AN EPIC REDEMPTION: RE-READING SOME ABERRANT ELEVENTH-CENTURY BODIES

by

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Abstract

The text of the Junius 11 manuscript and the illustrations accompanying it are marked by an apparent discord, whereby the ecclesiastical nature of the work often seems threatened by the eroticism of the images. This thesis sets out to explain the disjunction, not by eliding it but rather showing it to be highly significant.

To uncover the attitudes prevailing towards the corporeal (both erotic and numinous), the analysis undertakes a close examination of late tenth-/early eleventh-century conceptions of the body, especially those informed by the discourses of the Church. Such discourses frequently did pose the body in erotic formations, but in most of these it is possible to demonstrate multiple frameworks of social control being applied to them to determine correct meaning. The Junius Eve, though, does not conform to such structuralist paradigms. Her erotic subversion is driven by something beyond, even antithetical to, expositions of exterior power advanced by, for example, Michel Foucault or Judith Butler.

To compensate for such structuralist lack, this thesis advances a psychoanalytic inflexion to develop a fusion that resolves the otherwise incongruous eroticism in the Junius Eve. The result is an Eve that completely subverts the text in a celebration of the libidinal.

For Dad, who had wanted to see it happen,

and Philippa, who helped make it happen,

and Somers, where much of it happened

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You Prepared a Body for Me[1]

One of the four major Old English poetic codices, Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Junius 11 stands apart by virtue of the number and sumptuousness of its illustrations. The work of two artists, the images are, for Catherine Karkov, 'in a style of outline drawing that combined the native interest in dynamic surface patterns and flickering lines with the expressionism of the Carolingian Reims style.'[2] As with many Anglo-Saxon manuscripts, what makes these drawings so interesting for so many critics is the tangential relationship they enjoy with the texts that they accompany. Karkov suggests that such illustrations do not merely illustrate but 'function as a visual gloss or exegesis of the text',[3] a 'form of translation'[4] that, in the case of Junius 11, provides a 'series of secondary narratives centred on themes of production and reproduction, reading and writing, order vs. disorder'.[5] This certainly is indicative of the looseness that characterises the relationship, but I see rather more disjunction than such explanation allows for – specifically a disconnect between text and image, between the orthodox exhortations to continence and the apparent libidinal recalcitrance of Eve especially. It is a disparity that goes beyond textual recension, elucidation or interpretation. This thesis seeks to explain the incongruence. It does so, not by diminishing the discord, but rather by showing it to be highly significant. It is an approach that will entail analyses not only of the powers operating on Anglo-Saxon bodies to pose them acceptably, but also of the sites of and

[1] Hebrews 10: 5. King James Bible.
[2] Catherine E. Karkov, *Text and Picture in Anglo-Saxon England: Narrative Strategies in the Junius 11 Manuscript* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001; repr. 2008), p. 33.
[3] Ibid., p. 8.
[4] Ibid., p. 36.
[5] Ibid., p. 45.

resources for resistance to this positioning. The thesis is thus concerned with the nature of subjectification and individuation, with how the subject emerges out of the matrix of influences forming him or her, and with how this subjectivity asserts itself in the ways available to it. In explaining these Anglo-Saxon bodies, I shall in this chapter be looking closely at more contemporary configurations and developments of identity; in considering the exchange between the modern self and society, I hope to develop understandings that are relevant in opening up the mediaeval. Ultimately, the Junius Eve will be shown to be a body in conformity, but to powers other than just the ecclesiastical.

Though it is difficult to presuppose an Anglo-Saxon aesthetic, for this reader some of the most affecting of the Junius drawings depict the moments around the Fall. The tableau on page 39 of the manuscript (fig. 11) is a simple line drawing that nevertheless captures the poignancy in that moment of realisation, when the eyes of the sinning couple are opened to knowledge in all its brutality. Shown with their sin beginning to weigh upon them, Adam and Eve seem already enjoined in that most human, that most a-historical of tropes, the assignation of blame: Eve's deflated posture is defensive, her hand plaintively offered up against the more assertive, even aggressive gesture of the husband whom God will soon confirm in his role as her master. Her body registers its identity with sin, and her newly opened eyes tell of her nakedness: beneath the clasp of leaves at her waist, she desperately pulls tight her knees as if to reign in her sex. As Augustine was wont to point out,

> before man sinned […t]hey 'were naked, but felt no shame'. They were aware, of course, of their nakedness, but they felt no shame, because no desire stirred in their organs in defiance of their deliberate decision. […] But once the raiment of grace was removed, they were taught the lesson that disobedience to God is punishable by disobedience to oneself. A strange and irrepressible commotion sprang up in their

bodies that made nakedness indecent. They realised the rebellion and it made them ashamed.[6]

Indeed, the 'corruptible body […] is', evidently, 'burdensome to the soul'.[7]

All of this might fit well enough into a manuscript likely designed or at least used as standard Lenten reading material.[8] And yet, even as it marks and signifies her alienation from God, as it works with the text alongside it, the Junius Eve's shameful, graceless body appears to be involved in another story, a 'secondary narrative' quite at odds with that which one might expect. The pendulous breasts still hang in much the same way as they have done from the moment of Creation, but having now been marked as sinful and corrupted, they appear provocative and ambiguous, coloured perhaps by our knowledge of the function they will soon assume – the suckling of imperfect man. Whereas in the previous illustrations her groin was nothing but a void, an absence of depiction, now the very act of her attempt to conceal those newly wayward genitals merely reinforces and emphasises what is there, what her sex is and means. Sin has rendered her vulnerable, suddenly carnally precocious and available, and out of that contact something of an eroticization emerges.

That such an image could function against rather than merely gloss or cross-reference the ostensible textual meaning of an overtly religious work seems incongruous; on matters sexual, after all, the Old English corpus is marked by an almost Salafist circumspection. In one of the few allusions to things conjugal, the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle recounts Cynewulf's visit to what might be termed his mistress – 'Ond þa geascode he þone cyning lytle werode on wifcyþþe on Merantune'[9] (And then he [Cyneheard] discovered that the king, with a small host, was in the company of a woman at Merton) – but the narrative deftly side-steps any

[6] Gerald G. Walsh and Grace Monahan, trans., *Saint Augustine: The City of God,* Books VIII-XVI (Washington D. C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1952), XIV.17., p. 389.
[7] Ibid., XIII.16., p. 127.
[8] Barbara Catherine Raw, *The Art and Background of Old English Poetry* (London: Edward Arnold, 1978), p. 1. I undertake a fuller discussion of the context and possible purposes of the manuscript in Chapter Two of this thesis.
[9] Corpus Christi College, Cambridge MS 173, in Bruce Mitchell and Fred C. Robinson, *A Guide to Old English* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1964; reprod. 2001), p. 209. Unless otherwise noted, all Old English translations are my own.

erotic potential to quickly refocus its attention on the fighting body: ‘Ond þa ongeat se cyning þæt, ond he on þa duru eode ond þa unheanlice hine werede oþ he on þone æþeling locude, ond þa ut ræsde on hine miclum gewundode’[10] (And then the king perceived that, and he went through that door and valiantly defended himself until he looked upon the prince, and then rushed out on him and greatly wounded him).

Perhaps it is not so surprising that the Chronicler should stage these bodies thus; pinched as they were between a utilitarian Germanic ontology of *lof* and *dom* and a Christian suspicion of the flesh (which we shall explore more fully in Chapter Two), he would have had little use for or interest in any sensuous interlude – romance lay centuries hence. The ninth-century Christian context in which these texts were written and transmitted was obsessively concerned with the language of the bodies it posed. For it to be tolerated, sex had both to perform and to transcend its physical meaning; Solomon’s paean to the joys of the flesh could be waived only if and as it was understood typologically, as a hymn to Christ’s love for His church:

> How beautiful art thou, my love, how beautiful art thou! thy eyes are doves’ eyes, besides what is hid within. Thy hair is as flocks of goats, which Come up from mount Galaad. Thy teeth as flocks of sheep, that are shorn which come up from the washing, all with twins, and there is none barren amoung them. Thy lips are as a scarlet lace: and thy speech sweet. Thy cheeks are as a piece of pomegranate, besides that which lieth hid within. Thy neck, is as the tower of David, which is built with bulwarks: a thousand bucklers hang upon it, all the armour of valiant men. Thy two breasts like two young roes that are twins, which feed amoung the lilies.[11]

Such a steady gaze on the particulars of the flesh made its subsequent transfiguration all the more moving: ‘My beloved put his hand through the key hole’ – Christ embraces his Lemman

[10] Ibid.
[11] Solomon’s Song 4. 1-4 – Douay-Rheims Bible <https://drbo.org> [accessed 21 May, 2020].

– ‘and my bowels were moved at his touch’.[12] The sexed body is allowed to appear only in order for it to disappear. Or so received wisdom would have it.

But even as they are fully situated in their Christian context, a not inconsequential minority of the bodies in the corpus refuse to conform to the models of reserve we have been tutored to expect of them. As with our newly sinful Eve, there is an openness to pleasure, an enjoyment that seems to threaten the authorized, ostensibly chaste deployments of the flesh. And yet none of these bodies are excused the requirement for social compliance, or relieved of the pressure to accept and to support the discourses prevailing.

What makes interpretation of all of these Anglo-Saxons bodies so difficult for us is the lack of theoretical unpicking to which they have been subjected; scholarly analyses rush from Augustine to Aquinas with little more than a backward glance at the intervening seven centuries, leaving us with a particularly sullen (if, it appears, occasionally transgressive) Anglo-Saxon soma. Debates in mediaeval studies ‘on the nature of subjectivity and identity, gender, the body, and sexuality, representation and power continue to operate from, or are conditioned by, premisses that “elide the early medieval period”’.[13] But bodies matter. They speak eloquently of the societies in which they are situated and with which they interact; because of their potential to carry social meaning, the social polity has always stage-centred the bodies that constitute it. No less today does the body play parasitized host to a freight of society’s anxieties and fetishes. In an inversion of the consumer milieu of the 1940s and 1950s that was populated by passive and domesticated women, contemporary advertising processes the subjugated male form through successive tableaux that visit upon it opprobrium and vengeance for the historic victory of the male gaze. Referencing Allen Jones’ 1970 fornophilic depictions of the female body as it sits in the (his) male imagination, Voodoo (a hosiery outlet) presents the abject male nude as a footstool to three pairs of power-dressed legs, their multiple stilettoed heels inverting that normative role of self-inflicted punishment

[12] Ibid., 5. 4.
[13] Clare A. Lees and Gillian R. Overing, ‘Before History, Before Difference: Bodies, Metaphor, and the Church in Anglo-Saxon England’, *The Yale Journal of Criticism*, 11. 2 (1998), 315-334, p. 315.

to now press down – to oppress – the male flesh. More generally, the Western body politic is by turns convulsed and paralysed by the self-loathing that is post-Colonial guilt, succinctly evidenced in, for example, the neutered responses to the knowing goading of Robert Mugabe. To the United Kingdom Prime Minister Gordon Brown's condemnation of Zimbabwe's 2008 Presidential election (widely held to have been corrupt), Mugabe responded not to the substance of the accusation but in terms invoking Britain's colonial discomfort. Positioning Brown's intervention as that of a once-more foreign interloper, he declaimed that 'Zimbabwe will never be a colony again'.[14] In this play, Brown was no more than a surrogate for the 'thieving neo-colonialists', *ad hominem* ripostes Mugabe knew to be unanswerable in contemporary politic terms. A more tragically resonant example is that of Victoria Climbié, a seven-year-old girl originally from the Ivory Coast, who was tortured and starved to death by her aunt and that aunt's boyfriend in 2000. The Inquiry into Victoria's death noted that the child's culture and colour had (doubly perversely, given that many of the professionals with whom she came into contact were of the same race)[15] condemned her to less than adequate care at the hands of the public institutions charged with her protection: 'the focus may have shifted from Victoria's fundamental needs because of misplaced assumptions about her cultural circumstances'.[16] In this, 'fear of being accused of racism' was a significant factor.[17] Racial politics, and the various cultural relativisms that are their adjunct, are understood and advanced – in the case of Victoria, with heart-breaking irony – wholly in terms of the body.

Such complex because so historically nuanced interstices of power and body demonstrate not only the rich cultural knowledge invested in (and available via) the flesh, but also the need for acute contextual empathy. Indeed, it is difficult to conceive of the body separated from its cultural context; for social narrative, skin remains the palimpsest of choice. For Judith Butler, 'bodies tend to indicate a world beyond themselves, [a] movement beyond

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[14] Mark Tran, 'Mugabe Denounces Britain as 'Thieving Colonialists'', Guardian, 18 April, 2008 <https://theguardian.com/world/2008/apr/18/zimbabwe.independence> [accessed 7 January 2017].
[15] *The Victoria Climbié Inquiry. Report of an Inquiry by Lord Lamming, Presented to Parliament January, 2003*, p. 345.
[16] Ibid., p. 346.
[17] Ibid.

their own boundaries, a movement of boundary itself, [which] appear[s] to be quite central to what bodies "are"'.[18] Occupying a liminal position, an over-determined space that is contested by both the personal and the social, bodies seem to be a dynamic interface where the 'production of selves, belonging, and identity'[19] takes place. The shifting preferences over women's body hair have for the moment settled on an austere epilation, an almost fundamentalist aversion to manifestations of the follicular in contemporary fashion, which (informed by and referencing as it does our contemporary porn-industry standard) would seem to mock the political activism of the 1970s. Such fluidity of signification positions hair beyond the merely aesthetic – or, rather, situates the aesthetic firmly within the political and cultural landscape. As Robert Bartlett shows, long hair on a man in the Norman court of post-conquest England connoted softness and effeminacy, to the extent that Anselm 'refused to give ashes or his blessing to those young men who 'grew their hair like girls''.[20] This was a notable inversion of the by then only recent Anglo-Saxon preference for the hirsute, manifested as much as anywhere in the (presumably far from effeminate) army of King Harold.[21]

Sexual identities especially are inexorably bound up with bodies. Sexual objectification – both the negative unwanted lingering on and appropriation of the flesh (wherein certain men project their virility via women's bodies), and the (for certain women) affirming validation of being desired ('a woman needs to be looked at, or else she'll just fade away',[22] which in turn invites discourses around cultural conditioning and notions of agency) – position the gazed-upon body as a protean, context-dependant nexus of desire. Indeed, one of our western society's more interesting sub-cultural shibboleths concerns the 'thigh gap', a magical space of allure and focus, of evacuated promise, that gifts to its possessor the

[18] Judith Butler, *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of Sex* (New York: Routledge, 1993), p. ix.
[19] Stephen Van Wolputte, 'Hang onto Yourself: Of Bodies, Embodiment, and Selves', *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 33 (2004), 251-269, p. 256.
[20] Robert Bartlett, 'Symbolic Meanings of Hair in the Middle Ages', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 4 (1994), 43-63, p. 50.
[21] Ibid., p. 45.
[22] *Fading Gigolo*, dir. by John Turturro (Antidote Films, 2014).

appearance of long legs and a narrow pelvis, a svelte androgyny that references – fetishizes, flirts with – that most cruel of society's body-dysmorphic manifestations, anorexia. The body is in this way distanced 'from nature by social and political codes. This systematic coding means that bodies are as much the product as site of experience'.[23] Never neutral, rarely passive, our bodies are the vehicles with which we project a self-conscious and self-referential image into the world, an image 'linked to all other imaginative and idealized visualisations'[24] of the human social condition.

