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Articles
Recipe, receipt and prescription in the history of English

Magdalena Bator & Marta Sylwanowicz
University of Social Sciences, Warsaw

Nowadays, the term recipe is immediately associated with the kitchen, various spice cupboards and cookbooks. Very few people realize that the word (with relation to cookery) appeared only in 1631 (OED: s.v. recipe). Earlier, since 1400s, recipe was a common term used by physicians and apothecaries. Hence, it was recorded mainly in medical writings as the heading of medical formulas. In the field of cookery, it was the term receipt which was used on everyday basis to denote the culinary instruction. Additionally, in the late sixteenth century, the term prescription began to be used with reference to doctors’ written instructions and was slowly replacing the term recipe in the context of medical prescription.

The main aim of this paper is an analysis of the rivalry between the three terms, recipe, receipt and prescription, and the examination of their distribution in the history of English. Particular attention will be paid to various uses of the terms and their semantic development. Also, a causal link between the semasiological and onomasiological changes will be considered. Moreover, the fate of the few Old English synonyms (e.g. læccraeft, gesetednes) will be traced.

The conclusions concerning the present topic are drawn on the basis of a corpus study. The data have been selected from a number of electronic text corpora including Dictionary of Old English, Innsbruck Corpus of Middle English Prose, the Middle English Dictionary, Helsinki Corpus, Middle English Medical Texts, Early Modern English Medical Texts, and Lampeter Corpus of Early Modern English Tracts.

Keywords: recipe; prescription; receipt; semantics

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1. Introduction

The recipe has already been widely discussed in various contexts. Some of the studies which deserve to be mentioned dealt with: (i) the analysis of the recipe as a text type (for instance Görlach 1992, 2004; Carroll 1999; Taavitsainen 2001; Alonso-Almeida 2014); (ii) the investigation of the particular features of the recipe (e.g. Massam & Roberge 1989; Culy 1996; Jones 1998; Mäkinen 2004, 2006; Quintana-Toledo 2009), (iii) the issue of synonymy and word rivalry within recipes (e.g. Sylwanowicz 2003, 2006, 2007, 2009, 2011, 2014; Bator 2013a, 2013b), or (iv) translation techniques within medical texts (e.g. Voigts & McVaugh 1984, Wallner 1987, Jones 1989, Pahta 1998) and the strategies used in the process of vernacularization of medical treatises (articles in Taavitsainen & Pahta 2004). The bulk of previous studies deals with the medical recipe, and is based on the electronic corpora prepared by the scholars established in Finland (e.g. Taavitsainen, Pahta, Mäkinen). The present paper aims at a more general discussion of the term recipe and its synonyms in the history of English.

The term recipe is immediately associated with the kitchen, various spice cupboards and cookbooks. Very few people realize that the word (with relation to cookery) appeared only in 1631 (OED: s.v. recipe). Earlier, since 1400s, recipe was a common term used by physicians and apothecaries, and it was recorded mainly in medical writings as the heading of medical formulas. In the field of cookery, it was the term receipt which was used on everyday basis to denote the culinary instruction.

Nowadays, the terms recipe and receipt have distinctive meanings and no one uses them interchangeably. However, they have a common origin. Both were derived from post-classical Latin. The earlier one, receipt, stems partly from Anglo-Norman (AN) recipte, receite, receyte, resceite and partly from AN receipt, recet, receipt, reset, reset. In Anglo-Norman it was used with the following senses: *receptacle; receipt, receiving; collection (of money); money received; receipt (document); right of admission into a court; reception; act of accepting; jurisdiction; recipe (medical)* (AND: s.v. receite). The word was present in English from the fourteenth century. The first record of receipt with the sense which is of interest for the present study comes from Trevisa (1398) and is purely medical. The term referred to “a statement of the ingredients and

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2 For a comparison of the typological features of the culinary and medical recipes, see Bator & Sylwanowicz (forthc.).
procedure necessary for making a medicinal preparation, a prescription; also a medicine made according to such a prescription” (OED: s.v. receipt n. IV.12.a).

The first culinary reference of receipt comes from the end of the sixteenth century (1595), from Widowes Treasure, in which it was used as “a statement of the ingredients and procedure required for making a dish or an item of food or drink”, see (1), (OED: s.v. receipt n.IV.14).

(1) A notable receite to make Ipocras (Widowes Treasure, 1595)

The noun recipe occurred in English later than receipt, in the sixteenth century (see (2)). It was derived from post-classical Latin recipe “formula for the composition or use of a medicine”, also “a medicine prepared according to such a formula, a remedy” (OED). A century later, the sense “a statement of the ingredients and procedure required for making something, esp. a dish in cookery” was added, see (3).

(2) This phisition when I was wrytinge these thynges, and takyng my iourney from Frankeford, wher he was wrytynge his recipe, was asked [...] what he thought of Guiacum. (T. Paynell, De Morbo Gallico, 1533)

(3) Thou art rude, And dost not know the Spanish composition [...] What is the recipe? Name the ingredients. (B. Jonson, New Inne, 1631)

However, it should be mentioned that the form recipe was known much earlier, since the verb recipe, borrowed from classical Latin recipe, was present in English from 1300. It was used in medical writings, at the beginning of a medical prescription to denote ‘take’, see for instance (4). Its traces can be found also in culinary writings, e.g. (5). The verb became obsolete in the seventeenth century.


1 For a discussion on the verb recipe in culinary texts, see Bator (2014: 177–182).
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(5) Paste Ryall. Recipe your sugour clene claryfyede & put yt in a clene panne & seth yt softlye unto þe hyeghe aforseyde of your quynces, þen set yt from þe fyere uppon a hedles vesell & with a rownde staffe fast stere it tyll he be whyQte as snowe. þen put þerto fyne pouder gynger & put yt in bokes, & þen set hym in stewes & fiat. (A Gathering of Medieval English Recipes, eMus CS 17, Paste Ryall, 1495)

Additionally, the term *prescription* appeared in English with reference to medicine in the late sixteenth century and was slowly replacing the term *recipe* in the context of medical instruction. Earlier it was used with reference to law (from the beginning of the fifteenth century). The term was derived from Anglo-Norman *prescripioun, prescriptioun* and denoted (among others) “a doctor’s instruction, usually in writing, for the composition and use of a medicine; the action of prescribing a medicine; and a medicine prescribed” (OED: s.v. *prescription*, n.1 II.5.a) (see (6)). Table 1 presents the medical and culinary senses of the analyzed terms together with their origin and date of appearance in English.

(6) Quhairin I am constrynit of necessitie to vse the prescriptioun of sum medicinis in Latine. (G. Skeyne, Breve Descr.Pest in Tracts, 1568)

Table 1. The culinary and medical references of the analyzed lexemes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lexeme</th>
<th>Sense</th>
<th>Origin</th>
<th>Introduced (OED)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>receipt</td>
<td>MEDICAL: a statement of the ingredients and procedure necessary for making a medicinal preparation, a formula; also a medicine made according to such a formula.</td>
<td>AN &lt; Lat.</td>
<td>1398</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>CULINARY: a statement of the ingredients and procedure required for making a dish or an item of food or drink.</td>
<td>Lat.</td>
<td>1595</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>recipe</td>
<td>MEDICAL: formula for the composition or use of a medicine.</td>
<td>Lat.</td>
<td>1533</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Recipe, receipt and prescription in the history of English

Recipe, receipt and prescription in the history of English

The main aim of the present paper is to present the co-existence or rivalry between the three terms – recipe, receipt, prescription – and to examine their distribution in the history of English. Special attention will be paid to the medical and culinary uses of the terms and their semantic development. Moreover, we shall begin with the presentation of the fate of the few Old English synonyms (e.g. læecræft, gesetednes) which disappeared after the introduction of the Romance terms.

The material used for the research comes from various corpora including Dictionary of Old English (DOE), Helsinki Corpus (HC), Innsbruck Corpus of Middle English Prose (IC), Middle English Dictionary (MED), Middle English Medical Texts (MEMT), Early Modern English Medical Texts (EMEMT), Lampeter Corpus of Early Modern English Tracts (LC), and a corpus of medieval culinary recipes (Bator 2014).

2. The medical context

In the Old English period all the vocabulary items referring to ‘medicine’ were formed from the base leech, which referred to “a physician, one who practises the healing art” (OED: s.v. leech n.1). Leech was extremely productive in forming compounds and derivatives expressing various medical senses, such as leechbook, leechcraft, leechdom, leeching, etc., but also senses less directly connected with medicine, as for instance leechwort which referred to a plant or herb (see for instance (7)–(8)). The total number of occurrences of the leech-terms found in the analyzed corpora has been shown in Table 2.

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4 For a detailed discussion of the term leech and its Middle English synonyms, see Sylwanowicz (2003).
(7)  Lychanis stephanice = lecevyrt. (DOE, Latin-Old English Glossaries: Von Lindheim 1941)

(8)  quinqueneruia = leciuyrt (DOE, Latin-Old English Glossaries: Pheifer 1974)

Table 2. The number of occurrences of the leech-terms in the analyzed corpora.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lexeme</th>
<th>Sense</th>
<th>Old English</th>
<th>Middle English</th>
<th>early Modern English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>leechbook</td>
<td>'a collection of (med.) recipes'</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>leechcraft</td>
<td>'(prescribed) medicine'</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>'medical science'</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>leechdom</td>
<td>'(prescribed) medicine'</td>
<td>281</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>'(med.) recipe / medical formula'</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>leechery</td>
<td>'medical science'</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>leeching</td>
<td>'(med.) recipe / medical formula'</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>'medical care / healing'</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td></td>
<td>368</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Leechbook “a collection of (med.) recipes” seems to have been a clearly defined term, which is evidenced by examples (9) and (10). The term leechbook is usually found in titles and in fragments where the author directs the reader to a collection of recipes and/or medicines, or refers to a particular recipe collection (see (10)).
Recipe, receipt and prescription in the history of English

The remaining three lexemes (leechcraft, leechdom and leeching) could have referred to at least two senses, which were very often close to one another. For instance, a number of occurrences of leechdom do not clearly indicate the exact meaning of the word (the context may suggest two senses, i.e. ‘a prescribed medicine’ or ‘a medical formula/instruction’), see (11)–(13).

11. Læcedomas gif men yrne blod of nebbe, eft blodseten a ge onto bindanne ge on eare to donne ge horse ge men. (DOE, Cockayne, Bald’s Leechbook)

12. Læcedom wiþ gesnote wiþ geposum. (DOE, Cockayne, Bald’s Leechbook)

13. Læcedomas wiþ sarum weolorum. (DOE, Cockayne, Bald’s Leechbook)

In most cases when the Old English text was accompanied by its Latin translation, leechdom was translated as Lat. remedia ‘cure, remedy’, e.g. (14). However, in a number of examples it was translated as medicina ‘medical art, treatment’, see (15), which serves as evidence for the two senses of the noun.

14. Benedic domine creaturam istam ut sit remedium salutare generi humano presta per inuocationem nominis tui quicumque ex ea sumpserit corporis sanitatem et anime tutelam percipiat per [...] bloesta driht’ giscæft ðas þætte sie lecedom halvoende cynnes mennisc’ gionn ðerh ongiceigingnome’ ðines se ðe suahvoelc of ðær onfoe lichomes hælo savles scildnisse onfoe. (DOE, Liturgical Texts, Durham Ritual: Thompson and Lindelöff, 1927)
Although, following the data, we see that it was the term *leechdom* which dominated the semantic field in the Old English period, the Middle English corpora do not show any records of the term, though, according to MED, *leechdom* was still present in the early Middle English period with a range of senses, see (16)–(19).

(16) ‘a medicine, remedy’
Raphaæl bitacneþþ uss [...] Drihtliness hallQhe læchedom & sawless eQhesallfē [...] he wolde himm senndenn Wiþþ heofe nnlike læchedom To læchenn Tobess eQhne. (MED, Orm_1200)

(17) ‘a medical treatment’
Þisne læcedon do þan manne, þa hym beoð on hyra brosten nearuwe [...] Do hyne into þan huse, þe beo næþer [read: næþer] ne to hæt ne to ceald, [etc.]. (MED, PDidax_1150)

(18) ‘medicinal use’
Þeos wyrt [...] dweorQe-dwosle [...] hæfed mid hire læcedomes, þeah hi feala man ne cunna. (MED, Hrl.HApul._1150)

(19) ‘the art or science of medicine’
Þet mon gistas underuo [...] oðer unhalne lechnað 3if he lechedom com. (MED, Lamb.Hom._1225)

A similar confusion occurs in the case of a much less frequent *leechcraft*. This lexeme is a combination of *leech* ‘healer, leech’ and *craft* ‘skill, expertise’, which suggests the senses ‘ability to heal/to apply medicinal leeches’ or ‘art of
healing'. However, the *Thesaurus of Old English* (TOE) and the OED ascribe it two senses: (i) ‘art of healing/medical science’ and (ii) ‘remedy/medicine, medical formula/instruction’. The former is easy to deduce as the term usually occurs in a context in which *leechcraft* is identified as a learned, acquired, trained or practiced skill, see (20)–(23).

(20) he him tæhte ðone mæran læcecræft þe hine swa mihtelice gehealde. (DOE, Saint Sebastian)

(21) And het hine þæt he him getæhte ælcne læcecræft. (DOE, Saint Pantaleon)

(22) hine mon lærde ælcne læcecræft. (DOE, Saint Pantaleon)

(23) Witodlice þær wæs sum munuc, þam wæs namanustus, se wæs gelered on læcecræfte, (DOE, Gregory the Great, Dialogues)

As we can see the term is accompanied by such verbs as: tæhte, getæhte ‘taught’, (go)lærde ‘instructed, taught’, which identify *leechcraft* as a learned skill. The latter sense (‘remedy/medicine, medical formula/instruction’) shows that even the editors of the dictionaries found it difficult to deduce the real sense of the term, especially the difference between *medicine/remedy ‘a drug/treatment’ and prescription ‘a written formula*. When confronted with particular quotations this difficulty becomes apparent, see (24)–(25).

(24) On þissum ærestan læcecræftum gewritene sint læcedomas wið eallum heafdes untrynnessum. (DOE, Cockayne, Bald’s Leechbook)

(25) Genim geoluwne stan salt stan pipor weh onwæge drif þurh clað do ealra gelice micel do eal togedere drif eft þurh linene clað. Þis is afandan læcecræft. (DOE, Cockayne, Recipes)

There are a couple of records of the term which could as well refer to the sense ‘medical formula’, see (26)–(27). However, one may say that these two examples could as well be translated as ‘remedy/medicine’.

(26) Þanne ys se læcecræft þarto: Nim sumne dæl of heortes hyde and anne niwne croccan and do wæter on and sceþ swa swyþe, þæt hit þriwa wylle, swa swyþe swa wætreflæsc. (DOE, Cockayne, Medical Recipes)
The third term, *leeching*, is underrepresented and probably did not have any significant influence on the development of the analyzed concept. It occurred only thirteen times in the Old English corpora, however, apart from its medical sense (see (28)), it could also refer to religion, suggesting the general sense ‘treatment’, see for instance (29).

Additionally, following the *Historical Thesaurus of English* (HTE), the term *gesetednes* was used throughout the Old English period with the sense ‘recipe’. However, such a sense of the term has not been found in any other dictionary. The analyzed corpora contain the term exclusively with legal and religious reference, i.e. “a constitution, law, ceremony” (cf. Bosworth & Toller). The only record of *gesetednes* with its possible medical sense is found in the following fragment (30). However, its strict medical sense ‘medical formula/instruction/recipe’ seems dubious and it is possible that the compiler used the term to emphasize the fact that one should follow some rule/formula.

Although the Anglo-Saxons possessed sufficient resources of their own to represent various medical ideas, soon after the Norman Conquest, English
assimilated thousands of words borrowed from Norman French, which resulted in both the reduction and the loss of Old English heritage.\(^5\)

The Old English terms *leechdom* and *leechcraft* were being steadily replaced by at least five Romance items (*medicine*, *remedy*, *pharmacy*, *antidote*, *receipt*) which stood for ‘some curative substance’ or ‘medical treatment’, as in (31)–(35).

(31) Skabbe is curable wiþ metisines ṭat [...] clensiþ wiþinne & wiþoute. (MED, a1398 *Trev. Barth. (Add 27944) 99a/a)

(32) Comyn [...] acordiþ to many medicynes and remedyes and namely of ṭe stomak. (MED, a1398 *Trev. Barth. (Add 27944) 220a/b)

(33) Formacie [vr. ffarmasye], ṭat is laxatiuis purgynge ṭe colere & bren humours. (MED, a1400 Lanfranc (Ashm 1396) 83/19)

(34) ṭe first doctrine is of vniusale antidotez or helpyngez. (MED, ?a1425 *Chauliac(1) (NY 12) 6b/b)

(35) This receyte [vrr. ressaite, resceyte, receiht] ys boght of non apothecary. (MED, c1450(a1449) Lydg. Diet. (Sln 3534) 78)

Out of the five Romance synonyms of *leechdom* and *leechcraft*, *receipt* deserves our attention as this noun was also used with the sense ‘medical written formula’. The earliest occurrences of the term date back to the second half of the fourteenth century, when it was used with the senses ‘formula, statement of ingredients’ and ‘amount of received money’, e.g. (36)–(37).


(37) Penk also [...] ṭat longe hast lyued and muche receiued...hou ṭou hast spendet ṭat resit. (OED, c1390 Mirror St.Edm.(1) (Vrn) 145)

In the fifteenth-century records we find the noun in a medical context, usually as ‘medicine/remedy’ (see (38)–(39)) or ‘a medical formula’ (see (40)–(41)).

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The compilers/translators of these texts, unlike the Old English ones, are quite consistent in the use of the lexeme and there is no confusion in identifying a particular sense (‘medicine’ or ‘written formula’).

(38) What may helpen þe stomak or þe hed [...] any receyt or confeccioun, Herbe or stoon, or al þat leches knowe, Whan þat a cors is leied in erþe lowe. (MED, c1425(a1420) Lydg. TB (Aug A.4) 1.3630)

(39) Do of that pouder in mylke and hit sleys fleys that light ther on; And that resyte castith oute wekyd humers þrowe vomyte and olde evillis. (MED, ?a1425(1373) *Lelamour Macer (Sln 5) 83b)

(40) Þe firste is ane oynement of maister Anselm of Jene, of þe whiche he solde þe Resseit to kynge philip of ffraunce for a grete soumme of golde. (MED, ?a1425 *MS Htrn.95 (Htrn 95) 170a/a)

(41) Þe receites schal be founden in þe Antitodarye. (MED, ?c1425 Chauliac(2) (Paris angl.25) 307/9)

The use of receipt, instead of the Anglo-Saxon heritage (leechdom, leechcraft), might be explained by the fact that Middle English medical texts (especially the fifteenth-century works) were mostly translations of French and Latin originals. Thus, the introduction of the term, which might have already been familiar to medical practitioners, seemed an obvious choice. Also, the foreign term might have been perceived as more learned and prestigious, whereas leech-terms were regarded as the remains of popular/folk medicine. Although receipt is found in reduplications, this does not have to indicate that the term was unknown. Rather, this strategy might have been used to state precisely the actual sense of the term in a given context, see for instance (42)–(43).

(42) In alle goode resceytes and medicyns amomum is ofte y-do. (MED, a1398 *Trev. Barth.(Add 27944) 214b/a)

(43) Yf thou take any medycyne or receyte, that it be made of a certeyn weight and mesure as the sekenesse may require. (MED, c1475 Abbrev.Trip.SSecr.(UC 85) 330/1)
Recipe, receipt and prescription in the history of English

In Middle English medical texts we also find the first occurrences of the lexeme *recipe*. However, *recipe* is used exclusively as a head word in physicians’ prescriptions and it stands for Latin imperative second person verb form, meaning ‘to take’, as in (44)–(45).

(44) Also be þer made suche a vntment þat is riçt mitigatiue. Recipe: tame comon malueȝ M. i or M. ij, & brisse þaȝ in a morter, and put þaȝ in a quart of oyle of olyueȝ and lat þaȝ putrifie þerin 7 dayes or 9. (MEMT, Arderne, Fistula)

(45) And to þe same entensioun Auicen enditeþ þiȝ medeçyne expert, & Brune graunteþ it: Recipe draganti rubei z/+Q j, calcis viue, Alum, corticis granatorum ana .+Q .6., thuris, gallarum ana +Q 4, cere, olei ana þat sufficeþ, be þer made vnguentum. (MEMT, Chauliac, Ulcers)

The verb was so frequent that it was often replaced by the symbol Rx (see example (46)), a pharmacy symbol found nowadays in most medical prescriptions. Today, this symbol is the only indicator of the original sense of *recipe*.

(46) Brother leches haue a queynþ maner writyng and hard for to rede in makyng of hir medicynes. Brother when ye seeth in bookes of phisique thes writynges that is comynly the begynnyng of hir medicines ye shul vnderstond Recipe that is to say take. (MEMT, Thesaurus Pauperum)

In Early Modern English medical texts the following terms referring to ‘written formula’ are used: receipt, recipe and prescription. As shown in Table 3, receipt is the most frequent term used with reference to ‘prescription’, which is not surprising as the term was used with this sense already in the medieval medical context. We can also observe the emergence of two nouns: recipe (formerly used only as a verb) and prescription, which became serious “rivals” for receipt, which later stopped being used in the medical context.

As stated earlier, receipt entered English lexicon early and became a commonly used term in the medical context. Although first recognized as a general term for ‘some formula or statement of ingredients’, it soon narrowed its sense to ‘prescribed medicine’ and ‘medical formula’, which is exemplified by examples (47)–(49).
(47) [A receipt to restore strength, in them that arr brought low with long sicknesse. chapter. xxxix.] Take of the brawne of a Fesant or Partridge, and of a Capon. (EMEMT, 1573, Partridge, Treasurie of Commodious Conceits)

(48) That most of Men do very readily take upon trust any Remedies or Receipts, that are confidently recommended to them, can scarce be contradicted; and their fond passion in the inconsiderate belief of 'em is so great, that without any loss of time, they are to be Registred in their Book of Receipts. (EMEMT,1700, Harvey, Vanities of Philosophy and Physick)

(49) It is true, Sir Robert Talbor did not always observe the directions prescribed in his Receipt, touching the time of the infusion of Quinquina; (EMEMT, 1682, Talbor, English Remedy)

Table 3. The number of occurrences of the analyzed terms of Romance origin.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lexeme</th>
<th>Sense</th>
<th>Middle English</th>
<th>early Modern English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>receipt</td>
<td>'(prescribed) medicine'</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>'medical instruction'</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>recipe</td>
<td>'(prescribed) medicine'</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>'medical instruction'</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>prescript(ion)</td>
<td>'(prescribed) medicine'</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>'medical instruction'</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td></td>
<td>16</td>
<td>206</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A thorough analysis of the occurrences of receipt in medical texts reveals that it is not always clear whether the term refers to 'prescribed medicine' or 'medical formula/instruction'. For instance, in example (47), does receipt stand for 'a medicament/remedy' or 'a medical formula/instruction'?
Another problem encountered while analyzing the data concerns the use of *receipt* as a derivative of another Latin loanword meaning ‘act of receiving’, see (50)–(51).

(50) of decumbiture, or for the time of any strong fit (if any be) or upon the receipt of the Urin, or time of the first visitation of the Patient, (EMEMT, 1671, Blagrave, Astrological Practice of Physick)

(51) And truly if nothing else should make one out of fancie with the use of Tabacco, it might be sufficient for an equall iudge to think with himself how unnaturall a thing it is to peruer the naturall vse & offices of the parts of the bodie, for by the force of Tabacco the mouth, throte, and stomacke, (appointed by nature for the receipt of food & nourishment for the whole body) are made emunctuary clensing places and sincks, (supplying herein the office of the most abiet and basest part) for the filth and superfluous excrements of the whole body. (EMEMT, 1602, Philaretus, Work for Chimny-sweepers)

Thus, it may be concluded here that *receipt* and its various senses (including also the non-medical sense ‘received amount of money, etc.’) made it prone to be soon replaced by other equivalent terms.

*Recipe*, being seemingly the best candidate to take the place of *receipt* as it has been present in medical remedy-books since the earliest Middle Ages, as a noun did not gain sufficient attention of medical writers. The noun is found mostly in the titles of some compilations or in general statements, which refer to some treatises being collections of recipes, see for instance (52). We have also found one example in which it is used as an explicatory term for ‘medical formula/instruction’, see (53).

(52) Pharmacopoeia Bateana: OR Bate’s Dispensatory. Translated from the Last Edition of the Latin Copy, Published by Mr. James Shipton. CONTAINING His Choice and Select Recipe’s, their Names, Compositions, Preparations, Vertues, Uses, and Doses, as they are Applicable to the whole Practice of Physick and Chirurgery. (EMEMT, 1700, Salmon, Pharmacopoeia Bateana)

(53) Some recipeis or prescriptions in some remedies may be used instead of one another, as a conserve for the syrop of the same simple whether of fruit, flower or Root [...] (EMEMT, 1649, Rondelet, Countreymans Apothecary)
The reason for such a limited use of *recipe* as a noun in the medical context might be explained by a high frequency of its verbal form, which became a fixed part of a traditional formula giving ingredients for a medical preparation, see (54)–(55).

(54) The second Intention is the vse of breaking, attenuating, mundifying & opening Medicaments; as are these Remedies now following. viz. Recipe. Rad, Ireos. Cort. Sambucij. (EMEMT, 1602, Clowes, Cure of Struma)

(55) Also, many learned men, of a certaine knowledge and sound understanding, haue in their bookes greatly commended a playster made thus: Recipe. Olde dryed Goates dung, Hony and Uienger, being decocted at an easie fire, to the consistence of a playster. (EMEMT, 1602, Clowes, Cure of Struma)

In addition, in the texts studied we found 682 occurrences of the symbol Rx, which pigeonholed *recipe* as a verb used as a head word of prescriptions, see (56)–(58).

(56) +R of the roots of the hearb dogstooth, of Sperage, of Parsly ana, +o i. of Sage leaues, of Betony leaues. (EMEMT, 1632, Bruele, Praxis Medicinae)

(57) She was purged with the following, +R Sena +o j. Agarick +Q iij. Rubarb +Q ii. Cinnamon +o i +s. (EMEMT, 1679, Hall, Select Observations)

(58) You may make an excellent Injection for a Virulent Gonorrhea with this Water, thus; +R of this Lime Water +o x. Mercurius dulcis levigated +o j. mix, and shake them so long together, till the Mercurius dulcis precipitates down to the bottom of a black colour. (EMEMT, 1700, Salmon, Pharmacopoeia Bateana)

This leaves us with the third noun, *prescription*, which entered the medical realm in the late sixteenth century, as in (59)–(61).

(59) Eating […] raw app[es and things contrary to the prescription of Physicke. (OED, 1579 FENTON Guicciard. x. (1599) 413)

(60) Phisitians, by whose directions and prescriptions such medecines are to be ministred, […] (EMEMT, 1603, Lodge, Treatise of the Plague)
Recipe, receipt and prescription in the history of English

(61) because that Prescriptions never mention the regulation of the Decoction, nor the degrees of fire, nor the length of time requisite for the Decoction, which is all left to the prudence of the Apothecary. (EMEMT, 1678, Charas, Royal Pharmacopoea)

The noun prescription had only two senses: (i) ‘a written formula’, and the later sense (ii) ‘a medical formula/instruction’. In addition, it coexisted with its verbal form prescribe ‘to write down directions’ (263 occurrences in EEMMT), which must have strengthened the position of the noun as the ‘right’ term for ‘a medical formula’.

(62) For suppose the remedie be hotte or cold, a purger of flegme, melancholy, or choler: it is the worke of inuention, the cause and kind of the disease being considered, to dispose the remedy in a iust quantity: to prescribe the same in a convenient form, (EMEMT, 1609, Pomarius, Enchiridion Medicum)

(63) For a Fume was prescribed the following: +R Frankinsence, Mastich, each +Q i +s. Brimstone +Q ii +s. Juniper +q ii. Storax +q i. (EMEMT, 1679, Hall, Select Observations)

(64) Or it may be prescribed thus: +R Of this Water +o iij. Syrup of Violets +o i+s. (EMEMT, 1700, Salmon, Pharmacopoeia Bateana)

(65) These are the Medicins I prescrib’d him (EMEMT, 1697, Cockburn, Continuation of the Account of Distempers)

(66) He being called vnto her prescribed such remedies as are usuall in this case, and within few dayes recouered her, to the great admiration of the beholders. (EMEMT, 1603, Suffocation of the Mother)

As seen in the examples above, the verb prescribe co-occurs with the symbol Rx (meaning ‘recipe’), which partly confirms the previously stated assumption that recipe was restricted to a very formulaic context.
3. The culinary context

When it comes to the culinary terms in the Old English period, not only did the Anglo-Saxons leave no cookbooks, which would help us understand the Anglo-Saxon culinary tradition, but also it seems that none of the terms for ‘recipe’ carried the culinary sense.

The earliest culinary reference was found in a fifteenth-century text, in which the term receipt was applied to a set of instructions how to prepare a certain dish (see (67)). Even though the lexeme was used as a heading, it proves an earlier use of receipt with the culinary sense than indicated in the dictionaries (according to which receipt with the sense “a statement of the ingredients and procedure required for making a dish or an item of food or drink” was first introduced at the end of the sixteenth century (OED).

(67) A RECEIPT
   +Ge must take wurte, and barly, and comyn, and hony, and a lytyll curtesy of salte, and sethe them in a potte togedyr tyl the barly be brostyn. And sythen, caste it abowte in +te hows wheras dowys be n vsyng etc. (HC, Reynes, The Commonplace Book)

The electronic corpora analyzed for the present study have shown the first appearance of receipt, other than as a heading, only in 1701, see example (68). But its reference is not clearly culinary, it could as well be medical. It should be mentioned, however, that a closer look at some culinary collections (not included in any of the electronic corpora used for the present study) reveals even earlier records of receipt with a purely culinary sense, i.e. ‘the instructions to prepare a particular dish’. The Compleat Cook, for instance, which is a collection of culinary recipes published in the middle of the seventeenth century, contains seven records of the noun: six of them included in the headings and one within the body of a recipe, see example (69).

(68) The Cook, Confectioner or Perfumer have as much pretence to learning, or the knowledge of the uses of what they prepare. Have not our Servants the skill to make up all our domestick collections of Receits, which are many of them the same with theirs? (LC, The Present State of Physick & Surgery in London_1701)

(69) The Lord Conway his Lordships receipt for the making of Amber Puddings.
First take the Guts of a young hog, and wash them very clean, and then take two pound of the best hog's fat, and a pound and a half of the best Jurden almonds, the which being blancht, take one half of them, & beat them very small, and the other halfe reserve whole unbeaten, then take a pound and a half of fine Sugar and four white Loaves, and grate the Loaves over the former composition, and mingle them well together in a bason having so done, put to it halfe an ounce of Ambergreec, the which must be scrapt very small over the said composition, take halfe a quarter of an ounce of levant musk and bruise it in a marble morter, with a quarter of a Pint of orange flower water, then mingle these all very well together, and having so done, fill the said Guts therwith, this Receipt was given his Lordship by an Italian for a great rarity, and has been found so to be by those Ladies of honour to whom his lordship has imparted the said reception. (The Compleat Cook, 1658)

The term *recipe*, whose culinary reference is said to have been introduced in the seventeenth century (cf. OED), was found once at the end of the fifteenth century. Similarly to *receipt*, this first nominal attestation of *recipe* was used in a heading to a culinary formula, see example (70).

(70) For to make floure of rys, recipe.

Tak rys and pyke hem clene and washe hem, and þenne druye hem a lyte ageyn þe sonne, and after bete hem in a morter small and þen sarse hem, and þenne druye hem wel agayn þe sonne and put hit in a vescell and sture hit offte for mustyng. (A Gathering of Medieval English Recipes, TCC_115_1490)

Additionally, *recipe* was found in the fifteenth-century culinary collections as a verb, meaning 'to take', ninety times, see for instance (71).

(71) Recipe your sugour claryfyede & put yt in a clene panne & seth yt [...]. (A Gathering of Medieval English Recipes, eMus_CS_17_1495)

Following the OED, the verb was used at the beginning of medical instructions from 1300. Its presence in the culinary material might serve as evidence that the boundary between medical and culinary formulas was
On the other hand, taking into account that ninety percent of its occurrences were found in the same collection (MS Harley 5401), we may assume that it was used due to the writer’s misinterpretation of the recipes.

4. Conclusions

The study has shown that the Anglo-Saxon vocabulary has been completely replaced in the Middle English period. In fact, the small number of Middle English occurrences of the analyzed terms (see Table 2) shows that it was the period of transition from the Germanic word-stock to vocabulary derived from Anglo-Norman. The former are clearly on their way to disappear, whilst the latter are only making their way into the lexicon.

Another striking conclusion is that the culinary reference of the analyzed items has been highly underrepresented, which might be accounted for by the fact that the culinary issues were of a lower status than the medical ones.

In case of the medical reference, the presented examples reveal that the early Anglo-Saxons did not have a clearly defined term for what we understand today as ‘a medical prescription/recipe’. Surely, they must have realized that there were some formulas to be followed whenever a given substance was prepared. But, instead of coining a term for that they made use of the already existing lexemes, which partly reflected the sense ‘written formula’. This also throws a light on their understanding of medicine/remedy, which was not only ‘a drug/a healing substance’ but rather ‘a substance made according to some formula’, hence the lack of a separate lexeme.

In the early Modern English period we can observe how the multi-meaningful lexemes became arranged within the semantic field. Thus, the term *recipe* gained dominance with the culinary reference, *prescription* became the medical term, and *receipt* was rejected from either of these, denoting ‘a statement confirming the reception of something’.

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6 Very often medical and culinary recipes were found in the same manuscripts, which may suggest that they might have been perceived by the contemporary reader/writer as one and the same text type. On the other hand, a detailed comparative study of the two reveals a number of differences (cf. Bator & Sylwanowicz forthcoming).
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Dress rehearsal: Word play and narrative construction in

*The Assembly of Ladies*

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In the erotics of theater, words are (theoretically) corporeal. They are up there for public scrutiny. The mind’s eye echoes the mind’s ear. *Words act.* They are elements of the scenic investiture affecting, synesthetically, light space rhythm pattern sound, but they also resound at the deepest level of the *mise-en-scène*, through self time memory consciousness as well. Mere words, true. Problematic to the last breath of being. The material elements of theater – like the body itself – situate us.¹

*Keywords:* dream vision; narrative structure; performance theory; dream narrators; gender; collective voice

The few critics who have addressed the anonymous fifteenth-century poem *The Assembly of Ladies* have largely limited their inquiry to intriguing, but overly simplified, ultimately unanswerable questions: is the author male or female? Is the text “feminist”? Can its genre be defined as Chaucerian? Is the poem’s primary concern with judiciary procedures or domestic courtly decorum? My conjectures to the above inquiries: likely female, and if so, “a remarkable woman”;² reflecting women’s writing, and after the influence of Christine de Pizan; appropriated as Chaucerian, though most probably not;³

³ Jane Chance, “Christine de Pizan as Literary Mother: Women’s Authority and Subjectivity in ‘The Floure and the Leaf’ and ‘The Assembly of Ladies’”, in *European

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eruditely focused on the details of both, giving an “admirable picture of manners”, in the words of C.S. Lewis. In fact, he alleges that “the detail of the poem shows powers akin to genius”. But these reflections only set the stage for the discussion below.

Like several other critics, Bradford Fletcher notes that The Assembly is not particularly well written. Fletcher asserts that the poem “is representative of a class of late medieval courtly love poems composed by writers who, for want of a better term, might be called amateurs”. Though it does not qualify as “great poetry”, Fletcher praises “its evident fascination with the details of court behavior and its frequent flashes of verbal sprightliness”. C.S. Lewis also locates the poem’s redeeming qualities in the author’s focus in “the stir and bustle of an actual court”, cleverly using the terminology of dress to highlight his contention that “the poet […] has no better vocation to allegory than fashion”. Though Lewis is underwhelmed by the author’s use of allegory, he admires how the detail and “realism” of the language makes the reader “soon forget that it is a dream, or an allegory”. Clarifying the legitimacy of serious scholarship on this text, Ann McMillan asserts that The Assembly is unusual among all the dream-visions and garden of love poems from which it derives because it has a female narrator. She astutely summarizes this important phenomenon:

Whole studies of dream and garden poetry use the collective pronoun ‘he’ for their dream-narrators without any need for qualification […] whatever the topic, women narrators simply do not appear in the secular dream-visions – except for those in the […] Assembly of Ladies […] by contrast; rather than male sexuality and seduction, [the poem deals] with female sexuality and chastity.

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7 Ibid. 250.

Building on many of these insights, though in a departure from those criticisms of the text for lacking proper aesthetics, or being too depressingly patriarchal, this analysis will apply performance theory to more thoroughly engage how the fluidity of the dreamscape in *The Assembly of Ladies* creates a theatrical medium that accentuates the corporeality of language. In other words, as the dreamer lies still, words float, act, take shape, and ultimately, clothe the participants involved. A public act of speech and writing, telling and retelling, *performing*, allows the female narrator to partially transgress the boundaries of male authority of which she tells and writes, this poem leads me to read it as if it were enacted on a stage, with roles played, and therefore mutable. In my analysis, I take into account the following themes that have emerged from my reflection on scholarship and the text itself: the oral frame and its interplay with the written word, gendered conventions, and sociohistorical context; the dream vision genre and its transgressive narrator; the all-female allegorical cast of characters occupying, performing male roles in typically male-dominated spaces; the fragmented nature of and composition of narrative; the allegorical and physical emphasis on costume; and the veil of allegory.

The corporeality of how this “booke” wrestles to come into being expresses female authorship and female performance. Through fragmented characterization, the use of “mottoes”, and a self-conscious, complex, female narrator, *The Assembly* takes shape as an assemblage of female parts into a readable text. When the narrator instructs amidst the calling of ‘voices’ to “Rede wele my dreame”, she presents an assemblage, a narrative that shows the readers its parts before a single subjectivity emerges (l. 756). Though she is mostly estranged from her “fellowship”, a physical separation and discomfort reinforced by the geography of the garden, the narrator weaves together a “collective narrative”, concluding it with the synecdochical joining of the sleeves. “[E]che of us toke other by the sleve, / And furth withal, as we shuld take oure leve” (Ll. 734–735). Not only does this image show how the women come together physically, but also points to the linking of their words. As I discuss, the allegory of clothing not only enacts the performative nature of the court proceedings, but also bears the very words, or “mottoes” that define the complaints and traits of the allegorical figures at play.
1. Unraveling the spatial and gender role maze

The narrator, identifying herself as a woman, or as Simone Marshall writes, “asserting her gender as a significant factor in her narration”, describes the setting of the poem as one September afternoon. Ladies are strolling the maze in a garden according to their fancy, walking two by two. They are evidently in the company of knights and squires. Instantly, readers align the high status of the knights with the ladies; one infers that the ladies are all of worthy character and part of the aristocracy. Marshall alludes to the spatial and temporal elements already presented, remarking that “the maze in a location for abrupt shifts in time” and that “autumn is specifically associated with transition”, not courtly love. As this paper makes apparent, this is not the only rupture with tradition. For Jane Chance, the timing spells contemplation and “the maze symbolizes the problem of female difference, women’s subjectivity”, namely “their confusion over direction [...] and over their social role”. When one of the knights questions the narrator’s presence in the garden, he asserts that this maze is a closed space, invoking social status and gender.

