent, distinctive, in that some of the themes or motifs I identified above are absent from other renditions of the angelic rebellion. Notably, *Genesis A* leaves the angelic orders unmentioned, as does Avitus. Moreover, the Latin poet does not conceive of the angelic rebellion as an attempt to establish another kingdom.<sup>149</sup> This is not to say, however, that Ælfric's treatise is a source text for *Genesis B*. Rather, if the poem

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<sup>141</sup> Ælfric, p. 18.

<sup>142</sup> P. E. Dastoor, 'Legends of Lucifer in Early English and in Milton', *Anglia*, 54 (1930), 213-68 (p. 220).

<sup>143</sup> Ælfric, p. 19.

<sup>144</sup> Ælfric, p. 19.

<sup>145</sup> Ælfric, p. 19.

<sup>146</sup> Ælfric, p. 20.

<sup>147</sup> Ælfric, p. 20.

<sup>148</sup> Ælfric, p. 20.

<sup>149</sup> Avitus, p. 81.

was composed around 850, as I indicated in the Introduction, it is possible that *Genesis B* would have influenced Ælfric's text, for the abbot was active over a century later.<sup>150</sup> However, save for scriptural texts,<sup>151</sup> Michael Fox identifies no direct sources for Ælfric's treatments of the rebellion,<sup>152</sup> including the one in the *Letter to Sigeweard*.<sup>153</sup> In the last instance, the similarities between the two texts shed no light on their respective origins. However, they suggest that *Genesis B* may have been inspired by earlier catechetical or liturgical texts, as I already indicated for *Genesis A*. This would explain, at any rate, why the narratives of the angelic rebellion in the two Genesis poems share distinctive didactic themes or motifs even where their narrative styles are so different. I argue that the angelic rebellion narratives in the two poems belong to the same tradition in view of these shared themes and motifs, which would easily have been transmitted from liturgical or catechetical texts to the Genesis poems, as well as across monastic institutions. The interpolation of *Genesis B* into *Genesis A* suggests that these and other thematic elements would have been prioritised by the manuscript redactor over stylistic considerations, which offers further justification to the view that the two narratives of the angelic rebellion belong, or would have been seen to belong, to the same tradition. This viewpoint also tallies with Fitzgerald's conclusion that the 'story of the fall of the angels in Anglo-Saxon England is [...] the story of a popular exegetical and apocryphal teaching turned rich literary tradition'.<sup>154</sup>

In this section I demonstrate that the angelic rebellion narratives in the Genesis poems belong to the same tradition, a tradition marked, in the first place, by shared patristic and didactic themes. It is also marked by similar notions of kingship and, quite possibly, vernacular ideas of loyalty and betrayal. The two narratives also share, in their expressions of

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<sup>150</sup> Larry J. Swain, 'Ælfric and Catechesis', in *Ælfric of Eynsham's Letter to Sigeweard: An Edition, Commentary, and Translation* (Witan Publishing, 2017), chapter I, paragraph 34, Kindle edition.

<sup>151</sup> Fox, 'Ælfric on the Creation and Fall of the Angels', p. 193.

<sup>152</sup> Ælfric also deals with the rebellion in his *De initio creaturæ*, the *Interrogationes Sigewulfi*, the *Exameron* and the *Letter to Wulfgeat*. See Fox, p. 175.

<sup>153</sup> Fox, p. 193.

<sup>154</sup> Fitzgerald, p. 275.

the angelic myth, tropological and analogical levels of meaning. These similarities are important, in that they explain why tenth century audiences would not necessarily have found the interpolation of *Genesis B* into *Genesis A* inappropriate. Moreover, the importance of these similarities transpires from discussions in the chapters that follow, as the analogical and tropological levels of meaning are also characteristic of the two poems' adaptations of Genesis-derived narratives. This is the case for the temptation and lapse of humankind in *Genesis B*, which I discuss in Chapter 3.2, and the story of Cain and his descendants in *Genesis A*, which I discuss in Chapter 4.2. In this sense, the angelic rebellion narrative in either poem informs the biblically derived narratives that follow in similar ways. This further attests to the thematic consistency of the composite narrative.

### 1.3 Satan and Hell in *Genesis B*

I discuss Satan's speech in Hell, where this character describes his situation and calls for one of his followers to tempt Adam and Eve, in section 1.3.1. I focus on the themes that underlie this text, namely the Devil's unrepentant attitude, powerlessness, and self-deception. I discuss the description of Hell in section 1.3.2. My primary objective is to show how Hell functions in the context of the narrative, with particular reference to its tropological level of meaning. The tropological aspect also informs my discussion in section 1.3.3, where I focus on the binding of the Devil and other tropological themes or motifs. While this aspect of the narrative has been considered and debated by previous commentators, in this discussion I draw attention to the similarities between *Genesis B* and *Christ and Satan*. These similarities have been largely underestimated by previous commentators. They are however important because they demonstrate that in an Old Saxon-Old English context the post-rebellion Hell was seen in terms that anticipate its post-Harrowing version. This makes the representation of the pre-Harrowing Hell directly relevant to the Christian audience in its anticipation of the theme of salvation. This makes sense in *Christ and Satan*, which goes on to tell of Christ, but also in the context of *Genesis B*, which goes on to tell of Adam and Eve's lapse in a manner that anticipates humankind's redemption. The Hell of *Genesis B* therefore informs interpretation of the Genesis-derived narrative that follows.

#### 1.3.1 Satan's Speech in Hell

Satan's speech in Hell is important because it indicates to the audience that he is unrepentant, self-deceived and powerless. The absence of repentance is evident in the Devil's belief that his punishment is unjust<sup>155</sup> and in his expression of regret at Adam's inheritance of his heavenly throne (Gen B, l. 365-66). Powerlessness is suggested by the binding motif; Satan states that his feet are bound and his hands tied (Gen B, l. 379b-80a), while his neck is

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<sup>155</sup> Janet Schrunck Ericksen, 'Lands of Unlikeness in *Genesis B*', *Studies in Philology*, 93.1 (1996), 1-20 (p. 9).

tethered (Gen B, l. 384b-85a). He also recognises that God knows of his intention to harm Adam (Gen B, l. 385b-87), which entails recognition of God's omniscience. This not only attests to his powerlessness against God, but also to his self-deception, as he later convinces one of his followers to tempt Adam and Eve to make up for the loss of Heaven.

In her analysis of lines 368-88 of Satan's speech Colette Stévanovitch argues that this passage denotes lack of control, for it ends as it started with the desire for revenge. In other words, circularity is indicative of powerlessness.<sup>156</sup> At the same time, the Devil's statement that the rebellion did not harm the land (Gen B, l. 391b-92a),<sup>157</sup> meaning Heaven, jars with landowners' obligations of loyalty towards the king as expressed in the Anglo-Latin charters. This statement is also at odds with God's generosity towards the prelapsarian chief rebel angel, which points to Satan's failure to recognise the deity's justice. God's justice suggests that a rebellion against him is intrinsically harmful. The Devil's failure, or refusal, to recognise God's justice is also evident in his belief, expressed in lines 401-02, that God controls Heaven out of might rather than right.<sup>158</sup>

As I already indicated, the Devil's intention to seek revenge for the loss of Heaven through the temptation of humankind is indicative of his self-deception. At the same time, the manner whereby the Devil convinces one of his followers to take up this mission attests to the analogical level of meaning in the narrative. This is because Satan suggests that his followers have an obligation to take up the mission in return for the gifts he handed out to them in Heaven (Gen B, l. 409-14). He appeals, in other words, to what Peter S. Baker calls the violent connotations of the gift, in that the 'gift compels the thegn to risk his life in battle or

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<sup>156</sup> Colette Stévanovitch, 'Envelope Patterns in *Genesis A* and *Genesis B*', *Neophilologus*, 80 (1996), 465-78 (p. 469).

<sup>157</sup> See Thomas D. Hill, 'Satan's Injured Innocence in *Genesis B*, 360-2, 390-2: A Gregorian Source', *English Studies*, 65.4 (1984), 289-90, for a discussion of the origin of this theme in Gregory the Great's *Moralia in Iob*.

<sup>158</sup> Robert Emmett Finnegan, 'God's *Handmaegen* Versus the Devil's *Craeft* in *Genesis B*', *English Studies in Canada*, 7.1 (1981), 1-14 (p. 7).

lose honour'.<sup>159</sup> In this instance, therefore, the speech may be said to point to vernacular notions of loyalty between lord and retainer, or rather to their abuse. As in the case of the angelic rebellion in the same poem, the attribution of such abuse to the Devil upholds the established hierarchy, or the social *status quo*, in that God is implicitly equated with a king in that the Devil is represented analogically as a rebellious subject. At the same time, the Devil may be seen as a worldly king who does not recognise God's supremacy, whose gifts are the only ones that truly matter. This means that the speech may be understood to have a tropological dimension as well, in that it constitutes a negative example for both kings and their retainers, or the poem's audience.

Now that I have explored the main themes that underlie Satan's speech, I discuss the description of Hell. This discussion not only reaffirms the Devil's powerlessness and the tropological element in the narrative, but also paves the way for my in-depth discussion of the tropological aspects of *Genesis B* (and *Christ and Satan*) in section 1.3.3. I discuss Satan's emissary, who takes it upon himself to tempt Adam and Eve in response to Satan's call, in Chapter 3.2.4.

### 1.3.2 The Hell of *Genesis B*

The description of Hell in *Genesis B* received the attention of early critics, who sought to trace the origin of the elements that make up the text. While these efforts were mostly inconclusive, I hereby take them into consideration before I discuss how each of the three elements that make up the description of Hell functions within the context of the narrative.

The Hell of *Genesis B* is alternately hot and cold as is the Hell of *Genesis A*. In his discussion of *Genesis B* Remley argues that this description is typically Germanic,<sup>160</sup> whereas Chiles Clifton Ferrell claimed that the fire is derived from Christian sources,<sup>161</sup> while the east

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<sup>159</sup> Peter S. Baker, *Honour, Exchange and Violence in Beowulf* (Cambridge: Brewer, 2013), p. 57.

<sup>160</sup> Remley, p. 150.

<sup>161</sup> Chiles Clifton Ferrell, *Teutonic Antiquities in the Anglosaxon Genesis* (Halle: Karras, 1893), p. 24.

wind and cold belong in the realm of the goddess Hel.<sup>162</sup> Abbetmeyer claimed, however, that an alternately hot and cold Hell is Enochic in origin,<sup>163</sup> or that it derives from the apocryphal Books of Enoch. Another potential source for a cold Hell is the *Breviarium in Psalmis*.<sup>164</sup> However, the oldest extant versions of this text do not predate the ninth century,<sup>165</sup> which rules it out as a certain source for *Genesis B*. Even where the origin of a cold and hot Hell remains elusive, its occurrence in line 192a of *Be Domes Dæge*<sup>166</sup> (which poem translates a Latin text about the Last Judgement attributed to Bede) and *Christ and Satan* may shed light on how it would have been understood in an early medieval English context. In Fitt III, line 131 of *Christ and Satan* the Devil states that ‘hēr hāt and ceald hwīlum mencgað’ (here heat and cold are, at times, mingled). Hell is also described as a windswept hall in line 135b, which description recalls *Genesis B*’s mention of an east wind (Gen B, l. 315). The description in *Christ and Satan* occurs at a point when the Devil resumes his lament from the previous fitts that relate to his fall; however, this section of the text appears to describe his situation after the coming of Christ rather than after the fall. Indeed, a few lines later, at 144b-48, Satan bemoans that he may only take the souls of the wicked: those who have been rejected by Christ. This scenario recalls the Harrowing of Hell in the *Gospel of Nicodemus*,<sup>167</sup> where the Devil’s loss of control over the souls of the virtuous is attributed to Christ’s intervention. The apocryphal gospel sets out that before Christ’s redemption of humankind all souls were confined in Hell. The souls of the biblical patriarchs are only liberated upon

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<sup>162</sup> Ferrell, p. 25.

<sup>163</sup> Abbetmeyer, pp. 15-16.

<sup>164</sup> Julia Barrow, ‘How Coifi Pierced Christ’s Side: A Re-Examination of Bede’s *Ecclesiastical History*, II, Chapter 13’, *The Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 62.4 (2011), 693-705 (p. 700-01).

<sup>165</sup> Martin McNamara, *The Psalms in the Early Irish Church* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), p. 49.

<sup>166</sup> ‘Be Domes Dæge’, in *Be Domes Dæge, De Die Iudicii: An Old English Version of the Latin Poem Ascribed to Bede*, ed. by J. Rawson Lumby (London: Trübner and Co, 1876), pp. 2-20 (p. 12).

<sup>167</sup> See Antonette di Paolo Healey, ‘Anglo-Saxon Use of the Apocryphal Gospel’, in *The Anglo-Saxons: Synthesis and Achievement*, ed by J. Douglas Woods and David A.E. Pelteret (Waterloo, Ontario: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1985), pp. 93-104 (p. 101), for a discussion of the influence of this apocryphal gospel on Old English poetry directly relating to Christ’s descent into Hell.



Christ's descent into Hell.<sup>168</sup> Hence, the alternately cold and hot Hell of *Christ and Satan* is rendered in the context of the aftermath of the angelic fall, but in a manner that recalls Satan's situation in a post-Harrowing of Hell scenario. This motif in *Be Domes Dæge* may be understood in similar terms, for it is combined with the judgement, an event that evidently postdates the Harrowing in mythical chronology.

I indicated, in section 1.1, that *Christ and Satan* has a tropological dimension, whereby the events in the narrative are rendered in a manner directly relevant to the experience of the Christian audience. This is achieved through the chronological displacement of the binding of the Devil in the beginning of time, where this motif properly belongs to Christ's Harrowing of Hell. The same may be said of Satan's loss of control over the souls of the virtuous, which likewise pertains to the Harrowing rather than the aftermath of the angelic rebellion. In view of the points I raise above, I contend that this is also likely to be true of the alternately cold and hot Hells of *Genesis B* and *Christ and Satan*. This idea is also supported by the descriptions of Hell and a Hell-like location in King Edgar's Privilege to New Minster, Winchester. In the opening section of the document, which relates to the angelic creation and fall, Hell is equated with eternal flames: 'aeternis baratri incendiis',<sup>169</sup> (eternal fires of the Abyss). However, section ix of the same document, which pronounces anathema against anyone who would plot against the monks, describes those punished as 'frigore stridentes feruore perusti letitia priuati merore anxii catenis igneis compediti',<sup>170</sup> (shrieking with cold, scorched with heat, deprived of joy, troubled by lamentation, fettered by fiery shackles). Even where this second location may allude to an intermediary place of

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<sup>168</sup> 'The Gospel of Nicodemus', in *The Apocryphal New Testament*, ed. by J. K. Elliot (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), pp. 164-204 (p. 189).

<sup>169</sup> 'Eadgar Rex Hoc Priuilegium Nouo Edidit Monasterio ac Omnipotenti Domino Eiusque Genitrici Marie Eius Laudans Magnalia Concessit', p. 75. All translations of this text are taken from the same source.

<sup>170</sup> 'Eadgar Rex hoc Priuilegium Nouo Edidit Monasterio ac Omnipotenti Domino Eiusque Genitrici Marie Eius Laudans Magnalia Concessit', p. 83.

punishment,<sup>171</sup> the text suggests that punishment by heat and cold belongs to narratives set well after the immediate aftermath of the angelic rebellion. In the context of *Christ and Satan* and *Genesis B* (as well as *Genesis A*) this Hell may therefore have been assigned tropological significance by the audience, or at least by those individuals within the audience who would have had knowledge of such nuances.

The ‘niobedd’ (Gen B, l. 343a) (corpse-bed) into which Satan is cast is the second element that makes up the description of Hell in *Genesis B*. Ferrell compared this corpse-bed to the Náströnd, the corpse-beach of Norse myth;<sup>172</sup> however this suggestion is conjectural at best. In the first place, the similarity between the Norse myth and the poem is vague. Secondly, Norse written sources postdate *Genesis B*. It is more likely, rather, that the corpse-bed in *Genesis B* would reflect notions, known to have persisted into the later phase of early medieval English history, whereby ‘barrows were associated with a range of supernatural and demonic entities’, which would have been derived from ‘surviving pagan beliefs that regarded the afterlife as a ‘quasi-physical’ existence in the ground of the grave’.<sup>173</sup> The direct association between the corpse-bed and Satan’s ‘morðer’ (death) in the preceding line, line 342b, suggests that this is plausible. It is to be recalled, however, that *Genesis B* is a translation from Old Saxon, which casts doubt over any conclusions reached on the basis of pre-Christian English beliefs. The provenance of this description of Hell therefore remains elusive. Even if it originates with a vernacular non-Christian source, however, it is integrated into the narrative’s Christian framework. This is because the corpse-bed associates Satan with death, which in this instance is a by-word for perdition, as well as powerlessness.

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<sup>171</sup> See St Aldhelm’s vision of the afterlife, which comprises a location that is associated with both heat and cold, but is said not to be Hell, in *Bede’s Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, ed. by Bertram Colgrave and R.A.B. Mynors (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969), pp. 488 and 90.

<sup>172</sup> Ferrell, p. 22.

<sup>173</sup> Sarah Semple, ‘Illustrations of Damnation in Late Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts’, *Anglo-Saxon England*, 32 (2003), 231-45 (p. 240).

This brings me to the binding of Satan, which is the third element that makes up the description of Hell in *Genesis B*. Ferrell argued that the bound Satan recalls the Norse deity Loki. Inasmuch as the Devil is bound by iron chains, Loki is bound by the intestines of his son Narfi, which turn into iron.<sup>174</sup> It is interesting that the iron chains in these texts are not mirrored in other relevant Old English texts. Fitts I and III of *Christ and Satan* (CS, l. 57b-58, 155b-58) make reference to heat and burning bonds, and so does Cynewulf in *Christ II*.<sup>175</sup> Yet, this is not quite sufficient to demonstrate that the Norse myth is a source for the binding of Satan in *Genesis B*. In the first place, the Norse text postdates the poem; secondly, the binding motif forms part of the Harrowing of Hell tradition, as I already suggested.

The binding of Satan may therefore be treated as a Christian motif, as for the other elements that make up the description of Hell. This motif is also associated specifically with the Harrowing of Hell tradition, which assigns it a tropological dimension. This is also true, I contend, of the description of Hell as alternately hot and cold. I explore this level of meaning within the narrative, as well as in *Christ and Satan*, in the next section.

### **1.3.3 *Christ and Satan* and *Genesis B*: The Binding of Satan and the Tropological Dimension**

I discussed the tropological aspect of the binding of Satan in section 1.1 with reference to lines 1376-85 of *Andreas*, where I also made reference to this level of meaning in Fitt III of *Christ and Satan* and *Genesis B*. I also discussed, in section 1.3.2, Satan's knowledge of his limitations in relation to human souls in Fitt III, lines 144b-48 of *Christ and Satan*, which is also tropological. In this section I provide a more in-depth assessment of these and related matters in *Christ and Satan* and *Genesis B*. I contend that my analysis provides important insights into the workings of tropological elements and motifs across Old Saxon and Old

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<sup>174</sup> Ferrell, p. 18.

<sup>175</sup> Lines 730-36 of 'Christ II: The Ascension', in *The Old English Poems of Cynewulf*, ed. and trans. by Robert E. Bjork (London: Harvard University Press, 2013), pp. 1-32 (pp. 20 and 22).

English literary productions, which points to a common tradition for the representation of Satan and Hell after the angelic rebellion.

I already indicated, earlier in this chapter, that the tropological dimension in the third fitt of *Christ and Satan* is the result of chronological displacement. This is because the binding of the Devil, a motif associated with Christ's Harrowing of Hell and the *Gospel of Nicodemus*,<sup>176</sup> and therefore with salvation, is what makes the narrative of the angelic fall in the poem directly relevant to its Christian audience. The *Gospel*, as for the Augustinian and Gregorian exegetical thinking I discussed in section 1.1, draws a distinction between Satan's power before and after the coming of Christ, as the Devil is only bound by Christ in the course of the Harrowing. In my discussion in the same section I also indicated that this distinction may have been known in early medieval England. This is affirmed by Bede's knowledge of the *Gospel*<sup>177</sup> and its later translation into Old English.<sup>178</sup> While the proper chronological context of the binding theme may well have been known, Fitt III of *Christ and Satan* integrates it into a narrative of the fall. In this context, Satan's knowledge that he may only have those souls allowed to him by Christ is also chronologically displaced, as this theme likewise pertains to the Harrowing. Fitt III therefore contains at least two themes that, in chronological terms, should be alien to the angelic fall. As I already indicated, both of these themes are tropological. It is possible that this also applies to the hot and cold Hell, which description may have been derived from narratives relating to the Last Judgement, as I suggested in section 1.3.2. The opening to the poem's fourth fitt, in lines 193-94, also attests to a tropological approach, as the narrator represents the angelic rebellion as a negative exemplum for humankind when it is set out that everyone must resolve not to anger the Son

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<sup>176</sup> Dendle, p. 68.

<sup>177</sup> M. B. McNamee, 'Beowulf— An Allegory of Salvation', in *An Anthology of Beowulf Criticism*, ed. Lewis E. Nicholson (London: University of Notre Dame Press, 1963), pp. 331-52 (p. 341) (first publ. in *Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, 59 (1960), 190-207).

<sup>178</sup> See C. W. Marx, 'The *Gospel of Nicodemus* in Old English and Middle English', in *The Medieval Gospel of Nicodemus Texts, Intertexts and Contexts in Western Europe*, ed. by Zbigniew Izydorczyk (Tempe: Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies, 1997), pp. 207-60.

of God. The poem's representation of Satan's rebellion as one directed against Christ, rather than an unspecified figure of the Trinity, is likewise tropological. Christ's presence in an Old Testament-related narrative is clearly intended to prompt the audience to ponder the theme of salvation, a theme that is also invoked by the other themes I mentioned. Similar arguments may also be made in relation to other aspects of the narrative that go beyond the scope of the present discussion, such as Satan's followers' recognition of their guilt in lines 228-29a, and the Devil's submission to Christ's command, at the end of the poem, to measure Hell's height, depth and width with his hands.<sup>179</sup>

The themes I discussed above, with the exception of Satan's knowledge of humankind's salvation, also occur in *Genesis B*. John F. Vickrey wrote that the binding of Satan in this text fulfils a specific purpose, in that it telescopes the Devil's fall and Christ's Harrowing of Hell into one event.<sup>180</sup> This conflation of narrative traditions recalls, on a broad conceptual basis, King Hrothgar's *scop*'s composition built, *inter alia*, on the manipulation of chronology and place in the amalgamation of Sigemund's deeds and Beowulf's exploits following his victory against Grendel.<sup>181</sup> It therefore appears that this narrative style, which in *Genesis B* delivers a tropological level of meaning, is also attested in narratives of vernacular origin. Be that as it may, *Genesis B* represents a devil that belongs to the sixth age, the age following the coming of Christ.<sup>182</sup> The tropological level of meaning, moreover, manifests itself throughout the narrative. *Genesis B*, again like *Christ and Satan*, invites the audience to compare the rebel angel before his fall to anyone who would strive against God (Gen B, l. 295b-99a). Even where *Genesis B*, unlike *Christ and Satan*, does not describe a rebellion

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<sup>179</sup> Alvin A. Lee, *The Guest-Hall of Eden: Four Essays on the Design of Old English Poetry* (London: Yale University Press, 1972), pp. 20-21.

<sup>180</sup> John F. Vickrey, *Genesis B and the Comedic Imperative* (Lanham: Lehigh University Press, 2015), pp. 111-12.

<sup>181</sup> See Helen Damico, 'Grendel's Reign of Terror: From History to Vernacular Epic', in *Myths, Legends and Heroes: Essays on Old Norse and Old English Literature in Honour of John McKinnell*, ed by Daniel Anlezark (London: University of Toronto Press, 2011), pp. 148-64 (p. 149).

<sup>182</sup> Vickrey, p. 37.

directed against Christ, his presence is invoked in the course of the temptation of Adam and Eve, particularly by way of the term *nergend* (saviour), and in the description of Eve's vision, which I discuss in Chapter 3.2.3. *Genesis B* and Fitt III of *Christ and Satan* also share Hell's alternately hot and cold climate, a theme that may have been derived from narratives set after the coming of Christ rather than the angelic fall.

However, the appeal to the Christian audience, or the tropological level of meaning in *Genesis B*, is also delivered by themes that have no counterpart in *Christ and Satan*. In the first place, as I already suggested, tropological representation in *Genesis B* extends beyond the angelic fall. This is attested, *inter alia*, by the juxtaposition of the two trees, the tree of life and the tree of knowledge of good and evil, ahead of the temptation of Adam and Eve. This text highlights the choice to be made by the couple rather than the known outcome of the biblical original.<sup>183</sup> Secondly, the tropological aspect in *Genesis B* is also expressed by way of its anticipation of the Devil's deception,<sup>184</sup> which theme is typically 'focused on the Incarnation and especially on Christ's death'.<sup>185</sup> This theme is central to the *Gospel of Nicodemus*, where Satan is ignorant of Christ's true identity and instigates the Jews to kill him. The consequences of Christ's death are only anticipated by Hades, who fears that Christ will carry away the souls of the virtuous.<sup>186</sup> The Devil's deception is adapted to a different narrative context in *Genesis B*, where Satan is bound and cognisant of God's omniscience. In this scenario self-deception is the only frame of mind that may credibly explain this character's persistence in seeking revenge.<sup>187</sup> While Satan's self-deception is demanded by the plot, it also suggests that he is driven by passion rather than reason, particularly when

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<sup>183</sup> Vickrey, p. 39.

<sup>184</sup> Vickrey, p. 112.

<sup>185</sup> Vickrey, p. 111.

<sup>186</sup> 'The Gospel of Nicodemus', p. 187.

<sup>187</sup> Vickrey, p. 112.

combined with his envy of humankind.<sup>188</sup> In contrast, *Christ and Satan* represents a Devil who knows of his limitations, in that he may only obtain the souls of the wicked.

Even where the expressions of the tropological dimension in the two poems are not identical, the similarities between them are distinctive, in that they are not to be found in all narratives of the angelic rebellion and fall. *Genesis A* does not explore the Devil's motivations, nor does it represent him bound in Hell. Avitus's version of the myth likewise lacks the binding motif, as well as an alternately hot and cold Hell. Ælfric's rendition of the angelic rebellion, moreover, lacks a description of the angels in Hell, while Revelation 12.9 suggests that Satan after his fall should have been free to roam the Earth rather than confined in Hell.<sup>189</sup> The similarities between *Genesis B* and *Christ and Satan* are therefore significant, which suggests that the two texts belong to the same tradition for the tropological rendition of the post-rebellion Hell, a tradition that spans across Old Saxon and Old English narratives. Both narratives, in their tropological representations of Hell, suggest that redemption is prefigured by Old Testament and related narratives, even if only implicitly so. In this sense, the representation of Hell in *Genesis B*, as for the angelic rebellion in the Genesis poems, informs the biblically-derived narratives that follow. In the context of *Christ and Satan* the tropological Hell anticipates the salvation brought by Christ in the rest of the poem. Therefore, *Genesis B* and *Christ and Satan* adopt a very similar approach even if one is focused on biblically-derived Old Testament and the other on New Testament narratives.

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<sup>188</sup> Elan Justice Pavlinich, 'Satan Surfacing: (Predetermined) Individuality in the Old English *Genesis B*', *Interdisciplinary Humanities*, 30.1 (2013), 88-100 (p. 92).

<sup>189</sup> Dendle, p. 67.

## 1.4 Conclusion

As I indicated in section 1.3.3 the similarities between *Genesis B* and *Christ and Satan* suggest that the two narratives are tropological and that they express the same tradition for the representation of Hell. On broadly similar lines the themes that underlie the representations of the angelic rebellion in *Genesis A* and *Genesis B* point to recourse to the same tradition in the two narratives. Indeed, the two texts resort to themes and motifs that, while similar to each other, differ significantly from other versions of this narrative, including scriptural and Latin accounts. This is the case even where the two Genesis poems explore different nuances of the rebellion. *Genesis B* focuses on the chief rebel angel and relates to humankind's lapse, which follows it in the sequence of the narrative, while the *Genesis A* version generally represents the rebels as a collective and relates to God's act of Creation. The connections between the expressions of the angelic rebellion in the two texts have, generally speaking, been underestimated by previous commentators. This is also true of the similarities between Hell as rendered in *Genesis B* and *Christ and Satan*.



Table 1

Motif	<i>Gen A</i>	<i>Gen B</i>	<i>Guthlac A</i>	<i>Christ and Satan</i> (Fitts I and III)	<i>Andreas</i>	<i>Solomon And Saturn</i> (II)	<i>Privilege to New Minster, Winchester</i> (Angelic Rebellion)	<i>Privilege to New Minster, Winchester</i> (Those who plot against the monks)
Angelic Rebellion directed against God/the creator	X	X	X			X	X	X
Angelic Rebellion directed specifically against Christ				X	X			
Angelic Rebellion and Harrowing of Hell kept separate (or only one event described)	X		X				X	X
Angelic Rebellion and Harrowing of Hell conflated through the binding of Satan		X		X	X	X		
Alternately Hot and Cold Hell	X	X		X				X

## 2 The Creation in *Genesis A* and *Beowulf*

### 2.1 Background

The Creation is a recurrent theme in Old English verse.<sup>1</sup> I hereby compare this theme in *Genesis A* and *Beowulf*, the two poems at the centre of this chapter, with *Christ and Satan* and *Andreas*, as well as with the Latin and Old English versions of Cædmon's *Hymn*<sup>2</sup> in Bede's *Historia Ecclesiastica Gentis Anglorum*. These texts explicitly Christianise the Creation, either by way of allusion to the Trinity (*Christ and Satan*), by conveying a salvific message through Christian knowledge of God (*Andreas*), or in the identification of God as the preserver of humankind (Cædmon's *Hymn*). I also explore the Creation in *Genesis A* with reference to early medieval conceptions of nature and patristic texts. I draw on previous commentators in this and in other aspects of my analysis of the biblical poem.<sup>3</sup> My focus on the literary and cultural contexts of *Genesis A* not only reaffirms that the poem shares its approach to the Creation with other narrative texts, but also enables analysis of the manner in which *Beowulf* differs from *Genesis A* and other Old English renditions of the Creation. This is the case even where the heroic-elegiac poem also draws on Christian interpretative

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<sup>1</sup> See Ruth Wehlau, *"The Riddle of Creation": Metaphor Structures in Old English Poetry* (New York: Peter Lang Publishers, 1997), pp. 33-41, who discusses the Creation theme in, *inter alia*, *The Gifts of Men* and *The Order of the World*. See also Stephen Scott Norsworthy, ' "Sing me Creation": Creation in the Old English *Genesis* in Physical and Cultural Context' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Southwestern Louisiana, Graduate Faculty, 1998), p. 96, where the creation of heaven, earth and sea is identified in, *inter alia*, the Junius 11 poems and *Judith*.

<sup>2</sup> Even if according to Bruce Holsinger, 'The Parable of Cædmon's *Hymn*: Liturgical Invention and Literary Tradition', *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, 106.2 (2007), 149-75 (p. 165), Cædmon's song is not, in technical terms, a liturgical Hymn, I hereby follow the established convention of referring to it as such.

<sup>3</sup> C. Abbetmeyer, *Old English Poetical Motives derived from the Doctrine of Sin* (Minneapolis: Wilson, 1903); Bernard F. Huppé, *Doctrine and Poetry: Augustine's Influence on Old English Poetry* (New York: State University of New York, 1959); Frederick M. Biggs, 'Elene Line 1320 and *Genesis A* Line 185', *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen*, 86.4 (1985), 447-52; Paul G. Remley, 'The Latin Textual Basis of *Genesis A*', *Anglo-Saxon England*, 17 (1988), 163-89; Ananya Jahanara Kabir, *Paradise, Death and Doomsday in Anglo-Saxon Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001); Jennifer Neville, *Representations of the Natural World in Old English Poetry* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004); Fabienne L. Michelet, *Creation, Migration and Conquest: Imaginary Geography and Sense of Space in Old English Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006); and, Charles D. Wright, 'Genesis A *ad litteram*', in *Old English Literature and the Old Testament*, ed. by Michael Fox and Manish Sharma (London: University of Toronto Press, 2012), pp. 121-71.

traditions. My discussion of the Creation in this text focuses on the manner whereby it draws attention to the Danes' limited knowledge of God and their ignorance of salvation. I argue, in other words, that the poem represents the Creation as a paradigm against which the audience may assess the Danes' ignorance of scriptural truth and its implications. While *Beowulf* assumes scriptural knowledge in its audience, it explicitly sets out that the characters only have non-scriptural, and therefore partial and incomplete, knowledge of the Creation. This may not only be read in the style, or the comparative lack of epithets in the *Beowulf* Creation song, but also in the *gastbona* (slayer of souls) episode that follows, where the Danes worship at a heathen shrine in response to Grendel's depredations. I argue, in line with J. B. Bessinger,<sup>4</sup> that this episode forms part of the poem's Creation sequence, and that it should be read with reference to the song. My interpretation of these episodes is also informed by the work of other commentators.<sup>5</sup> However, I also compare the Creation sequence in *Beowulf* with the representation of heathens in thrall to the Devil, the identification of God as creator, and the use of epithets in *Andreas*. I contend that this discussion better illustrates the significance of the Creation and the *gastbona* episodes in *Beowulf*, which may have been inspired by catechetical texts.

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<sup>4</sup> See J. B. Bessinger, 'Homage to Cædmon and Others: A Beowulfian Praise Song', in *Old English Studies in Honour of John C. Pope*, ed. by Robert B. Burlin and Edward B. Irving (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1974), pp. 91-106.

<sup>5</sup> Anne F. Payne, 'The Danes' Prayers to the *Gastbona* in *Beowulf*', *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen*, 80.4 (1979), 308-14; Malcolm Andrew, 'Grendel in Hell', *English Studies*, 62.5 (1981), 401-10; Marijane Osborn, 'The Great Feud', in *The Beowulf Reader*, ed. by Peter S. Baker (Abingdon: Routledge, Taylor and Francis Group, 1995), pp. 111-26 (first publ. in *Publications of the Modern Language Association of America* (1978): 973-81); Richard North, *Heathen Gods in Old English Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997); Andy Orchard, *A Critical Companion to Beowulf* (Cambridge: Brewer, 2003); Margaret E. Goldsmith, *The Mode and Meaning of Beowulf*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013); David Nathaniel Grubbs, 'The One Who Knew Sang: Reading *Beowulf*'s Creation Song in the Christian Apologetic Tradition' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Georgia, 2014); William Helder, *How the Beowulf Poet Employs Biblical Typology* (Lampeter: Mellen Press, 2014); Tristan Major, *Undoing Babel: The Tower of Babel in Anglo-Saxon Literature* (London: University of Toronto Press, 2018), pp. 242-43; Christopher Abram, 'At Home in the Fens with the Grendelkin', in *Dating Beowulf*, ed. by Daniel C. Remein and Erica Weaver (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2020), pp. 120-44; and, Michael Fox, *Following the Formula in Beowulf, Örvär-Odds Saga, and Tolkien* (Cham: Palgrave MacMillan, 2020).

## 2.2 The Creation in *Genesis A*

The opening verses of *Genesis A*, which I discussed in the previous chapter, are largely extra-biblical. In contrast, the account of the Creation I discuss in this section, which may be said to commence in line 103, is closely based on the biblical original from lines 112 to 234. Lines 112-13 adapt Gen 1.1, which sets out that in the beginning God created Heaven and Earth.<sup>6</sup> This means that lines 103-11, which introduce the act of Creation, are just as extra-biblical as the poem's opening 102 lines. In these lines God is not represented creating *ex nihilo*, or out of nothing, or even gazing upon neutral chaos, but rather he transforms 'an apparently pre-existing land that has from the beginning antagonistic power'.<sup>7</sup> The negativity inherent to the matter utilised by God in the act of Creation is illustrated by the phrases 'drihtne fremde'<sup>8</sup> (alien to the Lord) and 'idel and unnyt' (Gen A, l. 106a) (empty and useless). Jennifer Neville suggested, on the basis of this description, that the primordial matter utilised by God is comparable to an uncultivated forest, rich in resources but lacking in beneficial qualities due to its as yet natural state.<sup>9</sup> The suggestion that the representation of primordial matter in *Genesis A* may be equated with a wilderness is supported by Old English representations of nature in the elegiac *The Wanderer*<sup>10</sup> and *The Seafarer*. In these texts, after all, the natural environment is equated with the misery experienced by the respective speakers.<sup>11</sup> In this context, God's transformation of the alien and useless primordial matter into something bright, safe and fruitful<sup>12</sup> may be seen as an exemplar, or an archetype, for the construction of

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<sup>6</sup> Facing page biblical verses and corresponding *Genesis A* text in *Genesis A- A New Edition*, rev. edn by A. N. Doane (Tempe: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2013), pp. 148-49.

<sup>7</sup> Neville, p. 59.

<sup>8</sup> Line 105b of *Genesis A- A New Edition*, p. 149. All references to *Genesis A* from this edition shall henceforth be given parenthetically in the main text, indicated by the abbreviation Gen A. All translations of *Genesis A* are mine.

<sup>9</sup> Neville, p. 59.

<sup>10</sup> Neville, p. 59.

<sup>11</sup> Neville, p. 36,

<sup>12</sup> Michelet, p. 46.

buildings or towns.<sup>13</sup> *Genesis A* therefore adopts a utilitarian approach to the environment,<sup>14</sup> which stance may be traced back to Augustine, whose major works, including *De civitate Dei*, are characterised by a dichotomy between nature and grace.<sup>15</sup> The point, of course, is that God's efforts transform the resources he draws upon, just as the construction of towns or buildings transforms the natural environment. The extra-biblical text in *Genesis A* therefore assigns additional significance to the Genesis myth, which not only explains how the world known to the audience came to be, but also acts as precedent, or as an archetype, for human efforts to transform and make use of the natural environment. I contend that this analogical representation of God's creation is implicitly based on the notion inscribed into Gen 1.28<sup>16</sup> that God gives humankind authority over nature when he proclaims that Adam and Eve would exercise dominion over Earth and all its creatures. It is also significant that in lines 144-46, even where these belong to the part of the narrative that draws closely on the biblical original, the heavens should be described as 'hefontimber' (Gen A, l. 146a) (heaven-structure), which is of course strongly suggestive of a building.<sup>17</sup> This means that *Genesis A* not only represents God's creation as an act that anticipates, and justifies, humankind's transformation of the natural environment. Creation is also anthropocentric, in that Earth is created for the benefit, or as a home, for humankind. While the text delivers anthropocentrism in its extra-biblical components, this concept is also evident in the biblical original, as suggested, *inter alia*, by Gen 1.28, which I mentioned above.

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<sup>13</sup> Michelet, p. 38.

<sup>14</sup> See Heide Estes, 'Weather and the Creation of the Human in the Exeter Book Riddles', *Medieval Ecocriticism*, 1 (2021), 11-27, for a discussion of riddles that represent the natural environment independently of humankind, which contrast the approach to the Creation in *Genesis A*.

<sup>15</sup> Alfred K. Siewers, 'Landscapes of Conversion: Guthlac's Mound and Grendel's Mere as Expressions of Anglo-Saxon Nation Building', in *The Postmodern Beowulf*, ed. by Eileen A. Joy and Mary K. Ramsey (Morgantown: West Virginia University Press, 2006), pp. 199-258 (p. 205). (first publ. in *Viator* 34 (2003): 1-39)

<sup>16</sup> 'Genesis', in *The Vulgate Bible Vol. I The Pentateuch*, ed. by Swift Edgar (London: Harvard University Press, 2010), pp. 1-274 (p. 6). All citations and translations from the Vulgate Genesis are taken from this edition.

<sup>17</sup> Michelet, p. 52.

My arguments and conclusions in relation to the extra-biblical elements of the *Genesis A* account of the Creation are largely based on analyses made by previous commentators. However, in the course of this section I also emphasise that the anthropocentrism characteristic of this text is complemented by the salvific outlook of the biblically-derived part of the narrative. This means that *Genesis A* establishes a conceptual interrelationship between God's Creation, humankind's efforts to transform the natural environment, and salvation. The poem therefore offers ideological justification for society's encroachment into the natural environment, which becomes part of the divine plan. In a similar fashion, the representation of the rebel angels in both Genesis poems not only justifies God's ways, to use a Miltonic turn of phrase, but also the authority of kings.

As I indicated above, *Genesis A* follows the biblical original closely from line 112, which narrative is interrupted by a lacuna in the text. In the last scene described before this lacuna God separates land from sea as he sets the waves in their course. The Creation in the extant text resumes after the hexameral account that corresponds to the first chapter of the Book of Genesis, for at line 169 God answers to Adam's need for a companion through the creation of Eve. More text is missing at the end of line 205. The account of the Creation in the poem comes to a definitive close in line 234 as the description of the Euphrates is interrupted by yet another lacuna. This is followed by the *Genesis B* interpolation. In his edition of *Genesis A* A. N. Doane identifies the verses from the Book of Genesis that have been reproduced in the poem. I hereby reproduce in tabular format the results of Doane's research in relation to the lines dealing with the Creation. The table splits the account of the Creation into three parts, in line with the aforementioned lacunae in the text.

**Table 2**

Part	<i>Genesis A</i>	Vulgate (and Vetus) Genesis
1	ll. 112-68a <sup>18</sup>	1.1-6 and 1.9-10 <sup>19</sup>
2	ll. 169-205	2.18, 2.21, 2.22 (selection) (cf. 2.7); 1.27 and 1.28 <sup>20</sup>
3	ll. 206-234	1.31, 2.1, 2.6, 2.5, 2.10-11 and 2.13-14 <sup>21</sup>

The omission of verses 1.7 and 1.8 (Part 1 of Table 2) in the hexameral account, which verses relate the division of the waters and the naming of the firmament *caelum*, may be attributed exclusively to avoidance of repetition. However, this is not the case for the versification of the biblical narrative having to do with the creation of humankind. The poem reproduces Gen 2.18, 2.21 and 2.22 (Part 2 of Table 2) in succession; these verses relate to man's need for a companion and the creation of Eve from Adam's rib after the latter had been cast into a deep sleep. The adaptation of these verses is followed by what Paul G. Remley describes as an uncanonical reference to Eve's soul<sup>22</sup> in lines 184b-85a: 'feorh in gedyde, | ece saula' ([God] gave life, an eternal soul). As I indicated in the table, Doane set out that these half-lines are comparable to Gen 2.7, which tells of God's breath of life into Adam. The poem then adapts Gen 1.27 and 1.28, namely the creation of man after God's own image and the 'Crescite, et multiplicamini' (Gen. 1.28) (Increase, and multiply) command. Verse 2.25, which refers to Adam and Eve's unashamed nudity, is omitted.<sup>23</sup> Clearly, the narrative of the creation and status assigned to humankind is rendered sequentially; an approach that is also characteristic

<sup>18</sup> See Kabir, *Paradise, Death and Doomsday in Anglo-Saxon Literature*, p. 145, for a discussion of landscape in *Genesis A* with reference, *inter alia*, to the term *græsungrene* in line 117a.

<sup>19</sup> Facing page biblical verses and corresponding *Genesis A* text in *Genesis A- A New Edition*, pp. 148-51.

<sup>20</sup> *Genesis A- A New Edition*, pp. 152-55.

<sup>21</sup> *Genesis A- A New Edition*, pp. 154-57.

<sup>22</sup> Remley, pp. 172-73.

<sup>23</sup> Facing page biblical verses and corresponding *Genesis A* text in *Genesis A- A New Edition*, p. 2.

of Cyprianus's late antique biblical verse, where the creation of Adam and Eve is likewise conflated from incidents drawn from Gen 1 and Gen 2.<sup>24</sup> *Genesis A* therefore streamlines the biblically-derived narrative in the manner of Cyprianus's *Heptateuch* and offers a single and readily understandable account. This narrative style evades a problem that is potentially posed by the biblical narrative, namely that the creation of woman may be understood to have happened twice. *Genesis A* also clarifies that Eve has an eternal soul. Hence, the poem not only streamlines the biblically-derived narrative, it also rules out unorthodox interpretations of the biblical text. The sequential account of the creation of Adam and Eve I just discussed is followed by a description of God's creation of Earth, which is mainly drawn from the second chapter of the Book of Genesis (Part 3 of Table 2).

The sequential representation of the creation of humankind in *Genesis A* suggests that the poem may be a product of the same tradition that produced universal histories or world chronicles.<sup>25</sup> It also conforms to an interpretation of the text as catechetical *narratio*, particularly as these narratives often comprise the Creation, the fall of the rebel angels, and the creation of humankind. Moreover, catechetical *narratio* typically lacks extra-literal exegesis of the corresponding biblical text,<sup>26</sup> which according to Charles D. Wright is also true of *Genesis A*, which likewise forgoes allegory. Wright observes that the poem's literal approach to biblical versification is attested, *inter alia*, by its adaptation of the hexameral account of the Creation. He argues, for instance, that *Genesis A* does not equate God's separation of light from darkness with the separation of the good and rebel angels.<sup>27</sup> I contend that, in this respect, the poem adopts a different approach in the biblically-derived account of the Creation as opposed to the largely apocryphal or non-biblically derived material in its opening lines. I suggested, in the previous chapter, that *Genesis A*'s account of the angelic

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<sup>24</sup> Patrick McBrine, *Biblical Epics in Late Antiquity and Anglo-Saxon England* (London: University of Toronto Press, 2017), p. 72.

<sup>25</sup> Wright, p. 127.

<sup>26</sup> Wright, p. 158.

<sup>27</sup> Wright, p. 131.



myth conveys meaning at the tropological and analogical levels. Similarly, the non-biblically derived text relating to the Creation may be interpreted analogically, in that God's act of Creation recalls humankind's transformation of the natural environment. However, the absence of an allegorical dimension in the biblically-derived Creation in *Genesis A* does not mean that it lacks exegetical import. In his edition of the poem Doane argues that line 185b, 'heo wæron englum gelice' (they were like angels) may be interpreted as a variation on Gen 1.27, which establishes that man was made after God's image.<sup>28</sup> C. Abbetmeyer made a similar observation in relation to the perfection of Adam and Eve in lines 187-91,<sup>29</sup> given that this text appears to be based on the same biblical verse. More importantly, Wright himself points out that line 185b also attests to New Testament influence, as Luke 20.36 equates those who attained the kingdom of God with the angels. The text in question therefore attests to familiarity with biblical commentary that links Gen 1.27 with the New Testament.<sup>30</sup>

However, when it comes to an assessment of the purpose and method of the biblically-derived Creation passage in *Genesis A*, what is omitted may be just as important as what is included or added. I have already pointed out that the poem omits Gen 2.25 from its account of the creation of Adam and Eve, which verse relates that the two are not ashamed of their nudity. The excision of this verse ostensibly jars with the Junius 11 drawings that represent Adam and Eve in the nude. The nakedness represented in these drawings, however, may be described as partial, in that the prelapsarian first parents' genitals are not drawn. This denotes 'sinless innocence and an absence of lust'.<sup>31</sup> In contrast, in the picture of the monstrous Donestre and the woman in folio 103v in Cotton Vittellius A.xv the monster's genitals are clearly visible and the woman waves her skirts 'in what may be read as a

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<sup>28</sup> Facing page biblical verses and corresponding *Genesis A* text in *Genesis A- A New Edition*, pp. 152-153. The connection between this line from *Genesis A* and Gen 1.27 was also made by Biggs.

<sup>29</sup> Abbetmeyer, p. 23.

<sup>30</sup> Wright, p. 129.

<sup>31</sup> Christopher Monk, 'A Context for the Sexualisation of Monsters in *The Wonders of the East*', *Anglo-Saxon England*, 41 (2012), 79-99 (p. 88).

provocative gesture'.<sup>32</sup> Moreover, in the Junius 11 manuscript itself the fallen angels acquire male genitals as a consequence of their fall.<sup>33</sup> The nudity represented in the Adam and Eve pictures is therefore in line with exegetical interpretations of Gen 2.25, as attested by Bede, who cites Rom 7.23 to state that the prelapsarian Adam and Eve are not beset by sin. This is the reason why they have no cause to feel ashamed.<sup>34</sup>

Seen from purely artistic or exegetical considerations, therefore, the omission of Gen 2.25 from the *Genesis A* text may come across as surprising. However, the text employs a comparable approach in its rendition of the creation of Eve from Adam's rib, where the audience is told that the removal of his rib causes the first man no injury.<sup>35</sup> The corresponding verse, Gen 2.21, only relates, in the typically terse biblical style, that God casts Adam into a deep sleep and takes one of his ribs. Wright attributes the explanation given in the poem to an anticipated audience response based on the physical rather than the figural aspects of the procedure.<sup>36</sup> Hence, the text gives no consideration to the typological associations between Adam and Christ based on this episode.<sup>37</sup> The explanation given in *Genesis A*, in other words, may well reflect concerns over the ability of the audience to interpret the biblical text. It is interesting that Ælfric explicitly expresses concern over the ability of a readership or audience to properly interpret Old Testament narrative in his preface to the translation of the Book of Genesis:

ic ondræde, gif sum dysig man þas boc ræt oððe rædan g[e]hyrþ, þæt he wille wenan,  
þæt he mote lybban nu on þære tide, ær þan þe seo ealde æ gesett wære.<sup>38</sup>

<sup>32</sup> Monk, p. 80.

<sup>33</sup> Catherine E. Karkov, 'Exiles from the Kingdom: The Naked and the Damned in Anglo-Saxon Art', in *Naked Before God: Uncovering the Body in Anglo-Saxon England*, ed. by Benjamin C. Withers and Jonathan Wilcox (Morgantown: West Virginia University Press, 2003), pp. 181-220 (p. 184).

<sup>34</sup> Bede, *On Genesis*, trans. by Calvin B. Kendall (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2008), pp. 124-25.

<sup>35</sup> Wright, p. 132.

<sup>36</sup> Wright, p. 132.

<sup>37</sup> Wright, p. 132.

<sup>38</sup> Ælfric, 'Preface to Genesis', in *The Old English Version of the Heptateuch, Aelfric's Treatise on the Old and New Testament and his Preface to Genesis*, ed. by S. J. Crawford (London: Early English Text Society, 1922), pp. 76-80 (p. 76). The translation is mine.

(I fear lest a foolish man should read this book or hear it read out to him and that he might wish to think that he may live now as they lived back in the day under the Old Law.)

The omission of verse 2.25 from *Genesis A* may have been informed by similar considerations, as well as possible audience prudishness. At any rate, a prudish stance to biblical narrative appears to be attested by early medieval English adaptations of the story of Judith. Hugh Magennis observed that both Ælfric's text and the poem in the Beowulf Manuscript suppress the protagonist's sexuality and seductiveness.<sup>39</sup> However, these representations of Judith may simply reflect hagiographical models. As I indicated in the Manuscript Contexts section of my Introduction, after all, the Judith of the Beowulf Manuscript is described as saintly. Similarly, the omission of verse 2.25 from *Genesis A* may be attributed exclusively to concern over audience misinterpretation of this biblical verse.

The biblically-derived *Genesis A* Creation narrative therefore recalls, in its general outlook, catechetical *narratio* and similar traditions. In this context, conceptual similarities between the reservations to biblical translation in the vernacular expressed by Ælfric in his preface, and the *Genesis A* omissions, affirm that the poem would have been composed for an audience that would not have been exegetically inclined. At the same time, the sequential approach to the creation of humankind, which recalls the aforementioned catechetical *narratio* and similar traditions, points to the anthropocentrism of the text. While, therefore, the biblically-derived component of the Creation in *Genesis A* is anthropocentric as for the non-biblically-derived text, it also adapts its source narrative with due consideration to its intended audience. However, I have so far only given a partial picture of the manner in which the biblically-derived narrative in *Genesis A* adapts the biblical original. This is because this

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<sup>39</sup> Hugh Magennis, 'No Sex Please, We're Anglo-Saxons? Attitudes to Sexuality in Old English Prose and Poetry', *Leeds Studies in English*, 26 (1995), 1-27 (pp. 9 and 12).

narrative also freely alludes to New Testament concepts that evoke the theme of salvation.

This goes well beyond the allusion to Luke 20.36 that I mentioned above.

Wright argues that lines 110b-11 of *Genesis A*, ‘oð þæt þeos worulðgesceaft | þurh word gewearð wuldorcyninges’ (until this created world came into being through the word of the king of glory), express ‘the doctrine that Christ the Logos/Verbum was the agent of Creation’. This description of the Creation therefore points to familiarity with the traditional correlation between Gen 1.1 or 1.3 and John 1.1.<sup>40</sup> These paronomastic lines, which link the Creation with the Logos, or the word,<sup>41</sup> precede and introduce the biblically-derived section of the narrative, which commences at line 112. The text again alludes to Christ in line 140b, which mentions the ‘nergend’ (saviour). Line 120a is made up of the phrase ‘heafonweardes gast’ (the spirit of heaven’s keeper), which alludes to the Holy Spirit. The figure of God the Father is implied by the narrative context, as well as by the phrase ‘ece drihten’ (Eternal Lord), in line 112b. These terms, which evoke the Trinity, re-cast the Old Testament myth in a Christian light, as for humankind’s original perfection or angelic likeness, which may be traced back not only to the Book of Genesis itself, but also to the New Testament, as I already indicated.

The allusion to the Trinity in *Genesis A* shows that the source narrative is adapted in a manner directly relevant to the Christian audience. In so doing, the text brings into the equation, and rather explicitly for that matter, the idea of salvation in Christ. In its direct appeal to the Christian values of the audience, this text complements the analogical representation of the Creation in the non-biblically derived part of the narrative, as this text also appeals to the reality, or the perceived reality, known to the audience. As I already indicated, in its representation of the act of creation as the construction of something useful, the non-biblically derived text appeals to society’s transformation of the natural environment.

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<sup>40</sup> Wright, p. 129.

<sup>41</sup> Roberta Frank, *The Etiquette of Early Northern Verse* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2022), p. 38.

This is represented as part of the divine plan by virtue of its association with God, and as part of the plan of salvation as the Creation is ascribed to the Trinity in the lines that follow. This means that the Creation narrative, taken as a whole, is informed by an ideology that sees humankind's domination of the natural environment as part of the proper order of things. This approach to the Creation is not unique, for the Old Testament narrative is also adapted to a Christian audience, or anthropocentrically, in the short poem ascribed to Cædmon in Bede's *Historia Ecclesiastica*, *Christ and Satan*, and in Ælfric's writings. I now discuss these texts because they shed light on *Genesis A*'s broader cultural context, which reaffirms the importance accorded to anthropocentrism and the audience's understanding of the Christian dimension of the Old Testament narrative.

The short poem paraphrased in Latin by Bede is anthropocentric in outlook; however it does not allude to the Trinity in the manner of *Genesis A*:

Nunc laudare / debemus auctorem regni caelestis, potetiam Creatoris et consilium  
illius, facta Patris gloriae: quomodo ille, cum sit aeternus Deus, omnium miraculorum  
auctor extitit, qui primo filiis hominum caelum pro culmine tecti, dehinc terram  
Custos humani generis omnipotens creauit.<sup>42</sup>

(Now we must praise the Maker of the heavenly kingdom, the power of the Creator and his counsel, the deeds of the Father of glory and how He, since he is the eternal God, was the Author of all miracles and first created the heavens as a roof for the children of men and then, the almighty Guardian of the human race, created the Earth.)

Bernard F. Huppé interprets the poem with reference to an Old English version inserted by a scribe in his Latin copy of the *Historia Ecclesiastica*.<sup>43</sup> He argued that the terms and phrases *heafonrices weard*, *modgeþanc* and *weorcwuldor fæder*, which respectively translate as

<sup>42</sup> Bede, *Bede's Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, ed. by Bertram Colgrave and R.A.B. Mynors (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969), pp. 416-17. The translation is taken from the same edition.

<sup>43</sup> Huppé, p. 99.