It is because of its being so over-determined that the body allows us privileged access to the shifting visualizations of social propriety. The oscillating meanings of the very words used to deal with matters of the flesh map such shifting concerns through time, as they signify various identities into being. *Fin de siècle* Britain began to correlate the strangeness captured by the adjective 'queer' and that of the passive male, his gender-discordant alterity seemingly a snug conceptual cross-over that thereby further concretized an (abject) category. But, as Veronica Vasterling notes, every 'citation implies […] a shift. […] These inevitable temporal and spatial shifts, in short, contextual shifts, are at the same time shifts of meaning'.[25] So the queered body (camp, effete, butch, leathered, transgressive, derided) was itself eventually re-queered by the radical gay movement of 1980s' New York, a colonization, appropriation, and occupation that took back the signifier and in so doing changed – shifted – its signification into what has become a concussive queering counterpunch. And yet the citation continues to flex, especially as 'queer' remains one of the most commonly reached-for tags of homophobic insult. But even within the LGBT community (itself a contested category acronym), the very signification of queer remains problematic: 'Right now, it matters what we are called and what we call ourselves […] queer controversies are battles over identity and naming […]

[23] Sarah Kay and Miri Rubin, *Framing Medieval Bodies* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1994), p. 1.
[24] Anne Hollander, *Seeing Through Clothes* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), p. xiv.
[25] Veronica Vasterling, 'Butler's Sophisticated Constructivism: A Critical Assessment', *Hypatia*, 14: 3 (1999), 17-38, p. 28.

Which words capture us and when do words fail us?'[26] To some extent, the difficulty may be generational; younger people 'can "reclaim" [queer] only because they have not felt as strongly the sting, ostracism, police batons, and baseball bats that accompanied it one generation earlier. For older people, its oppressive meaning can never be lifted, can never be turned from overpowering to empowering'.[27] But in so successfully punching back, and setting up a validated bodily identity, gay might in fact actually contest the very definitions – both of itself and of its other – that it would establish. For Joshua Gameson, queerness

> in its most distinctive forms shakes the ground on which gay and lesbian politics has been built, taking apart the ideas of a "sexual minority" and a "gay community", indeed, of "gay" and "lesbian" and even "man" and "woman". […] This debate […] is not only over the *content* of collective identity (whose definition of "gay" counts) but over the everyday *viability* and political *usefulness* of sexual identities (is there and should there be such a thing as "gay", "lesbian", "man", "woman"?)[28]

Similarly, but perhaps even more tendentiously, the linguistic history of 'nigger' demonstrates the protean nature of designations. From being the (at the time) relatively innocuous moniker of the dog of Guy Gibson, Wing Commander of the Dambuster Lancaster Squadron (referenced a dozen times in the still popular 1955 film *The Dambusters*), it reached its apogee as the go-to definition of taboo in the mainstream in the last decade, becoming, like 'Jehovah' to pious Jews, an ineffable referent, to be elided if spoken ('Elohim', and 'the N-word') and in some way pixelated if written (YHWH, and n****r). And then, because of its incendiary connotations, it was re-appropriated by some sections of the black community to become an empowering and segregating patois. The influential Los Angeles hip hop group Niggaz With Attitude, performing from 1986 to 1991, formulated inherently political lyrics

[26] Joshua Gamson, 'Must Identity Movements Self-destruct? A Queer Dilemma', *Social Problems* 42: 3 (1995), 390-407, p. 397.
[27] Ibid., p. 395.
[28] Ibid., p. 390 – his italics. His notion that '[f]ixed identity categories are both the basis for oppression and the basis for political power' (p. 391) is striking in its similarity to Foucault's and Butler's notions of power and instability and resistance. It is a theme to which we shall return in Chapters Four and, especially, Five.

that drew on their *soi disant* experiences of discrimination and police brutality, the name a dynamic inversion and then reclamation of what was its erstwhile negativity. These fraught semantic deployments – shifting citations – still wrestle over the cathexis of the black body. There is significant political charge in such semantic shifts (evidenced by my initial reservations over including the word unmediated here), but as with the gay body, increasing tension too in the maintenance of discrete identities. Rachel Dolezal, an American woman who was a leader of the National Association for the Advancement of Coloured People until being 'outed' as white in 2015, 'called for racial fluidity to be recognised in the same way as transgenderism'.[29] Identifying as black, she claimed that race is 'less biological than gender', and considered the term 'transracial' to be a useful descriptor for people assuming another culture. The analogy is persuasive, even if – as she discovered – politically and culturally explosive. In defending her position, however, Dolezal might perhaps have found succour in the work of Walter Pohl: exploring the instability of homogenous *gens* (in relation especially to a Germanic *ethnos*, though his conclusions seem more widely pertinent), he suggests a political and cultural dimension to ethnicity:

> we can describe *ethnos* as a process rather than a unit. Ethnic boundaries are not static […] are not classificational but operational terms; ethnic groups cannot be delineated from each other clearly, and their reality has to be constantly reproduced by human activity. Therefore, we do not have to look for ethnicity as an inborn characteristic, but as an 'ethnic practice' that reproduces the ties that hold a group together.[30]

Judith – not 'Judy', she defensively and tellingly asserts in the preface, keen to avoid so informal a linguistic construction when in her academic guise – Judith Butler argues for

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[29] Lucy Pascha-Robinson, 'Rachel Dolezal: White Woman who identifies as black calls for 'racial fluidity' to be accepted' Independent, 27 March 2017 <http://independent.co.uk/news/people/rachel-dolezal-white-woman-black-racial-fluidity-accepted-transracial-naacp-a7653131.html> [accessed 9 November 2017].

[30] Walter Pohl, 'Conceptions of Ethnicity in Early Medieval Studies', *Debating the Middle Ages: Issues and Readings*, ed. by Lester K. Little and Barbara H. Rosenwein (Oxford: Blackwell 1998), pp. 13-24, p. 17.

bodies *as* discourse,[31] given that our understandings of and reactions to reality cannot but be mediated through language:

> The body posited as prior to the sign, is always *posited* or *signified* as *prior*. This signification produces as an *effect* of its own procedure the very body that it nevertheless and simultaneously claims to discover as that which *precedes* its own action. If the body signified as prior to signification is an effect of signification, then the mimetic or representational status of language, which claims that signs follow bodies as their necessary mirrors, is not mimetic at all. On the contrary, it is productive, constitutive, one might even argue *performative*, inasmuch as this signifying act delimits and contours the body that it then claims to find prior to any and all signification.[32]

How, for example, are we to understand women? What body do we discover in the term? Is it the sexed body, or the political one – or the confusing (confused?) one that the absence of quotation marks, above, might suggest? The word flexes under the meanings with which we invest it, investments mediated through, for example, the relative misogyny or misandry of the hearer. It might seem that the female body especially is one always already contested.[33] For many feminisms, it necessarily materializes as an object ready armed and mobilised, a bristling (half-) bra-burned Amazonian; for certain others, it is more easily conjured through synecdoche. The clarion call by which the female body was often made

[31] It would seem that this *as* is an epistemological, not an ontological one. Butler has been charged with both linguistic monism and gay sedition, given the denial of agency that her position sometimes suggests. However, in her defence she qualifies those comments above with: 'To claim that discourse is formative is not to claim that it originates, causes, or exhaustively composes that which it concedes; rather, it is to claim that there is no reference to a pure body which is not at the same time a further formation of that body … the constative claim is always to some degree performative' (Butler, p. 10). Veronica Vasterling's ('Sophisticated') paper is useful in stripping away many of Butler's trees to expose the theoretical wood she would sometimes seem to delight in obscuring.
[32] Butler, p. 30, her italics.
[33] Pace Butler, Elizabeth A. Clark discusses the concerns of many feminists over the value of a deconstructive construction of the subject, which in some of its purer forms might appear to threaten to undermine the validity of political feminism: 'the decentering of the male subject eventually annihilated the female subject as well' ('The Lady Vanishes: Dilemmas of a Feminist Historian after the "Linguistic Turn"', *Church History* 67: 1 (1988), 1-31, p. 3.) Such caution demonstrates the (usually less overt) political dimension of theory.

public and available for consumption – was called into being – in my own working milieu was the effortlessly reductive 'look at the tits on that', a succinct distillation of the individual into the twin sexual markers of pre-weaned puerility. But the body thus being spoken into being (and concomitantly being spoken out of its essential humanity by that telling 'that') was itself the site of multiple contested understandings, depending upon how each of the invitees to the parade approached, interpreted, and responded to the voiced mammary. Far from being a simplistic conjuring of a sexed body, the phrase was variously and often simultaneously a call to an assumed, insular camaraderie, a sometimes somewhat despairing attempt to ingratiate, a diminution of the male psyche, and a discomforting justification of the most muscular of feminisms.

Such instability and negotiability of meaning speaks loquaciously of the concerns animating the social body, and can be a point of entry for uncovering the various techniques of control that are applied in determining what and how bodies are finally made to mean. The discourses coming out of building sites today are less the wolf-whistled cacophony than would have been the case twenty years ago, which is not to say that women's bodies are any less objectified – the objectification has shifted – but that society has now deemed specifically inappropriate such overt verbalisations of objectification, and is willing to take punitive action over its concerns. Such mobilisation invites questions about the operation of social power and that upon which it settles, 'the way individuals [are] led to assign meaning and value to their conduct, their duties, their pleasures, their feelings and sensations, their dreams'.[34] By what techniques does society decide upon and then drive its agenda? By what agency? With what aim? For Michel Foucault, society more than anything required docile bodies, the better to be useful bodies.[35] The 'political investment of the body is bound up […] with its economic uses; it is largely as a force of production that the body is invested with

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[34] Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, vol. 2: The Use of Pleasure*, trans. by Robert Hurley (London: Penguin, 1984), p. 4.

[35] Though the evidence adduced by Foucault for his theories on power (especially those of the first volume of the *History of Sexuality* series) was firmly situated in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, he was keen to apply the conclusions coming out of them to the modern period. Such techniques of power, though perhaps contingent in form, seem to me to be transhistorical.

relations of power and domination […] the body becomes a useful force only if it is both a productive body and a subjected body'.[36]

The production of such tamed bodies seems to require that their sex be managed. In this at least, Foucault found a fellow traveller in Sigmund Freud, though they would never be comfortable bedfellows. Especially in his later work, Foucault as good as defined himself in opposition to Freud, for whom identity was grounded in sex; his psychoanalysis presupposed a person of desire whose essential truth lay in his sexuality. For Foucault, sexuality was not a defining characteristic but a cultural construction. To the psychic determinism of Freud's subject, Foucault wanted to offer a self-created, self-governing one that also broke free of the cultural determinism he thought to be operating. These are disparate, at first even seemingly irreconcilable, positions: a socially constructed and therefore contingent sexuality does not easily lie with an innate, transhistorical one. The two theories, however, not only share in themselves multiple points of contact, but are concerned with some of the most pressing themes – especially those around power – emerging out of our Junius analysis. Facilitating a methodological rapprochement between them (as I hope to have achieved in Chapter Five) offers enticing exegetical opportunities for mediaeval (and wider) matrices of power, resistance, and subjectivisation. This is, of course, not to attenuate the differences between the theorists. But certainly in the social investment of sexed bodies, Freud concurred with Foucault: everything reduced to 'the struggle between Eros and death, between the life drive and the drive for destruction, as it is played out in the human race [… It] is the essential content of all life'.[37] There was no doubt that for society, the desiring body was a problematic body, and that for civilisation to hold together, it needed

> to bind the members of the community libidinally to one another, employing every available means to this end, favouring any path that leads to strong identifications among them, and summoning up the largest possible measure of aim-inhibited libido

[36] Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, trans. by Alan Sheridan (London: Penguin, 1977), p. 25.
[37] Sigmund Freud, *Civilization and its Discontents*, trans. by David McLintock (London: Penguin, 2002), p. 58.

in order to reinforce the communal bonds with ties of friendship. For the fulfilment of these objectives the restriction of sexual life becomes inevitable.[38]

Sex, though not the only behaviour to come under scrutiny, does indeed appear especially susceptible to manipulation, perhaps because it has so exercised the body politic. In his *History of Sexuality* series, Foucault explored the operations of power that he thought to be constitutive of the subject, identifying 'the practices by which individuals were led to focus their attention on themselves, to decipher, recognize and acknowledge themselves as subjects of desire, bringing into play between themselves and themselves a certain relationship that allows them to discover, in desire, the truth of their being'.[39] These two selves – the desiring self and the self that is led to recognize and acknowledge it – needed to be introduced, and Foucault understood this to be the imperative upon which deployments of power were based. The elaborate systems of classification and then medicalization that proliferated particularly in the nineteenth century – what he has termed the *Scientia Sexualis* – set out less to prohibit than to produce a truth about the workings of the sexed body, to bring these two selves together, and in so doing repositioned the orgasm as an epistemology rather than a simple shudder of pleasure. To suppress sex was never the aim; it was rather to bring it out into the open, to subject it to endless scrutiny, so that it had 'an analytical, visible and permanent reality […] a natural order of disorder'.[40]