Like others in the poem, the knight mentions the narrator’s pallor as setting her apart, and questions whom she is seeking. She responds: “I seye aseyne, as it fil in my thought: / ‘To walke aboute the mase, in certeynte, / As a womman that nothyng rought’” (Ll. 16–18). In her reply, she not only recognizes his efforts to define the space as exclusive, but also cleverly appeases him by refusing to adopt a hierarchical position. She performs an unassuming role, a feminized one, setting the stage for her performance of the tale. Having disarmed his protectiveness over the typically patriarchal, male-dominated maze, she beckons the knight to abide and listen to the “playne of this matiere” (l. 28), a tale of women, told by women. Colleen Donnelly recognizes

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10 Ibid. 20.
11 Chance, “Christine de Pizan as Literary Mother”, 256.
12 All quotations and notes will be taken from, Derek Pearsall (ed.), The Floure and the Leaf; The Assembly of Ladies, The Isles of Ladies (New York: Thomas Nelson and Sons, Ltd., 1963).
that the “poet has appropriated a patriarchal form to tell of her own experience”.13

2. Dreamscape: Subverting the patriarchal dream

What ensues after the exchange with the knight marks the narrator’s ultimate separation from the group through wandering in the garden, and falling into the dream state where she envisions the journey to the Court and the presentation of the bills. She describes her state as she initially reaches a secure and hidden spot in the garden:

And as they sought hem self thus to and fro
I gate my self a litel avauntage;
Al for-veyred, I myght no further go,
Though I had wonne right grete for my viage;
So come I forth in to a streyte passage,
Whiche brought me to an herber feyre and grene
Made with benchis ful craftily and clene. (Ll. 43–49)

For McMillan, the narrator’s exhaustion and separation connect to the uneven and inconclusive nature of the poem, its fragmentation; what’s more, her uneasiness is explained as a reaction to the hardships experienced by contemporary women, which beset and overwhelm the narrator.14 In a curious contrast to this sense of bearing the psychological weight of the fellowship, the narrator does not engage directly with her fellows, who are equally bewildered by this “earthly paradise” of “sunlight”, “trees, a flowery meadow, rich fragrances and colors, birds’ songs, breezes, and water in the form of a fountain or spring”.15

Instead, she retreats, allowing the design of the maze to inspire and direct self-reflection once she reaches its center.16 Marshall “suggest[s] that the maze is a purely literary construct”, not a real place. If the maze is indeed an

15 Ibid. 28.
allegorical space, the narrator “reaches the centre before her companions [in order to] signify] for us [readers] a focus on literature and how women participate in literature”. 17 This sets her apart for her authorial role, perceiving
the narrative through dreaming, while performing in the dream-vision, and as narrator upon waking. By both embracing and challenging her difference from her companions in the garden, the narrator forms and performs her authorial perspective, shifting time and state of consciousness:

A litel while thus was I alone
Beholdyng wele this delectable place;
My felawshyp were comyng everichone
So must me nede abide as for a space,
Remembryng of many dyvers cace
Of tyme past, musyng with sighes depe,
I set me downe and there fil in slepe. (Ll. 71–77)

In these lines, the narrator speaks of a fellowship, but she is distant from it; not only does she precede the other women, creating a physical place and occupying it figuratively through her relationship to literature, but most importantly, she enters her dream state. In the context of the dream, the narrator introduces the allegorical figure Perseverance, describing the fictive woman in clothing embroidered with “remember me’s”, the same flower as in her garden of retreat, while mindfully enacting the roles of both dreamer and the performer-narrator. The flowers recall the function of memory in the telling and retelling of stories, as well as the interpretation of dreams, and point to the narrator’s intentional reconstruction of her dream-vision. The characterization of Perseverance as “sad”, “demure”, and like the narrator, on her own, helps to distract the reader from how the narrator shapes her own role as author and participant:

And as I slept me thought ther com to me
A gentil womman metely of stature;
Of grete worship she semed for to be,
Atired wele, nat hye but bi mesure,
Hir countenaunce ful sad and ful demure,
Hir colours blewe, al that she had upon;
Theyr com no mo but hir siff alon. (Ll. 78–84)

17 Ibid. 18, 19.
The dreamscape in *The Assembly* gives the narrator's subjectivity a theatrical platform, where female lived experience is elevated, and expressed as a feminized linguistic performance that interrupts assumptions of male vocality and authority.

3. **Wakeful dreamscape: Rehearsing and performing memory**

Upon waking from her dream, the narrator follows suit with her authorial role: she begins to write, or in her words, “rehearse” what she has seen and performed in her dream. As Chance underscores, she does so immediately, without delay.\(^{18}\) In order not to forget, she recreates memories through speech and writing. The fluidity of forms, which relates to the simultaneous focus on writing and performing builds on the use of the word “rehersyng”. The definition of *rehersyng* in the *Middle English Dictionary* includes narrating or to give account. The narrator writes:

> 'Wher am I now?' thought I, 'al this is goon',
> Al amased; and up I gan to looke.
> With that anon I went and made this booke,
> Thus symply *rehersyng* the substaunce
> Because it shuld nat out of remebraunce, (Ll. 738–742, emphasis mine)

The narrator reports that the fellowship “thought we had out travel spent/ In suche wise as we hielde us content” (Ll. 732–733). Moreover, she has communicated her tale of performance to the listening knight, in itself a role reversal, and another transgression on her part. Woman as narrator, transmitter of the oral frame used to present the bills themselves, self-inserted author, specifically, writer – these are all fairly overt challenges to the traditional depiction or invisibility of female characters in fifteenth-century poetry, even in the wake of Christine de Pizan’s *Cité des Dames*, where she “determine[s] that writing, inventing, and artisy are no longer a masculine or clerical preserve”.\(^{19}\) Thus, as Chance argues, women write, but in *The Assembly*

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\(^{18}\) Chance, “Christine de Pizan as Literary Mother”, 256.

\(^{19}\) Ibid. 250.
of Ladies, they “write” through dress, handsewn “mottoes” or “words”, and embroidery, the oral delivery of their charges, and written individual complaints, feminizing the act of writing by expanding it to include skills relegated to women through law, force, and tradition. The interplay with poetics and performance and pushing the boundaries of women’s roles through acts of narrating, orating and writing is transgressive.

Notably, the meeting between the narrator and the knight is neither sexual nor hostile. Instead, their exchange represents the coming together of the two sexes on a platform resembling mutual respect; the frame of the poem permits a knight, a male figure who is an insider to the labyrinthine garden, to listen quietly to a woman’s words, moreover ones reporting of injustices done to women. Though the narrator proceeds with her tale, she positions herself as a naïve female, instead of aggressively displaying the authority and agency with she might be viewed. This is a conscious, tactical act, a sign of a savvy author: by appearing feeble and diminished, the narrator can disguise her transgression against roles, and as a result, to better perform them. For instance, when the narrator asks Perseverance whether men will accompany “them” on their journey, she says that “nat one [...] may come among yow alle” (l. 147). The narrator reacts almost in disbelief and questions why, although her own complaints against men contribute to the pallor and exhaustion (l. 20) remarked by the knight.

When she has finished, the knight applauds the tale’s worthiness, asks its name, and without exhibiting more concern, excuses himself from further encumbering the progress of its transcription, its assemblage from the narrator’s memory. McMillan notes that, “dreams not understood, even by their own dreamers, are a staple of Chaucer’s dream-visions. The disturbing nature of the dream, especially of its commentary on relationships between men and women, seems to have escaped her male listener”.20 Though she remarks that the knight’s response shows his failure to comprehend what he has heard, the performative platform the poem creates is itself a gesture that begs to be decoded. In a sense, the knight performs an audience member’s role, providing a frame for the show, leaving the scene at the show’s end, possibly to process what has unfolded before him – the narrator’s performance of her experience – or to give way to the creation of the written script.

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20 McMillan, 41. Here, McMillan indirectly attributes authorship to Chaucer, putting her in the “Chaucerian” camp of the debate about the identity of the poet.
4. Acting the part: Performance theory and the reinterpretation of roles

In its circular nature, reflected even in the shape of the arbor, the dream vision genre as used in *The Assembly of Ladies* is similar to performance because they both hinge on the ability of language to represent things seen, unseen, and lost through multiplicity, simultaneity, and in a fluid space. Herbert Blau, in his analysis of performance, comments that “the theatre remembers [...] whether that other thing exists or not. [It is] only a dream remembered”. The crux of the dream poet’s work, then, lies in the construction, the weaving of this memory. As the events in *The Assembly of Ladies* unfold, the narrator is present, only transferring them upon waking from her dream state, writing from memory.

Like theater, the actualizing force of the dream vision violates and confuses time and reality. How the play of words in a text is received by its audience is affected by the setting, the time and place of its occurrence, just as for the audience of a theatrical performance. Like narrators, viewers and readers are merely “constituents of the shifting, vulnerable to time”. Blau asks, regarding “the reality we refer to in theater, does it exist before or after the fact made present? in the performance? [...] and did we put it there in the act of perceiving? or was it there before we looked, hiding or withdrawn”. On stage, as words are voiced, that which is out of sight becomes embodied and manifest. This is reminiscent of the oral frame of communication, used in *The Assembly*. The voice transforms itself to an image manifested from writing, which, in this space, precedes speech. History is preserved or recreated through imitation, rehearsal, and improvisation on stage, which amplifies the social and political involvement in poetics.

Blau notes that, “from the beginning, theatre has been concerned with the action of memory trying to remember a beginning”. This bears a significant relationship to the role of the narrator in either pulling apart or threading and reinforcing the seams of history or past narratives with their words through narrative means, permanently etching him or herself as a commentator, one of the “auctorities” of language’s past and future. Like the actor, the narrator is

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21 Chance, “Christine de Pizan as Literary Mother”, 250.
23 Ibid. 132.
thus able to embody self, time, memory, consciousness, and desire. In this act of “improvisation”, the unwritten is spoken or written, while the physical and spatial expression of memory is less focused on the past, and more on where to begin anew. In Blau’s words, “memory is the desire of the not-accomplished, the reflex of desire itself, which is located on the stage of being at the limits of consciousness – the theatre in which all things come to be, dreaming still”. The dream vision genre creates a similar rupture in time and space where narrative “improvisation” takes place: past and present stand still in this moment between consciousness and sleep, when the dream narrator questions, highlights, rearticulates, redefines, and ultimately makes social commentary.

Christine Chism traces a similar merger between past and present to alliterative romances that dramatize a revived past suspended “between a historic connection and catastrophic rupture”. Although my focus is on how this dream narrator imbues meaning in such a suspended rift, it is interesting to see how the ambidexterity of alliterative romances “energize contemporary issues by projecting them into [...] distant, vast, and spectacular historical theaters”, much like the fluid landscape of the Middle English dream visions. Chism argues that the alliterative romances “explore a matrix of interests both local and national, both historic and contemporary, both political and transcendental, both conservative and innovative”. The work of the romances, how they seize historical rupture and continuity, resonates with the work of the dream visions identified in this analysis. Both genres enact what Chism calls “socially interrogative forces” to reconstitute specific binary rifts. In order to do so, the narrator’s performance of her role engages, challenges, and attempts to subvert social dichotomies.

5. Enacting the court

The Assembly, and its inability to adjudicate or even fully articulate the bills of complaint presented before the court, is particularly valuable for its focus on

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24 Ibid. 141.
25 For a longer discussion, see Christine Chism, Alliterative Revivals (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002).
27 Ibid. 9.
the very physical nature of narrative construction, to use C.S. Lewis’ words, “put into the mouth of a woman”.28 Significantly, this story not only originates in women’s speech, but also flows from the hand of a woman through writing. Women gather as a collective to plead their cases in a symbolic court; the presiding Lady Loiaulte has charged the “felawes” “everichon” to come to her dressed in blue, and promised to hear their bills of complaint. In this way, she expects to appease the suffering of the women presenting them. In fact, the courtly exchanges in The Assembly engage the development of female discourse and present the opportunity to interrupt male authority through female enactment of roles usually filled by men. As Chance states, “it is legislature and justice, feminized”.29

According to Donnelly, it would not be unusual for the eight allegorical figures who guide the narrator’s journey30 to have a role in legal courts, and that actually, all the named figures have a servile place in royal households:

The figures’ station in relation to the dream narrator positions them in roles of servitude [...] such role reversal is unusual in dream poems, where dreamers are generally presented as subservient to their allegorical teachers. In contrast to that tradition, the allegorical personages of this poem are not teachers but attendants, employed in Loiaulte’s household and court of justice.31

While this reading supports my argument for the transgression of the text in depicting the roles of women, the fact that women perform every role, from “chaunceler” to “secretarye” to the judge, Lady Loiaulte herself, requires further examination. In Derek Pearsall’s explanatory notes to the 1962 edition of The Assembly of the Birds, “chaunceler” is defined as “the usher in law courts whose station was the ad cancellos, the bars separating the public from the judges”,32 while the “secretarye” in The Assembly performed “administrative and clerical [tasks.] The closest parallel [to this role] is a legal one [...] with the work of the clerk of the King’s Council”, a position of relative importance and visibility.33 Like the King’s Council, “the court of Lady Loyalty was conceived of in rather vague and general terms, and was approached by suitors as ‘the

28 Lewis, The Allegory of Love, 249.
29 Chance, “Christine de Pizan as Literary Mother”, 257.
32 Pearsall, 165, 507n.
33 Ibid. 162, 337n.
supreme authority of the state, superior to the ordinary law and able to right wrongs of every kind". 34 This understanding helps frame, if not fully explain, both the structure of the court, its representation by the narrator, and ultimately, the failure to deliver judgment that would openly dispute systems of patriarchy and female oppression.

Each bill, "a statement of complaint and a prayer for redress [...] was the initiatory action and the distinguishing feature of all procedure in equity; it is only semi-legal in form [and] tends to be vague in point of fact but vehement in presenting the enormity of the offence (as in AL)". 35 According to Pearsall, the use of "semi-legal parlance, [...] loosely related participles, [...] the same choked and circuitous movement and convoluted syntax", all point to the poet's familiarity with "the stricter legal sense" of a bill, and his or her "attempt to imitate legal procedure". 36 For C.S. Lewis, *The Assembly of Ladies* is a "realistic presentation, in some degree satiric, of the contemporary legal world", like John Roland's *The Court of Venus*. 37 The bills themselves lack cohesion, aside from their general demonstration of women's woes in the period as delivered through feminized speech: broken hearts, unfulfilled promises, unrewarded virtue, sadness, instability, ungratefulness, and labor in vain. 38

One complaint illustrates the double entendre of the loosely legal framework through which women perform the courtly roles of petitioners: "C'est sanz dire", "it goes without saying", or "my case speaks for itself" (l. 627). 39 This can serve as an encompassing summary of the burdens of women and reiterate women's authority; conversely, its lack of precision can mask the details of the problem, and prevent it from being fully articulated, or addressed. Through the narrator exerts such effort to maintain the judicial allegory, which is successful to an extent, the magnitude of women's problems and concerns are only alluded to, rather than emphatically represented. Marshall comments on "the deliberate ambiguity in the meaning of the complaints, emphasising the indistinct characteristics of the female speakers [...] [T]his ambiguity is then replicated in the narrator's unusual behaviour in

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34 Ibid. 161, 325n.
35 Ibid. 161, 325n.
37 Lewis, *The Allegory of Love*, 293.
38 Chance, “Christine de Pizan as Literary Mother”, 257.
39 Pearsall, 168, 627n.
the assembly”. Through lack of resolution, a delay in judgment, the legal framework does not resolve the bills, which stymies the completion of the transgression made possible by *The Assembly* itself, and its proactive, differentiated narrator.

Besides depicting the legal procedure in a manner quite historically accurate, the narrator also obscures the ladies’ complaints to promote the transition between courtly poetry’s traditional encyclopedic approach to the female–male encounter, and the narrator’s feminized innovation: a self-authored, individual confrontation capturing the vast social concerns of women. By turning female denigration into condensed, encyclopedic templates, delivered in a repetitive manner, with the same phrasing, the poet makes readers want to simply subsume all these stories into one, if that. The listener and reader are discouraged by the actual complaints, in a manner that Marshall argues is the result of self-conscious female authorship: “The women’s bills are shown to be repetitive and unoriginal [and while they] signify the female voice, that does not fit into the boundaries of masculine literary conventions”. Nonetheless, the history entailed in these encyclopedic versions is important, as it marks a visible point in the development of the female written voice and content, in the tradition of Christine de Pizan.

### 6. Solitude, fragmentation, and the weaving of “Assembly”

Perseveraunce, one of eight allegorical figures who guide the narrator’s journey to the castle of Pleasant Regarde, highlights the solitary nature of the narrator’s quest in several instances. She gives her an escort, a woman of wise and discreet conduct, Diligence. It is Diligence, not other “felawes”, who provides the narrator with companionship and direction when Perseverance leaves the narrator “al alone” (l. 190). Perseverance’s reason for leaving is to inform the other women of the plan of action, “to yeve warnyng in many dyvers place to youre felawes”, something that the narrator herself might have done herself (Ll. 142–143). A third allegorical character, Countenance, voices

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42 Chance, “Christine de Pizan as Literary Mother”, 248.
the concern of the knight, openly asking “Yowre felawship, where bien they now?” (l. 296), to which the narrator answers:

‘Forsoth,’ quod I, ‘they bien comyng echeone,  
But in certeyne I knowe nat where they be.  
At this wyndow whan they come ye may se;  
Here wil I stande awaiting ever among,  
For wele I wote they wil nat now be long.’ (Ll. 297–301)

Aware that others are coming to the Court, but not knowing exactly where they are, she stays cautious, preferring to wait. As the tale unfolds, the narrator relies on the allegorical Remembranunce and Avisenesse to provide the opening for the entrance of the ladies and gentlewomen. Instead of forthcoming interaction with other female characters throughout the poem, the narrator distances herself from the society of her peers, her “felawes”, and thus, performs her narrative role while questioning the possibilities for social conglomeration.

In the dreamscape, the narrator partially overcomes her sense of isolation by speaking to other women, contravening her difference and separation from them while continuing to articulate the storyline. In so doing, the anonymous female narrator creatively reassembles the narrative, yet the reader is part of the collective that interprets and explores its meaning. These participants receive, “read”, and cocreate the allegorical presentation; authorship includes readers as coauthors. Through this “collective narrative”, the text extends far beyond the class of ladies and gentlewomen whose complaints are accounted for in the bills delivered to the Lady of Loialute. In fact, this democratization of narrative construction begins with the characterization of the narrator and her transgressive agency in the poem: even though she is distinguished as an outsider, does not bear a motto, and herself presents no bill, it is she who not only bears the petition, but is also briefed on the organization of the court. This emphasizes the protest of the narrator against social norms and structures, perhaps the legal system itself, even while she performs her own role in the text. Not only does she participate in the court, transcribe its proceedings from memory, but in so doing, also enables this important “collective narrative”.

The poem enhances the narrative’s communal value and the ease with which it can be appropriated and expanded by inviting the reader into a habitable space, a stage for the narrative. Engaging a productive energy, this
galvanizes interpretive activism by the reader and audience. Likewise, the dream narrator also navigates the wastelands, the abyss of meaning that such a narrative creates. This fragmentation thus characterizes the “collective narrative”: the synecdochical parts referred to in this analysis represent disintegrated allegorical pieces, forever estranged from a transitory past. However, these fleeting versions of the past also point to possibilities where narrative construction questions or reaffirms memories through performance. By assembling self and society through participation in authorship, even through disappointingly unclear bills, the audience mirrors the processes and vulnerabilities involved in mining a complete narrative from fragmented visions.

The narrator’s multiple roles – her ability to walk actively, and maintain both a bird’s-eye and an interior view of her fellowship – actually facilitates the unification of the images presented. The narrator “mediates our experience of the text, but resists interpretation through a single lens, because she does not function as a unified character”. This dispersion of viewpoint not only complicates the narrative, and highlights the particularly transgressive role and actions of the anonymous female narrator; it also is an appropriation of the typically male dream narrator role and a move toward individuated authorship. Her mediation of the dream allows the reader to move across narrative frames. The creation of the “booke” becomes the mimetic vehicle where readers can partake of the dream vision through the very process of its writing, its passing from the oral frame to the written. This passage from orality to textuality takes place during “an historical period in which written and oral agreements co-existed”, with neither considered the superior or more authoritative, though the written was “innately masculine in nature”. The instructions for proper womanhood are transmitted orally in How the Good Wife Taught Her Daughter, to be discussed shortly. The Assembly, on the other hand, utilizes orality to express displeasure while figuring as more provocative the gesture of a specifically textual connection, as seen from the literal joining of sleeves as the women depart. I read the individual sleeves as symbolizing the words of the poem, conjoined to form phrases, sentences, stanzas, and finally the complete poem, which challenges male textual authority by dressing this...
authorial process in the guise of fashion and uses female actors to perform it. Further complicating the landscape of linguistic traditions and choices, Marshall goes on to comment: “the poet demonstrates that both legal and poetic language have cause to utilise empirical and emotional modes of communication in different circumstances”.  

In *The Assembly*, the social agency of language, as expressed through the reading of the bills, reinforces the idea of the “collective narrative”, while providing a natural link to performance theory, and its application to the dreamscape and the use of allegory. The magnitude of words, how they act, attempts to capture a collective identity – in this case, one of veiled suffering expressed by individual or allegorical entities – retold from the fragments of memories belonging to a single narrator. The telling of the tale, mediated through the dream vision, serves to provide a performative platform where a lady is able to present her thoughts in a non-threatening way to a male figure. The poem purports to address the theme of truth and loyalty of women and the neglect and unfaithfulness of men. Though “the trappings of allegory are retained [...] the true interest of the poets lies elsewhere, sometimes in satire, sometimes in amorous dialectic, and often in mere rhetoric and style”.  

This allegory is placed in the framework of a dream, where justice takes on a womanly shape. The five ladies and four gentlewomen who seek redress at the court of Lady Loyalty, voice their collective distress, then deliver their particular complaints in writing, and in ways that reveal the gendered nature of this performance, in sewing, embroidery, and fashion. Considering dresses as text, a reading of these women is imperative to how readers surmise narrative opportunities offered through speaking garments, to again evoke the image of the women’s connected sleeves.

7. Dressing the part

The maiden petitioners are represented via their mottoes, which could be read to expose the injustices committed against them, but are ultimately too pliable to be read either as affirmation of independence and autonomy, or alignment to male misogyny. Most notable about them is that they enable the airing of

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47 Ibid.
49 Chance, “Christine de Pizan as Literary Mother”, 257.
women's complaints through "words", as they are alternately called. Their open-endedness provides the narrative space where an everywoman's story could be written – a universal tale more focused on construction than resolution. Contrasted by more ambiguous mottoes such as "Une sans chaungier", and "C'est sanz dire", others briefly state virtues that women must adhere to if they be chaste, silent, and obedient, for instance, "Entierment vostre", "En dieu est", "Sejour ensure", and "Bien monest".50

The fourteenth-century poem, What the Good Wife Taught Her Daughter, is an illustration of the expected behavior and attributes of contemporary women. Marshall indicates that the idealized masculine rules and virtues the poem contains actually resemble the names of the women who inhabit Pleasant Regarde and partially comprise The Assembly of Ladies. These names act as a "series of masculine regulations to be imposed upon women in which rules of external behavior are prescribed to impact upon the internal state of mind".51 Since, in poetry of the period, masculine expectations for women's behavior are also projected onto their thinking, the instructions for proper womanhood are often delivered and modeled by female figures. The matriarchal figure in How the Good Wife Taught Her Daughter, the latest translation of the Codex Ashmole 61 version of What the Good Wife Taught her Daughter, is one such example. Occupying 209 lines of the text, the matriarch provides binding instructions for how wives can be in servitude to their husbands, and more generally, good citizens: treat the poor with kindness, attend church, and stay away from practices of ageism or idleness. She asserts:

My dere doughter, of this take kepe.
If any man profer thee to wede,
A curtas ansuer to hym be seyde,
And schew hym to thy frendys alle.
For anything that may befawle,
Syt not by hym, ne stand thou nought
In sych place ther synne mey be wroght.
What man that thee doth wedde with rynge,

50 Pearsall, notes. "One without changing", "It needs no words", "Entirely yours", "In God is (my trust)", "Rest Assured", "Well advised".
...thou hym love aboven all thinge.  
If that it forteyn thus with thee,  
That he be wroth and angery be,  
Loke thou meekly ansuer hym,  
And meve hymn other lyth ne lymme,  
And that schall sclake hym of hys mode;  
Thank schall thou be hys derlyng gode. (Ll. 26–40, emphasis mine)\(^\text{52}\)

These directives premise wifehood as the defining characteristic of a virtuous woman, as conceived in its sociohistorical context. Although the allegorical companions share the names of patriarchal virtues — Discrecioun, Remembraunce, Attemperaunce, to name several — *The Assembly* subtly criticizes this compartmentalization of female behavior and traits by presenting synecdochical virtues — splintered women walking to and fro (l. 43). Most of their mottoes reasonably suit the rules of being a good woman; conceptually, a woman might figure as only one of the virtues, but is not sufficient for an authentic female character, especially not one of such high social standing and “trowthfulness” as the ladies assembled in the Lady of Loiaulte’s court. Thus, it is quite possible that each woman is not “real”, but represents a single feminine virtue, performing it in the theater of the court.

Much like costume in the theater, clothing acts as allegory, stitching meaning by way of visual articulation through synecdochical significance. Like allegory, costume has the ability to become a metonymic disguise or a fully articulated text. An actor’s clothing or lack thereof is integral to demarcating meaning in a performance. Clothing, a physical gesture, speaks. Susan Crane argues that “[a] chronicle’s account of a courtier’s disguising offers only mediated access to a historical moment, but its very mediations – its explanations of the behavior, its economy of representation, its judgments – constitute a generically shaped *discourse of identity*”\(^\text{53}\). Using a study of the performance’s “material register”, where identity and clothing reflect how self-conception intersects with self-presentation, she traces the uses of clothing in the courts of the Hundred Years War. In embroidered mottoes and other heraldic marks of identity, Crane explains that “talking garments” functioned both to conceal the body and to reveal a character, an ambiguity that both

\(^{52}\) All quotes will be taken from “How the Good Wife Taught her Daughter”, ed., George Shuffelton in *Codex Ashmole 61: A Compilation of Popular Middle English Verse* (Kalamazoo, Michigan: Medieval Institute Publications, 2008).

draws attention to the corporeal function of language and parallels the content of the bills presented in *The Assembly*.\(^{54}\)

8. Unity and discord: Women’s work and women’s words

To present before the Lady of Loialute, the women are asked to dress all in blue, each with a motto on her sleeve. This monochromatic attire masks the differentiation among the women based on individuality, supporting the notion that the women in the garden are performing the roles of women, or virtues, rather than being authentic women. Although she wears blue, a symbol of truthfulness, fidelity, or chastity, depending on the source, the narrator does not wear a motto.\(^{55}\) This constitutes one of her transgressive acts, and denotes a characteristic that steps outside of the traditional female roles within courtly love poetry and the dream-vision genre. McMillan argues that the narrator’s refusal to wear a motto indicates “her sense of differentness and apartness from the other” allegorical women in the text.\(^{56}\) Though she agrees that the narrator may so object to the masculine values the mottoes express, Marshall also sees this act as contravening the “architectural and social boundaries of Pleasaunt Regarde”,\(^{57}\) leading to her exclusion and distancing from a means of communication.\(^{58}\) Wendy Matlock also views the narrator’s refusal as a transgressive move, but for her the narrator’s motivation is that she is unwilling to comply with the court’s prescribed rules.\(^{59}\)

I concur with the identification of transgression, best framed by Marshall: “Pleasaunt Regarde emphasises exclusion rather than inclusion”, involving “a series of boundary transgressions”. It is specifically “her willingness to transgress [that] causes her to be isolated from the inhabitants of the castle and from her companions”.\(^{60}\) While these scholars examine the narrator’s transgression, their analysis differs most notably in that Matlock suggests the connection to the written word and its use as a mode of expression within this constructed
narrative, while Marshall claims that because the narrator cannot represent herself using a feminine voice, the possibilities for self-expression within the narrative are limited.\(^\text{61}\) Evans and Johnson also note the restrictions placed on the women by the device of the mottoes, but they assert that,

> the function of the mottoes is also ideological, in that they emblematise, in stark terms, the codes of conduct which shape these women’s lives and the limited positions available to aristocratic women in a dominant male culture. [...] The subjectivity of the narrator, then, becomes a focus for the (mild) questioning of a particular form of late medieval femininity which is simultaneously constructed with the text and exposed as a construction.\(^\text{62}\)

Notably, Donnelly contends that the narrator “will take up the pen rather than a needle to record her experience and make a book, thereby adopting for female uses a normally masculine mode of expression”.\(^\text{63}\) This reading highlights the narrator’s act of refusal, aligning it with the reversal of gendered roles through the choice to write. Here, again, the narrator challenges, rather than limits narrative scope, specifically through exploring linguistic corporeality.

To build on the common ground of scholarship, while underscoring Evans and Johnson’s point about the particular transgressive agency exemplified by the narrator, I argue that the choice not to wear a motto relates to her earlier efforts at maintaining solitude, carving out an individualized space for reflection and creation. For Donnelly, the motto’s absence is an attempt at anonymity, which opens up the space of “authorship”. Through refusing to wear a motto, the narrator asserts that despite her separation, she is part of the collective: the blue costume worn by women regardless of their social standing serves to blur the identities of the ladies and gentlewomen. Barrat, Chance, and Marshall agree that “the narrator, without a motto, is [...] identity-less”, a choice performed on the courtly stage, and then again, in the narrative’s reconstruction. She manipulates her own persona as narrator – facing exclusion and imposing self-exclusion.\(^\text{64}\) Simultaneously, she crafts the

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\(^{63}\) Donnelly, “Withoute Wordes”, 51.

\(^{64}\) Marshall, The Female Voice, 48.
narrative itself, probing the possibilities of female narrative through a presentation that enables the “universality of her voice and dream”.  

The fact that the women are not clearly described as they enter the court of Lady Loialute reinforces the narrator’s separation from them. Her depictions of them are nondescript – she traces their movements through their feet: jumping rails, walking inward and outward, pictured far behind, far forward, and walking in all directions at once, in pairs:

Som went inward and went they had gon oute,
Som stode amyddis and loked al aboute;

And soth to sey som were ful fer behynde
And right anon as ferforth as the best;
Other there were, so mased in theyr mynde,
Al wyes were goode for hem, both est and west.
Thus went they furth and had but litel rest,
And som theyr corage dide theym so assaile
For verray wrath they stept over the rayle. (Ll. 34–42)

The particular choice of words reflects the women’s individual frames of mind, literally multi-faceted and fragmented. They are introduced individually and thoroughly using the mottoes, but only once “Perseverance has shifted her narrative sufficiently into the interior of her castle, suggesting a further, interior, psychological space has been entered into. Furthermore”, Marshall comments, “the presence of women in the interior space of Pleasant Regarde specifically equates spatial interiority with femininity”.

It is important to note that the medieval organization of households, roles, and power relied on strict hierarchy, with titles for each station denoting associated duties. According to this, women were charged with the inner, or local, the loosely framed private realm, while men ruled the outer household, its scope, affairs with other entities, in other words, the public stage. Many of the legal roles in the text have counterparts within the household: position of “chaunceler”, for instance, also existed in the domestic sphere, where he “supervised the running of the household and the estate”. Marshall asserts that “the concept of the ‘inner household’ being the exclusive domain of

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67 Pearsall, 165, 507n.
women is particularly present” in The Assembly. She goes on to suggest that “female spaces, both lay and religious, are both subject to the same masculine authoritative conventions”\(^68\). The male control mentioned even stretched to the definition of women’s work: “masculine authority deems embroidery and tapestry to be female activities, thus by practising such activities, the women condone masculine authority”\(^69\).

Interestingly, Mª Beatriz Hernández Pérez links embroidery to effective writing. Although she eventually finds that the delay in judgment shows women acquiescing to male authority, part of her argument also supports the transgressive power of women’s work, even as constructed by men and the patriarchal authority over means of communication. She states:

> embroidery occupied precisely that category of the external and material. Indeed, it not only concealed meaning, as letters could do, but furthermore, it amplified and embellished any surface. Embroidery magnified and exaggerated the superficial excellence of the material and the visual; it was the surface of surfaces, the top of the costume, the ultimate outer layer displaying its own formal beauty and accuracy as a unique and essential value, belittling any other virtue.\(^70\)

The narrator views embroidery, like the wearing of a motto, symbols of captivity that she does not engage. Despite her choice not to engage these means of communication, and thus exclude herself from full participation, the narrator details with painstaking attention the dress, symbols, mottoes – the “words” the women wear – emphasizing the utmost importance of these elements in the recreation of the court and to its proceedings.\(^71\)

However, even in interaction with the women’s words, complete access to their meaning is complicated by language’s indefinite representation of the sign and the signified. Spoken word and meaning as represented by the bills is disparate because “the voiced self […] is already an image, worded, before it is heard; that is, subject to the interior ‘writing’”.\(^72\) The narrator’s role, then, articulates interiority, what she is hearing and “writing” as the poem unfolds.

\(^68\) Marshall, The Female Voice, 42–43.
\(^69\) Ibid. 48.
\(^71\) Marshall, The Female Voice, 47.
\(^72\) Blau, “Prescriptions of Theatre”, 129.
Discerning the significance of the object or motto on clothing is all the more involved. The visibility of signs situates identity, but that visibility is made complex because the wearer’s desires – although placed on the physical surface for public use and consumption – are partial (a mystery), thereby resistant to full disclosure or scrutiny. As Crane shows, if emblematic clothing can be read as an assemblage of experiences, some chronicled, others not, then complete readings are dependent on survival of the text in full, like a manuscript. At the same time, recalling the function of the “collective narrative”, meaning is also made from the narrator’s, then the reader’s interpretation of visual representations. If one’s identity, the assemblage or gathering of one’s experience, is tied to articles of clothing, it is imperative to link the “text” of dress and fashion with that of narrative performance and construction, especially when the narrative attempts to question or draw attention to the status quo, as The Assembly so clearly does.

9. Under the veil: The dubious success of allegory

Unlike Chaucer’s male narrator in the House of Fame, who attempts to manipulate historical narrative, the woman relating The Assembly does so as though they are mere stereotypes, allegorical figures. The narrator in The Assembly negotiates the formulaic depictions of age-old tales through a veil. The women’s tales are partially hidden by a “fyne umple”, allowing for them to become fragmented references to the stories that came before, templates for authors and readers, or as I argue, calls to cowrite their newly edited versions. Chaucer repeatedly delves into and gets caught in long-winded narratives in Anelida and Arcite and The Legend of Good Women. In a nod to authorial tradition, the poet of The Assembly begins in a similar manner, but ultimately truncates, fragments, and shortens it, providing a synecdoche of grievance in this excerpt:

Wheron was graven of storyes many oon:
First how Phillis of wommanly pite
Deyd pitously for the love of Demephon;
Next after was the story of Thesbe,

74 Joan Evans, Dress in Mediaeval France (London: Oxford University Press, 1952), 42.
How she slowe hir self under a tre;
Yit sawe I more how in pitous case
For Antony was slayne Cleopatrace;

That other syde was how Melusene
Untriewly was disceyved in hir bayne;
Ther was also Anelada the quene
Upon Arcite how sore she did complayne;
Al these stories wer graven ther certayne
And many mo than I reherce yow here –
It were to long to telle yow al in feere.

And bicaus the wallis shone so bright
With fyne umple they were al over-spredde
To that entent folk shuld nat hurt theyr sight,
And thurgh that the stories myght be redde. (Ll. 456–473)

The narrator admits that more stories were shared, “many mo than I reherce yow here”, but time is limited. The narrator has other concerns: she seeks to document the process of seeking justice.

The Assembly’s veil of allegory, its duality and elusiveness, forces the narrator to encounter the images of forlorn women of the early romances. The collage of stories on Lady Loiaulte’s wall-of-women-deceived mimics the assemblage of women who present their case to the court. In other words, the women depicted as victims of love on the wall echo the nine women in the hall, a cunning method through which the narrator creates allegorical selves for the allegorical characters within the poem itself. The narrative she reconstructs then becomes representative of other women as a synecdoche of their lives. Writing on the wall serves a similar purpose in Chaucer’s House of Fame, showing how these subtexts bear relevance to the creation of new narratives and innovating in methods of composition. In the House of Fame, in the Temple of Venus, the narrator recounts the story of Dido and Aeneas. Both the Ovidian and Virgilian interpretations of the tale are evoked. The male narrator questions the authority of both texts as he chooses language to reinterpret and posit his artistic literary truth. By calling attention to the “mediation of the observer/transcriber and the text he claims as his source”,

the narrator “assumes [some] authorial privileges.” Jacqueline T. Miller acknowledges that “[t]he wavering and ambivalence that characterize the narrator’s efforts to assume full authorial rights over the text also restrain and betray that effort; and they indicate that such a position is as untenable as subservience to an outside source seems to be.”

As I propose, however, piercing the veil and baring the mystery is not The Assembly’s trajectory. Instead, the narrator questions the status quo and formulates a narrative, both calling attention to and offering possibilities for a narrative performance that provides context and makes an experience textual. Marshall asserts that

The veil of umple demonstrates an awareness of the veil of allegory, but it is not the same thing as integumentum. The purpose of integumentum is to discover the truth of a text; it is a means of interpretation that allows one to reveal what lies underneath the narrative. Yet the umple veil does the exact opposite. It is, in every way possible, a feminine version of integumentum, except in its resulting effect. The umple conceals the stories beneath it, it does not reveal them.