*guardian of the heavenly kingdom, counsel and glory father's work*; would have been assigned Trinitarian significance by Bede.<sup>44</sup> Irrespective of whether any of the extant Old English versions of Cædmon's *Hymn* are antecedent to Bede's Latin or simply translations from his paraphrase,<sup>45</sup> what Huppé wrote about the Old English version may be understood to apply to the Latin as well. For all that, the text is not as explicitly Trinitarian in outlook as for *Genesis A*, as the association between these terms and the figures of the Trinity is not necessarily explicit. It is not self-evident, for instance, which of these terms refers specifically to the Holy Spirit. The text does however recall the biblical poem in its anthropocentrism, in that the Earth is created for humankind. *Christ and Satan*, which draws on Hebrew scriptural accounts and Hellenistic astronomy in the manner of biblical exegetes,<sup>46</sup> is a closer analogue to *Genesis A* in its representation of the Creation. This poem refers to the creator as 'meotod' (God) in lines 2a and 8a, and as 'godes āgen bearn' (God's own son), i.e. Christ, in line 10b. The text also appears to allude to the Holy Spirit in its mention of the creator's 'wuldres gāst' (glorious spirit) in line 14b.<sup>47</sup> Ælfric, moreover, explicitly mentioned Christ's agency in the act of Creation, for he described Christ as the Wisdom born out of the mighty Father.<sup>48</sup> *Genesis A*, *Christ and Satan* and Ælfric's representations of the Creation are therefore analogous insofar as they associate this Old Testament myth with the Trinity. In this respect, these texts reflect the patristic interpretation of the opening verses of Genesis 1, in that the biblical text was typically conceived as 'the *locus classicus* of scriptural evidence for the Trinity'.<sup>49</sup> Augustine referred to the Trinitarian God as the author and creator of everything

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<sup>44</sup> Huppé, p. 109.

<sup>45</sup> For a discussion of this point see Kevin S. Kiernan, 'Reading Cædmon's "Hymn" with Someone Else's Glosses', in *Old English Literature: Critical Essays*, ed. by R.M. Liuzza (London: Yale University Press, 2002), pp. 103-24 (pp. 108, 110-112), and Daniel Paul O'Donnell, 'Bede's Strategy in Paraphrasing Cædmon's *Hymn*', *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, 103.4 (2004), 417-32 (p. 419).

<sup>46</sup> Janet Schrunck Ericksen, *Reading Old English Biblical Poetry: The Book and the Poem in Junius 11* (London: University of Toronto Press, 2021), p. 126.

<sup>47</sup> *Christ and Satan: A Critical Edition*, ed. by Robert Emmett Finnegan (Ontario: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1977), p. 68. The translations are by the present author.

<sup>48</sup> Huppé, p. 110.

<sup>49</sup> Huppé, p. 110.

in his *De Doctrina Christiana*,<sup>50</sup> while Ambrose expressed the view, in his *Hexameron*, that the Trinity is visible in the act of Creation.<sup>51</sup> Gen 1.2, which relates that the spirit of God moved over the waters, was understood to allude to the Holy Spirit, while Gen 1.1, which states that God created Heaven and Earth, was interpreted to the effect that God acted through Christ. This is because this verse was read in conjunction with John 1.3, which states that all things were made through Christ.<sup>52</sup>

Therefore, the Trinitarian representation of God in the *Genesis A* narrative of the Creation, as for its representation in *Christ and Satan* and Ælfric's writings, draws on an established patristic and exegetical tradition. While the *Hymn* attributed to Cædmon is not explicitly Trinitarian, it is anthropocentric and salvific in outlook. This may be inferred, at any rate, from its identification of God as the guardian of humankind. The concept of salvation, however, also emerges more clearly from the more explicitly Trinitarian texts, including *Genesis A*. For all that, the *Hymn* should not be ruled out as an analogue, or quite possibly as a source of influence, for *Genesis A*. Bede's Cædmon narrative, after all, identifies this man as the first composer of biblical poetry in the vernacular, and one whose gift originated with God.<sup>53</sup> Bede also makes reference to Cædmon's didacticism, for he sets out that the vernacular poet aimed to lead men away from sin and to prompt in them a zeal for good deeds.<sup>54</sup> I observed a similarly didactic approach in the discussion of the angelic rebellion in *Genesis A*, where the representation of the contrasting fates of prelapsarian and rebel angels in the opening 46 lines is set within the framework of the Preface to the Mass.<sup>55</sup> The narrative is therefore rendered in a manner directly relevant to the audience, such that it

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<sup>50</sup> Section C.IX of Book I of Augustine, *De Doctrina Christiana*, ed. by Car. Herm. Bruder (Leipzig: Tauchnitz, 1838), p. 12.

<sup>51</sup> Ambrose, 'Hexameron', in *Hexameron, Paradise and Cain and Abel*, trans. by John J. Savage (New York: Fathers of the Church Inc, 1961), pp. 3-283 (p. 32).

<sup>52</sup> Ambrose, p. 32.

<sup>53</sup> Bede, *Bede's Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, p. 414.

<sup>54</sup> Bede, *Bede's Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, p. 414.

<sup>55</sup> The Preface to the Mass attests to liturgical influence in *Genesis A*. Cædmon's *Hymn* is likewise influenced by the liturgy, as attested by Holsinger, pp. 165-66.

prompts obedience of God's commands. One of the main points of the opening lines of *Genesis A*, after all, is to contrast the rewards of obedience and the adverse consequences of disobedience. At the same time the audience of *Genesis A* is addressed directly as in the case of the *Hymn*. Again as for the *Hymn*, the non-biblically derived section of the Creation I discuss in the present section also makes for a narrative directly relevant to the audience, in the sense that it highlights, among other things, God's generosity towards humankind in his shaping of the materials of Creation.

I conclude, on the basis of this discussion, that the narrative of the Creation in *Genesis A* is characterised by two different but complementary approaches. The non-biblically derived text is an archetype for construction or the transformation of the natural environment, and delivers meaning at the analogical level. This representation of the Creation makes human activity part of the divine plan, particularly as the biblically-derived part of the narrative that follows ascribes Creation to the Trinity. The salvific message inherent to the Trinity, in the figure of Christ, suggests that the *Genesis A* Creation narrative as a whole also associates human activity with salvation. The text, in other words, is driven by an ideology that perceives the natural environment in utilitarian terms, which viewpoint may be traced back to the biblical narrative and its exegesis. While the biblically-derived part of the narrative complements the earlier non-biblically derived text, as I already explained, it also adapts the biblical text to its audience in the rendition or omission of certain verses. It appeals to its intended audience, in other words, by taking into consideration their level of understanding of the finer exegetical or interpretative points. Moreover, this part of the narrative conveys meaning primarily at the literal level. It is also interesting that the broader Old English narrative tradition offers analogues to the *Genesis A* Creation narrative. This narrative therefore forms part of a broader tradition relating to the representation of the biblical text, a tradition that may be described as catechetical in outlook and that is dependent



on mainstream biblical exegesis. This explains, *inter alia*, the anthropocentric and salvific approaches to the Creation in *Genesis A*. The biblical poem, however, may also be said to extend beyond other Old English texts in the interrelationship it generates between God's Creation, human activity, and salvation. It appears that this characteristic has not been explicitly observed by previous commentators. Moreover, previous commentators have not observed that the anthropocentrism and message of salvation in *Genesis A* and the other texts I discussed in this section, also throw light, by way of contrast, on the approach to the Creation in *Beowulf*. While this poem also resorts to biblically-derived and related material, it makes use of it in notably different ways.

### 2.3 The Creation in *Beowulf*

In this section I argue that the *Beowulf* Creation song forms part of a sequence, and I therefore discuss the song with reference to its narrative context. I first address my main focus to how the song relates to the text that follows it in the chronology of the narrative. I also discuss how the song, and the sequence of which it forms part, compares with the renditions of the Creation and other relevant themes in *Genesis A* and *Andreas*. My objective is to contextualise the representation of the biblical myth in the heroic-elegiac poem. One of the main advantages of this approach is that it points out the ways in which the treatment of the Creation in *Beowulf* differs from the rest of the Old English poetic corpus. The heroic-elegiac poem, in other words, reveals an aspect to the Old English adaptation of the Creation myth that does not emerge from other poetic narratives. Finally, I consider how the *Beowulf* Creation song relates to the text that precedes it in the poem's chronology, which text reaffirms that the song, when read within its wider narrative context, points to the limitations of its singer and the audience within the poem. This is because the singer and his audience do not have access to the Christian knowledge conveyed by the narrator.

Cædmon's *Hymn* is a good starting point for this discussion because it functions as a panegyric, which by definition requires the presence of the person celebrated.<sup>56</sup> It should be evident that to a Christian audience God is always present, and that therefore the *Hymn* is a panegyric in a metaphorical sense if not literally. This text also belongs to the English poetic tradition, at least insofar as Bede claimed a vernacular origin for it and assigned to Cædmon the status of first vernacular biblical and Christian poet. *Beowulf* also conveys the Creation myth by means of verse in praise of the act of Creation, which is paraphrased by the narrator:

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<sup>56</sup> Bassinger, p. 93. See also Colin A. Ireland, *The Gaelic Background of Old English Poetry before Bede* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2022), p. 69, who argued that the *Hymn*'s vocabulary originates with secular praise tradition.

[...] Sægde, sē þe cūþe  
frumsceaft fīra feorran recċan;  
cwæð þæt se Ælmihtiga eorðan worh(te),  
wlitbeorhtne wang, swā wæter bebūgeð,  
ġesette siġehreþiġ sunnan ond mōnan  
lēoman tō leōhte landbūendum,  
ond ġefræt Wade foldan scēatas  
leomum ond lēafum, lif ēac ġesceōp  
cynna ġehwylcum, þāra ðe cwide hwyrfaþ.<sup>57</sup>

(He said, he who could recall the creation of the first people in far off times; he told that the Almighty made the Earth, a bright-faced plain encircled by the waters, set up in triumph the sun and the moon as a light for those dwelling on land, and adorned the corners of the Earth with branches and leaves; that he also created life for every kind of living thing that moves about.)

This song may clearly be described as a panegyric like the *Hymn*. Moreover, again like the text ascribed to Cædmon, the song is paraphrased within the context of a broader narrative that is not primarily concerned with the same theme or myth, i.e. the Creation. In the context of the *Historia Ecclesiastica* the *Hymn* illustrates the origin of biblical poetry and serves as an example of the poetic output that Cædmon would go on to compose at a later stage. I contend that the Creation song in *Beowulf* also functions in relation to the surrounding text, albeit not necessarily in the same way as the *Hymn*. I argue that one of the primary functions of the Creation song is to reveal to the poem's audience the limitations of the characters, in particular the Danes, who only have a partial knowledge of God and are ignorant of the message of salvation.

<sup>57</sup> Lines 90b-98 of *Klaeber's Beowulf*, ed. by R. D. Fulk, Robert E. Bjork and John D. Niles, 4<sup>th</sup> Edn. (London: University of Toronto Press, 2008), p. 6. Further references to this work will be given parenthetically in the main text and indicated by the abbreviation 'B'. All bracketed translations of *Beowulf* are mine.

The contextual similarities between the *Hymn* and the Creation song suggest that the latter text is to be read and interpreted in the context of the main narrative, which is what was done, for instance, by Bessinger.<sup>58</sup> While this is not surprising, what is interesting is that, as I already observed, the Creation song interacts with the surrounding text in a manner that differs from that of the *Hymn*. There are two main and closely interrelated reasons for this. The first is the narrative style of the Creation song, and the second is its close interaction with the *gastbona* (slayer of souls) episode, where the Danes worship at a heathen shrine. I now discuss these aspects of the Creation song. As I already observed in section 2.2 the *Hymn* is anthropocentric in outlook, particularly as it expressly states that the Earth was created as a home for humankind. This led Fabienne L. Michelet to the conclusion that the *Hymn*, as for the account of the Creation in *Genesis A*, may be understood to denote that the Creation offers an exemplar for all constructions.<sup>59</sup> This is not the case for the *Beowulf* Creation song, which makes reference to humankind in line 91a but does not otherwise directly and explicitly associate the act of Creation with its wellbeing. Moreover, this single reference to humankind does not appear to form part of the paraphrased song itself, for it is related at a point when the narrator is informing the *Beowulf* audience of what it is that the *scop* (minstrel) remembers. In the paraphrased song itself, however, no direct reference is made to humankind. It therefore appears that the competence, or memory, of the *scop* is not reflected in what he sings. This is ironic when considered in relation to the *Hymn*, for Cædmon, as I observed in the Introduction to this thesis, is initially not poetically competent. For all that, he delivers an anthropocentric song in the fashion of *Genesis A* and, for that matter, the Book of Genesis itself. It may therefore be argued that the rendition of the *Beowulf* Creation song as a paraphrase points to the limitations of its singer.

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<sup>58</sup> See Bessinger, pp. 91-106.

<sup>59</sup> Michelet, p. 38.

The paraphrase of the *Beowulf* Creation song in the third person, which is attested by line 90b cited above, also marks a distinction between what is known by the *scop*'s and the *Beowulf* audience. This is because the ending of the song segues into the account of Grendel's first incursion into Heorot. At this stage, in other words, the text is characterised by liquid syntax; it is therefore not immediately clear when the paraphrase of the Creation song has come to a close.<sup>60</sup> This means that the reference to the 'fēond on helle' (B, 101b) (fiend from/in hell) may at first be interpreted, especially by a listening audience as opposed to a reader, as the Devil striking against God's newly-created world. After all, the subject of this phrase, Grendel, is only named in line 102b.<sup>61</sup> The reference to Grendel just ahead of the song may likewise be deemed reminiscent of the Devil, given that the as-yet unnamed creature is described as an 'ellengæst [...] sē þe in þýstrum bād (B, l. 86-87) (powerful ghost/spirit<sup>62</sup> [...] who waited in the darkness). The overall, or at any rate the initial impression given, is that of a newly created and innocent world that has been corrupted. It is only at line 102b, when Grendel is identified by name, that it is clear to either audience or reader that the creature is not the Devil, that the song has come to a close, and that the narrator is once again relating events in the narrative present. Given that the allusions to the Devil turn out not to form part of the song, the song's style coupled with the narrative context of which these allusions form part, appeal to the knowledge of broader Christian myth by the poem's audience. This is because what is related in the text surrounding the song is not accessible to the audience of the Danish *scop* whose song is paraphrased. Hence, the narrative style and context highlight the different perspectives of the poem's audience and the *scop* and

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<sup>60</sup> Osborn, p. 115.

<sup>61</sup> According to Andrew, p. 404, the identification of Grendel as a hellish fiend reflects the Augustinian view that sin darkens the mind and fosters misery.

<sup>62</sup> The term *gæst* may however also mean 'guest' if the vowel is short. I discuss the implications of this interpretation in Chapter 4.3.2.

his audience within the poem.<sup>63</sup> The appeal to broader Christian tradition gives the former audience more information, which enables it to understand the nature of Grendel and his depredations, which may be traced back to the Devil and to the cosmic dimension of the confrontation between good and evil. Moreover, William Helder argues that this distinction also applies to the text that forms part of the paraphrased Creation song itself. He suggests that the description of the sun and the moon as *sigehtreþig*, or triumphant, derives its appropriateness to *Beowulf*'s audience 'from the divine paschal victory over the dominion of hell'.<sup>64</sup> The same may be said of the description of God as almighty. I conclude that this discussion, which started with the premise that unlike the *Hymn* the *Beowulf* Creation song is paraphrased in the third person, and not the first, suggests that *Beowulf* differentiates between its audience and the audience within the poem. While this is by no means a new finding, it is important to record in the context of the present discussion, as it is essential to a full understanding of the manner whereby the poem utilises the Creation myth.

Now that I have established that the Creation song is delivered in such a manner as to highlight the limitations of its singer and the audience within the poem, unlike *Genesis A* or the *Hymn*, I discuss the song in relation to the *gastþona* episode. In this episode the Danes resort to heathen worship in response to Grendel's depredations:

Hwīlum hīe gēhēton æt hærgtrafum  
wīgweorþunga, wordum bādon,  
þæt him gāstþona gēoƿe gefremede  
wið þēodþrēaum. Swylc wæs þēaw hyra,  
hāþenra hyht; helle gēmundon  
in mōdsefan; metod hīe ne cūþon. (B l. 175-80)

<sup>63</sup> This and similar points have been made by previous commentators. See Footnote 2 in Rafael J. Pascual, 'Two Possible Emendations of *Beowulf* 2088a', *Notes and Queries*, 66.1 (2019), 5-8 (p. 5).

<sup>64</sup> Helder, p. 15.

(At times they vowed at the high shrine, made offerings, and prayed that the slayer of souls would save them from their calamity. Such was their custom, the hope of heathens; their minds recalled hell; they were ignorant of God.)

According to Anne F. Payne the Danes' heathen worship suggests that they have 'given up knowledge of the divine dimensions of space' and 'belief in the ideal patterns of order, law and right'.<sup>65</sup> This is clearly the case. The cited text from *Beowulf*, in asserting the Danes' ignorance of God, reaffirms the aforementioned limitations imposed on the *scop* and his audience. At the same time, these people's pre-Christian customs are equated with Hell, which suggests that the *gastbona* that they worship is the Devil.<sup>66</sup> The epithet *gastbona*, in the last instance, denotes the consignment of souls to eternal perdition. The equation of pre-Christian deities with the Devil is not unique to *Beowulf*, as it also occurs in homiletic and related writing as attested, *inter alia*, by Ælfric's and Wulfstan's work, and the Old Norse *Bartholomeus saga pastola*.<sup>67</sup> I also explore this theme, and the way it relates to *Beowulf*, in *Andreas*. However, before I discuss *Andreas* as an analogue to *Beowulf*, I further consider the development of the heathen worship theme in the heroic-elegiac poem. *Beowulf*, after all, elaborates upon this theme in the lines that follow. It re-asserts, in lines 181b-85, that those who do not know God are condemned to hellfire. The text hereby makes use of the formula 'Wā bið þāem ðe sceal' (B, l. 183b) (It will go ill for him), which is 'quite widely attested in Old English homiletic prose'.<sup>68</sup> Moreover, the plight of these people is contrasted with the reward that awaits the faithful:

[...] wēl bið þāem þe mōt

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<sup>65</sup> Payne, p. 311.

<sup>66</sup> Fulk, Bjork and Niles, 'Commentary', in *Klaeber's Beowulf*, pp. 110-272 (p. 128).

<sup>67</sup> See Ælfric, *De Falsis Diis*, in *Homilies of Ælfric: A Supplementary Collection Vol. 2*, ed. by John C. Pope (Oxford: Early English Text Society, 1968), pp. 676-712 (p. 686); and, Wulfstan, 'De Falsis Dies', in *The Homilies of Wulfstan*, ed. by Dorothy Bethurum (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1957; repr. 1998), pp. 221-24 (p. 224). See also L. Michael Bell, "'Hel Our Queen": An Old Norse Analogue to an Old English Female Hell', *The Harvard Theological Review*, 76.2 (1983), 263-68 (p. 264); and Grubbs, p. 73, for discussions of non-Christian worship in the Norse *Bartholomeus saga pastola* and Ælfric respectively.

<sup>68</sup> Orchard, p. 153.

æfter dēaðdæge Drihten sēcean

ond tō fæder fæpmum freoðo wilnian. (B, l. 186b-88)

(It goes well with him who may, after the day of his death, seek out the Lord and ask for peace in the father's embrace.)

Line 186b follows the structure of line 183b, which is again indicative of homiletic influence.

The *gastbona* episode and the text that follows therefore reaffirm the points I made earlier about the limitations of the *scop* and the characters as part of my discussion of the Creation song and its surrounding text. If anything, these themes now emerge more clearly. However, the *gastbona* episode and the text that follows it in the chronology of the narrative are not only relevant to this discussion because of the themes that they share with the Creation song and its surrounding text. Their relevance also stems from the narrative sequence in the text and the delivery of the song itself as a paraphrase in the third person. As I explained earlier, the narration of the song as a paraphrase integrates it within the rest of the text, which means that it flows, or segues, into Grendel's depredations and the *gastbona* episode that is their direct consequence, as it is Grendel's depredations that induce the Danes to worship at heathen shrines. It therefore makes sense, as suggested by Bessinger, to speak of a Creation sequence, which extends into the *gastbona* episode and beyond.<sup>69</sup> This sequence also incorporates the epithets for God that follow the *gastbona* episode but precede the homiletically inspired texts I cited above. While, as Bessinger argues, Cædmon's *Hymn* is also characterised by such epithets, in *Beowulf* these are localised 'with a great difference, at Heorot'.<sup>70</sup> This is because in *Beowulf* these epithets are not only intended to praise God, but also to draw attention to what it is that the Danes do not know about God. The relevant text states that the Danes do not know 'metod' (B, l. 180b) (God), 'drihten God' (B, l. 181b) (the lord God) and 'wuldres waldend' (B, l. 183a) (the ruler of glory). This means that they are

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<sup>69</sup> Bessinger, p. 93.

<sup>70</sup> Bessinger, p. 94.



unable to worship ‘heofona helm’ (B, l. 182a) (the protector of Heaven). This discussion confirms, therefore, that within the context of the broader narrative the Creation song comes across as a text that comprises only partial knowledge of God. This is the case because while the song describes God as almighty, it is otherwise lacking in epithets. This also confirms that the Danes are placed in a position that contrasts the audience, in a manner that is neither characteristic of Cædmon’s *Hymn* nor *Christ and Satan* and *Genesis A*. Then again, these texts do not contemplate heathen worship as *Beowulf* does. It is interesting, however, that another poetic text, the hagiographical *Andreas*, does comprise an account of heathen worship and a reference to God as creator, if not the Creation *per se*. I now discuss these themes in *Andreas* which, despite its conceptual similarities to *Beowulf*, handles them rather differently. This, I contend, sheds light on how the Creation sequence in *Beowulf* would have been understood by early medieval audiences.

I would have to point out, in the first place, that *Andreas* has often been compared to *Beowulf*. It is typically argued that this hagiographical narrative is modelled on the heroic-elegiac text, particularly given that ‘the similarities of phrasing between these two poems are closer than would be expected if their authors were doing no more than drawing on a common word hoard’.<sup>71</sup> Moreover, analysis of the rendition of similar motifs in the two texts has led to the conclusion that these are forced into an alien context in *Andreas*.<sup>72</sup> However, this is not the case for the narrative elements I hereby discuss, which are not typically compared with the Creation song or the *gastbona* episode in *Beowulf*. The themes I discuss, rather, clearly belong in the hagiographical poem, which deals with a proselytising mission to a cannibalistic people. The first theme is the Devil’s control over pagans, which is also characteristic of extant Latin versions of the story, such as the *Recensio Casanatensis*.<sup>73</sup> The

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<sup>71</sup> R. D. Fulk, Robert E. Bjork and John D. Niles, ‘Introduction’, pp. xxiii-cxc (p. clxxv).

<sup>72</sup> Fulk, Bjork and Niles, p. clxxv.

<sup>73</sup> ‘Casanatensis’, in *Die Lateinischen Bearbeitungen der Acta Andreae et Matthiae apud Anthropophagos*, ed. by Franz Blatt (Geissen: Töpelmann, 1930), pp. 33-95 (pp. 79-81).

Old English poem establishes that the Mermedonians are driven to torture St Andrew by a ‘helle dioful’<sup>74</sup> (a devil from hell) in an account that closely follows the aforementioned Latin text. The second theme I discuss is the destruction of the Mermedonians’ pagan temples as the Old English text draws to its conclusion. In this instance, the narrative builds on the theme whereby pagan practices are said to derive from or to be promulgated by the Devil:

Swylce se hālgā herigeas þrēade,  
 dēofulgild tōdrāf ond gedwolan fylde;  
 þæt wæs Sātāne sār tō gepolienne,  
 mycel mōdes sorg, þæt hē ðā manigeo geseah  
 hweorfan higeblīðe fram helltrafum  
 þurh Andrēas ēste lāre  
 tō fægran gefēan, þær nǣfre fēondes ne bið,  
 gastes gramhȳdiges, gang on lande.<sup>75</sup>

(Thus the saint assailed the temples, drove away idolatry and suppressed heresy; that was painful for Satan to bear, a great sorrow in his mind, when he saw many, through Andrew’s gracious teaching, turning, in joyful mood, from the hellish temples to joyous exultation, in the land where the fiend, the hostile spirit, will never walk.)

It should be evident that the identification of the Danes’ heathen worship with the *gastbona* and Hell is directly comparable to the pagans enslaved by the Devil and the destruction of their temples in *Andreas*.<sup>76</sup> Both texts, after all, entail direct association between paganism and the Devil.

However, the similarities between the two texts do not end here. The newly-converted Mermedonians, who are now content, identify God as the creator. This is the first of three

<sup>74</sup> Line 1298b of *Andreas*, ed. by Richard North and Michael D.J. Bintley (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2016), p. 187. All translations from *Andreas* are by the present author.

<sup>75</sup> Lines 1687-94 of *Andreas*, pp. 208-09.

<sup>76</sup> See John Tanke, ‘Gold-Luck, and God’s Will’, *Studies in Philology*, 99.4 (2002), 356-79 (pp. 371-72).

epithets delivered over the course of lines 1717-22, namely ‘An is ece God eallra gesceafta’ (one is the eternal God of all Creation), ‘breme gebledsod’ (gloriously blessed) and ‘æðele Cyning!’ (a noble king).<sup>77</sup> Even if brief, the allusion to God as creator in the Old English hagiography is all the more significant given that neither the extant Greek version<sup>78</sup> nor the *Recensio Casanatensis*<sup>79</sup> refer to God in this manner. These versions only mention the one God and Christ who sent the apostle to convert the pagan Mermedonians. Therefore, even if *Andreas* does not mention or describe the act of Creation, it evokes the idea of God as creator and makes use of epithets in praise of God that also provide information about the characters within the narrative. In the context of *Andreas* the epithets show to the poem’s audience that the Mermedonians have acquired knowledge of God, in that they are able to address him properly and directly. The Mermedonians are also content, which state is in open contrast with their plight before the conversion, when they suffer hunger, their wine halls remain deserted, and when they take no pleasure in the land of their birth.<sup>80</sup> These circumstances are disconcertingly similar to those faced by the Danes beset by Grendel, who weep as they witness the signs of the monster’s slaughter (B, l. 126-33) and are forced to abandon their hall (B, l. 144-46a). This comparison reaffirms that the Danes are beset by the Devil.

While the Danes recall the Mermedonians before the conversion, the epithets in the *Beowulf* Creation sequence are utilised so as to reveal to the poem’s audience the Danes’ ignorance of God, as I already suggested. Hence, *Beowulf* does not make use of the epithets in the same way *Andreas* does. Similarly, as I already observed, the Creation song itself draws attention to the Danes’ partial knowledge of God and his Creation. In this context, the *gastbona* episode may be understood to denote the loss of even this partial knowledge among

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<sup>77</sup> *Andreas*, pp. 298-99.

<sup>78</sup> See ‘Acta Andreae et Matthiae’, in *Acta Apostolorum Apocrypha*, ed. by Constantinus Tischendorf (Leipzig: Avenarius and Mendelssohn, 1851), pp. 132-66 (p. 166), and the English translation ‘The Acts of Andrew and Matthias in the City of the Man-Eaters’, in *Apocryphal Gospels, Acts and Revelations*, trans. by Alexander Walker (Edinburgh: Clark, 1870), pp. 348-68 (p. 368).

<sup>79</sup> ‘Casanatensis’, p. 95.

<sup>80</sup> Lines 1155-60 and 1162b of *Andreas*, pp. 260-61.

the Danish people. This negative representation of the Danes in *Beowulf* recalls, on a broad conceptual level, homiletic texts such as Ælfric's *De Falsis Deis*, which treat heathenry as an ongoing threat rather than as an evil that has been extirpated. It is likely that *Beowulf*, which unlike any other text discussed in this chapter is completely set in the vernacular pre-Christian past, draws upon catechetical models throughout its Creation sequence. The Creation narrative and the abandonment of idol worship, after all, are characteristic of catechetical instruction, which means that these themes are also likely to have been reproduced in early vernacular sermons.<sup>81</sup>

The assessment of the Creation song in relation to the *gastbona* episode and the other text that follows in the chronology of the narrative, and the comparison with *Andreas*, therefore points to the manner in which the song is to be interpreted. However, my discussion so far does not provide a complete picture of the manner in which the song works in the poem's narrative context. This is because a discussion that aims to properly contextualise the song also has to take into account what precedes it, namely the construction of a hall greater than any that the children of men had ever seen before (B, l. 67b-70). The construction of this hall, Heorot, may be considered as another act of creation, in that Danish king 'Hrothgar creates almost by his "word"', in a manner that recalls God.<sup>82</sup> The completion of the hall is what prompts the Danes to celebrate and provides the backdrop to the *scop*'s song, however the building is ill-fated. The narrator's rendition of its construction is immediately followed by the anticipation of its future destruction by fire (B, l. 81b-83a). This suggests that the description of Hrothgar as 'creator' is in the last instance ironic. Grendel's ire, moreover, is instigated by the Danes' celebration upon completion of the hall, as he cannot bear the sound of people rejoicing (B, l. 86-89a). In this context, even if Grendel is represented as a devil-

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<sup>81</sup> Mary Clayton, 'Preaching and Teaching', in *The Cambridge Companion to Old English Literature*, ed. by Malcolm Godden and Michael Lapidge, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013) pp. 159-79 (p. 163).

<sup>82</sup> Fox, p. 83.

like figure, as I already observed, he is at the same time rendered as a quasi-human antagonist. The audience is told that the monster would neither seek peace nor pay compensation for the people slain (B, l. 154b-58). The expectation of compensation, howsoever unlikely it is to be met, assigns a human dimension to this creature. I discuss this aspect of the narrative in Chapter 4.3, as it relates directly to the Cain theme. What is interesting to consider at this stage is the connection between the Creation song and the heathen shrine on the one hand, and the hall on the other. This discussion throws light on how *Beowulf* relates the act of Creation to a building in a manner that differs from the expression of this notion in *Genesis A*.

The anticipation of Heorot's destruction suggests, in the first place, that the building is meant to draw the audience's attention to the transitory nature of earthly power. It also points, more specifically, to the dysfunctional nature of relationships within the Danish royal family and court. After all, the audience is not only told of the destruction of the building, but also that in-laws turn against each other (B, l. 83b-85). In this context, the hall's sheer height may be understood to allude to the Tower of Babel,<sup>83</sup> while its short history points to its futility as an expression of King Hrothgar's glory. The hall's association with the king is attested by lines 64-79, including by way of the name Heorot (stag). This is because the stag emblem on the great whetstone that forms part of the Sutton Hoo treasure suggests that this animal would have symbolised early medieval English kingship.<sup>84</sup> *Beowulf* therefore represents the building of Heorot as an act that recalls God's Creation for ironic effect. Previous commentators have not observed that this juxtaposition of God's Creation and the construction of the hall recalls, on a conceptual level, the theme of Aldhelm's Riddle 72,

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<sup>83</sup> Fox, p. 81.

<sup>84</sup> William Perry Marvin, *Hunting Law and Ritual in Medieval English Literature* (Cambridge: Brewer, 2006), p. 30.

which tells of the Colossus.<sup>85</sup> In this Riddle Aldhelm did not write of the statue's huge size and the workmanship that went into its construction to convey grandeur, but rather to point to lifelessness and uselessness. The statue relates, as the speaker of the riddle that, *inter alia*, its eyes cannot see and its feet cannot walk,<sup>86</sup> while its human shape is invariably reminiscent of God's creation. Therefore, the description of the statue is ironic, as it only points to the superiority of God's creation. Hrothgar's hall is similarly large and impressive, yet its purpose is lost as it is left deserted following Grendel's depredations (B, l.144-46a).

Christopher Abram argues that the hall 'functions mostly as a symbolic monument to the price one pays for hubris'.<sup>87</sup> Moreover, Tristan Major observes that Hrothgar's military fame, which attracts retinues of young men, as well as the construction of Heorot by 'manigre mæġþe geond þisne middangeard' (B, l. 75) (many peoples throughout this Middle Earth), recall the Nimrod of *Genesis A*, who as for the Danish king is widely known across the land.<sup>88</sup>

While these arguments cannot be adduced to suggest that *Beowulf* is influenced by the riddle or the representation of Nimrod in *Genesis A*, they do point to the possible influence of didactic texts or motifs, quite possibly of catechetical or homiletic derivation. Didacticism is also evident in the aforementioned contrast between the *scop* and his audience and the *Beowulf* narrator and the poem's audience. This contrast derives primarily from the adaptation of the Genesis-derived Creation myth which, combined with the *gastþona* episode, suggests that the Danes must, until 'they are converted [...] honour the devil as their god'.<sup>89</sup> While this assessment sounds harsh, it may well have been acceptable, expected even, by

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<sup>85</sup> Nancy Porter Stork, *Aldhelm's Riddles in the British Library MS Royal 12.C.xxiii* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1955), p. 203.

<sup>86</sup> Stork, p. 203.

<sup>87</sup> Abram, p. 132.

<sup>88</sup> Major, pp. 242-43.

<sup>89</sup> North, p. 180.

early medieval audiences. At any rate, the representation of similar themes in the hagiographical *Andreas*, discussed above, also points in this direction.

This discussion suggests, therefore, that in *Beowulf* the relation between God's Creation and human activity, or construction, differs completely from its representation in *Genesis A*. While the biblical poem justifies human activity, including the activity of the audience's society, with reference to the biblical Creation myth, *Beowulf* contrasts such activity to the Creation. The heroic-elegiac poem, in other words, does not focus on human domination of the natural environment, or its representation as part of God's plan, but rather on its transitory nature. The approach pursued in *Beowulf* may be traced to its pre-Christian setting, which may have demanded some form of condemnation of the Danes. Similar condemnation of pre-Christian societies, at any rate, is also evident in the hagiographical *Andreas* as well as homiletic texts by Ælfric and Wulfstan. While I am not arguing that these texts influenced *Beowulf*, they represent appropriate thematic analogues. Within *Beowulf*, the transitory nature of human activity complements the limitations of the Creation song and the audience within the poem, which I have already discussed. The same may be said, moreover, of the poem's mention of King Hrothgar's morality or his knowledge of God, which has led some commentators to suggest that this character, along with Beowulf, is to be understood within the framework of natural law.<sup>90</sup> I contend, however, that knowledge of God by the characters of *Beowulf* must be contextualised with reference to early medieval views of the knowledge of God by non-Christians. In his discussion of Christian notions of pre-Christian knowledge Richard North made reference to Martin of Braga's *De correctione rusticorum*, which is informed by the idea that 'the first men knew of their creator before they lost this knowledge and became pagans'.<sup>91</sup> This knowledge, according to Ælfric, was lost following the dispersal of humankind upon its abandonment of the construction of the Tower of

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<sup>90</sup> Goldsmith, p. 151.

<sup>91</sup> North, p. 175.

Babel,<sup>92</sup> whereupon the Devil deceived humankind through pagan beliefs.<sup>93</sup> *Beowulf* reproduces this loss of knowledge in its adaptation of the Genesis-derived Creation myth, given that the Creation song is followed by a devil-like Grendel who drives the Danes to worship at a heathen shrine.

This means that the Danes' recourse to heathen worship, which is ascribed to their ignorance of scripture, or God, is reconcilable with the partial knowledge of the Creation suggested by the song. I recognise that this view of the text is not consensual, and that over the years of *Beowulf* criticism the *gastbona* episode has been dismissed as an artistic blemish or an interpolation.<sup>94</sup> My analysis of the Creation sequence, however, which draws on previous commentators' interpretation of the relevant text, including Bessinger, suggests that there is more to this passage than that. What I would suggest, rather, is that *Beowulf* attempts reconciliation of different, and not easily reconcilable, considerations. On the one hand, the text ascribes the Creation to a figure that the poem's audience would identify with the Christian God. On the other hand, the text recognises what would have been known to the audience, i.e. that the poem's characters are not Christian.<sup>95</sup> This is the reason why limitations are imposed on their knowledge of the Creation. In a context where the narrative struggles with ostensibly conflicting requirements, it represents the *scop*, and King Hrothgar, as well intentioned, yet constrained by pre-Christian circumstances.<sup>96</sup> In this sense, the narrative is consistent in its representation of the Creation, the *gastbona* episode, and the portrayal of the

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<sup>92</sup> Grubbs, p. 73.

<sup>93</sup> See Grubbs, p. 73, and Wulfstan, p. 221.

<sup>94</sup> For an overview of critical opinions on the Danes' paganism, including the view that the *gastbona* passage is an interpolation or an artistic blemish, see Karl P. Wentersdorf, 'Beowulf: The Paganism of Hrothgar's Danes', *Studies in Philology*, 78.5 (1981), 91-119 (pp. 93-98). See also Leonard Neidorf, 'Beowulf Lines 175-88 and the Transmission of Old English Poetry', *Studies in Philology*, 119.1 (2022), 1-24, for another assessment of past critical views and an analysis of the *gastbona* passage that counters the view that it is an interpolation on the basis of, *inter alia*, attested scribal corrections and linguistic considerations.

<sup>95</sup> The Scyldings to which King Hrothgar belongs would have been known from other narratives, and some of them were recorded in English royal genealogies. See Philip A. Shaw, *Names and Naming in Beowulf: Studies in Heroic Narrative Tradition* (London, Bloomsbury Academic, 2020), pp. 73-107.

<sup>96</sup> See also Leonard Neidorf, 'The Beowulf Poet's Sense of Decorum', *Traditio*, 76 (2021), 1-28 (p. 4), for a discussion of King Hrothgar's limitations. This commentator also lists, in footnote 11, critics who expressed similar views of the main characters' limitations.



Danes. The limitations imposed on the characters also explain why the text should represent human activity in contrast to, rather than as complementary with, God's act of Creation.

The *gastbona* episode may therefore be considered essential to the poem's representation of the pre-Christian past to a Christian audience. The pre-Christian setting also explains why the Creation song should not equate God's act with human construction in the manner that *Genesis A* does. It explains, moreover, why King Hrothgar's *scop* should not display the same degree of knowledge of the Creation as the *Genesis A* narrator or, for that matter, Cædmon in his *Hymn*, who is inspired in a dream.<sup>97</sup> The poem's pre-Christian setting may also account for the paraphrase of the Creation song in the third person, which calls into question, as indicated by Helder, what is understood by the audience within the poem and the poem's audience. The narrative, in other words, appears to be informed by awareness that the knowledge of a non-Christian audience should be limited. It is also informed by a homiletic view of non-Christians, who are vulnerable to the Devil's deceit. In this respect the heroic-elegiac poem also recalls the approach pursued in *Andreas* in respect of the pre-conversion Meremedonians.

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<sup>97</sup> See also Snorri Sturluson, 'Prologue', in *The Prose Edda*, trans. by Jesse L. Byock (London: Penguin Group, 2005), pp. 3-8 (pp. 3-4), where Snorri *qua* narrator directly refers to God as the creator of humankind, but where the people who forgot God's name are only given the wisdom to understand that he ruled over nature and the heavenly bodies, but not that he created them; at any rate not explicitly so.

## 2.4 Conclusion

The discussion in section 2.3 reveals that the representation of the Creation in *Beowulf* is driven primarily by Christian considerations, particularly in its differentiation between characters and audience. The Creation in *Genesis A* is also driven by concerns that relate primarily, if not exclusively, to representation of the narrative in Christian terms. However, in contrast to the expression of the Creation in *Beowulf* this text is entirely salvific in outlook. It is also rendered in terms relevant to the audience in its association of God's Creation with humankind's transformation of the natural environment, which is rendered as part of God's plan. This approach differs markedly from that pursued in *Beowulf*, which as I observed earlier in this chapter treats the Creation narrative in a manner almost altogether distinct from all the other texts I discuss. While *Genesis A* and *Beowulf* entail a different approach to the Creation, it is interesting that neither text appeals to vernacular beliefs or social values in its adaptation of this biblical theme. In all likelihood this is because the Creation would already have been ingrained and accepted unquestioningly by the intended audiences. Moreover, this narrative may not have offered the same opportunity for the promulgation of politico-social ideologies as for the angelic rebellion and fall.

### 3 The Temptation and Lapse of Adam and Eve in *Genesis B* and *Genesis A*

#### 3.1 Background

In the Book of Genesis God's act of Creation is followed by the temptation and lapse of Adam and Eve. The Creation is adapted by *Genesis A*, as I already observed in Chapter 2.2; however, the extant text lacks the couple's temptation and lapse. These episodes, rather, are only adapted by the passage interpolated into this poem, which is known as *Genesis B*. Current critical opinion suggests that this passage was interpolated to make up for the loss of the original *Genesis A* text.<sup>1</sup> Alternatively, a redactor may have deemed the *Genesis A* text less satisfactory than the extant *Genesis B* version. It is possible that the manuscript redactor may have found the allegorical rendition of the temptation and lapse of Adam and Eve in *Genesis B* more interesting because it represents the temptation as a difficult situation that demands a choice. It is also a situation that calls for constant vigilance, as well as awareness of God's command. Adam and Eve make the wrong choice, as they let down their guard and forget about God's command. In this sense the narrative appeals, tropologically, to the experience of the audience as Christian men and women, who would have likewise lapsed in their daily lives. This recalls, at a conceptual level, the opening lines of *Genesis A*, which likewise appeal to the audience tropologically by means of the allusion to the Preface to the Mass. Thematically, therefore, the adaptation of the temptation and lapse in *Genesis B* fits into the *Genesis A* scheme, as for the same fragment's adaptation of the angelic rebellion and fall I discussed in Chapter 1.2.2 and 1.2.3. I also observe, in Chapters 4.2, 4.2.1 and 5.2.2, that the tropological approach is also pursued in the representation of Cain's fratricide and, to a degree, in *Genesis A*'s rendition of the Great Flood. While, therefore, the reason as to why *Genesis B* has been interpolated into *Genesis A* cannot be conclusively ascertained, some of

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<sup>1</sup> See Leonard Neidorf, 'Beowulf Lines 175-88 and the Transmission of Old English Poetry', *Studies in Philology*, 119.1 (2022), 1-24 (p. 14).

the themes I explore in this chapter suggest that *Genesis B* belongs within *Genesis A*, thematically if not stylistically. Moreover, the resumption of *Genesis A* after the *Genesis B* interpolation is smooth and consistent, as the first parents' lapse in *Genesis B* is followed by God's pronouncement of his sentence and the exile from Paradise in *Genesis A*. This suggests that the redactor gave some thought to the impact of the interpolation on the composite narrative.

In this chapter I discuss the first ten lines of the *Genesis B* fragment, which tell of God's command to Adam and Eve to desist from the fruit of the forbidden tree. I also discuss the temptation and fall conveyed over the course of lines 442-851, including the tempter's celebration upon the ostensible success of his quest and Adam's extra-biblical repentance. I follow up this discussion with a brief overview of the aftermath of the fall in *Genesis A*, which points to continuity across the two narratives. My discussion, however, not only highlights thematic and narrative continuity, but also *Genesis B*'s distinctive approach to biblical versification. The text not only relates extra-biblical episodes, such as the aforementioned tempter's exultation or the Adamic repentance; it also juxtaposes the tree of knowledge of good and evil and the tree of life in a manner that the biblical original does not. Moreover, the temptations comprise an extra-biblical first temptation of Adam, which ostensibly contradicts the course of events in the Book of Genesis. This elicited conflicting interpretations from commentators. While J. M. Evans saw this episode as a possible misinterpretation of I Tim 2.13-14,<sup>2</sup> John F. Vickrey argues that the narrative is allegorical. This is because Adam's initial resistance of the tempter may be ascribed to his role of *ratio*, or reason.<sup>3</sup> At the same time, the *Genesis B* representation of Eve is controversial, which led Vickrey to identify those commentators who emphasise the first woman's deception, rather

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<sup>2</sup> J. M. Evans, 'Genesis B and its Background', *The Review of English Studies*, 14.53 (1963), 1-16 (p. 10).

<sup>3</sup> John F. Vickrey, *Genesis B and the Comedic Imperative* (Lanham: Lehigh University Press, 2015), p. 44.

than temptation, as the exonerative school.<sup>4</sup> In this chapter I demonstrate, however, that while the narrative is allegorical, its representation of Eve is ambivalent. She is simultaneously deceived and tempted, which shows to the audience that the distinction between the two situations need not be straightforward, in that even good intentions may lead to sin. The ambivalence inherent to the representation of the first woman is therefore compatible with the didactic aims that may be expected to underlie a biblical poem. While in this discussion I synthesise previous commentators' contributions, I place particular emphasis on the ambivalent representation of the first woman.

In this chapter I also demonstrate that the fragment's extra-biblical ending explores the Christian themes of repentance and salvation. While I am not the first to make this point,<sup>5</sup> the manner in which the narrative explores and develops these themes, particularly in Adam's process of repentance, merits further consideration. The same is true of the tempter's exultation, which points to the message of salvation in its dramatic irony. This point has been largely overlooked, or not duly emphasised, by previous commentators. Moreover, my discussion of *Genesis B* assigns importance to the text's anagogical dimension, which may be read in Eve's vision of Heaven, which recalls the Last Judgement. While this point has been made before,<sup>6</sup> I consider that its significance in relation to the course of events at the end of the fragment is often overlooked, or understated. The allusion to the Last Judgement suggests, *inter alia*, that the tempter's exultation upon the apparent success of his quest is, in the last instance, futile.

I also discuss *Genesis B*'s appeal to vernacular social values in its representation of Satan's emissary before he leaves Hell, as well as in Adam's representation of his

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<sup>4</sup> Vickrey, p. 5.

<sup>5</sup> See *inter alia* Ellen B. Sorensen, 'Redeeming Eve: A Model Woman in Middle English Vernacular Literature' (unpublished doctoral thesis, Northern Illinois University, Department of English, 2008), p. 95; and Alexander J. Sager, 'After the Apple: Repentance in *Genesis B* and its Continental Context', *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, 112.3 (2013), 292-310 (p. 307).

<sup>6</sup> John F. Vickrey, 'The Vision of Eve in *Genesis B*', *Speculum*, 44.1 (1969), 86-102 (p. 87).

relationship with God. Even if these themes have been discussed by previous commentators,<sup>7</sup> they must be taken into consideration in any comprehensive assessment of the manner whereby *Genesis B* adapts the biblical myth. These themes also throw light on important ideological considerations that, to some extent, complement those I discussed, *inter alia*, in Chapter 1.2.3.

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<sup>7</sup> See, *inter alia*, Thomas D. Hill, 'Pilate's Visionary Wife and the Innocence of Eve: An Old Saxon Source for the Old English *Genesis B*', *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, 101.2 (2002), 170-84; Vickrey, *Genesis B and the Comedic Imperative*, pp. 139-66; and, Michael Lysander Angerer, 'Beyond "Germanic" and "Christian" Monoliths: Revisiting Old English and Old Saxon Biblical Epics', *Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, 120.1 (2021), 73-92.

### 3.2 The Temptation and Lapse of Adam and Eve in *Genesis B*

In this section I discuss the episodes that make up the temptation of Adam and Eve, as well as its aftermath, in *Genesis B*. The temptation of Adam and Eve explores, *inter alia*, the distinction between truth and lie<sup>8</sup> at different levels of meaning. I precede my discussion of these episodes and their levels of meaning by an overview of the narrative's potential sources and analogues, which provides background information essential to an understanding of the manner in which *Genesis B* adapts its biblical source. This is the case even where this discussion points primarily to the originality of *Genesis B*'s retelling of the Genesis myth. I engage in this discussion in section 3.2.1. The rest of this section is structured as follows:

- a) In 3.2.2 I discuss the two-tree motif that introduces the temptations, as well as the temptations of Adam and Eve by Satan's emissary. I also take into consideration narratorial commentary relating to Eve's lapse, which explains and mitigates, but does not absolve her, of guilt;
- b) In 3.2.3 I deal with Eve's temptation of Adam, a temptation built around the first woman's anagogical vision of Heaven, which also informs interpretation of the episodes that follow;
- c) In 3.2.4 I discuss Satan's emissary's celebratory speech following his temptation of Adam and Eve, as well as his representation before he leaves Hell, after the fall of the rebel angels. I focus, in particular, on the irony that inheres to these representations; and in,
- d) 3.2.5 I discuss Adam's process of repentance that follows his lapse, which is redemptive and tropological in outlook.

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<sup>8</sup> Christina M. Heckman, *Debating with Demons: Pedagogy and Materiality in Early English Literature* (Cambridge: Brewer, 2020), p. 125.

### 3.2.1 Narrative Sources and Analogues for the Temptation and Lapse in *Genesis B*

Although *Genesis B* treats the temptation and lapse in lines 442-851, it tells of God's command to Adam and Eve not to partake of the forbidden fruit in lines 235-45, which lines precede the account of the angelic rebellion I discussed in Chapter 1.2.2. These ten lines attest to *Genesis B*'s radical approach to the adaptation of biblical material. While the biblically derived sections of *Genesis A* primarily entail sequential versification of the original,<sup>9</sup> the mentioned ten lines modify the corresponding biblical narrative. This is because Adam alone bears direct witness to God's prohibition in Gen 2.16-17,<sup>10</sup> whereas in *Genesis B* both Adam and Eve are present.<sup>11</sup> While Eve's reply to the serpent in Gen 3.2-3 demonstrates that she knows of God's prohibition even if she does not witness it, the *Genesis B* modification is unusual when compared to the *Genesis A* approach. For all that, a similar conception of God's warning appears to have informed Vercelli Homily XIX, where 'Be ðam treowe Crist self forewarnode ægðer ge Adam ge Euan'<sup>12</sup> (Christ himself warned both Adam and Eve of the tree). In section 3.2.2 I explore the reasons why *Genesis B* modifies the biblically-derived episode. Suffice it to say, for the time being, that this modification places emphasis on Eve's knowledge of God's command and that this knowledge shows that she could have resisted the temptation. The presence of the same theme in the homily suggests that this theme may be of homiletic origin. It therefore appears that, at least in this instance, the poem draws on biblical exegesis in its representation, or interpretation, of the temptation.

*Genesis B*'s departure from the corresponding biblical text is also evident in its representation of the temptation of Adam and Eve, so much so that early criticism of the poem was built on the premise that, unlike *Genesis A*, the passage draws extensively on

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<sup>9</sup> Paul G. Remley, *Old English Biblical Verse* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 96.

<sup>10</sup> 'Genesis', in *The Vulgate Bible Vol. I The Pentateuch*, ed. by Swift Edgar (London: Harvard University Press, 2010), pp. 1-274 (p. 10). All citations and translations from the Vulgate Genesis are taken from this edition.

<sup>11</sup> Robert Emmett Finnegan, 'Eve and "Vincible Ignorance" in *Genesis B*', *Texas Studies in Literature and Language*, 18.2 (1976), 329-39 (p. 330).

<sup>12</sup> Homily XIX, in *The Vercelli Homilies and Related Texts*, ed. by D.G. Scragg (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), pp. 315- 26 (p. 317). The translation is mine.



extra-biblical narrative texts. Critics like Eduard Seivers, Ten Brink and J. M. Evans dedicated their efforts to the identification of these sources. This work led to the identification of Alcimus Ecdicius Avitus's *De Spiritualis Historiae Gestis* as the text most relevant to the composition of *Genesis B*.<sup>13</sup> However, my discussion of Avitus in Chapter 1.2.2 shows that even where the similarities between the two texts are not insignificant, they do not quite attest to a direct link. Even where D. G. Calder and M. J. B. Allen cite this poem as a distant *Genesis B* analogue, they recognise that the temptation scenes in the respective poems bear practically no relation to each other. Indeed, six of the major episodes that make up the temptation in *Genesis B* find no counterpart in Avitus's narrative, these being:

- a) temptation by an emissary, rather than by Satan himself;
- b) the tempter's angelic disguise (which is additional to his earlier transformation into a serpent);
- c) the extra-biblical first temptation of Adam;
- d) the representation of the forbidden tree as a tree of death;
- e) Eve's heavenly vision and her belief that her actions fulfil God's will; and,
- f) Adam and Eve's immediate repentance following the temptation.<sup>14</sup>

Moreover, with the notable exception of the Old Saxon *Heliand*, attempts to identify other literary texts as sources for these episodes have generally proven inconclusive. On the other hand, *Genesis B*'s reliance on biblical verses other than those in the Book of Genesis, apocryphal traditions, and exegetical notions has on occasion been securely established. For instance, with respect to point a), C. Abbetmeyer and A. D. McKillop suggested that 'Satan's dispatch of a subordinate demon to destroy Adam and Eve derives from a fusion of the story of Lucifer's fall with Christ's binding of Satan during His descent into hell'.<sup>15</sup> As I indicated

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<sup>13</sup> D. G. Calder and M. J. B. Allen, *Sources and Analogues of Old English Poetry* (Cambridge: Brewer, 1976), p. 3.

<sup>14</sup> Calder and Allen, p. 4.

<sup>15</sup> Calder and Allen.

in Chapter 1.3.3, there is ample evidence to show that the bound Satan motif derives from the apocryphal Harrowing of Hell tradition, and that its portrayal is tropological in scope.

As for point b), the tempter's angelic disguise, Evans identified an analogue in 2 Cor 11.14,<sup>16</sup> which relates that Satan disguised himself as an angel of light.<sup>17</sup> Daniel Anlezark suggests, moreover, that this episode evokes the typological association between Eve and the Virgin Mary.<sup>18</sup> These analogues may well be considered plausible, however their connection with the *Genesis B* episode may be deemed indirect, hence not conclusively demonstrable. The extra-biblical temptation of Adam, point c) in the above list, appears to be without precedent.<sup>19</sup> As regards the representation of the forbidden tree as a tree of death, point d), Evans argued that it recalls the gloomy descriptions in Prudentius's *Liber Cathemerinon* and Dracontius's *Carmen de Deo*.<sup>20</sup> The tree in *Genesis B* is however more likely to have originated with Alcuin. I discuss this point in section 3.2.2, where I state that this description forms part of *Genesis B*'s tropological dimension.

Point e), which relates to Eve's belief that she acts in accordance with God's will, is complex, in that it is inextricably linked with her deception, or more specifically the vision induced by Satan's emissary. Evans argued that Eve's deception recalls Avitus's rendition of the biblical narrative,<sup>21</sup> as well as Dracontius's *Carmen de Deo*.<sup>22</sup> However, neither of these texts suggests that Eve is convinced that she acts in accordance with God's will when she tempts Adam. It is likely that this theme does not originate with Latin narrative sources, although it may be explained with reference to exegetical traditions and patristic texts. This is because Satan's emissary's deception of Eve by means of a vision of Heaven, whereby the

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<sup>16</sup> J. M. Evans, 'Genesis B and its Background', p. 7.

<sup>17</sup> '2 Corinthians', in *The Parallel English-Latin Vulgate Bible* (Toronto: Publishing Toronto, 2016). Kindle edition.

<sup>18</sup> Daniel Anlezark, 'The Old English *Genesis B* and Irenaeus of Lyon', *Medium Ævum*, 86.1 (2017), 1-21 (p. 13).

<sup>19</sup> Calder and Allen, p. 4.

<sup>20</sup> Evans, 'Genesis B and its Background', p. 10.

<sup>21</sup> J. M. Evans, *Paradise Lost and the Genesis Tradition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1968), p. 136.