In its superseding of religion (at least in the Western tradition), the deployment of the medical sciences was merely an economically efficient means to bring about that Foucauldian rapprochement: 'Gradually, an administrative and political space was articulated upon a therapeutic space; it tended to individualise bodies, diseases, symptoms, lives and deaths; it constituted a real table of juxtaposed and carefully distinct singularities. Out of discipline, a

[38] Ibid., p. 46.
[39] Foucault, *Pleasure*, p. 5.
[40] Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, vol. 1: The Will to Knowledge*, trans. by Robert Hurley (London: Penguin, 1976), p. 44.

medically useful space was born'.[41] The ostensibly neutral terms emerging from this useful space were in fact strategic deployments of power, intended to provide the subject with a *pro forma* of normality against which he was invited to measure himself; behaviours not corresponding to 'normal' (and therefore deviant) could legitimately be corrected in pursuit of a healthy body politic. Society's fixation on the sexed lives of its members – these attempts to understand and realign sexualities – came to demonstrate, for Foucault, less any truth inherent in sex than that in the 'tactics of power immanent in [the] discourse'.[42]

The elegance of this technique lay as much in the subtlety of its power as in its efficacy. 'The category of 'sex' is, from the start, normative; it is what Foucault has called a 'regulatory ideal'. In this sense, then, 'sex' not only functions as a norm, but is part of a regulatory practice that produces the bodies it governs'.[43] Normativity made redundant the 'costly and violent' contestation between the state and its producers, 'obtaining [...] effects of utility at least as great'[44] by inculcating in its subjects norms with which those subjects agree, and to which they aspire; the individual thereafter polices himself and does the work of power for it. Especially since the eighteenth century, it has been a force applied not 'by right but by technique, not by law but by normalization, not by punishment but by control, methods that are employed on all levels and in forms that go beyond the state and its apparatus'.[45] Foucault's insight, however, need not be confined to the recent past; the techniques of coercion that he identifies are also evident, even if presenting themselves in slightly altered forms, in mediaeval technologies of power. I as explore more fully in Chapter Four, there is considerable evidence of such soft power at work in the Old English corpus, as elegant and subtle as any later manifestation of it. It is via such shaping, nudging, cajoling norms, which define the parameters by which meaning is conferred, that power exercises mastery over the mediaeval no less than the modern body.

[41] Foucault, *Discipline*, p. 144.
[42] Foucault, *Knowledge*, p. 70.
[43] Butler, p. 1.
[44] Foucault, *Discipline*, p. 137.
[45] Foucault, *Knowledge*, p. 89.

For Butler, this 'regulatory apparatus of heterosexuality'[46] brings bodies into being:

> The forming, crafting, bearing, circulation, signification of that sexed body will not be a set of actions performed in compliance with the law; on the contrary, they will be a set of actions mobilized by the law, the citational accumulation and dissimulation of the law that produces material effects [...] Performativity is thus not a singular "act", for it is always a reiteration of a norm or set of norms.[47]

The creation of norms entails the establishment of abject beings outside of the norm, against which the norm is defined, and the spectre of the abjected or sinning other is a constant threat because of the subject's constant susceptibility to slippage and recidivism. It is in the repeated attempts to conform to and achieve this normative ideal that power secures its hold over the subject, and out of which repetition the subject emerges: 'In other words, the norm of sex takes hold to the extent that it is "cited" as such a norm, but it also derives its power through the citations that it compels'.[48] The continual performance of these norms compels the reification of the body: what it can be, what it is allowed to signify. Those erstwhile colleagues' deployment of 'tits' is a case in point (though an alternative or parallel notion of 'norm' is here being deployed, a situational norm that perhaps somehow becomes for them a regulatory one); with every reductive reiteration, they confirmed and made more concrete – normalized – the sexed meaning of women's bodies, performing a certain materialization into being, both that of women and of themselves.

The body is, therefore, under a steady constituting pressure to mean. The operations of power that play upon it are, even if sometimes delicately nuanced, inexorable in their efforts to civilise the bodies under its writ. But civilisation turns out to be somewhat

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[46] Butler, p. 12. Butler's own discursive project is, of course, underpinned by her political objective to overthrow the 'heterosexual hegemony', and unsettle/denormalize society's heteronormativity, what Zizek has termed 'a guideline for a certain new feminist practice' (Slavoj Zizek, 'Psychoanalysis and the Post-Political: an Interview with Slavoj Zizek', *New Literary History*, 32: 1 (2001), 1-21, p.15). In a cheeky counter, he challenges Butler's foundational position by suggesting that the performative understanding of sex, power, and gender may in fact itself be a cultural construction, able to emerge only at a contingent moment in space and time (p. 14).
[47] Butler, p. 12
[48] Ibid., p. 13.

Schrödingian; its bodies are both in and at the same time not in the (penalty) box. That the social polity and the happy self are mutually exclusive is an easy cliché; fulfilment for the individual lies in either the sexual satisfaction of the id (for Freudians) or the satisfaction of wider bodily pleasures (for Foucault); all such satisfactions, however, must defer to the exigencies of the state. Civilisation will have its docile, productive bodies. And yet, as Freud recognised even as he declaimed its sins (and here he again differs from Foucault), it is civilisation that in fact secures the necessary conditions *for* human happiness, in the space it opens up in an otherwise indifferent universe – indeed, in the space it puts between us and the satisfactions of others: 'it is certain that all the means we use in our attempts to protect ourselves against the threat of suffering belong to this very civilisation'.[49] Though some political theorists may demur, these penetrating social frameworks seem to be the necessary trade-off, even *sine qua non*, for a workable communal life.

But even as these civilising manoeuvres are being accepted and embraced by the subject, and even as he tries to conform to them because he has come to believe in them (whether through internalising authority via the establishment of the superego, which 'answers to everything that is expected of the higher nature of man'[50] or unknowingly acquiescing to a Foucauldian/Butleresque normative power), there remains something stubbornly 'bodily'. Bodies may emerge as a consequence of power's wrestling over the cathexis of their meaning, but it is always already a wrestling. In response to the multiplicity of pressures being applied to them, bodies turn out to be far from pliant; they are rather 'an environment, representation, sensuous potential'[51] wherein meaning is contested, 'mediat[ing] the conceptual gap between individual and aggregate, nature and culture, biology and sociology'.[52] Bodies are a 'cross-roads between the self and society'.[53] Our presence and our futures are not a simple New Historicism of meaning; in *Civilisation and its Discontents*,

[49] Freud, *Civilization*, p. 25.
[50] Sigmund Freud, *The Ego and the Id*, trans. by Joan Riviere (New York: W. W. Norton, 1989), p. 33.
[51] Kay and Rubin, p. 1.
[52] Wolputte, p. 253.
[53] Roy Porter, 'History of the Body', *New Perspectives on Historical Writing*, ed. by Peter Burke (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991), pp. 206-232, p. 207.

Freud argued 'that bodily-instinctual repression increases with more pervasive and elaborate 'civilised' social constraints'.[54] The pressure applied to the id to wrest from it a compliant subject generates psychic tensions that require release in some form or other. Thwarted sexuality, which has little to do with the sexual act,[55] 'is the ineradicable, intractable source of our unhappiness',[56] an inner life that 'makes us unfit for civilisation',[57] and which requires of the superego a *continued* repression of the id. Beguiling and effective though it may be, the power of normativity lies in the *re*iteration and *re*stating of its norms. That the process is never complete suggests an ambivalence to the social settlement at the psychic level.

For Freud, the source of this ambivalence is far from difficult to locate: the

> feeling of happiness resulting from the satisfaction of a wild instinctual impulse that has not been tamed by the ego is incomparably more intense than that occasioned by the sating of one that has been tamed. Here we have an economic explanation for the irresistibility of perverse impulses, perhaps for the attraction of what is forbidden.[58]

Ambivalence remains situated at the heart of what it is to live a communal life, and with it there remains always the possibility and thus the temptation of resistance to and subversion of social power.

The shifting significations and evaluations placed upon the body evidence society's continuing claim to it as a means to express its own concerns and secure its own interests, but no less reveal the body's intention not to be so claimed; the ongoing wrestling, for example, over the 'queerness' of the queer body in all its gendered and genital nuance demonstrates a more modern collision of these investments. Perhaps for any contemporary audience of Junius, abstract perceptions of the body would likely most often be mediated through or

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[54] E. S. Freund, 'Bringing Society into the Body: Understanding Socialized Human Nature', *Theory and Society*, 17: 6 (1998), 839-864, p. 842.
[55] 'Psychoanalysis treats only 'sexuality', but the sexuality it treats is a kind of vast tautology within the human psyche, one to which what we call the sexual act is nearly irrelevant' (Leo Bersani, 'Introduction' to *Civilization,* p. xx).
[56] Freud, *Civilization*, p. xix.
[57] Ibid., p. xxi.
[58] Ibid., p. 17.

focused upon its soteriological capacity (and perhaps less abstractedly on its potential for pain). The body was central to an individual's spiritual experience, whether through analogies with the congress of the flesh in sex that enabled a more complete encounter with God, or by means of an ascetic transcendence of the flesh. In either configuration, it was still the very flesh of God that was the Christian's means of salvation, the same flesh that he took into himself as the Eucharist. And yet, even as they were preoccupied by all these figurations of the body, the readers of and listeners to these manuscripts were denied any meaningful contact with it: the ascetic must abjure; the analogous should sublimate. The Shulamite's bowels may well have been moved by the very proximity of her Lord, but the novitiates and monks of the early eleventh century could not even sate their goaded urges with a little contemplative rubbing.[59]

Could it be, then, that our penitent Eve is in fact satisfying 'a wild instinctual impulse'? That she seems resistant to the dominant social narratives embodied in the Junius manuscript even as she illustrates them surely indicates some sort of ambivalence to the social settlement. It is a discomfiture that almost invites a psychoanalytic reading. The ecclesiastical authorities were compulsively concerned with what the bodies around them were saying. No less than are ours today, the discourses they provided were intended to regulate the meanings of the flesh, through the norms iterated by the penitential literature and the hortatory and homiletic texts. To be authorised, the bodies populating the margins of such manuscripts had to conform to those paradigms; in Butler's terms, they had to perform themselves into an acceptable role. Yet, even as they are posed and framed by and within the considerable technologies of power available to society, certain of them still manage to unsettle the narratives in which they are situated, mutely arguing an alternate case, setting down a different agenda. It is a collision of power and personhood, a dual performance that enables

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[59] Prohibitions on and penalties for even solitary masturbation were onerous. Cf. Allen Frantzen, *Before the Closet: Same-Sex Love from Beowulf to Angels in America*, (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1998), especially Chapter Four.

over-determined meanings to emerge, and they seem to me to be particularly amenable to dynamic, deconstructive theoretical consideration.

This introductory analysis of the body has sought to explore the various powers operating upon it to assign meaning to it, and consequently how such manoeuvres reveal the interests and concerns of wider society. My attenuated histories of bodies, black and queer, evidence the considerable societal investment in the flesh: Victoria Climbie's little black body being made to carry the weight of modern western society's terror of racial solecism; the *fin de siècle* abjection of 'queer' that sought to quarantine – thereby creating – an aberrant type.

Sexuality, as Foucault argued, is particularly amenable to manipulation by social actants, which power often works by constructing social norms. But by virtue of its need for reiteration, the normativity that Butler describes has an inbuilt reflex to subvert itself because the iteration is never settled. This instability opens up opportunities for the self to assert itself; the nineteenth-century medicalisation of sex that created the homosexual, a novel 'abnormality', was one around which an alternative identity could congeal. Thus the analysis also evidences considerable levels of personal investment, and charts the manner in which bodies so often resist the constraints of meaning placed upon them. Hence the queer counterpunch that would reclaim the signifier from its abjecting past. It is in such comprehensive shifts of meaning especially that Butler's assertion of linguistic constructedness finds plausibility, an insight that demands acute contextual empathy from any theoretical consideration of historical bodies.

Foucault's position was in large part antithetical to Freud's (although both considered power's interest in the body to be one of pacification), but it is Freud's insights into the relationship between civilisation and the self and its subconscious that provide an explanation of the dynamic for the self's assertion of itself, and for the ambivalence of the subject. Subjectivity would seem to emerge out of the collision of the forces that these ostensibly

irreconcilable theorists detailed, and it invites an approach that is formed of a rapprochement between the two.

But, and despite the enticing concatenation, we would do well to proceed with interpretive caution. On the outworkings of desire, there is violence enough in the Penitentials; I would not wish to add to it the violence of a crass reading of Junius. Even as we seek out and interrogate the possible manifestations of an obstinate Eros, there is surely need to recognize and allow for the disparate conceptions of luxuria, theirs and ours. Conditioned as we are by our easy relationship with desire and sexuality, and the extensive cache of imagery that is its support, we must first allow that there is no such easy insouciance within Anglo-Saxon culture. Except to be prohibited in penitential literature, overt demonstrations of that which we might define as unmediated desire rarely figure in the corpus. Even that casual (because seemingly obvious) designation of 'mistress' in our earlier discussion of Cynewulf might be considered problematic, because our term carries with it connotations that may not even remotely capture the Anglo-Saxon's experience with and of the woman.[60] Do the terms, and the conceptual baggage they carry, translate across the cultures? The issue is further problematized in that expressions of what might most closely approximate our ideas of 'love', or at least of charged intimacy, are almost invariably to be found in homoerotic contexts, wherein inter-male affection appears to be not only tolerated but celebrated.