To capture meaning from this narrative, I suggest focusing on the narrator’s choices, their sociohistorical context, and their performative nature in terms of a process, versus the resolution of complaints or completion of The Assembly. As Donnelly states, the poem offers “veiled commentary on and criticism of the events, powers, and ideologies of the day.” Her investment in the legal process, then, does not mean that she is only invested in a sort of legal redemption. Let us remember that she delivers no bill of her own, however voices her personal reflection on the process in the following lines:

Nothyng so lief as death to come to me  
For fy nal end of my sorwes and peyne;  
What shuld I more desire, as seme ye –  
And ye knewe al aforne it for certeyne  
I wote ye wold, and for to telle yow pleyne,

76 Miller, “The Writing on the Wall”, 108.
Without hir help that hath al thyng in cure
I can nat thynk that it may long endure;

And for my trouth, preved it hath bien wele –
To sey the soth, it can be no more –
Of ful long tyme, and suffred every dele
In pacience and kept it al in store;
Of hir goodenesse besechyng hir therfor
That I myght have my thank in suche wise
As my desert deservith of justice. (Ll. 694–707)

Once the bills are each read, Lady Loiaulte answers the “felawes” collectively, in a conventional, nearly dismissive reply: she recognizes that these complaints are a mere synecdoche of a larger unrest and dissatisfaction, but “she thought it to moche in hir entent” to reply to the “felawes” individually (l. 711). This indicates that the poet does not use the poem to directly challenge male and female roles by delivering judgment. Instead, the poem’s fragmentation attempts to put these roles in conversation with each other, in the narrator’s conversation with the knight, the conversations among women, and the proceeding of the court. Evans and Johnson see the possibilities in this “new” narrative although it offers little vindication. They argue that

attention to the historical contexts of the Assembly of Ladies – to its writers, readers, literary traditions, shaping circumstances – realigns the text and offers us a work which hovers on the edge of critique, which is cautious [...] about its position but which opens up a distinctively female space for the exploration of gender relations. The equivocal authorial voice allows for the deconstruction of historical and ideological categories, revealing the possibility that courtly women are not ‘naturally’ submissive, uncomplaining or incapable of protest at the strictures of their social world.79

Through the process documented, Lady Loiaulte does not vindicate the wrongs to which the women testified, however incompletely; she notes that their complaints are valid, but delays justice:

We have wele sen youre billis by and by  
And som of hem ful pitous for to here.  
We wil therfor ye knowen this al in feere:  
Withyn short tyme oure court of parlement  
Here shal be holde in oure paleys present,  
And in al this wherein ye fynde yow greved  
There shal ye fynde an open remedy,  
In suche wise as ye shul be releved  
Of al that ye reherce heere triewly.  
As of the date ye shal knowe verily,  
Than ye may have a space in your comyng,  
For Diligence shall bryng it yow bi writyng. (Ll. 717–728)

Matlock argues that the delay in judgment offered within this poem has historical context, and that the “inept” and “uncooperative narrator” is a reflection of the legal system. She argues:

When the poem’s irresolution is considered in conjunction with the contemporary legal system’s delays – a problem of real-life petitioners in actual courts – it becomes clear that fictional court suffers the same imperfection. In this context, the disjunction between the idealized presentation of the court and its failure to dispense justice is jarring, and the poem leaves the discontinuity unresolved. Lady Loiaulte’s justice is as burdensome and ineffective as her fifteenth-century counterparts; the fantasy court is no more successful than real ones.

This points both to irony and to realism, as used by the poet, as well to the ultimate weakness of the allegory of the court. Interestingly, Matlock sees delay as a necessary evil as it establishes a system of petitions that offered litigants an opportunity to repeatedly engage with the legal system, decreasing the likelihood of violence between both parties. The poem’s weaknesses limit outright narrative conflict, yet the women receive catharsis from lodging their complaints and contribute to a narrative more substantial than that of historical victims etched on a wall.

Some readers tread through this awkward, fragmented dream, yet receive little or no reprieve for the negative they have taken in as a participating

80 Matlock, “And Long to Sue”, 22.  
81 Legal delays are discussed at length in Matlock, who cites the Whilton dispute as an example. See Matlock 24–27.  
audience. Certainly, the delay in judgment, although realistic, is a blow to the transgressive potential of the court, maybe a disguised critique of the legal system, and potentially represents the compliance with the patriarchal and male order of power. What is also substantial and unfortunately overlooked, is one argument to the contrary: that a female narrator partakes in the courtly process, seeks justice through her participation in it, and recreates orally and textually all of the roles those real life processes entail — her performance in her role. The collection of words, whether expressed through sheaths of cloth or leaves of a manuscript, and however ineptly “embodying” the injustices committed against them, can be used to give voice to the voiceless.83

The skilled and complex female narrator recreates her experience and her dream not for her own use, but for “her feyre sustres al” (l. 370). This, as well as the title itself, “La semble de Damea”, creates a locus of female fellowship, a woman-centered universality, where pen and needle, the public and domestic, are given some leverage as a corporeal language. Rather than focusing on the irresolution of the text, its allegorical vacuity, its stereotyped narrative, I reiterate that it is indeed replete with possibilities, rather than inept. In response to spatial, temporal, and sociohistorical location within patriarchal frameworks, transgression defines the narrator’s actions. Initially, she presents herself as narrator; second, she maintains her separation from the ladies and gentlewomen attending the Court of Loyalty until her dream state, and even then some, arguably to get authorial distance and “hang” the veil of allegory; next, she enters Pleasant Regarde, reaching the final destination ahead of her companions; fourth, she conspicuously does not wear a motto, or formally present a complaint; and lastly, she consciously recreates and performs the narrative by writing it upon waking. Through exploring physicality, performance, and investment in self-preservation orally and textually, this poem engages ideas of female writing itself as a form of protest.

In the words of Marshall, “the narrator’s frustration lies in the fact that, as a woman, femininity should not be a constraint” to her participation, performance, or retelling of the journey.84 She weaves together words, and the “words” of others, intersecting self-conception with self-presentation and self-articulation, exposing the concerns and suffering of women, and transgressing her restrictions. Her oral rehearsal of her “booke” for the knight is a dress rehearsal for word play – narrative construction that enables the creation of a

84 Ibid. 48.
female literary space, written and woven, etched both on fabric and paper. It acknowledges the tradition of its literary precursors – the encyclopedic attempts to document the stories of forlorn women, such as Chaucer’s *Legend of Good Women* – but suggests that these accounts unwittingly celebrate the disempowerment of women.

A marked contrast, *The Assembly* gives readers an insight into the performative role of female narration, opening the space to conscious self-insertion and fragmented authorship. This newly woven space outside of social norms can admit, hear, and eventually offer visions of social justice that more profoundly engage women’s agency and needs. While it shows that authorship enlists a communal response and often promises social implications, such as the capacity to create new means and forums of expression, more conducive to the aims, experiences, and voices of the narrative’s creators, the public act of writing as protest can emerge from an individual narrative, a single voice speaking on behalf of many. Though justice is not served, the Court of Lady Loiaulte is to be reread, relived, and performed anew, searching for new textual ruptures and the possibilities for articulated, feminist social change.

**References**


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Smash the matriarchy!: Fear of feminine power structures in *Beowulf* adaptations

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Just as the antagonists of *Beowulf* may be read as symbolic of those problems which pervaded the heroic society in which the poem is set, so too can they be viewed as having deeper allegorical meaning in the modern adaptations of the Anglo-Saxon poem. These adaptations may be seen both to react to and engage with the poem as a means to express contemporary concerns about modern society. One such concern on which *Beowulf* adaptations have especially focused is that of the gendered power structures that appear in the poem, in particular the tension between the patriarchal world of Heorot and the matriarchal mere and its female occupant, Grendel’s mother.

Through the employment of the theoretical frameworks put forward by Julia Kristeva and Sherry B. Ortner, this article will examine how patriarchal societies are depicted in three *Beowulf* adaptations: Gareth Hind’s graphic novel *The Collected Beowulf*, John Gardner’s novel *Grendel*, and Robert Zemeckis’s film *Beowulf*.

**Keywords:** Beowulf; adaptation; feminist theory; reception history

W.H. Canaway’s narrative adaptation, *The Ring Givers*, published in 1958, is one of the first in a line of modern creative retellings of the *Beowulf* story which would be followed by numerous narrative, comic, and cinematic explorations of the poem, reaching a peak in the late 1990s and 2000s. There is often the temptation among scholars to write off many of these modern adaptations of the poem (especially those of the film variety) as uninformed pieces of pop culture, yet more often than not on closer inspection they reveal a surprisingly deep level of critical engagement with the Anglo-Saxon poem itself, as well as with contemporary scholarly trends and academic debate. Furthermore, these adaptations demonstrate that there is something in

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Beowulf, which makes it relevant to modern audiences, the ideal blueprint on which to lay out contemporary anxieties and social concerns. One of the more obvious examples of this is John Gardner’s Grendel, a manifestation of the increasing anxieties surrounding the Vietnam War (1955–1975), and consequently the increasing distrust of the government and the traditional image of the hero, a case study which will be discussed in further detail later in this article.

It is typically through antagonistic figures that social anxieties and concerns are expressed in literature and film. This can be seen, for instance, in Mary Shelley’s Frankenstein, where Frankenstein’s monster can be read as a representation of the fear of scientific discovery in the Georgian period in England. Similarly, it is primarily through Grendel and Grendel’s mother (as well as the dragon) that such concerns are expressed in Beowulf; these characters can be read as symbolic of problematic aspects of heroic society. As is the case with the original poem, Beowulf adaptations use these figures to express contemporary societal concerns and anxieties. Although many of these concerns inevitably change over the course of time, one issue that the majority of these adaptations seem to have in common is the conflict between masculine and feminine power structures present in the poem. This paper aims to explore the depictions of these gendered power structures in a number of modern Beowulf adaptations through the theories of Julia Kristeva and Sherry B. Ortner (specifically those of Abjection and of binary opposition, respectively). Using these theoretical models, the imagery and dialogue of three adaptations (Gareth Hinds’s The Collected Beowulf, John Gardner’s Grendel, and Robert Zemeckis’s Beowulf) will be examined, focusing on the representation of both matriarchal and patriarchal power structures.

Kristevan theory has, in the past, been applied fruitfully to the Anglo-Saxon poem: James Hala, followed by Paul Acker and Renée Trilling, have read Beowulf in terms of Kristeva’s theory of Abjection. Julia Kristeva’s theory (simplified for the purposes of this article), set forth in Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection, deals with the human reaction to the Abject, i.e. those aspects of life which threaten a breakdown in society or which lead to the loss of the distinction between subject and object. Those things that remind us of our own materiality (“defilement, sewage, and muck […] the skin on a surface of milk, […] the corpse”, Kristeva 1982: 2–3) we exclude and reject, and therefore make Abject. The Abject is associated with the primal and that which precedes the Symbolic Order (the social world of linguistic communication, law and ideology) and therefore is often associated with the
maternal, the mother being the one the child must move away from in order to develop subjectivity. Symbolic Order is thus associated with the paternal, and is achieved through what Lacan called the Name-of-the-Father, i.e. the laws which control the child’s desire (and most notably its Oedipal complex) and allow it to enter a community of others (Lacan 2006: 278).

Beowulf may be read in these Kristevan terms if we are to view Heorot and Hrothgar’s realm as a civilised patriarchal society, the Symbolic Order which has separated itself from the Other and the primitive maternal through the acquisition of culture, laws, and language. This is comparable to the way in which the child (through the Name-of-the-Father) separates itself from the maternal body in an attempt to become a separate subject. In order for society to do this, it must expunge that which is Abject, that which reminds us of death and materiality, or that which is a risk to civilisation, usually through the formation of laws or taboos. In this Kristevan reading, Grendel’s mother may be seen as a manifestation of the maternal and also as the Abject, a female figure who transgresses gender roles and therefore reveals a weakness in a society which presumes and requires women to be passive. Grendel, then, may be seen as a figure who (without a father or means of entrance into the Symbolic Order) has not managed to separate himself from the maternal or the abject, a figure who has not gained language or culture; as James Hala notes, he is the deject, the agent by which confrontation with the Abject is brought about, as outlined by Julia Kristeva:

the one by whom the abject exists is thus a deject who places (himself), separates (himself), situates (himself), and therefore strays instead of getting his bearings, desiring, belonging, or refusing [...] the deject is in short a stray. He is on a journey, during the night, the end of which keeps receding. (Kristeva 1982: 8)

Grendel travels to Heorot, bringing death and reminding the Danes of the fragility of their society. Beowulf’s killing of both Grendel and Grendel’s mother, then, may be viewed as the society’s final expulsion of the abject and its full separation from the maternal.

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1 The concept of “the Other”, that which is different, has often been associated with the feminine (as well as with natives in relation to colonialism). Simone de Beauvoir states that “[Woman] is determined and differentiated in relation to man, while he is not in relation to her; she is the inessential in front of the essential. He is the Subject; he is the Absolute. She is the Other” (2010: 26).
Of course it is impossible to say whether or not the original poet, or poets, had any such intentions in mind, and applying modern theory to an ancient poem is extremely problematic. For the modern adaptations, however, which exist in a post-Freudian and post-Lacanian, and, for the most part, a post-Kristevan era, the relevance of such theories can be explored with more confidence. David Marshall, in his article “Getting Reel with Grendel’s Mother: The Abject Maternal and Social Critique”, explores a number of *Beowulf* film adaptations, such as McTiernan’s (1999) *The 13th Warrior*, Gunnarsson’s (2005) *Beowulf and Grendel*, and Zemeckis’s (2007) *Beowulf*. Marshall analyses the Kristevan imagery evident in these films and more specifically these films’ responses to the threat of Grendel’s mother, an argument which I will both build on and also depart from in this article.²

In addition to Kristeva’s theory of abjection, I will also make reference to the socio-cultural theory set forth by Sherry B. Ortner in her article “Is Female to Male as Nature is to Culture” (1974). In essence, Ortner’s theory revolves around the idea that woman is identified with, and symbolic of, “something that every culture devalues, something that every culture defines as being of a lower existence than itself”, that “something” being “nature” (1974: 72). Man, on the other hand, is associated with “culture”, his physiology freeing him from the functions of nature, such as pregnancy, child-rearing, and menstruation. Ortner argues that, in almost every society, there comes a point in a child’s, and more specifically a boy’s life where his socialisation is transferred to the hands of men; the male being the only one who can enter him into the fully human world of culture (1974: 80). This idea is reflected in the theories of Lacan and Kristeva, with the patriarchal concept of the Name-of-the-Father allowing the child to enter the Symbolic Order.

Ortner’s theory may also be applied (again, with caution) to the original text of *Beowulf*: the patriarchal society of the Danes is depicted as culturally more sophisticated and central than what may be described as the more maternal, and arguably matriarchal world of the Grendel-kin. Hrothgar’s kingdom is associated with culture and language, as displayed through the importance placed on the *scop*. This can be contrasted with the mere, surrounded by and engulfed in nature, and inhabited by two characters who

² For a recent study which focuses on modern representations of Grendel’s mother (including Zemeckis’s), see Pilar Peña Gil’s “The Witch, the Ogress, and the Temptress: Defining Grendel’s Mother in *Beowulf* and Film Adaptations”, *SELIM* 18 (2011): 49–75.
never speak in the poem. As with the Kristeva reading of Grendel, unable to reach the Symbolic Order without a father figure, Grendel’s lack of language, and his inability to enter “fully human status”, can also be seen in terms of Ortner’s theory. Due to the lack of a male figure to fully socialise and acculturate him, Grendel can never successfully enter the fully human world of the dominant culture.

Our lack of knowledge pertaining to the socio-cultural and psychological world of the Anglo-Saxons, especially that of Anglo-Saxon women, again makes the application of such a theory to Beowulf itself problematic. However, I would argue that Ortner provides a useful context for assessing gender in modern versions of Beowulf. Beginning with the analysis of one of the lesser known adaptations, Gareth Hinds’s graphic novel The Collected Beowulf (2000), I will then go on to explore one of the most popular retellings, John Gardner’s novel Grendel (1971), before concluding with one of the more complex re-tellings, Robert Zemeckis’s (2007) film, Beowulf.

Gareth Hind’s The Collected Beowulf, originally a set of three self-published books, dedicated to each of the three antagonists of the poem, is arguably one of the more artistically successful adaptations of the Old English poem. Significantly, its three-part structure demonstrates a sensitivity to the importance of Grendel’s mother that is not evident in many of the other adaptations of Beowulf, and indeed in a large proportion of scholarship. Approaches which favour a two-part structure focusing on the two stages of the hero’s life tend to reduce (or excise) the role of Grendel’s mother. These adaptations are often directly or indirectly influenced by J.R.R. Tolkien’s Beowulf: The Monsters and the Critics (1936), which despite its focus on the monsters almost entirely overlooked her presence in the poem, thus “erroneously [creating] an exclusively male Anglo-Saxon world for a presumably all-male audience, then and now” (Lees, cited in Bennett 2012: 55).

Numerous modern retellings and adaptations show equally little interest in her character, often viewing her as a mere structural device whose main function is to serve as a transition, or filler, between Beowulf’s battles with Grendel and with the Dragon. This approach is demonstrated in works such as Gunnarsson’s (2005) Beowulf and Grendel and John Gardner’s Grendel which, for a novel which focuses entirely on her son, devotes remarkably little space to Grendel’s mother compared to the original poem. Hinds’s choice to

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3 The commentary in Tolkien’s Beowulf: A Translation and Commentary, published in 2014, also excludes Grendel’s mother from more detailed analysis.
dedicate an entire book to her part in the story therefore emphasises her figure far more prominently than many other versions, adaptations or interpretations. In the collected version of this graphic novel, which contains all three publications in one book, the three-part structure is still evident, as each of Beowulf’s encounters features a subtly different style of artwork. The Grendel section is drawn with extremely dark contrasts, and notably less refined black outlines, with blotches of ink appearing in many frames. The next section, dealing with Grendel’s mother, by contrast exhibits more neutral tones, with Hinds focusing on earthy browns and reds; for this section, technical pen, watercolours and acrylics were used on wood panels (Hinds 2012a), with more attention-to-detail and fine lines than the previous section. Finally, the third section, which centres around Beowulf’s fight with the dragon, shows fine detail and definite outline, while using the same ink as Grendel’s section. Unlike the previous two parts of the graphic novel, the final section consists of only blacks and greys, setting the mood for the final scenes and Beowulf’s death.

The section of Hinds’s novel dealing with Grendel’s mother is of most importance for this study. Its earthy tones serve to create a softer and perhaps less-threatening atmosphere than the darker inks used of the other two sections, especially the chaotic and blotchy ink used of Grendel’s section. The tones used in Grendel’s mother’s cave may also be described as fleshy, the colours perhaps more suggestive of feminine imagery; indeed, the cave can be described as womblike. This apparent association between the cave and the female can be linked both to Kristeva’s and Ortner’s theories, the cave, evocative of the womb and therefore the repressive maternal, and the female’s perceived closeness to nature. John McTiernan’s The 13th Warrior associates the cave from which the Northmen escape through a series of constricted tunnels with the birth canal, thereby implying “a final separation from the maternal figure” (Marshall 2010: 141). Similarly, Hinds’s The Collected Beowulf portrays (in this case a lone) Beowulf escaping and emerging from the womb-like cave. Indeed, the maternal imagery here is even more suggestive than that of McTiernan’s film, with the water of the cave a deep red, bloodied from the death of Grendel’s mother (61–63). Beowulf’s emergence from the mere, covered in red gore, therefore evokes both images of childbirth and menstruation. Beowulf appears here as a Christ-like figure: the hilt of the

4 The image that appears on page 45, which shows the Danes’ and Geats’ approach to the mere, is once again, evocative of female anatomy, and unlike in the majority of the
giant-sword which he bears is evocative of a crucifix, and is surrounded by and emitting rays of light. Beowulf’s separation from the maternal here can therefore be interpreted in light of Lacan’s conception of the Name-of-the-Father, an idea also present in Kristeva’s theory of the Abject: the hero, freed from the mother and surrounded by the paternal imagery of God, can now enter the Symbolic Order and go on to be king.

At the centre of Hinds’s text is the complex figure of Grendel’s mother herself. Described by the author in a personal communication as “frog-like, but with skeletal face and hands” (Hinds 2012b), she has yellow reptilian eyes, and her large sagging breasts and lack of clothes suggest a vaguely human (and vaguely female), yet wholly uncivilised being. In Hinds’s view, Grendel’s mother “symbolises a twisted, repressed, vision of female sexuality [...] she is meant to be somewhat reminiscent of the Venus of Willendorf and similar figures. But with claws” (2012b). We find similar imagery in Michael Crichton’s *Eaters of the Dead*, a fabricated “found manuscript” based on the historical account of Ahmed Ibn Fadlan and his experience among the Volga Vikings, as well as its film adaptation, *The 13th Warrior*, in which Grendel’s mother is symbolised by a “crude and ugly” figurine found at a raided camp with “no head, no arms, and no legs; only the torso with a greatly swollen belly and, above that, two pendulous swollen breasts” (Crichton 1977: 92). An Appendix to Crichton’s novel featuring fictitious notes confirms that this stone ornament is indeed meant to be reminiscent of the Willendorf Venus or the Venus of Hohle Fels.

The inclusion of the Venus image to represent Grendel’s mother in both *Eaters of the Dead* and Hinds’s *The Collected Beowulf* is both complex and culturally charged. The Venus of Willendorf (c. 28,000-25,000 BCE), also known as the Woman of Willendorf, has multifaceted interpretations, from fertility icon, to symbol of wealth and security, to direct representation of a female deity or mother goddess. Probably one of the most common interpretations, and the one most relevant to these two works, is that this figure is representative of prehistoric matriarchal societies. The Willendorf Venus’s now-disputed name is itself a study in male-female power relations: the term *Vénus impudique*, “immodest” or perhaps “indecent” Venus, coined by preceding pages which take place in and are dominated by images of Heorot, here we are suddenly introduced to images of nature. Once again, this imagery of the natural words resonates with Sherry Ortner’s theory of the female traditionally being seen as closer to nature.
the Marquis de Vibraye in 1864 on his discovery of another such figure (Conkey 2005: 185), was arguably intended as an ironic and derisive title, playing on the Venus pudica, the “modest” or “chaste” Venus, of Classical and Renaissance art (e.g. Sandro Botticelli’s Birth of Venus, c. 1484–1486). Unlike the restrained and “civilised” image of the Classical Venus, the Venus of Willendorf exhibits an unrestrained and unselfconscious sexuality associated with prehistory and the uncivilised.

Hinds’s presentation of Grendel’s mother as uncivilised and uncultured is evident in the first image we see of her (40). She appears deep below the earth in a chaotic tangle of tree roots, far beneath the civilisation of Heorot and the mapped-out sky. The named constellations are a sure sign of the civilised culture above, emblematic of the Symbolic Order. This image shows the Abject maternal as a threatening and lurking force, before it is fully expunged from society, in sharp contrast to the later image of Beowulf emerging righteous and Christ-like from the mere.

The Symbolic Order, the universal structure involving language, ideologies, law and social structure, is expressed in The Collected Beowulf through the mapped-out sky, the intricate artwork within Heorot, and rituals such as Wealththeow’s passing of the cup (16). The polarity between the Symbolic Order and the Abject, or masculine and feminine power systems, is made even clearer in John Gardner’s (1971) novel Grendel (and its own adaptation Grendel Grendel Grendel, directed by Alexander Stitt in 1981). In Grendel, the Symbolic Order can be seen in the Danes’ politics, notably their obsession with religion and philosophy, and in the privileged position of the scop, referred to by Grendel as “The Shaper”. Once again, this male-centred world is clearly contrasted with the maternal mere, itself reminiscent of the womb and closely associated with nature.

Unlike most other adaptations of Beowulf, with the notable exception of Sturla Gunnarsson’s Beowulf and Grendel, in Gardner’s novel it is Grendel, rather than Beowulf (or more generally the Danish community) who attempts to separate himself from the maternal. In contrast to Beowulf, who is able to join the Symbolic Order through the Name-of-the-Father with the help of both Hygelac and later Hrothgar (both of whom may be seen as adoptive father figures), Grendel, in the absence of a father, struggles to become a separate subject from his mother and from nature.5 Gardner’s Grendel thereby

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5 The struggle to separate from the maternal, due to the absence of a father (or father figure) is a common theme in horror texts, as can be seen in Robert Bloch’s Psycho.
Fear of feminine power structures in *Beowulf* adaptations differs from *The Collected Beowulf* and *Eaters of the Dead* in its treatment of both matriarchal and patriarchal power structures. While the latter two works take a relatively straightforward stance towards the perceived power of the masculine-orientated ruling system, *Grendel* questions its validity and its superiority. This aspect of Gardner’s novel may reflect increasing anxieties surrounding conflict and The Establishment in the aftermath of WWII and midway through the Vietnam War, and consequently the increasing distrust of both the government and the traditional image of the “hero”. Instead, the post-WWII era gave rise to the “anti-hero”, evident in other protagonists of the time, ranging from Billy Pilgrim of Kurt Vonnegut’s *Slaughterhouse 5* (1969) to Randle McMurphy of Ken Kesey’s *One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest* (1961). These characters, along with Gardner’s Grendel may be viewed as being ideologically at odds with “the System”, or indeed the prevailing Symbolic Order. Perhaps unlike these other examples of post-war anti-heroes, Grendel is attempting to join the Symbolic Order (and ultimately fails), while the others appear more actively opposed to the governing systems, especially the figure of Randle McMurphy. It may be argued that Grendel’s persistence in trying to access the Symbolic Order is evocative of the blindness with which some young Americans glorified war and the patriarchal system of the US. Similarly, the image of Beowulf as “insane” in Gardner’s novel, almost as monstrous as Grendel himself, appears to be a comment on the American government’s exploitation of soldiers during the Vietnam War through the notion of hero worship.

While the novel is on one level certainly a criticism of this patriarchal system, we are nevertheless still shown Grendel’s mother and the maternal as Abject and primitive – not necessarily a desirable alternative to Hrothgar’s kingdom. The mere, once again, associated with the Abject, is filled with creatures unseen to the civilised world, such as the “fire-snakes […] grey as old ashes; faceless, eyeless” (Gardner 1971: 8), beasts which conjure up feelings of disgust, much like the defilement, sewage and much described in Kristeva’s own words. The mere, whilst being reminiscent of the womb, is

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(1959) and Stephen King’s *Carrie* (1974). In these novels, along with their film adaptations, the mother figure is constructed as the “monstrous feminine” (Creed 2002: 72).

simultaneously described in natural terms, as a “shark-toothed chamber”, Grendel describing the “black tentacles of [his] mother’s cave” (8). Grendel’s mother herself is a “life-bloated, baffled, long-suffering hag” (5), and his attempt to make the thetic break, the separation from the maternal and the development of a new self, is hinted at in the language surrounding his experience with his mother. For example, Grendel’s mother tries to “clutch at [him] in her sleep as if to crush [him]” but he “break[s] away” (5); as Grendel himself states, “she stares at me as if to consume me [...] I was her creation. We were one thing [...] she would smash me to her fat, limp breast as if to make me a part of her flesh again” (9); “she reaches out as if some current is tearing us apart” (17). The repetition of such imagery seems to make clear that what Gardner is referring to here is the oneness of the mother and child and the child’s attempts to separate himself from her in order to become his own individual self.

More Kristevan imagery can be detected in Grendel’s mother’s inability to speak – “she’d forgotten all language long ago, or maybe had never known any. I’d never heard her speak to the other shapes” (17). In Kristeva’s view, language is associated with the Symbolic Order, and this is exemplified here in the scop’s, or “The Shaper’s”, high status in Heorot: “he reshapes the world [...] and turns dry sticks to gold” (32). Unlike the maternal, which produces merely perishable items (Ortner 1974: 75), the Shaper, and the masculine, produces items of cultural value, enduring pieces of art. The Kristevan association of language with both the Symbolic Order and culture is further

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7 Gardner’s description of Grendel’s mother “clutching” at her son is an echo of lines 747–749; *ræhte ongean feond mid folme; he onfeng brahte inwit-funcum and wið earm genet*, “the monster [Grendel] reached out towards him with his hands – he quickly grabbed him with evil intent, and sat up against his arm” (Liuzza). It may also be read as an inversion of Beowulf’s “grim grip” (line 765) on Grendel, which is the ultimate cause of Grendel’s death.

8 Simone de Beauvoir in her seminal piece *The Second Sex* argues that this is because the female “is more enslaved to the species than the male” (2010: 317). Because, historically, woman’s physiology means that more of her time is devoted to the natural processes surrounding reproduction, less of her time is spent in cultural production – “to give birth and to breast-feed are not activities but natural functions; they do not involve a project, which is why the woman finds no motive there to claim a higher meaning for her existence [...] Man’s case is radically different. He does not provide for the group in the way worker bees do, by a simple vital process, but rather by acts that transcend his animal condition [...] the human male shapes the face of the earth, creates new instruments, invents and forges the future” (2010: 98–99).
demonstrated through the linguistic progression of Gardner's Grendel. As he moves away from the maternal towards civilisation and culture, he uses the formats of poetry and drama to convey his story, arguably more eloquent and "cultured" forms of writing than the prose format of the novel. Furthermore, while Gardner associates the patriarchy, in particular the Danes, with civilisation, science, religion and art, his main matriarchal figure does not "think" or "ponder" or "dissect" the "dirty mechanical bits of her miserable life's curse" (5); for Gardner the matriarchy is associated with primitivism, lives by instinct and does not better itself with science. Grendel's separation from his mother has already begun at the commencement of the novel; he has already "played [his] way farther out into the world" (8), in an image reminiscent of birth, and has at this stage also encountered the dragon, the philosophy-debating creature who begins his "civilisation" as a type of father figure. Grendel's introduction to the Name-of-the-Father, the laws and conventions through which the Symbolic Order is achieved, is evident in his criticism of his mother's primitivism and animalism. He also exhibits a general disgust with nature, for instance in the first chapter, when he asks why the mating goats cannot discover a little dignity (2). Once again, these undignified goats, and the animals which "see all life without observing it", are much like his mother who fails to "dissect or ponder".

Whilst the maternal and natural is treated with disgust at the beginning of Gardner's novel, as the story progresses, and as Grendel becomes more "civilised", we gradually begin to see hints of criticism of the patriarchal society ruled over by Hrothgar. For example, as Grendel becomes more like the men in the novel, he also begins to see the absurdity of their society and its obsession with religion, philosophy and general "betterment". This appears at odds with how the Danish men actually act, especially when they are drunk and their base desires come to the fore. The third chapter, in particular, critiques this male-orientated society and its treatment of both women and nature. Hence Grendel notes that "no wolf was so vicious to other wolves" (20); the men seem to senselessly kill members of other tribes simply in order to be able to return to their camps and "tell wild tales of what happened" (12). In battle they would shout:

terrible threats [...] things about their fathers' fathers, things about justice and honour and lawful revenge – their throats swollen, their eyes rolling like a newborn colt's, sweat running down their shoulders [...] all they killed – cows, horses, men – they left to rot or burn. (23)
Throughout this third chapter the hypocrisy of patriarchal society is highlighted; the warriors’ reasons for fighting (“justice”) appear to act simply as cover-up for their real, base animalistic needs and their desire for bloodshed and power. We also begin to see here the Danes’ lack of respect for women (“no one getting hurt except maybe some female who was asking for it”, 21) and nature, exemplified in their mistreatment of their own oxen and horses, “first stripping off the saddle and bridle and the handsomely decorated harness”, before killing them (25). There is the implication that nature is an object for the Danes to colonise – nature is viewed by the Danes as subordinate to their will, and as with women and animals, it is treated with little respect. Much as the matriarchal was seen as a destructive power to be reckoned with in *The Collected Beowulf*, in Gardner’s *Grendel* this violent patriarchal system is now presented as a threatening and unstoppable force – “there was nothing to stop the advance of man” (26). We might compare this view of the Beowulfian patriarchy with Howard McCain’s (2008) science-fiction adaptation *Outlander*, in which the suggestively-named Kainan (a stand-in for Beowulf) recalls the colonisation and destruction of the Moorwen (a species of whom the last remaining seeks revenge on Kainan, much like Grendel’s mother does in seeking out the killer of her son). The moral centre of this film, however, is unclear: does Kainan regret the genocide of the Moorwen, or rather his failure to kill the last one remaining, whom we discover is responsible for the death of his family? Whilst *Outlander* never seems to take a clear stance on this moral dilemma, the novel *Grendel* clearly does in condemning the transgressions of the patriarchal societies which it depicts. The violence of this supposedly civilised and cultured order is further exemplified in the figure of Grendel himself in the novel. The more he pushes away from his mother, becoming in the process more civilised, “human” and cultured, the more monstrous and violent he becomes. Ironically, this process of Grendel’s civilisation leads him to become more depraved and corrupt, and ultimately leads to his death at the hands of Beowulf, who himself is presented as a bloodthirsty figure.

The flaws of the patriarchal system are further highlighted in Gardner’s novel through the figure of the dragon. In other *Beowulf* adaptations, and arguably in the original poem itself, the dragon symbolises dangers which threaten heroic society itself. In *Grendel*, however, the dragon appears to symbolise the Father, or the Symbolic Order as a whole. While in *Beowulf* itself, greed (such as that displayed by Heremod) is a negative aspect of heroic
society to be avoided by the hero, in Gardner’s Grendel obsession with material things is presented as something inherent in and inseparable from heroic society. The dragon, who acts as a father-figure to Grendel, educating him through the Name-of-the-Father, is described as being “serpent to the core” (41), an allusion to the Fall of Man. Here, the dragon, and by extension the patriarchal system, is viewed as a malevolent and devious force. Read within a contemporary context this may reflect Gardner’s sense of the US government’s deceitfulness and exploitation of soldiers in sending them to war in Vietnam. The government’s utilisation of the concept of heroism in order to draw in recruits for the Vietnam War can be compared with the serpent’s promise to Adam and Eve that they would “be as gods, knowing good and evil” (Gen 3: 5).

Gardner’s Grendel, a figure separated too late from the mother, and therefore only partly civilised, provides a painful reminder to the Danes of that which is Abject and that which has been expunged from society. Because of his protean state he remains as the deject, the agent by which confrontation with the Abject is brought about. Like Grendel’s character in Sturla Gunnarsson’s (2005) Beowulf and Grendel, he is, as it were, in a state of evolution, and because of his failure to join the Symbolic Order, he is killed. There may also be the implication here that, although Grendel has become very much like the men of Heorot, physically he remains the same, and he is therefore rejected by society; his deformation and Otherness once again inspires disgust among the Danes, reminding them of their own mortality. In Grendel’s social context, this may well be another criticism of contemporary attitudes towards war, and the intolerance of those who appear as different or Other, a criticism of the overtly patriotic, and at times xenophobic, culture of the US in the 1960s and 1970s.

To sum up, then, Gardner’s Grendel displays a more complex view of these traditional feminine and masculine power structures than Hinds’s The Collected Beowulf. Although the maternal here is simple and primitive, far from the cultured world of the patriarchy of Heorot which is filled with language and art, it is also safe, relatively unburdened by the violence which characterises the world of the patriarchy. The maternal is also seen by Gardner as more wholesome and genuine, unlike the hypocritical civilisation of Heorot which, despite its interest in the arts and religion, remains fundamentally violent. In Gardner’s novel, we can detect a yearning for a more primitive and simple life, one more harmonious with nature and the maternal.
Another adaptation which complicates the power structures of \textit{Beowulf}, and the last to be explored in this article, is Robert Zemeckis's (2007) film adaptation of the same name. This retelling of the Anglo-Saxon poem is no doubt the most well-known of all cinematic adaptations. Despite its sensational, Hollywood approach to the Old English poem, it is also arguably one of the most engaged with the text itself as well as attendant literary criticism. Moreover, Zemeckis's film also deals in interesting ways with both the gendered power structures of the poem and the idea of the Abject.

David Marshall's analysis of Zemeckis's film explores the base desires which drive the patriarchal system of Heorot in opposition to the more rational and discerning matriarchal system of the mere. Far from the sombre hall we are confronted with in \textit{The Collected Beowulf} and most other adaptations, here we are faced from the outset with a hall-culture based around crude physicality and hedonistic pleasure, preoccupied with "merriment, joy, and fornication" (\textit{Beowulf} 2007). As Marshall argues, "the power exhibited in the warrior's display, led by Hrothgar, amounts to an unconstrained freedom to act on terms of not reason and civilisation, but base physical desire" (Marshall 2010: 141). For example, Beowulf's passionate exclamation during his fight with Grendel – "mine is strength and lust and power – I am Beowulf!" – stands in stark contrast to the more sober presentation of female characters in the film, notably Wealhtheow, who refuses to be intimate with the drunken Hrothgar, and most importantly, Grendel's mother, who consistently shows a great deal more rational thought than the men of Heorot.

As noted by Marshall, the concept of the Abject is transparent in Zemeckis's film – for example, the opening of the film depicts Beowulf exclaiming, "The sea is my mother! She will never take me back into her murky womb!", hinting at major plot developments to come. While Gardner had focused on Grendel's relationship with his mother, the 2007 \textit{Beowulf} film once again returns to the theme of Beowulf's separation from the womb. However, the hero's separation from the maternal also appears here to reflect that of all Heorot, including Hrothgar, making this film also appear to deal with the progress of heroic civilisation as a whole.\(^9\) Kristevan imagery is certainly evident within Zemeckis's adaptation: the extremely patriarchal and masculine area of the hall is contrasted with the scenes of the mere; once again, the cave is shrouded in nature, surrounded by wildly-grown trees whose

\(^9\) It is worth noting that Beowulf's identity as a Geat is largely absent from the film, allowing Beowulf to more clearly symbolise Heorot as a whole.
growth has not been restrained. Much like in Hinds's *The Collected Beowulf*, the cave entrance appears reminiscent of the vaginal opening,\(^\text{10}\) the scattered bones outside showing its destructive and primal nature,\(^\text{11}\) perhaps reflecting woman's ability to create “only perishables” (Ortner 1974: 75). The cave entrance leads into a chamber, which again, is reminiscent of female anatomy. Most importantly, however, the confrontation between Beowulf and Grendel's mother does not take place here, but rather in a skull-type area, which both reinforces the cave's structure of female anatomy, and brings to mind images of Ymir, the giant of Old Norse mythology whose body was fashioned into the earth. Primarily, however, this part of the cave, where we see Grendel's mother clearly for the first time, reinforces the idea that her character's power lies first and foremost in the mind, rather than the instincual and irrational area of the womb, as is the case with both *The Collected Beowulf* and *Grendel*. It is at this point that we begin to see the contrast between the two power structures: the masculine which here is associated with uncontrollable base desire, and the feminine, associated with calculating, rational thought.