<sup>22</sup> Evans, p. 132.

first woman sees all creation, broadly recalls the inner light that fills St Benedict's mind in Gregory the Great's *Dialogi*, II.35.7.<sup>23</sup> In other words, the intensity of the vision, or its apparent authenticity, convinces Eve that it is genuine and that, consequently, God wants her to have Adam partake of the forbidden fruit. For all that, the conceptual similarities between the vision in *Genesis B* and Gregory's text do not conclusively demonstrate that Eve's mistaken belief originates with Gregorian thought. Moreover, in section 3.2.4 I observe that the vision in *Genesis B* may have been inspired by the Old Saxon *Heliand*, where Satan induces a vision on Pilate's wife. This is a more likely source for the vision in *Genesis B*, particularly as it is not the only motif shared between the two poems, as I indicate in my discussion of Satan's emissary's helmet later in this section and in section 3.2.4. As regards point f), Ellen B. Sorensen proposes Matt 14.25-32, where Peter attempts to walk towards Christ over the waters and Christ saves him from drowning, as an analogue to Adam's readiness to cross the sea in penance.<sup>24</sup> John F. Vickrey, moreover, identifies an analogue for Adam's readiness to descend to the bottom of the sea in *Genesis B*, l. 834a, in 2 Cor 11.25, which verse mentions shipwreck and a night and day in the bottom of the sea.<sup>25</sup> I argue, however, that the Book of Job may offer a closer analogue, which I discuss in section 3.2.5.<sup>26</sup> Alexander J. Sager, in a broader discussion of Adam's repentance, makes reference to Carolingian reform theology as expressed in Rudolph of Fulda's miracle book.<sup>27</sup> He suggested that *Genesis B*'s omission of Adam and Eve's confession to God recalls an episode in this book where a man is told to confess and presumably does so, but whose confession is

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<sup>23</sup> Andrew Cole, 'Jewish Apocrypha and Christian Epistemologies of the Fall: The *Dialogi* of Gregory the Great and the Old Saxon *Genesis*', in *Rome and the North: The Early Reception of Gregory the Great in Germanic Europe*, ed. by Rolf H. Bremmer, Kees Dekker and David F. Johnson (Paris: Peeters Publishers, 2001), pp. 157-88 (p. 177-78).

<sup>24</sup> Sorensen, p. 95.

<sup>25</sup> John F. Vickrey, *Genesis B and the Comedic Imperative*, p. 240.

<sup>26</sup> See also Joseph St. John, 'Ac ic to þam grunde genge: An Analogue for *Genesis B*, Line 834a', *The Explicator* (2023): <https://doi.org/10.1080/00144940.2022.2164169> for a more detailed exploration of this idea.

<sup>27</sup> This collection of texts is also known as *Fuldenses ecclesias translatorum auctore Rudolfo*. See Sager, p. 303.

not related.<sup>28</sup> Yet this point is problematic, given that it is not known whether *Genesis B* would have incorporated the encounter with God prior to its interpolation into *Genesis A*. Moreover, in its current manuscript context the known ending of *Genesis B* does not function autonomously, given that *Genesis A* relates Adam and Eve's encounter with God. This casts doubt on the validity of the miracle book as a *Genesis B* analogue.

In section 3.2.4 I observe that *Genesis B* may have been influenced by the Old Saxon *Heliand* in its representation of Satan's emissary as he is about to leave Hell, in that he wears a disguising helmet.<sup>29</sup> Although the *Heliand* is a gospel harmony based on Tatian's *Diatessaron*,<sup>30</sup> the Assyrian writer's text does not mention Satan's helmet.<sup>31</sup> However, this is a feature that the Old Saxon poem shares with *Genesis B*. I argue that this is one of those aspects of *Genesis B* that adapts the narrative to a vernacular context. This is not only on account of the likelihood that the disguising helmet is of vernacular origin, but also because it emphasises the tempter's deception, which mitigates Adam and Eve's guilt to an audience that would have assigned particular importance to loyalty towards one's lord. I also observed similar adaptation to vernacular social values in my discussion of the *Genesis B* account of the angelic rebellion and fall and, to a lesser extent, in the *Genesis A* version of the same narrative.

My discussion of sources and analogues, which synthesises the work of previous commentators, suggests that the representation of the temptation and lapse of Adam and Eve in *Genesis B* is unconventional. This is because the narrative does not appear to rely on a

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<sup>28</sup> Sager, p. 307.

<sup>29</sup> See Michael Fox, 'Feðerhama and hæleðhelm: The Equipment of Devils', *Florilegium*, 26 (2009), 131-57 (pp. 139, 147 and 134), for a discussion of other sources or analogues for the representation of Satan's emissary before he leaves Hell. While these possible sources or analogues have their merits, the *Heliand* is a more likely source for *Genesis B* in view of the similarity between the helmets in the two texts, as well as their similar functions in the context of the respective narratives.

<sup>30</sup> Hill, 'Pilate's Visionary Wife and the Innocence of Eve: An Old Saxon Source for the Old English *Genesis B*', p. 179.

<sup>31</sup> Section L of Tatian, *Diatessaron*, trans. by Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson (1895), in *earlychristianwritings.com*, <http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/info/diatessaron.html> [accessed 5 July 2018].

single source, be it biblical, apocryphal or otherwise. *Genesis B*, if anything, appears to draw on multiple sources, which it combines in a manner that may only be described as unique and original. This is not to say, however, that *Genesis B* is unorthodox in its representation of the temptation and lapse of Adam and Eve. Even where the narrative departs from the biblical original or known narrative sources, it resorts to tropological, allegorical and anagogical levels of meaning. These levels of meaning are typical of biblical exegesis, as attested, *inter alia*, by Bede's commentary on the Book of Genesis.<sup>32</sup> Moreover, as I observe in the course of this section, *Genesis B*'s recourse to vernacular social values works in unison with its Christian themes.

### **3.2.2 The Two Trees and Satan's Emissary's Temptations**

In this section I discuss the two trees that introduce the temptations and Satan's emissary's temptations of Adam and Eve. While these episodes are broadly based on Gen 3.1-6, which relate the temptation of Adam and Eve, and Gen 3.22, which tells of the Tree of Life, they entail extensive modifications to the terse biblical version. The importance of the juxtaposition of the tree of life and the tree of knowledge of good and evil in *Genesis B* lies in its strategic placement at the head of the temptations, which suggests that it sets the tone for these episodes, or their interpretation. I argue that this juxtaposition is tropological in its appeal to the Christian men and women in the audience, which points to tropological interpretation of the episodes that follow. A tropological interpretation of these episodes, however, does not rule out other levels of meaning. In my discussion of the extra-biblical temptation of Adam I argue that the first man is posited as representative of the faculty of reason in an allegorical context. Adam is also a retainer who intends to remain true to his lord, God. In this regard, the text may be appealing to vernacular social values that assign

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<sup>32</sup> Calvin B. Kendall, 'Introduction', in *On Genesis*, by the Venerable Bede (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2008), pp. 1-64 (pp. 10-11).

importance to loyalty, or rather, to the co-option of such values on the part, or on behalf of, kingly authority. At the same time, Adam's good intentions distinguish him from Satan and his emissary. This explains Adam's response to his eventual lapse, which I discuss in section 3.2.5. The first man's repentance contrasts Satan's unrepentant attitude, which I discussed in Chapter 1.3, and the emissary's exultation, which I discuss in section 3.2.4. In my discussion of Eve's temptation I draw attention to her simultaneous deception and guilt. I argue that Eve's naivety mitigates her sin; however it does not absolve her. The ambivalence that inheres to the representation of Eve, coupled with the anticipation of her punishment, which I discuss in section 3.2.5, suggests that deception does not preclude guilt, or sin. This is because Eve lets down her guard and allows herself to be persuaded even though she witnessed God's pronouncement of the prohibition to partake of the tree of knowledge. This takes place, moreover, in a context where the distinction between the right and the wrong choice, embodied by the two trees, is manifest. In the course of this section I draw on previous commentators' work and synthesise their views; however I also place particular emphasis on the ambivalence that inheres to the representation of Eve.

The juxtaposition of the tree of knowledge and the tree of life in *Genesis B* is extra-biblical, given that the biblical text only mentions the tree of life in Gen 3.22, after the temptation has taken place. This modification is important because it emphasises that Adam and Eve have a choice to make.<sup>33</sup> The phrase *gumena æghwīlc* (each person) in the following text suggests that the audience has the same choice to make:

[...] swa hie waldendgod,  
 heah heofoncyning handum gesette,  
 þæt þær ylðo bearn moste on ceosan  
 godes and yfeles, gumena æghwīlc,

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<sup>33</sup> John F. Vickrey, *Genesis B and the Comedic Imperative*, p. 39.

welan and wawan. næs se wæstm gelic.<sup>34</sup>

(In such way the ruling God, high king of Heaven, set them [the trees] with his hands, so that the children of men, each person, would choose between good and evil, prosperity and woe. The fruits were not alike.)

One of the trees is fair and grants eternal life (Gen B, l. 467-69), whereas the other, the source of knowledge of good and evil, is a tree of death (Gen B, l. 477-81). The description of the trees in *Genesis B* contrasts the terse Book of Genesis, which does not describe either tree in detail, or at all. Nor does the biblical text describe the tree of knowledge as black, dim and dark, as does the poem in lines 477b-78a. Rather, Gen 2.17, where God pronounces the prohibition, does not describe the tree at all, as God only asserts that the consequence of disobedience is death. Likewise, Eve does not describe the tree of knowledge in Gen 3.2-3, whereas in Gen 3.6 she is said to have seen it as fair, whereupon she partakes of its fruit. The tree of life is only mentioned in Gen 3.22, which provides no description.

This means that the description of the two trees in *Genesis B* is as extra-biblical as for their juxtaposition. The description of the tree of knowledge in the poem appears to run counter to Augustine's exegesis in *De Genesi ad litteram*, where it is set out that the tree is not evil in itself. This is because God only creates good things.<sup>35</sup> However, Alcuin of York argued, in his *Interrogationes et Responsiones in Genesim*, that the tree of knowledge offers poison and death<sup>36</sup> in a passage that may be considered unorthodox.<sup>37</sup> It is interesting that Ælfric's translation of Alcuin's work omits this comment.<sup>38</sup> It is possible, however, that a narrative of Old Saxon origin like *Genesis B* would have been influenced by Alcuin's

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<sup>34</sup> Lines 462b-66 of 'Genesis B', in *The Saxon Genesis An Edition of the West Saxon Genesis B and the Old Saxon Vatican Genesis*, ed. by A. N. Doane (London: University of Wisconsin Press, 1991), pp. 207-31 (p. 217). All references to *Genesis B* shall henceforth be given parenthetically in the main text, indicated by the abbreviation Gen B. All translations of *Genesis B* are mine.

<sup>35</sup> Jodi Grimes, 'Tree(s) of Knowledge in the Junius Manuscript', *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, 112.3 (2013), 311-39 (p. 315).

<sup>36</sup> Evans, *Paradise Lost and the Genesis Tradition*, p. 153.

<sup>37</sup> Grimes, pp. 315-16

<sup>38</sup> Grimes, p. 316

conception of the tree of knowledge. This is because the original Old Saxon text would have been produced in a Carolingian context as for the *Heliand*, as I observed in Chapter 1.2.3. Alcuin was of course a leading figure in the Carolingian court and the *Interrogationes* was popular on the continent (as well as in England).<sup>39</sup>

In contrast to the description of the tree of knowledge, the juxtaposition of the two trees is orthodox in scope. This is because, as I already suggested, juxtaposition suggests that Adam and Eve have a choice to make, and that they therefore enjoy free will. As I also explained earlier, the individual members of the poem's audience have the same choice to make, one between obedience and its positive outcome and disobedience and its adverse repercussions. In this framework, the dichotomy that inheres to the representation of the two trees makes the dire consequences of the wrong choice, in the form of the tree of knowledge, all too evident. This is the case irrespective of the motivations behind this choice. Ironically, therefore, the unorthodox representation of the tree of knowledge points to an orthodox objective and outcome. This approach to the adaptation of the biblical narrative ties in with *Genesis B*'s opening ten lines, where both Adam and Eve bear direct witness to God's pronouncement of the prohibition. The two episodes, taken in conjunction, suggest that the first couple has the knowledge required to resist the temptation, which makes both Adam and Eve culpable. Moreover, in a context where the juxtaposition of the two trees precedes the temptations, it also informs their interpretation. In other words, its tropological aspect suggests that Adam and Eve stand in for the Christian men and women who make up the audience. Like Adam and Eve, therefore, these men and women enjoy free will, and they are likewise responsible for their actions.

I now discuss the temptations in *Genesis B*, the first of which is the unsuccessful extra-biblical temptation of Adam. This episode is preceded by the narrator's description of

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<sup>39</sup> Katherine O'Brien O'Keefe, 'The Use of Bede's Writings on Genesis in Alcuin's *Interrogationes*', *Sacris erudiri*, 23 (1978), 463-83 (p. 465).



the emissary's transformation into the likeness of a *wyrm*, or serpent (Gen B, l. 491a). The tempter also appears in the shape of a serpent in the upper register of the full page picture on page 20 of the manuscript,<sup>40</sup> which flanks the text where Satan plots his revenge on Adam and Eve. However, in this picture the serpent approaches Eve, not Adam.<sup>41</sup> Adam's temptation is therefore not represented in the manuscript drawings. As I indicated earlier in this chapter, Evans suggested that the extra-biblical temptation of Adam results from interpretation, or quite possibly misinterpretation, of I Tim 2.13-14, which reads:

Adam enim primus formatus est deinde Eva et Adam non est seductus mulier autem seducta in praevaricatione fuit.<sup>42</sup>

(For Adam was first formed; then Eve. And Adam was not seduced; but the woman, being seduced, was in the transgression.)

Evans explained that a 'reader unlearned in theological commentary might have taken these verses to mean that the devil failed to deceive Adam but succeeded in deceiving Eve'.<sup>43</sup>

Vickrey, however, argues that *Genesis B* appeals to allegorical interpretative traditions, which point to understanding of the biblical original in terms that go beyond the literal sense. In this section I draw and build upon Vickrey's work, in which he suggests, *inter alia*, that *Genesis B* does not deliver a realistic or behaviourally plausible narrative.<sup>44</sup> Rather, the initial placement of Adam and Eve between the two trees suggests that they, along with the audience, have a choice to make. I already observed that the juxtaposition of the two trees forms part of the narrative's tropological dimension, whereby Adam and Eve stand in for the Christian audience. This episode also conveys meaning at the allegorical level, particularly in its appeal to the senses through the contrasting physical descriptions of the two trees. The

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<sup>40</sup> See Appendix, Plate IV.

<sup>41</sup> Vickrey, *Genesis B and the Comedic Imperative*, p. 88.

<sup>42</sup> '1 Timothy 2', in *The Parallel English-Latin Vulgate Bible*. The bracketed translation is taken from the same edition.

<sup>43</sup> Evans, 'Genesis B and its Background', p. 10.

<sup>44</sup> Vickrey, *Genesis B and the Comedic Imperative*, p. 75.

text's allegory also explains Adam and Eve's separation after Adam has been unsuccessfully tempted, which makes little sense at the literal level, given that the couple is forewarned that something wrong may be afoot.<sup>45</sup> Vickrey argues that the allegorical dimension in *Genesis B* is expressed by way of the *tribus modis*, or three-way rationale,<sup>46</sup> which applies to the events in the poem that adapt Genesis 3.1-7.<sup>47</sup> This covers the onset of temptation right up to Adam and Eve's opening of their eyes and the discovery of their nakedness, where Satan's emissary, as the tempter, is suggestion, or *suggestio*, Adam reason (*ratio* or *spiritus*), and Eve the senses (*sensus*).<sup>48</sup> The *tribus modis* rationale is set out, *inter alia*, in Bede's *Historia Ecclesiastica Gentis Anglorum*, I, xxvii, which renders Gregory the Great's reply to Augustine's ninth question, where the devil makes the suggestion to sin (*suggestio*), Eve represents the flesh delighted by it (*delectata est*), hence her association with the senses, and Adam the spirit that consented to the act.<sup>49</sup> As I already indicated, this scheme not only explains the appeal to the senses in the representation of the two trees, but also the reason why Adam and Eve are tempted separately. The Adam of the first temptation is not hindered by his senses or desires, while Eve is not assisted by reason as she is tempted later in the course of the narrative. As I already set out above, allegorical representation of the temptation of the first couple is borne out by Bede's *Historia Ecclesiastica*, I, xxvii. This representation of the temptation is also in evidence in the Old English translation of Bede's text, and the Old English translation of the *Cura Pastoralis*.<sup>50</sup> Moreover, Hrabanus's *Commentaria in Genesim*, I, xv, represented the temptation in essentially the same terms.<sup>51</sup> In view of its patristic origins and the known connections between Old Saxon and English early medieval

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<sup>45</sup> Vickrey, p. 44 and 77.

<sup>46</sup> Vickrey, p. 77.

<sup>47</sup> Vickrey, p. 217.

<sup>48</sup> See Vickrey, pp. 44 and 57.

<sup>49</sup> See Vickrey, p. 44.

<sup>50</sup> Vickrey, p. 44.

<sup>51</sup> See Vickrey, pp. 43 and 269.

religious institutions, this allegorical mode may easily have been taken up and adapted from insular religious texts.

I now turn to a detailed analysis of the emissary's temptation of Adam and the first man's response. In this discussion I draw on Vickrey's work in relation to the *tribus modis* rationale. I also consider, however, other aspects of this temptation, including its appeal to vernacular social values. Satan's emissary tempts Adam in his speech covering lines 496-521, wherein he states that God now wants the first man to partake of the forbidden fruit. The tempter suggests that God rescinded his prohibition because Adam won divine favour (Gen B, l. 504-507). The tempter also justifies his errand by stating that God did not want to trouble himself with the journey, hence the need for a messenger (Gen B, l. 507c-16a). The emissary also tells Adam that the forbidden fruit will enhance his skills and mental capabilities (Gen B, l. 499-500) and that his body will become more beautiful (Gen B, l. 502-03). As I already indicated the notion of a temptation of Adam is extra-biblical. The same is true of the tempter's explanations for his presence. However, the promises made by the tempter reflect the general terms of the terse biblical account in Gen 3.5, which lays down that:

‘[...] scit enim Deus quod in quocumque die comedeteris ex eo, aperientur oculi vestri, et eritis sicut dii, scientes bonum et malum’.

([...] for God doth know that in what day soever you shall eat thereof, your eyes shall be opened, and you shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.)

This is the case even though *Genesis B* omits the serpent's claim that Adam and Eve would be like gods, for the suggestion that Adam's intellectual faculties would be enhanced recalls the opening of the eyes in the biblical text. Moreover, the reference to physical beauty in the *Genesis B* temptation of Adam recalls the element of pride suggested by the biblical narrative as a whole. Of course, the tempter's reference to ‘*þin lichoma leohtra micle*’ (Gen B, l. 502)

(your body more radiant) also recalls the body of the chief rebel angel (Gen B, l. 256) in the part of the poem dealing with the angelic rebellion. This is certainly no coincidence, for the treacherous angel and the loyal Adam of the first temptation offer contrasting attitudes to God's command. I establish, in the course of this chapter, that this contrast is central to the adaptation of the biblical narrative as a renewed myth in *Genesis B*.

Satan's emissary's speech affirms that he stands for *suggestio* in the text's allegorical scheme. The tempter, after all, appeals to Adam's pride to entice disobedience. However, in his response in lines 523b-46 Adam questions the extra-biblical elements of the speech, while he ignores its promises. In the first place, Adam appeals to his own knowledge, as he recalls that he has heard God lay down the consequences of disobedience, when God identified the forbidden tree as 'deaðes beam' (Gen B, l. 528a) (tree of death) that leads to a 'sweartan helle' (Gen B, l. 529b) (dark hell). It is also interesting that while Adam should say that he has no knowledge of the emissary's true intentions (Gen B, l. 531b-33a), he points out that:

[...] hwæt, ic þinra bysna ne mæg,  
worda ne wisna wuht oncnawan,  
siðes ne sagona. (Gen B, l. 533b- 35a)

(Indeed, I can neither fathom your narrative, words, nor reasoning, nor your mission or claims.)

Adam suggests, in other words, that the premises of the tempter's speech are unthinkable. This is an important point, for it offers further evidence that the Adam and Eve of *Genesis B* have the required knowledge to resist temptation. Moreover, Adam's response makes it abundantly clear that the couple is knowledgeable of the consequences of disobedience. It is also significant that Adam never considers the reasons behind God's prohibition, and that he therefore ignores the reason given by Satan's emissary for God's supposed rescinding of his command. This is important in that the reason behind God's prohibition may well be

immaterial. In his commentary on Gen 2.17 in *De Genesi ad litteram* Augustine pointed out that God's command is to be adhered to for its own sake.<sup>52</sup> Vickrey argues that Augustine's notion of obedience as expressed in this text offers a clue as to how *Genesis B* would have been understood in the Early Middle Ages.<sup>53</sup> Moreover, the first man approaches the temptation rationally, in line with his role of *ratio*, and keeps God's command constantly in mind. He also assesses the claims made by the tempter with reference to his own experience of God. This is affirmed by the concluding lines of his speech, where he points out that God may bestow anything without sending an underling (Gen B, l. 545b-46) to do his bidding. As I already indicated, Adam's speech is important in that it demonstrates to the audience that Adam and Eve have the knowledge required to resist temptation. However, this is only one of its functions. The text also provides to the audience information about the nature and powers of God. It appears that previous commentators have not emphasised this point, yet the provision of information about God may have been important, particularly in the narrative's Old Saxon context. In the section of the Introduction to this thesis titled 'Authorship and Audience' I made reference to the *Praefatio in librum antiquum lingua saxonica conscriptum*, which set out that Old Saxon poetry would have been intended to address, *inter alia*, the illiterate, whose knowledge of scripture would have been rudimentary.

In his assessment of the Adam of *Genesis B* Vickrey refers to the view expressed by C. S. Lewis that most moralists prior to the eighteenth century held that moral maxims are understood intellectually. This view of morality suggests that *ratio* would have been inclined towards goodness (in this case obedience) unless it is misled by a combination of *suggestio* and *delectatio*,<sup>54</sup> or pleasure. Vickrey's argument not only explains Adam's focus on his experience of God, but also his remark that Satan's emissary does not produce a *tacen*, or a sign, attesting to God's favour (Gen B, l. 540b). It also explains Adam's presence of mind

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<sup>52</sup> Vickrey, p. 58.

<sup>53</sup> Vickrey.

<sup>54</sup> Vickrey, p. 56.

when he remarks that the tempter does not look like God's angels (Gen B, l. 538b-39a).

Adam's remark about the absence of a sign, or *tacen*, as well as his observation that the tempter does not look like God's angels, deserve in-depth consideration. These themes not only show that Adam displays or represents reason, but they also throw light on the nature of the tempter, or more specifically on the limitations imposed on his ability to influence humankind's future. I discuss the tempter's appearance in section 3.2.3; however I take up the significance of the *tacen* presently.

The text does not explain what the *tacen* is, beyond its aforementioned connection with God's favour. However, Vickrey drew attention to Adam's use of the term *nergend*, which occurs a few lines earlier in alliterating position in line 536a, where Adam states that he knows what 'nergend user' (Gen B, l. 536a) (our saviour) commanded. Vickrey argues that this remark appears to be out of place, given that at this stage Adam has not yet fallen, which means that he is in no need of a saviour just yet.<sup>55</sup> Moreover, in his reference to the saviour Adam makes use of the plural pronoun *user* as opposed to the dual *uncer*, which would be more appropriate given that at this point only two human beings are in existence.<sup>56</sup> The dual pronoun *uncer* is used elsewhere in the text in reference to the tempter and Eve. It is therefore probable that use of the plural *user* in this instance is deliberate, or that it is intended to deliver a message that goes beyond the literal level of meaning. The significance of this message transpires from the meaning and implications of the term *nergend*, which in the Old Saxon forms *neriand*, *heilbringend* and *rettend*, always refers to Christ.<sup>57</sup> I consider that this meaning would not have been lost on early medieval English audiences, or at least to those in the audience who would have had a reasonably good grasp of exegetical points. I observe, in section 3.3, that *Genesis A* sometimes makes use of this term where the Latin text adapted identifies God as *dominus*, which would be more accurately translatable into Old

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<sup>55</sup> Vickrey, p. 169.

<sup>56</sup> Vickrey, p. 170.

<sup>57</sup> Vickrey, p. 169.

English as *drihten* (lord) or, in the wording of *Genesis B*, *hearran*. Charles D. Wright argues that *Genesis A* makes use of the term *nergend* to convey the idea of redemption, as well as to invoke the doctrine of Christ's presence in the Old Testament.<sup>58</sup> Constance B. Hieatt, on similar lines, argues that the term *nergend* suggests that *Genesis A* represents 'Christ's incarnation and [his] role as redeemer'.<sup>59</sup> The use of this term in the context of the aftermath of Adam and Eve's transgression (in *Genesis A*) confirms the association with Christ the saviour. In this context the *tacen* of *Genesis B* points to the limitations imposed on the tempter to influence the future of humankind, in that humankind benefits from salvation brought about by Christ.

Vickrey argues that the allusion to Christ in *Genesis B* recalls Old English texts like *Daniel* and *Judith*, where the protagonists display knowledge of Christ or the Trinity in situations of danger.<sup>60</sup> Evidently, Adam is also in danger as he is tempted. This attests to the tropological or moral dimension of the poem, which sees Adam stand in for a Christian man of the sixth age,<sup>61</sup> i.e. the period after the coming of Christ. Hence, the emissary's temptation of Adam is simultaneously allegorical (by way of the *tribus modis* rationale) and tropological. The tropological level, which calls upon Christ as the *nergend*, or saviour, suggests that Adam's *tacen* is nothing other than the sign of the cross.<sup>62</sup> This anachronistic allusion to the cross, howsoever oblique, is not unique to *Genesis B*. Richard North interprets the phrase 'wuldres beam' (glorious pillar) in *Exodus*<sup>63</sup> as an allusion to the cross.<sup>64</sup> These allusions are neither surprising nor altogether exceptional, as attested by the related concept of Christ's

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<sup>58</sup> Charles D. Wright, 'Genesis A ad litteram', in *Old English Literature and the Old Testament*, ed. by Michael Fox and Manish Sharma (London: University of Toronto Press, 2012), pp. 121-71 (p. 154).

<sup>59</sup> Constance B. Hieatt, 'Divisions: Theme and Structure in *Genesis A*', *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen*, 81.3 (1980), 243-51 (p. 248).

<sup>60</sup> Vickrey, *Genesis B and the Comedic Imperative*, pp. 170-71.

<sup>61</sup> Vickrey, p. 172.

<sup>62</sup> Vickrey, p. 183.

<sup>63</sup> Line 568a of *Exodus*, ed. by Peter J. Lucas, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edn (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2020), p. 146. The translation is mine.

<sup>64</sup> Richard North, *Heathen Gods in Old English Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp. 58-59.

presence in the Old Testament I discussed in the first two chapters of this thesis. Moreover, according to Brandon W. Hawk the cross was seen to symbolise all salvation history, thereby spanning the Tree of Life right up to the last days.<sup>65</sup> I conclude, on the basis of these considerations, that *Genesis B* makes use of the term *tacen*, along with *nergend*, to appeal directly to the audience at the tropological level. This is the case even where the term *tacen* may also be interpreted as a surety in a legal or contractual sense.<sup>66</sup>

While the tropological level of meaning may be said to appeal to the more exegetically inclined members of the audience, *Genesis B* also appeals to the less exegetically inclined analogically. This is done with reference to what may be described as vernacular social values. These values would have appealed to members of the audience who would not necessarily have grasped the narrative's allegorical import, or even the tropological dimension. I therefore consider that the text offered an opportunity to all the members of its intended audience to interpret the narrative in an extra-literal sense. Adam's display of loyalty in the first temptation, which markedly contrasts Satan's behaviour in the same poem, represents, *inter alia*, the analogical level of meaning. The appeal to vernacular social values in Adam's resistance to temptation emerges when his stance is compared to that of the chief rebel angel in the same poem, whose rebellion is conceived in militaristic terms. The objective of the rebellion, after all, is the establishment of a rival throne in the north and west of Heaven (Gen B, l. 273b-76a). Moreover, the representation of Satan in Hell recalls an earthly lord, as he calls upon a retainer to do his bidding in return for the rewards he handed out in Heaven (Gen B, l. 409-21a) and in anticipation of whatever rewards may be dealt out in Hell (Gen B, l. 435-441). In this instance, therefore, Satan appeals to loyalty and *comitatus* values that require retainers to fight for their generous lord, values that Satan himself betrays when he rebels against God. These values are also in evidence in battle poetry, such as *The*

<sup>65</sup> Brandon W. Hawk, 'Id est, crux Christi': Tracing the Old English Motif of the Celestial Rood', *Anglo-Saxon England*, 40 (2012), 43-73 (p. 49).

<sup>66</sup> Janet Schrunck Ericksen, 'Legalizing the Fall of Man', *Medium Ævum*, 74.2 (2005), 205-20 (p. 209).



*Battle of Maldon*, and in *Beowulf*, as I indicated in Chapter 1.2.1. In his response to the tempter Adam also appeals to loyalty as enshrined in these vernacular narratives; however, in contrast to Satan the first man demonstrates genuine faith in his lord. As I already indicated, Adam ignores the promises made by the tempter in his speech, as his first thought relates to God's command and the consequences of disobedience (Gen B, l. 523b-535a). Adam's loyalty and focus on God's command leads him to request the *tacen* or sign of God's favour (Gen B, l. 535b-542). Irrespective of the precise meaning of this sign, it can hardly be contested that it demonstrates Adam's loyalty and intention to obey.

While Adam's response to the temptation is not quite conceived in militaristic terms, the first man refers to God as his 'sighedrihten', or Lord of Victory, in line 523b. Adam also appeals to his direct relationship with God as he relates that the lord may bestow anything upon him from his 'hean rice', or high kingdom (Gen B, l. 545b-46). Adam's direct relationship with God, as for the description of God in line 523b, recalls lord-retainer relations in *Beowulf*, where interaction between lord and retainer, as in the case of King Hrothgar or King Hygelac and the protagonist, is also direct and without intermediaries. Therefore, the temptation of Adam, which may be said to arise from the *tribus modis* rationale, also illustrates Adam's intention, as a retainer, to remain loyal to his lord's command. The importance accorded to loyalty in extant Old English vernacular narratives like *Beowulf* and *The Battle of Maldon*, where betrayal is equated with disaster and dishonour, explains why *Genesis B* may have been required to clearly distinguish between Satan's outright rejection of his lord and Adam's lapse later in the course of the narrative. The first temptation of Adam therefore appears to accommodate vernacular conceptions of loyalty.<sup>67</sup> However, the context provided by the broader narrative also suggests that retainer loyalty is co-opted in favour of a monarchic model. The equation of military rebellion with

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<sup>67</sup> See Vickrey, *Genesis B and the Comedic Imperative*, p. 70, who argued that the idea of obedience, including military obedience, is at the centre of the poem, even if it has been undervalued by commentators.

the chief rebel angel, which I discussed in Chapter 1.2.3, suggests that any rebellion directed against a king is analogically equated with rebellion against God. The representation of Adam as a loyal retainer at the stage of the extra-biblical temptation reinforces this message, in that inasmuch as the rebel angel represents a negative, Adam conveys a positive model for the audience. *Genesis B*, in other words, may well be combining a vernacular preoccupation with loyalty, which also emerges from Old English vernacular narratives, with the figure of an overarching lord, or king. This figure may well have been alien to vernacular social systems, yet *Genesis B* effectively integrates it, or melds it into, the representation of such a system. This viewpoint is supported by texts and evidence I discussed in Chapter 1. It is to be recalled that evidence for a royalist ideology and agenda behind representations of the angelic rebellion may be found in the Anglo-Latin charters I discussed in Chapters 1.2.1 and 1.2.3. The non-vernacular origin of the kingly figure in an Old Saxon context, moreover, transpires clearly from my discussion of the imposition of Carolingian authority on the Old Saxons in Chapter 1.2.3. While I presented no evidence for the non-vernacular origin of the notion of kingship in an Old English context, Oren Fulk argued that tensions inherent in the Geatish part of *Beowulf* between the protagonist's choice to confront the dragon and his kingly duties are to be attributed to the text's display of 'a social system which has little use for kings'.<sup>68</sup> However, the representation of the figure of God as king in *Genesis B* or, for that matter, in *Genesis A*, does not give rise to any evident tension, in that the idea of retainer loyalty fits in well in the context of the royalist narrative. It may however be contended that in terms of vernacular social values the chief rebel angel of *Genesis B*, as a strongman at the head of a retinue of angelic warriors, which I discussed in Chapter 1.2.3, would have been justified in his rebellion. This may well be the case, which means that tensions may underlie the smooth surface of the *Genesis B* narrative. However, the allocation of the strongman role to an angel

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<sup>68</sup> Oren Fulk, 'A Dark Age Peter Principle: Beowulf's Incompetence Threshold', *Early Medieval Europe*, 18.1 (2010), 2-15 (p. 12).

who seeks the damnation of humankind, and who confronts an all-powerful and generous God, is likely to have been intended precisely to counter this or similar viewpoints. The representation of the loyal Adam also fits in well within this narrative scheme, in that it suggests how a retainer, irrespective of his power or situation, should respond to kingly authority.

The Adamic temptation therefore functions at three levels of meaning. It functions allegorically, by way of the *tribus modis* rationale, tropologically, in its appeal to a Christian audience, and analogically, in that Adam is a retainer to his king. The analogical level of meaning that I have just discussed complements the angelic rebellion in the same poem, and to a lesser extent the rebellion in *Genesis A*. In the context of the temptations, tropological representation emanates primarily from the representation of the two trees. However, it also ties in with the broader Genesis narrative, in that this level of meaning is also encountered elsewhere in the two Genesis poems, as I observed, in particular, throughout Chapter 1. The *tribus modis* rationale, in contrast, is limited to the temptations, and attests, *inter alia*, to early medieval conceptions of gender and the senses. I consider these issues, among others, in my discussions of Satan's emissary's temptation of Eve.

The temptations of Eve attracted more critical attention than Adam's extra-biblical temptation, mainly in view of conflicting interpretations of their meaning and function. As I indicated earlier in this chapter, Vickrey grouped critics who considered that Eve is deceived rather than tempted under the so-called exonerative school. Vickrey himself, however, argued that Eve is guilty of her lapse, and questioned critical viewpoints that represent Eve as innocent on the grounds that this runs counter to early medieval soteriology.<sup>69</sup> In my discussion I likewise argue that Eve is represented as guilty, but I also emphasise the ambivalence that inheres to this *Genesis B* character. The didacticism in the representation of

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<sup>69</sup> Vickrey, *Genesis B and the Comedic Imperative*, p. 17.

Eve in the poem lies precisely in this ambivalence, which demonstrates to the audience that a lapse that results from deception by a tempter does not justify, or exempt the offender, from punishment. Eve's simultaneous guilt and deception are to be read in conjunction with the juxtaposition of the two trees I discussed earlier, as well as with reference to her having witnessed God's pronouncement of the prohibition. These episodes show that Eve had a clear choice in front of her, as well as knowledge of the outcome of disobedience. While my reading is, in many respects, close to Vickrey's, I do not deny that an exonerative reading of the Eve of *Genesis B* found favour with critics. Alain Renoir's statement that Eve only falls because she means to save Adam from any harm that he may incur as a result of his supposed disobedience<sup>70</sup> is clearly exonerative. The same may be said of Thomas D. Hill's assessment of Eve's fall, for he argues that the poem obscures some of the most important elements that make up the biblical original,<sup>71</sup> including the emphasis placed on Eve's pride in Gen 3.5. Similarly L. C. Buchelt argues that Eve's pride is almost absent from the *Genesis B* narrative.<sup>72</sup> An exonerative assessment of the Eve of *Genesis B* also appears to be endorsed by the narrator, who not only refers to the first woman's deception (Gen B, l. 588-90a), but also compares her circumstances to the plight of her progeny, which by definition includes the poem's audience:

[...] þæt is micel wundor  
 þæt hit ece God æfre wolde  
 þeoden þolian, þæt wurde þegn swa monig  
 forlædd be þam lygenum þe for þam larum com. (Gen B, l. 595b-98)

<sup>70</sup> Alain Renoir, 'Eve's I.Q. Rating: Two Sexist Views of *Genesis B*', in *New Readings on Women in Old English Literature*, ed. by Helen Damico and Alexandra Hennessey Olsen (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990), pp. 262-72 (p. 264).

<sup>71</sup> Thomas D. Hill, 'The Fall of Angels and Man in the Old English *Genesis B*', in *Anglo-Saxon Poetry: Essays in Appreciation*, ed. by Lewis E. Nicholson and Dolores Warwick Frese (London: University of Notre Dame Press, 1975), pp. 279-90 (p. 280).

<sup>72</sup> L.C. Buchelt, 'All About Eve: Memory and Re-Collection in Junius 11's Epic Poems *Genesis* and *Christ and Satan*', in *Women and Medieval Epic*, ed. by Sara S. Poor and Jana K. Schulman (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 137-58 (p. 148).

(It is a great wonder that the eternal God, the chief, would ever tolerate that so many of his thanes should be led astray by lies as they sought learning.)

This text may be said to evince sympathy for Eve, or identification with her plight. At the same time the narrator expresses wonder or awe at the course of events, in that God allows an injury to his creation and, indirectly, to himself, in order to confirm Eve's (and Adam's) freedom.<sup>73</sup> Evidently, this is the only way that God, who is otherwise invulnerable, may be injured.<sup>74</sup> The manner whereby the biblically-derived myth is represented in these lines has the effect of apportioning blame primarily on Satan and the tempter, particularly given that earlier in the narrative, in lines 393-400, Satan suggests that revenge for the rebel angels' fall may only be secured through an assault on God's human creation.<sup>75</sup> Hence, even where Eve disobeys God, Satan and the rebel angels commit more grievous crimes.<sup>76</sup> This representation of the temptation in *Genesis B*, which draws on the deception of the first woman, also appears to be supported by the biblical original. Even where the biblical text alludes to Eve's pride, as I already indicated, it also encompasses the notion that the first woman is deceived. Deception is implied by Gen 3.1, which sets out that 'Sed et serpens erat callidior cunctis animantibus terrae quae facerat Dominus Deus' (Now the serpent was more subtle than any of the beasts of the earth which the Lord God had made). Moreover, Latin biblical poetry comprises similar interpretations of the figure of Eve in *Dracontius* and *Avitus*, as I observed in section 3.2.1. Hence, the narratorial assessment of Eve in *Genesis B* finds exegetical and literary justification. This, however, does not mean that Eve is guiltless, only that the tempter beguiles her.

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<sup>73</sup> See A. N. Doane, 'Commentary on *Genesis B*', in *The Saxon Genesis: An Edition of the West Saxon Genesis B and the Old Saxon Vatican Genesis*, pp. 255-303 (pp. 287-88).

<sup>74</sup> John F. Vickrey, 'The *Micel Wundor* of *Genesis B*', *Studies in Philology*, 68.3 (1971), 245-54 (p. 248).

<sup>75</sup> Vickrey, pp. 248-49.

<sup>76</sup> Peter J. Lucas, 'Loyalty and Obedience in the Old English *Genesis* and the Interpolation of *Genesis B* into *Genesis A*', *Neophilologus*, 76.1 (1992), 121-35 (p. 130).

Satan's emissary first addresses Eve in lines 551b-87, which speech opens with the threat of punishment, where the tempter points out that Eve should partake of the forbidden fruit. However, the tempter also promises reward if she obeys him:

[...] þu meahst swa wide ofer woruld ealle

geseon siððan and selfes stol

hearran þines and habban his hyldo forð. (Gen B, l. 565-67)

(You [Eve] will be able to see widely across the whole world, and the throne of your master himself, and to have his favour henceforth.)

Satan's emissary also claims that the first man will follow Eve's example once he sees that she has fulfilled God's command (Gen B, l. 570-75a); however, he subsequently goes on to say that Eve will have to urge him to follow her teaching (Gen B, l. 577). The emissary also promises that he would not report to God Adam's insulting words if the first woman complies with the course of action he sets out (Gen B, l. 575b-82). The speech comes to a close a few lines later; when the tempter points out that he does not look like a devil (Gen B, l. 587b). The placement of this detail in this part of the narrative is odd, as Eve, unlike Adam, does not question the tempter's appearance. This may however be explained in terms of Eve's allegorical role of *sensus*. I discuss the first woman's perception of the tempter in detail in section 3.2.3, which focuses on Eve's vision and her perception of the tempter.

In his discussion of Eve's temptation J. R. Hall draws attention to the tempter's use of the second person dual pronoun *git* (you two) to warn the first woman of God's anger on account of Adam's disobedience.<sup>77</sup> The tempter thereby establishes that Eve will suffer the consequences of Adam's disobedience unless, that is, she agrees to undertake the remedial action he is about to suggest. At this point, in lines 559b-63, Eve is addressed in the second person singular, which sets out that whereas the first woman is to bear the consequences of

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<sup>77</sup> J. R. Hall, 'Duality and the Dual Pronoun in *Genesis B*', *A Journal for Scholars and Critics of Language and Literature*, 17.2 (1981), 139-45 (p. 141).

disobedience with Adam, she alone may remedy the situation.<sup>78</sup> While it has been argued that the tempter is here appealing to Eve's concern for Adam, given his use of the dual pronoun when contemplating punishment, coupled with the second person when discussing remedial action, it is more likely that the tempter appeals to her pride. Hall's interpretation is that the tempter prompts 'the woman to overrule the man and to take the decision-making authority for the two of them upon herself'<sup>79</sup> as he urges her 'gehyge on þinum breostum' (Gen B, l. 562a) (think in your breast).<sup>80</sup> This interpretation of *Genesis B* is in line with the biblical narrative, which alludes to Eve's pride in the aforementioned Gen 3.5. The appeal to Eve's pride in *Genesis B*, moreover, not only emerges from the emissary's use of the dual pronoun, but also from his statement that he and Eve will make Adam act in accordance with their wishes.<sup>81</sup> In other words, the emissary appeals to Eve's pride to make her his co-conspirator.

However, as I have suggested in my discussion of narratorial commentary, the text is also characterised by what may be described as an exonerative element. It would be more accurate to state that such commentary mitigates, rather than exonerates, Eve's guilt. The narrator sets out that the tempter misleads Eve with his lies (Gen B, l. 588) 'oð þæt hire on innan ongan | weallan wyrmes geþeapt' (Gen B, l. 589b-90a) (until the serpent's thought started to well up inside her). These lines precede a rather controversial statement where the narrator points out that 'hæfde hire wacran hige | metod gemearcod' (Gen B, l. 590b-91a) (God had characterised her with weaker resolve). Jane Chance explains Eve's *wacran hige* in terms of the noblewoman's adduced social role of peace-weaver, which role would have been 'less aggressive and warlike than that of the lord'.<sup>82</sup> Chance associates the peace-weaving function, which is said to entail 'the establishment of peace between two different tribes or

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<sup>78</sup> Hall.

<sup>79</sup> Hall, pp. 141-42.

<sup>80</sup> See Eric Jager, 'The Word in the "Breost": Interiority and the Fall in *Genesis B*', *Neophilologus*, 75.2 (1991), 279-90 (pp. 281-83), for a discussion of the term *breost*, its cognitive associations and its possible derivation from Christian Latin poetry.

<sup>81</sup> Hall, 'Duality and the Dual Pronoun in *Genesis B*', p. 142.

<sup>82</sup> Jane Chance, *Woman as hero in Old English Literature* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2005), p. 73.

members of a single tribe',<sup>83</sup> with the practice of marrying-off women to seal the peace. An interpretation of Eve in the light of this conception of the peace-weaver suggests that her behaviour would have been culturally predisposed towards compromise. However, this notion is problematic. L. John Sklute argues that the peace-weaver as expressed in Old English literature is not specifically associated with married women, as attested by the hagiographical *Elene*, where the peace-weaver is an angel who prompts Constantine's conversion to Christianity.<sup>84</sup> While Sklute does not challenge the idea that women would have been married off to seal the peace between two peoples,<sup>85</sup> he argues that peace-weaving is a poetic metaphor for any person whose function is to 'perform openly the action of making peace by weaving [...] a tapestry of friendship and amnesty'.<sup>86</sup> Peter S. Baker is likewise critical of the idea of the peace-weaver in relation to married women, and he argues that peace is harder to achieve than by arranged marriages.<sup>87</sup> More importantly, the notion of the peace-weaver is not required to explain the terms of the temptation in *Genesis B*, or Eve's *wacran hige*. It may be argued, rather, that the tempter entices Eve's compliance by appealing to her sense of pride, credulity, and plain lack of resolve. In this context it is significant that Eve does not realise that nothing can be hidden from an omniscient God,<sup>88</sup> particularly when the tempter promises that he would not be reporting Adam's alleged misbehaviour. Eve's state of mind recalls, in some measure, Satan's insistence on revenge notwithstanding his knowledge of God's omniscience, which I discussed in Chapter 1.3.1 and 1.3.3. This is because Eve, in this instance, displays ignorance of God's true nature and intentions.

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<sup>83</sup> Chance, p. 73.

<sup>84</sup> L. John Sklute, 'Freoðuwebbe in Old English Poetry', in *New Readings on Women in Old English Literature*, ed. by Helen Damico and Alexandra Hennessey Olsen (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990), pp. 204-10 (p. 205).

<sup>85</sup> Sklute, p. 205.

<sup>86</sup> Sklute, p. 208.

<sup>87</sup> Peter S. Baker, *Honour, Exchange and Violence in Beowulf* (Cambridge: Brewer, 2013), p. 124.

<sup>88</sup> Finnegan, p. 332.



While my assessment of Eve's stance and motivations leads me to the conclusion that the first woman is not exonerated, this interpretation does not enjoy critical consensus. Susan Burchmore argues that 'the tempter's promise is not one of power over her husband so much as of an ability to serve him by saving him'.<sup>89</sup> Burchmore's statement suggests, in other words, that Eve acts as she does primarily because she believes the tempter's claim that God has rescinded his prohibition. Pat Belanoff conceives of Eve in similar terms, in that the first woman fears that God will turn against Adam on account of the latter's presumed disobedience.<sup>90</sup> My reading suggests that these viewpoints only represent part of the picture, for in the course of his temptation Satan's emissary also appeals to the first woman's pride. I contend that this is the case even where Eve tempts Adam in good faith after she has partaken of the forbidden fruit:

heo dyde hit þeah holdne hyge, nyste þæt þær hearma swa fela,

fyrenearfeða fylgean sceolde

monna cynne (Gen B, l. 708-10a)

(She did so, though, with loyal intent; not knowing that so many injuries, sinful sorrows, should follow for humankind.)

This is because Eve's deception does not rule out the arguments I made for her temptation and guilt. Moreover, in her assessment of the tempter's angelic disguise, which I discuss in section 3.2.3, Rosemary Woolf points out that the disguise is an allegory 'for the kind of self-deception by which a person may deceive himself that an action, wrong but much desired, is right'.<sup>91</sup> In this context, the narrator's comments setting out Eve's *holdne hyge*, or good intentions, in the text cited above, as well as the earlier reference to her *wacran hige*, or

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<sup>89</sup> Susan Burchmore, 'Traditional Exegesis and the Question of Guilt in the Old English *Genesis B*', *Traditio*, 41 (1985), 117-44 (p. 133).

<sup>90</sup> Pat Belanoff, 'The Fall (?) of the Old English Female Poetic Image', *PMLA*, 104.5 (1989), 822-31 (p. 827).

<sup>91</sup> Rosemary Woolf, 'The Fall of Man in *Genesis B* and the *Mystère d'Adam*', in *Studies in Old English Literature in Honor of Arthur G. Brodeur*, ed. by Stanley B. Greenfield (Oregon: University of Oregon Books, 1963), pp. 187-99 (pp. 191-92).

weaker resolution, may be understood to mitigate her guilt. The narrator's reflections on Eve's aptitude, or more specifically her weaker resolution, mirror the characterisation of the first woman in Cyprianus's *Heptateuch*. In this narrative Eve's heart is conquered by her feeble mind.<sup>92</sup> It is quite possible that the narratorial description of Eve in *Genesis B* would have been derived from this or a similar Latin text. In any case, this assessment of the first woman does not absolve her of guilt. As I already suggested, *Genesis B* modifies the biblical narrative in a manner that is 'intended to present her [Eve] with clear and certain indications of what she should do'.<sup>93</sup> Hence, any ignorance that may be displayed by Eve in the course of *Genesis B* is vincible, or culpable,<sup>94</sup> in that she has the means to resist temptation.

In this context the first woman's weaker resolution serves two main functions: it explains her lapse and mitigates her guilt. It also attests, along with the representation of Eve as *sensus* in the framework of the *tribus modis* rationale, to a perception of women that may be traced back to biblical texts such as I Cor 11.3, I Cor 11.7-9 and Eph 5.22-24.<sup>95</sup> However, the *wacran hige* passage also has another dimension, which emerges from its combination with language to the effect that it is a wonder that God would let so many of his thanes be deceived (Gen B, l. 588-98). This narratorial comment is followed by Eve's partaking of the forbidden fruit and the vision induced by the tempter after her lapse (Gen B, l. 599-610). The reference to the future deception of God's thanes is evidently intended to associate Eve's deception, and her subsequent partaking of the forbidden fruit, with postlapsarian humankind. This includes the poem's audience. These passages thereby further attest to the tropological dimension in *Genesis B*, in that Eve is equated with the guilt and deception invariably faced by the audience as Christian men or women.

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<sup>92</sup> Patrick McBrine, *Biblical Epics in Late Antiquity and Anglo-Saxon England* (London: University of Toronto Press, 2017), p. 76.

<sup>93</sup> Finnegan, p. 335.

<sup>94</sup> Finnegan, p. 335.

<sup>95</sup> P.S. Langeslag, 'Doctrine and Paradigm: Two Functions of the Innovations in *Genesis B*', *Studia Neophilologa*, 79 (2007), 113-18 (p. 113).

While Eve is guilty and deceived when she partakes of the forbidden fruit (Gen B, l. 599-600a), the tempter's power to deceive her becomes more pronounced thereafter. Eve's lapse enables him to interfere with her soul and to induce upon her a vision of Heaven (Gen B, l. 607b-09a). Not only that, but the tempter now also exerts influence over Eve's sense of touch, for he relates that she may now not only see the light, but also touch it (Gen B, l. 614b-16). The full account of the vision, or rather its content, is however deferred until Eve's temptation of Adam in lines 655-83, where the tempter is described as God's good angel (Gen B, l. 657a). I discuss this episode in section 3.2.3. Eve's temptation of Adam is preceded by narratorial commentary that I discuss presently:

swa hire eaforan sculon æfter lybban  
 þonne hie lað gedoð: hie sculon lufe wyrcean,  
 betan heora hearran hearmcwyde ond habban his hyldo forð. (Gen B, l. 623-625)  
 (So must her heirs live afterwards when they commit loathsome deeds: They must  
 perform praiseworthy deeds, make amends for the injury against their lord and,  
 henceforth, win his favour.)

This text affirms a point I made throughout this discussion, namely that Eve's deception neither exempts her, nor her progeny, from guilt. Rather, the condition of the audience in relation to sin, or the human condition as understood in Christian terms, is attributed to the first woman's actions. This also occurs elsewhere in the composite narrative, for *Genesis A* makes extra-biblical reference to Eve when it tells of Cain's killing of his brother Abel.<sup>96</sup> Back to *Genesis B*, the cited passage is followed by the narratorial comment that humankind need not have suffered so much had the forbidden fruit been left alone in accordance with God's command (Gen B, l. 636-46). This passage emphasises the dire consequences of Eve's actions and, once more, the tropological dimension of the poem. However, the rest of the

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<sup>96</sup> Lines 995-1001 of *Genesis A- A New Edition*, rev. edn by A. N. Doane (Tempe: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2013), p. 165. All references to *Genesis A* from this edition shall henceforth be given parenthetically in the main text, indicated by the abbreviation Gen A. All translations from *Genesis A* are mine.

narratorial commentary in lines 647-54a mitigates Eve's guilt in relation to her temptation of Adam, which follows in the chronology of the narrative. The narrator offers an explanation for Eve's circumstances, in that her 'wacgeþoht' (Gen B, l. 649a) (weak intellect) has been led astray. In her discussion of the meaning of this phrase Katherine DeVane Brown makes reference to Wulfstan's *De fide catholica*. She suggests that *wac* may be referring to the state of the Christian man (or woman) who does not understand his (or her) Creator, rather than to any intellectual deficiency.<sup>97</sup> *Wac* is therefore understood to refer to the fallen condition, which means that it 'can be interpreted as describing the intrinsic human susceptibility to sin and temptation that leaves Eve vulnerable to the devil's scheme'.<sup>98</sup> This interpretation makes sense in the specific context where the term *wacgeþoht* is placed, as Eve's further deception, which leads to her temptation of Adam, is facilitated by her partaking of the forbidden fruit. It also makes sense in respect of Eve's weaker resolution in line 590b, which is linked to the serpent's thought (Gen B, l. 590a) that wells up in her mind. However, if the matter is considered from the perspective of the likely audience understanding and response, it is not to be excluded that *wac* would have been understood exclusively in its simpler sense. In a manner that recalls her weaker resolution, therefore, Eve's weak intellect is likely to have been interpreted as intellectual deficiency in an expression of misogynistic attitudes that simultaneously account for the first woman's lapse and mitigation of her guilt. Needless to say, misogyny also inheres to the *tribus modis* rationale, which portrays Eve in exclusively emotional or sensory terms in the context of a narrative marked by a mistrust of the senses that reflects ascetic monastic trends.<sup>99</sup> Eve's weakness, moreover, expressed by way of a weak resolve (Gen B, l. 590b), precedes her lapse, which suggests that it is innate. While the representation of femininity in *Genesis B* contrasts, *inter alia*, the strong characterisation of

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<sup>97</sup> Katherine De Vane Brown, 'Antifeminism or Exegesis?: Reinterpreting Eve's *wacgeþoht* in *Genesis B*', *Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, 115.2 (2016), 141-66 (p. 149).

<sup>98</sup> De Vane Brown, p. 150.

<sup>99</sup> Grimes, p. 319.

Judith in the Beowulf Manuscript poem, which I briefly discussed in the ‘Manuscript Contexts’ section of my Introduction, this is not easily attributable to a growing distrust of women within monastic circles towards the later Early Middle Ages.<sup>100</sup> This is because the misogynistic representation of Eve is to a significant degree conveyed as part of or in relation to the *tribus modus* rationale, which is also attested in Bede’s *Historia Ecclesiastica*, as I indicated earlier in this section. It is quite possible, in other words, that the misogyny inherent to the representation of Eve in *Genesis B* is specifically tied to the exegesis relating to the biblical narrative, rather than to a mistrust of women more broadly conceived.

My discussion of Eve’s temptation reaffirms a reading that sees the first woman as guilty, but whose guilt is mitigated. I consider that the ambivalent portrayal of Eve, which is at least partly attributable to her tempter’s simultaneous appeal to her concern for Adam’s plight and her pride, is integral to the poem’s didacticism. This is because Eve’s portrayal demonstrates that being deceived does not necessarily preclude sin. This reading is supported by narratorial commentary on the dire consequences of the first woman’s lapse. Moreover, the juxtaposition of the two trees and Eve’s witness of God’s pronouncement of his prohibition make it amply clear that her deception does not result from ignorance. My analysis of Adam’s temptation, as for my assessment of Eve, also synthesises previous commentators’ views, although I draw attention to the monarchic ideology that underlies the representation of Adam as God’s retainer. This transpires when the Adamic temptation is read in conjunction with the angelic rebellion in the same poem. This point has not been given as much attention, or importance, by previous commentators. Moreover, my discussion in this section identifies the themes that the episodes in question share with the rest of the composite Genesis narrative, particularly the delivery of meaning at the tropological and analogical levels. These aspects of the narrative may explain why a manuscript redactor

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<sup>100</sup> See Catherine Cubitt, ‘Virginity and Misogyny in Tenth- and Eleventh- Century England’, *Gender and History*, 12.1 (2000), 1-32, for a discussion of monastic attitudes towards women in the later Early Middle Ages.

might have considered that the fragment we now know as *Genesis B* belongs within *Genesis A*.