Accepting the risks of cultural miscegenation, and mindful of Jesus' caution about new wine and old wineskins,[61] there is nevertheless validity in, even a certain inevitability of, applying our modern theories to these old texts; knowledge, as Robert Oppenheimer appreciated, cannot be unknown.[62] The 'only past we can know is the one we shape by the

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[60] Margaret Clunies Ross talks at length on the practice and politics of 'other women' in the period, especially the tensions developing between Germanic cultural norms and those advanced by the Church in 'Concubinage in Anglo-Saxon England', *Past and Present*, 108 (1985), 3-34.
[61] Mark 2. 22.
[62] Oppenheimer's relationship with his offspring was complex; on August 17th, 1945, he hand-delivered a letter to Secretary of War Henry Stimson in which he expressed his revulsion over the bombing of Nagasaki and his wish to see nuclear weapons banned. He had earlier that month, however,

questions we ask [and] these questions are also shaped by the context we come from'.[63] Our interpretation risks being a pyrrhic one only if we allow it to disconnect Junius from its eleventh-century context. And the contacts between the manuscript and the theoretical approaches I would apply to it remain persuasive. Explicit as the religious and biblical injunctions and proscriptions are, the 'poems and drawings', as Karkov suggests, 'create a new and unique version of biblical history, and suggest ways in which biblical history relates to Anglo-Saxon history, as well as to the manuscript's Anglo-Saxon audience'.[64] For me, the ways it suggests are those of the audience's experience of bodies and of the prohibitions applied to them, and the manner in which lived (rather than transcribed) life is a negotiation between the two. It is a relation that has been consistently elided. Perhaps our interpretive tools have not been up to the task of conjuring lived life from dead skin, but it is just such an animation that these readings might enable. Real life emerges out of the id's encounter with power; the id does not simply yield to repression, and is rarely disciplined into a limp passivity. Rather, it seeks satisfaction through the outlets available to it.

The introduction has demonstrated the resource that bodies – both in their complexity and situatedness – offer to any understanding of society and to the individuals populating it. But this contextual specificity requires a detailed examination of the specifics of the milieu under consideration. Thus, in Chapter Two, I undertake a survey of the likely environment in which the Junius manuscript was produced, in order to position its audience within the discourses and dogmas then current. Given the ecclesiastical nature of the document, and my opening comments outlining the general direction of the thesis, the Church's attitudes to the body and to sex become central. But these attitudes were also informed by political circumstances: the continued after-effects of the Viking raids, and the not unconnected issue of clerical celibacy. Then as now, the discourses were far from settled and sometimes

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voiced his regret that the weapon had not been available for use on the Nazis. Ray Monk, *Robert Oppenheimer: A Life Inside the Center* (New York and Toronto: Doubleday, 2012), pp. 467-76.

[63] Caroline Bynum, 'Why All the Fuss About the Body? A Medievalist's Perspective', *Critical Inquiry*, 22: 1 (1995), 1-33, p. 30.

[64] Karkov, p. 17.

contradictory, and so my purview of the material encompasses both the writings of the Patristic Age and those of the late tenth and early eleventh centuries, in an attempt to capture an overarching feel for those Anglo-Saxon bodies. Only then might we conjure contemporary reactions to and understandings of the flesh, in recovering what is most certainly a highly nuanced context.

The degree of such nuance can be intuited from the number of sensually posed bodies to be found in the corpus, and in Chapter Three I explore the manner in which the erotic was deployed to facilitate a contact with the divine. That the physical senses were a particularly effective guide to a wholly transcendental spiritual encounter was a Platonic idea, and one certainly understood by the Anglo-Saxon Church. The explicit and sometimes sustained focus on the body, however, in many of the *Saints' Lives* especially seems to go beyond any simplistic didactic technique. The analysis I offer here suggests an ecclesiastical intention to arouse, to then effect the experience of a transformation – an investment in the erotic body that positions it fully within matrices of power.

Of course, such erotic deployments of power risk being misread: to rattle the cage is to provoke the beast. Hence, Chapter Four situates these erotically posed bodies within evident frameworks of control, the most easily identified of which was the requirement for ecclesiastical oversight through the intercession of knowing teachers. But as with the seeming prurience of some of the *Saints' Lives*, a number of the Riddles push the line far beyond that required of compunction or of guidance. So, too, is there evidence of interpretive coercion in, for example, the poems of *Genesis* and *Christ I*. I see in all of these texts Foucauldian/Butleresque operations of power, whether in an insistence on assigning meaning to doubtful signifiers or in the construction of norms and abjected others. My analysis here is one of structuralist power at work.

My treatment of the material to this point *is* largely structuralist. Such power is seen to be operating through many texts of the corpus, and the bodies coming out as a result seem

to align with much of what Foucault described in, for example, *Discipline and Punish*, and the *History of Sexuality* series. Their ostensibly subversive eroticism is plausibly explained in Foucauldian terms. What is then so striking is that this methodology, when applied to Eve, is found to be lacking. It does not convincingly account for the resistances I see in the Junius illustrations. Whilst certainly no less subject to the operations of societal power, hers is a recalcitrance that does not appear to correspond to that which Foucault or Butler predicted or explicated; having established and demonstrated structuralist operations of power, and the norms they instantiate and the resistances they provoke, we discern that Eve does not conform to them when analysed in light of them. It is for this reason that I choose to outline my methodological approach here, in Chapter Five, rather than at the (more usual) beginning of the thesis. It is a chronology that provides for a more coherent analytical progression: the particularity of Eve's resistance is the more defined for being offered up against the examples that precede her. It is this juxtaposition that demonstrates the need for my particular approach.

The lack I see in structuralism, which I develop in this chapter, is then filled by a psychoanalytical inflexion. Thus, whilst acknowledging their antitheses, I offer a fusion of Freud and Foucault that demonstrates their inter-relatedness, even perhaps their co-dependence, which will seek to explain the resistant image of the Junius Eve.

In possession of a methodological framework that takes into account the early eleventh-century context, I can now begin, in Chapter Six, to properly interrogate the resistant bodies of Junius. The illustrations themselves perform the usual contemporary function whereby picture engages with text, but this intentional looseness opens up opportunities for unintended narratives, ones that seem psychoanalytically suggestive. With particular close reference to Freud's 'Little Hans', amongst other works, my approach shows Eve to be involved in a discourse that completely subverts that of the text; rather than corroborating the chaste encomiums of the Church, she is shown to be a celebration of the erotic, the limbic, the idic. Eve is seen to be a succinct account of the multiple and conflicting impulses – Freudian and Foucauldian – that combine to create the subject.

My conclusion ties together the analysis, explaining the latent eroticism in a putatively sinful Eve, and also suggesting a reason why an ecclesiastical text is wholly suited to such a subversive narrative. But it further offers comment on various of our own contemporary positions and understandings, especially those of the masculine/feminine binary (and that which it supports), and the resolved use of terms such as homosociality. Many of these critical points of departure seem to me to rise from increasingly tenuous foundations, to which instability current issues of transgenderism are contributing. What is so interesting is that the subjectivity captured by the Junius Eve remains so pertinent to modern discussions around identity, personhood and self.

Two

The Curves of Ecclesia

The manner in which any putative audience might have received this Eve would likely have been largely conditioned by the dynamics of the environment of that audience; even allowing for individual differences of opinion, we might imagine an ecclesiastical reader reacting differently to a secular one. This chapter therefore interrogates the circumstances of the creation of the Junius manuscript, the likely intent of its producers, and its probable audience. Only then might we begin to conjecture on the manuscript's temperament, its position on matters of the flesh, and what it might wish to convey about them. In this, the Church's prevailing attitudes and discourses would have been highly influential, as would the political environment framing them. Thus I analyse here the pronouncements of the Patristic Fathers as well as more contemporary ones, together with the impact of the Viking conflict and that of the Benedictine Reform. From this recreation, we might begin to understand how the readers and viewers of the Junius bodies reacted to Eve, to her perfection and her sin.

This question of reader reception is an important one because our own readings of Eve will of course in large measure be configured by the relationship that past readers had with her, if in fact any such association can be recovered. Or, as John Niles puts it, the 'understanding of a literary work is deeply implicated in its past understandings by prior

generations of readers'.[1] Indeed, and perhaps worryingly for the outcomes of this project, Geoffrey Shepherd (one of the more recent readers of the Junius manuscript) has suggested that the inadequacy of our critical techniques – what he considers to be our conceptual need to find narrative unity – might deny us any meaningful access to it: 'in many respects we are in no position yet to examine these pieces. We do not know enough about Anglo-Saxon literary activities'.[2]

But I rather see this project as something of a variation on another reading, one that Joyce Hill calls (critically) the Germania tradition, which dominated the departments of Old English in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries – even as I acknowledge and agree with her critique of it. Capturing the Germanic nationalism of the moment, she quotes Greverus: 'the form in which [Anglo-Saxon] poetry is presented is rough indeed, yet full of primitive strength, even though it has been muddied and weakened by the influence of Christian clerics'.[3] The religious epics especially were neglected, and referenced only to succour a predisposition that looked for, and so found, a 'persistent Germanic spirit surfacing in defiance of the Christian subject matter'.[4] Of course, the defiances I see – seek out – are not Teutonic ones but libidinal, and yet (and perhaps counter-intuitively) this primitive strength is not necessarily always already hostile to Christianity. My appropriation of these bequests, then, turns out to be less a reductive than an inclusive one, receptive to the multifarious influences that together might produce an environment and the individual's responses to it.

What was that environment? The poems themselves return little that is conclusive; Robert Finnegan notes that critics have placed *Christ and Satan* within a 'time frame of

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[1] John D. Niles, '*Beowulf*, Truth, and Meaning' in *A Beowulf Handbook,* ed. by Robert E. Bjork and John D. Niles (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1997), pp. 1-12, p. 1.
[2] Geoffrey Shepherd, 'Scriptural Poetry', in *Continuations and Beginnings: Studies in Old English Literature*, ed. by E. G. Stanley (London: Nelson, 1966), pp. 1-36, p. 11. Criticism has of course moved on, but as we shall see later in this chapter, and also at the beginning of Chapter Five, Shepherd's comments on unity continue to resonate with and perhaps inform some Junius analyses.
[3] Joyce Hill, 'Confronting *Germania Latina*: Changing Responses to Old English Biblical Verse', in *The Poems of Ms Junius 11: Basic Readings,* ed. by R. M. Liuzza (New York: Routledge, 2002), pp. 1-19, p. 4.
[4] Ibid., p. 5.

between A.D. 680-950. […] Within this wide range, there is little or no external evidence for placing the poem',[5] which lacuna leaves an amorphous theological or secular framework on which to proceed, and from which to conjecture audiences' responses to the poetry. But the manuscript itself is more promising. It was, evidently, 'a high status anthology',[6] 'the occasion of [its] writing of some importance',[7] and 'elaborate preparations were made for the compiling […] and a not unskilful scribe was set to work copying the poems'.[8] Palaeographically, it has been dated to the turn of the millennium,[9] from the Winchester School, likely coming out of Canterbury.[10] In his 1927 survey, Israel Gollancz noted the small medallion portrait inscribed *ælfwine* on page 2, and concluded that although it is a 'fairly common Anglo-Saxon name […] it seems to me difficult to ignore the strong probability that the Ælfwine of our artist is to be identified with the famous Ælfwine who became Abbot of New Minster in 1035'.[11] G. P. Krapp is slightly more circumspect: the connection to Abbot Ælfwine is 'frail', though the association remains 'plausible and suggestive'.[12] There was also, as Rodney Thomson points out, an Ælfwine who 'was prior of Christ Church, Canterbury, at some time between 1052 and c.1074'.[13]

Accepting such originary ignorance, our firm knowledge of the manuscript's readership begins with Archbishop Ussher, whose 'achievements as an antiquary and a church historian'[14] have been eclipsed by his biblical chronology and its creative-date

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[5] *Christ and Satan: A Critical Edition*, ed. by Robert Emmett Finnegan (Ontario: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1977), p. 60.
[6] Hill, p. 3.
[7] *The Caedmon Manuscript of Anglo-Saxon Biblical Poetry: Junius XI in the Bodleian Library*, ed. by Israel Gollancz (London: Oxford University Press, 1927), p. xi.
[8] *The Junius Manuscript*, ed. by G. P. Krapp (London: Routledge, 1931), p. xi.
[9] 'The codex as it stands was compiled over a period beginning perhaps ca. 1000 and being completed (insofar as it is complete) in the second quarter of the century.' Hill, p. 13.
[10] 'This is the traditional assignation, both on stylistic grounds and because it fits the entry of "Genesis anglice depicta" in Prior Eastry's early-fourteenth-century catalogue.' Hill, p. 18. Barbara Raw concurs. For a Malmesbury-provenance alternative, cf. Peter J. Lucas, ed., *Exodus* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press,1977), and a counter-rebuttal, Rodney Thompson, 'Identifiable Books from the pre-Conquest Library of Malmesbury Abbey', *Anglo-Saxon England*, 10 (1982), 1-19.
[11] Gollancz, p. xxxv.
[12] Krapp, p. xi.
[13] Thompson, p. 18.
[14] J. Th. Leerson, 'Archbishop Ussher and Gaelic Culture', *Studia Hibernica*, 22/23 (1982/1983), 50-58, p. 50.

certainty. It is somewhat paradoxical that he should have become forever associated with one of the defining sins of our age – dogmatic religious literalism – when, in fact, in its day his computational endeavour 'signalled a revolutionary shift (from the theological towards the historical) in scriptural research'.[15] As to his opinion of the manuscript, one can only speculate; perhaps, to adapt Shepherd, he too held it to be 'mysterious as well as precious […] esoterically meaningful and theurgic […] having some connection with the ultimate forces and forms of creation'.[16] The conjunction of the poetic account of the act of creation and the man who created such a rod for himself by means of that act is, however we read it, a moment of bathetic irony.

Ussher passed the manuscript to his friend, the Dutch philologist and antiquarian Franciscus Junius, in whose hands it would enjoy wider circulation as the first Old English manuscript to be printed, in 1655.[17] It was Junius who ascribed the poems to Caedmon, and though few scholars would now attempt to press the ascription, that initial Caedmonian reading has left its lingering touch on the manuscript, where the association is still considered to be more than specious:

> the content of the manuscript accords so closely with the description of Caedmon as given by Bede […] that it requires no stretching of probability to assume that the example and incentive of Caedmon's own verse accounts in large measure for the existence of these poems, and in consequence, of this manuscript.[18]

Such a reading, of course, allows the codex to keep for itself some of the kudos of and electrifying contact with that seminal, quasi-mythical figure of English artistic history, and his achievement in marrying two such disparate inheritances. 'Such major transformations have occurred a few times in the course of English history […] Caedmon is […] perhaps the most vivid and astonishing example […] of the creative relationship that can exist between

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[15] Ibid.
[16] Shepherd, p. 1.
[17] Hill, p. 3.
[18] Krapp, p. ix.

tradition and individual talent.'[19] Value of and interest in the poems of Junius 11 was initially provoked and is somewhat sustained by their connection with that putative first cause, that first reading which cannot but define, contextualise, and inform our understanding of them (or, as Bruce Wood Holsinger argues, cloud completely our approaches to and readings of them: our 'a priori assumptions of the poem have obscured important aspects of its historical significance and indeed its very identity as vernacular verse'.[20] He goes on: 'What I am proposing, then, is that Caedmon's Hymn is not simply […] an example of four-stress alliterative-accentual verse but also, and simultaneously, a vernacular assay at accentual-syllabic verse of the sort found everywhere in contemporaneous Anglo-Latin poetic sphere').[21] The poems themselves remain stubbornly taciturn; as with so much of the poetry, in content and form they return little of help to us in situating their origins either geographically or temporally. For Finnegan, such attempts at recovery are 'all but impossible.'[22] The success of the cultural fusion they effect, however, raises questions less of Greverus' Christian corruption than of the complexity of that cultural relationship and of the milieu in which our as yet unidentified listeners and readers found themselves.