The 2007 film's sexualised vision of Grendel's mother is radically different to Hinds's and Gardner's adaptations, both of which present her as a primitive mother figure. Perhaps taking inspiration from Graham Baker's (1999) film *Beowulf*, in which former Playboy bunny Layla Roberts is cast as the second antagonist of the poem, in Zemeckis's *Beowulf* Grendel's mother appears as a “voluptuous, gold and buxom” (Marshall 2010: 135) woman played by Angelina Jolie. While Baker's *Beowulf* presented Grendel as the child of Grendel's mother and Hrothgar, Zemeckis's *Beowulf* takes this one step further: as well as casting Hrothgar as the unwilling father of Grendel, we also witness Beowulf's own submission to the Oedipal fantasy, following in Hrothgar's footsteps and fathering the dragon with Grendel's mother. In

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\(^{10}\) The appearance of the cave as reminiscent of female anatomy is intentional and an exaggerated vision can be seen in its concept art in Mark Cotta Vaz and Steve Starkey's *The Art of Beowulf* (2007).

\(^{11}\) The mother and woman has long had an association with death, as can be seen in Pliny the Elder’s *Natural History*: “(Mother) of God, even so is she of Men. She it is that taketh us when we are coming into the World, nourisheth us when we are new born : and once being come abroad, ever sustineth us: and at the last, when we are rejected of all the World besides, she embraceth us: then most of all, like a kind Mother, she covereth us all over in her Bosom” (1847: 100). Similar imagery may also be seen in Shakespeare’s *Romeo and Juliet*: “The earth, that’s nature’s mother, is her tomb.\(/>\) What is her burying, grave that is her womb” (2.3.5–6).
addition to Heorot’s drunken brawling, Beowulf’s relationship with Grendel’s mother appears as further evidence of the patriarchy’s inability to control its own base desires, and while Marshall views the hero’s actions as serving as a critique of the patriarchal structure (which ultimately fails), they may also be seen as a destructive result of a society which has not fully expunged the maternal. Hence Marshall argues that the film “tries to suggest power, coded in masculine terms, is corrupted by a misdirected will, one that loves the self unduly” (148). However, the film can also be read as displaying the inhibiting effect of the maternal on society: Heorot (epitomised by both Hrothgar and Beowulf) has not managed to fully enter the Symbolic Order due to its failure to reject the mother. The maternal is viewed as a threatening and manipulative force, with female sexuality seen as something to be feared, and as Bill Schipper notes, “nothing terrifies a male audience more than a physically and sexually powerful woman” (Schipper 2011: 425). Like the Dragon in Grendel, Grendel’s mother here is a snake-like and manipulative force, the embodiment of temptation. Her true form, a lizard-type being evocative of Ridley Scott’s aliens, furthers this sense of her serpentine nature. Her promises of glory, legacy and riches again echo the serpent’s promise to Adam and Eve, while Beowulf’s submission to temptation is a source of death and destruction for Heorot, much as Adam and Eve’s is for the world. Through Beowulf’s refusal to embrace Christianity, and through his surrendering to temptation, Heorot cannot move forward to become an ideal society. Beowulf’s submission to the snake-like Grendel’s mother banishes Heorot from the Eden of the Symbolic Order.

A further link between the primitive and Grendel’s mother is suggested by her appearance. Although conceived in a different manner, Zemeckis’s Beowulf shares with both Eaters of the Dead and The Collected Beowulf in reimagining Grendel’s mother as an ancient matriarchal and goddess-type figure. However, as Zemeckis’s adaptation is very much catering towards its main target audience – young men – the crude image of the Willendorf Venus is replaced with that of a goddess from Germanic cosmology, Gefion, a Danish form of Anglian Nerthus and Scandinavian Freyja, whom H.M. Chadwick notes are “local forms of the chthonic deity [...] whose cult was known to all Teutonic peoples” (Chadwick 1907: 263). Frank Battaglia argues that the appearance of Gefion in Beowulf “highlight[s] the championing of a new order antagonistic
to goddess worship [...] Grendel and his mother may stand as types of earlier, matrilineal tribes" (Battaglia 1991: 415).

The depiction of Grendel's mother as a naked, voluptuous woman is an example of what the popular-culture critic Anita Sarkeesian calls the modern trope of the "Evil Demon Seductress":

a supernatural creature usually a demon, robot, alien, vampire most often disguised as a sexy human female. She uses her sexuality and sexual wiles to manipulate, seduce, and kill, and often eat, poor hapless men, by luring them into her evil web. (“Tropes Vs. Women #4”)

This trope can be seen in various films contemporary with Zemeckis's Beowulf, such as Transformers: Revenge of the Fallen (Bay 2009), where Isabel Lucas plays an alien robot disguised as an attractive college student; in Jennifer's Body (Kusama 2009), in which Megan Fox plays a man-eating demon; and more recently, although to a different effect, in Under the Skin (Glazer 2012), where we see Scarlett Johansson portraying an alien who seduces men in order to eat them. Probably one of the closest parallels is with Louis Letterier's

12 Frank Battaglia, in "The Germanic Earth Goddess in Beowulf?", argues that there are five "Gefion passages" in Beowulf, in the form of the strong neuter noun geofon, where it refers to the sea as well as the Goddess who has power over it. Battaglia notes that geofon is an Old English word for "ocean", creating a link between her and Grendel's mother, whose figure is overwhelmingly associated with water (in words like brimwylf and merewif). Her association with water is seemingly exaggerated in Zemeckis's film, in her appearance to Beowulf during his fight with the sea-monsters, in her appearance to Wiglaf from the ocean, and in Beowulf's exclimation at the beginning of the film: "The sea is my mother! She will never take me back into her murky womb!".

The influence of Battaglia's work appears more evident in the novelisation of the film, Beowulf, by Caitlín Kiernan, based on the screenplay written by Neil Gaiman and Roger Avary. Grendel's mother is said to place her son's body on "a shrine built by men to honour a forgotten goddess of a forgotten people" (Kiernan 2007: 155), and tells of how "[l]ong before the coming of the Danes, there were men in this land who named her Hertha and Nerthus, and they worshipped her in secret groves and still lakes and secret grottoes as the Earth's mother, as Nerpuz and sometimes as Njörd of the Ásynja, wife of Njörd and goddess of the sea" (2007: 156), Hertha, Nerpuz (Neþþuþ) and Njörd, all possible forms of Nerthus.

13 Even more recently, we see a backlash to this trope with Alex Garland's (2015) Ex Machina, where Ava (Alicia Vikander), an A.I., seduces Caleb (Domnhall Gleeson) as a means to escape her abusive creator.
(2010) remake of Clash of the Titans, itself influenced by the original Beowulf in its structure. While in Davis’s original Clash of the Titans (1982) Medusa is characterised as a repulsive figure, Leterrier’s remake chooses to sexualise her character, turning her into an attractive seductress-type figure played by Russian model Natalia Vodianova. With so many instances of the “Evil Demon Seductress” appearing in film around the 1990s and early 2000s, both Baker’s and Zemeckis’s films can be viewed as products of their time, in which fears of female sexuality and sexual liberation evidently still ran high. The 1990s also saw the rise of so-called “Raunch culture”, or “Lad culture”, a backlash against feminism which saw an increase in the objectification of women, and also encouraged women to objectify themselves and one another. As Ariel Levy argues in Female Chauvinist Pigs: Women and the Rise of Raunch Culture, “some version of a sexy, scantily clad temptress has been around through the ages [...] but this was once a guilty pleasure on the margins” (Levy 2006: 34). The sexually objectified woman is a common sight in the media of the late 1990s and 2000s, in music videos, magazines, film and even restaurants, such as Hooters. While this objectification was (and still is) disguised as female empowerment, these forms of media still reflect latent fears of female sexuality, when this sexuality is in the power of women.

Sarkeesian argues that the “Evil Demon Seductress” allows audiences to objectify women while also perpetrating negative stereotypes regarding female sexuality – in both Baker’s and Zemeckis’s interpretations, Grendel’s mother is not empowered, but rather serves as a vehicle to demonise female sexuality and depict autonomous women as manipulative and untrustworthy. This trope of female characters appears to be based on a misconception regarding praying mantises’ mating rituals put forward by Leland Ossian Howard in 1886, who argued that the female of the species will eat the male’s head either during or after intercourse (Howard, as cited in Brown 1986: 421). The depiction of Grendel’s mother in Baker’s Beowulf certainly fits this mould, as her character indeed transforms into a praying mantis-type being in the latter half of the film. Although Grendel’s mother plays a larger (and, importantly, a speaking role), and in general is presented as a more powerful and dignified creature, both Zemeckis’s and Baker’s films still demonise women in a way that the poem does not, and in a way that differs from other adaptations. In its depiction of her character, the Zemeckis film chooses to portray women as manipulative and controlling, using sex to fulfil ulterior motives, in this case the birth of a child, an arguably “maternal” and therefore primitive motive.
We see further images of the threatening maternal in Beowulf’s encounter with Grendel’s mother, and particularly in the image of the sword. This scene may be influenced by Jane Chance’s article, “The Structural Unity of Beowulf: The Problem of Grendel’s Mother”, which explores the sexual undertones apparent in this passage, or indeed directly from the Exeter Book’s Riddle 20, which describes a sword in phallic terms:

Me bið ford witod, gif ic frean hyre,  
guþe fremme, swa ic gien dyde  
minum þeodne on þone, þæt ic þolian seal  
bearngestreona, ic wiþ bryde ne mot  
hærned habban, ac me þæs hyhtplegan  
geno wyrneð, se mec geara on  
bende legde; forþon ic brucan seal  
on hagostekde hæleþa gestreona.  
Oft ic wirum dol wife abelope,  
wonie hyre illan; heo me wom spredeð,  
flocbþ hyre folmyn, firenap meç wordum,  
ungod geleð. Ic ne gyme þæs compes

(It is ordained for me henceforth, if I obey my master, wage war as I have hitherto done, according to lord’s pleasure, that I must forego the procreation of children. I may not have sexual intercourse with a bride; [...] Often, reckless in my wire-ornaments, I enrage a woman, diminish her desire; she speaks shame/injury to me, curses (me) with her hands, reviles me with words, screams evil. I pay no heed to battle. (trans. Tanke 2000: 410–411)

The phallic undertones in Riddle 20 are exaggerated in Zemeckis’s Beowulf; we see Grendel’s mother gently caressing Beowulf’s sword, seducing him with riches and fame, and finally, when he has succumbed, she disintegrates it with her hands. This melting of Beowulf’s sword is interpreted by Chris Jones as a “post-ejaculative waning of manhood”, connected to line 1606 of the poem, where þæt sword ongan æfter beaþowate bildegicelu, wigbil wanian, “then the sword began, that blade, to dissolve away in battle-icicles” (Liuzza) once Beowulf has completed his visit to the mere (Jones 2010: 23). This scene, as well as evoking a “waning of manhood”, also brings to mind the more threatening castration motif, prevalent in horror films such as Lichtenstein’s (2007) Teeth and Zarchi’s (1978) I Spit on Your Grave, both of which serve to
terrify a male audience with images of female revenge and power.\footnote{Lichtenstein himself notes, in an interview for \textit{Emanuel Levy}, how the castration-motif, and more specifically the vagina dentate myth, is a metaphor for male fear of women: “Most she-monsters can be seen as representations for the toothed vagina, itself already a metaphor for male fear of women. This additional remove is what I always found disturbing because it masks the original fear, assuring that it never be resolved and allowing monstrous qualities to continue to be attributed to women” (Levy 2008).} As with these films, Zemeckis’s \textit{Beowulf} also depicts female-led sexual encounters as dangerous and as literally emasculating.

Although Marshall argues that it is the masculine rather than the feminine power structures which the film aims to criticise, the depiction of Grendel’s mother suggests otherwise. As we have seen, Zemeckis’s \textit{Beowulf} emphasises the destructive power of female sexuality. Whilst Grendel’s mother is viewed as more rational than other figures in the poem, she uses this to achieve natural and “primitive” goals, for the sake of having a child, with whom she will cause further destruction. As opposed to the film being a critique of patriarchal structures, it appears instead to show a society which has not fully matured, which is still controlled by the maternal.\footnote{It is also worth noting other works by that of author Neil Gaiman, who, alongside Roger Avary, wrote the script for Zemeckis’s \textit{Beowulf}. The monstrous feminine materialises also in his novels \textit{American Gods}, in the figure of Bilquis, who ingests her partners during intercourse, and in \textit{Coraline} in the form of the “Other Mother”, who incarnates all that we need to set aside in order to live, but which will continue to shadow us, and which, indeed, can at times seem appealing [...] Coraline spends the rest of the book trying to re-establish a distance, to rebuild the fantasmatic screen that allows her to function in the world. (Rudd 2008: 166–167)}

The repressive maternal appears quite differently in these three modern \textit{Beowulf} adaptations: Hinds’s graphic novel is the most straightforward, in which the monstrous form of Grendel’s mother is clearly a primitive and negative force. Zemeckis’s \textit{Beowulf} also presents female power as destructive in its repressive hold over Heorot – while the image of Grendel’s mother is modified, from the Venus of Willendorf-type figure of \textit{The Collected Beowulf} to

In other words, the “Other Mother” represents the Abject Maternal, and as with imagery found in \textit{Beowulf} adaptations, Coraline escapes through a “hot and wet” passage back to her parents’ house, which as Rudd states, is reminiscent of the birth canal.
the beautiful and seductive Angelina Jolie, the implication remains the same. John Gardner’s *Grendel* is the only work of these three which critiques the Symbolic Order and the patriarchal power system. This being said, Gardner’s novel does not necessarily extoll the maternal as a desirable alternative; although it is portrayed as more peaceful, it is also primitive and uninspiring.

Consideration of the influence of contemporary social contexts allows us to examine gender power relations in more detail. As Linda Hutcheon notes, “an adaptation, like the work it adapts, is always framed in a context – a time and a place, a society and a culture; it does not exist in a vacuum [...] Context can modify meaning, no matter where or when” (Hutcheon 2006: 142–147). By observing the employment of common tropes, such as Sarkeesian’s “Evil Demon Seductress”, we can situate Zemeckis’s *Beowulf* within the culture of contemporary horror movies. Similarly, Gardner’s novel can be seen as a manifestation of the growing concerns with the traditionally patriarchal system in the US in the 1960s and 1970s.

By drawing on the psychoanalytical and socio-cultural frameworks set forth by Julia Kristeva and Sherry Ortner we can also view these adaptations on a deeper level. As a result of viewing *Beowulf* and its adaptations through the use of these theories of Abjection and cultural binaries, we come into contact with age-old imagery and symbolism; although the application of these methodologies to ancient texts is itself problematic, it serves as a useful and legitimate tool for exploring modern adaptations themselves influenced by contemporary ideas about psychology and society. In particular, we can identify Kristeva’s concept of the Maternal Abject versus the Symbolic Order, and Ortner’s association of the female with nature and of the male with culture, as a common thread in these adaptations: Heorot is often seen as the cultural and civilised centre (with the exception of Zemeckis’s *Beowulf*), and the cave and Grendel’s mother is typically imagined as a primordial site which must be expunged in order for civilisation to continue.

Each modern *Beowulf* adaptation treats the Abject to different effect, and while the majority of these adaptations figure the maternal as a negative and repressive force, not all show the civilised patriarchy as the ideal. Ultimately, these retellings use the story of *Beowulf* as a means by which to express their own culture’s social anxieties about sex and gendered power structures.16

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16 I would like to acknowledge Dr. Tom Birkett and Dr. Francis Leneghan who offered invaluable help in the editing of this article.
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OE god, hlaford and drihten

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When a word is used in a new meaning without a formal alteration, how do people perceive the semantic change? In this paper, an investigation is made on OE god, which was used for both pagan and Christian God in some prose texts and interlinear glosses, with its synonyms drihten and hlaford. The result will show the flexibility in the choice of renderings and semantic overlap of these words in biblical contexts.

Keywords: Old English; God; synonyms; Latin; Gospels; interlinear glosses

1. Introduction

The English tongue is so flexible in nature that it has accepted historically a great number of foreign words into its vocabulary from various languages. As an international language in the medieval period, Latin has been borrowed incessantly into English throughout the time before the Anglo-Saxons came into Britain and after they made their settlements there. After the arrival of Christianity, Latin loan words became numerous.¹ Because of the thirty–odd year gap of the northern and southern routes of the arrival of Christian

¹ Some Latin borrowings which concepts are foreign to the Anglo-Saxons found in Psalter glosses are studied in Ogura (2006). For the vocabulary of the liturgical year, see Joyce Hill, "Naming the Liturgical Year: Reflections on Vernacular Practice", in M. Hosaka et al. (eds.), Phases of the History of English (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2013), 25–45. For the christianisation of some ordinary Old English words, see Ogura (2013). The HTOED is a useful tool for finding Old English synonyms, but DOE and BT(S) are also necessary to specify the quotations that contain actual examples.

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missionaries in the latter half of the sixth century, native words found their way to be christianised in their senses, as God being a typical example. In this paper I investigate god as a Christianised Anglo-Saxon word, together with its synonyms.

Verse lines give us more alternative words and expressions than prose, owing to the stylistic features of alliteration, variation and formulaic phrases. In Bede’s *Ecclesiastical History* the Latin-English correspondence is more clearly found than other prose texts and moreover verse is included, which is example (1), a series of the epithets or variations of “God” found in *Cædmon’s Hymn*.

(1) Bede 4 24.344.6–14

[Nunc laudare debemus auctorem regni caelestis, potentiam Creatoris et consilium illius, facta Patris gloriae: quomodo ille, cum sit aeternus Deus, omnium miraculorum auctor exitit, qui primo filiis hominum caelum pro culmine tecti, dehinc terram Custos humani generis omnipotens creavit.]

Nu sculon herigean heofonrices weard,  
meotodes meahte ð his modgeðanc,  
weorc wuldfodder, swa he wundra gehwæs,  
èce Drihten, ðor onsteald.  
he ærest sceop corðan bearnun  
heofon to hrofe halig scyppend;  
þa middangeard monncynnes weard,  
èce Drihten, æfter teode,  
þirum foldan, frea ælmihtig.

‘Now should we praise the guardian of the heavenly kingdom, the power of the Creator and the counsel of his mind, the works of the Father of glory, how he, the eternal Lord, originated every marvel. He the holy Creator first created the heaven, as a roof for the children of the earth; then the eternal Lord, guardian of the human race, the Almighty ruler, afterwards fashioned the world as a soil for men.’ (tr. by Miller)

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2 See Baugh & Cable (1993), especially pp.82–83. MacGillivray (1902) is a pioneering work on this theme, and focuses on the church history and the vocabulary seen from that side.

3 The Old English data are based on the *DOE Web Corpus* with abbreviated titles, though I often use quotations directly from the EETS editions, Skeat (1970), Kuhn (1965), Roeder (1904), Lindelöf (1909), and from *BT(S)*.
As seen by highlighted words and word groups, Christian God as the Creator is expressed by heofonrices weard ‘the guardian of the heavenly kingdom’, meotod ‘God (esp. in poetry)’, wuldorfæder ‘the Father of glory’, éce Drihten ‘the eternal Lord’, halig scyppend ‘the holy Creator’, monncynnes weard ‘the guardian of mankind’ and frea ælmihtig ‘the Almighty Lord’. It is true that this kind of variation is highly poetic, describing the important subject from various viewpoints so as to show its feature with alliterating words or the first element of a compound, in a half-line of suitable rhythmic types. When the Latin original is consulted, however, it also contains many expressions: auctorem regni caelestis, Creatoris, Patris, aeternus Deus, auctor and Custos. What characterises the Old English version are the repetition of éce Drihten (six times) and the last half-line, frea ælmihtig, that summarises the short poem. There is no use of the word god in this hymn.

2. God and its grammatical gender

*God* is used in the masculine when used as Christian God, but in the neuter otherwise. Example (2) is cited in the DOE as an example of unambiguous neuter forms (and in the plural), although the following lines (example (3)) are not cited together. Example (4) is also in the DOE and example (5) in BT.

(2) Bede 2 10.134.18
[Nullus enim tuorum studiosius quam ego culturae deorum nostrorum se subdidit;]

Forðon nænig þinra þegna neoldicor ne gelustfullicor hine sylfne underþeodde to ura goda [B. úre godu; O. ure godo; Ca. godas] bigange þonne ic;

‘For none of your followers devoted himself more closely or cheerfully to the worship of our gods than I did.’

(3) Bede 2 13.134.21
[Si autem dii aliquid ualerent, me potius iuuare uellent, qui illis inespensius seruare curauit.]

Hwæt ic wat, gif ure godo ænige mihte hæfðon, þonne woldan hie me ma fultuman, forþon ic him geornlicor þeodde þyryðe.

‘Well, I am sure if our gods had any power, they would help me more, for I more zealously served and obeyed them.’
Bede 5 11.416.17
[si peruenirent ad satrapam et loquerentur cum illo, auerterent illum a diis suis, et ad nouam Christianae fidei religionem transferrent]

gif hio to ðem ealdormen bicumen ðæt hio from hiora godum acerden, ðæt hio ðære niowan æ æ þæs Cristes geleafan gehwerfde;

‘if they came to the chief and conversed with him, they would turn him away from their gods, and convert him to the new religion of Christ's faith’

Or 1 5.24.10–12
For ðon sæde Pompeius þa Egyptian bisceopas þæt þa Godes wundor þe on hiora landum geworden wæron to ðon gedon þæt hi hiora ægnum godum getealde wæron, þæt sint diofolgild, nales þam sóhan Gode, for ðon þe hiora godu syndon drycrafte lareowas.

‘Because, said Pompeius and the Egyptian bishops, that those miracles of God which were performed in their land were done so that they might be ascribed to their own gods, who are devils, not to the true God, because their own gods are teachers of magic.’

The device of the distinction between Christian God and heathen gods in grammatical gender becomes obscure through morphological changes, but the plural form tells the difference, and in later periods the use of the big letter $G$ in God.

To say that the word god is in the masculine when used as Christian God and in the neuter when used as a heathen god is enough for the beginners of Old English, but soon we find examples (6), (7) and (8) where the false god is used in the masculine and in the plural, in contrast with the masculine singular form of the true God. The same is true with example (9), where we see the masculine plural forms in the Lambeth Psalter and John (West Saxon Corpus Christi).

LS25 (Michael Mor) 93 (= BlHom 17 201.30)

Þa on þa ilcan tid þa hæðnan bysmerlice & synlice heora þa leasan godas mid mislicum deofolgeldum hie him læpodan on ful tum.

‘Then at the same time the heathens shamefully and wickedly invited their false gods with various idols for their help.’
OE god, blaforð and drihten

(7) ÆHom 22 77 (De Falsis Diis)
Da þa hi toferdon to fyrlemen landum, and mancynn þa weox, þa wurdon hi beæhtæ þurh þone ealdan deofol þa adam ær beswac, swa þæt hi worhton wolice him godas, and þone scyppend forsawon þe hy gesceop to mannum.

‘When they dispersed to the distant lands, and then mankind increased, then they were deceived by the old devil who had betrayed Adam, so that they wickedly made gods for themselves, and neglected the Creator who made them as men.’

(8) WHom 12 12 (De Falsis Dies)
& þa æt nyhstan wurdon hi beæhtæ þurh ðone ealdan deofol þe Adam iu ær beswac swa þæt hi worhton wolice & gedwollice him hæpene godas, & ðone soðan God & heora agenne scyppend forsawon, þe hy to mannum gesceop & geworhte.

‘And then at last they were deceived by the old devil who had betrayed Adam so that they made wrongly and deceptively made heathen gods for them, and despised the true God and their own Creator, who made them as men.’

(9) PsGlI 81.6 [Ego dixi dìi estis et filli excelsi omnes.]
Ic sæde godas ge synond hearn þæs healiçan & ealle ge

‘I said you are gods, and you all children of the high.’

Cf. Jn (WSCp) 10.34
hu nys hit awritten on eowre æ þæt ic sæde ge synt godas?

‘Isn’t it written in your law that I said you are gods?’

Here is another example, in which the Christian God and heathen gods appear in a contrasting context and the latter is obviously in masculine plural:

(10) Or 4 4.87.28
Ond eac þa diofla þe hie an simbel weorþedon hi amirdon, <toeocan> þæm œþrum moniþcalfaldu bismaþ þe hi him lærende wyran, þæt hie ne cuþan angitæn þæt hit Godes wraçu was; ac heton þa biscepas þæt hie sædon ðæm folce þæt heora godas him wyran yrre, to þon þæt hie him þa git swiþor ofreden & bloten þonne hie ær dyden.

‘And also the devils, whom they always worshipped, led them astray, in addition to the other manifold scandals, which they were teaching them, so that they could not understand that it was the vengeance of God, but commanded the bishops that they should tell the people that their gods
were angry against them, to such an extent that they should offer and sacrifice to them much more frequently than they had done.'

3. *God, drihten, blaford* in interlinear glosses

As I put tables in Appendix, interlinear glosses provide the readers with good examples that show relationship between the source language and the renderings. Here I examined *BenRGl*, *LibSc*, *PsGlA* (the Vespasian Psalter: Mercian), *PsGlD* (the Regius Psalter: early West Saxon), *PsGlII* (the Lambeth Psalter: late West Saxon), *Li* (the Lindisfarne Gospel: Northumbrian), *Ru* (the *Rushworth 1* and *Rushworth 2*: Mercian and Northumbrian), and add *WSCp* (the *West Saxon Gospels* in MS CCC 140: West Saxon) for comparison in the choice of words. As seen in the tables, *BenRGl* shows a regular correspondence of *dominus* – *drihten* and *deus* – *god*, the only exception being 118a *dominus* – *blaford*. *LibSc* gives ten percent of the total occurrence of *blaford* as a rendering of *drihten*, especially in the dative plural form; *godes* appears only once for *domini* (69.4 percent) and once for *Christi* (13.4 percent). In Psalter glosses we find a similar correspondence of *dominus* – *drihten* and *deus* – *god* with some exceptional instances. Example (11) is the only instance where *blaford* is glossed for *dominium* in the three glosses, and examples (12), (13) and (14) are those in which the Gallican text (for *PsGlI*) shows different choice of Latin words from that of the Roman text (for *PsGlA* and *D*).

(11) Ps 104.21 [*Et constituit cum dominum domus suae. et principem omnis possessionis suae*]

*A:* ד gesette hine *hlafard* huses his ד aldermon alre æhte his

*D:* ד gesette hine *hlaford* huses his ד aldror eallre æhte his

*I:*  he gesette hine *hlaford* huses his  ד ealdor eallre æhte l. ealles anwealdnesse his

*AV:* Hee made him lord of his house and ruler of all his substance.

(12) Ps 46.3 [*Quoniam deus summus terribilis. et rex magnus super omnes deos*]

*A:* for ðon *god* heh egesful cyning micel ofer alle *godas*

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4 I have examined MSS Cambridge, Corpus Christi College 140, Bodleian, Bodley 441, British Museum, Cotton Nero D. iv and Bodleian, Auct. D. 2.19. For the detailed description, see Ker (1957, 1977).
Ps 56.3 [Clamabo ad deum altissimum. et ad dominum qui benefecit mihi]
A: ic cleopi tu  dryht*  δ Xml hestan Ʌ  to dryhtne  se wel dyde me
D: ic clypi xe to  ȝ  òode  Ʌ  þam helstan Ʌ  to drihtne  þe wel dyde me
I:  [Clamabo ad deum altissimum deum qui benefecit mihi]
ic clypie to  gode  þam hyhstan to  gode  se  þe dyde wel me
AV:  I will cry unto God most high: unto God that performeth all things for me.

Ps 99.2 [Iubilate deo omnis terra. serui domino in letitia]
A: wynsumiað  gode  all coðe δiowiað  dryht* in blisse  s
D:  drymað  ȝ ode  calæ coðe  þeowiað on blisse
I:  freadremað  drihtne  [domino]  calæ  coðe  þeowiað  drihtne  on blisse
AV:  Make a joyfull noise unto the Lord, all ye lands. Serve the Lord with gladnes:

Lindisfarne and Rushworth versions differ in forty-five instances in the choice between god, drihten, blaford, and hælend. In example (15), dominus and domini are glossed blaferd and blafordes in Li, while Ru1 chooses dryhten and dryhtnes.

Mt 25.23 [ait illi dominus eius euge bone serue et fidélis quia super paúca fuisti fidélis supra multa te constitúma intra in gaudium domini tuí]
Li:  cuoð him  hlaferd  his wiclymo la ᵇ[e]  goda δegν Ʌ  leafful  fordón  oʃ er  hyttla  δu were leaff-full oʃ er  monigó  δe ic setto geong in gladnisse  blafordes  δínes
Ru1:  cwæð him to his  dryhten  wel  þec  godú  esne  Ʌ  getreywa  forþon  þu  oʃ er  feawum wære  getreywe  oʃ er  monegu  ic  þe gesete  gá  in  gefa  δínes  dryhtnes
WSCp:  Da cwæð hys  hlaferd  to hym; Geblissa  þu goda  þeowá  Ʌ  getrywa.  forþam  þe  þu  ware  getrywe.  oʃ er  fea.  Oʃ er  fela  ic  þe  gesette.  gá  on  þínes  hlaferdes  getleæ;
AV:  His lord said vnto him, Well done, good and faithful seruant, thou hast beene faithfull ouer a few things: enter thou into the ioy of thy lord.
In (16) two examples of *dominus* are glossed *se drihten* and double-glossed *drihten \& se hlaford* in *Li*, but *Ru* uses *drihten* twice. Another example of this kind is (17), where both *Li* and *Ru* have *iesus* and *dominus* (twice), and the glosses for the latter differ in the two versions. These examples show that both *blaford* and *drihten* can be used as glosses for *dominus*, although *Ru* tends to choose *drihten* more often than *blaford*.

(16) Lk 12.42 [dixit autem *dominus* quis putas est fidelis dispensator et prudens quem constituet *dominus* super familiariam suam ut det illis in tempore tritici mensuram]

*Li:* cuoeð *donne se drihten* huælc woenes ðu is geleafull sgiire-mon \& fehugeroef ð hoga ðone gesettes *drihten* \& *se hlaford* ofer higo his \&te selle him In tid huætes hrippe

*Ru*:

cwað *donne drihten* huælc woenestu is gileof-ful scire-mon \& fehgroef ð hoga ðone gesetes *drihten* ofer higo his \&te selle him on tide huætes ripes

WSCp: Da cwað *drihten* hwelc woenestu is gileof-ful scire-mon \& fehgroef ðone gesetes *drihten* ofer higo his \&te selle him on tide huætes ripes

*AV*:

And the Lord said, Who then is that faithfull and wise steward, whom his Lord shall make ruler ouer his household, to giue them their portion of meate in due season?

(17) Jn 21.7 [Dicit ergo discipulus ille quem diligebat *iesus* petro *dominus* est simon petrus cum audisset quia *dominus* est]

*Li:* cuoeð *fordan de degn donne lufade se hlafard* petre de *hlafard* is simon petrus midby geherde petrus \&te de *hlafard* ueri

*Ru*:

cwað *fórde de degn he donne lufad ðone hlafard [iehus] drihten [dominus] is simon petrus midby giherde \&te *hlafard [dominus]* is

WSCp: Witodlice se learning-cniht þe se *hlafard* lufode cwæð to petre. hit ys *drihten*; Da petrus gehyrde þ hit *drihten* wæs.

*AV*:

Therefore that Disciple whome Iesus loued, saith vnto Peter, It is the Lord.

In most instances the different choice of Old English glosses is based on the difference of Latin versions of *Li* and *Ru*. Examples are (18), where *Li* has *deo* but *Ru domino*, (19), where *Li* has *domini* but *Ru dei*, (20), where *Li* has *dominus* but *Ru iheus*, (21), where *Li* has *iesus* but *Ru deus*, and (22), where *Li* has *iesus* but *Ru xps.*
(18) Mt 22.31 [de resurrectione autem mortuorum non legistis quod dictum est a deo dicente uobis]

Li: of erest soðlice deadra ne leornade gie þæcueden was from gode mīðþy sægde iuuh
Ru1: bi æriste þonne deadra ah ge ne hreordun þæcodynam was from dryhtne [domino] cwæþendum to eow
WSCp: Ne raedd ge be deadra manna æryste. þæc eow fram gode gesæd was.
AV: But as touching the resurrection of the dead, have ye not read that which was spoken unto you by God, saying,

(19) Mk 12.14 [nec enim uides in faciem hominis sed in ueritate uiam domini doces]

Li: ne forðon ðu gesiis on onsione monnes ah in soðfæstnisse wæg drihtnes ðu læres
Ru2: ne forðon ðu gisist on onsione monnes ah in soð-fæstnisse woeges godes [dei] læres
WSCp: ne besceawast þu manna anynse. ac þu godes weg lærst on soð-fæstnysse;
AV: for thou regardest not the person of men, but teachest the way of God in truth.

(20) Lk 22.31 [Ait autem dominus simon simon ecce satanas expetiuit uos ut cribaret sicut triticum]

Li: cuoeð da drihten simon simon heono se wiðerworda gesohta l iuuh þæc awoxe l sue hwaet
Ru2: cwæð da de helend [iheus] symon ðas symon heono de wiðerworda þæc awoxe swa hwaet
WSCp: Da cwæð drihten. Simon Simon. nu satanas gynde þæc he eow hridrude swa swa hwaet;
AV: And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift5 you as wheat:

(21) Jn 6.64 [Sciebat enim ab initio iesus qui essent credentes et quis traditurus esset eum]

Li: uiste forðon from fruma se helend þæðe ueron geleofendo þ þua sellende uere hine

5 i.e. sift.
For Iesus knew from the beginning, who they were that beleeued not, and who should betray him.

In contrast, (23) shows that Li has dominus which is glossed god, while Ru2 has deus and also glossed god.

A man that is called Iesus, made clay, and anointed mine eyes,

4. Summary

A few things can be said in summarizing the results of the investigation.

1. OE god can be used in the masculine and in the neuter. It is not decisively said, however, that god in the masculine is used as Christian God but as non-Christian God in the neuter.

2. Deus is rendered into god with a few exceptions. God is more often used in the genitive than drihten or blaford, especially in the Gospels. Dominus can be
rendered by either *drihten* or *hlaford*, partly because these two words are polysemous and mean 'a lord', 'a chieftain', 'a master', 'a husband', etc., as well as 'the Lord'. *Dominus deus* 'the Lord God' is often left unglossed in the Regius Psalter and the Lambeth Psalter.

3. My investigation on Old English prose and interlinear glosses may reveal some unification of the renderings in the Gospel of John and the Lambeth Psalter, that is, at least in late Old English. 

References


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6 The Gospel of John often shows its peculiarity in contrast with the Synoptic Gospels. For the so-called “Winchester words”, see Hofstetter (1988).


Appendix: *Dominus, Deus, Iesus*, etc. and their renderings

**BenRGl**

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Author’s address
School of Arts and Sciences
Tokyo Woman’s Christian University
2-6-1 Zempukuji, Suginami-ku, Tokyo 167-8585, Japan
received: 8 December 2014
e-mail: ogura.dainagon@jcom.home.ne.jp
revised version accepted: 10 June 2016
The two artists of the Nowell Codex *Wonders of the East*

Simon C. Thomson
Ruhr-Universität Bochum

The version of *Wonders of the East* contained in the Nowell Codex has long been seen as a relatively weak, low-grade production. The text has not been well received: even the edition produced specifically to represent the texts of the codex uses another manuscript version as a base text (Fulk 2012). The thirty-one images are frequently called “crude”, and even more pejorative adjectives have been deployed, including “absurd” and “ludicrous” (Rypins 1924; Sisam 1953: 78; James 1929: 55, 58). Some studies, including the most recent discussion of the manuscript, find a “chaotic vibrancy” in the strangeness, darkness, and lack of clarity found in the images (Mittman & Kim 2013, Ford 2009: 222). All assume that the lack of technical control points to the scribe of the text having drawn the images despite a lack of expertise in drawing.

What has not been recognised before is that there are at least two hands at work in the images of the text. A number of images show doubled figures, where there is a clear distinction between the work of a controlled and skilful draughtsman and the imitative work of a weaker contemporary. Other images can be attributed with more or less confidence to one artist or the other. One of the most interesting images also seems to show interference from a later ‘doodler’.

This paper will demonstrate the existence of these two hands. It will point to some moments in the text where scribe and draughtsmen seem to be in conflict. This will in turn lead to the brief consideration of some implications for our understanding of the construction of the codex and the value invested in its production.

Keywords: manuscript; exemplar; artist; frame; monstrous; Wonders of the East; eleventh century; Beowulf
1. *Wonders of the East* in the Nowell Codex

The version of *Wonders of the East* in the Nowell Codex (London, British Library, Cotton MS Vitellius A. xv, second part) is one witness to an enormously popular medieval text, recounting a sequence of remarkable animals, plants, and peoples in distant lands. It has a complex history, being witnessed in three insular manuscripts and a host of continental copies, between which there are considerable differences. Along with Nowell’s version which has just the Old English text are London, British Library, Cotton MS Tiberius B. v, a Canterbury manuscript from the early eleventh century, and Oxford, Bodleian Library, Bodley MS 614, dated to the twelfth century. Bodley is entirely in Latin; Tiberius in Latin followed by Old English section by section. There are numerous versions of a similar text across the Continent exclusively in Latin. The text’s original epistolary frame was lost or discarded relatively early, which gives the text that survives a sense of briefly cataloguing or listing the marvels it describes rather than forming any sort of narrative.

There are a number of editions of the text of *Wonders*, most of which privilege the fuller Tiberius version (Orchard 1995, Fulk 2012). The Nowell *Wonders* was transcribed by Stanley Rypins along with the other prose texts of the manuscript in 1924. More recently, Elaine Treharne included it along with *Beowulf* and *Judith* from the same manuscript in her Anthology of Old and Middle English Texts, and Asa Mittman and Susan Kim produced a beautiful edition, with translation, edition, transcription, and facsimile (Treharne 2009, Mittman & Kim 2013). Facsimiles of the whole manuscript are also readily available: Kemp Malone’s edition for the Early English

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1 Temple notes these three manuscripts as evidence for the popularity of the text (1976: 22).
2 An authoritative account of the interrelationship of these insular versions and of the various continental witnesses, as well as derivative texts such as the *Liber Monstrorum*, is given by Knock (1981: 21–46); she gives a more concise overview of the complex picture in McGurk et al. (1983: 88–95). A précis, particularly focused on the translation process, is in Knock (1997: 121–126). These update Kenneth Sisam’s more straightforward but now outdated textual history (1953: 74–80).
3 Joe McGowan is currently working to produce an updated version of this edition, based on his work and that of the late Phillip Puliano. Professor McGowan has been extremely generous in sharing notes and discussing details of the prose texts and the manuscript with me.
Manuscripts in Facsimile series has been supplanted by Kevin Kiernan’s *Electronic ‘Beowulf’*, now into a third edition with a fourth on the horizon; Kiernan’s images (though not his apparatus) have been superseded by the British Library’s ‘Digitised Manuscripts’ online edition, from which I have taken all of my images (Malone 1963, Kiernan 2011, British Library 2013). Because they are illustrated, there are also facsimiles specifically of the three insular *Wonders*. The English Manuscripts in Facsimile edition of the Tiberius text (which includes full images of Bodley and Nowell) produced by a team led by Patrick McGurk builds on and replaces Montague Rhodes James’ ‘reproduction’ of the three English versions (McGurk et al. 1983, James 1929). Mittman & Kim’s (2013) is probably now the standard edition, but they make some questionable and inconsistent editorial choices, and sidestep the difficulties of page numbers in the Nowell Codex by introducing a new foliation which I find very unhelpful. So readings here are my transcriptions from the manuscript, with my own translations. And, as I have discussed elsewhere, I follow Kiernan’s foliation system (Thomson 2015).