### 3.2.3 Eve's Temptation of Adam: The Anagogical Vision

In this section I discuss Eve's temptation of Adam, where the first woman relates her vision of Heaven. While the vision is induced by the tempter, which points to the deception of the first woman, its content anticipates the judgement of humankind. The vision is therefore primarily anagogical in scope. However, the vision is also ironic at the first woman's expense. Eve induces Adam to partake of the forbidden fruit because she believes that this is in accordance with God's will; however, the vision's allusion to the judgement points to Eve's lapse, for lapse is a necessary precondition to judgement. In my discussion of these themes I draw on Vickrey's work, as well as contributions by Woolf, Jodi Grimes and Anlezark among others. While in this section I synthesise previous commentators' views, I also engage in further analysis of the relevant themes, which paves the way for my discussions of Satan's emissary's exultation and Adam's process of repentance in sections 3.2.4 and 3.2.5 respectively.

Eve's temptation of Adam, which is delivered over the course of lines 655-83, replicates the themes of the tempter's second speech addressed to her, notably validation by sight, the tempter's readiness to forgive Adam's alleged trespass, and obedience as a precondition for forgiveness.<sup>101</sup> The appeal to the senses in Eve's speech also recalls the conclusion of the tempter's first speech addressed to her, where he states that he does not look like a devil. It could be argued that the tempter, who is the embodiment of *suggestio*, recognises Eve's allegorical identity of *sensus*. The first woman's allegorical identity is also affirmed by the fact that her speech is built on two perceptual factors, namely the description

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<sup>101</sup> Eric Jager, 'Tempter as Rhetoric Teacher: The Fall of Language in the Old English *Genesis B*', *Neophilologus*, 72.3 (1988), 434-48 (p. 437).

of the tempter as an angel and the detailed rendition of the vision of Heaven. In her speech Eve addresses Adam as her lord, and she points out that they both stand to benefit from the emissary's friendship. She also argues that the emissary is willing to forgive Adam, and suggests that they need his support for 'he mæg unc ærendian to þam alwaldan, | heofoncynige' (Gen B, l. 665-66a) (he may intercede for the two of us with the ruler of all, the king of heaven). Eve therefore posits the tempter as an intercessor to whom the couple should offer subjection,<sup>102</sup> which contradicts Adam's earlier rejection of the need for a messenger. Adam appealed to his relationship with God in terms that conceptually recall the lord-retainer relationship. Moreover, *Genesis B* precludes the role of an intermediary between God and the couple in that both Adam and Eve bear direct witness to God's command, as I already indicated earlier in this chapter. Therefore, in acting at the instigation of a self-styled intermediary, Eve not only interferes in Adam's lord-retainer relationship with God, but she also violates the terms of God's relationship with the couple.

The deceived Eve refers to the messenger as God's good angel, whose appearance is *sciene*, or radiant (Gen B, l. 656b). Some of the pictures of the temptation and lapse in the Junius 11 manuscript depict the tempter in angelic raiment,<sup>103</sup> thereby ostensibly confirming Eve's perception of him. However, Vickrey argued that the tempter actually assumes the form of a serpent.<sup>104</sup> This viewpoint is supported by textual evidence. While the narrator, ahead of the temptation of Adam, explicitly states that the tempter 'wearp hine þa on wyrmes lic' (Gen B, l. 491a) (He then cast himself into the likeness of a serpent), the angelic transformation is only mentioned by Eve at a point when she is already under the tempter's influence. The tempter, after all, is now in control of Eve's senses, so much so that he is able to impose a vision upon her. Eve's description of the forbidden fruit as 'swa swete' (Gen B, l. 655b) (so sweet), which contradicts the narrator's description of the same fruit as bitter (Gen

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<sup>102</sup> Angerer, p. 79.

<sup>103</sup> Vickrey, *Genesis B and the Comedic Imperative*, pp. 81-82.

<sup>104</sup> Vickrey, p. 82.

B, l. 479a), confirms that the first woman's senses have been compromised. These terms, moreover, attest to Satan's emissary's control over Eve even if they are understood metaphorically. Such an interpretation would suggest, after all, that Eve is now unable to perceive the truth.

The pictures, however, are more problematic to interpret than the text. I have already observed, in section 3.2.2, that the temptation of Adam is not represented pictorially, as the first picture of the temptation, on page 20 of the manuscript, represents the tempter as he approaches Eve as a serpent. Adam stands looking in the other direction, presumably pointing towards the tree of life. While this image may be adduced as evidence for the real appearance of the emissary as he tempts Eve, it may be countered that artists often worked independently of the texts they illustrated, choosing instead to follow pictorial models<sup>105</sup> or their own agenda. The absence of the extra-biblical Adamic temptation may be interpreted to point in this direction, even if the remaining temptation images, on pages 24, 28 and the upper register of page 31, are clearly consistent with *Genesis B*. The picture in page 24 represents Eve about to partake of the forbidden fruit in the presence of the angel-like tempter,<sup>106</sup> while in the upper register of page 31 Adam accepts the fruit from Eve as the tempter looks on.<sup>107</sup> It is not clear, however, whether the artist represents the tempter as he is perceived by the first woman, even if Vickrey argues for such an interpretation.<sup>108</sup> In the picture on page 28 the tempter, once more in the guise of an angel, hands over the forbidden fruit to Adam while Eve eats.<sup>109</sup> Even if the text emphasises the involvement of the tempter as Eve tries to convince Adam to partake of the forbidden fruit, it does not warrant such direct involvement, at least not literally. Of course, the image may be understood symbolically to signify the

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<sup>105</sup> Herbert R. Broderick, 'Metatextuality, Sexuality and Intervisuality in MS Junius 11', *Word and Image*, 25.4 (2009), 384-401 (p 387).

<sup>106</sup> See Appendix, Plate V.

<sup>107</sup> See Appendix, Plate VI.

<sup>108</sup> Vickrey, *Genesis B and the Comedic Imperative*, p. 83.

<sup>109</sup> See Appendix, Plate VII.



tempter's involvement in the temptation. In the last instance, however, this picture, like the others I just discussed, does not offer conclusive evidence for interpretation of the corresponding text. I have already suggested, however, that textual evidence clearly points towards the deception of Eve's senses. This point has also been recognised by previous commentators, such as Burchmore,<sup>110</sup> De Vane Brown<sup>111</sup> and Glen M. Davis.<sup>112</sup> Moreover, Anlezark argues, while citing Doane, that Eve's vision is faulty.<sup>113</sup> Hence, it appears that the poem reflects ascetic monastic trends that treat the senses with suspicion.<sup>114</sup> However, the interpretation of Eve's vision of Heaven I am about to discuss is more complex than this statement might suggest, for what she pictures is a representation of divine truth.

Eve tells Adam that she sees the creator's throne to the south and east, as well as the angels in their feather-cloaks who encircle it (Gen B, l. 666b-71a). She argues that the vision must originate with God (Gen B, l. 671b-73a); she therefore urges her companion to partake of the forbidden fruit, in accordance with what she believes to be God's will (Gen B, l. 679b-81a). In his analysis of Eve's vision Vickrey argued that there is a strong connection between the divine throne, to which Eve refers, and God's judgement. He therefore concluded that the *Genesis B* reference to the throne implies divine judgement.<sup>115</sup> The connection between the throne and God's judgement is affirmed by other Old English poems that make use of these and related motifs, even if not necessarily in combination. These include *Christ III* (also known as *Christ in Judgement*), *Christ and Satan*, *Elene*, and *Juliana*. Moreover, these motifs occur in the Old Saxon *Heliand*.<sup>116</sup> The subject matter of lines 33-35a of *Christ III*, however, is of particular interest. These lines set out that the radiance of the sun, which derives from the creator, originates from the south-east. The context of these lines, namely Christ's

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<sup>110</sup> Burchmore, p. 125.

<sup>111</sup> DeVane Brown, p. 151.

<sup>112</sup> Glen M. Davis, 'Changing Senses in *Genesis B*', *Philological Quarterly*, 80.2 (2001), 113-31 (p. 120).

<sup>113</sup> Anlezark, p. 8.

<sup>114</sup> Grimes, p. 319.

<sup>115</sup> Vickrey, 'The Vision of Eve in *Genesis B*', p. 87.

<sup>116</sup> Vickrey, p. 88.

judgement, is made evident in lines 39-43.<sup>117</sup> Even where *Genesis B* differs from *Christ III* in that it is set in the Old Testament, an allusion to judgement in this context, howsoever oblique, is appropriate. This is because in the Christian view of history humankind's lapse and judgement mark the beginning and end of its exile on Earth. In other words, these events frame world history and the first event implies the last.<sup>118</sup> This means that the south-easterly provenance of God's light in *Christ III*, and its association with judgement, suggests that early medieval audiences, or those more exegetically inclined, may have interpreted Eve's vision, in its focus on God's throne and its south-easterly location, to allude to the judgement. This is evidently also suggested by the mentioned exegetical connection between humankind's lapse and judgement. Conceptually, this aspect of Eve's vision recalls the representation of Satan in *Genesis B*, which alludes to his status after Christ's Harrowing of Hell, as I indicated in Chapter 1.3. The vision's allusion to judgement also suggests that it is ironic at Eve's expense. This is because judgement attests to Eve's (and Adam's) original sin, for the requirement to judge humankind derives from Eve's (and Adam's) original lapse.

Vickrey argues, moreover, that *Genesis B* also evokes, more specifically, the figure of Christ the Judge.<sup>119</sup> In this regard, a comparison with *Christ III*, this time lines 350-54 thereof, is illuminating. These lines explicitly identify the throne and judgement with the figure of Christ:

þonne Crist siteð on his cynestole,  
 On heah-setle, heofon-mæгна God,  
 Fæder ælmihtig. Folca gehwylcum  
 Scyppend scinende scrifeð bi gewyrhtum,

<sup>117</sup> See 'Christ in Judgement', in *Old English Poems of Christ and His Saints*, ed. and trans. by Mary Clayton (London: Harvard University Press, 2013), pp. 33-88 (p. 36).

<sup>118</sup> Vickrey, 'The Vision of Eve in *Genesis B*', p. 90.

<sup>119</sup> Vickrey, p. 94.

eall æfter ryhte, rodera waldend.<sup>120</sup>

(Then Christ will sit on his royal seat, his high seat, Heaven-mighty God, almighty father. The shining creator, ruler of the heavens, will judge everyone according to their merits, all in accordance with what is due.)

As for Eve's vision in *Genesis B*, this passage refers to the creator and his throne. However, it also makes explicit reference to Christ's judgement. This may be said to affirm that *Genesis B* also makes reference to Christ, even if only implicitly so. The implicit allusion to Christ reiterates the tropological dimension of the poem, which I have also observed, *inter alia*, in the representation of the bound Satan in Chapter 1.3. At the same time, the allusion to humankind's judgement gives the poem what Alvin A. Lee, in reference to *Beowulf's* homiletic lines following the *gastbona* (slayer of souls) episode, calls anagogical pull, as it invites meditation on the end of time.<sup>121</sup> The implicit association of the creator with Christ in *Genesis B*, which is rendered explicitly in *Christ III*, also conveys the notion of Christ's presence in the Old Testament. This exegetical notion is also to be found in catechetical sources such as Ælfric's *Preface to Genesis*, where it is related that God the Father 'gesceop ealle gesceafta þurh þone Sunu'<sup>122</sup> (Shaped everything created through his Son). Eve's vision in *Genesis B* therefore delivers a thoroughly Christianised rendition of the Genesis myth of humankind's lapse, which also conceptually recalls the *Genesis A* treatment of the Creation, particularly in its allusion to the Trinity.

Eve's address to Adam is followed by narratorial commentary setting out that she chased after him in what Rosemary Woolf called an undignified manner reminiscent of the

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<sup>120</sup> 'Christ in Judgement', p. 56. The translation is mine.

<sup>121</sup> Alvin A. Lee, *Gold-Hall and Earth Dragon: Beowulf as Metaphor* (London: University of Toronto Press, 1998), p. 180.

<sup>122</sup> Ælfric, 'Preface to Genesis', in *The Old English Version of the Heptateuch, Ælfric's Treatise on the Old and New Testament and His Preface to Genesis*, ed. by S.J. Crawford (London: Oxford University Press, 1922), pp. 76-80 (p. 78).

later medieval nagging wife.<sup>123</sup> Indeed, Adam does not fall immediately, but only after Eve urges him to eat the fruit all day (Gen B, l. 684-86a).<sup>124</sup> Interestingly, the motivations behind Adam's change of heart are not explained,<sup>125</sup> definitely not in any detail. This aspect of the temptation in *Genesis B* again recalls Cyprianus's *Heptateuch*, where the poet dwells on Eve's pliant disposition or weak mind, but leaves Adam's lapse largely unexplained.<sup>126</sup> The *Genesis B* narrator only points out that Adam's 'hyge hwyrfde', (Gen B, l. 716a) (resolve turned away) for 'heo þam were swelce | tacen oðiewde and treowe gehet' (Gen B, l. 713b-714) (she offered that man such signs and pledged good faith). In other words, Adam is persuaded by Eve. Vickrey explains Adam's change of heart in allegorical terms, as he argued that the phrase 'oð þæt adame' (Gen B, l. 715a) (until Adam) suggests the subversion of reason by sense.<sup>127</sup> This is also affirmed by the tempter's presence throughout Eve's temptation of Adam (Gen B, l. 686b-687), where the tempter stands for *suggestio*. The phrases 'deaðes swefn' (Gen B, l. 720a) (death's dream) and 'deofles gespon' (Gen B, l. 720b) (Devil's persuasion/artifice) likewise confirm, in their narrative context, 'the clouding or distortion of the rational faculty as a result of a stronger influence.'<sup>128</sup> In this context, Eve becomes, as it were, the *tacen* that had originally been demanded of the tempter by Adam, which notion is erroneous.<sup>129</sup> This is because Adam receives no *tacen* from God that rescinds the command to desist from the forbidden fruit, which means that he is also at fault in terms of the lord-retainer relationship. There is no reason, after all, as to why he should have

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<sup>123</sup> Woolf, p. 197.

<sup>124</sup> See Marcel Dando, 'The *Moralia in Job* of Gregory the Great as a Source for the Old Saxon *Genesis B*', *Classica et Mediaevalia*, 30 (1969), 420-39, for, *inter alia*, a discussion of similarities between Eve's persistence and Gregory's interpretation of Job's wife.

<sup>125</sup> A. N. Doane, 'Introduction', in *The Saxon Genesis: An Edition of the West Saxon Genesis B and the Old Saxon Vatican Genesis*, pp. 3-202 (p. 152).

<sup>126</sup> McBrine, p. 76.

<sup>127</sup> Vickrey, *Genesis B and the Comedic Imperative*, p. 208.

<sup>128</sup> Antonina Harbus, 'Old English *swefn* and *Genesis B*, Line 720', in *Studies in English Language and Literature: Doubt Wisely*, ed. by M.J. Toswell and E.M. Taylor (Abingdon: Routledge, 1996), pp. 157-74 (p. 157).

<sup>129</sup> Gillian R. Overing, 'On Reading Eve: *Genesis B* and the Readers' Desire', in *Speaking Two Languages: Traditional Disciplines and Contemporary Theory in Medieval Studies*, ed. by Allen J. Frantzen (New York: State University of New York Press, 1991), pp. 35-63 (p. 63).

accepted a mediator, even if it is his own wife, in his relationship with God as his lord. It may therefore be argued that Adam, notwithstanding his rationality, is as blind to covert evil as is Eve.<sup>130</sup>

This discussion confirms that the *tribus modis* rationale is relevant to all the temptations in *Genesis B*. Moreover, it reaffirms Vickrey's anagogical interpretation of Eve's vision which, I argue, is also relevant to Adam's process of repentance, which I discuss in section 3.2.5. I have also shown that the anagogical vision offers a thematic connection with the representation of Hell in the same poem. The Hell of *Genesis B*, after all, also alludes to Christ, even if with reference to the Harrowing of Hell rather than humankind's judgement. Moreover, the Christianised rendition of the biblical myth of humankind's lapse recalls the approach to the account of the Creation in *Genesis A*. Here again, therefore, the temptations in *Genesis B* belong in the context of the composite Genesis narrative.

### **3.2.4 Self-Deception, Powerlessness and Redemption: The Tempter Before and After his Temptation of Adam and Eve**

In my discussion of the temptations I dwelt on Satan's emissary's role of *suggestio* in the context of the *tribus modis* rationale, and on the strategies employed by this character in his attempts to tempt and deceive Adam and Eve. While the temptation of Adam and Eve is biblically derived, *Genesis B* expands considerably on the biblical narrative. In this section, however, I discuss two episodes involving Satan's emissary that are altogether extra-biblical, namely the prelude to the temptations, when the emissary is chosen to tempt Adam and Eve, and his exultation upon the ostensible success of his mission. Although these episodes are extra-biblical, they belong in the present discussion because they are built, *inter alia*, around the idea of deception, which is also at the centre of the *Genesis B* rendition of the

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<sup>130</sup> Kathleen E. Dubs, 'Genesis B: A Study in Grace', *American Benedictine Review*, 33 (1982), 47-64 (p. 59).

temptations. Moreover, the two episodes I hereby discuss are respectively cause and consequence of the temptations.

Satan's emissary is presumably chosen, or volunteers, to embark on the quest to tempt Adam and Eve in response to Satan's speech in Hell, which I discussed in Chapter 1.3.1. Due to a lacuna in the manuscript it is not possible to establish what exactly takes place, as when the text resumes, at line 441, the emissary has already been chosen and is putting on a helmet in preparation for his mission. As I indicated in section 3.2.1, the disguising helmet that Satan's emissary puts on his head — 'hæleðhelm on heafod asette' (Gen B, l. 444a) — recalls the 'heliðhelme' of line 5452a of the *Heliand*.<sup>131</sup> The two helmets are not only described in essentially the same terms, they are also placed in similar narrative contexts. While the Satan of the *Heliand* wears the helmet as he induces a vision on Pilate's wife to forestall Christ's death and the consequent redemption of humankind,<sup>132</sup> the emissary in *Genesis B* means to frustrate God's plans for Adam and Eve (Gen B, l. 451b-52). In his analysis of the helmet motif Thomas D. Hill argues that it originates with the *Heliand*, where it is employed by way of adaptation, and elaboration, of the version of Pilate's wife's story in Tatian's gospel harmony.<sup>133</sup> This motif appears to be of Nordic vernacular origin, given that it is introduced into Pilate's wife's story by the *Heliand*, and that similar motifs also occur elsewhere in medieval literature and folklore, including the *Nibelungenlied*.<sup>134</sup> In the context of the *Heliand* the helmet explains how Satan disguises himself in order to manipulate Pilate's wife, while in *Genesis B* it may be seen as one of the themes or motifs whereby the emissary is

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<sup>131</sup> *Héliand Text and Commentary*, ed. by James E. Cathey (Morgantown: West Virginia University Press, 2002), p. 122.

<sup>132</sup> See James E. Cathey, 'Commentary to the Readings', in *Héliand Text and Commentary*, pp. 133-252 (pp. 241-42).

<sup>133</sup> Hill, 'Pilate's Visionary Wife and the Innocence of Eve: An Old Saxon Source for the Old English *Genesis B*', p. 179.

<sup>134</sup> See Cathey, 'Commentary to the Readings', in *Héliand Text and Commentary*, p. 242.

identified as a deceiver.<sup>135</sup> This motif therefore entails *a priori* mitigation of Adam and Eve's lapse. Inasmuch as the juxtaposition of the two trees suggests that Adam and Eve are culpable, the helmet establishes that their lapse is not as serious as Satan's or his emissary's. As I already indicated in relation to other elements of the narrative, including in particular the extra-biblical first temptation of Adam, the helmet motif not only fits into the Christianised Old Testament narrative that is *Genesis B*, but it also accommodates vernacular social values that assign importance to loyalty to one's lord, or king. This motif fits into a Christianised context because it highlights the more serious offence committed by the Devil, through his proxy. This may have helped explain to the audience why Adam and Eve, in the context of Christian tradition and the composite Genesis narrative, are not punished with the same severity as Satan and his followers. At the same time, the helmet motif fits into a vernacular social framework because, along with other elements of the narrative, it points to Adam and Eve's deception. This suggests that even if they are at fault, Adam and Eve have not betrayed their lord, and king, in the manner of Satan and his emissary. This explains the harsher punishment meted out to the devils in vernacular terms.

I now discuss Satan's emissary's celebratory speech that follows Adam's consumption of the forbidden fruit, which I interpret with reference to what I consider partial analogues. I suggest that the speech is not to be taken at face value, as the speaker undermines his own rhetoric. Satan's emissary addresses his lord *in absentia* in language that evokes lord-retainer relations, whereby he is again analogically represented as the retainer of a lord who rebels against his king. He states that he has now won his lord's favour for many a day (Gen B, l. 726b-28a) on account of the success of his mission, while Adam and Eve have

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<sup>135</sup> On a broader conceptual level, the association between the vernacular helmet motif and Satan's emissary in *Genesis B* also recalls the Old Saxon baptismal vow, a Christian text like the *Heliand* and the Christianised biblical narrative that is *Genesis B*. In the vow the worship of vernacular deities is equated with worship of the Devil. See Rudolf Simek, *Dictionary of Northern Mythology*, trans. by Angela Hall (Cambridge: Brewer, 1993; repr. 2007), p. 276. See also Alaric Hall, *Elves in Anglo-Saxon England* (Suffolk: The Boydell Press, 2007), p. 71, for a discussion of the Royal Prayerbook of circa 800, a Christian text that demonises elves.

lost God's favour because of their disobedience (Gen B, l. 729-31). Satan's emissary also recalls his master's expression of regret at humankind's enjoyment of heavenly bliss and reassures him that, now that his mission has proved successful, this will no longer be the case (Gen B, l. 731b-740a). It hardly needs pointing out, however, that the poem's early medieval audiences, who would have been broadly familiar with the concept of Christ's redemption of humankind, would have recognised the irony inherent in this passage. Furthermore, the emissary is self-deceived.<sup>136</sup> This is attested, *inter alia*, by lines 740b-50a of his speech. He resorts to the dual pronoun in his recollection of the angelic rebellion, where he states that God was angry with him and Satan because they were unwilling to serve him (Gen B, l. 740b-44). Yet, the emissary is left unmentioned in the rebellion narrative.<sup>137</sup> This suggests that his role as a co-leader or second-in-command to his lord in the course of the rebellion is largely imagined. At the same time Satan's emissary's desire to approach the flame (Gen B, l. 760-62a) is distinctly ironic, as for his misplaced certainty in the anticipation of Adam and Eve's damnation.

Satan's emissary's longing for Hell recalls representations of diabolic or evil characters in the hagiographical *Juliana* and the heroic-elegiac *Beowulf*, at a point when these characters suffer defeat. The devil of *Juliana* seeks Hell once the protagonist makes him confess to his many crimes:

[...] Ða hine seo fæmne forlet  
æfter þræc-hwile þystra neosan  
in sweartne grund, sawla gewinnan,

<sup>136</sup> See Alain Renoir, 'The Self-Deception of Temptation: Boethian Psychology in *Genesis B*', in *Old English Poetry*, ed. by Robert P. Creed (Providence: Brown University Press, 1967), pp. 47-67 (p. 55), and J.R. Hall, 'Geongordom and Hyldo in *Genesis B*: Serving the Lord for the Lord's Favor', *Papers on Language and Literature*, 11.3 (1975), 302-07 (p. 302).

<sup>137</sup> Hall, 'Duality and the Dual Pronoun in *Genesis B*', p. 144.



on wita forwyrd.<sup>138</sup>

(Then the woman released him, the adversary of souls, after his time of misery, to go seek darkness in the black abyss, in the knowledge of his destruction.)

Similarly, Grendel longs for the company of devils when he faces up to Beowulf's superior strength: 'Hyge wæs him hinfūs, wolde on heolster flēon, | sēcan dēofla ġedræg'<sup>139</sup> (His courage had left him; he wanted to flee towards the darkness, to seek out the company of devils). The fact that Satan's emissary should likewise express a longing for Hell upon his self-proclaimed victory undermines the rhetoric of his speech. While I recognise that this character's desire to return to Hell may be explained with reference to the value he places upon his service to Satan, the broader context of the speech suggests that this is the only course of action open to him, rather than a genuine choice. This is evident in the emissary's own description of Satan as bound (Gen B, l. 761b-62a), which attests to the chief rebel angel's loss of freedom following his rejection of God.<sup>140</sup> The emissary has similarly lost his freedom even in the absence of literal chains, in that he is a retainer to a lord who is bound in Hell. The bound Satan motif, moreover, recalls humankind's salvation, in that as I observed in Chapter 1 it belongs with Christ's Harrowing of Hell. Therefore, the speech is not only marked by an element of self-deception, but also by the identification of Satan's emissary as powerless in his inadvertent allusion to humankind's salvation.

The representation of Satan's emissary at this point in the narrative therefore recalls the representation of Satan earlier in the same poem. The emissary also recalls the deceived human couple, in that he may be said to deceive himself inasmuch as he deceives them.

While, in the course of this discussion, I made reference to previous commentators' work,

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<sup>138</sup> Lines 553b-56a of 'Juliana', in *The Old English Poems of Cynewulf*, ed. and trans. by Robert E. Bjork (London: Harvard University Press, 2013), pp. 77-128 (p. 114). The translation is mine.

<sup>139</sup> Lines 755-56a of *Klaeber's Beowulf*, ed. by R. D. Fulk, Robert E. Bjork and John D. Niles, 4<sup>th</sup> Edn (London: University of Toronto Press, 2008), p. 27. The translation is mine.

<sup>140</sup> G. C. Britton, 'Repetition and Contrast in the Old English Later Genesis', *Neophilologus*, 58.1 (1974), 66-73 (p. 70).

including Renoir, G. C. Britton and Hall, I also took the discussion forward in my identification and discussion of partial analogues and the dramatic irony that inheres to the speech. The helmet motif I discussed earlier in this section, moreover, points to the recurrence of deception as a major theme in the representation of the temptations in *Genesis B*.

### 3.2.5 Adam's Process of Repentance

The self-deception and malice characteristic of Satan's emissary's celebratory speech is to be contrasted to Adam and Eve's admission of guilt and repentance. I hereby explore this aspect of the narrative, particularly Adam's process of repentance, which I discuss with reference to biblical verses and the notion of exile that would have been familiar to early medieval audiences.

In contrast to Satan or his emissary, Adam and Eve fear that they have lost God's love (Genesis B, l. 767b-68a). Moreover, the first woman grieves as the falsely induced vision slips away (Genesis B, l. 770-77a), following which Adam and Eve recognise their nakedness and fall down in prayer (Genesis B, l. 777b-784a). Although this episode is extra-biblical, in that the biblical Adam speaks of his nakedness only as he answers God in Gen 3.10, Adam and Eve's repentance and nakedness prior to God's arrival recall Gen 3.7. This verse reads: 'Et aperti sunt oculi amborum, comque cognovissent esse se nudos, consuerunt folia ficus et fecerunt sibi perizomata' (And the eyes of them both were opened, and when they perceived themselves to be naked, they sewed together fig leaves and made themselves aprons). The sense of shame conveyed by this verse, along with the corresponding recognition of guilt, is an essential precursor to repentance. This single verse, placed as it is between the consumption of the forbidden fruit and the couple's encounter with God, may therefore have been the primary source of inspiration behind the *Genesis B* episode I hereby discuss. In her discussion of this episode, however, Janet S. Ericksen argued that while *Genesis B*

foregrounds the couple's desire to confess their sin,<sup>141</sup> it differs from the biblical original in that the latter is characterised by an attempt to hide from God.<sup>142</sup> While, therefore, this *Genesis B* episode entails adaptation of Gen 3.7, as I hereby suggest, it also focuses the audience's attention to the themes of repentance and redemption. It thereby elides the negative connotations of the corresponding biblical passage.

Adam's speech at this stage of the narrative, which is addressed to Eve, conveys meaning, *inter alia*, at the anagogical level, in that it evokes judgement in the form of a rhetorical question. The first man asks Eve whether she can see 'þa sweartan helle | grædige and gifre', (Gen B, l. 792b-93a) (dark hell, greedy and gaping), which points to the anticipated consequences of their sin and, ironically, to the vision of Heaven she conveyed to him earlier. Adam's speech also appeals to vernacular social conventions, or the lord-retainer relationship, when he states that 'nu þu me forlæred hæfst | on mines herran hete' (Gen B, l. 818b-19a) (now you have misguided me into my lord's hate). In this sense the narrative is Adam's tragedy, where Eve is the 'vehicle of the catastrophe'.<sup>143</sup> Adam also sets out the physical consequences of disobedience, when he states that he and Eve stand naked in the face of wind, hail,<sup>144</sup> frost, cold and blazing heat (Gen B, l. 805-12a). In her discussion of this passage Suzannah B. Mintz argues that it undermines the view that Adam is representative of reason and the mind, while Eve stands for emotion and the senses.<sup>145</sup> However, this is not the case, as Adam draws attention to the consequences of the lapse, even where, at this stage, he shifts the blame on Eve. Moreover, this stage only conveys part of Adam's process of

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<sup>141</sup> Janet S. Ericksen, 'Penitential Nakedness and the Junius 11 Genesis', in *Naked Before God: Uncovering the Body in Anglo-Saxon England*, ed. by Benjamin C. Withers and Jonathan Wilcox (Morgantown: West Virginia University Press, 2003), pp. 257-309 (pp. 262-63).

<sup>142</sup> Ericksen, p. 263.

<sup>143</sup> Anne L. Klinck, 'Female Characterisation in Old English Poetry and the Growth of Psychological Realism: *Genesis B* and *Christ I*', *Neophilologus*, 63.4 (1979), 597-610 (p. 599).

<sup>144</sup> The phrase 'hægles scur' (shower of hail) in line 808a of *Genesis B* may however be a mistranslation from the original Old Saxon that refers to a cloudy sky. See A. N. Doane, 'The Transmission of *Genesis B*', in *Anglo-Saxon England and the Continent*, ed. by Hanna Sauer and Joanna Story (Tempe: Arizona State University, 2011), pp. 63-82 (p. 76).

<sup>145</sup> Suzannah B. Mintz, 'Words Devilish and Divine: Eve as Speaker in *Genesis B*', *Neophilologus*, 81 (1997), 609-23 (p. 618).

repentance, which is attested by his progression from misogyny to genuine repentance. This representation does not contradict the terms of the *tribus modis* rationale, in that Adam, as *ratio*, as I indicated in section 3.2.2, would be expected to find his way to goodness, in this instance, repentance.

Eve recognises her guilt in her response to Adam's speech. This may be said to reflect her strength of character<sup>146</sup> or even her representation as a model sinner in a context that is no longer primarily allegorical. Adam's next speech expresses what may be termed the next stage in his process of repentance. The first man voices his readiness for penance, as he sets out that he would be willing to travel across the sea (Gen B, l. 831b-33) and to walk to the abyss if God willed it (Gen B, l. 834b-35a). This passage appears to recall biblical episodes extraneous to the one being adapted, for Adam's traversing of the sea is reminiscent, even if only in broad terms, of Noah's journey across the flooded world. Of course, such an allusion belongs in a narrative context characterised by repentance, for the story of the Great Flood is not only about punishment, but also about redemption. Besides, the redemptive journey motif may also be encountered elsewhere in the Old English poetic corpus, as in *The Seafarer*, which represents an exilic journey by the narrator that is transmuted into a liberating voyage towards God.<sup>147</sup> While the mentioned texts relate to Adam's willingness to travel across the sea, they do not explain his readiness to walk the abyss. An explanation for this theme may be sought in a biblical text that appears to have been overlooked by previous commentators. This is Job 38.16, where God asks Job: 'numquid ingressus es profunda maris et in novissimis abyssis deambulasti'<sup>148</sup> (Hast thou entered into the depths of the sea, and walked in the lowest parts of the deep?). This passage closely corresponds to Adam's 'ic to þam grunde genge' (Gen B, l. 834a) (I would go into the abyss). It is also worth considering, at

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<sup>146</sup> Belanoff, p. 829.

<sup>147</sup> See lines 33-38 and 64-66 of 'The Seafarer', in *Old and Middle English c. 890- c. 1450: An Anthology*, ed. by Elaine Treharne, 3<sup>rd</sup> edn. (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), pp. 60-67 (pp. 62 and 64).

<sup>148</sup> 'Job', in *The Parallel English-Latin Vulgate Bible*. The translation is taken from the same edition.

this stage, Gregory the Great's interpretation of Job 38.16 in his *Moralia in Iob*. One of the interpretations adduced by Gregory sets out that before the coming of Christ the depth of the sea, or the abyss, was a prison that confined the souls of the good.<sup>149</sup> Of course, both Adam and Job are Old Testament figures who may be classified as good. Moreover, neither the Adam of *Genesis B* nor Job is actually said to walk to the bottom of the abyss, either literally or metaphorically. *Genesis B* therefore not only points to Adam's genuine repentance, but also to his limitations, in that he may neither save himself nor Eve. The *Moralia* sets out, indeed, that Christ alone may walk across the abyss, or the pit of Hell, for he alone is unfettered by sin.<sup>150</sup> Adam's speech may therefore be understood to allude, even if obliquely, to Christ's future salvation of Adam, Eve, and humankind.

In this speech Adam also evokes, once more, the idea of a retainer without a lord:

[...] nis me on worulde niod

æniges þegnscipes. nu ic mines þeodnes hafa

hyldo forworhte þæt ic hie habban ne mæg. (Gen B, l. 835b-37)

(There is no need for loyal service as a thane for me in this world. I have now lost my chief's favour so that I may not have it.)

Adam believes, in other words, that he has lost his purpose. His situation recalls that of the speaker in lines 22-25 of *The Wanderer*, who has no temporal lord as the man died in circumstances that are not defined.<sup>151</sup> All that the speaker can do is long for the good old days, only to wake up to the waves and seabirds in lines 37-50.<sup>152</sup> The similarity between the Adam of *Genesis B* and the speaker in the elegiac poem suggests that the former remains loyal to God, even though he believes that he has lost God's favour. His continued loyalty explains why Adam styles himself as an exile. It also clearly distinguishes between *Genesis*

<sup>149</sup> Gregory the Great, *Morals on the Book of Job- First Part of Vol. III, Part V and Books XXVIII, XXIX*, ed. and trans. by Charles Marriott and James Bliss (Oxford: Parker and Rivington, 1844), p. 317.

<sup>150</sup> Gregory the Great, p. 318.

<sup>151</sup> 'The Wanderer', in *Old and Middle English c. 890- c. 1450: An Anthology*, pp. 54-61 (p. 56).

<sup>152</sup> 'The Wanderer', pp. 56 and 58.

*B*'s representation of the first man and Satan or his emissary. This distinction, as for the extra-biblical temptation of Adam, mitigates the first man's guilt in the eyes of audiences who set very high store by loyalty towards one's lord. In this respect, Adam's continued loyalty also recalls one of the functions of the emissary's deception of Eve, which leads her to induce her companion's lapse in good faith. In either instance *Genesis B* draws on the notion that the Devil commits a more grievous crime, which explains his damnation. The poem also draws on vernacular social conventions that perceive betrayal as, quite possibly, the worst offence that may be committed. This is because, as I observed in Chapter 1.2, the angelic rebellion in the *Genesis* poems is styled as a betrayal, in terms that recall narratives of vernacular origin like *The Battle of Maldon* and *Beowulf*, which I discussed in Chapter 1.2.1. In contrast, the episodes I mention above explain and mitigate Adam and Eve's offences in terms that they may not be styled as acts of intentional betrayal. I contend, moreover, that the narrative's appeal to vernacular social values in all of these episodes would have been evident even to those in the audience who would not have grasped the allegorical or the tropological import of the narrative. *Genesis B* would therefore have been relevant to audiences whose biblical knowledge would have been fairly rudimentary, as well as for others who benefited from fairly advanced exegetical knowledge.<sup>153</sup> In either case the narrative would have fulfilled a key function of myth, in that it explains the origin of the world of its audiences, as well as the social hierarchies and relationships that would have been familiar to them.

I conclude, on the basis of the above discussion, that the extra-biblical ending of *Genesis B* appeals to vernacular social norms. At the same time the narrative explores repentance, which is represented as a process. This aspect of the narrative has not always been assigned its due importance by commentators. Moreover, the narrative continues to deliver meaning at the anagogical level when Adam expresses his fear of Hell. I now turn to

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<sup>153</sup> See Janet Schrunck Ericksen, *Reading Old English Biblical Poetry: The Book and the Poem in Junius 11* (London: University of Toronto Press, 2021), p. 120, for a similar argument in respect of *Exodus*.

Adam and Eve's confession and expulsion in *Genesis A*, which text takes up the narrative where *Genesis B* leaves off.

### 3.3 Confession and Expulsion in *Genesis A*

As I already indicated, the extra-biblical repentance of Adam and Eve in *Genesis B* is followed, in the context of the Junius 11 manuscript, by the biblical confession to God in *Genesis A*. Therefore, the repentance in *Genesis B* acts as a prelude to the confession. While *Genesis B* ends with the first parents praying for God to show them how to live in the light (Gen B, l. 849-51), *Genesis A* resumes by relating God's biblically-derived arrival in Paradise to see how his children might be doing in lines 852-56. This leads to the confession; which may be taken as part of the process whereby Adam and Eve are taught to live in the light.

Here as elsewhere, *Genesis A* anticipates redemption in that it identifies God as 'nergend usser' (Gen A, l. 855b) (our saviour) as he visits his children and again, in line 903b, when he curses the serpent. In its relation of the confession and the consequent expulsion from Paradise the poem versifies Gen 3.8-17, following which it versifies Gen 3.19, 3.21 and 3.23-24.<sup>154</sup> *Genesis A* therefore reproduces the biblical narrative virtually in its entirety, as its only major excisions relate to Gen 3.18, 3.20 and 3.22.<sup>155</sup> These verses relate to the Earth bringing forth thorns and thistles to Adam, the naming of Adam's wife Eve on account of her status as mother to all the living, and God's statement to the effect that Adam, who now knows good and evil, 'factus est quasi unus ex nobis' (is become as one of us). The excision of Gen 3.20 is easily explained, as it leaves out an essentially etymological point that may have had no relevance or significance to the intended audience. In its adaptation of the story of Abraham the poem likewise omits the episode where God renames Abram Abraham in Gen 17.5. Gen 3.22 may have been omitted out of concern for audience misinterpretation.

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<sup>154</sup> See *Genesis A- A New Edition*, pp. 156, 158, 160 and 162, where Doane identified these as the biblical verses adapted by the corresponding text in the poem.

<sup>155</sup> As indicated in *Genesis A- A New Edition*, pp. 158 and 160, the poem also excises parts of Vulgate verses 3.14, 3.17 and 3.19. However, Katherine O'Brien O'Keefe, 'The Book of Genesis in Anglo-Saxon England' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Pennsylvania, Graduate Faculty, 1975), p. 179, classified the first two omissions, relating to the curse of the serpent among all cattle and beasts, and Adam's obedience of his wife in his partaking of the forbidden fruit, as minor. Moreover, the dust to dust motif of 3.19, which is likewise omitted, is subsumed by the reference to Adam's death in line 938b.



Similar concerns may also have informed the omission of the first parents' unashamed nudity in Gen 2.25, which I discussed in Chapter 2.2. The omission of Gen 3.18 may however be the outcome of *Genesis A*'s focus on redemption. The extra-biblical commentary in lines 952-64, after all, is informed by an emphasis on God's mercy.<sup>156</sup> The fecundity of the Earth in this passage counterbalances the expulsion from Paradise, which is now guarded by an angel bearing a fiery sword (Gen A, l. 946-47), as in Gen 3.24.<sup>157</sup> The extra-biblical passage also sets out that the almighty does not strip Adam and Eve of all favours, and that he gives them a roof decorated with holy stars, as well as seas and the Earth, which offers fruits answering to their needs. The omission of Gen 3.18, coupled with the passage I just discussed, assume additional significance when considered in relation to the statement that attributes humankind's current plight on Earth to Adam and Eve's transgression: 'Hwæt, we nu gehyrað hwær us hearmstafas | wraðe onwocan and woruldrymðo' (Gen A, l. 939-40) (Listen! We now know where the sorrows and worldly misery cruelly awoke for us). This is because God's mercy, expressed by way of alleviation of the punishment suffered by Adam and Eve, is also extended to the poem's audience. Moreover, the holy stars in the said passage anticipate salvation, in that they symbolise the heavenly home towards which humankind may eventually return.<sup>158</sup> The emphasis on God's mercy in the context of Adam and Eve's confession and expulsion is therefore tropological, as it Christianises the Old Testament narrative. In the context of the composite narrative the redemption of humankind also contrasts the plight of the rebel angels in the two renditions of the angelic myth.

My discussion of the confession and expulsion in *Genesis A* suggests, therefore, that this narrative is Christianised. At the same time, the text appears to make no recourse to vernacular social conventions, in that even the reference to Adam's exile in lines 930b-31a is

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<sup>156</sup> Doane, 'Introduction', in *Genesis A- A New Edition*, pp. 1-122 (p. 93).

<sup>157</sup> See *Genesis A- A New Edition*, p. 162.

<sup>158</sup> Bernard F. Huppé, *Doctrine and Poetry: Augustine's Influence on Old English Poetry* (New York: State University of New York, 1959), p. 152.

tied to the separation of body and soul.<sup>159</sup> Its significance is therefore exclusively spiritual. This approach, which recalls the biblically derived account of the Creation in the same poem, which I discussed in Chapter 2.2, may well indicate that the intended audience for *Genesis A* would have accepted the Christianised rendition of the biblically-derived narrative unquestioningly.

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<sup>159</sup> See Leslie Lockett, *Anglo-Saxon Psychologies in the Vernacular and Latin Traditions* (London: University of Toronto Press, 2011), pp. 19-25 for a discussion of the soul-body relationship in Old English literature.

### 3.4 Conclusion

I observed, in section 3.3, that the aftermath of humankind's lapse in *Genesis A* is Christianised, while it makes no recourse to vernacular social conventions. In this respect, the narrative not only contrasts the non-biblically derived narratives in *Genesis A* itself, which I discussed in Chapters 1 and 2, but also the adaptation of apocryphal and biblical narratives in *Genesis B*. Moreover, *Genesis B* delivers meaning, *inter alia*, at the analogical and tropological levels, which levels of meaning are also evident in the non-biblically derived sections of *Genesis A*. However, as I observed in the course of section 3.2, *Genesis B* also displays allegorical and anagogical levels of meaning, which suggests that this narrative is more complex than even the non-biblically derived sections of *Genesis A*.

The manifold levels of meaning in *Genesis B*, which I explored with reference to previous commentators, in particular Vickrey, suggest that the text would have appealed to the exegetically competent as well as audiences whose knowledge of biblical narratives would have been more rudimentary. While my analysis is based on previous commentary, I assign particular importance to the anagogical dimension, which is also reflected in Adam's reference to Hell in his extra-biblical speech to Eve following his consumption of the forbidden fruit. This level of meaning, which entails allusion to God's judgement, suggests that Satan's emissary's quest is ultimately futile. The futility of the emissary's quest also emerges from the dramatic irony that inheres to his victory speech. In section 3.2.4 I proposed to interpret Satan's emissary's last speech with reference to the representation of the devil in *Juliana* and Grendel in *Beowulf*. This approach contextualises the speech within the broader literary tradition. At the same time, I contend that *Genesis B* makes innovative use of the motif of the defeated villain who craves Hell, as it places this motif in the context of a victory speech. This, along with other elements of the speech, such as the reference to the bound Satan, results in dramatic irony at the speaker's expense. My discussion of Adam and

Eve's repentance also focuses on an aspect of the narrative that has, generally speaking, been underestimated (though not ignored) by most previous commentators, namely Adam's process of repentance. I consider that the narrative represents Adam's progression from misogyny to genuine repentance as he expresses his readiness to undergo penance. This representation forms an integral component of the text's tropological dimension, for Adam's penance recalls redemption, which means that the first man is rendered as a Christian man in the audience's present.

## 4 Cain and his Descendants in *Genesis A* and *Beowulf*

### 4.1 Background

The Cain myth appears to have enjoyed importance in an Old English literary context, given that the story of the first fratricide is not only retold in *Genesis A*, which versifies narratives drawn from the Book of Genesis sequentially, but also by two poems that, strictly speaking, would not necessarily have had to retell this story. These are *Maxims I* and *Beowulf*. *Maxims I* retells Cain's story in its concluding lines, which posit this myth as an archetype, and originator, of all violence:<sup>1</sup>

Wearð fæhþo fyra cynne siþþan furþum swealg  
eorðe Abeles blode. Næs þæt an-dæge nið;  
of þam wroht-dropan wide gesprungon  
micel mon ældum, monegum þeodum  
bealo-blonden niþ. Slog his broðor swæsne  
Cain, þone cwealm serede; cuþ wæs wode siþþan,  
þæt ece nið ældum scod, swa aþol-warum.<sup>2</sup>

(Enmity came to be among humankind, since the Earth swallowed Abel's blood. That hatred was not confined to one day; from that criminal bloodshed widely sprang much pernicious hatred among men, among many peoples. Cain, who was spared death, killed his dear brother; it was since widely known that eternal strife oppressed men as for those who dwell in wretchedness)

The idea that Cain's crime is archetypal, or a prime exemplar and cause of all violence, may be traced back to Augustine, for whom the first fratricide is reflected historically in

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<sup>1</sup> See Charles D. Wright, 'The Blood of Abel and the Branches of Sin: *Genesis A*, *Maxims I* and Aldhelm's *Carmen de virginitate*', *Anglo-Saxon England*, 25 (1996), 7-19 (p. 10). The matter is also addressed by John M. Hill, *The Cultural World of Beowulf* (London: University of Toronto Press, 1995), p. 5.

<sup>2</sup> Lines 191-97 of 'Maxims I', in *Old English Shorter Poems: Volume II Wisdom and Lyric*, ed. and trans. by Robert E. Bjork (London: Harvard University Press, 2014), pp. 64-81 (p. 80). The translation is mine.

Romulus's killing of his brother Remus.<sup>3</sup> This explains why the Cain myth would not only have been relevant in the context of a biblical narrative like *Genesis A*, but also to a vernacular narrative like *Beowulf*.

In this chapter I explore the adaptation of the Cain myth in *Genesis A* and *Beowulf*, and the manner in which this myth fulfils an archetypal function in either narrative. I argue that in this respect the two poems adopt a conceptually similar approach. However, this is often overlooked by commentators, arguably on account of the several stylistic and thematic differences between the respective texts. In this chapter I therefore seek to better contextualise *Beowulf* within the extant Old English literary corpus. I also discuss the two poems' markedly different approaches to Cain's descendants, which are however similarly informed by the interpretation and representation of the Cain narrative as archetypal. *Genesis A* tells of Cain's violent city-dwelling descendants, who are contrasted to the descendants of his younger brother Seth. *Beowulf* not only represents Cain's descendants, in the form of Grendel and Grendel's mother, as violent, but also as monstrous exiles. At the same time, the envy and violence characteristic of Cain and Grendel also beset the Danes and Beowulf's people, the Geats, which suggests that in *Beowulf* social violence is intertwined with the biblical narrative.<sup>4</sup> While *Beowulf*, therefore, represents Cain's descendants in relation to their archetype, as for *Genesis A*, it does not represent them in contrast to a people, or a society, rendered in unambiguously positive terms, as for Seth's descendants until their lapse. I contend that *Beowulf*'s adaptation and contextualisation of the biblical myth is to be understood with reference to its pre-Christian setting, which also informs the Creation sequence I discussed in Chapter 2.3.

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<sup>3</sup> Book XV, Chapter 5 of Augustine, *The City of God against the Pagans*, ed. and trans. by R.W. Dyson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 639-40. See also Wright, p. 10.

<sup>4</sup> Sharon Elizabeth Rhodes, 'Turning the Tide: Fathoming the Great Flood in Old English Literature' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Rochester, Department of English, 2016), p. 136.

## 4.2 Cain and his Descendants in *Genesis A*

In view of the importance of the Cain myth in the wider Old English literary context and beyond, I hereby focus on *Genesis A*'s representation of Cain's fratricide, in section 4.2.1, and his descendants, in section 4.2.2. In my discussion of Cain's fratricide and exile I consider the contrast between appropriate and proscribed behaviour prior to Cain and Abel's sacrifices to God, as well as the subsequent focus on Cain's state of mind. Moreover, I argue that *Genesis A* adapts the biblical narrative with reference to the lord-retainer theme. In this respect, the adaptation of the Cain narrative recalls the renditions of the angelic rebellion in *Genesis A* and in the interpolated *Genesis B*, which deliver meaning at the analogical and tropological levels, as I observed in Chapter 1. The analogical aspect of the Cain narrative in *Genesis A*, whereby it appeals to vernacular social conventions, suggests that it is an archetype for post-biblical history, like the angelic rebellion in the two Genesis poems. The archetypal representation of the Cain myth is in line with Augustinian exegesis, as I already observed in section 4.1. *Genesis A* also relates the Cain narrative tropologically, in that it calls upon the day-to-day experience of its Christian audience, particularly when it contrasts the fratricide's and his brother's attitude ahead of their sacrifice to God, and in its representation of Cain's state of mind. As for the analogical level of meaning, the tropological aspect of the narrative recalls my discussion of the angelic rebellion in Chapter 1, where the representations of Heaven and Hell also call for rumination on individual choices. The Satan of *Genesis B*, for instance, is not only a rebellious lord, but also, at the tropological level, an individual who refuses to follow God's ways.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> See lines 295b-99a of 'Genesis B', in *The Saxon Genesis: An Edition of the West Saxon Genesis B and the Old Saxon Vatican Genesis*, ed. by A. N. Doane (London: University of Wisconsin Press, 1991), pp. 207-31 (p. 210).

In section 4.2.2 I discuss Cain's genealogy with a focus on its extra-biblical elements that, I contend, conceptually recall the angelic rebellion and fall. I compare, or rather contrast, these elements with the representation of Seth's descendants before their lapse. I argue that this contrast throws light on the meaning behind the extra-biblical themes in the two genealogies. While the themes prevalent in the Cainite genealogy highlight these people's violence, the representation of the Sethites is focused on lord-retainer loyalty and God's favour. Lord-retainer loyalty, which also transpires from vernacular narratives, is thereby equated with a people who, up to that point, are loyal to and favoured of God.

#### 4.2.1 Cain's Fratricide and Exile

Adam and Eve's expulsion from Paradise, which I discussed in Chapter 3.3, is followed by the birth of their children in a sorrowful and less productive land.<sup>6</sup> As opposed to the biblical narrative, *Genesis A* contrasts the actions of the two brothers born to the first couple ahead of their sacrificial offerings to God. The poem thereby offers *a priori* explanation for God's appreciation of Abel's offering and his disregard of Cain's in Gen 4.4-5.<sup>7</sup> *Genesis A* sets out that Cain 'eorðan elnes tilode' (Genesis A, l. 972) (tilled the earth), whereas Abel 'heold | fæder on fultum' (Genesis A, l. 973b-74a) (helped his father). This terminology suggests that while Cain is concerned with earthly matters, Abel seeks his father, literally Adam but extra-literally God.<sup>8</sup> Therefore, the function of the cited lines recalls Gen 4.7, a verse that is not reproduced in the poem,<sup>9</sup> even where these lines ostensibly adapt Gen 4.2.<sup>10</sup> Gen 4.2,

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<sup>6</sup> See lines 961-66 of *Genesis A- A New Edition*, rev. edn by A. N. Doane (Tempe: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2013), p. 163. All references to *Genesis A* from this edition shall henceforth be given parenthetically in the main text, indicated by the abbreviation Gen A. All translations of *Genesis A* are mine.

<sup>7</sup> 'Genesis', in *The Vulgate Bible Vol. I The Pentateuch*, ed. by Swift Edgar (London: Harvard University Press, 2010), pp. 1-274 (p. 18). All citations and translations from the Vulgate Genesis are taken from this edition.

<sup>8</sup> Bernard F. Huppé, *Doctrine and Poetry: Augustine's Influence on Old English Poetry* (New York: State University of New York, 1959), p. 157.

<sup>9</sup> See *Genesis A- A New Edition*, p. 164, where Doane identified the biblical verses adapted in this part of the poem.

<sup>10</sup> See *Genesis A*, p. 162.



however, simply states that Cain tilled the earth while Abel was a shepherd. Gen 4.7, whose function, I argue, is replicated by lines 972-74a, reads as follows:

Nonne si bene egeris, recipies? Sin autem male, statim in foribus peccatorum aderit?

Sed sub te erit appetitus eius, et tu dominaberis illius.

(If thou do well, shalt thou not receive? But if ill, shall not sin forthwith be present at the door? But the lust thereof shall be under thee, and thou shalt have dominion over it.)

This verse, as for the mentioned lines in *Genesis A*, explains why God rejects Cain's sacrifice, as it suggests that the cause of the rejection lies in Cain's own behaviour, or attitude. However, *Genesis A* provides its explanation for the rejection of the sacrifice before, and not after, the rejection itself. In contrast, Gen 4.7 follows the rejection of Cain's sacrifice in the chronology of the biblical narrative. Moreover, the cited lines from *Genesis A* contrast the behaviour of the two brothers in a manner that Gen 4.7 does not. The rest of the narrative, however, focuses on Cain's state of mind.

The biblical text and poem describe Cain's fratricide, which is prompted by his anger at God's disregard of his offering in Gen 4.5 and lines 980b-82a of *Genesis A*, in rather different terms. The Book of Genesis conveys the act in only one verse, Gen 4.8, where Cain draws his brother to a field to kill him, which detail is omitted by the poem. However, the *Genesis A* account is otherwise more detailed, particularly in its representation of Cain's state of mind.<sup>11</sup> Over the course of lines 979-82 the poem describes Cain as bitter, angry, hostile and furious.<sup>12</sup> Moreover, the representation of Cain's act as *unræden*, or ill-advised, in line 982b recalls the rebel angels' stance in *Genesis A*, lines 23b-24a, as they 'noldan dreogan leng | heora selfra ræd' (no longer acted to their own advantage). Cain is therefore represented following in the footsteps of the rebel angels, as he places himself in the same

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<sup>11</sup> Heide Estes, 'Raising Cain in *Genesis* and *Beowulf*: Challenges to Generic Boundaries in Anglo-Saxon Biblical Literature', *The Heroic Age: A Journal of Early Medieval Northwestern Europe*, 13 (2010), 1-12 (p. 3).

<sup>12</sup> Estes, pp. 3-4.

situation.<sup>13</sup> The aforementioned contrast between Abel and Cain likewise recalls the angelic rebellion in the same poem, where the fates of the obedient and rebel angels are contrasted in the opening 46 lines, as I indicated in Chapter 1.2.1. Hence, the *Genesis A* narrative of Cain's fratricide employs non-biblically derived narrative elements to deliver a didactic message, like the poem's representation of the angelic rebellion. Abel, after all, is represented as a positive model for the audience, like the loyal angels. This contrasts Cain's negative model, which recalls the rebel angels. This interpretation is supported by Abel's relationship with his father in lines 973b-74a, which as I already indicated may be understood as an allusion to God.

*Genesis A* also dwells on the consequences of Cain's fratricide in an extra-biblical passage that follows Abel's death:

[...] cwealmdreore swealh,  
 þæs middangeard, monnes swate,  
 æfter wælswege. Wea wæs aræred,  
 tregena tuddor. Of ðam twige siððan  
 ludon laðwende leng swa swiðor  
 reðe wæstm. Ræhton wide  
 geond werpeoda wrohtes telgan.  
 hrinon hearmtanas hearde and sare  
 drihta bearnum. Doð gieta swa. (Gen A, l. 985b-93)

(The slaughter-gore, the man's blood, was swallowed by Middle-Earth, after the death-blow. Woe was raised, offspring of grief. Then an evil and cruel fruit grew from that shoot, the longer the stronger. The branches of strife reached widely among the people, the harmful shoots struck the children of men hard and sorely. They still do.)