Perhaps the most influential reader of all, imposing that final editorial design upon the poetry, was the compiler of the manuscript himself. For years his influence was thought malign, what he had produced bereft of purpose, at best erratic and unfocused, at worst an enduring testament to his poor aesthetic. For Krapp, the last poem especially was something of an incongruous addendum, compositionally and functionally discordant: 'With respect to *Christ and Satan* […] there may be some question whether this poem was included in the original design of the compilation […] perhaps a fully thought out plan was never formed for the whole manuscript'.[23] Indeed, '[o]ne may lament the literary judgement of the person who

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[19] Shepherd, p. 8.
[20] Bruce Holsinger, 'The Parable of "Caedmon's Hymn": Liturgical Intervention and Literary Tradition', *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, 106: 2 (2007), 149-175, p. 167.
[21] Ibid., p. 174
[22] Finnegan, p. 61.
[23] Krapp, p. xi.

added [it]'.[24] But Finnegan's analyses of the manuscript's physical composition have not supported the general premise of aimless eclecticism: 'Since [*Christ and Satan*] ends on page 229, which is the right-hand half of the folio sheet containing on its left half pp. 211-12 (the conclusion of *Daniel*), the physical evidence indicates that the poem was intended as part of the manuscript, and was not bound in by chance'.[25] Barbara Raw is slightly more cautious: 'Although *Christ and Satan* seems not to have formed part of the original plan it is unlikely to have been added much later, for it includes an initial by the second artist',[26] and the poem 'was added before the manuscript as a whole had been sewn. The evidence from the pricking and ruling reveals that space was made for the poem by adding three bifolia to the centre of gathering 17'.[27] What adds particular weight to the notion of conceptual unity (at least for its initial readership) is that it was in its entirety punctuated for reading, with what Krapp notes to be a 'remarkable regularity and correctness throughout the whole manuscript'.[28] G. C. Thornley concluded that the punctuation 'must have been inserted for a purpose related to pronunciation in some form of public utterance',[29] with which conclusion Raw agreed: the manuscript seems 'to have been intended for the use of educated laymen […] The density of illustration in Junius 11 implies that it, too, was intended for some purpose other than private reading within the monastery'.[30] The effort involved in producing punctuation of such consistency and quality – 'unparalleled in the three other major Old English codices'[31] – is strongly suggestive that at some point early in its life, the material in Junius was in its entirety considered appropriate for public delivery. From such sparse facts, then, it appears that these seemingly insignificant little points and annotations of the manuscript may in fact assume the

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[24] Ibid., p. xii.
[25] Finnegan, p. 4.
[26] Barbara Raw, 'The Probable Derivation of most of the Illustrations in Junius 11 from an Illustrated Old Saxon "Genesis"', *Anglo-Saxon England*, 5 (1976), 133-148, p. 135.
[27] Barbara Raw, 'The Construction of Oxford, Bodleian Library, Junius 11', *Anglo-Saxon England,* 13 (1984), 187-205, p. 203.
[28] Krapp, p. xxii.
[29] G. C. Thornley, 'The Accents and Points of Ms. Junius 11', *Transactions of the Philological Society* (1951), 178-203, p. 182.
[30] Raw, 'Probable Derivation', p. 135.
[31] J. R. Hall, 'The Old English Epic of Redemption: The Theological Unity of Ms. Junius 11', in *The Poems of Junius 11: Basic Readings*, ed. by R. M. Liuzza (New York: Routledge, 2002), pp. 20-52, p. 21.

greatest relevance in our attempts to understand it, because they enable us to assert with a certain degree of confidence that the poems 'were bought together for reading aloud in a formal ecclesiastical context'.[32]

The physical evidence of the manuscript suggests that the poems were perceived as sequential, separate but connected, and meant to be read as part of a composite but continuous whole. The manuscript's content, too, can conjure a specific environment. While there is little by way of consensus, various interpretative theories demonstrate a conceptual coherence and unity for the manuscript.[33] For J. R. Hall, the 'selective interpolation of *Genesis B* into *Genesis A* seems best explained by the presence of *Christ and Satan* in the original design for the manuscript. Satan's conquest of mankind in *Genesis B* is dramatically answered by Christ's conquest of Satan in the final poem'.[34] For his 1976 reading, the 'complete cycle of poems in the manuscript sets forth the overall biblical structure of the story of redemption',[35] one that was briefly outlined by Bede in his account of Caedmon, and treated more expansively by Augustine in *De Catechizandis Rudibus*. That the 'material in the Junius manuscript approximates Caedmon's set of biblical subjects suggests that the course of sacred history is the organizing principle behind the compilation'.[36] Finnegan, writing a year after Hall, demurs slightly as to influences but not to unity: he 'conjectures […] that the original plan of the Junius manuscript had, as its rubric, something like [Ælfric's] "Ages of Man", and that the poems […] were collected accordingly'.[37] Virginia Day, less trenchantly, offers that 'the influence of the [catechetical] *narratio* is probably to be seen in *Genesis* […, and] the opening of *Christ and Satan* […] may also show the influence of the beginning of the *narratio*',[38] although her subsequent point – that so few of the '*narrationes* actually used in catechetical instruction would have survived' because '[c]atechism was always a

[32] Hill, p. 12.
[33] For alternatives, and rebuttals of coherence, see Hall's appendix.
[34] Hall, p. 42.
[35] Ibid., p. 23.
[36] Ibid., p. 24.
[37] Finnegan, p. 11.
[38] Virginia Day, 'The Influence of the Catechetical "Narratio" on Old English and some other Medieval Literature', *Anglo-Saxon England*, 3 (1974), 51-61, p. 53.

predominantly oral activity'[39] – ties in with Thornley's comments about the manuscript's being prepared for reading aloud.

De Catechizandis Rudibus was seen as a model for priests for the instruction of catechumens, was widely adapted for such use, and had a profound influence on monastic education for a thousand years.[40] The cycle of man's Fall and Redemption that it recounted was a common trope in Anglo-Saxon England; Augustine advised that treatises based upon it should contain the primal elements of the faith, climaxing in the Redemption and, ideally, an exhortation to the would-be faithful. The idea was not to repeat the scriptures verbatim, but rather select

> certain of the more remarkable facts that are heard with greater pleasure and constitute the cardinal points in history […] dwelling somewhat upon them to […] spread them out to view, and offer them to the minds of our hearers to examine and admire.[41]

The correspondences marshalled by Hall between Junius and Augustine – and Wulfstan's *Sermo 6*, another catechetical text 'structured on a similar Augustine pattern of salvation history'[42] – are persuasive, even allowing for the relative differences of genre and the impact of such on each of the text's treatment of its material. Conforming to Augustine's exordium, this 'resemblance can be seen in greater relief on considering how much material the bible contains and how little of it is actually included in the works under discussion'.[43] A most persuasive example is to be found in the Babylonian Captivity, explained by both the Junius *Daniel* and the *Sermo* as a consequence of the Israelite's disobedience; the Bible itself, however, fails to make any such connection. About this passage, Augustine reaches a similar (if typologically expressed) conclusion to the poet and the homilist; he highlights the

[39] Ibid.
[40] Among others, Virginia Day sees in Aelfric's *De Initio Creaturae* (with which he began his *Catholic Homilies*) 'a clear example of [Augustine's] *narratio* genre' (p. 56).
[41] Day, p. 52, footnote 1.
[42] Hall, p. 25.
[43] Ibid., p. 41.

‘distinction between serving God in piety or the devil in pride [which] recalls the opposition at the beginning of *Daniel* between the early Jerusalem which obeyed God and the later one which was seduced by pride, turned to demonic deeds, and chose the devil’s power’.[44]

Even allowing for a (likely) later addition of *Christ and Satan* is nevertheless to concede purpose and editorial control, a decision to include a natural balancing adjunct to the Old Testament material that reflected the Church’s typological approach to it. But to argue for intent and coherence is not, of course, to ignore the poems’ glaring compositional disparities, notably the inferiority of the final poem in relation to the others. That it is disjointed and haphazard, and lacks narrative coherence, is only emphasized by the fluency and control evident in some of the Old Testament pieces. Together with the interpolation of *Genesis B*, it is thought that the manuscript includes the work of (at least) five different poets,[45] and the juxtaposition often throws their poetic competences into sharp relief. Against the creative poetry of *Genesis B* (in its accounts of the devils’ obsessive quest for vengeance, for example; *Genesis* l. 389 on), some of the poetry of *Daniel* (Nebuchadnezzar’s dream; *Daniel* l. 104 on) seems pedestrian and even perfunctory – the needs of pedagogy superseding poetry. But if we remain troubled by such disjuncture, which may well jar with our own literary sensibilities, we need perhaps to heed Shepherd’s caution that our predisposition to narrative unity does nothing to prepare us for engagement with a very differently configured *Weltanschauung*. Anglo-Saxon poetry was often tangential, concerned less with pinning down than alluding to – a ‘looseness’ that translated into a ‘curious wavering approach to a subject’.[46] Unity is likely to be found less in the content of the poems themselves than in what they ‘enclose’,[47] whereby they form a kind of ‘envelope to a knowledge and understanding of Scripture’:[48] an eschatological, then, rather than a stylistic unity. This disconnect is only exacerbated by the Anglo-Saxons’ inclination to engage with their own culture vicariously, what Stacey Klein

[44] Ibid., p. 34.
[45] Ibid., p. 22.
[46] Shepherd, p. 15.
[47] Ibid.
[48] Ibid., p. 17.

describes as their preference for thinking 'about virtually every aspect of their society not by direct critique or description but through models offered by textual accounts of the past'.[49] She quotes Malcolm Godden: 'For the Anglo-Saxons the Old Testament was a veiled way of talking about their own situation […] a means of considering and articulating the ways in which kingship, politics and warfare related to the rule of God'.[50] This appropriation sets up creative filters that cannot but leave the source material inflected and disturbed by the needs and intentions of poets responding to their audiences.

The widely accepted orality of the manuscript, together with a credible explanation of its contents, makes easily supportable any assertion of its having assumed an educative role. It seems to me to be a more than plausible point of departure that a primary audience for which Junius was either designed or early co-opted and adapted – for whom it was to be spread out and by whom to be examined and admired – was a late tenth- or early eleventh-century lay one, brought before it for run-of-the-mill catechetical instruction.

However unlikely such a communion may seem, it might perhaps be at this point that one of the manuscript's earliest identifiable readers reaches out to us. Like Archbishop Ussher, we too find ourselves able to pinpoint the moment and milieu of Eve's creation, the instant wherein she emerges, albeit for us on skin rather than out of it. This creative moment is useful in conjuring the possible theological framework informing the audience viewing her, historically and socially situated as they were, because though 'trite and obvious to say, the effect of any work of art depends not only on the author's power and skill, but also on what is in the minds of its hearers'.[51] But while the various eleventh-century narratives to which these minds were exposed are – might be – relatively straightforward to reconstruct, recovering the attitudes of those living alongside and by means of those narratives is more difficult, especially when they are for us so distanced by time and culture. What, exactly, would our

[49] Stacy Klein, 'Beauty and the Banquet: Queenship and Social Reform in Aelfric's "Esther"', *Journal of English and Germanic Philology,* 103: 1 (2004), 77-105, p. 60.
[50] Ibid., p. 78.
[51] Dorothy Whitelock, *The Audience of Beowulf* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1951), p. 2.

catechumens have brought to the catechetical table, whereat Eve took on meaning? What, aside from an eagerness for spiritual instruction, was in their heads, and in the heads of the priests instructing them? How, exactly, were they looking at this Eve?