2. The Nowell Codex images

The quality of the images in Nowell has been much disparaged. James is an extreme but representative example, calling them a “collection of absurdities which I am rescuing from perhaps merited oblivion” (1929: 9). This weakness has resulted in a universal assumption that the scribe of the text (Nowell Codex Scribe A) drew the images, copying them direct from the exemplar, relying on Sisam’s analysis that “[u]nless he found them in his original, a scribe so incompetent in drawing would hardly have ventured on illustrations.”

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4 Images used here by kind permission of the British Library and are all © The British Library Board, Cotton Vitellius A. xv. I am also grateful to Julian Harrison, Cillian O’Hogan, and Andrea Clarke for enabling my physical examination of the manuscript on 18/03/2015.

5 Kiernan discusses the complexities of the foliation in full, and gives a succinct explanation of this numbering system (Kiernan 1996: 85–109, 103–104); Orchard provides a concordance to the foliation of *Beowulf* (2003: Appendix 1, 268–273); Mittman & Kim give an overview of foliations of *Wonders* (2013: 38). Where editors do not discuss foliation, they generally follow the 1884 system used by the British Library which, following Kiernan and Orchard, is included in brackets in my referencing.
(1953: 78). Reading the images as weak and impromptu copies of those in a more refined exemplar led Sisam and others to conclude that there was no possibility of deriving any information about the production process or of the exemplars from them. It has also contributed to the general finding that the manuscript containing *Beowulf*, even though it has colour illustrations, was a low-grade and poorly regarded production in its own time, contributing to a general privileging of postulated earlier iterations of the poem and a desire to reject this manuscript’s incarnation (e.g. Lapidge 2000, Neidorf 2014).\(^6\)

The more recent critiques are more toned down than earlier commentators: James’ “absurd” and Sisam’s “ludicrous” have become McGurk’s “crude” (an often used adjective in this context, Sisam 1953: 78, McGurk et al. 1983: regularly throughout 88–95, Knock 1981: 60, Ford 2009: 222). Mary Olson has argued for the playfulness and challenge of the Nowell images (2003: 133), with some support from Alun Ford who allows them a “chaotic vibrancy” (2009: 222). More recently, in a number of studies and in their edition, Susan Kim and Asa Mittman focused on its images and the interplay between images and text and found much to value (Kim 1997; Mittman & Kim 2008, 2009, 2010, 2013), but general opinion is clear. Certainly, there are some images that, while they may not merit such disdain, are “hardly refined” (Kim 1997: 51).\(^7\) Lack of colour is not intrinsically a mark of low quality in the period, as shown by the extremely high grade, beautiful and austere, image of Cnut and Emma presenting a cross in the frontispiece of Winchester New Minster’s *Liber Vitae* shown in Figure 1.\(^8\) But the odd gesture towards coloured outline on the “unclean woman” of 102 (BL105)v, §27, the lower image in Figure 2, using the same colour as her frame and giving up after outlining her arms and blotching her chin is untidy and...

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\(^6\) There are of course exceptions to this approach, led by Kiernan (1996), with recent arguments for the value of this manuscript’s presentation of *Beowulf* from Bredehoft (2014), Damico (2015).

\(^7\) Although it is worth noting in this context Sally Dormer’s (2012) observation that “[d]rawing is an unforgiving technique”, and it is thus easier to find ink drawings wanting than illuminated images.

\(^8\) The *Liber Vitae* is contained in London, British Library, Stowe MS 944, 6–61v. The image prefaces the codex proper, and is on 6r. As part of the British Library’s Digitised Manuscripts project, a high-resolution image can be viewed at http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/Viewer.aspx?ref=stowe_ms_944_f006r.
The two artists in *Wonders of the East* confusing. Only about a half of the frame is coloured, and a small section of it next to the branch held in her left hand diminishes to a line rather than continuing as a solid bar for her to break. The draughtsmanship of this image is also poor, with attempts to show her “eoseles teð” and “eofores teð” (“asses’ teeth” and “boar’s tusks”) barely sustained. What are presumably intended to be her breasts are added in far too low down, presumably to ensure they could be seen, as she is explicitly unclothed in the text and her right arm covers their natural position. In the context of the page she appears even weaker: an impoverished repetition of the more interesting, but still relatively unsuccessful, image of the bearded hunting woman above.

Other images, while perhaps not so poorly executed, are puzzling and seem to have almost no reference to the text. As shown in Figure 3, the example of the *Sigelwara* (‘Ethiopian’) who ends the text on 103 (BL106)v, §32, has a masklike face, appears to be wearing some form of textured all-in-one robe tunic with legs, and extends his left arm behind him to a much smaller figure who appears to be a naked woman. The seated man on 103 (BL106)r shown

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9 Given the variance between manuscripts and editions, I seek here to use as full a reference system as possible for the sections and images. Each has a page number and a sectional number referring to where it comes in the text; my sectional numbering is the same as that used in Orchard (1995). A full list of the images, by textual section and page, in the *Nowell Wonders* is included as an Appendix.

10 As Sisam observes, Nowell is the only version which includes both bestial features – and it may seem a little unfair to expect an artist to be capable of illustrating this overwhelming combination (1953: footnote, 79).

11 Olson (2003) tends to read repetition in design as part of a rhythm that works to construct meaning; but here it seems merely imitative.

12 Although note that, Mittman & Kim aside, all earlier readers of the manuscript have seen this as a man; see Olson (2003: 143), who counts only three women in the manuscript where I see four, and the detailed account of the illustrative scheme given by Knock, with this figure described as a “Man on right outside frame” (McGurk et al. 1983: 103). The shapes on its chest seem to me to resemble the simplistic breast archetype used for naked women elsewhere in the text, and the dark shape at its crotch seems more triangular than phallic to me. However, it is no more explicable as a woman than a man and the distinction is merely an academic one here. This puzzling image’s use of two figures, one of which is outside the frame, is a little reminiscent of Jacob walking out of his frame in the Old English Hexateuch (London, British Library, Cotton MS Claudius B. iv) on 42v, or the angel coming to help St Peter in the Caligula Troper (London, British Library, Cotton MS Claudius A. xiv) on 22r. The former can be seen in Dodwell & Clemoes (1974); the latter Backhouse (1984: plate 157).
in Figure 4 and the council on 102 (BL105)r, §28 or 29, shown in Figure 5, are similarly baffling, requiring a great deal of work from the reader to fit the text cleanly. All these discrepancies and weaknesses contribute to a sense that the artistry is second-rate or even worse.

However, there are stronger images in the text than the ones just noted. By my judgement, the first ten illustrations at least are well-executed and coloured. Other images later in the manuscript are also far from “crude”: I would include in this list of reasonably well-executed work all or part of the images on 100(96) (BL103)v, §19, of the precious tree (the first image in Figure 6), the Panotus on 101 (BL104)r, §21, the first Catinos on 103 (BL106)r, §28 and 29 (discussed in more detail below and shown in Figure 7), and the traveller carrying away a woman on 103 (BL106)v, §30 (the second image in Figure 8): in my view, fourteen of the thirty-one images do not deserve to be called “absurd” on any criteria. It is not possible, of course, fully to resurrect an eleventh-century aesthetic but along with the controlled use of colour noted above, there is a clear interest in images and text as reflexes of one another.

This is evident in, for instance, the Bury Psalter’s elegant interactions which have been widely admired (Wormald 1952: 47–49; Gameson 1995: 39). While the Nowell images cannot be placed on the same pedestal, they certainly engage with the same dynamic as in, for instance, the two-headed snake shown in Figure 9. Unlike the Bury Psalter’s lovely cervus, which drinks from its own name on 54r, this snake hisses aggressively at the generic name deor (‘beast’) of a rival creature, a line from whose description seems to have invaded its own space through the scribe’s lack of control.

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13 I have included here the gold-digging ants cycle on 98(100) (BL101)r and the olfenda on the verso, both of which I argue below to be fundamentally effective drawings which have been diminished by the presence of a weaker hand (the late doodler and Draughtsman B respectively).

14 Farr (2013) gives a useful discussion of progress and challenges in our current understanding of text and image interactions. Barajas (2013) gives an ambitious discussion of some possible roles of the images in Wonders, primarily focused on those in Tiberius.

15 The Bury Psalter is Vatican, Biblioteca Apostolica, Reg. lat. MS 12. Artist F’s work in the Harley Psalter (BL Harley 603) is another celebrated example of “a more intimate relationship between word and image”; see Gameson (1995: 112, n.40, cf. 40).

16 Gameson (1995: 39) cites the cervus image in the context of interaction between image and text. This, and many other delicate drawings from the Bury Psalter, can be seen in Ohlgren (1992).
Their weakness and poor critical reception aside, I will suggest that the images can tell us a great deal about how demanding the making of the manuscript was and the expertise that went into its compilation. *Contra* all previous readings of the text, it seems certain that more than one hand worked on the images, and this has interesting implications for the circumstances in which this manuscript was made and indeed for the process of manuscript production in late Anglo-Saxon England more widely.

3. The two artists of the Nowell *Wonders*

It is well-known that the two scribes of the Nowell Codex take place abruptly, mid-poetic line in *Beowulf* on 172 (BL175)v, shown in Figure 10. In an intriguing analogy, the images on 98(100) (BL101)v, §10, and 103 (BL106)r, §28, shown in Figures 11 and 7 respectively, clearly show the work of two different draughtsmen.\(^\text{17}\) They exhibit similar patterns. The first shows two camels (Old English *olfendas*) against a red background.\(^\text{18}\) The first is picked out neatly, even elegantly. The second shows clear indications of an attempt to draw an identical animal: it copies details such as the vertical lines inside the first camel’s ears and the tooth projecting down from the back of its mouth. But it is drawn altogether more roughly, with less subtlety of line and sense of proportion. The eye looks manic rather than intelligent, and the snout more lumpen than deft. Where it passes behind the first camel, this second draughtsmen did not realize that parts of it should still be visible between its companion’s tail and rump, and beneath its belly. It is clearly drawn by a much less skilled and practised hand. It was also clearly an original element of the drawing, as both camels are blank parchment figures against a red background; no background colour has been erased to make space for it at some later date.

The same pattern can be observed in the second of these examples on the penultimate page of *Wonders*. Two animals, called *Catinii* in the text, stand one behind the other, baying up at the writing before them. The first figure is again elegant, with layered curls and muscle curvature showing the strains to its mouth and body. It is not quite absurd to compare the control exerted in its execution with animals from the Bury Psalter, such as those at the foot of

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\(^{17}\) I am deeply indebted to C.L. Fawson, who first suggested two different draughtsmen to me when looking at the image of hens, §3, 96(98) (BL99)r.

\(^{18}\) Tiberius and Bodley have *ylpendas* (‘elephants’) in text and images here.
However, the second animal, while mostly lost to manuscript damage, is clearly in no way comparable. There is no variation in the weight and thickness of line used to draw it; the first creature’s pert nose becomes a beak; muscle definition becomes random lines more akin to scars.

It is beyond reasonable doubt that there were two draughtsmen at work on these two images: I will here call the more skilled hand Draughtsman A and the less skilled Draughtsman B. Once they have been identified, the possibility is opened up of seeing them throughout the text and attempting to attribute the other images to one hand or another. There are, for instance, three very similar illustrations of trees in the text, all shown in Figure 6. On the basis of its controlled design and elegant terminal buds, the first, on 100(96) (BL103)v, §19, can be confidently attributed to Draughtsman A. By contrast, on the basis of its lack of control and unambitious triangular buds, the second on 102 (BL105)r, §24, is clearly the work of Draughtsman B. The third, on 103 (BL106)v, §31, is less weak than the second, but does not exhibit Draughtsman A’s sense of design and (relative) ambition: it is probably the work of Draughtsman B, and may perhaps indicate him developing his skill. It is possible to speculate further on both the other doubled images in the text and on some of the more or less skilled productions, but there is no space to do so here. In the hope that it will support further interrogation of my findings and research into the making of this manuscript and artistic practice in the period generally, a list of the images and their frames, and my cautious attributions to the different hands, is included as an Appendix.

However, in this context it is worth briefly noting that I see yet another hand at work in the images of Wonders, and this to be more of a doodler than a draughtsman. On 98(100) (BL101)r, §9, the text’s largest image elegantly tells the story of how gold can be stolen from giant ants using three camels as shown in Figure 12. Parts of the execution are clearly by Draughtsman A: the camels, which are closer to his Catinos than his camel in the images discussed above; the tree to which the young camel is tethered, which is similar to the first tree of Figure 6; given its sophistication, perhaps the overall design was his. The image is not a masterpiece: the man with his gold is rigid rather than beautiful; the device used to load gold onto the female camel’s back is graphically interesting rather than convincing or even particularly clear. The argument here is not that Draughtsman A was a great artist, just that he was a competent one with significantly more control than his colleague.

At least two parts of this picture, however, are entirely extraneous and very poorly executed. A crude ink sketch of one of the massive ants curls around
the scribe’s writing on the first line of the page. It seems to be drawn in imitation of the most elegant ant which crouches immediately below it, but misses a front paw because that would cross the word. Beside it is a similarly crude sketch of an animal’s head. To my eyes, it looks most like an emu; given its placement it was probably an imitation of the male camel’s head, which has been lost to fire damage but was probably similar to the female camel’s head on the other side of the image. Unlike Draughtsman B’s imitative drawings which fill the frame by doubling animals, these sketches are pre-conceived of as incomplete. And where B is an unsophisticated draughtsman lacking fine control of line and form, this hand is genuinely weak: the roughness of the incomplete ant and camel head exceeds the weakness of Draughtsman B’s to at least the same extent as his exceeds that of Draughtsman A. It seems likely, then, that these doodles were made by a later reader who admired the drawings and sought to imitate them: it could perhaps be linked with the partial Middle English gloss on 99(95) (BL102)v in two or three hands, partially shown in Figure 13, but there are so many stages of unidentified interaction with the Nowell Codex that such a specific connection is unsafe at best. This analysis does not undermine Mittman and Kim’s finding that, as it stands, the image is destabilising and dramatic, confronting and encompassing the text. But it is clear that any such reading is of the codex as it now stands, not as it was first designed.

It is worth noting that in other documents of the period artists do share work, but that there is usually both a clear hierarchy and clear separation of artists. A well-known instance is the early eleventh-century Harley Psalter, probably produced at Christ Church, Canterbury, in which six different artistic hands have been identified and there may be more (Gameson 1995: 18; Noel 1995: 94–96, 137–140; cf. Heslop 1990: 175). Each worked on a different quire and some at different times: here, the variant hands are most likely connected to a minimisation of time to be taken and control of the burden given to each individual, as well as with the development of an artefact over time. As far as I know, there is no known Anglo-Saxon instance of two artists

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19 In addition to the facsimiles cited above, the glossed page is shown in Roberts (2005: 63). I am grateful to Profs. Winfried Rudolf and Linne Moody and to Dr Estelle Stubbs for discussing the gloss with me. The gloss is not widely discussed, but see Leake (1962), Malone (1963: 37), and Kiernan (1996: n.53, 143), all of whom see two hands.
working in the same quire, let alone the same page – and let alone again the same image.  

In Nowell, it seems to be the case that a less capable artist was given space to shadow the work of a stronger hand, and that this secondary artist was then given some illustrations to work on independently. Clearly, this can be placed in parallel to the “younger” and “older” hands of the manuscript as a whole (Scribes A and B respectively), although the relationship of those two is still entirely unclear. We could be witnessing apprenticeship in action, though it would require considerably more evidence to build any certainty in such a conclusion. The variation in quality can also be placed in the known context of artists who travelled to minor houses from the powerful centres: possibly a resident of a smaller scriptorium is learning from an itinerant professional.  

Pat Conner has argued that scribes working together sought to match their hands in a performance of their spiritual communality (Conner 2013: 46–49). The shared drawing of an image could be read as an extreme version of this kind of performative unity, only partially undermined by failure to successfully match style.

4. Frames and colours

Now it is clear that earlier assumptions about the unthinking reproduction of the images were wrong, it is important to reconsider the processes that went into their making. If the images are the result of teamwork rather than Scribe A incompetently scrawling his exemplar’s images as he went along, then the making of the Nowell Codex was a more complex and larger affair than has been previously assumed and the images not necessarily taken direct from an exemplar. I will therefore briefly discuss some other features of these images: first their framing and colouration; and then placement and design, to attempt to clarify this communal process of production. I hope to be able to reinforce

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20 The Winchester Bible is a twelfth-century example of artists working together, with one of the hands sometimes sketching designs for another to add details and colour; see Donovan (1993). I am grateful to Richard Gameson for pointing this out to me.  
21 Temple (1976: 17) notes the itinerant nature of some scribes; Dormer (2012) adds artists to this and suggests that some may have been professional members of the laity, with which Gameson (2012d: 281) agrees; Brownrigg (1978: 240) suggests that major centres may have sent out their artists on an irregular basis, and that many books which seem incomplete “may have been waiting in vain for a travelling artist”.
the idea of a collective effort to make the images, and to suggest that the impression of ‘absurdity’ or ‘crudeness’ they give is at least partly a result of the project proving to be more creatively challenging than its executors were equipped to handle, rather than due to pure incompetence.

While it is not possible to identify any consistent movement in the type or quality of frame used for images, it is clear that the artist made no attempt at any point to produce an elaborate frame of the type being regularly used at some of the great centres of textual production during this period, and which are sometimes regarded as characterising the ‘Winchester’ style. It is possible to conclude from this that the framing artist was spectacularly unskilled or ignorant, working entirely inconsistently and with no sensitivity for how his material was presented; or that his copy text had no frames, or simple lines, and he was instructed to add them at too late a stage. However, given the clear attempts to decorate some of the frames in different ways, and the number of instances where an active decision has been taken to leave off one or more framing edges or to cross frame and image, it seems more reasonable to conclude that we have here an active exploration of framing possibilities.

In general, the frames can consistently be seen to be adapting themselves to images and text. Where there is no space for a frame, as with the ant-camel image, it is simply left out. Where a frame can have four solid bars, as with the two-headed man on 98(100) (BL101)v, §11, Figure 14, it does. Where an edge of a frame cannot be a solid bar because the text comes too close to the image, it becomes a single ink line, as with the left hand line in the image of camels (Figure 12) discussed above, or the top edge to the second image of sheep on

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22 Gameson (1995: 193, 195–208) notes that frames of any degree of elaboration were rarely used for drawings (as opposed to paintings or illuminations), and discusses some types of decorated frame. On the basis of its lack of Winchester borders, Temple (1976: 75) places Pierpoint Morgan Library MS 869 into the “Utrecht school”, but this rigid distinction is probably not entirely tenable – and certainly not applicable by the mid-eleventh century. Arguing from individual characteristics to identify a school of origin could equally well suggest that the focus on individual animals with plant ornament is a feature of Ringerike style, which is plainly not the case here (see Hicks 1993: 246–248 for a straightforward description of Ringerike.) Friedman (1986: 334) argues that not using ornate frames could have been an intentional act in Tiberius, as the plain borders there “helps to focus our attention on parts of the monstrous anatomy which protrude from pictorial space”; cf. Barajas’ discussion of the frames and their implications (2013: 252).

23 I cannot account for Barajas’ finding that the frames in this manuscript are always “a solid boundary separating the reader from the wonder” (2013: 252).
95(97) (BL98)v, §2, Figure 15. Or it is left off altogether, as with both images on 96(98) (BL99)r, §3 and 4, Figure 16. The framer did not lack ambition: he adds decoration to the corners of his very first frame (the first image in Figure 15), some decorative bars to frames, and he was perhaps responsible for the elegance of the frame shaped like an architectural arch on 103 (BL106)r, §28 or 29, Figure 4. But the space occupied by text and images simply did not give him enough room to do more in most instances. In some instances, the framer is given a choice between drawing his frame through the text or through the image: he can be seen to change his mind in Figure 17, where a line is extended for the frame at the foot of the image, but the vertical bar is drawn an inch or so inside that, so that two thirds of the frame’s bar is not covered by the man’s arm. Given the occasional ambition of the frames, he may have been identical with Draughtsman A, but this does not seem likely given the lack of concern for framing shown by the draughtsman in his execution of images such as this one. Given that some difficulties encountered in framing result from the placement of text, Scribe A is not likely to have been the framer either; it is plausible that this was a third hand brought in to finish the text off, perhaps with frames and colour. It is also possible that Draughtsman A, having completed his images, was then asked to add frames in. This minimises the hands involved in execution, and also explains the lack of preparation for framing in the execution of images. Either way – with a third hand coming in to frame, or an external pair of eyes critiquing the lack of frames – the process of production is complex.

There are a number of instances, including those noted above, where the violation of framed boundaries in the Nowell Wonders makes the celebrated intrusion into frames employed by the Anglo-Saxon Psychomachia, where, for instance, the excesses of Luxuria’s dancing are emphasised by her hands and feet entering the bars of the frame, appear rather tame and feeble.

24 On 96(98) (BL98)v, 101 (BL104)v and 102 (B105)v. Mittman & Kim (2013) note the variation in frames, discussing it in detail pp.137–181, see especially pp.144–147; they list the different frame types as Appendix B, pp.241–244.

25 Broderick (1982: 40) identifies frame-violation as a particularly Anglo-Saxon trait. Friedman (1986: 324) regards Nowell’s frame-violations as comparable with the various manuscripts of Prudentius’ Psychomachia, but I go further than him: where Luxuria and Superbia, for instance, merely enter the bar of their frames, most of the Nowell images crash through the whole of their frames and enter the text-space. Susan Kim (1997: 40) is, I think, correct when she identifies the Nowell images as “characterised by their aggressive and persistent movement outside their frames”.

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The two artists in *Wonders of the East* represent part of a movement towards the unframed freedom epitomised by the Utrecht Psalter and its insular imitators. It could also be read as part of the same impulse towards violation and eruption that, so it has been argued, the Tiberius illustrations use (again, comparatively tamely) to suggest the wildness and danger of the marvels. A number of Tiberius’ images seem to emphasise the scale of figures by showing them straining against framed boundaries, but this is plainly nothing like as extreme as Nowell’s giant man on 99(95) (BL102)r, §12 or 13, shown in Figure 17, whose fist explodes out of the withdrawn frame noted above. As with the use of colour, on its own terms and in the context of the eleventh century, the Nowell *Wonders* seems at least adequate and – compared with the admired breaking in *Psychomachia* – radical and exciting in its aesthetic impact. This is not to claim extreme sophistication. One of the most widely discussed and admired images in Tiberius is that of the *Blemmya*, who grips his frame and stares out at the viewer, a level of dimensional play never present in Nowell.

Colours were added after the images and frames were drawn. In places, the colourist misunderstands what Draughtsman A has drawn: he paints the front camel’s leg in as background in the image shown in Figure 11; he confuses the clothes of a shepherd and the extended ears of its sheep-like beast on 99(95) (BL102)r, §14, Figure 18. As often in this codex, errors may be revealing: it follows that the colourist was probably not Draughtsman A, but he could have been Draughtsman B, or the scribe, or the framer, or all three. As discussed above, colour is inconsistently applied, in general moving from rich and glowing early images to stripped back, bare images later in the text. It may perhaps be the case that the colours simply ran out, leaving the colourist with the choice of highlighting with red or doing nothing in the last few pages.

Prudentius’ *Psychomachia* is in London, British Library, Additional MS 24199, and the images are discussed most thoroughly in Wieland (1997).  
26 The Utrecht Psalter (Utrecht, Universiteitsbibliotheek, Bibl. Rhenotraiectae MS 1 Nr 32) is discussed in a number of places. See for instance Wormald (1952: 21). The style it inspired is usually called the “Utrecht style” and is distinguished from the “Winchester school”. Wormald (1952) describes these styles in detail, and Friedman sees the Nowell images as “very like those of the earliest ‘Winchester school’” (1986: 322). I see no particular reason to assign them to one ‘school’ or the other: not least because, if there ever were any clear distinctions they were breaking down by the early eleventh century, and are only readily identifiable in very fine work where style can be easily discerned.

27 Violation of frames is frequently discussed – see for instance Wormald (1952: 28).
This easy process is a little disrupted by the tree on the final page, but it is just possible that the three trees were coloured at the same time. The impression of a set amount of red/orange pigment being produced for this project is reinforced by the opportunistic colouring of some capital letters early in *Alexander’s Letter to Aristotle*, which follows *Wonders* in the manuscript, as shown in Figure 19. A limited amount of colour, produced specifically for this manuscript and used with injudicious excess in the early images, continues to make it seem as though this copy of *Wonders* was produced in a scriptorium with ambitions somewhat in excess of its experience and capacity. All of the difficulties in planning text, image, frames, and colours also make it likely that the exemplar was not being exactly reproduced as the various hands seem to have a clear idea of the general direction of their work without knowing precisely what they are producing. I will therefore move on to briefly consider the planning of the images in the text before a final consideration of exemplars.

5. The planning and control of the images

The image spaces were certainly pre-planned: on occasion, Scribe A assumes space is needed for an illustration which is then not used. In the image of the giant man noted above on 99(95) (BL102)r, §13, Figure 17, for instance, five of the nine lines of text to the left of the first drawing all end with relatively large amounts of space. The scribe is clearly concerned about having enough space for text, as he starts a new section with a marginal capital on the very last line of the page. He could have saved at least a manuscript line by utilizing these gaps, and certainly had no qualms about text abutting and even, occasionally, crossing into an image. But he leaves the space, expecting it to be filled. The draughtsmen did not need the whole space, and the framer chose to bring the left edge of his frame close in to the image, so a gap is left. On occasion, details of the images are so well designed to fill the space coincidentally left by letter shapes that they must have been drawn second: protruding feet on 100(96) (BL103)v, §20, and 101 (BL104)r, §21, Figure 20, for instance, neatly occupy the spaces left by letters without ascenders.

Four initials are coloured: the first large *H*, a marginal *C*, and a mid-line *O* on 104 (BL107)r.1, 8 & 13 respectively, and then, less explicity, a mid-line *O* on (BL108)v.2, ten capitals later.
It is equally clear that the text was not always written before the image. The unframed ant-camel image (Figure 12) discussed above was drawn before the text underneath it was written. There are five ruled lines beneath it. However, Draughtsman A seems here not to have understood that a ruled line of text needs a fairly significant amount of space above it to be used for writing. The feet of his stylized tree (more like a tripod) extend very close to the ruled line. As shown in Figure 21, when he wrote below it, Scribe A had to compress the *d of londbunis* which is much smaller and closer to bilinear than his usual, taller and concave-down, allograph. That some images were drawn before the text and some after strongly suggests that Scribe A and the two draughtsmen were working in the same place and at more or less the same time: the draughtsman worked on some pages while the scribe worked on others. It cannot usually be deduced which came first of image and text, but it is useful to have conclusive evidence that both sequences took place at different times. It is suggestive that the ant-camel image is the only one certainly drawn before the scribe worked on the page. Possibly, this was the only time this sequence held. If so, this may have been because the image was an innovation, a possibility I will go on to consider in due course.

It is also worth noting that Scribe A’s regard for image space is not consistent. As in the two-headed snake example, his text seems to spill over the ends of pages and into what should be image spaces, certainly at 96(98) (BL99)r and 98(100) (BL101)r as shown in Figure 16 and Figure 12, and to some degree elsewhere. Given that the scribe and draughtsman were working together, at the same time and place, it is possible that the scribe worked on these pages and handed them over, that Draughtsman A complained about the interference with his image space, and that the scribe subsequently worked harder to maintain the boundaries (which, as it turns out, the draughtsmen did not always need after all). Such a sequence of events is clearly merely a speculative reconstruction, but makes sense of the shifts in behaviour indicated by the evidence.

To return to the main thread, given that the image spaces were pre-planned, it would be understandable if there were a relatively consistent plan and layout. The text gestures towards this. Each section starts on a new line and with a marginal capital, and the most frequent layout is to place two wonders on each page, each with an accompanying image, surrounded on
three sides by text, as shown in Figure 22. However, this ‘default’ design only appears on seven of the seventeen sides of Wonders. The variation mostly results from significant variation in both the size of images and the length of the text’s sections, with the added complication that some sections describe more than one wonder requiring illustration. As a result, three pages add an extra image between my spaces i and ii; two pages enlarge one of the images to occupy the full width of the page; three have only one illustration and two consecutive pages are completely anomalous, with 97(99) (BL100)v having no images at all and with 98(100) (BL101)r having one large picture which occupies almost all the page, which does mean that the open book resembles the ‘default’ layout, with an image to the right of the text. Sometimes, text-space is reduced because the images are larger, or laid out portrait rather than landscape. The most striking example of this is on 102 (BL105)v, Figure 2, where the two images of women leave so little space that only one line of text can cross the full width of the page.

6. Variant styles; multiple exemplars

There are a number of indications that at least some of the images did not come directly from an exemplar. First, there are two illustrations for one wonder: the generous men who give visitors women (§30) to take away are shown on recto and verso of 103 (BL106), Figure 8. The first image shows two men saying farewell; the second shows a man, presumably a visitor, carrying a woman away with him. Even with the top of the second image and the right hand side of the first missing, it is clear that they are drawn in strikingly different styles. The first has a divided frame, like that deployed for the bearded woman and her hunting animals (the upper image in Figure 2), shod feet, and elegant draping, recognisably Anglo-Saxon clothes including pointed shoes that seem to curl up at the tip. In style, the figures are close to

29 I am following Gameson’s (2012b: Figure 2.17, 69) presentation of page layout. Of the schemes he identifies, Nowell is closest to his ‘C’, which he describes as “less complicated” but also “less popular” (2012b: 70).
30 As noted by Olson (2003: 133), “there is little consistency in the size of the illustrations”.
31 Knock (1983: 96) also notes this repeated break down of the planned sequence in Vitellius.
The two artists in *Wonders of the East*

the third man in the council on the mountain on 102 (BL105)r, and to the priest in his temple on 101 (BL104)v, both shown in Figure 23. The second image of the generous men narrative, showing a visitor carrying the woman he has been given, uses an uncoloured linear design suggestive of decorated clothes rather than the flowing garments of the previous image. Rocks provide a floor for the man to stand on, and both are unshod. What can be seen of the woman’s face is drawn in the same style as the preceding image. The first has coloured clothes with blank parchment background; the second a lightly tinted background and no colour for the clothes. In short, as well as unnecessarily providing two images for one section, the two images have quite different illustrative styles, although I would (cautiously) attribute them both to Draughtsman A.

The variation in style persists throughout the text. The council on the mountain, §25, noted above and shown in full in Figure 5, gives three different men. At the right of the stylized table is the figure noted above and shown in Figure 23, whose face is made of straight lines and angles; in the centre and on the left, as shown in Figure 23, are two more figures drawn completely differently. They share the elongated nose, bulging chin, and prominent eyebrows also given to the bearded huntress on 101 (BL105)v, §26 and the shepherd on 99(95) (BL102)r, §14.

Indeed, in this second image, the shepherd’s face is utterly at odds with that of the *Hostes* it faces. It is expressionistic and dominated by a single eye; lines continue from its clothing into its neck, suggesting gaunt, stretched flesh. Other details, such as the crook, the hand holding it, and both feet, seem clumsily, rapidly drawn in to supplement this craning head. He seems to be dressed in a simple belted tunic, with lines showing the bulge of his belly. The figure facing it across the frame wears a full-length black robe, with no apparent texturing to the material. The fat sausages which form the shepherd’s fingers are a world away from the *Hostes*’ elegantly shaped outstretched right hand and the left hand, just about visible where it holds a human leg, has a realistic grasp which could hardly be less like the crook, drawn in around the shepherd’s hand with no particular interest in showing how the two are linked. His face is from another school. Gone are the shepherd’s distorted,

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33 James (1929: 55) calls him “[a]n absurd man, with a staff”.
expressive features, replaced by a small, neat face on a clean and upright throat. The animal between them shows a third style. It is one of the "wildeor þa hatton lertices" ("wild animals that are called Lertices"). Coloured a uniform golden yellow (apart from, as noted above, its ears which the colourist assumed to be part of the shepherd’s clothing), with pen markings showing the texture of its wool, the animal feels like a moment from a tapestry; something static and two-dimensional placed into a frame. The attempt at huge talons adds to this sense of flat illustration. Possibly the variations in style could be linked with the variations in quality discussed above, and attributed to different artists: if so, the two hands collaborated on a large number of images.

This composite image comes at the end of a two-page spread, shown in full in Figure 25, which is thoroughly confused in layout. The mistakes, and the rather drastic steps taken to ameliorate them, are further evidence that the image scheme was being freshly created for this copy of the text (cf. McGurk et al. 1983: 96, n.20, 96). As noted above, the clear intention in Wonders is to connect text with the relevant image. This was already difficult by the end of the second page, with a full manuscript line at the end of §4 having to be moved to the first line of 96(98) (BL99)v, intruding in the planned image space as partially shown in Figure 9. However, by the start of the double spread of 98(100) (BL100)v and 99(95) (BL100)r, the alignment of text and image space has fallen apart completely and only comes back into line through some artistic innovation. On the first side, two image spaces illustrate §10 and §11, neatly beside the text for §11 and §12, respectively. The next page contains the rest of §12, the whole of §13 and §14, and the start of §15. Next to §13, which describes the cannibalistic Hostes, is an illustration of a long-haired naked man holding a piece of foliage of some sort (the giant man of Figure 18). This may be an attempt to illustrate §12, given the statement that the people are “monu swa leona heafduino” (‘maned like lions’ heads’); possibly the foliage is a response to the text’s obscure “hy habbað nicelne muð swa fon” (‘they have a great mouth like a fan’): illustrating the fan rather than the mouth. On the other hand, the man has seven lines beneath his prominent breasts, which could be a response to the “sidan mid brestum seofon / fota lange” (‘sides with breasts seven / feet long’) attributed to the Hostes in §13

34 This is one of not many examples that I can find to support Friedman’s (1986: 324) estimation of the illustrations as “like curious statues on display”. The image is actually very similar, apart from the length of ears, to the Lertex in Tiberius, on 82r.
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which is beside the image. It is perhaps possible that the manuscript line break after the number may have inspired the seven lines of “breast”. The same set of line recurs in the long eared *Panotus*, §21, on 101 (BL104)r, so it may just be an archetype for nakedness, possibly showing ribs, available to the draughtsman. Or the image may in fact be a creative attempt to bring in features of both of these alarming giant men.35

As noted above, the *Hostes* is certainly shown in the second picture on the page: a dark figure with a bestial head, holding a human leg to demonstrate its cannibalism.36 Here, it has been integrated into the image for §14, the sheep-like *Lertex*. Perhaps in order to balance the humanoid figure towering over the animal which is after all the subject of the text, the expressive shepherd discussed above, which has no textual basis, is included. It is quite likely that this second, dark-clothed *Hostes* was based on that in an exemplar, because the detail of its blackness is omitted from the Nowell text and so the colourist cannot have worked out how to colour it without an exemplar or a fortunate coincidence. The draughtsmen of the Nowell *Wonders*, in order to rebalance the confused image scheme, seem to have integrated the illustrations for §12 and §13, and those for §13 and §14; then to have recognised the aesthetic imbalance this created in §14 and added an additional figure. That the extra-textual shepherd is drawn from a different archetype than the *Hostes* suggests that it was either from a different exemplar altogether, or from the artist’s mind; either conclusion places it alongside the similarly conceived figures which appear elsewhere in the text as not from the same exemplar as the *Hostes* and related figures. And that such confusion in the alignment of text and image occurs on this double page is interesting. It comes immediately after the large ant-camel image which is, as noted above, the only image in *Wonders* certainly drawn before the text was written, has no analogue in the other versions of the text, and may well be original to Nowell.

35 Compare Tiberius 81v, where the separate images are side by side and very similar. The image has confused most readers; see for instance McGurk et al. (1983: n.20, 96).

36 A human leg is also used to emblematise the cannibalism of the *Donestre*, §20, on 100(96) (BL103)v.
7. Suggestions

Far from “ludicrous” or even “crude”, the images in Wonders are, at worst, interesting and informative. Their modern reception has suffered by comparison with the more polished and colourful versions of the text in Tiberius and Bodley; when considered in isolation, on their own merit, or in comparison with some other significant artistic achievements of the period, there is a great deal to admire even without going as far as Olson or Mittman and Kim in a modern re-envisioning of Anglo-Saxon manuscript art as engaged with instability and uncertainty. There was clearly more than one hand at work on the text, and that matters. It demonstrates the communal nature of the project that made the Nowell Codex, and the investment of time, energy, and resources that it required. The planning of images can reasonably be described as sophisticated, but in some senses in excess of the capacity of the scribe and draughtsmen.