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<sup>13</sup> See also L.N. McKill, 'The Artistry of the Noah Episode in *Genesis A*', *English Studies in Canada*, 13.2 (1987), 121-135 (p. 123).

In its identification of Cain's crime as the source of grief and strife among humankind down to the present day, this passage posits the first fratricide as explanation, and source, for the hardships that beset the members of the poem's audience and the society in which they live. Moreover, *Genesis A* establishes a connection between Cain's offence and Eve's original transgression in lines 997b-1001, which lines are also extra-biblical. Eve's 'forman gylt' (Gen A l. 998b) (first offence) is thereby identified as the prime cause of Cain's crime, while Cain's crime reaffirms Eve's original sin. The reference to Eve in this passage also suggests that in the context of the composite narrative the Cainite shoot in lines 985b-93 cited above, should be read as an offshoot of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. Michael D. Bintley argues that by way of the Cainite shoot the tree of knowledge 'entwines its roots with the human family tree'.<sup>14</sup> In other words, the Cainite shoot reaffirms original sin just as Cain reaffirms Eve's transgression. This is confirmed by the fruit borne by the Cainite shoot, which would not be out of place in the description of the tree in *Genesis B*. It is possible, if not probable, that the tree and shoot in the two Genesis poems are ultimately influenced by 1 Tim 6.10, which tells of the 'radix enim omnium malorum' (root of all evils).<sup>15</sup> Cassian and Gregory the Great made use of this and similar biblical imagery in the formulation of 'the metaphor of the vices as offshoots from the root of Pride'.<sup>16</sup> This led to the conception of the tree of vices, which 'became a standard iconographic image'.<sup>17</sup> The use of similar imagery in the context of Cain's crime in *Genesis A* reaffirms that the fratricide's narrative is represented as an archetype, which representation may be traced back to Augustine, who as I indicated in section 4.1 held that Cain's crime is reflected historically in Romulus's killing of Remus. A similar conception of Cain's crime is evident in *Maxims I*, as I also indicated in the same

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<sup>14</sup> Michael D. J. Bintley, *Trees in the Religions of Early Medieval England* (Suffolk: Boydell and Brewer, 2015), p. 105.

<sup>15</sup> '1 Timothy', in *The Parallel English-Latin Vulgate Bible* (Publishing Toronto: Publishing Toronto, 2016), Kindle edition. The bracketed translation is taken from the same edition.

<sup>16</sup> Wright, p. 10.

<sup>17</sup> Wright, p. 10.

section. Moreover, this conception of Cain's crime finds biblical justification in Jude 1.11, where evil-doers are said to follow in his footsteps.<sup>18</sup> This means that Cain's crime as conceived in the biblical text was not only interpreted as an archetype for historical or pseudo-historical events, but also as a tropological narrative. Cain's narrative in *Genesis A* is likewise tropological, in that it suggests that the individual members of the audience suffer the consequences of the actions described in the text. This style recalls the tropological level of meaning in *Genesis B*.<sup>19</sup>

The discussion so far suggests that *Genesis A* renders the Cain myth as part of a cosmic confrontation between good and evil, in that the fratricide looks back to the angelic rebellion and Eve's transgression, and forward to the audience's present time. A broadly similar conception of the Cain narrative may be found in one of the fragments that make up the Old Saxon *Vatican Genesis*, where the Old Testament fratricide is followed by the account of the Sethite Enoch's death at the hands of Antichrist.<sup>20</sup> The context of the narrative, whereby Enoch's death is told following Abel's, suggests that the two deaths are linked.<sup>21</sup> In other words, as in the case of the shoot in *Genesis A*, the reference to Enoch and Antichrist 'adds a potent layer of cosmic evil' to the Cain narrative in the Old Saxon poem.<sup>22</sup> Therefore, as for the *Genesis A* narrative, the Old Saxon version of the Cain myth is archetypal, in that Enoch's death replicates Abel's. The adoption of a conceptually similar approach in the two narratives, which is not often discussed or observed by commentators, points to the close connection between the Old Saxon and Old English literary traditions, as does, after all, the interpolation of *Genesis B* into *Genesis A*. The approach shared by the

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<sup>18</sup> Wright, p. 9.

<sup>19</sup> A. N. Doane, 'Introduction', in *Genesis A- A New Edition*, pp. 1-122 (p. 93).

<sup>20</sup> See A. N. Doane, 'Introduction', in *The Saxon Genesis: An Edition of the West Saxon Genesis B and the Old Saxon Vatican Genesis*, ed. by A.N. Doane (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1991), pp. 3-302 (pp. 163-64) for a discussion of the figure of Enoch, who is plucked from mortality in the Book of Genesis and confronts Antichrist at the end of times in early Christian myth.

<sup>21</sup> Alexander Sager, 'Thiu wirsa giburd: Cain's Legacy, Original Sin, and the End of the World in the Old Saxon Genesis', in *The End-Times in Medieval German Literature*, ed. by Ernst Ralf Hintz and Scott E. Pincikowski (Rochester: Camden House, 2019), pp. 7-26 (p. 20).

<sup>22</sup> Sager, p. 20.

Cain narratives in *Genesis A* and the Old Saxon fragment also raises the question why the former text does not resort to the Enoch tradition in the manner of the latter. A reference to Enoch in *Genesis A* would have further affirmed the cosmic, and archetypal, nature of the Cain myth. This question is all the more relevant on account of the picture of Enoch in p. 60 of the Junius 11 manuscript, which suggests that his confrontation of Antichrist<sup>23</sup> would have been known by the artist and the redactor of the manuscript. While it is not possible to answer this question conclusively, a plausible answer may lie in A. N. Doane's commentary about Enoch as rendered in the Old Saxon text. Doane observed that the *Vatican Genesis* fragment first presents Enoch following the lapse of the Sethites, and not before, as in the case of the Book of Genesis.<sup>24</sup> This means that the text assigns Enoch, who is later killed by Antichrist, the place that in the Book of Genesis belongs to Noah.<sup>25</sup> *Genesis A*, however, renders the biblical narrative sequentially, which means that it mentions Enoch in the context of the Sethite genealogy, in lines 1188-217a. This precludes the approach pursued in the Old Saxon poem. For all that, the non-sequential approach to biblical versification in the *Vatican Genesis* does not diminish the importance of the conceptual similarities between the two texts.

I now turn, once more, to my discussion of *Genesis A*, where the Cainite shoot and its evil fruit are followed by a passage that adapts the biblical passage where the Earth denies its fruit to Cain. This is conveyed as part of God's speech addressed to Cain:

“hwæt befealdeſ þu folmum þinum  
 wraðum on wælbedd wærfæsne rinc,  
 broðor þinne, and his blod to me  
 cleopað and cigeð? þu þæs cwealmes scealt

<sup>23</sup> See Catherine E. Karkov, *Text and Picture in Anglo-Saxon England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), p. 9 for a discussion of this picture, where Enoch stands on a dragon.

<sup>24</sup> Doane, 'Introduction', in *The Saxon Genesis: An Edition of the West Saxon Genesis B and the Old Saxon Vatican Genesis*, p. 163.

<sup>25</sup> Doane, p. 163.

wite winnian and on wræc hweorfan,  
 awyrgeð to widan aldre. Ne seleð þe wæstmas eorðe  
 wlitige to woruldnýtte ac heo wældreore swealh  
 halge of handum þinum. Forþon heo þe hroðra oftihð,  
 gleames in grene folde. Þu scealt geomor hweorfan,  
 arleas of earde þinum swa þu abele wurde  
 to feorhbanan. Forþon þu flema scealt  
 widlast wrecan, winemagum lað.”<sup>26</sup> (Gen A, l. 1010-21)

(Listen, have you tucked your brother, a faithful warrior/man, into a slaughter bed, so that his blood calls and cries out to me? His death shall earn you torment and you shall turn to exile, accursed into the distant ages. The Earth shall not give you fair fruit for your worldly need, for it has swallowed holy slaughter gore from your hands. It will deny you its comforts, its gleaming green land. You shall wander in sadness, without honour, from your country/land, because you became Abel’s killer.

Therefore, you shall roam distant tracks, a fugitive hateful to friendly kinsmen.)

This passage reaffirms the consequences of Cain’s crime first conveyed in the representation of the extra-biblical shoot. However, unlike the extra-biblical theme, which appeals directly to the audience, the biblically-derived curse is directed specifically against Cain. For all that, the sequential placement of the two passages invites the audience to ponder the consequences of actions taken in everyday life, namely on the fruit that those actions will bear, and their effect on the individual’s relationship with God. Moreover, the curse as rendered in *Genesis A* conveys meaning at the analogical level even where it is directed against Cain. This is because the passage resorts to culturally significant terminology such as ‘wræc’ and ‘wrecan’

<sup>26</sup> For a discussion of the stylistic elements of this speech, which is characterised by hypermetricity and consecutive alliteration, see Mark Griffith, ‘The Register of Divine Speech in *Genesis A*’, *Anglo-Saxon England*, 41(2012), 63-78 (p. 77). This style is to be contrasted, *inter alia*, with Cain’s unadorned speech in lines 1023-35.

(Gen A, l. 1014b and 1021a), which convey the idea of exile. The narrative context suggests that these terms are not merely translations of the phrase ‘vagus et profugus’ (fugitive and vagabond) in the Vulgate version of Gen 4.12.<sup>27</sup> Rather, the text appeals to Cain’s humanity in terms of what Bennet A. Brockman called the Germanic fate of the exile.<sup>28</sup> This is because the relationship between God and Cain is described in the manner of a lord and his retainer. In the cited speech God sends Cain in exile in dishonour, while in his reply Cain claims that:

[...] Ðu to dæge þissum  
 ademest me fram duguðe and adrifest from  
 earde minum (Gen A, l. 1031b-33a)  
 (On this day you have deprived me of nobility /status and expelled me from my  
 land/country.)

God’s speech and Cain’s response therefore indicate that Cain loses his status or place in God’s retinue. This interpretation of the respective passages is also affirmed by God’s description of Abel as his ‘wærfastne rinc’ (faithful warrior/man) (Gen A, l. 1011b). This means that Cain’s crime also makes him a traitor, for analogically speaking, he has killed his king’s, or lord’s, loyal man. In this sense, the passage builds on the representation of the angelic rebellion and fall in the same poem, as well as in *Genesis B*. It also builds on the representation of Cain’s crime as archetypal, in that it suggests that social situations known to the audience may be traced back to him. However, the social dimension of Cain’s crime in *Genesis A* differs from the rendition of the biblically-derived narrative in the aforementioned

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<sup>27</sup> In the corresponding verse in the Old Latin version the text reads ‘gemens et tremens’ (groaning and trembling). See *Vetus Latina: Die Reste der Altlateinischen Bibel nach Petrus Sabatier Neu Gessammelt und Herausgegeben von der Erzabtei Beuron, Vol. 2 Genesis*, ed. by Bonifatius Fischer (Beuron: Freiburg, 1951), p. 86. The translation is mine.

<sup>28</sup> Bennet A. Brockman, “‘Heroic’ and ‘Christian’ in *Genesis A*: The Evidence of the Cain and Abel Episode”, *Modern Language Quarterly*, 35.2 (1974), 115-28 (p. 117).

Old Saxon Genesis. In the Old Saxon poem emphasis is placed, rather, on Cain's loss of his personal relationship with God.<sup>29</sup>

I briefly consider, finally, the drawing in page 49 of the Junius 11 manuscript, which represents the Cain narrative in a series of scenes.<sup>30</sup> These scenes are separated by lines in a compositional style reminiscent of a seventh-century illustrated Pentateuch that may have originated in North Africa, but that is known to have been at Tours by the ninth century.<sup>31</sup> The Junius 11 and Pentateuch drawings also share their representation of God's hand as it emerges from a cloud, whereby Abel's offering is blessed.<sup>32</sup> Given that, like the lines that separate the scenes, the representation of God's hand in the English manuscript is unique to this drawing,<sup>33</sup> it is likely to be derived from an external source rather than drawn with reference to the *Genesis A* text. Moreover, the straightforward rendition of the mythical scenes in Gen 4.2-10<sup>34</sup> in this drawing does not otherwise shed light on the interpretation of the corresponding *Genesis A* text. This is because the drawing does not interact with the text in the manner of, say, the pictures that represent the temptation of Adam and Eve, which I discussed in Chapter 3.2.3. These pictures, as I observed in that chapter, pose interesting interpretive questions, even if they do not necessarily allow for any definitive conclusions.

This brings to a conclusion my discussion of Cain's fratricide in *Genesis A*, which draws attention to the extra-literal levels of meaning conveyed in this narrative. I also focus on the narrative's extra-biblical elements that convey these levels of meaning, including by way of appeal to the lord-retainer relationship. Moreover, I draw attention to the representation of the Cain narrative as archetype for historical events, which is thematically

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<sup>29</sup> Michael Lysander Angerer, 'Beyond "Germanic" and "Christian" Monoliths: Revisiting Old English and Old Saxon Biblical Epics', *Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, 120.1 (2021), 73-92 (p. 83).

<sup>30</sup> See Appendix, Plate VIII.

<sup>31</sup> Barbara Raw, 'The Probable Derivation of Most of the Illustrations in Junius 11 from an Illustrated Old Saxon *Genesis*', *Anglo-Saxon England*, 5 (1976), 133-48 (p. 142).

<sup>32</sup> Raw, p. 142.

<sup>33</sup> Raw, p. 142.

<sup>34</sup> Thomas H. Ohlgren, 'Visual Language in the Old English *Cædmonian Genesis*', *Visible Language*, 6.3 (1972), 253-56 (p. 257).



related to the text's appeal to the lord-retainer relationship. This point is often underestimated by commentators. I also observe that, thereby, the Cain narrative in the Old English poem replicates themes first conveyed in the composite narrative's accounts of the angelic rebellion and fall. This suggests that the Cain narrative also reaffirms, by way of association, the monarchic ideology first conveyed in these extra-biblical narratives. I also highlighted, in the course of this discussion, the conceptual similarities between the Cain narrative as related in *Genesis A* and the Old Saxon *Vatican Genesis*, which are often overlooked by commentators.

#### 4.2.2 The Cainite Genealogy

In this section I discuss Cain's biblically derived genealogy, which attests to the archetypal function of the Cain myth in the context of the broader narrative, in that the attitude and actions of the ancestor are replicated in his descendants. I focus, in particular, on the extra-biblical elements in the genealogy, which point towards the violence of Cain's descendants, as well as on the representation of Lameh (Lamech), which affirms their moral status. I also contrast the Cainite genealogy to the representation of Seth's kinsmen, who enjoy God's favour until their lapse, which lapse I discuss in Chapter 5.

Cain's fratricide, which leads to his exile, is followed by the poem's adaptation of the genealogy of his descendants in lines 1055-103. These lines are broadly based on Gen 4.17-24;<sup>35</sup> however, *Genesis A* introduces extra-biblical elements into the biblically derived passage. While, for instance, the building of the first city associated with Cain's son Enos (Enoch) is also mentioned in Gen 4.17, the city represented in *Genesis A* is walled (Gen A, l. 1058b) and houses sword-bearing princes (Gen A, l. 1059b-60a). These descriptions are not, in and of themselves, negative; however, in the specific context of the narrative they suggest that Cain's descendants are violent like their ancestor. The Cainite city may therefore be understood to form part of what Augustine called the Earthly City which, he claimed, was

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<sup>35</sup> See *Genesis A- A New Edition*, pp. 168-70.

founded by the rebel angels and comprises all reprobates.<sup>36</sup> Augustine contrasted the idea of the Earthly City to the City of God, which comprises all those who remain loyal to God.<sup>37</sup> In the context of the Cain narrative and its aftermath in *Genesis A* it may be argued that the City of God is represented by the Sethites, whose genealogy is adapted with reference to lord-retainer loyalty and God's favour.

The most important of Cain's descendants in *Genesis A* is undoubtedly Lamah, as he reveals to his two wives that he killed Cain (Gen A, l. 1093-97a). Lamah also states that his crime will be avenged sevenfold (Gen A, l. 1098b-101), which recalls God's curse on anyone who would kill Cain, when he places a sign on the fratricide (Gen A, l. 1042b-47a). This sequence of events is mostly, but not completely, based on the biblical original. While God's curse on Cain's future killer originates with Gen 4.15 and Lamah's homicide and expectation of sevenfold vengeance derive from Gen 4.23-24, the identification of Cain as the man killed by Lamah is extra-biblical. This extra-biblical detail is important because it clearly marks the fulfilment of God's curse in a manner that the biblical original does not. It also places God's curse for Cain's death on Cain's own genealogical line, which as for the violence suggested in the description of the Cainite city, equates the Cainite line with its ancestor not only genealogically, but also morally. This is because Lamah, like Cain, slays a kinsman (Gen A, l. 1093-94). Moreover, Lamah and the Cainite line are cursed like their ancestor. Hence, the Cainites replicate the actions, and may be said to share in the fate, of their ancestor, at least in the broad sense that they are punished by God. While I discuss the plight of the Cainite line in Chapter 5.2, as part of my discussion of the Great Flood, I hereby briefly consider the origin of the tradition that identifies Cain as the man killed by Lamah. Oliver F. Emerson observed that this Hebrew legend evolved into a dramatic narrative.<sup>38</sup> This narrative is

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<sup>36</sup> R. W. Dyson, 'Introduction', in *The City of God against the Pagans*, pp. x-xxix (p. xx).

<sup>37</sup> Dyson, p. xx.

<sup>38</sup> Oliver F. Emerson, 'Legends of Cain, Especially in Old and Middle English', *PMLA*, 21.4 (1906), 831-929 (p. 876).

recorded, *inter alia*, in the midrash known as the *Book of Jasher*. According to this text the old and blind Lamech is told to draw and shoot an arrow in Cain's direction by the young Tubalcain, who mistakes their common ancestor for an animal.<sup>39</sup> While Arthur A. Chiel dated this text to the eleventh century,<sup>40</sup> the story of Cain's death is also told in the *Tanhuma* Midrash, the final redaction of which is likely to date back to the ninth century.<sup>41</sup> Be that as it may, some version of this narrative must have come to the attention of Christian biblical commentators at an early stage, as Jerome wrote about Cain's death in his response to the question concerning the meaning of sevenfold vengeance in the letter to Damasos, even if he gave no details.<sup>42</sup> John Block Friedman argues, however, that Jerome was referring to the apocryphal Book of Lamech, which left traces in medieval art and literature.<sup>43</sup> In an early medieval English context, moreover, Lamech's involuntary homicide is mentioned, *inter alia*, by Bede, who acknowledged its derivation from Hebrew tradition.<sup>44</sup> These texts suggest that the extra-biblical narrative would have been considered authoritative by early medieval exegetes, which explains *Genesis A*'s identification of Cain as the man killed by Lamech.

While *Genesis A* introduces extra-biblical detail to explain and contextualise Lamech's crime, it omits the numerology in the second half of Gen 4.24. The biblical verse reads: 'Septuplum ultio dabitur de Cain, de Lamech vero septuagies septies' (Sevenfold vengeance shall be taken for Cain, but for Lamech seventy times sevenfold). In contrast, Bede engaged in complex exegesis in his discussion of the levels of meaning attributed to the second part of this verse. On one level, he argued, seventy times sevenfold vengeance refers to the death of the seventy-seven children descended from Lamech in the Great Flood.<sup>45</sup> On another level

<sup>39</sup> See 2.26-28 of *Book of Jasher*, anon. transl. (New York: Noah and Gould, 1840), p. 5.

<sup>40</sup> Arthur A. Chiel, 'The Mysterious Book of Jasher', *Judaism*, 26.3 (1977), 367-74 (p. 368).

<sup>41</sup> Ruth Mellinkoff, *The Mark of Cain* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2003), p. 62.

<sup>42</sup> Heather O'Donoghue, 'What has Baldr to do with Lamech', *Medium Ævum*, 71.2 (2003), 82-107 (pp. 94-95, and 105).

<sup>43</sup> John Block Friedman, *The Monstrous Races in Medieval Art and Thought* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 2000), p. 97.

<sup>44</sup> Bede, *On Genesis*, trans. by Calvin B. Kendall (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2008), p. 159.

<sup>45</sup> Bede, p. 159.

Bede considered that Lamech represents the human race,<sup>46</sup> and that this verse attests to the proliferation of sin for seventy-seven generations until the advent of Christ.<sup>47</sup> *Genesis A* does away with the need for complex exegetical discourse by replacing biblical numerology with the following text:

[...] min sceal swiðor

mid grimme gryre golden wurðan

fyll and feorhcwealm þonne ic forð scio. (Gen A, l. 1101b-03)

(My parting hence shall be repaid by exceedingly grim terror, mortal destruction and a fall.)

The simplified adaptation of the second half of Gen 4.24, which may be understood as an allusion to the Great Flood, could have been informed by the poem's intended audience. At any rate, this tallies with the physical, as opposed to figural, explanation given for the creation of Eve from Adam's rib, which I discussed in Chapter 2.2. The text's focus on the miraculous aspect of this procedure, whereby Adam is not hurt, suggests that the narrative was intended for an audience whose exegetical knowledge is limited.

My discussion of the Cainite genealogy suggests, therefore, that *Genesis A* adapts this biblically derived theme with due consideration to its intended audience. Moreover, the *Genesis A* version of the genealogy links Cain's descendants to their ancestor not only genealogically, but also morally. This is achieved through the militarisation of the genealogy in its opening lines, which I further consider in the rest of this discussion, and by way of recourse to the extra-biblical Lamech tradition, which appears to have enjoyed recognition among biblical exegetes. Recourse to this tradition, moreover, reaffirms the interpretation of Cain's crime as an archetype, this time with reference to his biblical descendants. This point is typically overlooked by commentators. I now turn to Seth's genealogy, which covers lines

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<sup>46</sup> Bede.

<sup>47</sup> Judith N. Garde, *Old English Poetry in Medieval Christian Perspective* (Cambridge: Brewer, 1991), p. 36.

1133b-242a. A discussion of Seth's genealogy in the present context is important because it sheds more light on the significance of the Cainite genealogy in the context of the narrative as a whole.

Seth's genealogy in *Genesis A* is broadly based on Gen 5;<sup>48</sup> however, it also contains extra-biblical elements, as I already indicated. This is attested by Malalehel's (Mahalalel) wealth (Gen A, l. 1176b-77a) and the representation of Geared (Jared) as an *eorl* (chieftain) (Gen A, l. 1182a) who hands out gold to his followers (Gen A, l. 1180b-81).<sup>49</sup> These extra-biblical elements, particularly the distribution of gold, may have been interpreted with reference to the lord-retainer relationship by the intended audience.<sup>50</sup> This notion, after all, occurs in vernacular narratives such as *Beowulf* where, as I indicated in Chapter 1.2.1, Wiglaf berates Beowulf's men for their failure to assist their lord against the dragon in return for the gifts that he handed down to them. Moreover, the Sethite genealogy in *Genesis A* combines language that appeals to the status and duties of a lord with the Sethites' moral status in its representation of Enoch. Enoch is said to raise the earldom (Gen A, l. 1197b), to protect his people (Gen A, l. 1198a) and to preserve authority and rule (Gen A, l. 1199a) in a passage that has no counterpart in the biblical original.<sup>51</sup> Enoch's moral status, and the special favour God accords him, is set out, *inter alia*, in lines 1202b-13, in that this character does not die in the manner that other men do, but rather ascends with the angels in a passage that is based on, but adds detail, to Gen 5.22 and 5.24.<sup>52</sup> This passage therefore associates the representation of a lord rendered with reference to social values known by the audience, with loyalty towards

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<sup>48</sup> See *Genesis A- A New Edition*, pp. 170-81.

<sup>49</sup> See Catherine E. Karkov, 'The Anglo-Saxon Genesis: Text, Illustration and Audience', in *The Old English Hexateuch: Aspects and Approaches*, ed. by Rebecca Barnhouse and Benjamin C. Withers (Kalamazoo: Western Michigan University, 2000), pp. 201-38 (p. 214), for a discussion of imagery of power in the Junius 11 pictures representing the Sethites.

<sup>50</sup> See Thomas D. Hill, 'The "Variegated Obit" as an Historiographic Motif in Old English Poetry and Anglo-Latin Historical Literature', *Traditio*, 44 (1988), 101-24, for a discussion of those aspects of the Sethite genealogy in *Genesis A* reminiscent of the Anglo-Latin literary tradition.

<sup>51</sup> See *Genesis A- A New Edition*, p. 176, where Doane identified the biblical verses adapted in this part of the poem.

<sup>52</sup> *Genesis A*, pp. 176 and 178.

God and God's favour. This means that Enoch is a positive model that contrasts the Cainite Lameh, who replicates the crimes of his ancestor.

I suggest that the Sethite genealogy broadly recalls the representations of the loyal angels, or the angels before their fall, in *Genesis A* and *Genesis B*, which I discussed in Chapter 1.2.<sup>53</sup> Both versions of the angelic rebellion, after all, represent God as a king, whose subjects are the angels. Moreover, *Genesis B* draws on the lord-retainer relationship, in that it sets out that God meets his obligations by the chief angel, who is allowed to rule as the greatest of God's followers, second to God alone. In this context, God's appropriate kingly behaviour establishes that the angel has an obligation to serve God as his king, and that the angel's subsequent rebellion is unjustified. While both angelic rebellion narratives, however, clearly establish that the angels have an obligation to serve God, they do not set out the manner in which they should serve him as their king. At no point is it explicitly stated, for instance, that loyal service entails military obligations, as it does in vernacular narratives such as *Beowulf* or *The Battle of Maldon*. I indicated, earlier on, that Wiglaf berates Beowulf's men for their failure to assist their lord against the dragon in return for his gifts. Moreover, as I indicated in Chapter 1.2.1, the narrator in *The Battle of Maldon* casts Godric's escape from battle as a betrayal of his lord. These vernacular narratives suggest that the analogical language used in the representations of Heaven and the angelic rebellion in the Genesis poems, whereby these narratives appeal to social situations that would have been known by the audience, evoke military obligations. However, these obligations remain latent in the context of the Genesis poems. This is because the God of *Genesis A*, for instance, suppresses the rebellion on his own, with the strength of his grasp (Gen A, l. 61b-64), even though he has a retinue of angels at his disposal, who are described, *inter alia*, as 'engla þreatas' (Gen A, l. 13b) (a troop of angels) and 'þegnas þrymfæste' (Gen A, l. 15a) (retainers firm in glory).

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<sup>53</sup> See also N. McKill, 'Patterns of the Fall: Adam and Eve in the Old English *Genesis A*', *Florilegium*, 14 (1995), 25-41 (p. 38), who argued that the Fall of the Angels establishes an archetypal pattern for the genealogical lists in *Genesis A*.

This narrative, in other words, makes use of language that may have been understood in a social and military sense by the intended audience, and that thereby conveys meaning analogically. However, the loyalty promulgated by this narrative ultimately takes the form of obedience that is only expressed in the most general of terms.

Seth's genealogy is similar in that it mentions Geared's distribution of gold to his followers, yet it does not set out how his followers express their loyalty in return for the gifts they receive. Here again, therefore, loyalty is only concretised in the most general of terms. While it may be argued that this is not significant, in that the text may simply be resorting to extra-biblical elements to embellish the terse biblical genealogy, I contend that this is not the case. It is noteworthy that while, for instance, Geread and Enoch are represented as *eorls* who offer gifts and protection to their followers, the Sethite genealogy, unlike the Cainite genealogy, makes no reference to walled cities or weapons, except perhaps in lines 1169a and 1183a, where Malalehel and Geared are referred to as *frumgar*, which term means chieftain but is literally translatable as first-spear. I contend that the omission of fortified cities and weapons in this genealogy, along with its recourse to lord-retainer loyalty combined with God's favour, suggests that in the context of the composite narrative the Sethites conceptually recall God's loyal angels. They also offer a contrast to the Cainites, who as the moral descendants of Cain may be equated with the Earthly City founded by the rebel angels.

My discussion of the Sethite genealogy in *Genesis A* also suggests that in its appeal to the lord-retainer relationship, a vernacular social convention, which is combined with God's favour, the text invites the audience to associate with and model themselves on the Sethites who, until this point, remain loyal to God. This function of the genealogy is often overlooked by commentators. Moreover, my discussion of this genealogy reaffirms that the Cainites replicate the attitude and stance of their ancestor, and that therefore he is not only their ancestor, but also their moral archetype. The moral connection established between the

Cainites and their ancestor is important because it justifies the extirpation of this line in the Great Flood, which point I discuss in Chapter 5. This theme, however, is also important in the context of *Beowulf*, where Cain is identified as the ancestor and moral archetype for the Grendelkin, which I discuss in the next section.



### 4.3 The Representation of the Cain Tradition in *Beowulf*

My Chapter 2.3 discussion of the Creation in *Beowulf* shows that this biblically derived theme is placed in a non-biblical vernacular context. This is also true of the heroic-elegiac poem's direct references to the biblical figure of Cain. The first of these references forms part of the sequence to which King Hrotgar's *scop*'s Creation song also belongs. The text in question names Grendel for the first time, for the benefit of the poem's audience:

wæs se grimma gæst Grendel hāten,  
mære mearcstapa, sē þe mōras hēold,  
fen ond fæsten; fifelcynnes eard  
wonsæli wer weardode hwīle,  
siþðan him scyppend forscrifen hāfde  
in Cāines cynne— þone cwealm gewreac  
eðe drihten, þæs þe hē Ābel slōg.<sup>54</sup>

(The fierce ghost/guest was called Grendel, notorious boundary walker; he held moors, fens and stronghold, the dwelling place of the monstrous/foolish kind;<sup>55</sup> a miserable man, who dwelt there for a while, since the maker judged him in Cain's kin— he exiled that murderer, the eternal lord, for he slew Abel.)

The second reference to the biblical fratricide occurs in a passage that relates to Grendel's mother, and alludes to her origin:

Grendles mōdor,  
ides āglæcwīf yrmþe gemunde,  
sē þe wætereġesan wunian scolde,

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<sup>54</sup> Lines 102-08 of *Klaeber's Beowulf*, ed. by R. D. Fulk, Robert E. Bjork and John D. Niles, 4<sup>th</sup> Edn. (London: University of Toronto Press, 2008), p.6. Further references to this work will be given parenthetically in the main text and indicated by the abbreviation 'B'. All bracketed translations of *Beowulf*, unless otherwise indicated, are mine.

<sup>55</sup> See Santiago Barreiro, 'El País del que Vienen los Monstruos', *Medievalista*, 27 (2020): <https://doi.org/10.4000/medievalista.2846> (Accessed on 27/04/2021) for a discussion of the meaning of this term.

cealde strēmas, siþðan Cāin wearð

tō ecgbanan āngan brēþer,

fæderenmāge. (B, l. 1258b-63a)

(Grendel's mother, lady, warrior-woman,<sup>56</sup> recalled the misery; the one who had to inhabit water-horror, cold streams, since Cain became his own brother's, his father's kin's, blade bane.)

While these are *Beowulf*'s only direct references to the figure of Cain, I contend that their function in the context of the narrative is far more important than their brevity might suggest. I also argue that *Beowulf* alludes to this biblical figure or his criminal act in other passages, which attest to the archetypal function of the biblically derived theme in the context of the broader narrative. I therefore argue that inasmuch as the Cain of *Genesis A* is archetypal, *inter alia*, in relation to his descendants, the figure of Cain in *Beowulf* informs and explains Grendel and Grendel's mother, as well as the weaknesses that beset the Danes and the other societies represented in the poem.<sup>57</sup> My discussions of the Cain and related Christian themes, as well as their expression in relation to the societies represented in the narrative, are

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<sup>56</sup> The translation of 'ides āglæcwīf' is taken from Christine Alfano, 'The Issue of Feminine Monstrosity: A Reevaluation of Grendel's Mother', *Comitatus: A Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies*, 23.1 (1992), 1-16 (p. 12).

<sup>57</sup> I also make similar arguments, in relation to *Beowulf*, in Joseph St. John, 'The Meaning Behind Beowulf's Beheading of Grendel's Corpse', *Leeds Medieval Studies*, 1 (2021), 49-58 (pp. 54-58).

informed by previous commentators' views.<sup>58</sup> At the same time, I take the discussion forward with respect to the archetypal aspect of the Cain theme in relation to the societies represented in the poem. I also seek to better contextualise *Beowulf*'s themes with reference to the likewise archetypal representation of Cain in *Genesis A*. This point has been underestimated, overlooked even, by previous commentators. I recognise, at the same time, that *Beowulf* differs from *Genesis A* in that it places the Cain narrative in a pre-Christian vernacular context. For this reason, the poem lacks a counterpart to the Sethites prior to their lapse. Rather, the Cain theme in the heroic-elegiac poem is pervasive, as it also impacts the Danes and *Beowulf*'s Geats.

I precede my discussion of the Cain theme in *Beowulf* with two sections that contextualise my discussion. I already explained that *Beowulf* conveys the Cain theme in a direct manner in relation to Grendel and Grendel's mother. Therefore, in section 4.3.1, I explore the narrative analogues to *Beowulf*'s confrontations of these two monsters, which throw light on the representation of Cain's descendants in *Beowulf*. The differences between

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<sup>58</sup> These include, in particular: F. A. Blackburn, 'The Christian Coloring in the *Beowulf*', in *An Anthology of Beowulf Criticism*, ed. by Lewis E. Nicholson (London: University of Notre Dame Press, 1963; repr. 1980), pp. 1-22 (first publ. in *PMLA*, 12(1897), 205-25); James Carney, *Studies in Irish Literature and History* (Dublin: Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, 1955); Dorothy Whitelock, *The Audience of Beowulf*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn. (London: Oxford University Press, 1958); Niilo Peltola, 'Grendel's Descent from Cain Reconsidered', *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen*, 73.1/3 (1972), 284-91; Carroll Y. Rich, 'Unferth and Cain's Envy', *The South-Central Bulletin*, 33.4 (1973), 211-13; Stanley B. Greenfield, 'The Authenticating Voice in *Beowulf*', in *The Beowulf Reader*, ed. by Peter S. Baker (London: Routledge, 2000), pp. 97-110 (p. 99) (first publ. in *Anglo-Saxon England*, 5(1976), 51-62); Ruth Mellinkoff, 'Cain's Monstrous Progeny in *Beowulf*: Part I, Noachic Tradition', *Anglo-Saxon England*, 8(1979), 143-62; Thalia Phillis Feldman, 'Grendel and Cain's Descendants', *Literary Onomastics Studies*, 8 (1981), 71-87; Ruth Mellinkoff, 'Cain's Monstrous Progeny in *Beowulf*: Part II, Post-Diluvian Survival', *Anglo-Saxon England*, 9(1981), 183-97; David Williams, *Cain and Beowulf- A study in Secular Allegory* (London: University of Toronto Press, 1982); James W. Earl, *Thinking about Beowulf* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994); Andy Orchard, *Pride and Prodigies: Studies in the Monsters of the Beowulf-Manuscript* (London: University of Toronto Press, 1995); Richard North, *Heathen Gods in Old English Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997); O'Donoghue; Chris Bishop, 'þyrs, ent, eoten, gigans- Anglo-Saxon Ontologies of Giant', *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen*, 107.3 (2006), 259-70; Alfred Bammesberger, 'Grendel's Ancestry', *Notes and Queries*, 55.3 (2008), 257-60; James Phillips, 'In the Company of Predators: Beowulf and the Monstrous Descendants of Cain', *Angelaki Journal of Theoretical Humanities*, 13.3 (2008), 41-52; Dana M. Oswald, *Monsters, Gender and Sexuality in Medieval English Literature* (Woodbridge: Brewer, 2010); Ben Reinhard, 'Grendel and the Penitentials', *English Studies*, 94.4 (2013), 371-85; Leonard Neidorf, 'Cain, Cam, Jutes, Giants, and the Textual Criticism of *Beowulf*', *Studies in Philology*, 112.4 (2015), 599-632; Benjamin A. Saltzman, 'Secrecy and the Hermeneutic Potential in *Beowulf*', *PMLA*, 133.1 (2018), 36-55; and, Thomas D. Hill, '“On Fæder Bearme”: *Beowulf*, Line 21', *Notes and Queries*, 66.1 (2019), 2-5.

*Beowulf* and its analogues show that even if Grendel and Grendel's mother occupy a spot typically reserved for monstrous characters, they are, in some measure, human. In section 4.3.2 I explore Grendel and Grendel's mother's ambiguous identities, which reaffirm that these two characters are in some respects human. I argue that this facilitates their integration within the Cain tradition. In section 4.3.3 I home in on the representation of the Cain tradition in relation to Grendel and Grendel's mother, while in section 4.3.4 I discuss the archetypal function of the Cain tradition in relation to the societies represented in the poem. While I am not the first commentator to consider the relationship between the Cain theme and the societies in *Beowulf*, I contend that some of these connections have been underestimated, particularly with respect to the fratricide at the heart of the Geatish ruling family.

#### **4.3.1 Narrative Analogues**

*Beowulf* stands alone in the extant Old English literary corpus as a vernacular monster narrative; however, analogues to the poem's central narrative occur in the Old Norse literary tradition. Moreover, critics have argued that the protagonist's confrontations of Grendel and Grendel's mother are either expressions of the Bear's Son Tale, or the folktale known as the Hand and the Child. In this section I explore the similarities and, more importantly, the differences between *Beowulf* and analogous tales. I argue that the narrative at the centre of the heroic-elegiac poem represents Grendel and Grendel's mother as monstrous characters who are at the same time placed within the ambit of human morality, or who are assigned motivations that are characteristically humanlike. In this respect, the only analogous narrative that appears to approximate *Beowulf*, in that one of its monstrous antagonists, Glámr, is also human, is *Grettis Saga Ásmundarsonar*. It is interesting that this narrative is Christianised, in that Glámr becomes a revenant because of his unrepentant death and the abandonment of his

corpse.<sup>59</sup> *Beowulf* is evidently also Christianised, given that it refers, *inter alia*, to the Creation and Cain, as I indicated in Chapter 2.3 and section 4.3. It may be argued, therefore, that there may be a connection between the Christianisation of these narratives and the humanisation of their monsters. While this is a possibility, it is hardly possible to prove such a hypothesis, particularly as no information about *Beowulf*'s models survives. For all that, the representation of the monsters of *Beowulf* in humanlike terms integrates the vernacular narrative within a biblically derived context that sees them as descendants of Cain. For this reason, a discussion of the manner in which *Beowulf* relates to and differs from its analogues is important in the context of my discussion of the expression of the Cain tradition in the poem.

The adduced similarities between *Beowulf* and the Bear's Son Tale were discussed by Friedrich Wilhelm Panzer, R. W. Chambers<sup>60</sup> and, more recently, by Michael Swanton,<sup>61</sup> J. M. Stitt, M. Fjalldal and R. M. Scowcroft. R. D. Fulk, E. Bjork and John D. Niles also discussed the matter in their introduction to the fourth edition of *Klaeber's Beowulf*. Likewise, the discussion of the Hand and the Child has a long history in relation to *Beowulf* studies, as attested by Carl Wilhelm von Sydow's and Heinz Dehmer's work in the 1920s.<sup>62</sup> This motif, along with adduced Irish influence on *Beowulf* more generally, received renewed critical attention, notably in Martin Puhvel's work.<sup>63</sup> John F. Vickrey's discussion of the Bear's Son Tale and the Hand and the Child focuses on what he identifies as minor episodes

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<sup>59</sup> *Grettir's Saga*, ed. by Sveinbjorn Thordarsson, trans. by William Morris and Eiríkr Magnússon (1900), in *Icelandic Saga Database*, [https://www.sagadb.org/files/pdf/grettis\\_saga.en.pdf](https://www.sagadb.org/files/pdf/grettis_saga.en.pdf) [accessed 19 June 2019], pp. 48-49.

<sup>60</sup> See R. W. Chambers, *Beowulf: An Introduction to the Study of the Poem with a Discussion of the Stories of Offa and Finn* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1921), pp. 62-68 and 369-81.

<sup>61</sup> See Michael Swanton, 'Introduction', in *Beowulf: Text and Facing Translation* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1978; Repr. 1997), pp. 1-31 (pp. 9-12).

<sup>62</sup> Theodore M. Andersson, 'Sources and Analogues', in *A Beowulf Handbook*, ed. by Robert E. Bjork and John D. Niles (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1998), pp. 125-48 (p. 135).

<sup>63</sup> Andersson, pp. 136-37.

as opposed to the main narrative,<sup>64</sup> while Michael Fox gives an overview of relevant critical views in the context of his discussion of *Beowulf*'s formulaic elements.<sup>65</sup>

As I already indicated, Panzer explored the relationship between *Beowulf* and the Bear's Son Tale, of which he identified some 200 versions.<sup>66</sup> Most of these versions have since been classified under Aarne-Thompson tale-type 301,<sup>67</sup> which is known as the three kidnapped princesses.<sup>68</sup> The remaining tales pertain to tale-type 650A, the Strong John category.<sup>69</sup> However, the connection between *Beowulf* and the Bear's Son Tale was subsequently challenged by Chambers and von Sydow in view of the absence of the princesses in the heroic-elegiac poem<sup>70</sup> and other elements in the *Beowulf* narrative that do not originate with the tale, such as the tearing off of Grendel's arm or Grendel's mother's revenge.<sup>71</sup> Moreover, Fjalldal questions Panzer's methodology; particularly his use of comparatively modern versions of the Bear's Son Tale.<sup>72</sup> J. M. Stitt's 1992 study focuses on the Scandinavian versions of this tale, which versions fall under tale-type 301. In these versions the hero sticks the monster's beard under a log to extract a confession on the whereabouts of three kidnapped princesses. However, the creature breaks free, leaving its beard and a bloody trail behind. The hero then follows the bloody trail to the monster's lair, where he finds or is shown a huge sword, which he is able to wield only upon drinking a strengthening liquid. The hero then kills the injured monster; however, he is abandoned by the men who follow him to the lair. In some versions of the tale the men leave on account of

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<sup>64</sup> John F. Vickrey, *Beowulf and the Illusion of History* (Bethlehem: Lehigh University Press, 2009), p. 17.

<sup>65</sup> Michael Fox, *Following the Formula in Beowulf, Örvar-Odds Saga, and Tolkien* (Cham: Palgrave MacMillan, 2020), pp. 26-35.

<sup>66</sup> T. A. Shippey and Andreas Haarder, *Beowulf: The Critical Heritage* (London: Routledge, 1998; repr. 2000), p. 523.

<sup>67</sup> Fulk, Bjork and Niles, 'Introduction', in *Klaeber's Beowulf*, p. xxxvii.

<sup>68</sup> Fox, p. 31.

<sup>69</sup> Fulk, Bjork and Niles, 'Introduction', p. xxxvii.

<sup>70</sup> Magnús Fjalldal, *The Long Arm of Coincidence: The Frustrated Connection between Beowulf and Grettis Saga* (London: University of Toronto Press, 1998), p. 92.

<sup>71</sup> Fjalldal, p. 94.

<sup>72</sup> Fjalldal, p. 93.

the length of time the hero spends there.<sup>73</sup> In the Hand and the Child, which is expressed in the Irish Finn cycle,<sup>74</sup> a monstrous arm reaches into a house to grab and carry off someone, usually a child. When the hero arrives on the scene he wrenches off the giant's arm, whereupon the monster flees. In some versions of the tale the hero follows the giant's bloody trail to his lair, where he encounters the giant's mother, a hag, on an island. In the Niall West Irish version the hero is also in possession of a sword of light.<sup>75</sup> Moreover, in traditional Irish monster narratives the female monster typically offers the hero more of a challenge than the male antagonist or antagonists that precede her.<sup>76</sup>

Beowulf's confrontations of Grendel and Grendel's mother are substantially similar to these folk narratives, given that the three narratives are made up of a two-part sequence. Moreover, *Beowulf* and the Hand and the Child share the first monster's loss of his arm, the mother-son relation between the two monsters, the watery location of their refuge, and a magical, or at any rate, unusual sword. Moreover, as I observe in section 4.3.2, Grendel's mother proves a stronger adversary than her son. At the same time, the Scandinavian version of the Bear's Son Tale and the first monster fight in *Beowulf* share the motif of a sword that requires considerable strength to wield (B, l. 1557-62). Moreover, the Danes who accompany Beowulf and his men to Grendel's mother's *mere*<sup>77</sup> leave upon sighting blood in the water, which they mistake for Beowulf's (B, l. 1591-602a). This may well be said to reflect the abandonment of the hero in the folk narrative. This interpretation was however challenged by Puhvel, who argues that in *Beowulf* there is no sign of betrayal on the part of the Danes who

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<sup>73</sup> Fulk, Bjork and Niles, 'Introduction', p. xxxviii.

<sup>74</sup> Fulk, Bjork and Niles, pp. xxiii-cxc (p. xxxvii).

<sup>75</sup> Fulk, Bjork and Niles, p. xxxvii.

<sup>76</sup> Martin Puhvel, *Beowulf and the Celtic Tradition* (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1979), pp. 18-19 and 21.

<sup>77</sup> In this thesis I refer to Grendel's mother's abode using the Old English term in recognition of the lack of critical consensus over the precise nature of the location described by this term. See Roberta Frank, 'Mere and Sund: Two Sea-Changes in *Beowulf*', in *Modes of Interpretation in Old English Literature: Essays in Honour of Stanley B. Greenfield* (London: University of Toronto Press, 1986), pp. 153-72 (pp. 154-58) for a discussion of this term.

leave the scene.<sup>78</sup> My discussion of the similarities between *Beowulf* and the folktales therefore points towards a closer connection with the Hand and the Child, of which *Beowulf* may be an early expression. However, it is not to be excluded that there may also be some connection with the Bear's Son Tale. What counts for the purposes of the present discussion, however, is that the evidence available suggests that Beowulf's confrontation of the first two monsters is a traditional motif and that Grendel and Grendel's mother occupy a slot in the narrative that pertains to non-human or monstrous characters.

The traditional context I discussed so far makes the differences between *Beowulf* and the tales all the more interesting. This is because these differences point to the manner in which *Beowulf* may have adapted its traditional source material. While this cannot be asserted conclusively, given that as I indicated earlier the models for *Beowulf* have not survived, I argue that these differences enable, or facilitate, the integration of the Cain theme into the narrative. Unlike the folktales, *Beowulf* has Grendel's mother, the second monster, attack the Danish hall to avenge the death of her son.<sup>79</sup> This episode is also absent in adduced literary analogues, such as the well-known<sup>80</sup> confrontation of the *draugr* Glámr and the Sandhaugar episode in the Norse *Grettis Saga Ásmundarsonar*,<sup>81</sup> in Viðga's confrontation of Eðgeirr in *Piðreks saga af Bern*,<sup>82</sup> as well as in *Óláfs saga Helga*<sup>83</sup> and *Hrólfs saga Gautrekssonar*.<sup>84</sup> The avenging mother theme is important because it assigns humanlike motivations to the second monster, particularly where disputes in *Beowulf*'s digressions are also settled

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<sup>78</sup> Martin Puhvel, *Cause and Effect in Beowulf: Motivation and Driving Forces behind Words and Deeds* (Oxford: University Press of America, 2005), p. 57.

<sup>79</sup> Fulk, Bjork and Niles, 'Introduction', p. xli.

<sup>80</sup> Christopher Abram, 'Bee-Wolf and the Head of Victory: Identifying the Heroes of *Beowulf* and *Völsunga Saga*', *Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, 116.4 (2017), 387-414 (p. 407).

<sup>81</sup> R. M. Scowcroft, 'The Irish Analogues to *Beowulf*', *Speculum*, 74(1999), 22-64 (p. 29).

<sup>82</sup> See Jacob Hobson, 'An Old Norse Courtly Analogue to *Beowulf*', *Neophilologus*, 103.4 (2019), 577-90.

<sup>83</sup> See Magnús Fjalldal, 'An Unnoticed *Beowulf* Analogue in *Heimskringla*', *Notes and Queries*, 60.3 (2013), 341-43.

<sup>84</sup> See Tom Grant, '*Hrólfs saga Gautrekssonar* and the Originality of *Beowulf*', *The Review of English Studies*, (2021), 1-19.



violently.<sup>85</sup> Moreover, *Beowulf* differs from its analogues in that it sets out that Grendel refuses to pay wergild, i.e. monetary compensation for the men he kills.<sup>86</sup> Even where this may be interpreted to identify Grendel as a predator rather than humanlike,<sup>87</sup> I contend that, rather, mention of wergild is indicative of the expectation of compensation, howsoever unlikely or improbable its fulfilment may be. This confers on Grendel the status of a human antagonist, particularly as the audience would have known that wergild is a legal concept. This concept is promulgated, *inter alia*, in King Edmund's law code, where failure to pay compensation within a year exposes the offender to sanctioned vengeance.<sup>88</sup> Grendel's actions may therefore have been perceived by the audience as crimes in a juridical sense.<sup>89</sup> This means that *Beowulf* assigns legal responsibility to the monstrous Grendel, which may be said to translate into moral responsibility.

Irrespective of whether the humanlike representation of the monsters in *Beowulf* is an innovation introduced by the Christianised narrative or not, it fits into a Christianised context that sees the monsters as descendants of Cain. The monsters, after all, are responsible for, and therefore guilty, of their heinous acts, like their biblical ancestor. In this sense they belong with Cain not only genealogically, but also morally. While Grendel and Grendel's mother's ambiguous or liminal identity, in that they are simultaneously human and monstrous, or other, suits the Christianised narrative, its origin may also be traced back to a medieval conception

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<sup>85</sup> Katherine O'Brien O'Keefe, 'Values and Ethics in Heroic Literature', in *The Cambridge Companion to Old English Literature*, ed. by Malcolm Godden and Michael Lapidge (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), pp. 101-19 (p. 106).

<sup>86</sup> See Paul Hyams, 'Concluding Thoughts from England and the "Western Legal Tradition"', in *Wergild, Compensation and Penance: The Monetary Logic of Early Medieval Conflict Resolution* (Leiden: Brill, 2021), pp. 293-322.

<sup>87</sup> Ward Parks, 'How Heroes Perceive Monsters in *Beowulf*', *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, 92.1 (1993), 1-16 (p. 7).

<sup>88</sup> John D. Niles, 'The Myth of the Feud in Anglo-Saxon England', *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, 114.2 (2015), 163-200 (pp. 175-76).

<sup>89</sup> See David D. Day, 'Hands across the Hall: The Legalities of Beowulf's Fight with Grendel', *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, 98.3 (1999), 313-24 (p. 318) for a discussion of the rights King Hrothgar transfers unto Beowulf when he entrusts him with protection of the hall from Grendel.

of race that does not correspond to contemporary notions, which are more fixed.<sup>90</sup> I explore this aspect of the narrative, and its implications, in section 4.3.2, where I suggest that *Beowulf*'s representations of Grendel and Grendel's mother appear to be informed by a conception of the monstrous that may also have informed Augustine's *City of God* and another text in the Beowulf Manuscript, namely *The Wonders of the East*.

### 4.3.2 Grendel and Grendel's Mother's Ambiguous Identities

The descriptions of Grendel and Grendel's mother I discuss in this section indicate that these two characters do not necessarily correspond to what is typically considered human in a modern or contemporary sense. This is, quite possibly, more true of Grendel, in that some elements of his description suggest that he belongs to a monstrous race, or that he is a supernatural being. I argue, however, that this need not have prevented early medieval audiences from thinking of Grendel as a human being, mainly on account of the ambiguity that inheres to his description. This ambiguity is a reflection of an early medieval conception of race that does not correspond to modern, or Linnean, scientific classification, which is more or less fixed. The ambiguous identity of the Grendelkin is important in the context of the present discussion because it allows for reconciliation with their origin in Cain, who is human. Moreover, the more flexible early medieval conception of race accommodates the Cainite origin of the creatures mentioned in the following passage, which origin is implied by the context of the text, which follows the narrative's first mention of the biblical fratricide:

þanon untȳdras ealle onwōcon,  
eotenas ond ylfe ond orcneas,  
swylċe ġi(ga)ntas, þa wið Gode wunnon  
lange þrāge: hē him ðaes lēan forgeald. (B, l. 111-14).

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<sup>90</sup> Asa Simon Mittman, 'Are the *Monstrous Races* Races?', *Postmedieval: A Journal of Medieval Cultural Studies*, 6 (2015), 36-51 (p.44).

(Thence sprung all misbegotten beings, giants, elves and ogres, as well as the giants who maliciously contended with God for a long while: he gave them recompense for that.)

I now briefly consider the manner in which the ambiguous representation of the Grendelkin and *Beowulf*'s appeal to the tradition whereby monstrous creatures originate with Cain, relates to broader medieval thinking of what it is to be human. I then move on to a more detailed discussion of *Beowulf* passages that describe Grendel and Grendel's mother in order to establish the manner in which the text represents their identity in ambiguous, or liminal, terms.

The conception of race in *The Wonders of the East*, or to be more specific its understanding of what it is to be human, is rather broad. The term *men*, after all, describes creatures with a white body, two faces on a single head, red feet and knees, and that reach a height of fifteen feet.<sup>91</sup> More to the point, in his *City of God* Augustine contemplated the existence and status of similarly otherworldly creatures. Even where he argued that accounts of such creatures are not necessarily believable, he affirmed that whoever is born human, i.e. rational and mortal, is a descendant of Adam no matter how peculiar his or her physical appearance may be.<sup>92</sup> Therefore, the assignation of humanlike traits to a monstrous character like Grendel, or the Cainite origin of monstrous creatures, need not be considered surprising, as these representations are in line, or consistent, with notions of humanity in medieval and patristic texts. Moreover, the notion that monstrous creatures originate with Cain is also to be found in Isidore of Seville's *Etymologiae* and the Irish *Sex Aetates Mundi*,<sup>93</sup> which suggests that *Beowulf* draws on an established patristic tradition.

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<sup>91</sup> 'The Wonders of the East', in *The Beowulf Manuscript*, ed. and trans. by R.D. Fulk (London: Harvard University Press, 2010), pp. 15-32 (p. 20).

<sup>92</sup> Book XVI, Chapter 8 of Augustine, *The City of God against the Pagans*, p. 705.

<sup>93</sup> Carney, p. 106.

In the course of the narrative Grendel is described by the narrator and, later, by the protagonist. The narrator's physical description of the poem's first monster is terse, in that it is limited to:

- a) his eyes, which emanate an ugly light (B, l. 726b-27);
- b) his gigantic size, given that, *inter alia*, his severed head has to be carried by four men (B, l. 1637b-39); and,
- c) his severed hand<sup>94</sup> with a steel-like tip at the end of each nail (B, l. 983b-87b).

The description of Grendel's eyes, which marks his otherness, has been variously attributed to the monstrous islanders in the *Liber monstrorum*<sup>95</sup> and the creatures in Wisdom 11.18-19, whose eyes emit horrible sparks.<sup>96</sup> The origin of Grendel's gigantism, which likewise suggests that this character does not fall within the human norm, has been attributed to the apocryphal I Enoch, which is also known as the Ethiopic Book of Enoch on account of its transmission in Ethiopic translation.<sup>97</sup> Ruth Mellinkoff argues, in this regard, that 'later writings in I Enoch present a less consistent view of the giants, where giants and spirits are not carefully distinguished'.<sup>98</sup> I observe, in the course of this section, that this is also true of Grendel, whose representation not only straddles the boundaries of what is human and what is not, howsoever malleable these may have been in an early medieval context, but also call into question precisely what kind of otherworldly creature he is.<sup>99</sup> This does not necessarily suggest, however, that the representation of Grendel originates with this apocryphal text, for the narrative's refusal to pin down this character's identity may be attributed to the aforementioned flexible conception of race. The third description of Grendel I mention above

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<sup>94</sup> For a discussion of the display of Grendel's severed hand (and arm) at Heorot, which goes beyond the scope of the present discussion, see Rolf H. Bremner, 'Grendel's Arm and the Law', in *Studies in English Language and Literature: Doubt Wisely*, ed. by M.J. Toswell and E.M. Taylor (Abingdon: Routledge, 1996), pp. 121-32.