The easier question, of course, framing that more opaque one is, how were they *supposed* to be looking? Having advanced the premise of Eve's co-option into a trenchantly religious pedagogy, we might imagine that any pleasure we have intuited over her body is more a projection of our own, culturally-informed interests than of any obtaining to theirs. After all, the reforming period in which the manuscript was situated had compellingly problematized the sexed body. Clerical celibacy had eventually come to be the (at least strived-for) standard since a local council, Elvira in Granada, had early in the fourth century taken it upon itself to legislate that 'all bishops, priests, deacons and all clerics active in the ministry are to entirely keep themselves from their wives and not have children. Whoever shall do so will be dismissed from the clergy.'[52] The requirement for continence came to be enunciated by most of the Church Fathers; Ambrose was repulsed by the idea of married priests – he admonished, rather, that they were 'to remain strangers to conjugal intimacy, for you know that you have a ministry, whole and immaculate, which must never be profaned by any sexual relations'.[53] Having absorbed and then maintained the Old Testament association between bodily emissions (whether licit or not) and uncleanness, it logically followed that the holiness of the Eucharist must necessarily be sullied by any contact with one thus ritually unclean.[54] For Jerome, 'in the presence of the purity of Christ's body, all sexual union is

[52] Charles A. Frazee, 'The Origins of Clerical Celibacy in the Western Church', *Church History* 41: 2 (1972), 149-167, p. 154.
[53] Ibid., p. 155.
[54] Interestingly, Gregory the Great is far from proscriptive in this; his concern lay less in the emission than in the will. What debarred men and women from God was not their bodies, but their minds. Thus 'a woman should not be forbidden to enter the church during [her monthly courses], for the workings of nature cannot be considered culpable' (Leo Shirley-Price, trans., *Bede: A History of the English Church and People* (London: Penguin, 1965), p. 78). Nor need a man necessarily avoid Christian worship after sex: 'if any man is not moved by a desire for pleasure, but only by a desire for children, he is to be left to his own judgement either as to entering church or receiving the Communion of the Body and Blood of the Lord; for we have no right to debar one who does not yield to the fires of temptation' (p. 80). But 'desire itself is not blameless' (p. 80). But he, too, reaffirmed the legislation on sexual continence for priests – see Frazee, p. 157.

impure'.[55] And yet, the evidence suggests that many of the clergy in the tenth and eleventh centuries were married, and that clerical incontinence continued to be an issue.[56] Herbert Cowdry notes that the administration of Pope Gregory VII (1073-1085) was still greatly exercised by it: for one of Gregory's contemporaries, Humbert (once monk of Moyenmoutier), it provoked a 'furious onslaught […] it was unseemly that new husbands made weak by recent sexual delight should handle the immaculate body of Christ and that they should quickly return their consecrated hands to caressing the bodies of women.'[57]

By the time of the collation of the Junius manuscript the problem had anyway become more than just one of preserving the purity of the Eucharist or of maintaining an undivided focus on the flock; the continuing integrity of the nation itself was uncertain, a febrility captured by and in the hymn to defeat of the contemporaneous 'Battle of Maldon' (to which we shall return in Chapter Four). The Viking wars had left the organization and stewardship of the Church in a parlous state, a conflict of such attrition that it 'undoubtedly led to the partial disruption of the ecclesiastical organization in the North and East'.[58] More recent work has questioned the extent of the ecclesiastical disorder wrought by the Viking invasions – whether the Scandinavians merely provided an internecine English (who generally wrote the history) with a convenient politic scapegoat. As evidence attenuating the 'savage immigrant' commonplace, D. M. Hadley offers peace weaving marriages (*friþowebba*) such as that involving the (unnamed) sister of Æthelstan to Sihtric, together with the slew of Scandinavian baptisms that began with Guthrum in 878:

> These incidents suggest that the role of kings and individual ecclesiastics was central to the conversion of the Scandinavian leaders, and to the integration of them into Christian forms of lordship and kingship. It is noteworthy that there is no tradition of missionary activity from Wessex to the Danelaw. This absence may be significant,

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[55] Frazee, p. 156.
[56] Cf. Frazee, p. 158, footnote 41.
[57] H. E. J. Cowdry. *Popes and Church Reform in the Eleventh Century* (Hampshire: Ashgate Publishing, 2000), p. 270
[58] R. R. Darlington, 'Ecclesiastical Reform in the Late Old English Period', *The English Historical Review* 51: 203 (1936), 385-428, p. 385.

> especially when we remember that there *is* a written tradition about West Saxon missionary activity in Scandinavia.[59]

Doubtless, political considerations came into play: in 940, Wulfstan, Archbishop of York, accompanied Olaf Guthfrithson south, ultimately to be besieged with him at Leicester by King Edmund. The archbishop later allied himself to Eric Bloodaxe. Hadley situates such manoeuvring in the context of the independence concerns of the north of England over the waxing influence of the kingdom of Mercia.[60] But the literary and archeological evidence, sparse as it might be, is still weighted towards significant ecclesiastical disturbance. Lesley Abrams, in a balanced appraisal, notes the number of bishoprics that disappeared – sometimes never to be replaced – in the Danelaw, significant because a 'bishopric is not casually mislaid: they were, as Patrick Wormald has emphasised, 'among the most durable institutions of medieval Europe; they were not lightly abandoned, even for a time, and were very resistant to change, even by ecclesiastical authority'.'[61] Pace Hadley *et al*, and accepting other competing factors, there can be no denying the obvious and considerable and sustained denuding of ecclesiastical holdings in the Danelaw relative to the rest of the country: it seems unlikely that the Danish settlements were anything other than highly disruptive.

It seems that the entire dynamics of power between Church and state were at this time being completely reconfigured throughout much of the country, whether by the Viking attacks and settlements directly, or in direct response to them. For J. A. Raftis, there was a developing symbiosis between the political and monastic spheres during the period of the Viking troubles, and the considerable resources of the religious orders were directed to, or simply taken over by, the military effort: 'it can be stated without hesitation that in order to

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[59] D. M. Hadley. *The Northern Danelaw: Its Social Structure, 800-1100* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2000), p. 310 – italics in original.
[60] Ibid., p. 289. Similar ideological positioning also doubtless fed serendipitously into Alfred's earlier agenda to set his own reforms against the hollowed out Church he sought to conjure and then reconfigure, advanced in the Preface to his translation of Gregory's *Pastoral Care*.
[61] Lesley Abrams, 'The Conversion of the Danelaw', in *Vikings and the Danelaw: Select Papers from the Proceedings of the Thirteenth Viking Congress, Nottingham and York, 21-30 August 1997*, ed. by James Graham-Cambell et al, (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2001), pp. 31-44, p. 33.

resist major invasions nearly all monastic resources might have to be mobilised'.[62] The instinct for survival tightened the focus of monasteries, as it did of pretty much everything else, into prosecuting the campaign against the Scandinavian invaders, and that same instinct (honed, perhaps, by a more primal one) prompted the secular estate into taking a keener interest in the affairs of the religious houses: many 'kings […] during times of political crisis, rewarded officials and brought funds to ruling families, by the appointment of lay 'priors' or administrators over the lands of the monasteries'.[63] By the time of Dunstan, *Eigenklosters* (monasteries completely under the purview of secular patrons 'who had no compunctions about using them to [their] own advantage')[64] were everywhere.[65] In her analysis of nunneries throughout the Anglo-Saxon period, Barbara Yorke concludes that kings came to regard female houses especially as royal possessions, a practice even Æthelwold, the 'sternest of the reformers who persuaded and bullied kings and landowners',[66] failed to curb. Interestingly, one of Dunstan's addenda to the *Regularis Concordia* specifically warns male patrons of nunneries against abuse of their power, concerning which 'he could have had Edgar's predilection for young nuns in mind'.[67] Edgar apparently failed to seduce Wulfhild, one young nun of Wilton, but did succeed with another, Wulfthryth, who became mother to his daughter Edith.[68] The two estates enjoyed a close relationship predicated upon an easy familiarity; the lives of those following religious orders were in many respects not so far removed from the lives of the lay nobility; they moved freely in and through higher Anglo-

[62] J. A. Raftis, 'Western Monasticism and Economic Organization', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 3: 4 (1961), 452-469, p. 456.
[63] Ibid.
[64] Helmut Gnuess, 'King Alfred and the History of Anglo-Saxon Libraries', in *Modes of Interpretation in Old English Literature: Essays in Honour of Stanley B. Greenfield,* ed. by P. R. Brown, G. R. Crampton and F. C. Robinson (Toronto: Toronto Univerity Press, 1986), pp. 29-49, p. 33.
[65] The incidence of *Eigenkirchen* may also be in part due to the Germanic temperament: cf. Frazee on the non-Roman tendency toward the practice. Though traditionally held to be the villains of the piece, such noble overlords have recently been somewhat rehabilitated within a more complex picture. *Pace* Eric John, the 'tenth-century reform can no longer be portrayed as a simple attack upon the power of a lay aristocracy' (Catherine Cubitt, 'The Tenth-Century Benedictine Reform in England', *Early Medieval Europe*, 6: 1 (1997), 77-94, p. 86). Many did of course suffer financially because of the reforms, but others willingly continued to be patrons of reformed houses.
[66] Barbara Yorke, ''Sisters Under the Skin': Anglo-Saxon Nuns and Nunneries in Southern England', *Reading Medieval Studies*, XV (1989), 95-117, p. 99.
[67] Ibid., p. 100.
[68] Ibid., p. 101.

Saxon society, and enjoyed an intimacy with patrons who were very much particpants in the election of abbots and monks.[69] As Frazee notes, the ‘clergy of [such] private churches, and these soon became the majority, recognized the bishop, after ordination, as their spiritual leader, but much more concern was given to the authority held by the person from whom they received their charge.’[70]

Whatever the First Cause, the evident and increasing distance, if not detachment, of these ecclesiastical holdings from the centre was being exacerbated by the issue of married clergy, an issue that threw sex and the sexed body into acute late tenth- and early eleventh-century relief:

> There is evidence [… that] married bishops were passing on church property to their children. Rectors of churches might be members of the same families for generations – even bishoprics became hereditary. A list of the canons of St. Paul’s in London shows that in the eleventh century one-fourth were married.[71]

This was not purely an issue of theological control over what were coming to resemble clerical dynasties. Given that ‘the sons of priests might leave the church, taking what would otherwise have been ecclesiastical property with them’,[72] the problem was one concerning the most physical of the Lord’s talents. Patrimony, as a developing social norm around the millenium,[73] seemed to compound the spiritual deracination of the Church, and was of increasing Reforming concern: ‘Some of the earliest eleventh-century legislation against clerical marriage explicitly refers to such economic considerations’.[74]

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[69] Cf. Pauline Stafford ‘Queens, Nunneries and the Reforming Churchmen: Gender, Religious Status and Reform in Tenth- and Eleventh-Century England’, *Past and Present,*163 (1999), 3-35, p. 15.
[70] Frazee, p. 159.
[71] Ibid., p. 160.
[72] Megan McLaughlin, *Sex, Gender, and Episcopal Authority in an Age of Reform, 1000-1122*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p. 32
[73] Ibid., p. 16. Though conceding some of the revisionist arguments over *mutation familiale*, McLaughlin positions herself in qualified agreement with its explanation for the changes in marital practices around the year 1000.
[74] Ibid., p. 32.

This was the context into which the Benedictine reformers threw themselves, and out of which was to come the reconfiguration of the late Anglo-Saxon *ecclesia*, framed by the *Regularis Concordia*. Æthelwold, 'the leading polemicist and the author of most of the 'reform' material',[75] was much concerned with formalizing and regularizing monastic observance. But his framing of his project is significant: in the New Minster Charter, Æthelwold parallels the expulsions of the rebellious angels from Heaven, Adam and Eve from Paradise, and 'the proud and lascivious canons from the minsters, including New Minster.'[76]

> The naming of filth (*spurcitia*) as a quality of both the rebellious angels and the clergy is another significant theme. Æthelwold links the terms 'filth' and 'clergy' (or canons) several times in his writings: the reason for this was presumably that, since the clergy were often married (hence his reference to them as 'lascivious'), he, like other Benedictines, regarded them as impure and thought that they ought not serve altars or engage in any form of divine service.[77]

The wider intention behind both the document and its authors is contested. Catherine Cubitt notes that the 'adoption of the Benedictine Rule and the regulation of the monasteries were imperial policies designed to bolster royal prestige and to unite the kingdom by ideological means'.[78] Certainly the reformers, aristocratic and connected by birth, operated at the highest political levels and enjoyed enviable royal access, and it is likely that politics as much as ideology occupied the three of them. Alternatively, as Milton McC. Gatch has argued, 'the reformers intended not so much to liberate the monasteries in England from lay domination […] as to restore monastic observance in a country where it had all but disappeared'.[79] The *Concordia* itself is wholly concerned with reform of the monasteries:

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[75] Julia Barrow, 'The Ideology of the Tenth-Century English Benedictine 'Reform'', *Challenging the Boundaries of Medieval History: The Legacy of Timothy Reuter*, ed. by Patricia Skinner (Belgium: Brepols Publishers, 2009), pp. 141-154, p. 142.
[76] Ibid., p. 150.
[77] Ibid.
[78] Cubitt, p. 79.
[79] Milton McC. Gatch, 'The Office in Late Anglo-Saxon Monasticism', *Learning and Literature in Anglo-Saxon England*, ed. by Michael Lapidge and Helmut Gnuess (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), pp. 341-363, p. 341.

‘For ordinary monks and nuns in their day-to-day life the body of the *Concordia* would have been far more important than its proem. […] Far from being overtly or intentionally political, the chapters […] are concerned exclusively with the spiritual or liturgical life’.[80] One of its stipulations, contained within its preface – a uniquely English edict that digressed from its continental model, and that was ‘without any parallel in the Western Church of the time’[81] – demanded that any monastic community serving a cathedral church should *from its own body* elect its bishop, and he ‘shall conform his life in all respects to the monastic rule’.[82] Æthelwold in particular was most eager to bring about a monastic cleansing: ‘unwilling to tolerate the presence of clerks of irregular life in the cathedral and in King Edward’s New Minster’, he ordered that they be given ‘the alternative of becoming monks or departing’.[83] Regaining influence over and control of such dioceses – the desire to bring them firmly back under monastic aegis – was self-evidently of great Reforming concern.[84]

But need Æthelwold’s work have had only such high-blown, tightly focused objectives in its sights? Political strength and unity, and purity of monastic observance, need not be mutually exclusive outcomes. Nor need its purview be limited to cloistered life. In so limiting the *Concordia*’s ambition, an argument such as McC. Gatch’s surely does disservice to the monastic ethos. Nowhere did the orders expect its adherents to continue a life sequestered completely from earthly life or the living:

> it is a specific characteristic of western monasticism that an ascetic life for its own sake was deemed unsatisfactory. While always adhering in principle to the ideal of

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[80] Ibid., p. 343.
[81] David Knowles, *The Monastic Order in England: A History of its Development from the Times of St. Dunstan to the Fourth Lateran Council 943-1216* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1950), p. 45.
[82] Ibid, his italics.
[83] Ibid., p. 41.
[84] On the terminology of ‘reform’, see Barrow, pp. 147-8.