The mistakes the team made in executing the design seem generally to indicate some areas of significance for understanding of the codex as a whole. First, that there is a second artist working with less skill and operating sometimes literally behind the main artist provides an intriguing (though not precise) parallel with the two scribes and is suggestive of a relatively large scriptorium where there were enough resources to produce a secular text in the vernacular with full-colour illustrations and, moreover, to use it to some extent as a training ground; or, perhaps, a secular house which carefully planned and assembled the human and material resources for this project. Second, Scribe A, who writes a relatively new hand with confidence, exhibits a degree of inexperience in shaping his text around the planned image spaces and seems to vary his behaviour based, perhaps, on feedback, which may indicate uncertainty or naïvety. Third, there are some indications that this copy of Wonders was making innovations with its source materials and that these innovations caused the challenges in its production. We are given a strong impression of a piece of work conceived with ambition and executed to the best of its producers’ abilities. In turn, this is suggestive of possible experimentation, an over-ambitious commissioner, or a project designed as a learning experience. The evidence for two artists working together in the Nowell Codex Wonders of the East has implications for our reading of Beowulf.
in its manuscript context, and for future research into the processes of commissioning and producing manuscripts in the Anglo-Saxon period.\textsuperscript{37}

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London, British Library, Harley MS 603
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Oxford, Bodleian Library, Bodley MS 614
New York, Pierpoint Morgan Library MS 869
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Vatican, Biblioteca Apostolica, Reg. lat. MS 12
Appendix: Images and colours used in *Wonders of the East*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Page</th>
<th>Sect</th>
<th>Contents of image</th>
<th>Frame</th>
<th>Colours used</th>
<th>Probable artist</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>95(97)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Single ram standing on rocks looking to right away from text.</td>
<td>Four solid bars, floreate decorations in each corner.</td>
<td>Blue, yellow, black, (parchment)</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>95(97)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Two rams standing on rocks looking left and down to text.</td>
<td>Three solid bars, line across top</td>
<td>Yellow, orange, black, (parchment)</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>96(98)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Two hens, one (cockerel?) with left wing outstretched.</td>
<td>Three black lines, open to text on left.</td>
<td>Yellow, orange, black</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>96(98)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Two-headed eight-legged animal with lolling tongues and wide eyes looking left at text.</td>
<td>Solid bars at top and bottom, open to text at left; right side lost to damage: probably originally three sided.</td>
<td>Yellow, black, (parchment)</td>
<td>A &amp; B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>96(98)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Two-headed patterned snake across page with ‘hiss’ lines towards text.</td>
<td>Unframed.</td>
<td>Red, yellow, blue, black, (parchment)</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>96(98)</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Two animals as if from above, vertical in frame: on left a patterned snake; on right a reptilian creature with horns and a bushy tail.</td>
<td>Four solid bars, decoration to three edges.</td>
<td>Yellow, black, red, blue</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>97(99) (BL.100)r</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Dog-headed man dressed in Anglo-Saxon robes with tights and shoes.</td>
<td>Four solid bars.</td>
<td>Red, blue, brown, yellow, black</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>98(100) (BL.101)r</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Baby camel tied to a tree; man in Anglo-Saxon dress with female camel loaded with gold pieces in a harness on rocks; across a river, large ants around pieces of gold; male camel chained around the neck being bitten by two ants.</td>
<td>Unframed.</td>
<td>Black, red, yellow, light blue, (parchment)</td>
<td>A (and later additions)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>98(100) (BL.101)v</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Two camels facing left towards text on rocks.</td>
<td>Bars at top and bottom; possible bar to right but lost to damage; waving black line as fourth bar separating from text.</td>
<td>Red, yellow, orange, (parchment)</td>
<td>A &amp; B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>98(100) (BL.101)v</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>Man with two faces (one facing left, the other right) holding a horn in right hand and foliate sceptre in left.</td>
<td>Four solid bars.</td>
<td>Light blue, black, orange, yellow, (parchment)</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>99(95) (BL.102)r</td>
<td>?12 (or 13)</td>
<td>Naked man with long hair facing left towards text and holding upside-down foliate sceptre in right hand next to text.</td>
<td>Four solid bars.</td>
<td>Red, yellow, (parchment)</td>
<td>B &amp; A</td>
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<td>Page</td>
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<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>99(95) (BL102)r</td>
<td>13 &amp; 14</td>
<td>Sheep-like <em>Lertex</em> with long ears and talons on feet, facing old shepherd with crook on left of frame; beast-headed figure dressed in black on right of frame holding a leg in left hand and with right hand outstretched.</td>
<td>Three thickly drawn black lines, probable fourth on right lost to damage.</td>
<td>Black, yellow, light blue, (parchment)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>99(95) (BL102)v</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Headless man with moustachioed face in his chest, in Anglo-Saxon dress and leggings standing on rocks.</td>
<td>Four solid bars.</td>
<td>Red, yellow, (parchment)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>99(95) (BL102)v</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>Two striped snakes, entwined, across the width of the page, with bearded chins.</td>
<td>Unframed, though boxed in with a thin line on the right of the page.</td>
<td>Light blue, yellow (parchment)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>99(95) (BL102)v</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>A man’s torso with arms outstretched and a bracelet on each wrist, possibly singing and facing the text, on a dokey’s body, standing on rocks.</td>
<td>Bar on the left side, another half way up on the right and a short one from that into the body. Possibly a bar at the bottom lost to damage.</td>
<td>Black, yellow, orange, red, (parchment)</td>
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<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>100(96) (BL.103)r</td>
<td>Two circles each with hubs, a set of spokes set in a Greek cross, and a thin set of spokes set in an X.</td>
<td>Orange, red, black</td>
<td>A?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>100(96) (BL.103)v</td>
<td>A tree with three trunks rising out of entwined roots with a canopy of leaves and three flowers.</td>
<td>Blue, yellow, orange, red</td>
<td>A</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>100(96) (BL.103)v</td>
<td>On left, a humanoid figure with a reptilian head, naked with exposed phallus, holding a leg; on right, a woman with long hair and dress with flowing skirts apparently held up to expose legs, one foot cut off at the ankle.</td>
<td>Red</td>
<td>B?</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>101 (BL.104)r</td>
<td>A man, possibly naked and drawn in the same style as §11, facing away from the text, with large, trumpet-like ears and holding a small bow or possibly harp, with foliage in the bottom right corner.</td>
<td>Red</td>
<td>B &amp; A</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>101 (BL.104)v</td>
<td>Man in Anglo-Saxon dress with leggings and long hair, top half of face lost to damage.</td>
<td>Red, blue, orange, yellow</td>
<td>A</td>
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<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>An elaborate building with main central tower and two flanking towers, image of a sun on low wall at centre bottom, with head and shoulders of a robed man above it.</td>
<td>Three solid bars, with bottom bar formed of three bars making the building’s foundation.</td>
<td>Red, yellow, orange, blue, (parchment)</td>
<td>A</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>A tree with three trunks rising out of entwined roots, two prongs emerging with buds on the ends, top lost to damage.</td>
<td>No frame visible.</td>
<td>Blue, red, yellow, (parchment)</td>
<td>B</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>A table stretching across the page formed of five large circles, possibly shields, piled together, with three layers of pedestal emerging to the left, with three men sat behind it, heads and shoulders visible, two apparently in conversation.</td>
<td>No frame, though bar across bottom could be partial frame or part of image.</td>
<td>Blue, orange, yellow, red, black, (parchment)</td>
<td>B &amp; A</td>
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<td>Folio</td>
<td>26 or 29</td>
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<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>102 (BL105)v</td>
<td>A woman with long hair and beard, facing away from the text and holding an hourglass shaped club in her left hand; right hand third of the image is separated with a straight line and has a dog-like animal at right angles to the woman and apparently on rocks.</td>
<td>Solid bars, one with decoration, around three sides, open to right away from text.</td>
<td>Orange, brown, (parchment)</td>
<td>B</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>102 (BL105)v</td>
<td>A naked woman, facing away from the text, with long hair and perhaps a tail, with the lower curve of breasts visible beneath her right arm, and left arm holding a sceptre.</td>
<td>Four solid bars, one on right becoming a thin line at the top.</td>
<td>Orange, (parchment)</td>
<td>B</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>103 (BL106)r</td>
<td>A man facing away from the text and sitting on a cushion inside a decorated arch, with left hand (possibly holding something) lost to damage.</td>
<td>Decorated arch within which figure sits forms frame.</td>
<td>Yellow, red, (parchment)</td>
<td>B</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>103 (BL106)r</td>
<td>Two cat like animals baying towards the text.</td>
<td>No frame.</td>
<td>(Parchment)</td>
<td>A &amp; B</td>
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<td>28</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>Image space divided in half by a straight line, with a man in the left side in Anglo-Saxon dress carrying a crook and seemingly waving to the other man, who is mostly lost to damage but what remains looks near identical to the first.</td>
<td>Three solid bars, possibly fourth on right lost to damage.</td>
<td>Orange, yellow, brown, blue, (parchment)</td>
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<td>29</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>Man carrying a woman with long red hair, both clothed, standing on rocks. Both faces lost to damage.</td>
<td>Three solid bars, possibly fourth at top lost to damage.</td>
<td>Red, yellow, (parchment)</td>
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<td>30</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>A tree with four trunks rising out of a bed of earth with a canopy of leaves and two buds.</td>
<td>No frame, but line at bottom.</td>
<td>Red, yellow, blue</td>
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<td>31</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>Man with mask-like face and perhaps a circular hat, holding a foliate sceptre towards text in his right hand, with trailing left hand reaching to small figure, possibly a naked woman.</td>
<td>Four solid bars around main figure.</td>
<td>Orange, (parchment)</td>
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Figure 1. Frontispiece to Liber Vitae, London, British Library, Stowe MS 944, 6r. © The British Library Board, Stowe 944.
Figure 2. Two women of 102 (BL105)v, §26 & 27. © The British Library Board, Cotton Vitellius A. xv.
Figure 3. Sigelwara who ends the text on 103 (BL106)v, §32. © The British Library Board, Cotton Vitellius A. xv.
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Figure 4. Seated man on 103 (BL.106)r, §28 or 29. © The British Library Board, Cotton Vitellius A. xv.

Figure 5. The council on 102 (BL.105)r, §25. © The British Library Board, Cotton Vitellius A. xv.
Figure 6. The three trees 100(96) (BL103)v, §19; 102 (BL105)r, §24; 103 (BL106)v, §31. © The British Library Board, Cotton Vitellius A. xv.

Figure 7. Catini drawn by two different hands on 103 (BL106)r §28. © The British Library Board, Cotton Vitellius A.xv
Figure 8. The two illustrations of generous men on 103 (BL106)r & v, §30. © The British Library Board, Cotton Vitellius A. xv.

Figure 9. The two-headed snake and detail on 96(98) (BL99)v, §5. © The British Library Board, Cotton Vitellius A. xv.
Figure 10. Scribal handover on 172 (BL.175)v.1–5. © The British Library Board, Cotton Vitellius A. xv.

Figure 11. Two camels drawn by different hands on 98(100) (BL.101)v, §10. © The British Library Board, Cotton Vitellius A. xv.
Figure 12. Large illustration of stealing gold from ants with camels and detail of doodles on 98(100) (BL101)r, §9. © The British Library Board, Cotton Vitellius A. xv.
Figure 13. Part of the Middle English gloss on 99(95) (BL102)v.1–7. © The British Library Board, Cotton Vitellius A. xv.
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Figure 14. The two-headed man on 98(100) (BL101)v, §11. © The British Library Board, Cotton Vitellius A. xv.
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Figure 17. Giant with withdrawn frame 99(95) (BL.102)r, §12 or 13. © The British Library Board, Cotton Vitellius A. xv.

Figure 18. Lertex with shepherd and Hostes on 99(95) (BL.102)r, §13 and 14. © The British Library Board, Cotton Vitellius A. xv.
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Figure 19. Opening of *Alexander’s Letter*, 104 (BL 107)r. © The British Library Board, Cotton Vitellius A. xv.
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Figure 22. Regular plan for page layout.
Figure 23. Examples of one face type, shown on 101 (BL.104)v (priest in his temple, §22) and 102 (BL.105)r (third figure in the council, §25). © The British Library Board, Cotton Vitellius A. xv.

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Figure 25. Two page spread, 98(100) (BL101)v – 99 (95) (BL102)r, §10-14. © The British Library Board, Cotton Vitellius A. xv.
Notes
A medicine for the vanity in the head\textsuperscript{1}

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University of Alcalá

Medieval remedy books seem to have a recipe for everything, even for healing vanity. The present study is inspired by one of the medical texts which are preserved in Manuscript Ferguson 147 housed at Glasgow University Library. Among other items, the manuscript contains a wide hitherto unexplored collection of medical recipes. One of the recipes is entitled \textit{Medicyn for þe vanyte in þe bede}. The same recipe has been documented in other medieval compendia, as it is shown in the samples provided. The etymology of the word \textit{vanity} in this medical sense is explored in different languages in an attempt to trace back the meaning it has in the recipe to find out how such sense might have originated, as well as the further development of such meaning in English, as attested in the various sources.

\textbf{Keywords:} medical recipes; medieval medicine; vanity; Ms Ferguson 147

1. Introduction

Medieval remedy books seem to have a recipe for everything, even for healing vanity. The present study is inspired by a collection of medical recipes preserved in Manuscript Ferguson 147, housed at Glasgow University Library (hereafter GUL). GUL Ms Ferguson 147 contains 159 folios on paper and parchment, which are mainly devoted to medical recipes (from ff. 63 to 158). The focus is on the medical recipe collection found in folios 63r–91r. The hitherto unexplored compilation contains mostly medical recipes for different

\textsuperscript{1} This work was made possible through a \textit{Salvador de Madariaga} Mobility Grant for Senior Researchers, awarded by the Spanish Ministry of Education and Culture (Ref. PR2015–00248).

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diseases, but prognostic texts and charms also form part of this miscellany. The structure of the recipes in Ms Ferguson 147 follows the traditional structure of the period: a) the title, b) the ingredients, c) the method of preparation, d) the application and, sometimes, e) an efficacy phrase (Eggins 1994: 40).

The arrangement of the recipes, however, does not follow the traditional *de capite ad pedem* (“from head to toe”) order. The text begins with a recipe for scabs followed by others for a wide variety of medical symptoms and conditions, such as gout, red eyes, worms in your teeth, migraine and vanity in the head, among others.

2. Vanity in the head

The *Vulgate* verse “Vanitas vanitatum omnia vanitas” (Ecclesiastes 1:2;12:8) was rendered in King James Version as “Vanity of vanities; all is vanity”. This sense of futility is the most frequently evoked every time the term is used nowadays. Notwithstanding, the word has undergone a significant semantic shift since it was adopted from Old French in the thirteenth century. In Present-Day English, it is defined by the *Oxford English Dictionary* (hereafter OED) as “[t]he quality of being vain or worthless; the futility or worthlessness of something”. In previous centuries it had another meaning. Our intention is to discuss the etymological origin and development of the word *vanity* in the medical sense in an attempt to trace back the meaning it had in medieval medical recipes to find out how such a meaning might have originated.

The title of the article is taken after one of the shortest recipes, *Medicyn for þe vanyte in þe hede*, which appears on GUL Ms Ferguson 147 (fol. 83r, lines 17–20). After the title, in very few lines the reader learns about the disorder. Following the author’s instructions, the condition should disappear by means of the following:

*Take þe yois of walworte and salt and hony and wax and ensense and boyle hem to geder ouer the fuyre and gree þi hed ther wyp*

While reading this manuscript at the Glasgow University Library, it came to my mind how fascinating a remedy for such a common feature could be.
Likewise, the manuscript could contain other remedies for similar human qualities that have remained incurable despite modern technology and medical knowledge. In fact, other recipes for migraine and other diseases affecting the head are offered in the text.

Thanks to the Middle English Dictionary (hereafter MED), the reader finds out that in medieval times the condition could be either spiritual or physical, inasmuch as the word had different meanings: apart from designating “foolishness, arrogance, pride or madness”, in Medicine it was used to mean “dizziness, light-headedness or simply an occurrence of dizziness”. The MED provides the following quotations for such a meaning:


a1450 (c1410) Lovel. Grail (Corp–C 80) 23.724: Asaied he Anon vpe forto stonde,
For the vanite In his hed that hadde ben longe.


?c1450 Stockh.PRecipes (Stockh 10.90) 51/10: A good oynement for vanyte in þe hed.


From this moment onward, I wondered how the word vanity, coming from a long standing tradition from the Latin term vanitas-atis, could have acquired this medical meaning. The OED only records the prevailing modern meaning of “futility, worthlessness”. Regarding the origin of the lexical unit, it does not provide much information, but claims the French adoption of the word, equivalent to other forms in other Romance languages:

a OF. vanite (F. vanité, = It. vanità, Sp. vanidad, Pg. vaidade), ad. L. vānītāt-, vānītās, f. vānus vain a.

The OED also documents an obsolete sense of “emptiness, lightness; the state of being void or empty; inanity”, and displays some of the quotations attested in the MED. The former also provides a late sixteenth-century instance in Levens’s *Pathway to Health*. My own reading of Levens’s work shows two recipes. The first one corresponds with the one in GUL Ms Ferguson 147: “Take the iuice of a wallwoort, Salt, honie, wax, & Ensense, boyle them together, and therewith annoint the temples” (1596: 6). This must have been a wide spread remedy during the Middle Ages and afterwards, as other sources acknowledge the same recipe for the same purpose. In fact, Alonso-Almeida
Also a good oynement for þe uanite of þe heued. [f. 23r] Tak jus of walwort, salt, hony, wex & encense, ana. Boile hem togedre ouer þe fuyre & þerwith anoynte þe heued & þe temples. He schal be hol by godes grace.

The ingredients are alike in the recipes: wallwort, salt, honey, wax and incense. Even the way of preparing them coincides, as they are meant to be boiled together and then grease the head, although the Ms Hunter 185 recipe specifies the temples must be anointed too and finishes with an efficacy phrase, whereby the patient is to be healed by God’s grace.

Likewise, similar recipes are included in the Middle English Medical Texts compilation:

1. \[Vnguentum bonum pro vanitate capitis.\] take þe jus of walwort, and salt, & hony, & wax, & encense, and buyle hem to gedur ouer þe fuyre, and þer wyþ a noynte þe heued and þe temples.

2. Item a oynement for vanite of þe hed: Tac þe ious [f. 37ra\] of walwrt and salt and hony and wax and recheles and wel hem togedere ouer þe fyr and smer þin hed þerwit. (Second Corpus Compendium, p.163)²

The first recipe in the Middle English Medical Texts is taken from Heinrich (1896: 66), who records this Vnguentum bonum pro vanitate capitis on folio 81r in British Library Manuscript Additional 33996. He collated this text with other medical manuscripts housed in the British Library; namely, Solane 3153, Royal Ms 17 AIII, Royal Ms 19674, Harleian 1600 and Sloane 405. In all these five manuscripts the same recipe for vanity in the head is attested with little variation. Additionally, other medieval manuscripts also record the same recipe for vanitate capitis or vanite of þe hed: Cambridge, Trinity College Ms O.2.13, fol. 120v (Mooney 1995: 88), British Library Ms Sloane 3285, fol. 93 (Loen-

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Marshall 2005: 357), as well as Oxford, Bodleian Library Ashmole 1485, fol. 107v (Eldredge 2007: 96). All the ingredients are shared by the authors: wallwort, salt, honey, wax, and incense, which is not included in the first manuscript.

The second recipe by Levens (1596) is a complete treatment for vanity in the head, to comfort the brain and memory and for a fair face, which finishes with an efficacy phrase confirming that the treatment really works:

For the vanitie of the head, and to wash the head, and to comfort the braine and memory, and for a fayre face. Take lye that is not so strong, and put two Pyls of Dreuges, the Pils of as many Citrons, the blossomes of Camomell, Bay leaues a handfull, of maiden-haire a handfull, of Egrimonie two or three vnces, of barlystraw chopped in paces, a dishful of Fenegrace, a pound of Wine lyes, tow or three dishfulls of broome blossoms, put all these into the iye, and mingle them together, and so wash the head therewith, and put a little Myrre and Cinamom: this is proued.

From the seventeenth century onwards no other recipes could be found for the condition affecting the head. The Coruña Corpus records just one instance of the core meaning of “futility” in Elizabeth Wakefield’s An Introduction to the Natural History and Classification of Insects (1816), corresponding to the Life Sciences section of the Corpus, whereas the comprehensive Early Modern English Medical Texts document several occurrences, but all of them refer to the primary meaning it has nowadays. In this sense, it can be found in Gideon Harvey’s Vanities of Philosophy and Physic (1700).

Other western medical traditions also record this idea of placing the vanity disorder in the head even if it is a spiritual disease. Indeed, Saint Bernardine of Siena refers to “vanitas capitis mulieris est vexillum diaboli”. Although he is referring to the spiritual condition, it is placed in the head. Nonetheless, in GUL Ms Ferguson 147 the recipe is not just aimed at women or, at least, there is no specific indication of this.

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3 I am grateful to Isabel Moskowich for granting access to this part of the Coruña Corpus, which has not been published yet.

4 I am grateful to Bertha Rodríguez Rodilla for suggesting this idea to me. My thanks also to Ana Isabel Martinez Ferreira who let me know vanitas capitis could be related to another disorder known as fumus capitis. This thread was searched by consulting
Regarding the origin of this medical sense, the question to be answered now is whether *vanity* already had this medical meaning in Latin or was developed in the Romance languages, or just in French, or in Middle English. Apart from the MED, no other comprehensive Middle English dictionaries are available. Thus, the second possibility was to look up the word in several etymological French dictionaries, to check whether, apart from the straight meaning, the adjective *vain* or its derivative, *vanite*, recorded the medical sense. The consulted lexicographic works show the following results:

1. Bloch & von Warburg (1968: 662) indicate that in the Middle Ages *vain* also meant "faible, abattu".
2. Dazaut et al. (1969: 780) also record *vain* as "faible, épuisé", which can be rendered as "feeble, exhausted".
3. Rey (1994: 2209), when talking about *vanité*, refers to the fact that it can also be employed in the sense of "faiblesse du corps, défaillance"; that is, weakness, faintness.
4. *Le Trésor de la Langue Française Informatisé* includes no such a meaning, neither under the entry *vain* nor under vanité.
5. In the *Dictionnaire du Moyen Français* the noun *vainete* is recorded as "faiblesse, défaillance" c. 1380 Rem. Ex. d’a. fr., Gloss. lat. fr. (Montp., c. 1380, secordia, vainneté). Likewise, the adjective *vain*, when applied to a person or animal, means "deprived from energy". Hence, the different meanings of a) "faible, épuisé", b) "abattu, sans force morale", and c) "fatigant, épuisant" are attested.

It seems apparent that the meaning was present in Middle French and was imported into Middle English from this language. The fact that similar words exist in Spanish with this meaning made me extend the search to other Romance historical lexicographic works. In Spanish one finds terms like *evanescente*, *desvanecerse* (*desvanecimiento*, *devaneo*), all of them coming from the same Latin root *evanescere*, clearly related to *vain* and *vanitas*. Not every dictionary records this meaning, as happened with the French ones, but indeed some of them did:

1. Meyer-Lübcke (1972: 763) records *desvanecido* as "schwindelig", which means "dizzy, giddy".

several classical medical authors, but clear relationship could not be established with the disease dealt with in this article.
2. Corominas & Pascual (1980: 738) document different derivatives from vano, such as vanearse in Galician “insele a uno la cabeza” or in Spanish devanear “hablar desconcertado o desvariado”, devanecerse “sentir vahido”. All the senses highlight the idea of weakness in the head to the extent that one can either lose consciousness or sanity.

3. Covarrubias (1611/2006: 1511) associates vanidad with being so full of pride as to loose one’s head, a kind of madness, or loss of consciousness (“desvanecimiento, presunción y especie de locura”).

4. Diccionario de Autoridades (1984: 420) goes back to the Latin saying debile caput, vel nutans to illustrate the entry cabeza vana, defined as “la que está debil, ó flaca por enfermedad, ó demasiado trabajo” (“the head that is weak or feeble due to disease or excessive work”).

5. Herrera (1996: 519) states that in medical treatises, desvanecimiento and esvanecimiento are always associated with “headache and faintness”: “La sangría de las dos venas de la postrera parte de la cabeça de cada qual de los costados que llaman colodrillo aprouecha contra el dolor de esvanecimiento de la cabeça e alienación del sentido” (Compendio de la Humana Salud, 1494).

Finally, the consulted Latin etymological dictionaries are witnesses of the primary meaning, “pride, foolishness”. In this sense it is also attested by Ernout & Meillot (1951: 1260), de Vaan’s (2008: 653) and Valpy (1828: 494–495). However, Du Cange’s glossary records this idea of “weakness in the head” or “exhaustment”, illustrated in the following quotation:

Lassitudo, virium defectio, Gall. Abatement. Consuet. Fontanell. MSS:
Nobis autem conceditur post matutinas redire ad lectum, ne somnum quem corpori fragili subtraheremus, resumere per diem lassitudine et Vanitate compelleremur.

This could be translated as “[t]o grow weary of, the defection of the strength, […] However, we are granted to go back to bed after matins, which the body is weak, they should not be deprived of sleep, and resume it by day, and the weariness and vanity had compelled us”.

Other Romance languages, such as Italian, show similar meanings in vanus or its derivatives. Thus, in Italian svanire, senire, and henceforth svenimento means “to lose power”, as shown in Dizionario Etimologico Online. This idea of weakness could have developed from its sense of lacking power. Likewise, the Indo-European dictionaries consulted provide no explanation of the different meanings. By looking up the word vain in the Proto-Indo-European English Dictionary one can learn that Latin vanus derives from Indo-European wonós
or wans meaning “lacking, wanting”, but no further development is provided. Likewise, Roberts & Pastor (1996: 55) document this meaning as well as that of “emptiness”. It follows from here that, just by consulting lexicographic works, it is hard to assert whether the medical meaning was present in classical Latin or was developed in the Middle Ages.

3. Conclusions

Medieval remedy books are of interest to academia, especially if they remain unexplored, as it is the case of the medical collection in Glasgow University Library Manuscript Ferguson 147. The recipes in the manuscript show remedies for a wide variety of medical conditions. One of them is “vanity in the head”. Vanity seems to be a disease that physicians have tried to heal since long ago, as documented in the different medieval receptaria explored. In vain, the present piece of work has tried to unveil the origin of its double meaning, especially this sense referring to the medical disorder. Nonetheless, it is hoped to have made clear the fact that this weakness was already present in Latin and was inherited in the different Romance languages, as attested in the various lexicographic references mentioned above. From Middle French the meaning was exported to Middle English along with the more straight meaning of “emptiness”. The sense of “dizziness, feeling feeble”, especially in the head, has been documented until the late sixteenth century in English, as the recipe collections used have demonstrated. This meaning is still present in other western languages, but it fell out of use in the English language at some imprecise time from the seventeenth century onwards.

References


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Embedded topicalisation in Old English: Does it exist?

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The study of the left periphery of subordinate structures in Old English is not an exhaustively explored field, and it has often been inaccurately described by grammars and manuals of this language. It has been almost unanimously admitted that subordination and topicalisation are mutually exclusive in Old English. Only a few authors admit that topicalisation and subordination can coexist in Old English, and not a single systematic study of this issue has ever been provided. Therefore, the main objective of this paper is to present accurate statistical data about the combinatorial potential and distribution of preverbal arguments in Old English, highlighting the existence of structures that were thought to be forbidden in Old English syntax. Not only pronominal elements were found among those topicalised structures in subordinate sentences, but also syntactically complex and highly informative arguments. Thus, it is demonstrated that topicalisation is possible in Old English subordination.

Keywords: Old English; syntax; topicalisation; subordination; information structure

1. Introduction

The left periphery of subordinate structures in Old English (OE) has often been inaccurately described in grammars and manuals. Thus, it has been generally admitted that subordination and topicalisation are mutually exclusive in OE. In most accounts, topicalisation is simply banned from subordination (Pintzuck 1991: 69), and in the few cases where it is considered acceptable (Allen 1980: 52) no quantitative data are presented.

The main objective of this paper is to provide statistical data about the combinatorial possibilities and distribution of preverbal arguments in OE, focusing especially on topicalised embedded objects, and highlighting the
existence of structures that were thought to be forbidden in OE syntax. A large corpus of prose texts from the OE period has been analysed, and the data have been mapped against linguistically relevant variables, such as type of topic (pronominal or fully nominal), type of subordinate clause, syntactic position of the elements following the topic (with special emphasis on V2-ing), and overall informational load of the elements involved in embedded topicalisation.

2. Embedded topicalisation in other Germanic languages

Before analysing the question of embedded topicalisation in OE, it is necessary to consider the state of the matter in other Germanic languages. In Present-Day English (PDE), topicalisation is possible in main clauses (1b), while it is not acceptable in subordinate ones (1d):

\[(1)\]

\begin{itemize}
  \item a. I don’t drink wine.
  \item b. Wine, I don’t drink.
  \item c. He said that he doesn’t drink wine.
  \item d. *He said that wine he doesn’t drink.
\end{itemize}

According to Haider (2010: 141), word order in modern German is more flexible than in other Germanic OV languages like Dutch. In order to get some insight concerning the possibility of embedded topicalisation in German, an informal survey with native speakers of German was carried out. Informants were asked to answer a grammaticality judgment test about the following three subordinate sentences:

\[(2)\]

\begin{itemize}
  \item a. ..., dass der Arzt[^NOM] den Patienten[^ACC] besuchte. (SOV)
  \item b. ..., dass den Arzt[^ACC] der Patient[^NOM] besuchte. (OSV)
  \item c. ..., dass den Arzt[^ACC] besuchte der Patient[^NOM]. (OVS)
\end{itemize}

As seen in (2a–c) above, informants were asked to judge the grammaticality of a subordinate sentence with canonical SOV order, another one with a topicalised object (OSV order), and a third one with a topicalised object and inversion (OVS order). Results are shown in Table 1.
Table 1. Informal survey with native speakers of German: grammaticality judgement.

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As we can observe, sentence (2a), with canonical SOV order, was considered fully grammatical by the totality of informants. Only four of the informants considered that a subordinate sentence with a topicalised object (2b) was grammatical, while ten judged it to be grammatical but only in certain colloquial contexts. The majority of informants considered it to be ungrammatical. Finally, all the informants found topicalisation and inversion (2c) ungrammatical. Thus, we can conclude that, while object topicalisation in subordination may be acceptable in German, topicalisation with verb inversion is disfavoured in this language.

3. Embedded topicalisation in Old English

It is now necessary to consider if embedded topicalisation in OE is impossible (as in PDE), acceptable only in limited contexts (as in German), or whether it is a phenomenon that could occur naturally. Furthermore, the present section will shortly analyse the implications of the existence of embedded topicalisation for other processes of word order change in the history of English.

3.1. Implications of embedded topicalisation in OE

According to Stockwell & Minkova (1991), subordination and inversion cannot occur at the same time in OE, since the complementiser (COMP) blocks the raising of the verb to Inflection (INFL) position. This is due to the fact that both INFL and COMP occupy the same node, as shown in Figure 1.
According to this theory, VP is a dense and cohesive package, from which nothing can be taken out. After the OV $\rightarrow$ VO reanalysis (c. 1200), this internal operation leaves the verb in the absolute left periphery of the VP, in an adjacent position to the subject which precedes it, providing robust SV input which will serve as the basis for the subsequent reanalysis XV $\rightarrow$ SV in main clauses (accomplished c. 1400) (see Figure 2).

Under this perspective, the OV $\rightarrow$ VO reanalysis which took place in main clauses around 1400 would be motivated by analogy from the structure of subordinate sentences. However, this theory is based on the fact that no
element can be extracted from VP, and it would not work if topicalisation and inversion were possible in OE subordinate structures.

3.2. State of the matter

It has been generally admitted that topicalisation and subordination are mutually exclusive in OE. For instance, Pintzuck (1991: 69) categorically affirms that topicalisation is not possible in subordinate clauses, a view which has been widely accepted. Stockwell & Minkova (1991: 384–385) state that verb fronting and topicalisation rules cannot apply in subordinate clauses in OE, while Kroch & Taylor (1997: 309) consider that “topicalisation has a very weak discourse motivation” in subordinate sentences, and that “underlyingly I-final clauses” are not expected to exhibit V2 order.

Other authors like Haeberli (2001: 213–214) simply acknowledge the need for more work on word order in OE subordinate clauses. Only Cynthia Allen recognises that “topicalisation could also take place within a subordinate clause” (1980: 52), and that “both OSV and OVS order\textsuperscript{1} are found in embedded clauses” (1995: 46). However, she does not provide any kind of quantitative data which illustrate this phenomenon in order to support her claim. This lack of data has been the main motivation for the present study.

4. Data

In order to carry out an accurate collection of data, a selection of texts from the York-Toronto-Helsinki Parsed Corpus of Old English Prose (2003) were analysed using Corpus Search 2. Since style, genre and text-type are very relevant variables for the present study, texts were selected from various and different genres and types. Thus, the selection includes the following texts:

- Narrative/descriptive: The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle (A & E) (Chr. A/E), Orosius (Or.)
- Narrative: Bede (Bed.), Ælfric’s Lives of Saints (Liv.), Ælfric’s Old Testament (O.T.)
- Argumentative: ‘Preface’ Cura Pastoralis (C.P.), Boethius (Bo.)

\textsuperscript{1} That is, both topicalisation and topicalisation with inversion.
The nature of the texts as original OE ones or as Latin translations is also a relevant factor that must be taken in consideration. Namely, while *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* and the preface of the *Cura Pastoralis* are texts written originally in Old English, the rest of the works present in this selection have a Latin source. This could also have been a significant factor in the inclusion of topicalisation in subordinate sentences by the scribes.

First of all, a considerable amount of examples of subordinate sentences with a topicalised object (i.e. OSV order) were found, as illustrated in examples (3a–b):²

(3)  
a. On þæm dagum on Egyptan wæs þæs kyninges þeow Bosirðis þæt ealle þa cuman þe hine gesohton he to blote gedyde. (Or. 1:8.27.9.529)

   b. [...] ðonon gelomp þætte þa seolðan moldan, þær his lichoma gefeol, monige menneomende wæron (Bed. 3:7.178.5.1739)

It is important to note that topicalisation does not only occur with light NP or pronominal objects, but also with heavy NP objects, like the ones illustrated in (3a–b). In those examples, it is possible to find relative clauses within the object (*þe hine gesohton, þær his lichoma gefeol*). Furthermore, in order to demonstrate that not only objects, but also other elements of the sentence could be topicalised in a subordinate clause, topicalised PPs were included in the search. Examples (4a–b) illustrate that what can be called XSV order is also possible in OE subordination.

(4)  
a. Forþan þe on bis dagan ælc riht afeoll. & ælcunriht for Gode & for worulde up aras. (Chr.E 1100.12.3324)

   b. æfter þæm wæs an ger full þæt ofer all Romana rice seo eorþe wæs cwaciende & berstende. (Or. 2:6.50.6.958)

One of the most interesting findings in this study is that not only are there examples of topicalisation in subordinate clauses in the corpus, but it is also

² Italics added to signal the topicalised element.
possible to find topicalisation and inversion in the same subordinate sentence, as illustrated in (5a–b).³

(5)  a. Witodlice Basilius [...] awrat calle ða þenunga þæra halgan mæssan, swa swa hit healðað Grecas. (Liv. 142.546)

    b. Hu Sardanopolus wæs se sıjemesta cyning in Asiria, ond hu biene heswac Arbatus his ealdormon; (Or. 1.12.13)

Again, prepositional phrases were included in the search, and examples (6a–b) show that elements different from the object could also be topicalised in subordinate sentences with inversion.

(6)  a. Geðencāð eac þæt on þisum lytnan þearroce þe we ær ymb spræcon bugiað swiðe manega þeoda & swiðe mislica […] (Bo. 18.42.21.765)

    b. Is ðæt ec sæd þætte in ðere stowe, þer hio ofslegne weran, weolle an welle (Bed. 11.418.19.4207)

5. Statistics

In order to provide accurate data about embedded topicalisation in the selection of OE texts, a statistical analysis of all the occurrences of this phenomenon has been included in this section. Table 2 shows the totality of examples of each of the four word order patterns mentioned in the previous section.

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³ The verb in subordinate sentences with inversion has been underlined.
All the occurrences of embedded topicalisation have been mapped against a series of variables in order to find any patterns and to distinguish the differences between the four word order patterns included in the study. Thus, examples have been categorised attending to whether the topicalised object is a pronoun or a full NP, whether the subject is a full NP or the impersonal ‘man’, and whether the subordinate clause is nominal or adverbal.

Table 3. Statistical data: OSV order.

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Since no examples of embedded topicalisation were found in ‘Preface’ Cura Pastoralis, it has not been included in the tables.
As shown in Table 3, the majority of topicalised objects in subordinate sentences with OSV order are pronouns. It can also be observed that there is a balanced proportion between NP and ‘man’ subjects. Concerning the type of clause, there is an abundance of adverbial clauses. Table 4 shows that, when the topicalised element is a PP, the vast majority of subjects are full NPs, with only two occurrences of the impersonal ‘man’.

Table 4. Statistical data: XSV order.

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It can be observed that the number of occurrences of topicalisation with inversion is not as high as with OSV order. Nevertheless, the fact that they are present in five out of the ten texts analysed shows that it is not an isolated phenomenon. As seen in Table 5, the entirety of topicalised objects in embedded topicalisation with inversion are pronouns, and the totality of subjects are full NPs (there is a complete absence of NP objects or ‘man’ subjects). In this case, the vast majority of clauses are adverbial.
Finally, Table 6 shows that, when the topicalised element in a clause with inversion is a PP, the totality of subjects is NPs. Again, there are no examples of ‘man’ subjects.

Table 5. Statistical data: OVS order.

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Table 6. Statistical data: XVS order.

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6. Conclusions

Analysing the statistical data provided in the previous section, it can be appreciated that there is a tendency towards the topicalisation of pronoun objects in OE (pronouns are usually thematic elements, that is, they refer to previously given information). Furthermore, the data show that topicalisation with inversion always takes place with full (and sometimes complex) NP subjects, which are rhematic elements, representing new information. These two facts are clearly connected with information structural factors, since the motivation to topicalise certain elements or to invert the verb and leave a heavy subject in the right periphery of the sentence may be their thematic or rhematic nature as well as their semantic load. Studying the connection between embedded topicalisation and information structure in Old English, however, is clearly out of the scope of this paper, so more work on this topic is needed. Nevertheless, it has been demonstrated that topicalisation with or without S-V inversion is definitely an available option in OE subordinate sentences, against widespread belief. As suggested in Section 3, the fact that this phenomenon is possible also has some important implications for other associated processes of word-order change in the history of English, such as the change XV \( \rightarrow \) SV. That is clearly a matter for future research.

References


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From Leofgyth to Lioba: Perpetuating a medieval Anglo-Saxon name

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Universidad de Oviedo, University of Georgia

This article explores the history of a rather uncommon Anglo-Germanic first name, a Christian name in the original sense, tracking it back to its medieval roots in eighth century Wessex. Emphasis is made on Leofgyth’s effort fostering the education of women in the then pagan Germany, following the English model, and how this seemed to have been the cause of confrontation with the Church of Rome and its patriarchal concept. Furthermore links are drawn to the present, depicting the name’s imprint on some nowadays’ institutions, predominantly in Germany. Finally, with a truly cross-cultural approach, and touching four continents (Europe, Africa, America, and Asia), reference is made to some of the few people who bear this name (and why) in the twenty-first century.