<sup>95</sup> See Orchard, *Pride and Prodigies: Studies in the Monsters of the Beowulf-Manuscript*, p. 111.

<sup>96</sup> Daniel Anlezark, 'Grendel and the Book of Wisdom', *Notes and Queries*, 53.3 (2006), 262-69 (p. 263).

<sup>97</sup> Joseph B. Lumpkin, 'Introduction', in *The Books of Enoch*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., ed. by Carol Plum Ucci (Blountsville: Fifth Estate Publishers, 2011), pp. 7-24 (p. 11).

<sup>98</sup> Mellinkoff, 'Cain's Monstrous Progeny in *Beowulf*: Part I, Noachic Tradition', p. 150.

<sup>99</sup> See also R. E. Kaske, 'Beowulf and the Book of Enoch', *Speculum*, 46.3 (1971), 421-31 (pp. 424-25).

is the most interesting from the viewpoint of the present discussion. This is because the monster's hand is humanlike in that it has 'fingras' (B, l. 984a) (fingers) and 'nægla' (B, l. 985a) (nails), even if 'steda nægla gehwylc stýle gēlicost (B, l. 984b-85) (The tip of each nail was like steel). The description of the hand, in other words, simultaneously points to Grendel's humanlike and monstrous characteristics. The severed limb also explains Grendel's imperviousness to edged weapons, for all those who see it claim that no iron would have shed that war-hand's blood (B, l. 987b-90). The motif of Grendel's imperviousness to edged weapons is first conveyed in lines 791-805a, as Beowulf's men's efforts to injure the creature prove futile. The narrator's descriptions of Grendel therefore point to his humanity and otherness, while in lines 987b-90 the text provides a physical explanation for Grendel's imperviousness to edged weapons.

Beowulf describes Grendel on his return to Geatland for the benefit of King Hygelac and his queen. This account comprises detail left unmentioned by the narrator earlier in the narrative, namely Grendel's dragon-skin 'Glōf' (B, l. 2085b) (glove),<sup>100</sup> which is described as the Devil's craft (B, l. 2085b-88).<sup>101</sup> The protagonist also states that Grendel tried to put him in this *glōf* (B, l. 2089-90), which may be understood to denote the creature's 'swollen bag of a belly'.<sup>102</sup> Hence, Grendel's mouth is represented, as it were, as 'the gaping mouth of the glove, and his belly the body into which he greedily stuffs his victims with his own hands'.<sup>103</sup> Here again, while the focus is clearly on Grendel's otherness, the glove may also be understood to suggest that the creature is anthropomorphic. Moreover, throughout the text Grendel is alternately described as an 'ellengæst' (B, l. 86a) (powerful ghost/spirit, or possibly guest if the vowel in *gæst* is short), a 'grimma gæst' (B, l. 102a) (fierce ghost/spirit

<sup>100</sup> See Andrew M. Pfrenger, 'Grendel's *Glof*: Beowulf Line 2085 Reconsidered', *Philological Quarterly*, 87.3/4 (2008), 209-35 (pp. 209-19), for a discussion of early critical views and adduced analogues for this term.

<sup>101</sup> See Eric Weiskott, 'On Emending Beowulf 2088a', *ANQ: A Quarterly Journal of Short Articles, Notes and Reviews*, 34.1 (2021), 9-10, who argues that the term *deofles* (devil's) in the manuscript should be retained.

<sup>102</sup> Pfrenger, p. 222.

<sup>103</sup> Pfrenger, p. 222.

or guest), a ‘dēapscua’ (B, l. 160a) (shadow of death) and an ‘eoten’<sup>104</sup> (B, l. 761a) (giant/ogre/monster). The term *deapscua* recalls the Latin *umbra mortis*, which is associated with the Devil.<sup>105</sup> Moreover, Dorothy Whitelock<sup>106</sup> and Leonard Neidorf argue that Grendel resembles the demons that attack St Guthlac’s hermitage in Felix’s *Vita S. Guthlaci*, dateable to between 730 and 740;<sup>107</sup> while Lars Malmberg observes that the phrases ‘fēond mancynnes’ (B, l. 164b) (enemy of mankind) and ‘Godes andsaca’ (B, l. 1682b) (God’s enemy) identify Grendel with the Devil.<sup>108</sup> Descriptions of Grendel (and his mother) as alien guests, however, may be understood to suggest that the two creatures represent troublesome people living at society’s borders.<sup>109</sup> On similar lines, Fabienne Michelet, Alfred K. Sievers and Catherine E. Karkov argue that Grendel and Grendel’s mother recall representations of the Britons in texts like Bede’s *Historia Ecclesiastica Gentis Anglorum* or Felix’s aforementioned *Vita S. Guthlaci*.<sup>110</sup> These critical interpretations of the text point towards and affirm the ambiguity that inheres to the description of Grendel, in that they demonstrate that the text allows for his interpretation as both human and monstrous, or supernatural. At the same time, the categorisation of Grendel as demon, giant or any other type of monster may well be a secondary consideration, as ‘mythical or supernatural beings defy ordinary taxonomy’.<sup>111</sup> What counts, rather, is that Grendel’s monstrous traits identify him as God’s antagonist. Therefore, as for the ambiguity in the representation of Grendel as simultaneously human and monstrous, this character’s undetermined monstrosity fits in well with the Cain

<sup>104</sup> See William Helder, *How the Beowulf Poet Employs Biblical Typology* (Lampeter: Mellen Press, 2014), p. 168, for a discussion of Grendel’s anthropophagy in *Beowulf* that also takes into consideration the representations of *eoten* in vernacular sources, and Edward B. Irving, ‘The Nature of Christianity in *Beowulf*’, *Anglo-Saxon England*, 13 (1984), 7-21 (p. 11), for a discussion of troll folklore in relation to *Beowulf*.

<sup>105</sup> Joyce M. Hill, ‘Figures of Evil in Old English Poetry’, *Leeds Studies in English*, 8 (1975), 5-19 (p. 10).

<sup>106</sup> Whitelock, pp. 80-81.

<sup>107</sup> Leonard Neidorf, ‘*Beowulf* as Pre-National Epic: Ethnocentrism in the Poem and its Criticism’, *ELH*, 85.4 (2018), 847-75 (pp. 865-67).

<sup>108</sup> Lars Malmberg, ‘Grendel and the Devil’, *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen*, 78.3 (1977), 241-43 (p. 241).

<sup>109</sup> Catalin Taranu, ‘Men into Monsters: Troubling Race, Ethnicity, and Masculinity in *Beowulf*’, in *Dating Beowulf*, ed. by Daniel C. Remein and Erica Weaver (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2020), pp. 189-209 (pp. 195-96).

<sup>110</sup> See Catherine E. Karkov, *Imagining Anglo-Saxon England: Utopia, Heterotopia, Dystopia* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2020), p. 170.

<sup>111</sup> George Clark, ‘*Beowulf* as a Philosophical Poem’, *Florilegium*, 25 (2008), 1-27 (p. 8).

tradition as expressed in the poem. Grendel's representation as simultaneously monstrous and human, where the latter may be said to highlight his moral depravity, as attested by his refusal to pay wergild which I discussed in section 4.3.1, reconciles the vernacular narrative with the creature's origin in Cain. At the same time, his undetermined monstrosity is explicable in terms of the patristic tradition that all monstrous creatures originate with Cain. Moreover, the identification of Grendel with the Devil makes his confrontation with Beowulf part of a cosmic struggle between good and evil, which is also explicable in terms of the Christianisation of the vernacular narrative.

I now discuss the representation of Grendel's mother, whose ambiguity mainly relates to gender. While the monstrous mother is repeatedly identified as a woman, as attested by the epithets 'wīf' (B, l. 2120b) (woman),<sup>112</sup> 'mōdor' (B, l. 1276b) (mother), 'māgan' (B, l. 1391a) (kin)<sup>113</sup> and 'ides, āglæcwīf' (B, l. 1259) (lady, warrior-woman),<sup>114</sup> King Hrothgar describes her as a 'sinnigne secg' (B, l. 1379a) (sinful man). Renée Rebecca Trilling also indicated that this character is masculinised in lines 1260 and 1392b-94b.<sup>115</sup> Moreover, the monstrous mother, who is also referred to as a wolf in lines 1506a and 1599a,<sup>116</sup> poses more of a serious challenge to Beowulf than her son, so much so that the protagonist would not have prevailed against her had it not been for his hauberk and God's assistance (B, l. 1550-55). While this may point to the influence of Irish monster tales, which I mentioned in section 4.3.1, it reaffirms Grendel's mother's transgression of gender boundaries. Grendel's mother is evidently also anthropomorphic, in that after her surprise attack on Heorot, King Hrothgar claims that his men had seen a woman-like figure wandering at night with Grendel (B, l.

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<sup>112</sup> M. Wendy Hannequin, 'We've created a Monster: The Strange Case of Grendel's Mother', *English Studies*, 89.5 (2008), 503-23 (p. 505).

<sup>113</sup> Jane C. Nitzsche, 'The Structural Unity of *Beowulf*: The Problem of Grendel's Mother', *Details: Texas Studies in Literature and Language*, 22.3 (1980), 287-303 (p. 288).

<sup>114</sup> Translation by Christine Alfano, 'The Issue of Feminine Monstrosity: A Reevaluation of Grendel's Mother', *Comitatus: A Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies*, 23.1 (1992), 1-16 (p. 12).

<sup>115</sup> Renée Rebecca Trilling, 'Beyond Abjection: The Problem with Grendel's Mother Again', *Parergon*, 24.1 (2007), 1-20 (pp. 14-15).

<sup>116</sup> See Francis Leneghan, 'Beowulf and the Hunt', *Humanities*, 11.36 (2022), 1-22 (pp. 4-10) for a discussion of lupine imagery in *Beowulf*.

1349b-51a). Moreover, in the course of her confrontation of Beowulf at the *mere* she is said to sit astride the protagonist as she tries to stab him (B, l. 1545-46a). At the same time these episodes attest to Grendel's mother's otherness. This is also the case for her attack on King Hrothgar's hall, when she abducts the king's retainer Æschere (B, l. 1296-99a), whom she subsequently beheads, as Beowulf and his men discover when they spot his severed head on their way to her refuge (B, l. 1420b-21). The killing and beheading of Æschere, which are motivated by revenge, are atypical of the other female characters of *Beowulf*<sup>117</sup> or the male-centred notion of revenge in *Maxims I*.<sup>118</sup>

The representation of Grendel's mother therefore suggests that while she is human, she is also representative of otherness like her son. In the sequence of the narrative she therefore complements the representation of her son Grendel, whose monstrosity is more overtly described in physical terms. This means that the representation of the narrative's second monster also fits into a Christianised context that sees her and Grendel represented as descendants of Cain.

#### **4.3.3 Cain as Archetype: A Biblical and Christian Explanation for the Existence of the Grendelkin**

In this section I focus on *Beowulf*'s expression of the Cain theme, in order to discuss its biblical and exegetical sources, and to determine how it functions in relation to Grendel and Grendel's mother. Therefore, I also discuss Cain's archetypal role in relation to the two monsters. Before I delve into the detail of the Cain theme and its archetypal function, however, I give an overview of critical views in relation to Grendel's (and Grendel's mother's) Cainite origin. I also discuss the exegetical conception of history and other Christian elements that inform *Beowulf*, which directly relate to the narrative's representation of the Cain theme as an archetype in relation to Grendel and his mother.

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<sup>117</sup> Hannequin, pp. 505-06.

<sup>118</sup> Nietzsche, p. 288.



Grendel's descent from Cain attracted critical attention early on in *Beowulf* scholarship, and early commentators discussed the possible influence of apocryphal texts, notably the Book of Enoch and the Book of Jubilees.<sup>119</sup> Grendel's origin has also been discussed by R. E. Kaske, Stephen Bandy and Mellinkoff, who wrote between 1971 and 1981,<sup>120</sup> as well as by Dana M. Oswald in 2010. Moreover, James Carney, Andy Orchard and Neidorf explored the exegetical aspects of *Beowulf*'s direct references to Cain and his descendants in 1955, 1995 and 2015 respectively. These scholars have had to reckon with the problem that, strictly speaking, Cain's descendants are not supposed to have survived the Great Flood. Neidorf, like Philip Pulsiano before him, argues that *Beowulf* not only alludes to Cain, but also to the tradition that sees Cam (Ham), the evil son of Noah, as Cain's counterpart after the Great Flood. My discussion of this exegetical notion, which may be traced back, *inter alia*, to Augustine and Alcuin, is framed with reference to Neidorf's and Orchard's work. This is because these commentators cogently explain Grendel's existence in *Beowulf*'s postdiluvian context. Discussion of the allusion to the Ham tradition in *Beowulf* is important even where I also explore an alternative explanation for Grendel and Grendel's mother's continued existence, namely their aquatic refuge. This explanation, after all, does not rule out the relevance of the Ham tradition to the narrative. In my discussion of the Cain theme in the heroic-elegiac poem I also give due consideration to Mellinkoff's work and her idea that the Cain theme legitimises the monster narrative for the benefit of a Christian audience. Mellinkoff also sought an exegetical explanation for the absence of Grendel's father, an idea that I take into account, but that I do not support. Another meaningful contribution in relation to the expression of the Cain theme in *Beowulf* is Carney's discussion of the biblical villain's monstrous progeny. Carney compared these creatures in the heroic-elegiac poem with the rendition of similar beings in the Irish *Sex Aetates Mundi* and Isidore

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<sup>119</sup> See Peltola, who gives an overview, *inter alia*, of the views expressed by S. J. Crawford, O. F. Emerson and Friedrich Klaeber, who wrote between 1906 and 1929.

<sup>120</sup> See Alvin A. Lee, 'Symbolism and Allegory', in *A Beowulf Handbook*, pp. 233-54 (p. 250).

of Seville's *Etymologiae*. I consider that Carney's discussion places *Beowulf* within the appropriate exegetical context, even where I argue against some of the nuances of his argument. Before I consider the Cain theme more in depth, however, I discuss *Beowulf*'s exegetical conception of history, which explains recourse to biblical and related themes in the vernacular narrative.

It is ironic that an explanation for the existence of a poem like *Beowulf* may be sought in Alcuin's *Ars Grammatica*, where the liberal arts are conceived as a step towards the attainment of the ultimate educational goal, an understanding of Holy Scripture.<sup>121</sup> The irony stems from Alcuin's oft-cited complaint in Epistle 183.22, where he rhetorically asked what has the pagan Ingeld to do with Christ.<sup>122</sup> Yet, Alcuin's rhetorical question directed against non-Christian lays may have been intended specifically for their recitation by and for men of the cloth.<sup>123</sup> It is therefore questionable whether Alcuin would have disapproved of the recitation of a poem like *Beowulf* to a lay audience. This is because *Beowulf* integrates biblical themes into a vernacular context. The heroic-elegiac poem may therefore be seen as an expression of Alcuin's didactic view of the liberal arts, as it historicises biblical myth by placing it in a context that would have been familiar to its audience. The protagonist's exploits, after all, take place in the Scylding dynastic context, which is likely to have been familiar to early medieval English audiences. This is shown by the correspondence between *Beowulf*'s Scyld Scefing and the names Scef, Scyld and Scyldwa, which occur in English royal genealogies.<sup>124</sup> In other words, historicisation of biblical myth in the poem would have made such myth part and parcel of the audience's shared historical experience; or, to be more precise, of those shared vernacular narratives that would have been perceived as historical.

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<sup>121</sup> W.F. Bolton, *Alcuin and Beowulf* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1978), p. 23.

<sup>122</sup> Bolton, p. 52.

<sup>123</sup> Paul G. Remley, *Old English Biblical Verse* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 61-62.

<sup>124</sup> North, p. 183.

Moreover, the concept of historicisation is respectful of the original biblical context,<sup>125</sup> in that the Cain narrative in the Book of Genesis not set in a mythical world, but on Earth.

Therefore, the world of *Beowulf* fills a gap between biblical myth and vernacular historical or pseudo-historical experience.<sup>126</sup>

The integration of Christian themes in the vernacular narrative, however, is not limited to the direct references to the Book of Genesis. This is attested, *inter alia*, by Beowulf's description of Grendel to King Hygelac and his queen, which I mentioned in section 4.3.2, where the protagonist makes reference to the Devil's craft. Moreover, in lines 977b-79 Beowulf states that Grendel is stained with crime and that he must therefore await God's judgement. Rather less surprisingly, Christian concepts are also voiced by the narrator. Beowulf's superior strength prompts Grendel to seek the company of devils (B, l. 756a), while a few lines later the monster is identified as God's enemy (B, l. 785b) and Hell's captive (B, l. 788a). Moreover, Hell receives Grendel's heathen soul (B, l. 852). F.A. Blackburn discussed allusions to Christian doctrine in the poem and cited some of the abovementioned lines as instances of these allusions.<sup>127</sup> He concluded, however, that the relevant passages 'lack the clearness that one would wish in deciding how far Christian influence has shaped them'.<sup>128</sup> It is however probable that this is the case only because these references would have been deemed clear enough for an intended audience that would also have recognised the overt Genesis derived themes. As Whitelock argues, *Beowulf's* audience would have been familiar with Christian concepts such as the Last Judgement, and acquainted with Christian poetry.<sup>129</sup> Therefore, the references cited above would not have required elucidation, in that they would have appealed to the audience's Christian knowledge. At the

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<sup>125</sup> Earl, *Thinking about Beowulf*, p. 42.

<sup>126</sup> Earl, p. 46.

<sup>127</sup> See Blackburn, and Hill "'On Fæder Bearme": *Beowulf*, Line 21', who makes reference, *inter alia*, to Klaeber's discussion of these idioms.

<sup>128</sup> Blackburn, pp. 4-5.

<sup>129</sup> Whitelock, p. 8.

same time, allusion to Christian concepts in a vernacular context bridges Christianity and the audience's historical or pseudo-historical experiences, and it thereby complements the historicisation of the Cain myth I discussed earlier.

However, allusions to Christian concepts and recourse to Genesis myth also fulfil another function. As I observed in Chapter 2.3 *Beowulf's* Creation sequence draws a distinction between the poem's characters and the audience. The characters do not glean the meaning behind the Creation, even if the song paraphrased by the narrator is sung by Hrothgar's *scop*. Similarly, Beowulf's reference to judgement or other concepts bearing Christian significance do not denote that he comprehends them in a Christian sense. If anything, these concepts only indicate that God was present, and in some manner known, in the pre-Christian past. In the last instance, the poem's references to Hell and God's judgement are only given a clearly and incontrovertibly Christian significance by the narrator, who establishes that Grendel and his mother are related to Cain. The fact that the Cain theme is only conveyed by the narrator strongly suggests that neither Beowulf nor the other characters are aware of the true identity of the two monsters. In this context the narrator is the voice that validates the events reported by the text, pointing to the manner in which the audience should interpret them.<sup>130</sup> In this vein the narrator explains, in the context of the aforementioned Creation sequence, Grendel's existence and his status in the eyes of God with reference to Cain in lines 102-08, which I cited in section 4.3. This passage sets out that God judges Grendel as a kinsman of Cain, who is exiled for his killing of Abel. The text is therefore built on the premise in Gen 4.8 that Cain draws his brother to a remote place to kill him, following which he is exiled. Grendel may likewise be considered an exile, for he dwells in the wilderness. Moreover, the monster kills at night and therefore treacherously, like the

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<sup>130</sup> Greenfield, p. 99.

biblical fratricide.<sup>131</sup> The second reference to Cain, which I also cited in section 4.3, relates to Grendel's mother. The monstrous mother is said to have dwelt in cold streams since Cain killed his brother. While this passage does not expressly state that Grendel's mother is descended from Cain, her descent from the fratricide is implied. This is because Grendel's mother is said to have lived since Cain killed his brother, while the context of lines 111-14, which I cited in section 4.3.2, suggests that all monstrous creatures originate with Cain. The context of *Beowulf*'s second reference to Cain is also interesting because it is related as the Danes are about to sleep, unaware of Grendel's mother's imminent attack to avenge the death of her son (B, l. 1251-58a). Hence, the Cain theme in relation to Grendel's mother may be said to fulfil a similar purpose as for the Creation sequence, i.e. it reveals the Danes' limited understanding of the events unfolding around them. At the same time the two references to Cain attest to belief in the existence of monstrous creatures on the part of the intended audience, which arises out, or is legitimated by, the monsters' descent from Cain.<sup>132</sup>

For all that, these references to Cain are not straightforward. The *Caines* of line 107a originally read *Cames*; however, an erasure in the ligature corrects the *m* into an *in*, for the word to read *Caines*.<sup>133</sup> Moreover, the *Cain* of line 1261b is a modern emendation of the manuscript version, which reads *camp* (struggle).<sup>134</sup> The use of the monosyllabic *camp* in the manuscript is likely to be an error, for it does not metrically fit the line, whereas the disyllabic *Cain* does.<sup>135</sup> Moreover, the term *camp* appears to make no sense in a context that requires *Cain*, given the reference to his brother's death. The erasure of the ligature in *Cames*, in line 107a, is more difficult to explain in that, on metrical grounds, *Cames* is preferable to the corrected version, *Caines*.<sup>136</sup> The use of the term *Cames* is therefore not likely to be an

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<sup>131</sup> Saltzman, p. 41.

<sup>132</sup> Ruth Mellinkoff, 'Cain's Monstrous Progeny in *Beowulf*: Part II, Post-Diluvian Survival', p. 183.

<sup>133</sup> Leonard Neidorf, 'Cain, Cam, Jutes, Giants, and the Textual Criticism of *Beowulf*', p. 601.

<sup>134</sup> Neidorf, p. 606.

<sup>135</sup> Neidorf, p. 606.

<sup>136</sup> Neidorf, p. 603.

error, while this spelling suggests that the text alludes to Ham, Noah's evil son.<sup>137</sup> If this is the case, then lines 102-08, where *Cames* is associated with Abel's death, refer to both Ham and Cain. In other words, the passage may be read as a conflation of the Ham and Cain traditions.<sup>138</sup> This would also suggest that *Beowulf*, or the original uncorrected version of the text, conveys what Friedman calls a typological association between Cain and Ham, his postdiluvian counterpart.<sup>139</sup> The idea that the text may be conflating the Cain and Ham traditions is interesting because Grendel's literal descent from Cain poses exegetical and narrative difficulties.

Likewise difficult to answer is *Beowulf*'s silence on Grendel's paternal line.<sup>140</sup> I briefly consider this question before I proceed to a discussion of the difficulties posed by Grendel's Cainite origin, so as to tackle the monster's origin comprehensively. Mellinkoff attributes the absence of Grendel's father to the idea that the antediluvian giants were born to Cainite women and fathered by fallen angels.<sup>141</sup> However, she recognises that the poem gives no clues in this regard.<sup>142</sup> I contend, rather, that the absence of Grendel's father may be explained with reference to the poem's recourse to vernacular social conventions. This is because *Beowulf*'s warriors self-identify through their patronymic,<sup>143</sup> which suggests that Grendel does not belong with this group.<sup>144</sup> Grendel's exclusion from this group is also conveyed by *Beowulf*'s statement to the effect that the male monster lacks proper fighting

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<sup>137</sup> *Genesis A* refers to Ham either as *Cham*, in l. 1551b and 1590b, or as *Cam/Cames*, in lines 1577a and 1637a. Moreover, Friedman, p. 100, argued that in the Middle Ages the name Ham was typically spelled *Cham* not only in English, but also in French and Latin.

<sup>138</sup> Neidorf, p. 602.

<sup>139</sup> Friedman, p. 105.

<sup>140</sup> Mellinkoff, 'Cain's Monstrous Progeny in *Beowulf*: Part I, Noachic Tradition', p. 148.

<sup>141</sup> Mellinkoff, p. 148.

<sup>142</sup> Mellinkoff, p. 148.

<sup>143</sup> Edward B. Irving, 'The Text of Fate', in *Interpretations of Beowulf*, pp. 168-93 (p. 177) (first publ. in *A Reading of Beowulf* (New Haven: Yale University Press), pp. 1-42).

<sup>144</sup> See also Eric G. Stanley, 'A Very Land-Fish, Languageless, a Monster: Grendel and the Like in Old English', in *Monsters and the Monstrous in Medieval Northwest Europe*, ed. by K.E. Olsen and L.A.J.R. Houwen (Sterling, Virginia: Peeters, 2001), pp. 79-92.

skills, his great strength notwithstanding.<sup>145</sup> However, the problem posed by Grendel's descent from Cain cannot be addressed with recourse to vernacular social conventions. The point is that direct descent from the biblical fratricide should, in terms of Gen 7.22-23, be physically impossible, as Cain's descendants are supposed to have perished in the Great Flood.

This point may account for the aforementioned conflation of the Cain and Ham traditions, which conflation is neither original nor unique to *Beowulf*.<sup>146</sup> Augustine argued that Cain and Ham are the literal and spiritual ancestors of all reprobates,<sup>147</sup> while Alcuin described Noah's sons Shem and Ham in the same terms as the antediluvian Seth and Cain. He wrote that Shem's kinsmen intermingled with the daughters of Ham, which union produced giants as for that between Seth's kinsmen, who lapsed, and Cain's kinswomen.<sup>148</sup> Hence, the conflation of the Cain and Ham traditions finds exegetical justification, which means that its presence in *Beowulf* is easily explained. Moreover, the Irish *Sex Aetates Mundi* explains that postdiluvian monsters do not descend from Cain, but rather from Noah's son Ham, who is the first man cursed after the Great Flood and Cain's successor.<sup>149</sup> This text thereby establishes a moral link between Cain and Ham. It is also interesting that one version of the Old English *Heptateuch* uses the names *Cain* and *Caim* interchangeably, which suggests that the conflation of the two biblical figures gained acceptance in an English context.<sup>150</sup> However, Grendel's descent from a biblical ancestor makes exegetical sense even if the corrected *Caines* reading is retained. This is because the condemnation of Grendel as a descendant of Cain in lines 102-08 may be understood in judicial rather than genealogical

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<sup>145</sup> Irving, p. 177.

<sup>146</sup> Neidorf, 'Cain, Cam, Jutes, Giants, and the Textual Criticism of *Beowulf*', p. 607.

<sup>147</sup> Neidorf, p. 610.

<sup>148</sup> Orchard, *Pride and Prodigies: Studies in the Monsters of the Beowulf-Manuscript*, pp. 78-79.

<sup>149</sup> *The Irish Sex Aetatis Mundi*, ed. by Dáibhí Ó Cróinín (Dublin: Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, 1983), p. 119.

<sup>150</sup> Neidorf, 'Cain, Cam, Jutes, Giants, and the Textual Criticism of *Beowulf*', pp. 609-10.

terms. The point is that Grendel is *forscrifen*, or judged, as Cain's kinsman.<sup>151</sup> This is confirmed by Whitelock's discussion of this term, for she argued that it is a formation based on the Latin *proscribere*, i.e. to condemn or banish.<sup>152</sup> In other words, in the context of this text it is Grendel's actions, rather than his origin, that mark him as Cain's kinsman. Admittedly though, this argument does not apply to Grendel's mother, who is described as a 'merewif' (B, l. 1519a) (lake/sea woman) and who has been around since Cain's fratricide (B, l. 1258b-63a). In this instance Grendel's mother's aquatic nature explains, on a literal plane, her status as an antediluvian monster who survives the Great Flood.

Irrespective of whether lines 102-08 are understood to refer exclusively to Cain, or to both Cain and Ham, *Beowulf* represents biblical narrative as archetypal, in that it offers precedent, and explanation, for the Grendelkin's existence and nature. The monsters act as they do, in other words, because they are moral, and possibly genealogical, descendants of Cain (and Ham), which recalls Cain's descendants in *Genesis A*. This reading of the poem also tallies with *Maxims I* which, as I indicated in section 4.1, likewise represents the Cain narrative as an archetype for violence. Within a wider exegetical context, moreover, *Beowulf*'s representation of Cain in relation to the Grendelkin recalls Augustine's representation of the relation between the biblical fratricide and Romulus, as I also indicated in section 4.1. Within the context of *Beowulf* the connection between Cain and the Grendelkin assigns primacy to biblical myth over vernacular beliefs, insofar as the two monsters may be considered vernacular, as attested, *inter alia*, by the close correspondence between their confrontations with Beowulf and the monster-hero confrontations in the tales I discussed in section 4.3.1. The primacy of Christianity, of which the poem's biblical references evidently form part, is also suggested by the allusion to Christian concepts in a

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<sup>151</sup> Reinhard, p. 377.

<sup>152</sup> Whitelock, p. 6.



pre-Christian context. These concepts, after all, suggest that God, and the Devil, were present in the pre-Christian world.

I now discuss the passage where the narrator tells of the birth of monstrous creatures in lines 111-14, which I cited in section 4.2.1. As I already indicated, the creatures mentioned in this passage are the descendants of Cain, or so does the context of the passage suggest. Oswald argues, however, that this passage does not explicitly identify Grendel as one of these monsters, which suggests that he ‘is both the progeny of the human Cain and the progeny of those monsters born of Cain’.<sup>153</sup> This conclusion tallies with *Beowulf*’s ambiguous representation of its first monster, which I discussed in section 4.3.2. Carney compared the monsters in the *Beowulf* passage, which are mostly of vernacular origin, with their counterparts in the Irish *Sex Aetates Mundi*, which likewise associates creatures drawn from vernacular myth with a biblical reprobate. Carney argued that the *untýdras* in *Beowulf* are equivalent to the Irish *torothair*, the *eotenas* and *gigantas* to the *fomoraig*, the *ylfe* to the *luchorpáin*, and the *orcneas* to the *goborchind*. This commentator also pointed out that *Beowulf* is tautological in its mention of the *eotenas* and *gigantas*, as both terms signify *giant*.<sup>154</sup> He also suggested that the two texts draw their monsters motif from Isidore of Seville’s *Etymologiae*.<sup>155</sup> While I do not rule out the influence of this tradition on *Beowulf*, Carney’s monster-by-monster comparison does not necessarily reflect the manner in which it is expressed in the Old English poem. In the first place, the *gigantas* in *Beowulf* are evidently of Latin rather than vernacular origin. Secondly, *orcneas* is a *hapax legomenon*,<sup>156</sup> which means that the origin and nature of these creatures is uncertain. Moreover, Carney’s grouping of *eotenas* and *gigantas* does not take into account the distinction between antediluvian

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<sup>153</sup> Oswald, p. 74.

<sup>154</sup> Carney, p. 105.

<sup>155</sup> Carney, p. 106.

<sup>156</sup> See Feldman, p. 76, and pp. 78-79, for a discussion of, *inter alia*, vernacular and Old Norse analogues and explanations for the terms *eotenas*, *ylfe* and *þýrs*.

monsters, namely the *gigantas* mentioned in Gen 6.4, and their postdiluvian counterparts.<sup>157</sup> *Beowulf*, however, does appear to make such a distinction, as Grendel is only identified as a *þyr*, i.e. an exiled swamp creature,<sup>158</sup> and an *eoten*. The Latin-derived term is not used in reference to Grendel's mother either.<sup>159</sup> Orchard argues that *Beowulf*'s usage of the term *gigantas* appears to correspond to Isaiah 36.14, where it is stated that the giants will not rise again.<sup>160</sup> It is therefore probable that the *Beowulf* monsters passage I hereby discuss deliberately combines pre- and postdiluvian monsters, which combination explains 'the continuity of God's feud with the monstrous race (the *fifelcyn*)',<sup>161</sup> over the ages. The monsters passage in *Beowulf* may therefore be understood to reflect the aforementioned notion that Ham is the successor of Cain after the Great Flood.

However, the presence of postdiluvian monsters in this passage need not be explained with reference to the aforementioned conflation of the Cain and Ham traditions, as it is also in line with the Augustinian idea, expressed in *De civitate Dei*, XV.23, that the existence of gigantic postdiluvian warriors is explicable with reference to the apocryphal Baruch 3.26-28. In offering this explanation for the existence of postdiluvian giants Augustine aligned 'himself with an influential school of patristic thought which sought to explain the origins of much heathen myth in biblical terms'.<sup>162</sup> This is in line with a statement I made earlier in relation to Cain and the Grendelkin, whereby *Beowulf* subjects vernacular beliefs to biblical myth. This conception of myth clearly won currency in early medieval England beyond *Beowulf*, as the Old English translation of Boethius's *De consolazione philosophiae* explains that the giants' confrontation with Jove, a lie, was told instead of scriptural truth, i.e. God's

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<sup>157</sup> Neidorf, 'Cain, Cam, Jutes, Giants, and the Textual Criticism of *Beowulf*', p. 610.

<sup>158</sup> Bishop, p. 267.

<sup>159</sup> Mellinkoff, 'Cain's Monstrous Progeny in *Beowulf*: Part II, Post-Diluvian Survival', p. 184.

<sup>160</sup> Orchard, *Pride and Prodigies: Studies in the Monsters of the Beowulf-Manuscript*, p. 58.

<sup>161</sup> Neidorf, 'Cain, Cam, Jutes, Giants, and the Textual Criticism of *Beowulf*', p. 610.

<sup>162</sup> Orchard, *Pride and Prodigies: Studies in the Monsters of the Beowulf-Manuscript*, p. 79.

overthrow of the giant Nimrod.<sup>163</sup> This discussion therefore reaffirms my conclusions in relation to *Beowulf*'s Cain passages, namely that the poem represents biblical narrative as archetype and that, thereby, biblical narrative is assigned primacy over vernacular myth. It now remains to be seen how the archetypal representation of biblical myth in *Beowulf* is expressed in relation to digressions where kin strife plays an important, or central, role.

#### **4.3.4 Cain as Archetype: Kin-strife and Conflict in the Societies of *Beowulf***

I observed, in section 4.3.3, that Cain is an archetype for the Grendelkin, which means that the two monsters replicate the violence of the biblical fratricide. Grendel may also be said to replicate the Devil's deeds given that, in Helen Damico's words, he is a 'primeval demon in strife with God'.<sup>164</sup> However, it is the Cain theme that holds more of a central spot in the narrative, not only on account of the direct references to the biblical fratricide, but also in view of Grendel's envy, which appears to be a primary motivation behind his attack on Heorot. The narrator relates, after all, that the monster could not bear the sound of rejoicing in the hall (B, l. 86-89a). In the context of the narrative, which as I already indicated goes on to refer directly to the figure of Cain, this motivation recalls the reason why Cain kills Abel. Gen 4.4 states that God looks favourably upon Abel's sacrifice, while in Gen 4.5 it is set out that God looks unfavourably on Cain's offering, whereupon Cain is upset. Cain kills his brother just a few verses later, in Gen 4.8. Grendel's envy, along with his Cainite origins, may therefore be understood to suggest that he functions as a warning against fratricide,<sup>165</sup> as well as violence more broadly conceived. Cain's attitude and actions are also reflected in the heroic-elegiac poem's representations of society, which are characterised by kin strife and conflict. This means that the biblical figure is also an archetype for social conflict. In this section I discuss this notion with reference to the accusation of fratricide that *Beowulf* levels

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<sup>163</sup> Orchard, pp. 81-82.

<sup>164</sup> Helen Damico, *Beowulf and the Grendel-Kin* (Morgantown: West Virginia University Press, 2015), p. 33.

<sup>165</sup> Phillips, p. 41.

against Unferth, a prominent member of King Hrothgar's retinue, as well as three digressions, namely:

- a) the Finnsburh digression;
- b) Beowulf's prediction of the resumption of hostilities between Danes and Heathobards; and,
- c) Beowulf's narration of fratricide within King Hrethel's family.

The Unferth episode has been discussed by various commentators, who expressed different, even conflicting views, in relation to this character.<sup>166</sup> The protagonist's verbal confrontation with Unferth takes place after the connection between Grendel and Cain has been established; when Beowulf tells King Hrothgar of his past achievements and reputation ahead of the confrontation with Grendel. The episode relates directly to the Cain theme because Beowulf identifies Unferth, who sits by King Hrothgar's feet (B, l. 500), as a fratricide (B, l. 587-88a),<sup>167</sup> which accusation appears to be confirmed by the narrator in lines 1167b-68a, where it is set out that he was not honourable to his kinsmen in swordplay,<sup>168</sup> which may well be a case of litotes, or understatement.<sup>169</sup> Moreover, the narrator sets out that Unferth would not have any other man achieve deeds more glorious than his own (B, l. 501b-05),<sup>170</sup> which suggests that envy is the motivation behind his attempt to tarnish Beowulf's reputation in the rendition of an unfavourable account of the swimming match with Breca (B,

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<sup>166</sup> For an overview of critical views of Unferth see Michael J. Enright, 'The Warband Context of the Unferth Episode', *Speculum*, 73.2 (1998), 297-337 (pp. 297-301); and, Leonard Neidorf, 'On *Beowulf* and the *Nibelungenlied*: Counselors, Queens and Characterization', *Neohelicon* (2020): <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11059-020-00541-2> (Accessed on 26/03/2021). See also William Sayers, 'Rhetorical Coercion and Heroic Commitment: Beowulf's Reception at Heorot', *English Studies*, 101.6 (2020), 651-64, for an alternative interpretation of this character, and Leonard Neidorf, 'The *Beowulf* Poet's Sense of Decorum', *Traditio*, 76 (2021), 1-28 (pp. 15-16), who argued that the traditions that *Beowulf* may have drawn upon would not necessarily have represented Unferth as negatively as the Old English poem itself.

<sup>167</sup> Bolton, p. 118.

<sup>168</sup> Some commentators argued, however, that Unferth is not a fratricide, but rather that he refrains from aiding his brothers when they are attacked. See William Nelles, 'Beowulf's *sorhfullne sið* with Breca', *Neophilologus*, 83 (1999), 299-312 (p. 309).

<sup>169</sup> Fulk, Bjork and Niles, 'Commentary', in *Klaeber's Beowulf*, pp. 110-272 (p. 192).

<sup>170</sup> See Rafael J. Pascual, 'Beowulf 501b and the Authority of Old English Poetical Manuscripts', *Neophilologus* (2021), 1-12, for a discussion of an emendation of the text that affirms its connotations of envy.

l. 506-28). This is the case irrespective of whether Unferth is seen as a coward or as a warrior who feels threatened by Beowulf.<sup>171</sup> The point, insofar as the present discussion is concerned, is that biblical exegetes typically associated envy with Cain's fratricide,<sup>172</sup> and that envy is also characteristic of Grendel, who as I already indicated, is unable to endure the Danes' celebration at Heorot. This context suggests that Unferth's significance is to be understood with reference to both Cain and Grendel.<sup>173</sup> The connection between these three figures is significant and important as it points to the Danes' inability, on a moral plane, to face up to the monster. This is because Unferth, a fratricide like Cain, is and remains a prominent figure within the Danish hall.<sup>174</sup>

My brief discussion of the Unferth episode establishes that there is a connection between this character, Cain and Grendel, which point has also been made by previous commentators, including Alvin A. Lee. This connection reaffirms the archetypal representation of Cain's crime, this time with reference to King Hrothgar's hall. It also informs interpretation of the violence and kin strife characteristic of the digressions I now go on to discuss. These digressions are narrated after the Unferth episode, and feature broadly similar themes. The first of these digressions, which is known as the Finnsburh digression, deals with a conflict between Danes and Frisians that also appears to involve the *eotena* (Jutes) as a third party.<sup>175</sup> It is possible that the treacherous attack on the Danes that initiates the action may have been carried out by Jutes in Finn's *comitatus*.<sup>176</sup> Irrespective of the

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<sup>171</sup> Leonard Neidorf, 'Unferth's Ambiguity and the Trivialization of Germanic Legend', *Neophilologus*, 101 (2017), 439-54 (pp. 445-46).

<sup>172</sup> Reinhard, p. 382.

<sup>173</sup> Alvin A. Lee, *Gold-Hall and Earth Dragon Beowulf as Metaphor* (London: University of Toronto Press, 1998), p. 215. See also Francisco J. Rozano-Garcia, 'Unferð maðelode: The Villain in *Beowulf* Reconsidered', *English Studies*, 100.8 (2019), 941-58 (p. 953), who argued that the similarities between Unferth and Grendel point towards the narrative's mirror structure, whereby the events and individuals in the hall parallel or contrast those outside.

<sup>174</sup> See also my discussion of the connection between Unferth, and by association King Hrothgar's hall, and Cain and Grendel's head as a Cainite sign, in St. John, pp. 57-58.

<sup>175</sup> Dennis Cronan, 'The Role of the Jutes in the Story of Finnsburg', *Philological Quarterly*, 98.3 (2019), 201-20 (p. 202).

<sup>176</sup> Cronan, p. 204.

cause, the first bout of fighting sees Queen Hildeburh lose her brother and son, respectively Dane and Frisian, to the fighting. The two sides subsequently agree on a truce, whereupon the corpses of the two kinsmen are placed side by side in readiness for funerary rites (B, l. 1114-17a). Hence, uncle and nephew are only united as their bodies are cremated.<sup>177</sup> This is significant from a vernacular social viewpoint, given the importance that would have been assigned to the relationship between uncle and nephew.<sup>178</sup> This episode, therefore, signals the breakdown of important kinship ties, particularly as uncle and nephew may be understood to have died fighting one another.<sup>179</sup> In this context the funeral's description of burning heads and flesh suggests 'their status as metonyms for numerous other bodies to be destroyed in similar battles'.<sup>180</sup> This is the case even where, as I already indicated, the funeral takes place at a point when the rivals agree on a truce. The truce, after all, is forced by the stalemate between the two sides<sup>181</sup> rather than any genuine desire to seek peace. Moreover, the truce does not last, and the conflict only ends for good after the resumption of hostilities and the death of Finn, Hildeburh's husband. This digression suggests that kin strife is an integral part of the Danes' (and the rival Frisians') historical experience, just as it is of King Hrothgar's hall.

Beowulf's prediction of the resumption of hostilities between the Danes and another people, the Heathobards, confirms that conflict and kin strife are ubiquitous. The protagonist predicts that the marriage arranged by King Hrothgar between his daughter Freawaru and the Heathobard Ingeld will fail to secure peace,<sup>182</sup> which means that son-in-law will fight father-

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<sup>177</sup> Mary Kate Hurley, 'Elemental Intimacies: Agency in the Finnsburg Episode', in *Dating Beowulf*, pp. 147-63 (p. 152).

<sup>178</sup> Martin Camargo, 'The Finn Episode and the Tragedy of Revenge in *Beowulf*', *Studies in Philology*, 78.5 (1981), 120-34 (p. 128).

<sup>179</sup> Gale R. Owen-Crocker, *The Four Funerals in Beowulf* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), p. 49.

<sup>180</sup> Stacy. S. Klein, *Ruling Women: Queenship and Gender in Anglo-Saxon Literature* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2006), p. 94.

<sup>181</sup> Andy Orchard, *A Critical Companion to Beowulf* (Cambridge: Brewer, 2003), p. 177.

<sup>182</sup> See also Gillian R. Overing, *Language, Sign and Gender in Beowulf* (Carbondale: South Illinois University Press, 1990), p. 83.

in-law. Beowulf pronounces his prediction as he recounts his experience in Denmark to King Hygelac and his queen, when he relates that true and mournful songs were sung at Heorot. It is possible that Beowulf here refers to Hildeburh's story, which suggests that he acknowledges its tragedy. In this regard, Matthew Scribner contrasted Beowulf's response to that of the Danes, whose mirth after this story is told points to their lack of introspection.<sup>183</sup>

Cain's fratricide is therefore replicated by the Danes, either in Unferth's fratricide, or in the kin strife that is characteristic of their past and future. However, the representation of social conflict in *Beowulf* is not limited to the Danes, for Cain's fratricide also finds expression in the history of the Geats told by the protagonist. At this point in the narrative Beowulf is an old king who prepares to single-handedly confront the dragon that ravages his kingdom. He tells of the Geatish people's conflicts with the Scyldings (B, l. 2472-89)<sup>184</sup> and of his loyal service to King Hygelac, including his revenge on Dæghrefn, whom he kills with his bare hands in return for Hygelac's death (B, l. 2490-509). The speech is relevant in the context of the present discussion, however, on account of its opening lines. Here the protagonist relates that he was fostered by King Hrethel at the age of seven and that he was brought up with his sons Herebeald, Hæthcyn and Hygelac (B, l. 2426-36). Tragedy struck when Hæthcyn shot an arrow in the direction of his older brother Herebeald in what Beowulf describes as an accident (B, l. 2435-40), even where his use of the phrase 'morþorbed strêd' (B, l. 2436b), which Stefan Jurasinski translates as 'prepared a murder-bed', suggests that he does not consider Hæthcyn entirely blameless.<sup>185</sup>

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<sup>183</sup> Matthew Scribner, 'Signs, Interpretations, and Exclusion in *Beowulf*', in *Darkness, Depression, and Descent in Anglo-Saxon England*, ed. by Ruth Wehlau (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 2019), pp. 117-32 (p. 123).

<sup>184</sup> See James W. Earl, 'The Swedish Wars in *Beowulf*', *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, 114.1 (2015), 32-60, for a detailed discussion of these conflicts in Beowulf's speech and elsewhere, including their function within the narrative as a backdrop to the dragon fight (p. 55).

<sup>185</sup> Stefan Jurasinski, *Ancient Privileges: Beowulf, Law, and the Making of Germanic Antiquity* (Morgantown: West Virginia University Press, 2006), p. 113.

It is interesting that Beowulf ruminates over fratricide in his account of the Geats' history of conflict, for this suggests that in some manner fratricide explains, or at least relates, to the violence that follows in the chronology of the speech.<sup>186</sup> This recalls, on a conceptual level, Cain's fratricide as an explanation, or archetype, for the existence and actions of the Grendelkin. For all that, the imagery employed in the speech is evocative of narratives known from Norse sources rather than biblical texts. Herebeald, after all, is killed by a 'blōdigan gāre' (B., l. 2440b) (bloody spear/arrow), which recalls representations of Óðinn in extant Norse texts.<sup>187</sup> Moreover, Philip A. Shaw recently reiterated the case that the names of the two brothers in the Old English poem may be re-workings of the names attested in Scandinavian tradition.<sup>188</sup> However, the fratricide within the Geatish ruling family also bears conceptual resemblance to Cain's killing of Abel, particularly in the manner this biblical myth is retold in *Beowulf*.<sup>189</sup> This is because the protagonist describes Hæthcyn's act as criminal (B. l. 2441b), while he tells of the fratricide at the head of a narrative of conflict. This recalls, as I explained earlier, *Beowulf*'s brief retellings of Cain's fratricide, which are followed by the Grendelkin's acts of violence.

Herebeald's death at the hands of his 'mæg' (B, l. 2439b) (kinsman) may also be considered reminiscent of the tradition that represents Lamech as Cain's killer, which tradition I discussed in section 4.2.2 in relation to *Genesis A*. This interpretation is

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<sup>186</sup> See also Laurence N. de Looze, 'Narratives and Fictionalization: *Beowulf* as Narrator', *Texas Studies in Literature and Language*, 26.2 (1984), 145-56 (p. 149) for a discussion, *inter alia*, of the historical and psychological links between the fratricide and the Geats' wars.

<sup>187</sup> See Orchard, *A Critical Companion to Beowulf*, p. 118, where reference is made to Harris, Faulkes, as well as to Orchard's own work. Similar points are also made in Thomas D. Hill, 'Hæthcyn, Herebeald, and Archery's Laws: *Beowulf* and the *Leges Henrici Primi*', *Medium Aevum*, 81.2 (2012), 210-21 (pp. 217-18), while Jurasinski, p. 120, identified the relevant Norse texts as the *Voluspá*, *Baldurs Draumar*, Snorri Sturluson's *Gylfaginning* and Saxo Grammaticus's *Gesta Danorum*. Moreover, Orchard not only identified the bloody spear or arrow as an element that occurs in Norse texts, but also others that relate to the narrative of the old man who watches helplessly as his son swings on the gallows, which narrative may be said to offer a contrast to King Hrethel's choice of God's light after the death of his eldest son (B, l. 2469b). See Linda Georgianna, 'King Hrethel's Sorrow and the Limits of Heroic Action in *Beowulf*', *Speculum*, 62.4 (1987), 829-50 (p. 849) and North, p. 198, for contrasting interpretations of the description of King Hrethel's death in *Beowulf*.

<sup>188</sup> See Philip A. Shaw, *Names and Naming in Beowulf: Studies in Heroic Narrative Tradition* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2020), pp. 33-39.

<sup>189</sup> See also Rich, p. 211, who argued that the Cain narrative is woven into *Beowulf*, including Hæthcyn's story.



accommodated by *Beowulf*'s speech insofar as he sets out that Hæthcyn's act is not intentional. This lack of intentionality is however flanked by the idea that the act is criminal, as suggested by the phrase 'morþorbed strêd' (B, l. 2436b), which I cited earlier on, and the identification of the act as a 'fyrenum ġesyngad' (B, l. 2441b) (sinful crime/a deed wrongly done).<sup>190</sup> The idea that an act may be criminal even if unintentional also appears to underlie Lamech's killing of Cain, which as I indicated in section 4.2.2 exposes the offender to God's curse. However, the suggestion that there may be a connection between Herebeald's and Cain's deaths has been considered, and dismissed, by Heather O'Donoghue.<sup>191</sup> This is the case notwithstanding some interesting similarities between the details of the two accounts, such as the offending weapons. I observed, in section 4.2.2, that Lamech kills Cain with a bow as he is assisted by the young Tubalcain, who mistakes their common ancestor for an animal. Likewise, Herebeald is killed by an arrow shot from his brother's 'hornbogan' (B, l. 2437b) (horn bow), who misses his mark (B, l. 2439). However, there is no direct evidence that the full details of this apocryphal narrative would have been known at the time of *Beowulf*'s composition. This is because, for instance, Bede's brief reference to Cain's death, which I also mentioned in section 4.2.2, does not comprise any details. The same is true of the description of Cain's death in *Genesis A*, which I discussed in the same section. This means that a conclusive argument for a connection between Herebeald's death and the Cain theme may only be made with reference to *Beowulf*'s archetypal expression of Cain's fratricide. In this sense, the fratricidal Hæthcyn may be understood to follow in Cain's footsteps, like Unferth.

My discussion in the course of this section suggests that *Beowulf* asserts the weaknesses of its pre-Christian societies through their inability to address fratricide and

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<sup>190</sup> See Jurasinski, p. 128, for a discussion of the translation of this phrase.

<sup>191</sup> O'Donoghue, p. 98.

violence within the kin group.<sup>192</sup> This is attested by Unferth's continued presence in the Danish hall, as well as by the inability of the Danes to prevent these offences or to address them by any means other than violence. The Geats' failure to address kin strife may be said to go a step further, in that they allow the fratricidal Hæthcyn to assume kingship 'until the tension of his *feohleas gefeoht* leads to the near-total breakdown of the Geatish ruling order'.<sup>193</sup> Hæthcyn's act goes unpunished as King Hrethel could not seek revenge against his own son (B, l. 2441-43), while his accession to the throne raises questions as to whether his act is really unintentional, even in the absence of direct textual clues.<sup>194</sup> Be that as it may, the audience is likely to have known that, in contrast to the Geats, Christianity treats fratricide as any other sin, which 'could be defined, catalogued and atoned for'.<sup>195</sup> At any rate, this is evident in Grendel's exile from the community, which is rendered in terms that recall the Irish *Penitential of Columbanus*, which penitential sets out that a murderer who refuses to make satisfaction to the parents of the victim is driven away by the community, to wander as an exile like Cain.<sup>196</sup> Similar practices are documented in early medieval England after the composition of *Beowulf*. Wulfstan, for instance, wrote penitential letters for kin-slayers, including fratricides condemned to exile.<sup>197</sup> The representation of Grendel as an exile therefore brings to the fore the inability of either Danes or Geats to properly address fratricide and kin strife. This means that the Cain narrative is not only an archetype for tensions within the societies of *Beowulf*, but that it also points to the inadequacy of its pre-Christian societies. Once again, therefore, vernacular social beliefs or practices, even where these are ostensibly confined to the past and quite possibly constructed rather than real, affirm the precedence of

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<sup>192</sup> Reinhard, p. 371.

<sup>193</sup> Reinhard, p. 380.

<sup>194</sup> Michael R. Kightley, 'The Brothers of *Beowulf*: Fraternal Tensions and the Reticent Style', *ELH*, 83.2 (2016), 407-29 (p. 414).

<sup>195</sup> Reinhard., p. 372.

<sup>196</sup> Reinhard, p. 373.

<sup>197</sup> See Wulfstan, 'Penitential Letters in Appendix II', in *The Homilies of Wulfstan*, ed. by Dorothy Bethurum (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1957; repr. 1998), pp. 374-76.

biblical and Christian truth. I made a similar observation in relation to the precedence of biblical myth in my discussion of Cain as the ancestor of the Grendelkin.

Within the context of the broader narrative Cain's fratricide functions as an archetype for the Grendelkin's existence and actions. It also explains their exile from the community, which is rendered in simultaneously biblical and vernacular terms in a manner that one cannot be separated from the other.<sup>198</sup> This is because the Grendelkin's exile reflects Cain's exile, which is biblically and exegetically derived, while it also accommodates the representation of vernacular monsters, which would have been invariably perceived as alien to the community. In analogous narratives such as the Bear's Son Tale and the Hand and the Child, after all, the monsters are representative of otherness and a quintessentially external threat. This means that, in *Beowulf*, the Cain theme provides the framework for the vicissitudes suffered by the poem's human characters<sup>199</sup> through its connection to the Grendelkin. Moreover, as I explain in the present section, the Cain theme also finds expression in relation to the societies of *Beowulf*, which suggests that, in some manner, these societies are also in the grip of Cainite sin and crime. The association made by Augustine between Cain and Romulus suggests that *Beowulf*, in this regard, follows established exegetical notions.

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<sup>198</sup> Stanley, p. 84.

<sup>199</sup> Williams, p. 10.

#### 4.4 Conclusion

The archetypal representation of the Cain narrative in *Beowulf*, which as I indicated in the previous section is in line with Augustinian exegesis, also recalls, in broad conceptual terms, the representation of Cain's descendants in *Genesis A*. In *Genesis A*, after all, Lameh's kin slaying replicates Cain's fratricide, and is likewise subject to a curse. Moreover, violence is suggested by the description of the Cainites more generally. This means that *Beowulf's* rendition of the Cain theme not only fits within mainstream exegesis, but that it is also in tune with the representation of Cain in the biblical poem. Therefore, even where *Beowulf's* placement of the Cain theme within a vernacular pre-Christian narrative is unique within an Old English context, its approach and interpretation of the Cain theme is not altogether distinct from that in *Genesis A* or, for that matter, *Maxims I*. However, *Beowulf* differs from *Genesis A* in that it has no counterpart to the Sethites, who are loyal and close to God, at least until their lapse. I now turn to the lapse of the Sethites which, in the context of *Genesis A*, leads to the Great Flood.

## 5 The Great Flood and Related Themes in *Genesis A* and *Beowulf*

### 5.1 Background

In this chapter I discuss the Great Flood as a consequence of the lapse of Seth's descendants in *Genesis A*, which conceptually recalls the angelic rebellion and fall in the same poem. I also explore the representation of the Great Flood as a myth that not only deals with punishment of the sinful, but also with the salvation offered to Noah, who remains loyal to God. I argue that Noah's salvation anticipates, or prefigures, the audience's salvation through Christ. In this sense, the Great Flood in *Genesis A* recalls the far more condensed rendition of this myth in *Exodus*, which is also preserved in the Junius 11 manuscript.