> flight from the world, [it] again and again made its influence felt in the secular world, raising its voice so as to affect the church at large.[85]

The reform of the regular canons 'transplanted the ideals of renewal from the monasteries to the chapters of the secular clergy',[86] Uta-Renate Blumenthal notes, to the extent that we can 'with only slight exaggeration' write of this post-Carolingian reform period 'that direction of the church devolved from the episcopacy to the monastic order'.[87] It can be argued that the very aim of the reformers was to reclaim 'all aspects of religious life'.[88] Lynne Grundy talks of Ælfric's teaching 'extending the knowledge of God beyond the confines of the monastery to the ordinary people',[89] while Cubitt has the Benedictine ideal as one informing 'all aspects of religious life'.[90] Despite their being so closely associated with monastic improvement, the reformers who followed in Dunstan's footsteps were 'aiming at something more than a revival of strict monastic observance. They were endeavoring […] to rouse the enthusiasm of the laity and raise the standard of the secular clergy'.[91] Indeed, '[g]reat importance was undoubtedly attached to the instruction of the laity […] and herein lies the origin of many of the homilies and translations of the period'.[92]

Ælfric, one of the most celebrated of the second-generation reformers, might in fact be characterised by the intensity of his interest in the flock: 'As is evident from his sermons, Ælfric takes seriously the task of educating the laity in the fundamental tenets of orthodox Christian doctrine and practice'.[93] His *Catholic Homilies* were 'intended to serve the needs of people who lacked the benefits of education. In the two-year cycle, the sermons offer a

[85] Uta-Renate Blumenthal, *The Investiture Controversy: Church and Monarchy from the Ninth to the Twelfth Century* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1991), p. 68.
[86] Ibid.
[87] Ibid., p. 69.
[88] Cubitt, p. 85.
[89] Lynne Grundy, *Books and Grace: Aelfric's Theology* (Exeter: Short Run Press, 1991), p. 9.
[90] Cubitt, p. 85.
[91] Darlington, p. 387.
[92] Ibid., p. 408.
[93] Robert K. Upchurch, 'For Pastoral Care and Political Gain: Aelfric of Eynsham's Preaching on Marital Celibacy', *Traditio,* 59 (2004), 39-78, p. 43.

reliable account of the basic tenets of Christian faith'.[94] The list of such basic sermons is compendious: the structure of the liturgical year, the efficacy of Mass, the significance of baptism, necessity of confession, the Virgin Birth, Trinity, Resurrection and Judgement Day.[95] Given the increasing incidence and severity of divine vengeance, as articulated through the renewed Viking raids and their ever-more punitive demands for tribute, it might have appeared to Ælfric that only a renewed purity of religious observance in *both* monastic and lay communities could assuage the righteous anger of God.[96] A faithful lay congregation, clean in thought and deed, was 'indispensable to his vision of an English Church that is able to secure in this world the peace and prosperity its members are assured of in the next'.[97]

The historical confluence of these issues could not but have sucked the sexed body into the on-going organizational and theological realignment of the Anglo-Saxon Church. Ælfric, no less than his Reforming predecessors and than his contemporary Wulfstan, was concerned with the contemporary Church's uncertain hold over its Lord's earthly talents. Sexually active priests were certainly of great concern *vis-a-vis* the integrity of the pure, disciplined Church herself. For Ælfric, married clergy were anathema; he displayed a 'disdain' for them,[98] and in his *Lives of Saints* sermon used the example of the Apostle Peter who, though initially being married, 'wiþ-cwæð siððan woruldlicum gewilnungum and wifes neawiste' (afterwards rejected worldly desires and the companionship of a wife).[99] In his sermon for Sexagesima he embarks on a diatribe, what Upchurch refers to as 'his earliest salvo in a personal war against clerical marriage that would last his entire career':[100]

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[94] Grundy, p. 2.
[95] Robert Upchurch gives a brief summary of such catechumenal sermons, and notes also Ælfric's concern with or 'concentration on celibacy within marriage' (p. 43).
[96] For example, Klein analyses Ælfric's use of *Esther* in his search for paradigms to explain 'England's current political crises' (Klein, p. 92). See also Malcolm Godden, 'Apocalypse and Invasion in Late Anglo-Saxon England', in *From Anglo-Saxon to Early Middle English: Studies Presented to E. G. Stanley*, ed. by Malcolm Godden, Douglas Gray and Terry Hoad (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), pp. 130-162.
[97] Upchurch, p. 71.
[98] Ibid.
[99] Ibid., p. 73.
[100] Ibid.

> Þæt is ðæs gehadodan mannes clænnyss þæra ðe gode þeniað. Þæt hi eallunge fram flæslicum lustum hi forhabbon. […] Witodlice ðam oðrum þe æt godes weofode þeniað þæt is mæssepreostum and diaconum. is eallunge forboden ælc hæmed; þreo hund biscopa. and eahtatyne gesetton ðone canon. Þæt nan mæssepreost oððe deacon on his wununge wifhades mann næbbe. buton hit sy his moder . oððe sweoster. oððe faðu. oððe modrie; And gif he dearnunge oððe eawunge wifes bruce. Þæt he his hades ðolige.
>
> (The chastity of a man in holy orders, of those who serve God, is that they abstain entirely from fleshly desires. Certainly the others who serve at the God's altar, that is, to priests in full orders and deacons, all sexual intercourse is entirely forbidden. Three hundred and eighteen bishops set down the canon that no priest in full orders or deacon may have any female in his dwelling, except it be his mother or sister, or father's sister, or mother's sister; and if he secretly or openly enjoys a wife that he forfeit his order.)[101]

In his letter to one Sygefyrth, he describes as 'heretics' those who disagree with his stance on clerical marriage, and asserts that anyone in any way connected with the Eucharist must be celibate. In contrast, Wulfstan, perhaps because of political geography, was a deal more pragmatic; he certainly preferred celibacy in his clergy, but differentiated between ideal and practice: 'he states that a married priest is not to suffer any loss of legal status, and was also, apparently, willing to countenance the marriage of deacons'.[102] Nevertheless even for him the most pressing choice for a priest 'was between his altar and his wife: he must not bedeck a woman with the ornaments and goods which belonged to his altar; his marriage was to his church'.[103]

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[101] Malcolm Godden, ed., *Ælfric's Catholic Homilies: The Second Series Text* (London, New York and Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1979), VI. 136-50, n.p.
[102] Peter Jackson, 'Ælfric and the Purpose of Christian Marriage: A Reconsideration of the Life of Æthelthryth, lines 120 – 30', *Anglo-Saxon England*, 29 (2000), 235-260, p. 247.
[103] Stafford, p. 9. Cf. also Upchurch, p. 76 and Jackson, p. 246.

But, of course, sex was a matter that went far beyond both the political integrity of the Church and the numinous nature of the Eucharist; the nature of marital congress was fundamental to the acceptability of the sacrifice of the self to God, whatever one's role in society. Inevitably, Ælfric's interest in the 'children' that priests ought to 'beget to God'[104] extended also to the laity's begetting: 'þæt is þæs læwedan mannes clænnys. Þæt he his æwe healde. and alyfedlice for folces eacan bearn gestreone' (the chastity of the layman is that he keep his marriage law and in the permitted manner, for the increase of people, beget children). [105] Sex was for procreation – 'gesceafta ne beoð for nanum oðran þinge astealde / butan for bearnteame anum, swa swa us secgað halige bec' (sexual intercourse is ordained for nothing other than the procreation of children, as holy books tell us) [106] – and found favour with God only if the act was entirely denuded of any lustful pleasure. Ælfric, it seems, occupied a fully Augustinian position.

Grundy speaks of Augustine's 'profound influence' on the Abbot, which may be 'discerned in all of Ælfric's writings. It is no exaggeration to say that almost all of the ideas contained within Ælfric's sermons are to be found in Augustine […] Augustine is the direct source of much of what Ælfric teaches […though he gives to them] new life […] appropriate to his own time and place'.[107] Augustine's views on sex might be framed as cerebral. In contrast to Gregory of Nyssa, Ambrose and Jerome (for whom '[m]arriage, intercourse and paradise were as incompatible […] as were death and Paradise'),[108] he posited that, in their pre-Fall condition, the original couple doubtless consummated their union, but that during such congress their sexual organs waited upon the impulses of the will – oh how far we are fallen – rather than yielding to the provocations of touch, power, pleasure. They would have experienced the 'full range of the joys of fully physical, fully social and, Augustine was quite prepared to conclude, of fully sexual beings. […] it was a singularly social and full-bloodied

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[104] Godden, *Catholic Homilies*, VI 141-2, n.p.
[105] Ibid., 137-8.
[106] Jackson, p. 242.
[107] Grundy, p. 7.
[108] Peter Brown, *The Body and Society: Man, Women and Sexual Renunciation in Early Christianity* (London: Faber and Faber, 1988), p. 399.

vision'.[109] Their sex was the occasion of a 'tranquillity of both soul and body, without the stimulus of fiery enticement and without any breach of psychosomatic unity […] sexual intercourse would be a placid obedience to the will and not a violent act of concupiscence'.[110] The passage suggests that for Augustine, perfect sex did not preclude joy in and pleasure from the act.

But even for Augustine, those halcyon bowers and boudoirs of Eden were long gone. Sex had become tainted, both because of its role in the transmission of Original Sin – Augustine 'specifically locates the transmission of sin in the sexual act'[111] – and because of its almost inevitably being sinful in and of itself. Could post-Edenic sex really ever be detached from concupiscence, from the body's will to pleasure? Augustine knew only too well the joy of sex, which 'pleasure is the greatest of all bodily pleasures';[112] his 'grant me chastity and continence, oh Lord. But not yet'[113] speaks of a man cognisant with the everyday proximity of rapture. In the *Confessions*, he reminisced:

> My former mistresses, plucking softly at the garment of my flesh and whispering: 'Do you send us away? […] From this moment unto eternity, this and that will not be permitted to you?' What suggestiveness was there in that phrase, 'this and that' – Oh my God, what suggestiveness![114]

And yet, even in the midst of these his pressing theoretical and theological musings on matters sexual, we see something of his humanity, and of his pragmatism. Although the 'most searching exponent of the frailty revealed by sexual desire',[115] Augustine was perhaps surprisingly sympathetic to a young clergyman who had been accused of deflowering a nun whilst staying at her parents' house. In a newly discovered letter, he did not appear unduly

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[109] Ibid., p. 400.
[110] Frank Bottomley, *Attitudes to the Body in Western Christendom* (London: Lepus, 1979), p. 91.
[111] Grundy, p. 95.
[112] Bottomley, p. 84.
[113] Ibid., p. 81.
[114] Vernon J. Bourke, trans., *Saint Augustine: Confessions* (Washington D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1953), 8.11.26., p. 222.
[115] Brown, p. 397.

concerned by the events: ‘for a young girl to climb into one’s bed, in order to complain about her parents’ lack of understanding was […] “a trial that can befall any serious and saintly person”’ – though he later admitted that the young man was guilty.[116] In practice, ‘couples should really engage in intercourse only with a view to conceiving children: however, as marriage is also ordained for mutual support and for the avoidance of illicit intercourse, it is only a venial sin if they have sexual relations for pleasure’.[117] A couple’s choosing to live in abstinence following menopause, or even earlier, is an ideal:

> They are better in proportion as they begin the earlier to refrain by mutual consent from sexual intercourse, not that it would afterwards happen of necessity that they would not be able to do what they wished, but that it would be a matter of praise that they had refused beforehand what they were able to do.[118]

But, within marriage (and notwithstanding our own contemporary social mores), sex is in most circumstances a necessary, even compulsory evil. Augustine is not reticent in his chastisement of one Ecdicia, who unilaterally withdrew from the marriage contract and whose husband subsequently committed adultery:

> I say nothing of the fact that I know you undertook this state of continence, contrary to sound doctrine, before he gave consent. He should not have been defrauded of the debt you owed him of your body before his will joined yours in seeking that good which surpasses conjugal chastity […] For, if you had never obtained his consent, no lapse of years would have excused you, but, if you had consulted me however long afterwards, I should have made you no other answer than what the Apostle said: “The wife hath not power of her own body, but the husband.”[119]

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[116] Ibid.
[117] Jackson, p. 248.
[118] Ibid.
[119] Wilfrid Parsons, trans., *The Fathers of the Church: the Letters of Saint Augustine 204-270, vol. 5* (Washington D. C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1956), p. 262.

Tolerated or otherwise, however, sex inevitably involved that crippling spasm of the body with that solipsistic sunburst of the mind, a moment denuded of all rationality and all control. And for Augustine, the rational was held ‘to be the highest of men’s attributes’.[120] The dominance of the will over the body was central to his thought, in that it is what separated man from the animals. But susceptibility to rationality would seem to be one of the least appropriate epithets for the sexual organs:

> Sometimes, their lust is most importunate when they least desire it; at other times, the feelings fail them when they crave them most, their bodies remaining frigid when lust is blazing within their souls. Thus, lust itself, lascivious and legitimate, refuses to obey, and the very passion that so often joins forces to resist the soul is sometimes so divided against itself that, after it has roused the soul to passion, it refuses to awaken the feelings of the flesh.[121]

This lack of dominion over the sexual organs ‘provides fundamental evidence of the disorder in fallen man’s nature, the break-up of psychosomatic unity, the destruction of an integrity which was related to the order between God and man and the unity between God and man’.[122] So great had been man’s fall, so tainted was he by this convulsive discharge of lust, that even the blessed Mary was unable to escape its corrosive stain; conceived in passion, for Augustine she was not without sin: ‘We do not free Mary from the devil because of the condition in which she was born, but on this account, that she was set free from that condition, reborn in grace’.[123] That she did not transmit her sin to her son was only because ‘Mary’s faith, not her human desire, was the context of conception’,[124] what Peter Brown

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[120] Bottomley, p. 84. In this he may be considered an ally of Boethius, who railed against the Muses of Poetry as ‘hysterical sluts […] who slay the rich and fruitful harvest of Reason with the barren thorns of Passion’ (Victor Watts, trans., *Boethius: The Consolation of Philosophy* (London: Penguin, 1999), p. 4).
[121] Gerald G. Walsh and Daniel J. Honan, trans., *Saint Augustine: The City of God, Books VIII – XVI* (Washington D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1952), XIV.16., p. 389.
[122] Bottomley, p. 89.
[123] Grundy, p. 96.
[124] Ibid.

defines as an 'act of undivided obedience'[125] wherein Mary felt not the least flicker of uncontrolled desire at the moment of conception. Ælfric may be inferred to agree. He comments that 'all are conceived with unrighteousness and born with sins with the single exception of Christ. No further qualification of the rule is made for Mary'.[126] Hence were the genitals the appropriate part of the body to be concealed before the eyes of the roving Jehovah, in the breezy part of the day, just after the Fall in Eden. They were 'the visible signs of a disordered human personality in which the body was no longer the willing servant of the mind'.[127]