Keywords: Leofgyth of Wessex; eighth century; education of women; Christianization of Germany; cross-cultural approach

The Benedictine monk and teacher Rudolf, also known as Rudolph or Ralph (died in Fulda in 862), was one of the most distinguished scholars of his time. He is recognized as the first chronicler of the English Benedictine nun who came over as a young woman to take an active role in the Christianization of the then heathen lands of Germany, and who will be the subject of the ensuing pages. In 838 and at the suggestion of his master Rabanus Maurus, Rudolf compiled, from notes of the priest Mego and from oral tradition, a Life of St Leobgyth,¹ who had died a few decades earlier. This was to be part


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of the *Annales Fuldenses*, a worthy supplement to the history of that time, especially since Rudolf was connected, through his superior Rabanus (who was appointed to the Archiepiscopal See in Mainz) to the court of Louis the Pious, who was king of Aquitaine from 781 until his death at Ingelheim am Rhein in 840. Originally started by Einhard, Rudolf continued the *Annales Fuldenses* between 838 and 863 in a similar style. Another authoritative source of information about Leofgyth’s life is the letters exchanged with Boniface, as will be mentioned further on.

Numerous both ancient and contemporary works make reference to Leofgyth as an important figure in the Christianization that went out from the British Isles to the continent in the eighth century. Thus, in *The Beginnings of English Society*, Professor Dorothy Whitelock includes an account of the evangelization that spread from England to the barbarian territories in Europe. The name of Leofgyth comes up several times, first when she refers to a young girl from Wessex who was meant to take the veil and was related to Boniface. Whitelock explains that in the seventh and eighth centuries many double monasteries had spread in England, and this type of foundation, she writes:


4 This article will mention merely some of them, with no claim to representativeness.

5 These double monasteries, such as the great monastery of Winburn (or Wimbourne), built by the West-Saxon kings, were each separated from the other and surrounded with high walls. No monk was allowed to set foot in the enclosure of the nuns, except in their church to say mass; and immediately afterwards he stepped down
was primarily a house for nuns, but had alongside it a house of monks, who saw to the external administration and provided the priests to serve the community of women. The whole was under an abbess, often of royal birth, and many of these double monasteries rose to distinction as places of learning and education. [...] Leofgyth, Boniface’s chief woman helper in his mission to the Germans, was educated first at Minster, then at Wimborne. Her biographer tells us that at the latter place there were separate monasteries for the monks and the nuns, and the segregation seems to have been more complete than it was, as far as our evidence goes, at other places, for even the abbess spoke to the monks only through a window. Boniface and his fellow-missionaries founded similar establishments in the lands which they converted.  

Boniface (in Latin: Bonifatius, born in Wessex in 675) was the name the West Saxon Wynfrith took when setting out from the British Isles as appointed papal legate and archbishop to the Germans in the eighth century. Many English helpers joined him and Willibrord on their mission to convert and educate the pagans, and were named bishops in the newly created sees, and abbots and abbesses at the monasteries founded above all in Thuringia and Hesse, but also in Frisia and Bavaria. Whitelock continues:

Abbots include Wigbert of Fritzlar, Beornred of Echternach, who became archbishop of Sens (died 797), and Wynnebald of Heidenheim, a double monastery like those they were accustomed to at home, in which he was succeeded by his sister Waldburg. Boniface’s chief woman-helper was Leofgyth, abbess of Tauberbischofsheim, mentioned above.  

The role of women in this undertaking was crucial, and some of them followed in the footsteps of their male brethren, as was the case of Waldburga from the altar to leave the church and return to his own cloister. As a rule no nun could ever go out of her own enclosure.

6 Dorothy Whitelock, The Beginnings of English Society (From the Anglo-Saxon Invasion). Pelican books, Harmondsworth (1952, reprint 1962), chapter VIII, “The Church”, p.171. This synthesis of the life and thoughts of the Anglo-Saxons has become a classic and used to be widely read as a textbook.

7 Willibrord (born 658 in Northumberland) founded the Benedictine Monastery in Echternach in 700, where he died in 739. He has since become the patron saint of Luxembourg.

8 Whitelock, The Beginnings, p.178.
who eventually came to run a double monastery, thus being in charge of both religious women and men. Leofgyth is mentioned again in Whitelock’s account of the Anglo-Saxons, when referring to Chronicler Rudolf’s compilation of data on the Saint’s life:

\[\text{Aldhelm’s writings for the nuns of Barking and Rudolf’s Life of St Leofgyth, Boniface’s helper in his missionary work, who was educated at Minster and at Wimborne, show that women, like men, studied the scriptures and their fourfold interpretation, the works of the Fathers, chronography, grammar, and metrics.}\]

Rudolf’s compilation is, indeed, a main source for the entry in Butler’s authoritative mid-eighteenth century work *Lives of the Fathers, Martyrs and other Principal Saints*.\(^9\)

St. Lioba’s namesday is generally celebrated on September 28\(^{th}\),\(^12\) yet in some calendars it appears to be September 22\(^{nd}\), or even September 23\(^{rd}\). On the pages containing the entries of September 28\(^{th}\), the day corresponding to St. Lioba, Abbess, Butler starts out:

This saint was a great model of Christian perfection to the Church, both of England, her native country, and of Germany. She was descended of an illustrious English-Saxon family, and born among the West-Saxons at Winburn[sic], which name signifies fountain of wine.\(^13\)

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\(^9\) As mentioned above, the Benedictine Rudolf, a most distinguished scholar of his time, compiled in 838 the *Life of St Leofgyth*.\(^10\)


\(^11\) Alban Butler’s great work, *The Lives of the Fathers, Martyrs and other Principal Saints (Butler’s Lives)*, the result of thirty years of industry and research, was first published in four volumes in London, 1756–1759. It has passed many (sometimes quite altered) editions and translations. The quotations in this article are from the 1866 revised edition published by James Duffy, 15 Wellington Row, Dublin, and 22 Paternoster Row, London, pp.315–317.

\(^12\) For instance, Manuel Raisch, *Lioba, die Missionarin an Bonifatius’ Seite. Die Notwendigkeit von Frauen in der Missionarbeit*. Nürnberg 2013, p.65, referring to September 28\(^{th}\) “Dies ist ihr Gedenk-und der wahrscheinliche Todestag”. On the other hand, Leinweber names September 23\(^{rd}\) as the day of her death, and September 28\(^{th}\) as the day of her burial in Fulda. Josef Leinweber, *St. Lioba: Leben u. Wirken*, Bistum Fulda, 1980.

\(^13\) If not stated otherwise, the ensuing shorter quotes stem from Butler’s *Lives* vol. IX, pp.315–317.
Indeed, her father Dynne (also: Dimo, Tinne, born around 665; died around 725) was an Anglo-Saxon nobleman, and her mother was called Aebbe (or Ebba, born around 665; died after 630). They belonged to the second generation after the Christianization of the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms that had spread from Ireland. The legend goes that Ebba had been barren for a long time. Before she eventually conceived (at the then – and even today – relatively advanced age of 44), she dreamed of hearing a bell ringing in her belly. This was interpreted by her foster as a sign of her forthcoming pregnancy. Moreover was it taken as God’s behest to promise the child to him. Consequently, when her daughter was born (c. 710), Ebba offered her to the Church “and trained her up in contempt of the world”. The infant had been baptized Truthgeb, or Truthgeba, but came to be called Leofgyth, or Liobgeth(a), then abbreviated to Leoba or Lioba, which means “the dear one” or “the beloved” (by God, and her parents). When a young girl, probably at the age of seven, she was placed in “the great monastery of Winburn in Dorsetshire, under the care of the holy abbess Tetta, a person still more eminent for her extraordinary prudence and sanctity, than for being sister to a king”. Rudolf refers that once the girl was sent to the monastery, the foster who had predicted her birth, and who seems to have been a serf or bond servant, was granted her freedom. Lioba is reported to have made “great progress in virtue”, she understood Latin and loved reading. However, “she read no books but such as were proper to nourish piety and devotion in her soul”. In the monastery Lioba received a comprehensive education in all seven liberal arts and underwent a thorough literary and theological training, including in ecclesiastical law. She is described as intelligent, good-tempered, charitable, modest, and patient. Soon she took the religious veil and was devoted to teaching, first in monasteries of Wessex and Kent (including Minster-in-Thanet). These monasteries supported the missionary work of St. Boniface.

St. Boniface, a relative (possibly a cousin) of Lioba’s mother, Ebba, had kept up an epistolary correspondence with the novice and later young nun, and appreciated her abilities. So he requested the abbess to give leave to Lioba, Thecla, Waldburgha, and others from their quiet abbey in Wimborne to join him in the heathen wilds, “in order to settle some sanctuaries and nurseries of religion for persons of their sex in the infant church of Germany”. Tetta could

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14 This is the reason why in the imagery Leofgyth is sometimes depicted with a bell.
not oppose the urgent demand, though she “regretted the loss of so great a treasure”. In Germany, Lioba and her “little colony” of thirty companions were settled by St. Boniface near Mainz, in the monastery of Bischofsheim (i.e. Bishop’s House). Butler proceeds:

By the prudence and zeal of our saint, this nunnery became in a short time very numerous, and out of it she peopled many other houses which she founded in Germany. She never commanded others anything which she had not first practised herself. Her countenance appeared always angelically cheerful and modesty breathing a heavenly devotion and love. Her time was spent in prayer, and in holy reading and meditation. She knew by heart the divine precepts of the Old and New Testaments, the principal canons of the church, the holy maxims of the Fathers, and the rules of the monastic life and perfection. By humility, she placed herself beneath all others, and esteemed herself as the last of her community and washed often the feet of the sisters. The exercise of hospitality and charity to the poor was her delight.  

Butler’s account is patched with idealizing terms seeking to enhance Lioba’s halo as a saint, yet the underlying facts are historically contrasted. Later, so the chronicles go, Lioba became abbess of Tauberbischofsheim in Franconia, serving for twenty-eight years, and actively contributed to the education of girls of the upper class in the neighborhood. Thereby she followed the model known in the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms, which proved to be an effective way to connect with these families while fostering the Christianization of the local elite. Some of her disciples in turn became teachers and would thus carry on the torch of learning. It is especially noteworthy how, by applying the educational model known from her motherland, Lioba contributed to the empowerment of women. However, this model was soon to be undermined by the patriarchic model imposed by the increasingly powerful Church of Rome. Meanwhile, Lioba was “respected and honoured” by kings and princes, “especially Pepin king of the Franks, and his two sons, Charles or Charlemagne and Carloman”. When Charlemagne reigned alone after the death of his brother, he “often sent for her to his court at Aix-la-Chapelle, and treated her with the highest veneration. His queen Hildegardis loved her as her own soul, and took her advice in her most weighty concerns”. The queen, indeed, wished to have the abbess as often as possible at court, to

“enjoy the edification and comfort of her example and instructions”, so refers Butler. Yet Lioba seems to have preferred the retreat of her monastery and always made haste to return to it. Bishops are reported to have had conferences with her, “and listened to her counsels”.

Before Boniface went on his mission into Friesland (where he suffered martyrdom in 754), he placed Lioba at the head the mission, and beseeched bishop Lullus of Mainz to grant her special protection. Furthermore he declared his desire, “as by his last will, that after her death she should be buried by his bones, that both their bodies might wait the resurrection and be raised together in glory to meet the Lord, and be for ever united in the kingdom of his love”. Boniface’s wish, however, was not fulfilled. Upon Lioba’s death about the year 779\(^1\) in Schornsheim, to where she had retired, apparently following the advice of Lullus, the monks are said to have feared to disturb the relics of St. Boniface. At least this is Rudolf’s official version. So she was interred at Fulda, on the north side of the high altar.\(^2\) Historians have read between the lines that there was more to it than just a breach of Boniface’s last will. As a matter of fact, after the latter’s death a fight started between the bishop Lullus and the first abbot of the monastery of Fulda, Sturmius regarding the question of authority. It was eventually won by the bishop. The sources do not clearly disclose where Lioba stood in this dispute. Yet with her status as Boniface’s protégée she seemed to have been caught in the crossfire between Lullus and Sturmius. The fact that she did not spend her last years in one of the monasteries founded by her but in a retreat organized ad hoc in Schornsheim, southeast of Mainz, where she eventually died, point at the possibility that her role and her mission was to be mitigated by the expanding authority of the representatives of the Church of Rome. As mentioned above, it is most likely that her stance in favor of women actively participating in ecclesiastical and educational issues was being questioned by the increasingly male dominated concept dictated from Rome, and thus she could have become a political nuisance factor. Furthermore the disputes over the destination of her remains and the successive removal of them to three different sites seem to shed light on how the Church struggled with this truly emancipated female figure, ahead of her time.

\(^1\) Some sources declare she died in 781 or 782.  
\(^2\) After being removed twice, (part of) her remains now rest behind an altar in a church dedicated to Mary and the virgins of Christ in Petersburg in Fulda.
Butler concludes his account of this saint’s life: “Her tomb was honoured with miracles; her historian assures us he was himself an eyewitness of several”. “Her historian”, Rudolf, indeed refers to several legends reported and miracles believed to have been performed by the saint, both before and after her death. Among those during her lifetime are: her dream of a red woolen thread emerging from her mouth, of such length that it could be wound onto a reel. A senior nun interpreted this dream as the red thread representing God’s love that should be passed on to others. Lioba is also said to have saved the monastery and part of the town of Tauberbischofsheim from a fire deploying salts consecrated by Boniface; to have appeased a thunderstorm; and to have healed a mortally ill nun. Rudolf furthermore reports events of the saint’s actions after her death, such as the story of an iron ring which oppressed a man’s arm and unlocked while he was praying at the tomb of the saint; and, around the year 836, of a Spaniard with a nervous disease (probably Parkinson) who was cured of his tremors while praying at the saint’s tomb.  

The closeness between Leofgyth and Boniface, also accredited by touching letters, has given rise to conjectures that there might have been more to it than just a special affection between them; if not an open affair, at least some kind of platonic attraction. That speculation continues to offer food for debate (though it will not be taken up in this article), and has got as far as Korea, with scholar I Deug-Su inquiring: “Lioba – dilecta Bonifatii. A love story in the 8th century?”.  

Altogether there are numerous works dealing with aspects of the life of this outstanding forerunner not only in the Christianization but also and significantly in the education of young women.

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19 Rudolfus magister Fuldensis, *Vita Leobae*, chs. 8, 13, 14, 15, 22 and 23.
Nowadays Leofgyth, or Lioba, is remembered above all as a pioneer in the Christianization of Germany, and more specifically for her active role in the creation of nunneries and therefore the education of women. In times of patriarchic dominance, it is astounding how some women not only stood their ground but actively engaged in the organization of the incipient Church, and sometimes, as in the case of Leofgyth, became helms in its structure.

In Schornsheim, where she died, a statue that represents Lioba can be admired in a town square. The authorities of Tauberbischofsheim declared Lioba the patron saint of the town during an official ceremony in 2005, and every year the last Saturday of September is celebrated as an official holiday in the town. This decision was not received without controversy since the Lutheran church rejects the veneration of saints. A widely supported argument by the locals advocated that Lioba’s prayers had saved the town towards the end of World War II, while the nearby town of Königshofen was almost completely destroyed.

In the German village of Bad Nauheim, close to Mainz, there is a secondary school with the name of the saint: St. Lioba-Schule, and a primary school carries her name in the Westphalian town of Warstein. In the Bavarian city of Nürnberg we come across a St. Lioba Church, with a Catholic kindergarten attached to it, and in the Black-Forest capital Freiburg we can find a St. Lioba monastery. Even a mineral fountain in the South of Germany bears the saint’s name, under which water and other soft drinks are commercialized. Across the world there are several religious communities, such as in France, the Frères et Soeurs bénédictins de Ste Lioba in Simiane-Collongue. A detailed browsing of the internet may yield many more curious results. Yet little or nothing can be made out in her home country, England, where monasteries, convents, and Roman Christian communities (such as priories and friaries) had been suppressed in the dissolution processes between 1536 and 1541 under Henry VIII, after he separated England from the Papal authority.


22 http://www.lioba.de/
23 http://www.lioba-schule.com/
24 http://www.stadtkirche-nuernberg.de/pfarrgemeinden/st_lioba.html
25 http://www.kloster-st-lioba.de
26 http://www.mineralbrunnen.bad-liebenzell.de/produkte/lioba.html
Regarding the name of Lioba as such, a dwindling number of women have borne or are bearing it. Even in Germany it is not only extremely uncommon, but also widely unknown.

Now let me continue striking a more personal key. As I am writing this note, I am hosted by the Department of Comparative Literature of the University of Georgia, in the Franklin College of Arts and Sciences, in Athens, some seventy miles from Atlanta, capital of Georgia, USA. The head of Department is Prof. Dr. Lioba Moshi. Three years ago, when first visiting this University as a guest of the English Department, I spotted her name on the list of Faculty and was curious to find out how she came by it, especially since I spotted a picture of her: she is ebony black. When we eventually met, she told me that she was born in Tanzania and her first language was Swahili. At first I thought, what a coincidence, a local or tribal African name which happens to be spelled and pronounced [li:ɔba] the same way as my own. Yet she explained to me that this was related to the role of the German Catholic missionaries who had worked in the district of Moshi, the home of her family (whence she derives her surname), while it formed part of the German empire (and was called Deutsch-Ostafrika). As a matter of fact, her ancestors were in touch with them, albeit not volunteers, since the religious men were considered part of a foreign power. It was only later, in the generation of her father, that the experience with the missionaries bore its fruits. When I beseeched her to provide me with some further details for this article, she sent me an email with this interesting account:

How I got my name
I am a third born preceded by two brothers. We come from a catholic family which means our names are taken from a book of saints.

My father was an only son to my grandmother. He also had one sister. My grandmother was the youngest of four wives to my grandfather. By the time my grandmother got married to my grandfather, he had an average of six children by each of his other three wives. As such, he told my grandmother upfront that he did not want many more children. To secure a place in my grandfather’s extended family and to be able to claim property if my grandfather died before her, she needed a son. She was blessed with a son as her first born. My grandfather allowed

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28 As of the late 1870s, Germany participated in the process of colonization, a fact that caused animosity with the other colonial powers such as Great Britain and France, and decidedly contributed to the outbreak of World War I and the Reich’s loss of all its colonies (mainly Namibia, Tanzania and Togo).
her to have a second child and this was my aunt. My grandfather was now contented and declared to my grandmother that she was secure because she had a son to claim inheritance on her behalf and a daughter to help her around the house. The culture does not allocate inheritance to females in the family. That is how my father ended up in a household of predominantly females which I am sure made him very protective of my grandmother and my aunt and later my sister and I, the only girls among nine brothers.

Through my grandmother’s efforts, my father went to school. This [special effort of the grandmother] was because my grandfather did not want to have anything to do with the missionaries to the extent that he refused to be baptized up until when he was on his death bed. Being a descendant of the chief’s clan, my grandfather felt that the foreigners were stripping the chiefdoms the power they customarily have on their subjects. He also felt that their intentions were to acquire their property and services illegally.

From his primary school 5th grade class, my father was picked with several other students to go to a teacher training college. The missionaries wanted to phase out the use of foreigners teaching at the primary school level (grades 1–4) and use locally trained teachers. There were two major reasons for this, one the language of instruction was Kiswahili, the national language, and two, they wanted the curriculum to include the understanding of local cultures. With my father going to school under the missionaries, he got baptized and made sure that his mother and sister were baptized too.

The knowledge and experience with the missionaries must have influenced my father in a big way, so much that when he got married and had children he became keen on finding unique names that no child in the village had. As such, all of my siblings and I were the first in the village to bear these unique names. The other thing that my father did was that he had criteria for choosing certain names. In the culture, parents choose names for their children based on the events of the day the child is born, after a major or unforgettable incident or after someone they admire. My father, who was known to be an independent thinker, had his own ideas about his children’s names. He used the book of saints and named his children with the rarest name closest to the birth date or some sort of pairing system. For example, my oldest brother was born in September and so my father picked the closest rare name after his birth, Wenceslaus. The second child, also a boy born in September, two years later, was named Ladislau. Both these names were European and the lives of these individuals influenced my father’s choice.

When I came along, my father named me Lioba. I can only think of two reasons. It was a rare name in the village and my father liked the biographic sketch of saint Lioba. The second factor was that I was born July 30th and there was no unique name in that month. Because I was the first born girl he paired me up with my oldest brother, the first born male. We share the same feast day as our namesakes,
September 28th. I am sure if he had known beforehand that he would have a girl, he would have named my brother Boniface because of the relationship Lioba had with Boniface. However, knowing how my father’s mind worked and his affinity to the women in his life, he gave me the name in the hope that I would grow up to be just like my namesake. I think when I look at my life at this age and how I have tried to live my life; there are a few characteristics that are inscribed in the story of St. Lioba.

Needless to say, the name Lioba is still very rare in Tanzania and I only know of two, all from the same village I grew up in.

Having known Prof. Moshi for some time, it becomes evident that bearing the name of St. Lioba has had a seminal influence on her life, as she herself admits. Not only is she a scholarly character, she has also crossed the sea (first from Tanzania to the UK, then to the United States of America where she has culminated her academic career), and devoted her life to teaching. Moreover is she a person with deep religious convictions, and has been caring for her large community, with a special focus on empowering women. For some time now, and with a view to her forthcoming retirement, she has been fostering an orphanage in Northern Tanzania, to which she plans to devote the remainder of her life. Thus the sentence quoted above from Butler’s Lives referring to St. Lioba: “The exercise of hospitality and charity to the poor was her delight” likewise matches Prof. Moshi.

Another Lioba I met personally is the German opera singer Lioba Braun, who specializes in Wagner female roles. It was some ten years ago in Madrid, after the Schubert Mass No. 5 Concerto the mezzosoprano had sung in, that I knocked on the door of her dressing room to congratulate her on her performance and ask her how she came by her name. She was overjoyed to meet somebody sharing it, and gave me a big hug. Her first question was “Did you also experience so many difficulties as a child?” She admitted to having had her leg pulled more than once on account of that strange name. Yet in her professional career that unusual name, paired with a more common surname, has certainly contributed to her being more easily distinguished, she said.

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29 Quoted from an email by Prof. Dr. Moshi, 16/07/2015.
30 http://www.upendo-okat.com/
31 http://www.lioba-braun.de/
32 In my childhood teachers were generally surprised at the name, yet would quickly learn it and not forget it, while it would take them longer to remember the more ‘normal’ names of my classmates.
When I was about to leave Lioba Braun’s dressing room, she stopped me, “wait a second!” and handed me over the spectacular bouquet of dozens of pink roses she had been presented together with the audience’s applause on the stage. I dried it and have since then kept it in a place of honor.

Further resonances of that name may come when hearing of king Favila\(^{33}\) of Asturias in the Northwest of Spain, who is reported to have died at the hands (or rather paws) of a bear when hunting in the year 739. He had been married to a lady called Froliuba\(^{34}\).

Altogether, the name bears a touch of exceptionality. Recently I learned that a younger member of the Habsburg family bears it. According to a web page that features statistics on names, MyNameStats\(^{35}\), in the United States there are only 110 people named Lioba, and the national rank of that name is 43,092. Seventy-three percent of them are reported to be white, sixteen percent of Hispanic origin, and nine percent black. The state with the most people named Lioba is Texas (where seventeen people bear it). The website offers a breakdown by states and interesting complementary data.

Yet the probably most surprising – to me at least – bearer of that name is a male: Lioba Aragón. I met him personally some years ago in Spain, and we were both not a little astounded when we introduced ourselves. It turned out that he had never heard of the saint. So when I explained it to him, he fell out a-laughing. No wonder: he had been given his name for radically different reasons. His father was an admirer of Leon Trotzky, born Lev Davidovich Bronshtein. In Russian it is written Ён, pronounced [ˈɤnt], and its diminutive (on which M. Aragón’s father had grounded his choice) is Ёна (pronounced [ˈɤnə]).\(^{36}\)

\(^{33}\) Favila was the only son of the Visigothic King Pelagius (Pelayo), whose victory in the Battle of Covadonga around 722 marked the beginning of the *Reconquista* – the Christian recovery of the Iberian Peninsula from the Moors.

\(^{34}\) I have not been able to find references to her background. That her name could be a compound of “Fro” (from Old-German “Frouwe”, now “Frau”, i.e., Mrs.) and “Lioba” is merely a personal conjecture. At that time the saint was a young woman in her late twenties, and though already abbess, it is not clear how widely known she was beyond her monastery.

\(^{35}\) http://www.mynamestats.com/First-Names/L/LI/LIOBA/index.html

\(^{36}\) Not really with a bilabial [b], but a labio-dental [v]; therefore it should have been written *Lieva* (I consulted a Russian speaking Estonian student in one of my classes about this).
When I was in Cuba some years ago, people seemed to be acquainted with
the name and often addressed me without hesitating as Lyuba. I found out
that this was due to the Cuban-Soviet friendship, and the existence of a
similar Russian name, Lyubov (Любовь), pronounced: [lj-oo-ВОХF’].
Further research disclosed that this means: love, affection, passion. So, the
Slavic and Anglo-Saxon words share the very same root and meaning. In
traditional Russia it seemed to be a popular custom to bestow on daughters of
the same family the three consecutive names, Vera (Truth, or Faith), Nadesha
(Hope), and Liubov (Love, Charity, Christianity), with clear Biblical
resonances (Corinthians 13:13). The existence of literature and even a – not
very highly rated – war movie produced in times of the Soviet Union by
Vladimir Grammatikov as late as 1984 with the title: "Vera, Nadezhda,
Lyubov", give proof of that popularity.  
To conclude, I may add that some years ago I won a prize (a train ticket for
two persons to whatever destination I chose in Spain38), when responding to a
call issued in a Spanish radio program on a September 28th, along the lines:
“Today is the feast of St. Lioba. Is there anybody out there who bears such a
name?”
Yes there is, indeed.

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37 "Вера, Надежда, Любовь" on Memocast.com, e.g.
www.youtube.com/watch?v=89_SEaZT_yo
38 So I travelled with my daughter, whom I have NOT given that name (they asked
me about it), to Cádiz.
An interview with Tom Shippey

Alexandra Guglieri
University of Granada

Tom Shippey was born in Calcutta in 1943. His father was an engineer and bridge-builder, his mother (also born in Calcutta) was the daughter of the Harbourmaster. Both stayed on for some years after Indian independence in 1947, and Tom was sent to boarding school in Scotland at the age of seven. He often remarks that it was a proper boarding school, not like Hogwarts, where the children go home for holidays! Inmates of his school, with parents abroad and as yet little air travel, were there 365 days a year and saw their parents at three-year intervals.

His parents did however eventually return to Britain and in 1954 Tom won a scholarship to King Edward’s School, Birmingham, where Tolkien had been a pupil fifty years before. He went on to Cambridge in 1961, and in 1965, with only a BA in English, became Assistant Lecturer, coincidentally, at Birmingham University opposite his old school – which meant that for seven years he could play rugby for the Old Edwardians club. His first book came out in 1972 with the title *Old English Verse*, and on the strength of this he gained a Fellowship at St John’s College, Oxford, a major and unexpected promotion. Other publications on Old English led to appointment in 1979 as Chair of English Language and Medieval English Literature at the University of Leeds – the Chair Tolkien had held, again some fifty years before.

Up till then, his publications had almost all been in orthodox areas of medieval studies – there is a very long list of his publications at http://www.slu.edu/english-department/faculty/thomas-shippey-phd – but meeting Tolkien in Oxford before Tolkien’s death in 1973 had given Tom a strong sense of fellow-feeling with another Anglo-Saxonist, Old Edwardian, and rugby player, and he decided to write a book about Tolkien’s fiction (to use Tolkien’s own phrase from the *Sir Gauain* edition) “of the sort which its author may be supposed to have desired”. This came out in 1982 as *The Road*.
to Middle-earth, which has since appeared in successive expanded editions up to 2005. The burden of this was that Tolkien could and should be seen diachronically, as inspired by the discoveries of the Grimmian discipline of comparative philology – Jacob Grimm being, so to speak, the nineteenth-century Darwin of the humanities. Some years later Tom reflected further that Tolkien could also be seen synchronically, in the context of his own time, though it was a very different context from that normally noticed by literary critics (sc. “modernism”). This insight appeared first at a conference and then in a volume organised by SELIM-attendee Keith Battrbee, and led to the provocatively-titled *J.R.R. Tolkien: Author of the Century* (2001). In 2007 *Walking Tree Press* brought out a collection of Tom’s papers on Tolkien, titled *Roots and Branches*.

In 1993, meanwhile, and after Visiting Professorships at Harvard and the University of Texas, Tom had taken up the Walter J. Ong Chair of Humanities at Saint Louis University, where he remained till his retirement in 2008. During this period he continued to publish in the areas both of medieval studies and of modern fantasy, but he began to take an interest as well in the then-neglected topic of “medievalism”, that is to say the way the Middle Ages have been viewed and exploited in the modern world. He edited several volumes of *Studies in Medievalism*, as well as the 2005 collection *The Shadow-walkers: Jacob Grimm’s Mythology of the Monstrous*. Another very time-consuming task was the survey of early reactions to *Beowulf* (most of them written in German or Scandinavian languages) begun with Professor Andreas Haarder of Odense University, but devolving on Tom after Professor Haarder suffered an untimely and serious stroke. This appeared eventually as *The Critical Heritage: Beowulf* (1998), a work which has kept many scholarly opinions alive – even though most of them had been amusingly dismissed by Tolkien in his influential lecture of 1936.

Tom had, however, had a secret passion ever since 1958 (secret in the sense that it had had to be concealed from academic circles, in which it was regarded as sub-literary). This was for science fiction. He attended and spoke at science-fiction fan conventions, became a judge of the John Campbell Award for Year’s Best Novel almost from the award’s inception in 1974, and collaborated with the famous author Harry Harrison on two “alternate history” trilogies (*West of Eden* and *The Hammer and the Cross*) in the 1980s and 1990s. Fifteen of his occasional essays have now been collected and published in 2016 by Liverpool University Press as *Hard Reading: Learning from Science Fiction*. 
Meanwhile, in alleged retirement, Tom keeps all his interests alive. Listing them chiastically, he is currently the regular reviewer of science fiction and fantasy for The Wall Street Journal. His interest in medievalism, especially as it affects the creation of national identities, shows in his connections with the SPIN and ERNiE projects of Professor Joep Leerssen of Amsterdam (Study Program in Interlocking Nationalisms and Encyclopedia of Romantic Nationalism in Europe): he is a frequent speaker in Europe on such topics. On Old English, he contributed to the 2014 volume of The Dating of Beowulf, edited by Leonard Neidorf, and is co-editor, with Neidorf and Rafael J. Pascual of Granada, of Old English Philology: Studies in Honour of R.D. Faulk. He, Leonard, and Rafael have other projects in mind, all part of what Tom labelled at the SELIM conference in Granada 2015 as La Reconquista de la Filología, a goal of which Tolkien would heartily have approved.

Finally, completed or half-completed, but not as yet placed with publishers, are a book on Old Norse, which may in the end be titled The Road to Valhalla: Death and the Vikings, and another which builds on published articles and applies pragmatic linguistics to early poetry in several languages, How the Heroes Talk.

If there is a consistent element in these many activities, it is a conviction that, in the English-speaking academic world, critics have been neglecting, ignoring, or misprising vital developments, both intellectual (comparative philology and medievalism) and popular (the rise of fantasy and science fiction as literary genres). Attention has been disproportionately focused on classical canons – such as “the Great Tradition” of F.R. Leavis, which ruled Cambridge in Tom’s youth, and the now-outdated notion of “modernism” – and in the last forty years on the philosophical notions of “literary theory” which have driven many British and American students out of the humanities altogether.

Tom knows he is a Neinsager, who finds it easy to disagree with established opinion. Some would say – in line with the current veneration for those who claim victim status – that this may be connected with old feelings of being an “outsider.” Tom, however, characteristically thinks he is an “insider” and it is the administrators of established literary opinion who are culturally marginal.

This is, of course, a minority opinion. At the moment. But time will tell.

The following interview was conducted via e-mail by Alexandra Guglieri, of the Universidad de Granada, during October 2015.
1. Your association with SELIM goes back quite a few years, and you've delivered the keynote address at two different conferences. How would you describe your connection to SELIM? What do you enjoy most about presenting your work at SELIM?

For the whole fifty years of my professional career (1965–2015, so far), departments of English studies in Britain and America have set their faces against any form of serious language study. Students graduating with degrees in 'English Language and Literature' usually know nothing about the structure of their own language, and have a diminishingly small awareness of its history.¹ The discipline has been controlled by the literary critics, many of whom were and are what Tolkien, in his Oxford "Valedictory Address", called "misologists". I spent many of my fifty years, accordingly, fighting what one of Tolkien's characters called "the long defeat" – trying to keep some part of the old philological discipline on the syllabus of successive universities.

I had some success at Leeds in the 1980s (though that success has now been reversed), and it was at this time that I came into contact with Patricia Shaw, a Leeds graduate and one of the founders of SELIM. Briefly, SELIM has always been a great relief to me because none of what I said in the paragraph above applies to it. Just a few days ago, a young American working for a PhD in philology at Oxford said to me, looking at the 2015 SELIM programme, "[t]here are more philological papers offered at SELIM [which had seventy delegates] than at the whole of Kalamazoo [the annual International medieval Congress, which has more than 4000 attendees]". That's correct. SELIM never turned its face away from philology, and has continued to develop philological methods and results.

And in addition, its conferences have always been exceptionally genial, hospitable, and culturally valuable. I remember exploring Moorish hydraulics at Córdoba, marvelling at the clock collection in Coruña (clocks are one of the great medieval inventions), visiting Cervantes' house at Alcalá de Henares (one of only two pre-modern houses which I could see myself living in), and going to the flamenco in Granada: always accompanied by old friends and new ones.

¹ To illustrate this, I have put a couple of my recent reviews – of books by a Mr Ritche and a Professor Watts – under my name on the website academia.edu. In different ways, they show what a situation English departments have reached.
2. How has the state of Old English scholarship changed since you delivered your first keynote address at SELIM?

My answer here goes on from the one above. In 1991 I gave a kind of “Recessional” speech at the Modern Language Association in San Francisco,\(^2\) warning that the often self-congratulatory attitude of, for instance, the International Society of Anglo-Saxonists disguised disciplinary weaknesses, especially as regards student enrolments (true of course, in America, of the humanities generally).

But perhaps, without my recognizing it, the tide had already turned. As I now argue in my contribution to *Old English Philology* (see below), the high-point of “misology” may have been the 1980 Toronto conference on *The Dating of Beowulf*, which argued in effect that linguistic tests of date were valueless; that no chronology of Old English poetry could be recovered; that literary history was accordingly impossible; and that literary speculation could continue unchecked. Yet this act of hubris perhaps produced its own nemesis, in the form of severe criticism by onebold junior scholar, Robert D. Fulk, and a growing chorus of dissent from those outside departments of English, including historians like Patrick Wormald and scholars of Norse and German like Theodore Andersson.

Those dissentient voices were orchestrated by another then-junior scholar, Leonard Neidorf, at that time a post-graduate student at Harvard, into a further conference on dating, held in 2011, with a follow-up volume of essays edited by Neidorf in 2014. Neidorf has since attended SELIM, and published with SELIM, for, as he points out, editors in US journals are still reluctant to publish material too fiercely critical of what has become the comfortable post-1980 consensus – which also explains why the 2014 volume, based on a US conference, had to find a courageous publisher in the UK! Neidorf has furthermore been joined and supported in their metrical studies by Rafael J. Pascual, of the University of Granada, another SELIM member, a pairing which may prove to be a further turning-point in the history of medieval linguistic and literary studies.

Indeed, at the SELIM conference in Granada, I suggested that the Neidorf-Pascual conjunction might well be the start of *La Reconquista de la*...

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\(^2\) “Recessional” is a poem by Rudyard Kipling, written in 1897 (Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee) warning of the future decline of the British Empire. I have put the MLA lecture on academia.edu as well.
Filología. One “Reconquista” culminated in Granada, so it would be fitting for another “Reconquista” to begin there. In which case SELIM will have played an important role, which I am sure my old friend Patricia Shaw would be delighted to see.

3. You collaborated with Leonard Neidorf and Rafael J. Pascual in The Dating of Beowulf: A Reassessment, and you’re now editing with them Old English Philology: Studies in Honour of R.D. Fulk. What impact do you think these books will have?

I hope that the most immediate response to the Dating volume will be to undo the damage caused by the 1981 volume on Dating, and its spin-offs. This damage has been considerable. I’ve remarked elsewhere (see my short article on Jacob Grimm online at academia.edu) that there is a clear parallel between the theory of evolution and the development of comparative philology, two of the great intellectual achievements of the nineteenth century. In both cases one man, Charles Darwin or Jacob Grimm, was the instigator, but in both cases someone else would have got there if they hadn’t: Alfred Wallace or Rasmus Rask. Both Grimm and Darwin addressed very evident questions – what made animals different, what made languages different – and ignored the old mythical explanations (Noah’s Ark and the Tower of Babel). Both men were followed by whole armies of investigators, who developed, extended and corroborated their ideas until they became rationally unchallengeable.

Here the parallels diverge. While the claim that Darwinism is “only a theory” is now confined only to Creationists, and is no longer intellectually respectable, rejecting the evidence of philology has (especially since 1981) become normal rather than exceptional in British and American universities. You might say it’s not even rejected by argument, just neglected, assumed to be irrelevant. Well, we hope – and the reviews indicate that this is already happening – that the Neidorf volume on Dating will make people think again. The range and strength of its arguments for an early date for Beowulf – not a late date, not an indeterminable date – should convince anyone who is not, like Creationists, ideologically committed. In many areas proof is not attainable. But (as Robert Fulk has often said) probability may reach such a level as to make denial irrational: especially where “a theory” explains elegantly and economically prodigious amounts of accumulated data.
Robert Fulk was of course the keynote speaker for the conference which generated Neidorf’s *Dating*, and the festschrift which he and I and Rafael have put together will not only bear tribute to his initially lonely efforts to keep philology within scholarly awareness, but also remind people of the range and strength of his contributions. Remembering my parallel above, I might say that Robert Fulk has been to Grimm as Richard Dawkins to Darwin. It’s not by any means a perfect comparison, as Fulk is quite without Dawkins’s aggression and intolerance. But Fulk has been “the critic of the century”, or shall we say of his half-century career, and *Old English Philology* will help people to see that.