Therefore, I argue that the Great Flood in *Genesis A* is not only a narrative of reversal and punishment, but also a salvific narrative, either literally or allegorically. While the literal reading of the text is hardly in question, there is no consensus on the extent to which, or even if, the Great Flood in *Genesis A* also delivers meaning allegorically. I discuss this point in section 5.2.2. Suffice it to say, for the present purposes, that Noah's salvation from the Great Flood in *Genesis A*, which evidently reflects the biblical original, contrasts the brief allusion to the biblical cataclysm in *Beowulf*. The heroic-elegiac poem omits the idea of salvation from its brief allusion to the Great Flood, in that it only makes direct reference to the giants who die in the inundation. Moreover, like the representations of the Creation and Cain themes, which I discussed in Chapters 2.3 and 4.3 respectively, the context of the Great Flood in *Beowulf* points to the limitations of the characters when compared to the audience. These limitations also transpire from other episodes that belong to Grendel's mother's section of the poem, notably King Hrothgar's speech addressed to Beowulf, which is known as Hrothgar's sermon. I argue, in the course of my discussion, that the allusion to the giants who perish in

the inundation also functions as an archetype for Grendel's mother, inasmuch as Cain functions as an archetype for the Grendelkin, as I indicated in Chapter 4.3.

In this chapter I therefore suggest that *Beowulf* approaches the Great Flood as archetype and in a manner that recalls and restates the contrast between characters and audience that is also conveyed by the Creation and Cain themes. While I am not the first to point to the poem's recourse to dramatic irony, I consider that the narrative's consistency in this regard is often underappreciated. I also indicate that *Beowulf*'s approach to the Great Flood differs markedly from that characteristic of *Genesis A*, which focuses on Noah, who is saved by God.

## 5.2 The Great Flood in *Genesis A*

In this section I synthesise critical views relating to the rendition of the Great Flood in the biblical poem, while I aim to better contextualise *Genesis A*'s rendition of this myth within the poem's broader narrative and manuscript contexts, and to explain how the story of the cataclysm is adapted for the benefit of the intended audience. The first aspect of the adaptation that I hereby consider is the course of events that lead to the cataclysm. This narrative element in the biblical original poses interpretative and narrative difficulties for any attempt at adaptation, mainly on account of its ambiguity and silences. This aspect of the *Genesis A* narrative requires in-depth consideration from the outset because it informs interpretation of the rest of the Great Flood episode, which is likewise informed, *inter alia*, by audience-related considerations and the integration of this episode in the wider narrative. I indicated, in section 5.1, that *Genesis A* represents the inundation as a consequence of the lapse of the Sethites, who intermingle with women from Cain's genealogical line.<sup>1</sup> This occurs in the opening lines of Fitt XX:

xx.

Oð þæt bearn godes bryda ongunnon

On caines cynne secan

wergum folce and him þær wif curon

ofer metodes est monna eaforan,

scyldfulra mægð, scyne and fægere.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See Alexander Sager, 'Thiu wirsa giburd: Cain's Legacy, Original Sin, and the End of the World in the Old Saxon Genesis', in *The End-Times in Medieval German Literature*, ed. by Ernst Ralf Hintz and Scott E. Pincikowski (Rochester: Camden House, 2019), pp. 7-26 (p. 15) for a discussion of the related notion that the exchange of womenfolk with Cain's kinsmen led to the demise of Seth's descendants in the Cain fragment of the *Vatican Genesis*.

<sup>2</sup> Lines 1248-52 of *Genesis A- A New Edition*, rev. edn by A. N. Doane (Tempe: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2013), p. 181. All references to *Genesis A* from this edition shall henceforth be given parenthetically in the main text, indicated by the abbreviation Gen A. All translations of *Genesis A* are mine.

(Until the children of God sought brides from Cain's kin; the accursed folk. The children of men chose their radiant and beautiful women, wicked maidens, over God's grace/favour.)

This is evidently a turning point in the narrative, particularly as the conjunctive *Oð þæt* uncharacteristically opens Fitt XX in mid-sentence. While the conjunctive *ær ðon* (until) in line 22a of the poem does not open its fitt in mid-sentence, it fulfils the same thematic function, in that it marks the reversal suffered by the angels who rebel against God. Like the rebel angels, moreover, 'sethes bearn' (Gen A, l. 1257b) (Seth's offspring) betray God, in that they seek women among his enemies (Gen A, l. 1255-63).

While *Genesis A* establishes a direct link between Sethite reversal and the Great Flood, this neither emerges clearly nor explicitly from a reading of the Book of Genesis. In the biblical text the men and women who intermingle are only identified as the sons of God and the daughters of men respectively, in Gen 6.1-2.<sup>3</sup> These phrases have been variously interpreted to refer to the fallen angels and women who descend from Cain,<sup>4</sup> or to Seth's kinsmen and Cain's kinswomen, as in the case of *Genesis A*. In this respect the biblical poem falls in line with prevailing biblical exegesis.<sup>5</sup> I contend that recourse to this tradition enables *Genesis A* to address major narrative and interpretative challenges posed by the biblical text, in that it clearly explains why Seth's descendants are deserving of punishment. At the same time, *Genesis A* represents Cain's kinswomen as sexual temptresses<sup>6</sup> and the giants of Gen 6.4 as the product of their proscribed union with Seth's kinsmen. This detail, which is by no means explicit in a reading of the biblical original,<sup>7</sup> has the effect of streamlining and

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<sup>3</sup> 'Genesis', in *The Vulgate Bible Vol. I The Pentateuch*, ed. by Swift Edgar (London: Harvard University Press, 2010), pp. 1-274 (p. 26). All citations and translations from the Vulgate Genesis are taken from this edition.

<sup>4</sup> Ruth Mellinkoff, 'Cain's Monstrous Progeny in *Beowulf*: Part I, Noachic Tradition', *Anglo-Saxon England*, 8(1979), 143-62 (p. 148).

<sup>5</sup> Christopher Monk, 'A Context for the Sexualisation of Monsters in *The Wonders of the East*', *Anglo-Saxon England*, 41(2012), 79-99 (p. 94).

<sup>6</sup> Monk.

<sup>7</sup> Monk, p. 96.



clarifying the narrative, in that the existence of the giants, who are eventually killed in the inundation, is integrated into the Cain-Seth storyline.<sup>8</sup> The adaptation of the events that lead to the Great Flood in *Genesis A* therefore recalls the same poem's approach to the creation of humankind, which is likewise streamlined and clarified for the benefit of the audience, as I indicated in Chapter 2.2.

Another interpretative challenge posed by the biblical narrative in relation to the onset of the Great Flood transpires from a reading of Gen 6.3:

Dixitque Deus. "Non permanebit spiritus meus in homine in aeternum, quia caro est, eruntque dies illius centum viginti annorum."

(And God said, "My spirit shall not remain in man for ever, because he is flesh, and his days shall be a hundred and twenty years.")

Biblical exegetes offered different interpretations of this verse, namely the placement of a limit on human life expectancy, or the length of time that is allowed to the giants on Earth.<sup>9</sup>

*Genesis A* interprets 120 years as the time allotted by God until the onset of the Great Flood:

siððan hundtwelftig geteled rime  
wintra on worulde wræce bisegodon  
fæge þeoda hwonne frea wolde  
on wærlogan wite settan  
and on deað slea dædum scyldige  
gigantmæcgas, gode unleofe,  
micle mansceaðan, metode laðe. (Gen A, l. 1263-69).

(One hundred and twenty winters were counted on this world since the fated people  
exiled themselves, when the lord would punish and strike down the covenant

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<sup>8</sup> See also Daniel Anlezark, *Water and Fire: The Myth of the Flood in Anglo-Saxon England* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006), p. 184, who argued, *inter alia*, that thereby *Genesis A* skirts the exegetical tangle posed by the possibility that the giants of the biblical original are a distinct race.

<sup>9</sup> Oliver F. Emerson, 'Legends of Cain, Especially in Old and Middle English', *PMLA*, 21.4 (1906), 831-929 (p. 891).

breakers, those guilty in their deeds, the giant kinsmen, unloved by God, huge man-harmers, hateful to God.)

This passage not only clarifies interpretation of an ambiguous passage, but it also explains and justifies the Great Flood, which is expressed as the outcome of estrangement from God. Here again, the approach pursued in relation to the onset of the inundation recalls the poem's approach to the angelic rebellion, likewise the result of estrangement from God. This passage also reaffirms that *Genesis A* adapts the biblical original for the benefit of its audience, as it conveys a version of the narrative that is both streamlined and coherent.

While the *Genesis A* account of the Great Flood, which takes up 306 lines of verse in all, expands upon, and clarifies, the events that lead to the cataclysm, it abbreviates or omits some of the narrative elements in the rest of the mythical narrative. Elsewhere, *Genesis A* interpolates extra-biblical detail that may not necessarily be exegetically informed, as in the case of Noah's warning to his kinsmen. This approach, whereby some passages are abridged or omitted, and others expanded upon, reflects the adaptation of the Cain narrative I discussed in Chapter 4.2. However, as I indicate in section 5.2.1, with reference, *inter alia*, to Paul G. Remley's work, this approach is far more pervasive in the poem's rendition of the Great Flood. While I argue that, in line with Remley's conclusions, such an approach attests to the influence of lectionary sources on the Great Flood passage, I also contend that it is indicative of the poem's thematic approach to this narrative.

In section 5.2.2 I briefly take up, once more, the Sethites' reversal, as well as Noah's warning to his kinsmen, which I mentioned above. I assess the possibility that these passages are informed, *inter alia*, by vernacular social conventions. I also explore the message of redemption conveyed by the Great Flood narrative in *Genesis A*, particularly in its allusions to Christ. While I argue that these allusions transpire from a reading of the text alone, I contend that a reading of the text informed by the pictures of the ark in the Junius 11

manuscript prompts allegorical interpretation of the narrative. This interpretation, I argue, recalls the brief rendition of the Great Flood in *Exodus*, another poem from the Junius 11 manuscript. Finally, I discuss the meaning of the raven sent out by Noah in search of dry land, and the sacrifice the patriarch offers upon his egress from the ark, which recalls themes from the poem's adaptation of the creation of humankind.

### 5.2.1 The Abridgement of the Great Flood in *Genesis A*

The approach to biblical versification in *Genesis A* is generally sequential, as I observed in my discussion of the poem in the previous chapters. This is also true of *Genesis A*'s postdiluvian narratives.<sup>10</sup> While the adaptation of the Great Flood falls within this sequential approach, it stands out from the rest of the narrative in that it entails extensive abridgement of its biblical source. In this section I explore this abridgement with reference to previous research, while I suggest that the manner in which the biblical narrative is adapted in *Genesis A* not only points to the poem's sources of influence, but also to its thematic approach.

The distinctiveness of the adaptation of the Great Flood in *Genesis A* led Paul G. Remley to explore potential sources for this adaptation including, *inter alia*, biblical glossaries. He identified the unmetrical naming of Noah's wives in lines 1547-48 as one of the details drawn from the glossaries.<sup>11</sup> However, the *Genesis A* account is mostly influenced by Latin liturgical lections for the Easter Vigil. As Remley observed, the manner of abridgement in *Genesis A* recalls the approach adopted in these texts.<sup>12</sup> Remley also suggests that while the bulk of *Genesis A* follows a textual exemplar, the account of the inundation is drawn from recollection of a liturgical reading.<sup>13</sup> This may well be the case, as *Genesis A* does not fully correspond to any of the extant liturgical texts considered by Remley in his research, even where it broadly follows their approach. These texts, which Remley deems

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<sup>10</sup> Paul G. Remley, *Old English Biblical Verse* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 137.

<sup>11</sup> Remley, p. 49.

<sup>12</sup> Remley, p. 138.

<sup>13</sup> Remley, p. 137.

representative of western liturgical practice, are the Roman twelve-lection series, the Gallican series, the Spanish series, and the Milanese series.<sup>14</sup> As for *Genesis A*, these texts treat the Great Flood with relative freedom.<sup>15</sup> Moreover, the four Easter Vigil readings omit the Gen 7.8-9 account of the animals that board the ark two by two, which verses are also left out by *Genesis A*.<sup>16</sup> Similarly, Gen 7.10 and 7.18, which describe the inundation of the Earth, are omitted by *Genesis A* and partially or completely left out of the liturgical texts. Moreover, *Genesis A* and the Gallican lectionary of Luxeuil and, to a degree, the other readings, omit or curtail allusions to the victims of the Flood in Gen 7.21-22 and the chronology of the disaster conveyed by Gen 8.13-14.<sup>17</sup>

I consider that Remley's conclusions in relation to lectionary influence on *Genesis A* are plausible, as the similarities identified above, as well as others mentioned in his research,<sup>18</sup> are significant. However, not all the differences between the rendition of the Great Flood in *Genesis A* and the biblical original may be explained with reference to the lectionaries. For instance, Remley does not identify a lectionary source for the sequence in the following passage:

[...] þa waldend spræc,  
 nergend usser and to noe cwæð:  
 "Ic wille mid flode folc acwellan  
 and cynna gehwile | curcra wuhta  
 þara þe lyft and flod lædað and fedað,  
 feoh and fuglas. þu scealt frið habban  
 mid sunum þinum ðonne sweart wæter,  
 wonne wælstreamas, werodum swelgað

<sup>14</sup> Remley, pp. 138-39.

<sup>15</sup> Remley, p. 140.

<sup>16</sup> Remley, pp. 140-41.

<sup>17</sup> Remley, p. 140.

<sup>18</sup> Remley, pp. 141-42.

sceaðum scyldfullum. Ongyn þe scip wyrcan,  
 merehus micel. On þam þu monegum scealt  
 reste geryman and rihte setl  
 ælcum æfter agenum eorðan tudre.  
 Gescype scylfan on scipes bosme.  
 Þu þær fær gewyrc fiftiges wid,  
 ðrittiges heah [and] þreohund lang  
 elngemeta and wið yða gewyrc  
 gefeg fæste” (Gen A, l. 1294b-320a)

(Then the ruler spoke, our saviour, and said to Noah, “I will kill the people with a flood/water, and every kind of living thing that air and water bring forth and feed, cattle and birds. You shall have peace with your sons, when the black water, gloomy storms of slaughter; swallow peoples, the guilty injurers. Start working on a ship, a great sea-house. You shall make room for many to rest, and a right seat, according to its own kind, for each of the Earth’s offspring. Make a deck in the ship’s interior. Make that ship fifty ell-lengths wide, thirty high, and three-hundred long, and make strong joints against the waves.)

This passage reverses the order of Gen 6.14-16 and Gen. 6.17-18,<sup>19</sup> which respectively relate to the description of the ark to be built by Noah and the destruction to be wrought by the Great Flood. Moreover, Remley identifies no counterparts in the lectionaries to *Genesis A*’s conflation of ‘the partly redundant matter of widely separated biblical verses’ on the commands given to Noah to choose the animals to board the ark, the inundation, and other

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<sup>19</sup> Remley, p. 142.

themes in Gen 7.1, 7.18, 7.2 and 6.21, which are versified in *Genesis A* lines 1327-34, 1335-46a, 1367b-68, 1371b-76a and 1376b-86a.<sup>20</sup>

These points reaffirm that *Genesis A* does not follow any specific exemplar in its rendition of the Great Flood. However, the differences between the Old English poem and the lectionaries identified above are otherwise of secondary importance. The similarities between the respective texts, at any rate, are far more important, particularly as the Great Flood is ‘the *only* episode of the Latin text of Genesis that is regularly subjected to such liturgical abridgement’.<sup>21</sup> The Irish *Saltair na Rann*, which would not appear to be in any way related to the Old English text, also abbreviates this biblical episode and omits some scenes altogether.<sup>22</sup> The *Genesis A* version of the Great Flood may therefore be said to abridge the source narrative in line with an early medieval practice that may be seen as a response to a ‘lengthy and somewhat intractable’ biblical original.<sup>23</sup> In his discussion of the Old English poem’s omission of material in Gen 7 and 8 A. N. Doane reaches fairly similar conclusions. He argues that these biblical chapters ‘are full of duplicated material stemming from the double source of the [Hebrew] original’,<sup>24</sup> i.e. the Yahwistic narrative and the Priestly redaction.<sup>25</sup> The poem’s abridgement of the biblical narrative may therefore also be said to stem from the need to present a streamlined and clear narrative for the benefit of the audience.

The present discussion confirms that while, as Remley suggests, the lectionaries influenced *Genesis A*, the approach pursued in the poem is also likely to result from a concern to render the narrative in terms more easily accessible to the audience. As I indicated earlier, this concern also informs the rendition of Sethite reversal that instigates the

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<sup>20</sup> Remley, p. 142.

<sup>21</sup> Remley, p. 142.

<sup>22</sup> Brian Murdoch, ‘From the Flood to the Tower of Babel: Some Notes on *Saltair na Rann* XIII-XXIV, *Ériu*, 40 (1989), 69-92 (p. 70).

<sup>23</sup> Remley, p. 142.

<sup>24</sup> A. N. Doane, ‘Introduction’, in *Genesis A- A New Edition, Revised*, pp. 1-122 (p. 88).

<sup>25</sup> David L. Petersen, ‘The Yahwist on the Flood’, *Vetus Testamentum*, 26.4 (1976), 438-46 (p. 438).

cataclysm, even if in this instance the poem resorts to elaboration rather than abridgement. I now proceed to a discussion of these and other thematic aspects of the narrative.

### 5.2.2 Thematic Aspects of the Great Flood in *Genesis A*

While, as I already observed in section 5.2.1, some details from the Great Flood are abbreviated or omitted altogether, other elements of the narrative are elaborated upon. One of these elements is the cause of the cataclysm, which as I observed in my discussion so far is informed by a need to clarify and streamline the terse biblical original. In this section I give further consideration to this aspect of the narrative, even if briefly, and I also consider Noah's warning to his kinsfolk of the impending cataclysm, which warning is ignored. I argue that in these instances the text may be appealing to vernacular social conventions, albeit not to the exclusion of exegetical or related traditions. I then consider the ostensibly Christian or redemptive aspect of the Great Flood, notably by way of the poem's allusions to Christ. This leads me into a discussion as to whether the Great Flood narrative in *Genesis A* is allegorical, which discussion factors into the equation three Junius 11 pictures and *Exodus*, the poem that follows *Genesis A* in its manuscript context. I then discuss the meaning of the raven sent out by Noah in search of dry land, which also appears to have an extra-literal dimension. I finally consider Noah's sacrifice on his egress from the ark. Like the poem's representation of the cause of the Great Flood, this episode recalls an earlier episode in *Genesis A*, namely the Creation.

Lines 1263-69 of *Genesis A*, which I cited in section 5.2, make reference to the 'wærlogan' (Gen A, l. 1266a) (covenant breakers), who exile themselves from God (Gen A, l. 1264b-65a). It is interesting that this term does not correspond to the description of the antediluvian people in Gen 6.5, which verse represents them as evil, but not specifically as traitors. It may therefore be argued that *Genesis A* renders the antediluvians in terms that

recall the rebel angels in the poem's opening lines.<sup>26</sup> At the same time, the notion that the antediluvians are traitors recalls the emphasis placed on betrayal in narratives of vernacular origin, such as *Beowulf* and *The Battle of Maldon*, as I indicated in Chapter 1.2.1. In other words, the covenant breakers not only recall the angelic rebellion as archetype for subsequent biblical or historical events, but they may also have appealed to vernacular notions of loyalty and betrayal. A similar conclusion may be drawn from an analysis of Noah's warning to his kinsfolk:

[...] magum sægde

þæt wæs þrealic þing þeodum toweard,

reðe wite. Hie ne rohton þæs. (Gen A, l. 1317b-19)

(He told his kinsfolk that a terrible event, cruel torment, was heading towards the people. They did not heed this [warning].)

Charles D. Wright suggests that *Genesis A* introduces this extra-biblical detail in order to reassure its audience that the patriarch is sensitive to the plight of his kinsfolk, and that this detail would therefore have addressed a concern that the biblical original would not answer to the audience's respect for kinship bonds.<sup>27</sup> While this may well be the case, Jewish tradition comprises a similar idea, in that Noah is said to have warned the people about the flood for up to 120 years before its onset.<sup>28</sup> In the last instance, therefore, it does not appear possible to ascertain whether this detail would have been introduced specifically to accommodate vernacular social conventions. Be that as it may, it is clear that the extra-biblical details I just discussed fulfil two distinct but closely related functions. Firstly, they justify God's actions;

<sup>26</sup> See Larry Neil McKill, 'A Critical Study of the Old English *Genesis A*' (unpublished doctoral thesis, State University of New York, The Graduate School, 1974), p. 210; and Horst Richard Paul Battles, 'The Art of the *Scop*: Traditional Poetics in the Old English *Genesis A*' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, Graduate College, 1998), pp. 233-34, who discuss a similar representation of the Sodomites in the postdiluvian section of the poem.

<sup>27</sup> Charles D. Wright, '*Genesis A ad Litteram*', in *Old English Literature and the Old Testament*, ed. by Michael Fox and Manish Sharma (London: University of Toronto Press, 2012), pp. 121-71 (p. 135).

<sup>28</sup> A. N. Doane, 'Commentary', in *Genesis A - A New Edition*, pp. 285-400 (p. 329).



in that the antediluvians betray him, while Noah's relatives ignore the warning they are given. Secondly, and for the same reasons, they justify Noah's subsequent abandonment of his kinsfolk.

In a context where the *Genesis A* narrative places emphasis on God's and Noah's justice, thereby justifying their actions, it is not surprising that it also dwells on God's covenant with Noah and the redemption that it implies. This is evident in the passage that spans lines 1294b-320a, which I cited in section 5.2.1. This passage renders the straightforward reference to God's *foedus* (covenant) in Gen 6.18 as 'þu scealt frið habban' (You shall have peace) in line 1299b. Moreover, the peace to be won by Noah is contrasted to the black waters that will swallow the sinful in the context of lines 1299b-302a. This contrast may not be original to *Genesis A*, as the biblical text also contrasts Noah's status to every living thing that will be left out of the ark in Gen 6.17. Yet, the biblical poem places greater emphasis on this contrast by referring specifically to the people who will be killed in the Great Flood, in line 1296b, and to the dark waters that will swallow them, in line 1300b. The reference to the black waters is extra-biblical, yet *sweart* (black) occurs frequently in Old English poetic descriptions of 'hell and black souls'.<sup>29</sup> In the context of *Genesis A*, therefore, the black waters, which signify or allude to damnation, highlight the contrasting meaning of the ark built as a physical manifestation of God's covenant, and therefore of redemption. This interpretation of the ark, which is based on the contrast between redemption and damnation, is confirmed by the use of the term *nergend* (saviour) in reference to God.

The use of the term *nergend* in the Great Flood as rendered in *Genesis A* deserves in-depth discussion on account of its significance, which informs interpretation of the narrative, as well as in view of its occurrence elsewhere in the poem, and in the interpolated *Genesis B*. This term is not derived from the Vulgate version of Gen 6, nor does it occur, for that matter,

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<sup>29</sup> William E. Mead, 'Color in Old English Poetry, *PMLA*, 14.2 (1899), 169-206 (p. 182).

in the other sections of the biblical text that deal with the inundation. Likewise, the Old Latin version of Gen 6<sup>30</sup> makes no reference to a *salvator* (saviour). However, as I indicated in Chapter 3.2.2 Adam makes reference to ‘nengend user’ (our saviour) in line 536a of *Genesis B*,<sup>31</sup> which term alludes to Christ and his redemption of humankind. Recourse to this term in the aftermath of Adam and Eve’s transgression in *Genesis A* reaffirms this interpretation in the context of the composite narrative, as I also indicated in Chapter 3.2.2. In line 855b of *Genesis A* it is the narrator who identifies God as ‘nengend usser’ (our saviour) as he visits Adam and Eve. The context therefore suggests that reference is here being made to the audience’s saviour who, in terms of biblical myth, is made up of the descendants of Adam and Eve. The salvific and Christological connotations of this term also transpire from its use in the Great Flood narrative. In line 1285b Noah is said to enjoy the saviour’s love, while in line 1314b the patriarch builds the ark at the saviour’s behest. In line 1327b the saviour tells Noah that he should board the ark, and in line 1356b the patriarch boards the ark upon the saviour’s command. The identification of God as the saviour, which by definition connotes redemption, is complemented by the sealing of the ark. The poem elaborates on the terse rendition of this theme in Gen 7.16, which simply sets out that ‘inclusit eum Dominus de foris’ (the Lord shut him in on the outside):

Him on hoh beleac heofonrices weard  
 merehuses muð mundum sinum,  
 sigora waldend, and segnade  
 earce innan agenum spedum  
 nengend usser. (Gen A, l. 1363-67a)

<sup>30</sup> *Vetus Latina: Die Reste der Altlateinischen Bibel nach Petrus Sabatier Neu Gessammelt und Herausgegeben von der Erzabtei Beuron, Vol. 2 Genesis*, ed. by Bonifatius Fischer (Beuron: Freiburg, 1951), pp. 101-12.

<sup>31</sup> ‘Genesis B’, in *The Saxon Genesis An Edition of the West Saxon Genesis B and the Old Saxon Vatican Genesis*, ed. by A. N. Doane (London: University of Wisconsin Press, 1991), pp. 207-31 (p. 220).

(The guardian of the Kingdom of Heaven, he who wields victory, shut in with his hands the mouth of the sea-house on their back and our saviour blessed those in the ark with his success.)

Earlier on the narrator also describes the caulking of Noah's ship in an extra-biblical passage:

[...] þæt is syndrig cynn.

symle bið þy heardra þe hit hreoh wæter,

swearte sæstreamas, swiðor beatað. (Gen A, l. 1324b-26)

(That is a special kind. It always grows stronger as the rough waters, the black sea-streams, vigorously beat against it.)

The narrator's use of the phrase *nergend usser* in the first passage cited above suggests that the audience is equated with Noah and his family, who are saved by the ark. This also means that the audience's saviour, Christ, is Noah's saviour. The second passage, which refers to the black waters, suggests that the waves are not exclusively literal, but that they may also be understood to point to the ability of those who remain faithful to God to resist sin and life's vicissitudes.

The consistency in the use of salvific terminology across *Genesis A* suggests that it would have been introduced as an original element at some stage in the poem's composition. A similar conclusion may be inferred in relation to lines 1396b-97a, which set out that 'halig god | ferede and neredē' (holy God steered and saved them). I contend that these extra-biblical details suggest that the Great Flood narrative in *Genesis A* may be read allegorically. However, there is no consensus among commentators that the poem's account of the Great Flood is allegorical. Nina Boyd argued that there is no evidence that the poet intended this text to be read allegorically,<sup>32</sup> while Wright pointed out that the narrative falls short of allegory proper. Wright considered, rather, that *Genesis A* does not solicit such a reading,

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<sup>32</sup> Nina Boyd, 'Doctrine and Criticism: A Revaluation of *Genesis A*, *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen*, 83.3 (1982), 230-38 (p. 235).

even if a reader who is aware of the allegorical interpretative tradition may read the *Genesis A* adaptation allegorically.<sup>33</sup> A discussion of exegetical treatments of the Great Flood does not resolve the issue, in that some readings are allegorical and others are not. For instance, Augustine's discussion of the raven that does not return to Noah's ark in his *Quaestiones in Heptateuchum* is not allegorical, even if elsewhere Augustine treats this episode allegorically.<sup>34</sup> Moreover, it may be argued that the elaboration of biblical episodes in *Genesis A* does not have to be exegetically driven. Britt Mize, for instance, questions whether *Genesis A*'s adaptation of the dove sent out by the patriarch, which finds a place to rest, entails exegesis or description in emotive terms.<sup>35</sup> What this means is that the presence of an allegorical dimension in the Great Flood of *Genesis A* must be assessed with reference to the text itself, and to the poem's manuscript context.

My reading of the term *nergend*, which is informed by previous researchers' views, not only suggests that God saves Noah and his family, but also points to Christ's presence in the Old Testament. I discussed this notion in Chapter 1.1. Even though in and of itself this may still be considered exegesis at the literal level, the allusion to Christ in the context of the Great Flood suggests that the ark stands for the Church, which offers salvation to those within it. It appears, therefore, that an allegorical dimension is inbuilt into the text, even if basic exegetical knowledge may be required to glean it. In any case, the pictures on pages 66 and 68 of the Junius 11 manuscript, which give us unique insight into early medieval interpretation of the biblical narrative that is directly relevant to the *Genesis A* text, prompt an allegorical reading. The picture in the second tier of page 68 represents the figure of God, or Christ, who seals the ark.<sup>36</sup> Noah's ark is represented as a dragon ship which, it may be surmised, would have been the design familiar to contemporary readers. Rather less

<sup>33</sup> Wright, 'Genesis A ad Litteram', p. 134.

<sup>34</sup> Wright, p. 139.

<sup>35</sup> Britt Mize, *Traditional Subjectivities: The Old English Poetics of Mentality* (London: University of Toronto Press, 2013), p. 41.

<sup>36</sup> See Appendix, Plate IX.

realistically, the ship supports a building, which may have been intended to allude, allegorically, to a church. The picture on page 66 represents the biblically derived theme in similar terms; however, this drawing is more detailed and complex.<sup>37</sup> While the ship in this picture is also a dragon ship, according to Catherine E. Karkov the building on top is more easily identifiable as a church or church-like structure on account of its weather-cock.<sup>38</sup> Moreover, in this drawing the ship is steered by Noah<sup>39</sup> while God, or Christ, is placed at the centre of the picture. These figures are complemented by two angels at the top corners, figures that, again, connote divine protection. While divine protection is also evident in the biblical text, the pictures identify that protection as the protection accorded to the Church by Christ. Therefore the pictures, interpreted in conjunction with the textual representation of God as the saviour, prompt an allegorical reading of the *Genesis A* text, even more so where the text, in places, identifies God as ‘our’ saviour, meaning the audience’s saviour. I argue that this is the case even where the drawings may have been composed independently of the text, for the association between drawing and text, in this instance, is suggested by the former’s placement in the manuscript. The allegory in the text may be classified as moral or tropological, in that it signals the direct relevance of the biblical narrative to the reader (or audience), who should seek salvation within the Church just as Noah and his family seek salvation within the ark. Karkov also assigns allegorical significance to the picture on page 73 of the manuscript,<sup>40</sup> where the ark is represented as a tub or sarcophagus. The image may be interpreted as a representation of baptism, which was conceived as a grave or womb, in that it entails rebirth.<sup>41</sup> This means that the ark may also be understood to allude to the individual Christian man or woman on his or her way towards salvation. These readings,

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<sup>37</sup> See Appendix, Plate X.

<sup>38</sup> Catherine E. Karkov, *Text and Picture in Anglo-Saxon England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), p. 90.

<sup>39</sup> Karkov.

<sup>40</sup> See Appendix, Plate XI.

<sup>41</sup> Karkov, *Text and Picture in Anglo-Saxon England*, p. 93.

whereby the account of the Great Flood in *Genesis A* is allegorical, including in its representation of the ark, lead me to the treatment of this biblical episode in another poem from the Junius 11 manuscript, namely *Exodus*.<sup>42</sup>

While the main narrative in *Exodus* adapts a selection of episodes from the Book of Exodus, its patriarchal digression comprises an adaptation of the Great Flood, which segues into Abraham's preparations to sacrifice his son Isaac. The latter narrative also interpolates a brief reference to Solomon's temple, where Solomon is identified as the wise son of David.<sup>43</sup> The two main episodes that comprise the digression are also told, in the context of the manuscript, in *Genesis A*. This suggests that an audience or, more likely, a reader, may have retrospectively interpreted these *Genesis A* episodes in the light of their rendition in *Exodus*. The Great Flood in *Exodus* takes up lines 362-76:

Niwe flodas Noe oferlað,  
þrymfæst þeoden, mid his þrim sunum,  
þone deopestan drencefloda  
þara ðe gewurde on woruldrice.  
Hæfde him on hreðre halige treowa;  
forþon he gelædde ofer lagustreamas  
maðmhorda mæst, mine gefræge.  
On feorhgebeorh foldan hæfde  
eallum eorðcynne ece lafe,  
frumcneow gehwæs, fæder ond moder  
tuddorteondra, geteled rime,  
missenlicra þonne men cunnon,

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<sup>42</sup> James W. Earl, 'Christian Tradition in the Old English *Exodus*', in *The Poems of MS Junius 11*, ed. by R. M. Liuzza (London: Routledge, 2002), pp. 137-72 (p. 160).

<sup>43</sup> See lines 389-90 of *Exodus*, ed. by Peter J. Lucas, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edn (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2020), pp. 125-26. All translations from *Exodus* are mine.

snottor sælonda. Eac þon sæda gehwile

on bearm scipes beornas feredon

þara þe under heofonum hæleð bryttigað.<sup>44</sup>

(Noah journeyed across the new waters, the glorious lord, with his three sons; the deepest drowning-flood that happened in the kingdom of the world. He kept the Holy Covenant in his heart; for that reason, as I have heard, he led the greatest of treasure-hoards over the flowing sea. The wise sailor protected the life of all of the Earth's kin, the everlasting remnant, the first generation of each, the father and mother of those who procreated; a number that counts more than men know. Also, the men carried in the bosom of the ship each seed under the heavens that is now of use to warriors.)

The reference to the Holy Covenant in line 366b recalls Gen 6.18, which relates that God establishes a covenant with Noah when he enters the ark. It also alludes to the more detailed rendition of the covenant upon Noah and his family's egress from the ark in Gen 9.8-17 and, possibly, Sir 44.17-19, as this text also treats the narratives of Noah and Abraham, just like *Exodus*.<sup>45</sup> The description of the ark as the greatest treasure hoard evokes 'the traditional typological association between the ark and the Church',<sup>46</sup> particularly where the text also makes reference to the eternal remnant, which anticipates the 'Christian faithful who will pass through judgement into glory as the eternal remnant'.<sup>47</sup> The subsequent reference to Abraham's readiness to sacrifice his son Isaac, which episode was typically understood to mark a turning point in salvation history,<sup>48</sup> further affirms the allegorical aspect of the narrative. As I already indicated in Chapter 1.2.1, Isaac's interrupted sacrifice was typically understood to prefigure the salvation of humankind. Hence, this discussion affirms that an

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<sup>44</sup> *Exodus*, pp. 122-24.

<sup>45</sup> Daniel Anlezark, 'Connecting the Patriarchs: Noah and Abraham in the Old English *Exodus*', *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, 104.2 (2005), 171-88 (p. 178).

<sup>46</sup> Anlezark, *Water and Fire: The Myth of the Flood in Anglo-Saxon England*, p. 198.

<sup>47</sup> Anlezark, p. 198.

<sup>48</sup> Anlezark, p. 199.

early medieval allegorical reading, or reassessment, of the *Genesis A* adaptation of the Great Flood, would also have been possible with reference to the broader manuscript context.

I now return to *Genesis A* to consider the narrative elements that bring the Great Flood episode to its conclusion. I hereby focus on the raven sent out by Noah to find dry land, which poses interpretative questions; and on Noah's sacrifice upon his egress from the ark, which alludes to the Creation. Bernard F. Huppé suggests that the raven betokens those men and women who refuse redemption,<sup>49</sup> a viewpoint that recalls Ambrose's interpretation of this creature in the corresponding biblical narrative.<sup>50</sup> In the context of *Genesis A* this interpretation finds support in the identification of the bird as a 'feond' (Gen A, l. 1447a) (enemy), which results from its abandonment of the search for dry land to alight on a corpse floating in the water (Gen A, l. 1446b-48). While the raven's abandonment of its search is biblically derived, its motivation is extra-biblical. This narrative detail may be found in Isidore of Seville's *Quaestiones in Vetus Testamentum*<sup>51</sup> and the fourth book of Alcimius Ecdicius Avitus's *De Spiritalis Historiae Gestis*.<sup>52</sup> These writers may have derived this detail from Jewish narratives.<sup>53</sup> In its appeal to this tradition, however, *Genesis A* may also be said to recall the vernacular representation of the raven as one of the beasts of battle, which also feast on human flesh.<sup>54</sup> Interestingly, a raven also makes an appearance just ahead of the battle for Sodom and Gomorrah in *Genesis A* itself, in lines 1983b-85a. This suggests that even where Noah's raven is biblically derived and draws on related Jewish tradition; it may also appeal to the known natural behaviour of this creature and its symbolic association with

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<sup>49</sup> Bernard F. Huppé, *Doctrine and Poetry: Augustine's Influence on Old English Poetry* (New York: State University of New York, 1959), p. 175.

<sup>50</sup> Milton McC. Gatch, 'Noah's Raven in *Genesis A* and the Illustrated Old English Hexateuch', *Gesta*, 14.2 (1975), 3-15 (p. 5).

<sup>51</sup> McC. Gatch, p.6.

<sup>52</sup> Alcimius Ecdicius Avitus, 'The Flood', in *The Poems of Alcimius Ecdicius Avitus*, trans. by George W. Shea (Tempe: Arizona board of Regents for Arizona State University, 1997), pp. 100-114 (p. 113).

<sup>53</sup> McC. Gatch, p 5.

<sup>54</sup> Todd Preston, 'Feathers and Figuration: Ravens in Old English Literature', in *Reading the Natural World in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance: Perceptions of the Environment and Ecology* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2020), pp. 37-51 (pp. 41-42).



death. At any rate, a simultaneously natural and symbolic representation of the raven may be observed in the gnomic *The Fortunes of Mortals*, which makes reference to the departure of the spirit and the raven's predilection for eye-balls.<sup>55</sup> In its representation of Noah's raven *Genesis A* also allows for a simultaneously naturalistic and symbolic interpretation of the raven, thereby complementing the allegorical reading of the Great Flood taken as a whole.

The last narrative element I hereby consider is Noah's sacrifice upon his egress from the ark. Discussion of this episode is important for two reasons. Firstly, it concludes the rendition of the Great Flood in the poem. Secondly, and more importantly, it alludes to the Creation. This approach conceptually recalls the prime cause of the Great Flood, which looks back to the rebel angels. Some of the details of Noah's sacrifice differ from the biblical original, as attested by the omission of animal sacrifice,<sup>56</sup> which may be said to Christianise the sacrifice. As Daniel Anlezark observes, the text also focuses on Noah's piety and obedience.<sup>57</sup> The account of the sacrifice in *Genesis A* also makes reference to the Earth's fertility, or greenness, in line 1517a, which recalls line 197a, which relates to God's creation of Earth. The injunction to increase and multiply, which is originally conveyed to Adam and Eve in lines 196-98a, which versify Gen 1.28, is repeated in lines 1512-14a, which versify Gen 9.1.<sup>58</sup> Noah's sacrifice therefore marks a new beginning that recalls the Creation, inasmuch as the Sethite lapse that leads to the Great Flood replicates the angelic rebellion.

In this section I have shown that the opening and conclusion to the Great Flood in *Genesis A* establish links with the narratives that precede this episode in the poem's chronology. The Great Flood may therefore be understood to form part of a broader narrative that represents biblical (and related) episodes archetypally, in that key elements from one narrative are repeated in another. This way, the onset of the Great Flood recalls the angelic

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<sup>55</sup> See Preston, p. 43.

<sup>56</sup> Anlezark, *Water and Fire: The Myth of the Flood in Anglo-Saxon England*, p. 178.

<sup>57</sup> Anlezark, p. 178.

<sup>58</sup> Facing page biblical verses and corresponding *Genesis A* text in *Genesis A- A New Edition*, pp. 152 and 196.

rebellion, while its conclusion evokes the Creation. Moreover, the rendition of the cataclysm in the biblical poem embraces the concept of Christ's presence in the Old Testament, and may be understood to anticipate Christ's redemption of humankind. The allusion to Christ, combined with the presence of the ark, also allows for an allegorical reading of the text. This reading is also prompted by the manuscript context, which point may not have been given its due attention by previous commentators. It is not clear, however, to what extent the narrative has been adapted to accommodate vernacular social values. Even where this may be presumed in relation to Noah's warning to his kinsmen, an alternative explanation with reference to Jewish tradition is at hand. The same is true of the representation of Noah's raven, in that the conceptual similarity to the raven of the Beasts of Battle is by no means the only explanation for this narrative element. The main point I make in my discussion of the raven, after all, is that its representation allows for purely literal or symbolic interpretation, and that it may therefore be understood to complement the allegorical dimension of the poem's rendition of the Great Flood. It is likely, however, that the representation of the antediluvian people as traitors may have been informed by vernacular social values, which values also underlie the depiction of the rebel angels to which this representation compares. I now turn to the Great Flood and related themes in *Beowulf*, which entails allusion to the biblical cataclysm in a non-biblical context.

### 5.3 The Drowning of the Giants in the Great Flood and its Significance in the context of *Beowulf*

*Beowulf*'s treatment of the Great Flood is brief, in that it is limited to reference to the drowning of the antediluvian giants. This theme is conveyed as part of a narratorial comment that describes the hilt of the sword with which Beowulf kills Grendel's mother,<sup>59</sup> as the protagonist hands the object to King Hrothgar. I argue that the brevity of this reference belies its importance in the context of the aftermath of Beowulf's confrontation of the poem's second monster. This is because the biblically derived episode points towards Grendel's mother's pride and the limitations of the Danes, whose understanding of the events that unfold around them is inadequate. I discuss Grendel's mother's pride with reference to the biblical theme and the sword hilt in section 5.3.1.<sup>60</sup> I then proceed to discuss King Hrothgar's so-called sermon, which is addressed to Beowulf following his victory against Grendel's

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<sup>59</sup> The blade of the sword melts away after Beowulf kills Grendel's mother and beheads her son's corpse in lines 1563-69 of *Klaeber's Beowulf*, ed. by R. D. Fulk, Robert E. Bjork and John D. Niles, 4<sup>th</sup> Edn (London: University of Toronto Press, 2008), pp 53-54. Further references to this work will be given parenthetically in the main text and indicated by the abbreviation 'B'. All bracketed translations of *Beowulf* are mine.

<sup>60</sup> My discussion in this section is made with reference to, *inter alia*, F. A. Blackburn, 'The Christian Coloring in the *Beowulf*', in *An Anthology of Beowulf Criticism*, ed. by Lewis E. Nicholson (London: University of Notre Dame Press, 1963; repr. 1980), pp. 1-22 (first publ. in *PMLA*, 12(1897), 205-25); Marie Padgett Hamilton, 'The Religious Principle in *Beowulf*', *PMLA*, 61.2 (1946), 309-30; Stephen C. Bandy, 'Cain, Grendel, and the Giants of *Beowulf*', *Papers on Language and Literature*, 9.3 (1973), 235-49 (p. 240); Jane C. Nitzsche, 'The Structural Unity of *Beowulf*: The Problem of Grendel's Mother', *Details: Texas Studies in Literature and Language*, 22.3 (1980), 287-303; Jane Chance, 'Grendel's Mother as Epic Anti-Type of the Virgin and Queen', in *Interpretations of Beowulf*, ed. by R. D. Fulk (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991), pp. 251-63 (first publ. in Jane Chance, *Woman as Hero in Old English Literature* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1986), pp. 95-108 and 131-35); Johann Köberl, 'The Magic Sword in *Beowulf*', *Neophilologus*, 71.1 (1987), 120-28; Seth Lerer, 'Hrothgar's Hilt and the Reader in *Beowulf*', in *The Postmodern Beowulf: A Critical Casebook*, ed. by Eileen A. Joy and Mary K. Ramsey (Morgantown: West Virginia University Press, 2006), pp. 587-628 (first publ. in *Literacy and Power in Anglo-Saxon England* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1991), pp. 158-94); Richard J. Schrader, 'The Language of the Giant's Sword Hilt in *Beowulf*', *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen*, 94.2 (1993), 141-47; Allen J. Frantzen, 'Writing the Unreadable *Beowulf*: *Writan* and *Forwritan*, the Pen and the Sword', *Exemplaria*, 3.2 (1991), 327-57; Anlezark, *Water and Fire: The Myth of the Flood in Anglo-Saxon England*; Richard North, *The Origins of Beowulf: from Vergil to Wiglaf* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006); M. Wendy Hannequin, 'We've created a Monster: The Strange Case of Grendel's Mother', *English Studies*, 89.5 (2008), 503-23; Margaret E. Goldsmith, *The Mode and Meaning of Beowulf*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013); Brian Cook, 'Textual Homelands: Reinterpreting the Manuscript Runes in *Beowulf*', *English Studies*, 98.4 (2017), 551-67; Dennis Cronan, 'Hroðgar and the Gylden Hilt in *Beowulf*', *Traditio*, 72 (2017), 109-32; and Adam Miyashiro, 'Homeland Insecurity: Biopolitics and Sovereign Violence in *Beowulf*', *Postmedieval: A Journal of Medieval Cultural Studies*, 11 (2020), 384-95.

mother, in section 5.3.2.<sup>61</sup> This text, I argue, points to the king's inability to fully comprehend the significance of the events that unfold around his people, as for the sword hilt. My discussion of the Great Flood and related themes in *Beowulf* is therefore informed by the same principles that inform my discussions of the Creation and Cain themes in Chapters 2.3 and 4.3 respectively. As for my discussions of the Creation and Cain themes, my discussion of the Great Flood and related themes points to the limited ability of the poem's characters to interpret the events that unfold around them. Moreover, I argue that the connection between the Giants and Grendel's mother suggests that the biblically derived narrative is an archetype for Grendel's mother, inasmuch as the Cain theme is an archetype for the Grendelkin. Finally, I engage in a discussion of Grendel's mother's aquatic abode in section 5.3.3,<sup>62</sup> which is relevant to the present discussion in that it explains her status as an antediluvian creature who survives the Great Flood, which I also briefly mentioned in Chapter 4.3.3.

### 5.3.1 The Drowning of the Antediluvian Giants and Grendel's Mother's Pride

I indicated, in section 5.3, that the reference to the Great Flood in *Beowulf* is conveyed in a passage that describes the sword hilt handed over by the protagonist to King Hrothgar. The hilt is also described in related passages that respectively state when and how this artefact fell

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<sup>61</sup> In this discussion I make reference to, *inter alia*, Fred C. Robinson, *Beowulf and the Appositive Style* (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1985); Chance, *Woman as Hero in Old English Literature*; Scott De Gregorio, 'Theorizing Irony in *Beowulf*: The Case of Hrothgar', *Exemplaria*, 11.2 (1999), 309-43; Paul Cavill, 'Christianity and Theology in *Beowulf*', in *The Christian Tradition in Anglo-Saxon England: Approaches to Current Scholarship and Teaching*, ed. by Paul Cavill (Cambridge: Brewer, 2004), pp. 15-41; Mary Catherine Davidson, 'Speaking of Nostalgia in *Beowulf*', *Modern Philology*, 103.2 (2005), 143-55; and, Scott Gwara, *Heroic Identity in the World of Beowulf* (Leiden: Brill, 2008).

<sup>62</sup> In this discussion I make reference, *inter alia*, to W.S. Mackie, 'The Demons' Home in *Beowulf*', *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, 37.4 (1938), 455-61; Richard Butts, 'The Analogical Mere: Landscape and Terror in *Beowulf*', *English Studies*, 68.2 (1987), 113-21; Charles D. Wright, *The Irish Tradition in Old English Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993); Margaret Gelling, 'The Landscape of *Beowulf*', *Anglo-Saxon England*, 31 (2002), 7-11; Stuart Elden, 'Place Symbolism and Land Politics in *Beowulf*', *Cultural Geographies*, 16.4 (2009), 447-63; Paul S. Langeslag, 'Monstrous Landscape in *Beowulf*', *English Studies*, 96.2 (2015), 119-38; Alexandra Bolintineanu, 'Declarations of Unknowing in *Beowulf*', *Neophilologus*, 100.4 (2016), 631-47; Katayoun Torabi, 'Two New Approaches to Exploring Monstrous Landscapes in *Beowulf* and *Blickling Homily XVII*', *Essays in Medieval Studies*, 31 (2016), 165-82; Nicole Guenther Discenza, *Inhabited Spaces: Anglo-Saxon Constructions of Place* (London: University of Toronto Press, 2017); Heide Estes, *Anglo-Saxon Literary Landscapes: Ecotheory and the Environmental Imagination* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2017); and, Michael Bintley, 'Hrindle Bearwas: The Trees at the Mere and the Root of All Evil', *Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, 119.3 (2020), 309-26.

into King Hrothgar's hands, and that the name of the sword's first owner or maker is inscribed upon it. In this section I discuss these passages, as well as the manner in which they relate to Grendel's mother and her pride.

The reference to the Great Flood is to be found in the following narratorial passage that describes the mentioned sword hilt:

[...] On ðāem wæs ðor writen  
fyrngewinnes; syðþan flōd ofslōh,  
ġifen ġēotende ġiganta cyn,  
frēcne ġefērdon; þæt wæs fremde þēod  
ēcean dryhtne; him þæs endelēan  
purh wæteres wylm waldend sealde. (B, l. 1688b-93)

(The origin of ancient strife was engraved/depicted upon it; the waters, the gushing sea, have afterwards slain the race of giants. They fared horribly. That was a people estranged from the Eternal Lord. The Ruler gave them their final reward for that through the surge of the waters.)

The narrator<sup>63</sup> also describes the same hilt a few lines earlier, as follows:

Ðā wæs gylden hilt gamelum rince,  
hārum hildfruman on hand ġyfen,  
enta ærgeweorc; hit on æht ġehwearf  
æfter dēofla hryre Denigea frean,  
wundorsmiþa geweorc. (B, l. 1677-81a)

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<sup>63</sup> The context suggests that both passages are spoken by the narrator, even if the description of the hilt in lines 1688b-93 is preceded by the words: 'Hrōðgār maðelode; hylt scēawode | ealde lāfe' (B, l. 1867-68a) (Hrothgar spoke; he saw the hilt, the ancient remnant). This is because the king's speech commences in line 1700 and is preceded by commentary to the effect that the wise son of Healfdene speaks (B, l. 1698b-99a).

(Then the golden hilt, the ancient work of giants, was given into the hands of the old warrior, the old prince. It, the work of marvellous smiths, passed unto the leader of the Danes after the devils' fall.)

The reference to the inscription of the sword's first owner or maker's name<sup>64</sup> is to be found in lines 1695-96: 'þurh rúnstafas rihte ġemearcod, | ġeseted on ġesæd, hwām þæt sweord ġeworht (B, l. 1695-96) (it was rightly marked, in rune-letters, set out and stated for/by whom that sword was made).<sup>65</sup>

These three passages pose interpretative questions and challenges. The second text I cite above, which makes reference to the devils' fall, may either be understood to allude exclusively to the Grendelkin; or to the angelic fall as well.<sup>66</sup> The latter possibility is plausible when considering that, as I observed in Chapter 4.3, the Grendelkin are elsewhere associated with biblical reprobates. The third text's allusion to the sword's first maker or owner is, quite possibly, more problematic to interpret. Previous commentators considered the possibility that this sword originates with or recalls Cain or his descendant Tubalcain.<sup>67</sup> The identification of Cain or a Cainite descendant as the owner or maker of the weapon makes sense in the context of the poem, given that Grendel's mother, in whose refuge the sword is found (B, l. 1557-59), is a descendant of Cain, as I indicated in Chapter 4.3. For all that, *Beowulf* provides no clues as to the identity of the sword's owner or maker, which means that any such claims remain conjectural. However, the passage is significant in that the term *runstafas*, or rune-letters, recalls hilts and swords inscribed with runic names or formulas.<sup>68</sup> The reason why this is significant is that it links the antediluvian giants associated with the sword in the passage that covers lines 1688b-93, cited above, and the audience's

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<sup>64</sup> Cronan, 'Hroðgar and the Gylden Hilt in *Beowulf*', p. 120.

<sup>65</sup> Allen J. Frantzen, 'Writing the Unreadable *Beowulf*: *Writan* and *Forwritan*, the Pen and the Sword', *Exemplaria*, 3.2 (1991), 327-57 (p. 347) argued that it is not clear whether the rune-letters give the name of the maker or the owner of the sword.

<sup>66</sup> Köberl, p.124.

<sup>67</sup> See footnote 17 in Köberl, p. 127, and North, p. 69.

<sup>68</sup> Lerer, p. 595.

material present, to which runic names and formulas belong. Moreover, the fact that the sword is found in Grendel's mother's refuge, and that it is also associated with the vernacular name for giants, namely 'enta' in line 1679a cited above, suggests that it represents a link between the antediluvian giants and creatures of vernacular origin.<sup>69</sup> The reference to the antediluvian giants in *Beowulf*, in other words, is rendered in terms directly relevant to the audience. The passage in lines 1688b-93 is the only one of the three I hereby consider to comprise a clearly identifiable biblical reference, i.e. the text relating to the drowning of the giants in the Great Flood. I recognise, however, that while my interpretation of this passage is based on the premise that this reference to the Great Flood is important even if brief, this was by no means always the prevailing view in *Beowulf* criticism. F. A. Blackburn, one of the poem's early critics, considered that the reference to the Great Flood is a mere interpolation, and that the authorial passage would have referred to the confrontation between giants and pre-Christian gods.<sup>70</sup> However, more recent critical work not only recognises that the extant language of this passage alludes to the biblical flood, but also that the giants who perish therein are, correspondingly, antediluvian.<sup>71</sup> In this respect, the phrase 'giganta cyn' (giant race) in line 1690b is as important as the description of the waters in the same passage, given that as I observed in Chapter 4.3.3 this term is never used to identify Grendel or Grendel's mother, who live in the postdiluvian world.

While the language of this passage suggests that reference is being made to the biblical flood, the term 'fyrngewinnes' ('first ancient strife') in line 1689a is not that easy to decipher. Moreover, the wording of the text is ambiguous as to the relation between what is represented on the sword hilt, namely the first ancient strife, and the drowning of the Giants in the Great Flood, which follows that strife. By definition, the term *fyrngewinnes* must refer

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<sup>69</sup> Bandy, p. 240.

<sup>70</sup> Blackburn, pp. 14-15.

<sup>71</sup> See Schrader, pp. 141-47, who also contends that the language that King Hrothgar sees on the inscription, but cannot read, is Hebrew.

to something that is understood to have happened before the onset of the Great Flood.

Previous commentators have suggested three main possibilities, namely that this first ancient strife is the angelic rebellion, Cain's killing of his brother, or the acts committed by the giants themselves before the onset of the inundation.<sup>72</sup> The ambiguity of the passage does not rule out any of these possibilities. Moreover, it is possible that the reference to the giants drowned in the Great Flood is not inscribed or otherwise represented on the hilt, but is rather mentioned by the narrator as a digression relating what happened after the first ancient strife.<sup>73</sup> While the ambiguity of the text makes it difficult to draw any definitive conclusions in this regard, textual ambiguity may be significant in itself. This is because the members of the audience are left to consider the possibility that King Hrothgar does not see everything that they are told. In any case, the Christian audience would have been knowledgeable of the pre-Christian characters' limitations, which limitations suggest that King Hrothgar does not even comprehend whatever it is that he sees.<sup>74</sup> This is the case given that the reference to the Great Flood is scriptural. This is also likely to be true of the first ancient strife, as I explained above. The limitations of the Danes as pre-Christian characters, moreover, are explored by the narrative in the context of the Creation sequence, in particular the *gastbona* (slayer of souls) passage that forms part of it, which I discussed in Chapter 2.3. The description of the sword hilt, in all the certainties and ambiguities it represents, therefore reaffirms a point I made in Chapters 2.3 and 4.3, namely that *Beowulf* draws on the distinction between

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<sup>72</sup> See North, p. 68, and 'Commentary', in *Klaeber's Beowulf*, pp. 110-272 (p. 212)

<sup>73</sup> See 'Commentary', in *Klaeber's Beowulf*, pp. 110-272 (p. 212) where reference is made to this viewpoint, which was first expressed by Dennis Cronan.

<sup>74</sup> See Cook, p. 359, and Miyashiro, pp. 389-40. King Hrothgar's inability to interpret signs may also be observed elsewhere in the narrative. See James Paz, 'Æschere's Head, Grendel's Mother and the Sword that isn't a Sword: Unreadable Things in *Beowulf*', *Exemplaria*, 25.3 (2013), 231-51 (pp. 235-36), whose discussion of the name Æschere suggests that Grendel's mother's abduction of this man compromises King Hrothgar's knowledge; Matthew Scribner, 'Signs, Interpretation, and Exclusion in *Beowulf*', in *Darkness, Depression, and Descent in Anglo-Saxon England*, ed. by Ruth Wehlau (Kalamazoo: Western Michigan University, 2019), pp. 117-32 (p. 123), who points to King Hrothgar's misinterpretation of the blood in the water at the end of Beowulf's confrontation with Grendel's mother, which he mistakes for Beowulf's; and, Joseph St. John, 'The Meaning Behind Beowulf's Beheading of Grendel's Corpse', *Leeds Medieval Studies*, 1 (2021), 49-58 (pp. 54-58), where I argue that Beowulf does not glean the meaning behind Grendel's head, which meaning is likewise inaccessible to the Danes (and King Hrothgar), who likewise have no knowledge of the monster's origin in Cain.



audience and characters. More than that, it suggests that *Beowulf* resorts to this distinction in relation to all of its scriptural references.