Besides all that, we hope (and I confidently expect) that the two volumes together will act as a support and encouragement for younger scholars in particular. The range of approaches taken will show them that there is still much more to be gained by philological studies of all kinds: such approaches are there to be followed up. Moreover, the number of contributors—thirteen for the *Dating* volume, twenty for *Philology*, though some names occur in both—will reassure junior scholars who may be wondering what direction to take, that their career-options are still open. The “jobs-market”, as it is crudely called in the USA, is a very frightening place to be, notably at the MLA conference after Christmas (the “hiring-fair”), and I have heard young post-grads say that they fear being overlooked because Old English studies are “too masculine”, or “not relevant”, or “insufficiently theoretical”. Well, now they know not everyone thinks that, and they have a powerful and respected body of opinion to support them. They can take these books into the interview room to show sceptical interviewers that the tide has turned!

4. What are some of your other current projects in medieval studies?

This is a sad question to answer, because I have been so slow in developing them. I have almost finished a book on Old Norse literature, centring on the many death-scenes, death-songs, “Last Stands” etc., which also doubles in a way as what one might call — and this is the kind of title that publishers like — “Top Ten Vikings”. I have written about half of a book called *How the Heroes Talk*, which seeks to apply pragmatic linguistics to *Beowulf*, Eddic poems, *Hildebrandslied*, saints’ lives, the *Heliand* (etc.). Three articles of this kind have already been published, but I need to finish the job and set those articles in a wider frame.
5. Can the world expect any additional projects from you in the realm of Tolkien studies?

What the world needs, I feel, is a survey of Tolkien’s effect and influences. But this is such a massive job, when one considers the explosion of fantasy since 1955, that I think it would have to be done by a consortium.

6. Which avenues of research in medieval studies and Tolkien studies do you think are most promising at present?

On Tolkien studies, I feel we still have little awareness of his literary and cultural background – and that has the same kind of cause as the turn-away from philological studies I mentioned above. When I was an undergraduate at Cambridge, our syllabus – I mentioned this in a recent article drawing on Erich Auerbach – was extremely restricted, without us or many of our tutors realizing the fact. In fiction, it was exclusively “the Great Tradition”, which dealt with the often-repressed emotional lives of a cultured, sheltered and privileged elite who were much less interesting than they thought they were I won’t name names, except to say that Henry James was in, but his much more widely-influential contemporary H.G. Wells was out. Firmly excluded also were all the “New Romancers”, as they are sometimes known – Conan Doyle, Rider Haggard, R.L. Stevenson, Bram Stoker, and many more.

Tolkien has much in common, especially as regards class-feeling, with the latter group; and conversely, much less in common with “the Bloomsbury Group”, whose members were (I think) a continuing provocation to the “Inklings”, especially Lewis. But there were people with links to both sides, like Naomi Mitchison, surely a New Romancer and a correspondent of Tolkien, whose brother J.B.S. Haldane however reacted sarcastically to Lewis’s “Space trilogy” – google “Haldane” and “Auld Hornie, F.R.S.”. This whole area of literary life in the early twentieth century has hardly been noticed.

Meanwhile, in medieval studies I (and Michael Drout) have put our disagreements with Tolkien’s (1936) lecture online through “Scholars’ Forum”,¹ but I have to agree with Tolkien that, for all the avalanche of studies

¹ Our two essays are online at http://www.lotrplaza.com/showthread.php?18483, and
about *Beowulf* as a poem, there has been remarkably little about the nature of alliterative poetry at any time, its strengths, its characteristic tropes and rhetoric. New Critical terminology just doesn’t work, but we have not developed a different one. Tolkien, of course, spent many years trying to revive alliterative poetry, with to begin with very little success.

7. You were involved with the production of Peter Jackson’s *Lord of the Rings* movies. Could you describe your involvement and share some opinions on these films?

My involvement really consisted of making sure all the (many) names were pronounced correctly. This is not so easy. Tolkien uses the word “Thain”, as a title for hobbits, “Gwaihir” (for an eagle), and Thrain (so spelled in *The Hobbit*) for a dwarf, and in each case the <ai> is pronounced differently. I produced a long video-tape for the actors, which I must say they stuck to very accurately – with one exception. Sméagol came out as “Smeagle”. They must have forgotten to ask me about that one. The *Hobbit* movies were much less careful about the dwarf-names.

As for opinions, I have to say that Jackson was coping with a changed medium, and a changed audience. I was impressed by his comments on why he made the changes he did in the *LotR* movies – characters could not merely be left in abeyance, like Arwen (a place had to be made for her in the second movie, though she does not figure in the second book). Nor could major action-scenes like the destruction of Isengard merely be told in flashback! In movies, you MUST show, not tell! Or the special effects team will break its collective heart! And there were other forced changes which I understood. What was lost, I felt, was first, something in Tolkien which was hard-hearted and realistic: Tolkien was a combat veteran who passed his life in the company of other veterans. They understood that the bold aggression rewarded in video-games was not always so rewarded in real life. More subtly, I felt – but not many have agreed with me – that the movies lost Tolkien’s almost-imperceptible presentation of the effects of Providence, or if you prefer, the Valar.

http://www.lotrplaza.com/showthread.php?17739. The two essays complement each other, but were written entirely independently.
These criticisms are much more easily made about the three *Hobbit* movies. Once again I think Jackson put his finger on the problem with *The Hobbit* as a narrative: it is highly episodic, one thing after another. It needed a connecting thread, which Jackson introduced (the continuous pursuit by the orcs). What it lost was the development of Bilbo as a hero, from being regarded with complete contempt to his final demonstrations both of physical courage (going down the tunnel to Smaug a second time), and moral courage (handing over the Arkenstone, and then returning into the power of the dwarves whom he has betrayed). All Bilbo’s big scenes, in the book, take place when he is alone and in the dark, and movies don’t do this very well. But we had too much waving a sword and charging, video-game heroism, instead.

8. In addition to being a prolific scholar, you are also a celebrated teacher, whose lectures were recently recorded and published by The Teaching Company. How would you characterize your philosophy of teaching?

Perhaps here I can quote my successor at Leeds, Andrew Wawn. He said that whenever he went out to confront the 250 students of the new intake at Leeds, he knew that not one of them had any interest in medieval studies. But every one of them could have! (And they did: year after year we had to cap the number of entrants to our Old Norse courses because we could not fit any more into our allotted times at the language laboratory.) My view is that every student knows something, and probably something I don’t. The trick is to connect what I am trying to tell them with what they know already.

Just to give one example, the most perceptive comment I ever heard on Old Norse sagas came from an undergraduate student at St Louis, who was studying aeronautical engineering. I was explaining the plot of *Laxdæla saga*. What is the cause of the death of Kjartan? His abandonment of Gudrun? The jealousy of Bolli? The family grudge going back to Hoskuld’s purchase of a concubine? Or is it the cursed sword? But as I droned on, young Joseph Yurgil spoke up, and said: "Stop! You are describing what we in aerospace call, ‘an error-chain’”. And then he told us what an “error-chain” was, and why airliners crash. But that told us a lot about sagas too.
9. Looking back on your career, what accomplishments are you most proud of? In your voluminous corpus of scholarship, are there certain works that you regard most highly?

There’s a kind of discrepancy here. I think my most-read book may well be Tolkien: Author of the Century. But this did not take me long to write, and was strangely trouble-free – largely because my editor at HarperCollins, Jane Johnson, kept on telling me “No footnotes! Not a single footnote!” (Did I smuggle two or three past her? No more than that.) But my least-read book must certainly be the Critical Heritage volume on Beowulf, for which I read almost everything written on the poem up to 1935, most of it in German or Danish or Swedish, and translated large amounts of it (my friend and colleague Rory McTurk helped me with the Swedish, but my Danish collaborator Andreas Haarder unfortunately had an incapacitating stroke). But then few copies were printed, and they were sold at an exorbitant price. I have now put my long “Introduction” up on academia.edu, and I may put the whole book there, if I can settle copyright issues. I think my mini-book on Beowulf had a lot of new ideas, back in 1978.

10. Few scholars have been able to achieve the international reputation you’ve managed to earn. What advice would you give to young scholars who hope to thrive in this profession?

Frodo Baggins says, “Go not to the Elves for counsel, for they will say both no and yes”, and although my counsel can’t be elvish, it may sound like the advice to lovers in The Faerie Queene: “Be bold, be bold, and everywhere be bold. / Be not too bold.”

So, first I would say: do not worry about wasting time on an idea, a project. You never know what will pay off. Back in 1970 there was no good reason for me to go and talk about “Tolkien and Philology” at a Tolkien-day run for the general public in Birmingham. I was never paid for it, it has never appeared on my curriculum vitae. But Tolkien’s secretary was there, she liked the talk, I gave her the carbon copy of my script (this was forty-five years ago), Tolkien liked it too, the effects are still with me to this day. So, range widely.

On the other hand, read deeply. It is hard to make the time for this in the modern academic world, where rapid results are often demanded, but not only did I spend a long, long time in the 1980s and 1990s reading long-dead Beowulf studies, I also spent a long, long time in the 1970s and 1980s reading...
all the old reviews of *Lord of the Rings* (Rayner Unwin had kept a file of them), and many of Tolkien’s old books donated to libraries in Oxford. Much of this looked like work wasted: but the overall experience was not wasted. And you can never tell ... 

Finally, first reactions are precious. Write down any hint of an idea you have. Think about it later.
Book Reviews
Tolkien posthumous publications keep returning to our bookshelves and they seem to do it on a more regular basis in recent times. Since 2013, we have been offered the opportunity to welcome “the last ‘new’ Tolkien work” at least once a year: The Fall of Arthur (2013), Beowulf: A Translation and Commentary (2014) and The Story of Kullervo (2015). If those were not enough to satisfy the literary quench of fans, in 2016 they will be treated to a Tolkienian double bill: A Secret Vice. Tolkien on Invented Languages (edited by Dimitra Fimi and Andrew Higgins) and The Lay of Aotrou and Itroun (edited by Verlyn Flieger with a preface from Christopher Tolkien).

Some critics may find in this extraordinary proliferation of new (old) books a perfect example of Tolkien as the literary Golden Goose par excellence. The impact of “the new rare Tolkien book to be (re) published” might perhaps one day lose some of its power to interest an international group of, mostly, fans under a permanent spell, however, that day is yet to come. Stuart Lee reminds us that “any title bearing Tolkien’s name immediately opens up international sales to a large and ever-hungry readership” (Lee 2015). That said, The Story of Kullervo is far from being a publication lacking academic merit, and it will be certainly treasured by a number of casual readers and fans.

As it is well known, Tolkien’s fascination with Finnish legends and the Kalevala started as a young student at King Edward’s School and nearly ruined his Hon. Mods, “becoming the original germ of the Silmarillion” in the author’s own words (Letters, p.87). In The Story of Kullervo, Verlyn Flieger, one of the world’s foremost Tolkien scholars, offers an in depth insight into the author’s exploration of the Kalevala and the creative response derived from such activity. Flieger’s edition includes, besides the unfinished The Story of Kullervo, two versions of Tolkien’s essay (or, rather, drafts of academic talks) “On ‘The Kalevala’ or ‘Land of Heroes’” and Flieger’s own essay, “Tolkien, Kalevala and ‘The Story of Kullervo’”.

The volume also offers Flieger’s informative introduction, Tolkien’s own artistic depiction of ‘The Land of Pohja’, a watercolor used as the book’s frontispiece, and several images of manuscript pages in Tolkien’s own hand such as those including plot synopsis (MS Tolkien B 64/6 folio 21 recto and verso), which the editor has used to suggest what she sees as Tolkien’s
projected ending. The notes and commentary for Tolkien’s take on what has come to be known as “the Finnish national epic” (Tolkien believed the *Kalevala* was not such a thing, but rather “a mass of conceivably epic material [...] a collection of mythological ballads”, pp.70, 71) and for the essays are not only useful, but completely necessary for the wider readership that the editor is trying to reach with this publication.

*The Story of Kullervo* and most of its accompanying material had already been published in *Tolkien Studies VII* in 2010, which might make certain readers question the need for this volume. Furthermore, the early date of composition alongside the incompleteness of the story could justify a critical approach to this publication which wishes to consider whether Tolkien would have deemed this material publishable at all. One certainly wonders if a non specialist audience will appreciate the opportunity to look at two versions of a text conceived for a series of talks in Oxford, which exist in manuscript and typescript form, and which undoubtedly show, through a careful analysis of modifications and revision of the early draft, a great insight into the mind at work of one of the greatest writers of the twentieth century.

Verlyn Flieger explains how *The Story of Kullervo* “needed to reach a larger audience than that of a scholarly journal” (p.viii) and after reading the tale of Hapless Kullervo, one is tempted to accept such view. Fans and scholars alike will enjoy the possibility of exploring Tolkien’s interaction with the primitive tales in the Finnish *runos* of the *Kalevala* as originally recorded by Elias Lönnrot in the nineteenth century, and as translated into English by W.F. Kirby and read by Tolkien in 1911. Flieger observes that if *The Story of Kullervo* was written sometime between 1912 and 1914, “this is the work of a beginning writer” (p.140). The young Tolkien is also known to have composed two poems, in 1911, in which he casted himself in the role of Lemminkainen, one of the heroes in the *Kalevala*, poems discussed by Andrew S. Higgins in his PhD thesis *The Genesis of J.R.R. Tolkien Mythology* (2015), whose section on “The Kalevala, Finnish and Tolkien’s language invention” the reader of this review is invited to consult.

The tragic nature of the story of Kullervo, an orphan never in control of his own life, although, as Flieger points out, does not offer “a one-to-one equation between Kullervo and Tolkien” (p.144), it certainly presents interesting parallelisms between character and author.

*The Story of Kullervo* serves as a window into Tolkien’s earliest period of creative energy. If Tolkien believed to have found in the Finnish language and the *Kalevala* a new world, primitive and fresh at a time, Flieger’s edition offers
the readers of Tolkien’s fiction a similar experience. Kullervo is not as elaborated as Túrin Turambar, his direct fictional heir, and Tolkien reconciliation of two world views (pagan and Christian) under a single narrative framework is not yet fully articulated. Tolkien took the Kullervo cycle from a stage in which he reflected on its translation into Modern English to a process of adaptation which would ultimately result in a move towards invention. Flieger's illuminating notes and comments contribute to a better understanding of Tolkien's use of new names for elements found in the story's source as well as names invented for new characters and places in the author's own retelling (e.g. Kullervo’s unnamed sister in the Kalevala becomes Wanona or Wanora, and the God of heaven in the original is given the names Ilu, Iluko and Ulko). Tolkien's language invention here is particularly interesting when read in the context of its immediate impact on the author’s first fully developed invented language: Quenya.

Readers of The Story of Kullervo might find the tale strange, ambiguous and lacking the eucatastrophic treatment of likely defeat that they have come to expect from the mature work of Tolkien. This is the tragic story of a doomed hero which the young Tolkien liked for being so in a different way to the Classical, the Celtic and Germanic literatures which he considered a Childhood attraction; he loved the Kalevala for its newness, extravagance and its arresting barbaric strangeness. Verlyn Flieger has done a great job at presenting Tolkien’s adaptation of a material he loved, to readers who might struggle if unfamiliar with the text’s source, but who will be always able to find a helpful note for confusing passages. The Kalevala is a work which deserves a wider audience, and no one like Tolkien has the power to rekindle the love for old texts in a modern audience. From the world of academia and Medieval studies we should welcome this new chance to read about hapless Kullervo, his people, their land and "the air that blows in that country".

References


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Si echáramos la vista atrás dos décadas y examináramos cuántos textos medievales en antiguo nórdico se habían traducido al castellano por aquel entonces, nos encontraríamos con un panorama muy limitado. Tendríamos las dos sagas del ciclo del asentamiento en Groenlandia, a cargo de Antón y Pedro Casariego Córdoba (1983); el fruto de la labor de traducción de Enrique Bernárdez Sanchís, que ofreció al lector hispanohablante la Brennu-Njáls Saga y la Egils Saga Skalla-Grímssonar, además de un conjunto de relatos cortos agrupados bajo el título de Sagas Islandesas (Bernárdez 1984, 1986, 1988); y la Kormáks Saga, traducida por Agustí Dimas (1985). Podríamos sumar a lo anterior algunas contribuciones realizadas en revistas de reducida difusión o publicadas en el extranjero y menos accesibles para el público, como la Hrafnkels Saga Freysgoda, a cargo precisamente de Luis Lerate de Castro (1971) o la traducción realizada por Álfrun Gunnlaugsdóttir de la Saga af Tristram ok Ísönd bajo el título Tristán en el Norte (1978). Apenas teníamos nada más accesible del resto del acervo saguístico.
Desde entonces el interés por la materia ha ido creciendo y las traducciones a nuestro idioma se han multiplicado. La labor de Mariano González Campo, Santiago Ibáñez Lluch o Javier Díaz Vera, por mencionar a los más prolíficos, ha permitido acercar al público español el fascinante, rico y prácticamente único mundo de la prosa vernácula producida en Islandia y Noruega entre los siglos XII a XV. A día de hoy tenemos acceso a la mayoría de los textos más significativos de este tipo, si bien existe todavía abundante material pendiente de ver la luz en castellano. Con la llegada del volumen que ahora reseñamos se avanza un poco más en ese camino.

_Sagas Cortas Islandesas_, edición y traducción del islandés antiguo, abre las puertas de nuestro país a un tipo de relato en prosa del que poseíamos hasta ahora muy pocas muestras: el þátr (plural: þættir), que podríamos traducir como saga corta, relato corto o, siguiendo la propuesta del editor, breve. De la edición y traducción se encarga Luis Lerate de Castro que, aparte de la _Hrafnkels Saga Freysgoða_, citada más arriba, ya tuvo a su cargo el cometido de trasladar obras capitales de las letras clásicas islandesas como _Edda Mayor_ (1986), _Edda Menor_ (1984) o la antología _Poesía Antiguo-Nórdica_ (1993). Igualmente se le debe, ya en el campo de la lengua inglesa antigua, el logradísimo e imprescindible _Beowulf y Otros Poemas Anglosajones_ (siglos VI-X) (1986), que consigue, dentro de las limitaciones que impone nuestro idioma, atrapar parte del ritmo y del sabor de la métrica original de este poema heroico-elegíaco del s. VIII.\(^1\)

Por lo que se refiere al contenido, _Sagas Cortas Islandesas_ se estructura en tres partes bien diferenciadas. Una “Nota Preliminar” de diez páginas a modo de introducción; el grueso del volumen, consistente en la recopilación de breves, casi en su totalidad pertenecientes al género de las _islendingaþættir_ (relatos cortos de islandeses); y, finalmente, dos apéndices en los que se ofrecen un listado de las sagas y breves traducidos al castellano, así como tres mapas, uno de Escandinavia y dos de Islandia.

La “Nota Preliminar” (págs. 13–22) comienza con una somera explicación del tiempo y el lugar de gestación de las sagas islandesas. Le sigue un comentario del criterio delimitador entre la saga (plural: sögur) y el þátr que es, básicamente, la longitud del texto (en las sögur es mayor y en los þættir

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\(^1\) Desde la publicación del volumen editado por Colin Chase (1980), la tradicional fecha de composición de _Beowulf_, el siglo VIII, ha sido muy cuestionada. Sin embargo, en el conjunto de ensayos editados por Leonard Neidorf (2014) se demuestra que con toda probabilidad _Beowulf_ ha de haber sido compuesto no más tarde del 725.
Este es, precisamente, el motivo por el que Lerate elige el término “breves” para denominar estos relatos, como él mismo indica recurriendo a una analogía con el cine: “así como los cineastas llaman «cortos» a sus películas de poca duración” (Lerate de Castro 2015: 14). A continuación, se resumen algunas de las principales características del género como la sencillez, la limitada y aséptica intervención del narrador o el fenómeno del prosimetrion.

Acto seguido, se dedica la parte más extensa de la “Nota Preliminar” a desglosar las distintas categorías en que usualmente se dividen las sögur. Continúa señalando a qué género pertenecen las que se han incluido en el volumen (sagas cortas protagonizadas por islandeses) y, para terminar, se ofrece alguna información sobre la transmisión de los textos. En cuanto al criterio de presentación de los breves, el editor advierte: “No hemos intentado aplicar criterio alguno para organizar la secuencia de las sagas que siguen. Van, simplemente, en el mismo orden arbitrario en que se nos ocurrió traducirlas, aunque si hemos querido cerrar este volumen con cuatro relatos que dan cuenta expresamente de las circunstancias últimas en que paganos y cristianos acordaron tener todos una sola fe” (Lerate de Castro 2015: 22).

Considerando el enfoque generalista del texto, cumple dicha “Nota Preliminar” perfectamente, ubicando al lector, con claridad y concisión, en los parámetros principales en los que se enmarcan las sagas. Una panorámica, como digo, suficiente, que sirve bien a cualquier interesado en conocer el patrimonio literario nórdico y en ampliar enfoques desde el campo de la historia o de la mitología. No obstante, se puede echar de menos alguna explicación sobre las elecciones realizadas a la hora de trasladar las

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2 Nos referimos a la técnica narrativa consistente en el engarce de poemas dentro del texto en prosa, que nos remite a la literatura latina de época tardía. Frecuente entre los autores medievales, es una constante en el género de las sögur que también vamos a encontrar en los þættir. Ursula Brown (1946–1953) defiende que dichos poemas pueden haber constituido, en muchas ocasiones, la auténtica génesis de las sagas de los tiempos antiguos. Según esta propuesta, los poemas habrían sido originalmente conectados entre sí mediante breves fragmentos en prosa. Posteriormente, estos breves fragmentos habrían sido ampliados de manera progresiva, dando lugar en última instancia a las sagas tal cual las conservamos hoy en día. No es descartable que esto mismo haya sucedido con algunos breves. En cuanto a la función que cumplen dichos poemas, como apunta Ibañez Lluch (2011), por un lado se utilizan como fuente de autoridad y por otro sirven para expresar el pensamiento de los protagonistas.
peculiaridades del antiguo islandés al castellano, ya señaladas en su momento por Ibáñez Lluch (2002: 185–205), item que no falta en la gran mayoría de las traducciones. Por ejemplo, ninguna información se ofrece sobre los criterios utilizados para el reemplazo de las grafías originales propias del islandés antiguo, inexistentes en nuestro idioma: <þ, ð, æ, ø, œ, ý>. Otro tanto sucede con aquellas letras que, si bien existen en castellano, representan sonidos distintos en nórdico, como es el caso de <j, h, ð>. Tampoco se explicitan las decisiones respecto al modo de presentar los nombres propios, los patronímicos, los apodos o los topónimos, ni se da cuenta del tratamiento que se ha dado a cuestiones como la alternancia de formas verbales en presente y en pasado, del estilo directo e indirecto, o la reiteración de conjunciones (ok, er) y adverbiales (nú, þar), tan características del género sagústico. En cualquier caso, resulta una ausencia menor, pues se coligen fácilmente las soluciones adoptadas si se conocen esas peculiaridades y no afectan a la comprensión y disfrute del texto en ningún caso.

3 Se escapa de los límites de la reseña el ampliar uno a uno este tipo de problemas. No obstante y para el lector curioso expondré un único ejemplo relacionado con la alternancia de tiempos verbales y la reiteración de la conjunción copulativa ok, a grandes rasgos equivalente a nuestra “y”, para que se comprenda un poco mejor la dificultad mencionada y las soluciones tomadas por el traductor. En el “Breve de Audun de los Fiordos del Oeste” (Auðunar þátttr vestfirzka) tenemos la siguiente frase en islandés antiguo:

Ok nú fára þeir útan heðan ok fersk þeim vel, ok var Auðun of vetrinn eptir með Þóri stýrimanni;

La traducción de Lerate es:

Se hicieron luego a la mar y tuvieron buen viaje. Audun pasó el invierno con Tórir el capitán;

Por un lado las tres conjunciones ok han sufrido distintos destinos, para evitar la reiteración: la primera se elimina, la segunda se mantiene y la tercera se transforma en punto y seguido. Por otro, en cuanto a la alternancia de tiempos verbales, se opta por cambiar los dos presentes (fára: viajan; fersk vel: tienen-se buen viaje) por dos verbos en pasado (se hicieron a la mar; tuvieron buen viaje). A cambio, el verbo en pasado (var: en este caso, pasó, permaneció) se ha mantenido igual.
La segunda parte y principal (págs. 25–557) está constituida por la recopilación de breves, en total cincuenta y ocho, que se cierra con algunos fragmentos de la *Kristni Saga*. Se trata de una cantidad nada desdénable, teniendo en cuenta que la totalidad de estos textos se ha calculado en torno a la centena (Lange 1957: 150, Pulsiano 1993: 661, Ashman Rowe y Harris 2005: 462). De la selección que nos ofrece *Sagas cortas islandesas*, sólo once se encontraban ya en nuestro idioma, repartidos entre el ya mencionado *Sagas Islandesas* (Bernárdez 1984), *Cinco Cuentos Islandeses* (Fernández Romero 1997) y *El Islandés y el Rey* (Fernández Romero 2006).

El formato de los breves consiste en un relato de corta extensión, en ocasiones independiente, pero las más de las veces inserto dentro de un texto mayor, cuyo protagonista es normalmente un habitante de Islandia (de casi cualquier rango social), que por diversas circunstancias se encuentra con alguno de los reyes de la Escandinavia medieval. A partir de este esquema, se desgrana un riquísimo anecdotario donde caben situaciones que van de lo épico a lo ridículo, de lo venerable a lo soez. Vemos deambular por las páginas de los breves personajes de lo más variopinto y que pocas veces nos dejarán indiferentes pese al laconismo del narrador: mercaderes, cuenta-sagas, nobles y

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4 En Sagas islandesas tenemos Þorsteins þátr stangarhögg, Gísls þátr Illugasonar, Odds þátr Ófeigssonar y Aðbunar þátr vestfyrzka. En la revista *El Extramundi* y *Papeles de Iria Flavia* podemos encontrar Brands þátr ûrva (allí traducido como *Brand el Dadivoso*), Stefnis þátr Þorgilssonar, Þórhalls þátr knapps, Þorvalds þátr tasalda y Þormóðar þátr kolbrúnarskálds. Por último, en *El Islandés y el Rey* además del ya referido de Brands se encuentran traducidos Mána þátr skalds e Íslendinga þátr sögufróða.

5 Conviene advertir que también teníamos algunos ejemplos de breves pero de los que podríamos clasificar, aceptando las convenciones que se aplican a las sagas, como “de los tiempos antiguos” (*fornaldarsögur*). Es el caso de Norma-Gests þátr, Þorsteins þátr bojarmagns y Helga þátr Þórissonar, todos ellos incluidos en *La Saga de Fridhjóf el Valiente* y *Otras Sagas Islandesas*, o þátr af Ragnars sonum contenido en *Saga de Sturlaug el Laborioso, Saga de Rangar Calzas Peludas, Relato de los Hijos de Ragnar*. Igualmente sucede con otro breve, aunque relacionado éste con las sagas de caballerías (*riddarasögur*), como el Valvens þátr, incluido en *Sagas Artúricas*.

6 Es el caso de un numeroso grupo de breves incluidos en la versión tardías de la *Óláfs Saga Tryggvasonar en mesta* y la *Óláfs Saga Helga*, ambas contenidas en el *Flateyjarbók*. Estos relatos se encuentran integrados en dichos textos a modo de capítulo o anécdota. A menudo, si no siempre, se trata de interpolaciones del anónimo escriba (Ashman Rowe y Harris 2005: 462).
reyes desde luego, obispos y esclavos, vikingos, tumulares arrepentidos, niños abandonados, mendigos, anacoretas, ogros, bandidos, brujos fineses e incluso un oso amaestrado llevado de aquí para allá, todo hay que decirlo, en lamentables condiciones.

A aquellos que estén familiarizados con las sogur probablemente les llamen la atención dos características, aparte de la corta extensión, que van a encontrarse en múltiples ocasiones en estos þættir. En primer lugar, la fuerte impronta del cristianismo presente en muchos de ellos. En las sagas esa influencia existe y es significativa, pero suele quedar algo más oculta, relegada a un segundo plano. La mentalidad cristiana subyace en muchas sogur pero sin hacerse explícita. No sucede así en los breves, donde cobra un protagonismo mucho mayor. No faltan en ellos conversiones, apariciones de santos, peregrinaciones a Roma, destrucción de templos, predicaciones, reliquias mágicas y oráculos. Se colocan muchos de estos breves, de este modo, a caballo entre las denominadas byskupaþættir (sagas de obispos y santos) y las íslendisogur.

En segundo lugar estaría la importancia que adquieren en estas narraciones los skáld. Mayoritariamente islandeses, estos poetas medievales asumen el protagonismo en buena parte de los breves. Retados una y otra vez en condiciones adversas para que compongan con rapidez en los complejos modelos métricos de la época, como el muy apropiadamente llamado (dadas las circunstancias) dróttkvætt, poesía de la corte, consiguen salir con éxito las más de las ocasiones. Sus dotes igual pueden utilizarse para obtener el favor o un regalo del noble de turno que para evitar un castigo. De este último modo sucede, por ejemplo, en el Breve de Óttar el Negro. Su protagonista compone un poema titulado Höfuðlausn, es decir, el Rescate de la Cabeza. Se trata de un lugar común en la literatura islandesa medieval y existen al menos tres poemas distintos con ese nombre (Cleasby y Vigfusson 1874: s.v. höfuð). Todos ellos se pretenden compuestos en similares circunstancias, con la intención de hacer cambiar de opinión al monarca o noble que pretende ajusticiar al skáld. Tampoco faltan poemas para hacer decayer la salud o la honra de quienes les contravienen, para burlarse de rivales o para dar muestra de fe pagana a cierto idolo de curiosa factura llamado völvi en uno de los relatos más cómicos de esta recopilación.

La pujanza de este tipo de relato nos permite atisbar dos motivos imbricados en su génesis. Por un lado, hace partícipe al lector (y al público que escucha, pues muchos de estos textos estaban pensados para su recitado en voz alta) de un sentimiento de identidad e independencia en una época difícil, en la que Noruega ha terminado anexionándose Islandia, a lo que sigue un tiempo de crisis, hambrunas y catástrofes naturales. Se rememora entonces un pasado en el que los habitantes de Islandia se codeaban con los monarcas y los jarlar escandinavos, formaban parte de su corte, les acompañan en la batalla y demostraban en muchas ocasiones ingenio y valentía por encima del resto de personajes, llegando incluso a burlar a los poderosos con los que se cruzan. Por otro lado, se mantiene vivo el recuerdo, verdadero o mitificado, de los hechos de los principales cabecillas de la Islandia de la colonización, haciendo manifiesto de este modo el cómo adquirieron ciertas familias la relevancia de la que gozan entonces, en la época en que se componen y se leen. Sirven así de justificación al estatus político y económico de los individuos que detentan ciertos apellidos.

En conclusión, tan marcadas se encuentran estas dos características comentadas (el mayor influjo del cristianismo, referido como la “nueva usanza”, y la asunción de protagonismo por parte de los poetas) que han llevado a algunos autores como Ashman Rowe y Joseph Harris (2005: 462–464) a distinguir los “Conversion þættir” y los “Skald þættir” como dos de las ocho categorias que plantean en su propuesta de sistematización de los þættir. Los “Conversion þættir” serían aquellos en los que se muestra un momento de conflicto entre paganismo y cristianismo. Dentro de estos habría un subgrupo al que denominan “Pagan-contact þættir”, en el que dicho conflicto tiene lugar cuando un rey noruego cristiano, o su representante, se enfrenta cara a cara con algún aspecto concreto de la era pagana. Por otro lado, los “Skald þættir” vienen definidos según esa propuesta por contener breves anécdotas relacionadas con la poesía escáldica y provendrían de la parte en prosa que acompañaba a los poemas para darles un contexto y sentido.

Para terminar con el análisis de esta parte del libro, se hace preciso considerar el trabajo de traducción llevado a cabo por su autor. Lerate de Castro ha ido en este libro mucho más allá de la mera traslación del texto al

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8 Mitchell (1991: 129–130) cita, entre 1300 y 1424, erupciones del Hekla, terremotos, inviernos especialmente duros, hambrunas, ausencia total de llegada de naves procedentes del continente, epidemias y carestía de alimentos.
castellano. Le ha dado una impronta propia y personal, fácilmente reconocible para quienes hayan tenido oportunidad de leer sus anteriores trabajos. Caracteriza su labor que no reniega, ni mucho menos, de acercarse a la literalidad del original en islandés antiguo, a veces al extremo de dislocar un tanto la sintaxis de nuestra lengua. A modo de ejemplo:

No nos pensábamos cuando asentamos con Biarni Muert es que íbamos nosotros a chamuscar aquí cabezas de corderillos, mientras su proscrito Torstein chamusca las de carneros castrados. No tan malo que hubiese Biarni tenido más consideración con los parientes suyos en Bodvarsdal y que no se le quedara ahora ese proscrito en Sunnudal como que iguales fuesen. (Lerate de Castro 2015: 221–222)

Engaño ha sido. Bien sabes tú, hermana, decir cosa otra de la que piensas. (Lerate de Castro 2015: 462)

[...] las había recibido él aquellas tierras de su tío paterno Éyvind, todo entre el río de Vapnafjord y el río de Vestrdal. (Lerate de Castro 2015: 467)

Además, despoja el texto de reiteraciones innecesarias y hace uso de un variado e imaginativo vocabulario para superar con éxito los envites terminológicos de una época, un lugar y una manera de narrar que hoy día resultan lejanos. La suma de lo anterior produce un texto rico y muy meritorio, a veces chocante, a veces arcaizante, en cualquier caso vehículo muy eficaz para el disfrute de estos breves medievales.

Tal vez merezca una mención, en tanto que sorprenderá a buen seguro a cualquiera que haya enfrentado antes la lectura de las sögur en nuestro idioma, la existencia de opciones que se apartan de la convención usual, como la de traducir nombres compuestos con -staðir (Sitios Knapp, en lugar de

9 En islandés antiguo: Eigi varði oss þess, þegar vé r tókum vist með Vigabjarna, at vér myndim svíða hér dilkahöfuð, en Þórstein skogar-maðr hans skyldi svíða geldingahöfuð; væri eigi verr at hafa meir vægt friendum sínum í Böövvarsdal, ok sæti nú eigi skógar-maðrinn jafnhátt honum i Sunnudal. Þorsteins þáttar stangarhöggs.
10 En islandés antiguo: Nú eru brögð, ok mæltir þú annat, frændkona, enn þér var í hug i ger. Gunnars þáttar Þórandabana.
11 En islandés antiguo: ok haði honum þar land gefit Eývindr fððurbróðir hans, allt á milli Vápnafjarðarar ok Vestrdalsár. Þórsteins þáttar hvida.
Knappsstaðir; Sitios Bruni, en lugar de Brunastaðir), los patronímicos (Égil hijo de Grim el Calvo, en lugar de Égil Skallagrímsson), o la variación sobre ciertas soluciones de transposición, más o menos asentadas, para determinados seudónimos (Harald Lindo Pelo, en lugar de Cabellera Hermosa o el de Hermosos Cabellos; o Glum Muertos, en lugar de Viga-Glúm). No obstante, comparto con Ibáñez Lluch “que cualquier versión que permita atisbar fielmente el estilo de la antigua prosa islandesa y la complejidad de la poesía escáldica puede ser considerada válida mientras se halle lo más cerca posible del texto original y ofrezca al lector una clara exposición del entorno cultural en el que fue producido” (Lluch 2002). *Sagas Cortas Islandesas* cumple sobradamente con dichos fines.

Cierra el volumen una “Relación de sagas y breves publicados en castellano” (págs. 561–563) y tres “Mapas” (págs. 565–567). La “Relación”, estructurada por temas (de islandeses, históricas, de los tiempos antiguos, de caballeros) es una útil fuente para quienes se queden con ganas de más y quieran acercarse a la literatura nórdica medieval traducida a nuestro idioma. Ofrece además referencia a algunos textos poco conocidos, aunque se echa en falta la *Saga de Ragnar Calzas Peludas* en la traducción llevada a cabo por Ibáñez Lluch (1998). Los “Mapas”, por su parte, nos permiten localizar la mayoría de los lugares mencionados en los breves. Dos están dedicados a Islandia y señalan los enclaves y accidentes geográficos más relevantes y la división administrativa de la época en cantones. Otro hace lo propio con la zona de Escandinavia. También se ha incluido un dibujo con la disposición de *Þingvellir* (los campos de la Asamblea), marco de numerosos episodios de las *islendingasögur*.

Para concluir, *Sagas Cortas Islandesas* supone una buena noticia en tanto en cuanto ofrece al lector hispanohablante, por primera vez, una traducción directa desde el nórdico antiguo de un numeroso grupo de þættir. Además, se suma al interés intrínseco de los mismos que se trata de una cuidada

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12 Un catálogo similar y algo más actualizado se encuentra disponible en la siguiente dirección de internet: https://www.academia.edu/12223157/Cat%C3%A1logo_de_sagas_traducidas_al_castellano

13 En *Þingvellir* se celebraba anualmente, desde el año 930, la asamblea nacional de Islandia (el *alþingi*) en la que podían participar todos los hombres libres del país. En estas reuniones se resolvían pleitos, se modificaban leyes, se pactaban alianzas, se cerraban tratos, se transmitían noticias y se concertaban matrimonios. El *alþingi* está considerado uno de los primeros antecedentes de los modernos Parlamentos.
traducción. Siendo esto así, esta recopilación resultará de interés tanto para el profano como para el estudioso de la cultura, la literatura y la historia medieval del norte de Europa. Debemos alegrarnos por el mantenimiento del ritmo, constante ya, de llegada de traducciones a nuestra lengua desde el mundo de la prosa islandesa, pese a que aún existan numerosos e interesantes textos pendientes. En esta línea, Sagas Cortas Islandesas supone un paso más.

References


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[Defoe, D.] 1702: The Shortest-Way with the Dissenter: or, Proposals for the Establishment of the Church, with its Author’s Brief Explication Consider’d, his Name Expos’d, his Practices Detected, and his Hellish Designs Set in a True Light. London, [n. n.].

The Safest-Way with the Dissenters Being in Answer to a Late Book, Entituled, The Shortest-Way with the Dissenters: or, Proposals for the Establishment of the Church. 1703. London, [n. n.].

It is frequently the case with early books – and with pamphlets in particular – that some bibliographic information is missing altogether from the title- and end-page. The abbreviations [n. d.] (no date), [n. p.] (no place) and [n. n.] (no name) should be used to indicate that the year of publication, the place of publication, and/or the editor’s name were not provided in the volume. If the identity of the author of an item that was published anonymously is now known, this should be indicated between brackets.

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Cartwright, J. 1999: Y Forwyn Fair, Santesau a Lleianod. Agweddau ar Wyryfdod a Diweirdeb yng Nghymru'r Oesoedd Canol [The Virgin Mary, Female Saints and Nuns. Attitudes on Virginity and Purity in Wales during the Middle Ages]. Cardiff, University of Wales Press.

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