Anlezark argues that the reference to the antediluvian giants is an overt intertext for the benefit of the audience, in that it serves as a guide towards interpretation of the action in the narrative.<sup>75</sup> I consider that this intertext functions at more than one level. In the first place, it points to the aforementioned distinction between audience and characters. Secondly, it informs, *a posteriori*, the audience's interpretation of Grendel's mother. This is because the giants drowned in the Great Flood were typically associated with pride. While the Book of Genesis does not specifically identify pride as the sin committed by the giants, Wisdom 14.6 describes these beings as *superbi gigantes* (proud giants).<sup>76</sup> Moreover, Gregory the Great linked the giants who groan under the waters in Job 26.5, which giants were typically identified with those of Gen 6.4, with the giants of Isaiah 26.14. Gregory attributed the irreversible fall of these giants, which do not rise again, to excessive pride, which bars them from penitence.<sup>77</sup> I contend that Grendel's mother may likewise have been perceived as guilty of pride by early medieval audiences, in that she oversteps socially-imposed gender boundaries.<sup>78</sup> This character's pursuit of revenge, for instance, is atypical of the poem's female characters.<sup>79</sup> Moreover, *Maxims I* specifies that in early medieval England battle and war were exclusively masculine activities.<sup>80</sup> Grendel's mother's straddling of social boundaries also transpires from her simultaneous identification as a woman and her masculinisation, which I discussed in Chapter 4.3.2. In a sense, therefore, the antediluvian giants are the biblical archetype for Grendel's mother, with whom she also shares the sword

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<sup>75</sup> Anlezark, *Water and Fire: The Myth of the Flood in Anglo-Saxon England*, p. 293.

<sup>76</sup> See Goldsmith, p. 46.

<sup>77</sup> Hamilton, p. 315.

<sup>78</sup> See also Chance, 'Grendel's Mother as Epic Anti-Type of the Virgin and Queen', p. 263.

<sup>79</sup> Hannequin, pp. 505-06.

<sup>80</sup> Nietzsche, p. 288.

that Beowulf finds in her refuge. Her death at the edge of this sword, in a refuge surrounded by water, also recalls the watery death suffered by her antediluvian counterparts.

In this section I observe that *Beowulf*'s reference to the drowning of the antediluvian giants may be understood to function as an archetype for Grendel's mother, and that the sword hilt points to the distinction between audience and character that also transpires elsewhere in the narrative. In this instance, this is attested by King Hrothgar's inability to interpret whatever it is that he sees on the sword hilt. My analysis of the king's response to the hilt and Beowulf's victory in the next section, in his so-called sermon, confirms his limitations as a pre-Christian man. This is because King Hrothgar does not benefit from a Christian perspective and, by inference, knowledge of scripture. My discussion of the speech therefore complements my discussion of the sword hilt.

### **5.3.2 King Hrothgar's Sermon**

The speech King Hrothgar addresses to Beowulf after his victory over Grendel's mother is known as Hrothgar's sermon on account of its homiletic style.<sup>81</sup> I argue that this speech, in which the king responds to the sword hilt and to Beowulf's victory, is characterised by a discrepancy between style and content. While the text makes use of homiletic language and techniques, its explicit thematic focus is on reward and punishment in this world. It transpires, in the course of the speech, that Hrothgar is knowledgeable of the conventions that govern his society; however, his exclusive focus on this world, coupled with the text's homiletic style, draw attention to his ignorance of scripture. The king's limitations in this regard complement the presence of the fratricidal Unferth in the Danish court, which casts doubt on Hrothgar's wisdom,<sup>82</sup> as well as his inability to glean the meaning of the sword hilt. At the same time, the notions of kingship conveyed in the speech converge with Christian

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<sup>81</sup> See Leonard Neidorf, 'Beowulf Lines 175-88 and the Transmission of Old English Poetry', *Studies in Philology*, 119.1 (2022), 1-24 (pp. 16-19) for a discussion that dismisses the notion that this passage is an interpolation on account of, *inter alia*, its homiletic style.

<sup>82</sup> De Gregorio, p. 329.

morality, which lend the speech a tropological dimension. This is because the Christian message that may be gleaned by the audience, particularly by way of the style of the speech and biblical allusion in the preceding sword hilt passage, is represented as an integral part of what would have been perceived as ancestral history.

The first question I consider in my analysis of this speech is the Danish king's motivation for making it. Mary Catherine Davidson argues that the lexical strategies employed in the speech 'legitimize Hrothgar's authority through the insertion of conventional formulae [and] noninnovative lexical choices', which are 'aimed at reproducing linguistic dominance'.<sup>83</sup> The formulaic terms and phrases identified by Davidson include 'sōð ond riht' (right and true) (B, l. 1700b), 'mōdes snyttrum' (wise ways) (B, l. 1706a) and 'hæleðum tō helpe' (as help to the warriors) (B, l. 1709a). The hypermetrical lines where the Danish king emphasises Beowulf's bonds of loyalty to him fulfil the same purpose.<sup>84</sup> The speech therefore asserts Hrothgar's authority as king. Yet, the language of authority is not employed throughout the text. The account of King Heremod's life, which is a negative *exemplum* told for Beowulf's benefit, is marked by *hapax legomena* and unusual compounds.<sup>85</sup> At this stage King Hrothgar is no longer defining his relationship with Beowulf, but is rather recounting his personal and the Danish historical experience. The king also mentions the sorrow caused by Grendel's depredations (B, l. 1775b-78a) and describes the monster, or his 'ealdgewinna' (ancient strife) (B, l. 1776a), in terms that recall Heremod's actions directed against his own men, described by the term 'gewinnes' (strife) (B, l. 1721a). Therefore, King Hrothgar's speech associates Grendel's depredations with internal social conflict. Moreover, the audience may identify a connection between the use of these terms in the speech and the description of the sword hilt that precedes it, in that the latter makes use of the term 'fyrngewinnes' (ancient strife) (B, l. 1689a). While the precise referent of the term

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<sup>83</sup> Davidson, p. 146.

<sup>84</sup> Davidson, p. 147.

<sup>85</sup> Davidson, p. 147.

*fyrngewinnes* is not easy to identify, the context suggests this is a biblically derived or related episode, which means that Grendel's depredations and Heremod's misdeeds may be traced back to biblical reprobates. This connection, however, is only visible to the audience, and not to the characters, for as I indicated in Chapters 2.3, 4.3 and in section 5.3.1, the latter neither have access to the narratorial voice nor to the Christian knowledge it expresses. It is therefore ironic that King Hrothgar makes use of the homiletic repetition of the term *oððe* (or)<sup>86</sup> followed by alternative ways whereby the protagonist may die (B, l. 1763-68). This is likewise true of King Hrothgar's *exemplum* or psychomachia<sup>87</sup> of a man whose 'sāwele hyrde' (guardian of the soul) (B, l. 1742a) slept, whereupon the enemy struck with fiery darts (B, l. 1743b-44). Boniface makes use of similar imagery in his letter addressed to King Æpilbald of Mercia, dateable to the 740s,<sup>88</sup> which imagery is reminiscent of Psalm 10.3 and Eph 6.16.<sup>89</sup> In the context of *Beowulf*, however, this language primarily highlights the limitations inherent to the speaker's viewpoint, which is fixed on reward and punishment in this world.

King Hrothgar's exclusive focus on this world emerges in his rendition of Heremod's story, in that the wicked king is punished by exile (B, l. 1714b-15). Likewise, the unnamed or hypothetical miserly king at the centre of Hrothgar's second *exemplum* is punished when his place is taken over by someone who distributes treasure to his followers (B, l. 1753-57). King Hrothgar's exclusive focus on worldly consequences has two main functions. The first, as I already explained, is to convey to the audience the king's limitations. The second is to draw attention to the didactic message that transcends the king's focus, as in the case of the reference to the soul in line 1742a of the speech. This is because the homiletic style of the

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<sup>86</sup> Davidson, p. 147.

<sup>87</sup> Cavill, p. 20.

<sup>88</sup> Gwara, p. 207.

<sup>89</sup> See Mark Atherton, 'The Figure of the Archer in *Beowulf* and the Anglo-Saxon Psalter', *Neophilologus*, 77.4 (1993), 653-57, and Erin Sebo, 'Foreshadowing the End in *Beowulf*', *English Studies*, 99.8 (2018), 836-47 (p. 840).

speech would have appealed to audiences accustomed to the recitation of sermons, and would therefore have reminded the individuals in question of the transience of this world.

King Hrothgar's speech is also moral or tropological, in that it equates Christian morality with social notions of kingship. King Heremod's avarice and violence towards his own men, for instance, are damning from both Christian and social perspectives. This is because a king is expected to distribute treasure to his followers in the way that King Hrothgar himself does,<sup>90</sup> for in the context of *Beowulf* the distribution of treasure is 'a metonymy for lordship and the Christian ideal'.<sup>91</sup> Moreover, the Danish king identifies or alludes to three vices in the course of his speech, namely envy, pride and avarice. These vices are represented in what Jane Chance calls Germanic terms,<sup>92</sup> i.e. in terms that may also be identified as vernacular. Chance argues that envy is the motivation behind Heremod's killing of his companions in lines 1713-14, while she pointed out that pride misguides the hypothetical ruler whose conscience sleeps (B, l. 1740-44). Greed, moreover, is evident in the same ruler's angry-minded craving for treasure (B, l. 1749a).<sup>93</sup> Evidently, these vices would also have borne Christian significance for early medieval audiences. In the context of the text, therefore, these vices entail convergence between Christian morality and notions of kingship that would have been prevailing in a vernacular context.<sup>94</sup> These vices are also significant in the context of the main narrative, for as I observe in Chapter 4.3.4 Grendel stands for envy, while as I indicate in section 5.3.1 Grendel's mother epitomises pride. The dragon, moreover, represents avarice, or greed, in its thirst for gold.<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> See Raymond P. Tripp, 'The Exemplary Role of Hrothgar and Heorot', *Philological Quarterly*, 56.1 (1977), 123-29 (p. 124) for a discussion of King Hrothgar's exemplary behaviour in the poem's opening lines.

<sup>91</sup> Joseph E. Marshall, 'Goldgyfan or Goldwlancc: A Christian Apology for Beowulf and Treasure', *Studies in Philology*, 107.1 (2010), 1-24 (p. 2).

<sup>92</sup> Chance, *Woman as Hero in Old English Literature*, p. 107.

<sup>93</sup> Chance. See also Kazutomo Karasawa, 'A Note on *egesan ne gymeð* in *Beowulf* Line 1757', *Modern Philology*, 106.1 (2008), 101-08 (p. 108), for a discussion of the hypothetical king.

<sup>94</sup> Robinson, p. 33.

<sup>95</sup> J. R. R. Tolkien, 'Beowulf: The Monsters and the Critics', in *Interpretations of Beowulf*, pp. 14-44 (p. 23) (first publ. in *Proceedings of the British Academy* 22(1936), 245-95).

This discussion demonstrates that King Hrothgar's speech fulfils two main functions. Convergence between social and Christian values may be said to promote Christian values in a social context. This aspect points to the poem's Christian ideology, which also transpires from the narrative's recourse to biblical myth to explain vernacular creatures or phenomena, as I indicated in my discussions in Chapters 2.3, 4.3 and section 5.3.1. At the same time, disjunction between the homiletic style of the speech, and King Hrothgar's worldly perspective, points to his limitations. This is because the style would have reminded audiences accustomed to the recitation of sermons of a focus on the afterlife, and the transience of this life. This discussion therefore also confirms that King Hrothgar does not comprehend the sword hilt, in that he lacks the Christian perspective that would be required to do so.

Now that I have discussed the sermon, I turn to a short passage that follows it in the chronology of the narrative. In line 1810a the narrator makes reference to a 'hrefn blaca' (black/shiny raven),<sup>96</sup> which is atypically and perhaps incongruously associated with 'heofones wynne' (B, l. 1801b) (Heaven's joy).<sup>97</sup> Sylvia Huntley Horowitz argues that, in this context, the bird is reminiscent of the raven released by Noah from the ark, and that it is therefore 'a symbol of the survival of evil in the world'.<sup>98</sup> Even if the adduced connection between the raven in *Beowulf* and the Great Flood may appear tenuous, particularly where alternative explanations for this narrative element in the heroic-elegiac poem have been put forward,<sup>99</sup> Horowitz's argument is lent credence by the reference to the Great Flood in the sword hilt passage that precedes Hrothgar's speech. It is therefore possible that King

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<sup>96</sup> See Eric Lacey, 'Beowulf's Blithe-Hearted Raven', in *Representing Beasts in Early Medieval England and Scandinavia*, ed. by Michael D.J. Bintley and Thomas J.T. Williams (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2015), pp. 113-30 (pp. 119-24), for a discussion of the ambiguity of the term *blaca*.

<sup>97</sup> Lacey, pp. 114-15.

<sup>98</sup> Sylvia Huntley Horowitz, 'The Ravens in *Beowulf*', *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, 80.4 (1981), 502-11 (p. 505).

<sup>99</sup> See Marijane Osborn, 'Domesticating the Dayraven in *Beowulf* 1801', in *Heroic Poetry in the Anglo-Saxon Period: Studies in Honor of Jess B. Bessinger, Jr.*, ed. by Helen Damico and John Leyerle (Kalamazoo: Western Michigan University, 1993), pp. 313-30 (pp. 316-26), and Lacey, pp. 116-19, who gave an overview of critical views of this narrative element.

Hrothgar's so-called sermon is not only preceded, but also followed, by a passage that may be read as an allusion to the Great Flood. It is also relevant that both allusions refer to the negative aspects of the biblical narrative. As I observed in my section 5.2.2 discussion of the raven in *Genesis A*, this bird is a symbol of death, as shown by the biblical poem's recourse to an extra-biblical tradition that associates it with the consumption of human flesh. It would therefore not be amiss to suggest, as Horowitz did, that the raven in *Beowulf* attests to the renewal of evil following Beowulf's victory over Grendel's mother. In any case, this is in tune with the course of events in the rest of the narrative, as attested, *inter alia*, by Beowulf's anticipation of the resumption of Danish-Heathobard conflict (B, l. 2024b-69a) and the protagonist's confrontation of a third antagonist, the dragon.<sup>100</sup> I now turn to Grendel's mother's aquatic abode that may be said to explain her survival of the Great Flood, as I briefly indicated in Chapter 4.3.3.

### 5.3.3 Grendel's Mother's *Mere*

I indicated, in Chapter 4.3.1, that in this thesis I refer to Grendel's mother's abode using the Old English term *mere* in recognition of the lack of consensus among commentators over the type of aquatic environment that this term denotes. While the precise nature of the *mere* is in dispute, the location that this term describes is evidently aquatic. It is also a fantasy<sup>101</sup> and symbolic landscape,<sup>102</sup> an extended metaphor for terror.<sup>103</sup> This is attested by the inconsistency in the description of the way leading to this location, which is joyful (B, l. 854b) for those warriors who follow Grendel's tracks following his defeat, but hard and strange (B, l. 1409-12) for those who accompany Beowulf on his way to face the monstrous

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<sup>100</sup> See Christine Rauer, *Beowulf and the Dragon* (Cambridge: Brewer, 2000), pp. 24-51, for a discussion of the dragon episode with reference to its vernacular and hagiographical sources, which on a conceptual level recalls the combination of vernacular and biblical elements in the representation of Grendel and his mother.

<sup>101</sup> Gelling, p. 7.

<sup>102</sup> Bolintineanu, p. 641.

<sup>103</sup> Butts, p. 113.

mother.<sup>104</sup> This is also true of the *mere* itself;<sup>105</sup> while King Hrothgar describes it as a ‘dark deep pool, surrounded by trees’,<sup>106</sup> terms such as ‘seġlrāde’ (B, L. 1429b) (sail-road) and ‘yðgebland’ (B, l. 1620a) (tossing/surging waves), which describe the same location as Beowulf and his companions make their way there, recall the sea and its horrors<sup>107</sup> rather than a pool. The *mere* also recalls the apocryphal description of Hell in the *Visio S. Pauli* tradition and, like the fens that surround St Guthlac’s hermitage, is inhabited by demons<sup>108</sup> or demon-like creatures. These descriptions of the *mere* are relevant to my discussion of the biblical elements in *Beowulf* because they relate, even if indirectly, to these references or allusions. I indicated, in Chapter 4.3.3, that Grendel’s mother is said to have dwelt in cold streams since Cain killed his brother (B, l. 1258b-63a), which suggests that her aquatic nature explains, on a literal plane, her survival of the Great Flood. Moreover, the giants of lines 1677-81a, which I discussed in section 5.3.1, drown in the waters of the Great Flood.

In his study of the *mere* P. S. Langeslag points out that past scholarship ‘recognized a connection between Grendel’s damp abode and his biblical ancestry’.<sup>109</sup> S. J. Crawford adduced Job 26.5, which tells of the giants that groan under the waters, as a model for *Beowulf*, while David Williams argues that the wilderness represented in the poem denotes the exile of the Grendelkin on the Cainite model.<sup>110</sup> This means that the *mere* not only offers an explanation for Grendel’s mother’s survival of the Great Flood, but is also an expression of her, and her son’s, exile from humankind. The representation of Grendel’s mother as semi-aquatic also conforms with Augustinian exegesis relating to the Great Flood in the *City of God*, where it is stated that no aquatic creatures had to be boarded on the ark to be saved.<sup>111</sup>

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<sup>104</sup> Bolintineanu, p. 641.

<sup>105</sup> Mackie, p. 456.

<sup>106</sup> Mackie, pp. 456-57.

<sup>107</sup> Elden, p. 451.

<sup>108</sup> See Estes, p. 46.

<sup>109</sup> Langeslag, p. 123.

<sup>110</sup> Langeslag, pp. 123-24.

<sup>111</sup> Langeslag, p. 126.



Hence, the exegesis that informs the Grendelkin may have been drawn from an Augustinian reading of the Old Testament, ‘but with the provision of a dry cave to allow for a more terrestrial, and therefore more humanoid, species of monster’.<sup>112</sup>

The liminal environment of the *mere*, which is attested, *inter alia*, by Grendel’s mother’s dry cave, is therefore integrated into the narrative’s biblical and Christian scheme. It explains, on the one hand, Grendel’s mother’s survival of the Great Flood while, on the other, it enables her representation as a descendant (or contemporary) of Cain and heiress to the giants who perish in the inundation. I recall, in this regard, that Beowulf finds the sword that slays her, which is associated with the antediluvian giants, in her refuge within the *mere*. This does not mean, however, that Grendel’s mother, or Grendel for that matter, would not have originated in vernacular non-Christian traditions. I discussed the connection between Beowulf’s confrontation of the Grendelkin and the folktale known as the Hand and the Child in Chapter 4.3.1, which connection suggests that the first two monster fights in *Beowulf* belong to a vernacular non-Christian tradition. More to the point, Alaric Hall’s study of place name evidence establishes clear connections between monstrous creatures and English water features or depressions.<sup>113</sup> Hence, the *mere* adapts non-Christian or vernacular elements to a biblical and Christianised setting. At the same time the *mere* is uncanny, as attested by its status as a mysterious wasteland that is difficult access, and its simultaneous proximity to King Hrothgar’s hall.<sup>114</sup> This aspect of the *mere* reflects the characteristics of its humanoid inhabitants, who ‘straddle the boundary between human and non-human’.<sup>115</sup> The mysterious aspect of the *mere*, which evokes a hellish landscape, recalls Blickling Homily XVI,<sup>116</sup>

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<sup>112</sup> Langeslag, p. 127.

<sup>113</sup> Alaric Hall, *Elves in Anglo-Saxon England* (Suffolk: The Boydell Press, 2007), pp. 64-66.

<sup>114</sup> Discenza, p. 145.

<sup>115</sup> Discenza, p. 146.

<sup>116</sup> Durant W. Robertson, ‘The Doctrine of Charity in Mediaeval Literary Gardens: A Topical Approach through Symbolism and Allegory’, *Speculum*, 26.1 (1951), 24-49 (p. 32).

numbered XVII in Richard Morris's edition of the homilies.<sup>117</sup> This is a vernacular adaptation of the *Visio S. Pauli* tradition, which adaptation may postdate the composition of *Beowulf*. The similarities between the two texts, however, led Wright and Andy Orchard<sup>118</sup> to suggest that they draw on the same unknown vernacular source.<sup>119</sup> Katayoun Torabi argues, instead, that the texts independently draw on the same set of ideas.<sup>120</sup> While the details relating to the similarities and differences between *Beowulf* and the Homily<sup>121</sup> are not of direct relevance to the present discussion, I had to mention this point in that it suggests that *Beowulf* may have been influenced by a Christian source in its representation of an aquatic location associated with the heiress to the giants who perish in the biblical inundation. This is the case even where the nature of this connection is contested, and where other explanations, including natural explanations, have been proposed for key elements of the description of the *mere*. This is the case, for instance, for its *fyr on flode* (fire on the water), which is attributed to swamp gases by Christopher Abram.<sup>122</sup>

While the connection between Blickling Homily XVI and *Beowulf* is contested, the present discussion suggests that the liminal representation of the *mere* reflects the nature of its inhabitants, who are in some measure human even where they are monstrous. The *mere* therefore accommodates the representation of the Grendelkin as descendants of Cain and, more importantly in the context of the present discussion, as the heirs to the giants that perish in the Great Flood. This aquatic locale is also meaningful on a more literal level, in that it explains how Grendel's mother survives the inundation. The wording of lines 1258b-63a,

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<sup>117</sup> 'Blickling Homily XVII: To Sanctæ Michaeles Mæssan', in *The Blickling Homilies of the Tenth Century: Part II*, ed. by R. Morris (London: Trübner and Co, 1876), pp. 196-211.

<sup>118</sup> See Wright, *The Irish Tradition in Old English Literature*, pp. 116-36; and, Andy Orchard, *Pride and Prodigies: Studies in the Monsters of the Beowulf-Manuscript* (London: University of Toronto Press, 1995), p. 38.

<sup>119</sup> Wright, *The Irish Tradition in Old English Literature*, p. 133.

<sup>120</sup> Torabi, p. 166.

<sup>121</sup> The similarities between these texts are explored by Wright, *The Irish Tradition in Old English Literature*, p. 119. See also William Cooke, 'Two Notes on *Beowulf* (with glances at *Vafþuðismál*, Blickling Homily 16, and *Andreas*, Lines 839-846)', *Medium Aevum*, 72.2 (2003), 297-301 (p. 298); Anlezark, *Water and Fire: The Myth of the Flood in Anglo-Saxon England*, p. 319; and Torabi, p. 166.

<sup>122</sup> Christopher Abram, 'At Home in the Fens with the Grendelkin', in *Dating Beowulf*, pp. 120-44 (p. 131).

which I cited in Chapter 4.3, may be understood to suggest that she dwelt in the water even before the onset of the inundation.

## 5.4 Conclusion

My discussion of the Great Flood in *Beowulf* affirms that, as in the case of its representation of the Creation and Cain themes, the poem points to the distinction between the Christian audience and its characters. While, as I already indicated elsewhere, this aspect of the narrative has been discussed by previous commentators, the present discussion shows that this manner of representation is not only consistent across the passages that allude to biblically derived myth, but that it is also characteristic of King Hrothgar's sermon. In this instance, the distinction between audience and character is conveyed, in the first place, by the discrepancy between the style of the speech and its content. It is also likely to be conveyed by the possibility that this speech is not only preceded by an allusion to the Great Flood that has negative connotations, but that it is also followed by such an allusion. The speech, in other words, may well be framed within a non-salvific context, a point that has been underestimated, or overlooked, by previous commentators. Moreover, my discussion of the Great Flood theme in the heroic-elegiac poem points to the representation of biblical reprobates as archetypes for the poem's monstrous characters. I made the same observation in relation to Cain and Grendel in Chapter 4.3, which manner of representation, I argue, is replicated in the relation between the antediluvian giants and Grendel's mother. The pride seen by exegetes in these giants is reflected in Grendel's mother's transgression of social boundaries, even if in this instance the audience is told of the giants only after Grendel's mother and her actions have been introduced and described. The representation of the Great Flood in *Genesis A* differs notably from that in *Beowulf*, in that the biblical poem represents both the punitive and the redemptive elements of the biblically derived narrative. Moreover, Noah is a knowing recipient of God's salvific action, which may be understood to anticipate Christ's redemption irrespective of whether the narrative is interpreted literally or

allegorically. It is also noteworthy that comparatively little in the adaptation of the Great Flood narrative in *Genesis A* may be unequivocally attributed to attempts to accommodate vernacular social conventions. For instance, Noah's warning to his kinsmen may well have originated in Jewish tradition. It is possible that *Genesis A* lacks substantial or extensive narrative elements that adapt the biblical narrative to vernacular social conventions because this would have been deemed unnecessary, in that the audience would have been expected to accept the biblical narrative in a form that does not depart too strongly from the substance of the original. It may be argued, rather, that the most significant departures, or elaborations, of the biblically derived narrative, such as the overt connection established between Sethite lapse and the onset of the inundation, result from a perceived need to streamline the narrative to assist in the delivery of a Christian message. Therefore, the rendition of the Great Flood in *Genesis A* could hardly be any more different than its brief representation in *Beowulf*. An exception may lie, however, in archetypal representation, in that inasmuch as *Genesis A* associates the onset of the Great Flood with the angelic rebellion; *Beowulf* establishes a connection between Grendel's mother and the antediluvian giants.

## Conclusion

As I indicated in the Introduction, this research was undertaken with reference to three objectives. The first objective was the identification of the manner whereby *Genesis A*, *Genesis B* and *Beowulf* adapt Genesis-derived and -related narratives with reference to patristic interpretations of the Old Testament and other Christian concepts. The second objective was to explore how vernacular non-Christian elements, such as the lord-retainer theme, work in conjunction with Christian concepts. The third objective with which I set out relates more specifically to *Beowulf*, in that I meant to argue that the heroic-elegiac poem belongs in a corpus dominated by Christian and biblical poetry, and that it adopts an approach that, in some ways, recalls the Genesis poems.

My first objective was met, in that throughout this thesis I demonstrated how the Genesis poems, in particular *Genesis B*, make use of allegorical levels of meaning, in addition to exegesis at the literal level, to Christianise their apocryphal and Old Testament-derived narratives. These allegorical levels include, *inter alia*, the tropological and anagogical levels of meaning. The more extensive recourse to allegory in *Genesis B* suggests that the text was intended for a diverse audience, made up of listeners who were exegetically inclined and others whose knowledge was more rudimentary. The latter point is illustrated by the literal and analogical levels of meaning in this text. These conclusions essentially reaffirm the work of previous commentators, in particular John F. Vickrey,<sup>1</sup> even if in the course of Chapter 3 I also made reference to interpretations of the poem that do not give the same weight, for instance, to the *tribus modis* rationale that underlies the temptation of Adam and Eve.<sup>2</sup> My discussions of the Genesis poems also draw attention to other aspects of their Christianisation of Genesis-derived and related themes that have been underestimated, and in some cases

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<sup>1</sup> See John F. Vickrey, *Genesis B and the Comedic Imperative* (Lanham: Lehigh University Press, 2015).

<sup>2</sup> See, *inter alia*, Suzannah B. Mintz, 'Words Devilish and Divine: Eve as Speaker in *Genesis B*', *Neophilologus*, 81 (1997), 609-23 for an alternative reading of Adam.

overlooked, by previous commentators. This is the case for the similarities that underlie the *Genesis A* and *Genesis B* accounts of the angelic rebellion, which suggest that these texts belong to the same tradition for the retelling of this narrative (Chapter 1.2.3). The same is true of the similarities that underlie the Satan in the Hell of *Genesis B* and his counterpart in the early fitts of *Christ and Satan* (Chapter 1.3.3). In Chapter 2.2 I indicated that the representation of the act of Creation as a building in *Genesis A* is closely linked to the salvific message conveyed by the text in its representation of the Trinitarian God, which suggests that transformation of the natural environment is seen as part of the divinely sanctioned order of things. I also discussed, in Chapter 3.2.4, the dramatic irony characteristic of Satan's emissary's exultation upon the lapse of Adam and Eve in *Genesis B*. The irony characteristic of this passage is conveyed, in particular, by the salvific message that inheres to the bound Satan theme that is mentioned in the course of this speech. This is because this theme recalls Christ's Harrowing of Hell. I discussed, moreover, Adam's repentance in Chapter 3.2.5, which is conveyed as a process that serves as an example for the audience.

I also discussed *Beowulf's* allusions to Christian concepts, which reveal how this narrative, in its omission of a redemptive message in relation to its characters, differs from either Genesis poem. Unlike the Genesis poems, *Beowulf* draws on the Christian knowledge of its audience to contrast their situation to that of the non-Christian characters. This is particularly evident in the poem's Creation sequence, including the *gastbona* (slayer of souls) episode where the Danes worship at a heathen shrine, which I discussed in Chapter 2.3.<sup>3</sup> In contrast, the message of salvation is evident even as Adam and Eve lapse in *Genesis B* and as

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<sup>3</sup> See also J. B. Bessinger, 'Homage to Cædmon and Others: A Beowulfian Praise Song', in *Old English Studies in Honour of John C. Pope*, ed. by Robert B. Burlin and Edward B. Irving (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1974), pp. 91-106; Marijane Osborn, 'The Great Feud', in *The Beowulf Reader*, ed. by Peter S. Baker (Abingdon: Routledge, Taylor and Francis Group, 1995), pp. 111-26 (first publ. in *Publications of the Modern Language Association of America* (1978): 973-81); Richard North, *Heathen Gods in Old English Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp. 175-76; Orchard, *A Critical Companion to Beowulf*, p. 153; Margaret E. Goldsmith, *The Mode and Meaning of Beowulf*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013), pp. 151 and 154; William Helder, *How the Beowulf Poet Employs Biblical Typology* (Lampeter: Mellen Press, 2014), p. 15; and, Michael Fox, *Following the Formula in Beowulf, Örvar-Odds Saga, and Tolkien* (Cham: Palgrave MacMillan, 2020), p. 83.

the world is inundated at God's behest in *Genesis A*. This means that even if *Beowulf* resorts to Christian and biblical themes like the Genesis poems, it makes use of these themes in a distinctly different manner. While previous commentators discussed the expression of Christian and biblical elements in either the Genesis poems or *Beowulf*, my comparison of the renditions of the same biblical themes in *Genesis A* and *Beowulf* in Chapters 2 and 5 (Creation and Great Flood respectively) reveal how and in what ways the two narratives differ significantly. The emphasis on the salvific element in *Genesis A* is contrasted by its absence in relation to the characters of *Beowulf*, where the Creation points, *inter alia*, to the transitory nature of humankind's endeavours and where the Great Flood is alluded to in a context where a pre-Christian culture fails to understand the events that unfold around it. It is at the same time worth noting that, in Chapter 4, I discussed the archetypal renditions of the Cain theme in the two poems, where the two texts approach this biblical narrative in similar terms.

My discussions of vernacular social conventions, which relate to the second objective of this thesis, establish that the identification of vernacular themes is not as straightforward as it may appear to be at first sight. While my discussions confirm that the Genesis poems combine what may be described as vernacular thematic elements with their rendition of levels of meaning characteristic of biblical exegesis,<sup>4</sup> the relation between these two elements is more complex than is suggested by such a statement. *Genesis B* resorts to the lord-retainer theme in its rendition of the angelic rebellion, where the chief rebel angel instigates his followers to rebel against God, and where he subsequently calls on one of his followers to

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<sup>4</sup> See also, *inter alia*, R. Derolez, 'Genesis: Old Saxon and Old English', *English Studies*, 76.5 (1995), 409-23; David F. Johnson, 'The Fall of Lucifer in *Genesis A* and Two Anglo-Latin Royal Charters', *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, 97.4 (1998), 500-21; Fabienne L. Michelet, *Creation, Migration and Conquest: Imaginary Geography and Sense of Space in Old English Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), p. 38; A. N. Doane, 'Introduction', in *Genesis A- A New Edition*, rev. edn. by A.N. Doane (Tempe: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2013), pp. 1-122; Scott Thompson Smith, 'Faith and Forfeiture in the Old English *Genesis A*', *Modern Philology*, 3.4 (2014), 593-615; and, Jill Fitzgerald, *Rebel Angels: Space and Sovereignty in Anglo-Saxon England* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2019), pp. 26-27.



tempt Adam and Eve, citing the gifts he dealt out in Heaven as a favour to be returned. The identification of this ostensibly vernacular theme with the chief rebel angel, who is renamed Satan once in Hell, has political and ideological ramifications. The narrative context suggests that the lord-retainer relationship is abused if it is adduced by a lord to incite rebellion against a king or overlord. I recall, in this regard, that the narrative's analogical dimension, which I discussed in Chapter 1.2.2, suggests that God is a king. The narrative's recourse to the lord-retainer theme, in other words, is not innocent; it is not only intended to amalgamate or reconcile Christian and vernacular values, but is rather also intended to promote a monarchic ideology. This is confirmed by recourse to the themes of loyalty and betrayal in *Genesis A* and their association with a kingly figure of God, which recalls representations of the angelic rebellion in the Anglo-Latin charters. I discussed these themes in Chapter 1 (sections 1.1, 1.2.1 and 1.2.3). The monarchic-ecclesiastical context of the charters suggests that *Genesis A* is, like *Genesis B*, informed by a monarchic ideology. At any rate, it is likely that the text would have been understood in these terms in a circa tenth century context.

Moreover, recourse to vernacular thematic elements does not appear to be consistent throughout *Genesis A*, as such themes hardly make any appearance in the Creation or the Great Flood, except perhaps for the identification of the antediluvians as traitors ahead of the inundation. It appears, rather, that recourse to loyalty and betrayal in a manner that may be classed as vernacular, in the sense that these themes are represented in analogical or social terms, is limited to the aforementioned angelic rebellion and the identification of Cain and, quite possibly, the antediluvians, as traitors, as I indicated in Chapters 4.2.1 and 5.2.2 respectively. Therefore, these are the only antediluvian narratives in *Genesis A* that may be interpreted socially, in the sense that in these instances God may be seen as a king or overarching lord. This ideological aspect, particularly in its ramifications across the narrative, has largely been underestimated by previous commentators, even if the connections between

*Genesis A* and the Anglo-Latin charters have been thoroughly discussed by David F. Johnson.<sup>5</sup> *Genesis B*, on the other hand, appears to be informed by vernacular notions more thoroughly than *Genesis A*, in that it introduces modifications to the biblical narrative, for instance, to represent Adam as a retainer who intends to be loyal to God, which point I discussed in Chapter 3.2.2. The more extensive recourse to vernacular elements in *Genesis B* may well suggest that it was intended, *inter alia*, for an audience whose exegetical knowledge would have been limited, and who would be influenced by non-Christian, or vernacular, social values. This may be explained with reference to the poem's Old Saxon origins,<sup>6</sup> including the *Praefatio in librum antiquum lingua saxonica conscriptum* I discussed in the Introduction to this thesis.

This brings me to the third objective of my thesis, which relates more closely with the heroic-elegiac poem. *Beowulf*, which unlike the Genesis poems is a narrative of vernacular origin, draws extensively on its audience's Christian knowledge, as I indicated in Chapters 2.3, 4.3 and 5.3. I also suggested, in the Introduction, that narratives of vernacular origin would not necessarily have been composed, or recited, for an audience made up of converts. This is attested by one of the texts that I briefly discussed in the Introduction, namely the Carolingian *Waltharius*, which was intended for an elite audience.<sup>7</sup> *Beowulf*'s unadorned allusions to Christian concepts, which I discussed in Chapter 4.3.3, suggest that the composition of the text presumes a degree of Christian knowledge on the part of the audience. Moreover, the constituent elements of the text, including biblically-derived narratives (which I discussed, *inter alia*, in Chapters 2.3, 4.3 and 5.3.1), the aforementioned allusion to Christian concepts, and vernacular narrative elements (which I discussed, *inter*

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<sup>5</sup> See Johnson.

<sup>6</sup> See, *inter alia*, A. N. Doane, 'Introduction', in *The Saxon Genesis An Edition of the West Saxon Genesis B and the Old Saxon Vatican Genesis*, ed. by A. N. Doane (London: University of Wisconsin Press, 1991), pp. 3-141; and Derolez, for discussions of the narrative's Old Saxon context.

<sup>7</sup> Rachel Stone, 'Waltharius and Carolingian Morality: Satire and Lay Values', *Early Medieval Europe*, 21.1 (2013), 50-70 (p. 56).

*alia*, in Chapter 4.3.1), conceptually recall the elements that make up the Genesis poems. Also, while the absence of redemption in *Beowulf* distinguishes this text from either Genesis poem, its archetypal representation of Cain and, to a lesser extent, the antediluvian giants, recall the approach pursued in *Genesis A*. In this respect, both narratives recall the Augustinian representation of Cain as the biblical archetype for historical or pseudo-historical narratives, such as Romulus's killing of his brother Remus.<sup>8</sup> While the Cain narrative in *Beowulf* is an archetype for the violent and monstrous exile Grendel and his mother, as well as the fratricidal Unferth and Hæthcyn,<sup>9</sup> the actions of the Cain of *Genesis A* are replicated in his descendants, while he replicates the angelic rebellion and fall, as I indicated throughout Chapter 4.2. Likewise, the treacherous antediluvians in *Genesis A* recall the angelic rebels (Chapter 5.2.2), while the antediluvian giants in *Beowulf* are an archetype for Grendel's mother's pride, as I indicated in Chapter 5.3.1. This means that *Beowulf*, notwithstanding its differences from the Genesis poems, belongs in a poetic corpus made up, *inter alia*, of biblical poetry. This also means that the third objective of my thesis has been met, although the relationship between *Beowulf* and the Genesis poems turns out to be more nuanced than I originally anticipated. It should be recalled, in this regard, that the rendition of the Cain theme in *Beowulf* and *Genesis A* is also characterised by a culturally-specific aspect. In

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<sup>8</sup> See Charles D. Wright, 'The Blood of Abel and the Branches of Sin: *Genesis A*, *Maxims I* and Aldhelm's *Carmen de virginitate*', *Anglo-Saxon England*, 25 (1996), 7-19 (p. 10).

<sup>9</sup> My argument relating to Hæthcyn's fratricide in Chapter 4.3.4 draws on the work of Linda Georgianna, 'King Hrethel's Sorrow and the Limits of Heroic Action in *Beowulf*', *Speculum*, 62.4 (1987), 829-50; North, pp. 198-99; Heather O'Donoghue, 'What has Baldr to do with Lamech', *Medium Ævum*, 71.2 (2003), 82-107; Andy Orchard, *A Critical Companion to Beowulf* (Cambridge: Brewer, 2003), p. 118; Stefan Jurasinski, *Ancient Privileges: Beowulf, Law, and the Making of Germanic Antiquity* (Morgantown: West Virginia University Press, 2006), pp. 113, 120 and 128; Thomas D. Hill, 'Hæthcyn, Herebeald, and Archery's Laws: *Beowulf* and the *Leges Henrici Primi*', *Medium Aevum*, 81.2 (2012), 210-21; and, Philip A. Shaw, *Names and Naming in Beowulf: Studies in Heroic Narrative Tradition* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2020), pp. 33-39, but does not always and necessarily reflect their conclusions.

*Beowulf*'s case this is made evident by the vernacular context, while in the case of *Genesis A* it transpires from the appeal to the lord-retainer theme in the rendition of the Cain narrative.<sup>10</sup>

My discussions therefore affirm that a more comprehensive understanding of *Beowulf* may be reached if due attention is given to its biblically-derived references or allusions, and if the heroic-elegiac text is further contextualised within the wider Old English poetic corpus made up, *inter alia*, of Old Testament poetry. Moreover, my discussions confirm, rather more predictably, that the three poems at the centre of this thesis Christianise their Old Testament and related themes. It is therefore the case that we may speak of a Christianised Genesis in the context of Old English Old Testament poetry and *Beowulf*. The vernacular aspect, particularly as expressed in the Genesis poems, turns out to be more complex, in that it does not only interact with the Christian element of the narratives, but also with a monarchic ideology. This means that the vernacular element is co-opted in favour of an ideology that is intended to preserve, or reinforce, the role of the king as the head of a hierarchy in a manner that mirrors God in Heaven. In the context of *Beowulf* the representation of Cain as archetype (as well as the attribution of the Creation to a God identifiable as the scriptural and Christian God) suggests that the text's ideology is more distinctly spiritual as opposed to monarchic. This is because biblical narrative is posited as the originator, and the truthful explanation, for vernacular narrative and myth. While, therefore, we may also speak of a vernacular and Christian Genesis even in the context of *Beowulf*, the relationship between the vernacular and Christian aspects is asymmetrical. The Christian and biblical elements, after all, are assigned

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<sup>10</sup> See also Bennet Brockman, "'Heroic' and 'Christian' in *Genesis A*: The Evidence of the Cain and Abel Episode', *Modern Language Quarterly*, 35.2 (1974), 115-28 (p. 117); L.N. McKill, 'The Artistry of the Noah Episode in *Genesis A*', *English Studies in Canada*, 13.2 (1987), 121-135 (p. 123); Wright, p. 10; Mary Dockray-Miller, 'Beasts and Babies: The Maternal Body of Eve in the Junius 11 Genesis', in *Naked Before God: Uncovering the Body in Anglo-Saxon England*, ed. by Benjamin J. Withers and Jonathan Wilcox (Morgantown: West Virginia University Press, 2003), pp. 221-56 (p. 235-36); Mark Griffith, 'The Register of Divine Speech in *Genesis A*', *Anglo-Saxon England*, 41(2012), 63-78; Christopher Monk, 'A Context for the Sexualisation of Monsters in *The Wonders of the East*', *Anglo-Saxon England*, 41(2012), 79-99 (p. 94); Michael D. J. Bintley, *Trees in the Religions of Early Medieval England* (Suffolk: Boydell and Brewer, 2015), p. 105; and, Alexander Sager, 'Thiu wursa giburd: Cain's Legacy, Original Sin, and the End of the World in the Old Saxon Genesis', in *The End-Times in Medieval German Literature*, ed. by Ernst Ralf Hintz and Scott E. Pincikowski (Rochester: Camden House, 2019), pp. 7-26 (p. 20).

primacy in either chronology or importance, even where they may be said to take up only a few lines of verse.

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# Appendix

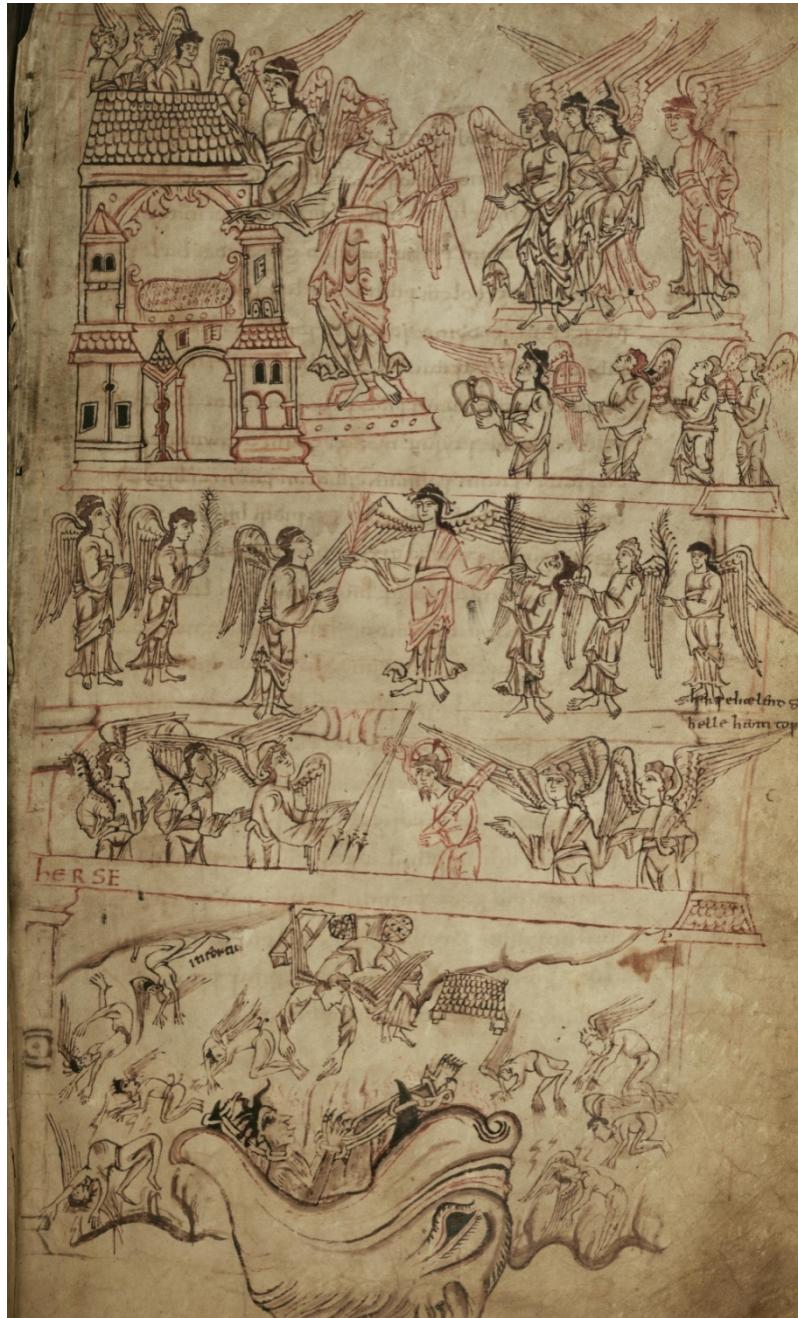


Plate I: Caedmon MS, Bodleian Library MS Junius 11, p. 3 [digital.bodleian.ox.ac.uk]



ȁlra monra mæc. ƿpa deð monna gehƿile þe  
 ƿið hiƿ ƿaðað ƿinnan ongyrned. mid mane ƿið  
 þone mæran drihten. þa ƿað ƿemhtiga ge  
 bolgen. heht ȁ hƿonk ƿaðað. ƿa ƿið hine  
 of þan hƿan ƿele. hƿe hæƿde he æt hiƿ hƿan  
 nan gƿunna. hƿdo hæƿde hiƿ ƿiðlora. ne  
 gnan ƿað him ƿegoda on hiƿ mode. ƿon þon  
 he ƿealde gund gƿeetan. hƿand ȁ helle ƿið.  
 þæt þe he ƿann ƿið hƿonk ƿaðað. æƿæð hine  
 þa fram hiƿ hƿdo. ȁ hine on helle ƿaƿ. on  
 þa deðan dala. þæt he to deðle ƿað. ƿe  
 ƿeð mid hiƿ gƿunna ȁllum. ƿeðlo. þa ƿon  
 of hƿonum. þuð loſe ƿpa þæt niht ȁda  
 ȁ. þa ȁglar of hƿonum on helle. ȁ hƿ ȁll  
 ƿon ƿeð drihten to deðlum.



Plate II: Caedmon MS, Bodleian Library MS Junius 11, p. 16  
 [digital.bodleian.ox.ac.uk]

forþon hæf hiſ dæd ƿpōd. noldon ƿfērdian.  
 forþon he hæf on ƿƿiſe lēht. undſe fōrdan  
 neſdan. ællmihtig god. fæte. fige lfare. on  
 þa ƿfērdian helle. þær hæbbad hæf on æfyn.  
 unſanft lange. ælha fōnda gēpīlc. fƿn ed  
 nāpe. þōnne cƿmð on ulcan. fƿtēhne ƿmð.  
 fōrt fƿmum cald. fƿmble fƿn oddē gār.  
 fum hæfd gēfƿne habban fēaldon. ƿofte  
 man hit him to ƿice. hƿna ƿofuld ƿær ge  
 hƿƿfēd. fōnman fidefƿlde helle. mid þam  
 and fæcum. hældon æglaf fōrd. hæfōn nect  
 hehde. þe ær godf hƿldo gelæfton. lagon  
 þa odre. fƿnd on þam fƿne. þe ær ƿƿa flū  
 la hæfōn. gēƿinnf ƿd hƿna ƿalofnd. ƿice  
 foliad. hatne hædo ƿelm. helle to midde.

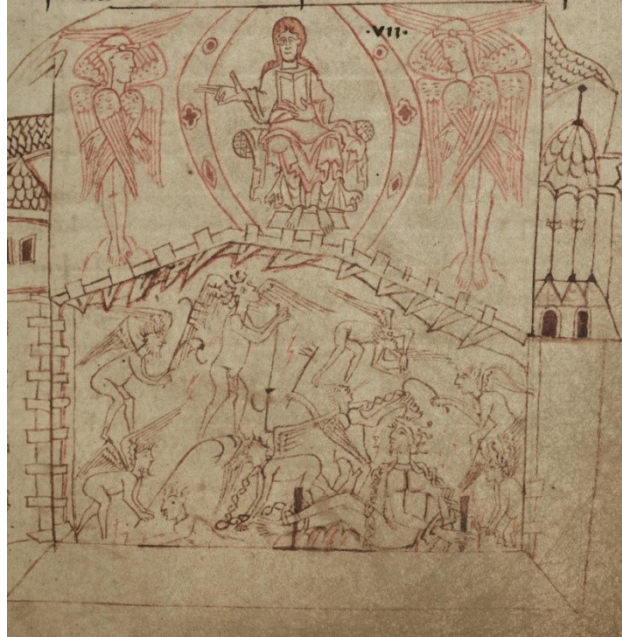


Plate III: Caedmon MS, Bodleian Library MS Junius 11, p. 17 [digital.bodleian.ox.ac.uk]





Plate IV: Caedmon MS, Bodleian Library MS Junius 11, p. 20 [digital.bodleian.ox.ac.uk]

hēƿon. þonne heo hēmon ƿāde. þonne ƿæt ƿe  
 oððe ællāga ƿƿāte. dūm ƿƿyƿe. þƿæt dædð bāun.  
 I ƿe bān bīcū ƿe lē. ƿe lēde bī ƿīcū. yloa æghƿīle.  
 yƿlā. ƿe oððe. gēƿānð on ƿīe ƿoƿulde. ƿe lēde.  
 on ƿīe. æ mid ƿƿate. ƿīd ƿongum. ƿīddan libban.  
 ƿƿa hīa. ƿƿa gēbyrgde. þæt on þam bāune gēƿe.  
 Se lēde. lūne yloa bānman. ellā dæda. dƿīamag.  
 ƿoƿulde ƿe ƿe. ƿum bān dæd ƿe ƿe. lēde hīle.  
 ƿe lēde he hī lē ƿe. ƿe can þonne lāda.  
 ƿe lēde. on ƿīe ƿe lēde. ƿe lēde. ƿe lēde.  
 þæt ƿe lēde. ƿe lēde. ƿe lēde. ƿe lēde.  
 ne hīle. ƿe lēde. ƿe lēde. ƿe lēde. ƿe lēde.  
 bova. þe ƿe dƿīhēd ƿann.



Plate V: Caedmon MS, Bodleian Library MS Junius 11, p. 24 [digital.bodleian.ox.ac.uk]





Plate VI Caedmon MS, Bodleian Library MS Junius 11, p. 31 [digital.bodleian.ox.ac.uk]

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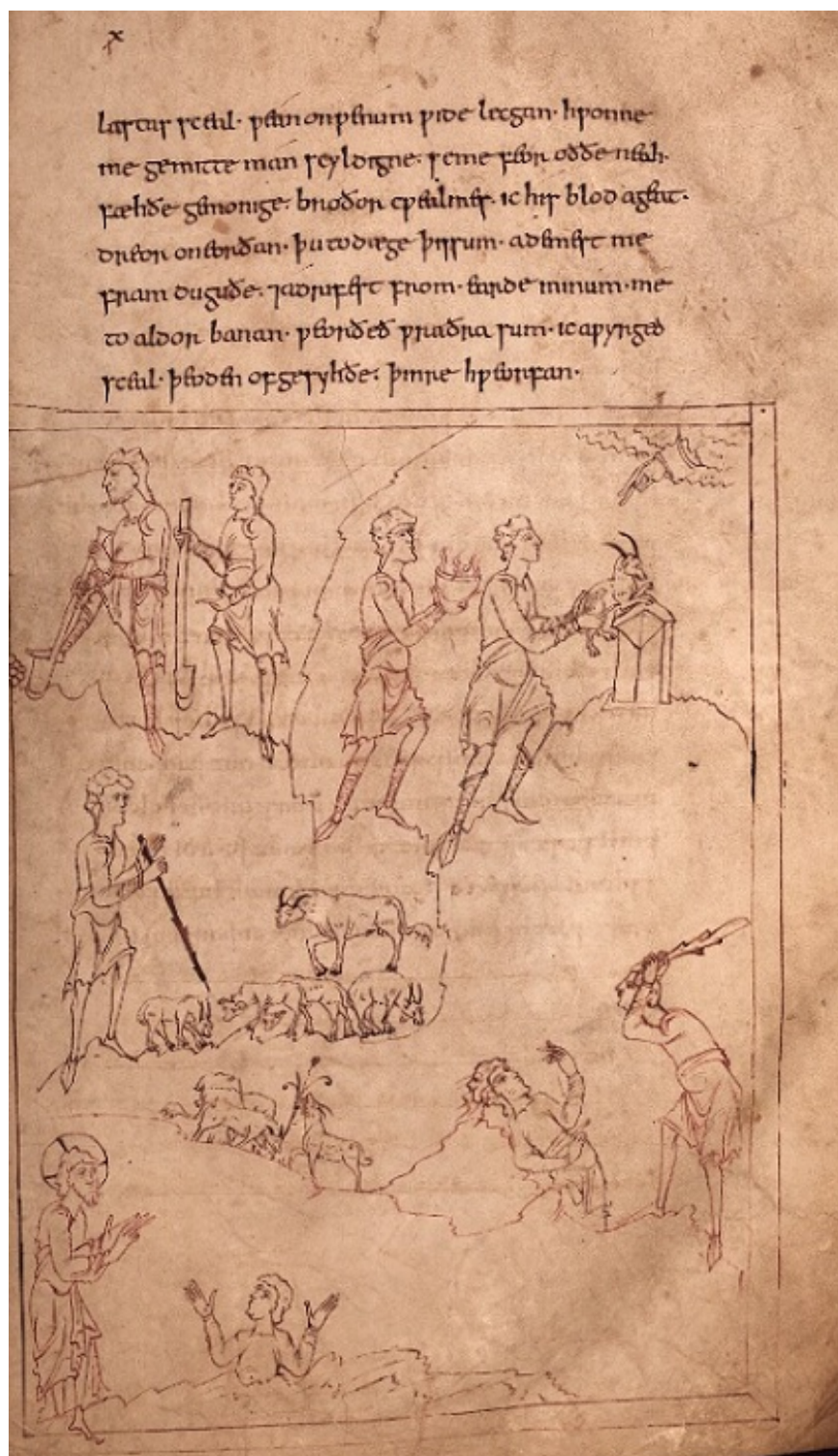


Plate VIII Caedmon MS, Bodleian Library MS Junius 11, p. 49 [digital.bodleian.ox.ac.uk]



Plate IX Caedmon MS, Bodleian Library MS Junius 11, p. 68 [digital.bodleian.ox.ac.uk]







Plate XI Caedmon MS, Bodleian Library MS Junius 11, p. 73 [digital.bodleian.ox.ac.uk]