Having imbued it with such significance and dark consequence, it is little wonder that sex, being in every way a 'radical ruin' in which 'carnal generation involves every man'[128] was to become so problematic for the Bishop of Hippo, and thence his acolytes. Ælfric himself was fully immersed in this august project.[129] One of his favourite remarks[130] pertained to Lenten prohibitions: 'for ði læsse pleoh . bið þam cristenum menn þæt he flæsces bruce . þonne he on ðisre halgan tide wifes bruce' (there is less risk to a Christian man that he enjoy meat than he enjoy his wife at this holy time), [131] a considerable stiffening of his source material.[132] Though restrictions on food, drink, and sex 'are at issue in […] Shrove Sunday sermons, Ælfric favours chastity over abstemiousness much in the same way he ranks *clænnyss* higher than other virtues in his sermon for Christmas Day'.[133]

Such starchiness on things sexual seems to have been something of a character trait. Ælfric goes beyond even Augustine in his strident corralling of sex: Augustine's exhortation

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[125] Brown, p. 407.
[126] Ibid., p. 97.
[127] Bottomley, p. 89.
[128] Grundy, p. 95.
[129] On chastity as a favorite topic of Ælfric, see James Hunt, *Ælfric* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1972).
[130] The opinion is Godden's (in Upchurch, p. 46).
[131] Peter Clemoes, ed., *Ælfric's Catholic Homilies: The First Series Text* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997) II.XII.202-3.
[132] According to Godden, Ælfric depended upon Haymo of Auxerre for this commentary, but he 'makes the regulation more specific', assigning 'the greater risk to violating the prohibition of sexual intercourse during Lent than to breaking the fast' (in Upchurch, p. 46).
[133] Upchurch, p. 46.

on post-menopausal celibacy is transformed into a ‘læwedra manna regol æfter boclicere gesetnysse’ (rule for laymen according to the decree derived from books), [134] wherein such abstinence becomes what Robert Upchurch calls ‘a defining feature of Ælfric’s individual, idiosyncratic conception of marriage’.[135] Such a proscription may have surprised Augustine, who though spiritualizing marriage into something contra-carnal, ‘never fixes so absolute a limit past which sex is forbidden’.[136] Indeed, whilst Ælfric is always orthodox with and faithful to the word of his sources, he is nevertheless ‘idiosyncratic’[137] in his selection and deployment of them. His use, for example, of an anecdote for his *Life of Æthelthryth* is drawn from a book – book VI of the *Verba seniorum* – the theme of which is humility and to which chastity is marginal. It is as though Ælfric, concerned with continence, ‘has tried to muster as many examples of life-long virginity as he can’.[138] And yet, despite his harshness with regard to all things sexual, almost to the point of obsession, he is considerably more attuned to God’s mercy than, for example, either Gregory or Augustine. In the fine balance between sin and punishment, he is the ‘more ready to embrace forgiveness’.[139] In confession, sympathy is *sine qua non* to its success: ‘Ðu þe styran scealt, þæt he seolf beo irihtlæht, and oðre beon istyrede, ðe þa steor ihyræð […] Ðe ðe monhatæ bið, ne mæg he wæl styræn; forþan ðe þa halga weræs ðe weron iu lareowæs beoð nu iherode ðurh heoræ liðnysse’. (You are to provide counsel so that the person himself may be set right and others who hear the counsel may be guided. Anyone who is a hater of people cannot correct well, for the holy men who were teachers in former days are now praised for their gentleness). [140]

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[134] Godden, *Catholic Homilies*, VI.125-6, n.p..
[135] Upchurch, p. 54.
[136] Ibid., p. 49. Despite Ælfric’s assertion, there would appear to be no such ‘rule’ attributable to anything written by Augustine. Godden finds elements of Ælfric’s sermons in Pseudo-Augustinian sources, but no-where does Augustine ‘require’ abstinence at any point. ‘Ælfric’s heavy insistence on bookish authority for his views suggests that they my have been unusual and controversial’ (Upchurch, p. 50).
[137] Jackson, p. 249.
[138] Ibid., p. 250.
[139] Grundy, p. 197.
[140] Ibid., p. 198.

Ælfric's world-view is nevertheless an ascetic one from which lust would be banished. But all the reformers were to a greater or lesser degree interested in policing the sexual habits of God's congregation, and increasingly in this the laity found little latitude:

> The attempts of late Anglo-Saxon reformers to regulate lay marriage were part of their more general efforts during this period to heighten standards of sexual morality. While many of their discussions centred on priestly celibacy and strictness within the cloister, clerical standards of chastity came, over time, to be urged on the laity in somewhat softened form.[141]

There is considerable circumstantial evidence for this, not least in the late tenth-century flowering of the Cult of the Virgin. Significant numbers of monasteries were dedicated, or even rededicated, to Mary. To the monks (and, given the importance attached to the Marian feasts in the Homilies, to the laity also), such a figurehead must have been a cause for pause and reflection. Indeed, it 'is difficult to explain why it captured the imagination of the reformers to such a marked degree, unless it be that they wished to adopt as patron saint of the new celibate monasticism a saint who was known above all for her virginity',[142] a virginity emphasised in the 'time-honoured phrases: 'uirgo ante partum, uirgo in partu, uirgo permansit inuiolata post partum'.'[143] Wrestling as they would have been with their own urges, natural inclinations, and incidental meetings of the flesh,[144] an experiential connection must have been forged between the congregants and the figure of the archetypal virgin, the very definition of chastity even as she expressed her fecundity in the delivery of the Christ. Remaining pure in mind and body during the natural outworking of her sex, she was proof that victory over sex was possible. In spite of her being sexed, in spite of her reproductive prowess and potential, and through the experience of reproduction, the movement of the child

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[141] Klein, p. 99.

[142] Mary Clayton, *The Cult of the Virgin Mary in Anglo-Saxon England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p. 273.

[143] Ibid., p. 88.

[144] Allen Frantzen demonstrates that the indices for sexual slippages and their punishments were comprehensive in 'Between the Lines: Queer Theory, the History of Homosexuality, and the Anglo-Saxon Penitentials', *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies*, 26: 2 (1996), 255-96.

through her cervix and past her genitals, Mary maintained her chastity. In the mystery and miracle of her insemination and its contact with and allusion to the reproductive act, her being *post partum uirgo permansit* would surely have been a topic of fervent meditation. As with the stricken Israelites surrounded by venomous, vengeful snakes, Mary must have stood as tall as Moses' copper serpent, a bright beacon of hope. She was a politic choice of mascot.

But, of course, none of these efforts were without considerable and remarkably consistent precedent. Given the Benedictine reforming impetus of the times, the founder's reported views on the conjugal act might offer a useful context to the narrative. In his *Dialogues*, Gregory the Great related how, after having imagined the joy of being with a woman, Benedict of Nursia threw himself into a bush of thorns to drive away his desires. 'Once he had conquered the pleasure through suffering', Gregory noted approvingly, 'his torn and bleeding skin served to drain the poison of temptation from his body. Before long, the pain that was burning his whole body had put out the fires of evil in his heart. It was by exchanging these two fires that he gained the victory over sin'.[145] Such mortification of the flesh might well have chimed with Boethius, whose *De Consolatione Philosophie*, though not explicitly an ecclesiastic text, certainly was one of the most widely held and influential of the period.[146] Through the person of Madam Philosophy, he commended the ascetic journey to his readers: 'Decide to lead a life of pleasure, and there will be no one who will not reject you with scorn as the slave of that most worthless and brittle master, the human body'.[147] As to the distractions and pleasures of the body, such 'pursuit is full of anxiety and its fulfilment full of remorse. Frequently, like a kind of reward for wickedness, it causes great illness and unbearable pain for those who make it their source of enjoyment'.[148] But these positions

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[145] Odo John Zimmerman, trans., *Saint Gregory the Great: Dialogues* (Washington D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1959), 2.2.
[146] According to Godden, over 80 manuscript versions of Boethius survive – Malcolm Godden and Susan Irving, eds., *The Old English Boethius: An Edition of the Old English Versions of Beothius's 'De Consolatione Philosophiae*', vol. 1 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 5.
[147] Watts, p. 60.
[148] Ibid., p. 59. The further the soul distances itself from matters of the flesh and therefore of Fate, the closer it comes to the constancy and stillness of God. According to Watts, Boethius' philosophy is the harmonious combination – 'the inspired eclecticism' – of Proclus' view of Fate and Plotinus' of Providence – Watts, p. xxviii.

merely echoed a ‘papal ideology’ that had ‘evolved at least since the time of Leo I (440-461)’.[149] Almost six centuries later, Pope Benedict VIII was still urging the 1022 Council of Pavia to enforce the ancient censure of clerical marriage. In the following generation, Peter Damian, supported by Pope Leo IX, was only the foremost champion of celibacy as he embarked on a life’s work of eradicating what he considered to be ‘the most serious abuses crying out for remedy’ – simony and clerical marriage.[150] But despite the centrality of these proscriptions to the Christian faith, the duration of their issue, and the stamina with which they were applied – culminating, perhaps, in the efforts of Dunstan, Oswald and Æthelwold, and of Ælfric and Wulfstan after them – members of the Christian congregation continued to delight in the works of the flesh, with a constancy that is chastening. It suggests that the bodies with which the Church was concerned were less than willing to rollover and capitulate. Doggedly determined as both Ælfric and Wulfstan were to re-establish the celibacy of the clergy, most priests continued to be married – testament, were any testament needed, to the frequent disjuncture between theory and practice.[151]

As with the more modern examples adduced in the opening chapter, this continued need to iterate sexual proscriptions suggests a resistance to the ecclesiastical establishment’s position on sex. The Church’s failure – or the flesh’s victory – evinces a wrestling over the status of the body and the meanings imposed upon it and its activities. Though it had never completely ceased to be such, in the context of Ælfric and the Junius manuscript the body had been honed into a locus of considerable ecclesiastical interest, wherein its sexedness had assumed engorged importance. By the eleventh century, women had come to symbolize ‘all that the male cleric was to reject. […Notions of] sexual purity readily aligned ‘women’ with all the notions of impurity’.[152] Women’s bodies ‘and the desire they were thought to provoke

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[149] Blumenthal, p. 71.
[150] Ibid., p. 71.
[151] See Darlington, p. 405.
[152] Stafford, p. 8. Though Caroline Bynum would demur: ‘Medieval […] belief made use of many binary contrasts, some of which correspond to a male/female opposition. […] But symbolic patterns do not, of course, fit into only a single grid. Moreover, in medieval writing, they can be shown to have undercut as well as undergirded traditional understandings of gender’ (Bynum, p. 16.) Indeed, ‘soul

tended to be viewed as hindrances to stricter norms of sexual conduct',[153] even when such bodies were consecrated to the service of God.[154] Among other evidence, Klein notes that 'reformers' anxieties about the female body are evident in their efforts to eradicate mixed-sex devotional arrangements'.[155] Thus, a problematized sex is at this time woven into the very fabric of the Anglo-Saxon Church.

In such an historical milieu, it is difficult to conceive of many of the reformers openly voicing (or perhaps even concurring with) Augustine's comments that 'a woman's sex is her nature and no blemish' and that, post-Judgement Day, 'her members will remain as before, with the former purpose sublimated to a newer beauty. There will be no concupiscence to arouse and none will be aroused, but her womanhood will be a hymn to the wisdom of God'.[156] Nor might we imagine them finding much humour in Augustine's appeal to the Lord that He delay His gift of chastity and continence. Sex still pre-occupied the Church, and its guardians would surely have had little interest in relaxing their pure precepts to risk letting in a Devil who would make mischief with the flock.

The picture thus painted, of a troubled and troubling body, might seem to align quite nicely with Origen, who famously applied to his own genitals Jesus' counsel about cutting away that which might cause a man to stumble.[157] His Platonism taught him of the purity of God, Whose spiritual creation existed only to experience *agape*. In the Fall described in *Peri Archon*, some of these spirits were imprisoned in bodies according to the relative cooling off of their love, some as angels, others as daemons, with humankind inhabiting the middle

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(*anima*) was gendered feminine far more often than *corpus* (in part of course because of the grammar itself)' (p. 17).

[153] Klein, p. 99.

[154] Given the remit of her paper (especially p. 99), it may not be surprising that Klein fails to mention an equally likely anxiety for any Anglo-Saxon authority, that over the male body. Even allowing for the straitening influences of Christianity, the culture's valorising of male prowess and vigour, and its historical indulgence of Sutergefederan, surely offered rich potential for eroticisation.

[155] Klein, p. 99.

[156] Walsh, *City of God*, XXII.17., p. 464.

[157] As reported by his biographer Eusebius (*Historia Ecclesiastica*); some have questioned the likelihood of this, given Origen's (later) opposition to any literal interpretation of Matthew 19, and suggested that the legend originated in slander spread by detractors. But Joseph Trigg finds no reason to doubt it: Joseph W. Trigg, *Origen* (London and New York: Routledge 1998).

ground – human beings 'who can, by Christ's grace, painfully re-ascend to their primal state of pure disembodied love by means of asceticism'.[158] It is an opinion that accords well with Boethius, who counselled that the mind seeks out heaven in willing its freedom from 'the earthly prison' that is its body: [159]

> For think how puny and fragile a thing men strive to possess when they set the good of the body before them as their aim. […] The sleek looks of beauty are fleeting and transitory, more ephemeral than the blossom in spring. If, as Aristotle said, we had the piercing eyesight of the mythical Lynceus and could see right through things, even the body of an Alcibiades, so fair on the surface, would look thoroughly ugly once we had seen the bowels inside.[160]

The body's apparent predilection for or susceptibility to pleasure, and the consequent despoiling effect on the soul, was a view widely held and constantly preached. In his *Commentary on Matthew*, Origen explicated that 'at no time should confidence be placed in the flesh, but the flesh must always be feared'.[161] Although his soteriology is somewhat opaque, it seems that he 'cannot conceive of a continuing role'[162] for the body when man is finally and properly reconciled to God, it being only a representation of the Ideal. Hence, for Frank Bottomley, Origen's ideas 'exemplify the extreme ascetical notion that the human body is an evil thing which must be shed like a chrysalis if the soul is to ascend to its proper place'.[163] Ambrose, long recognised as one of the Western Church's four leading teachers, at times 'speaks disparagingly of the body, which he describes as 'abject and vile' and as 'mud' which soils the soul'.[164] The more contemporary *Blickling Homilies* might seem to concur:

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[158] Bottomley, p. 63.
[159] Watts, p. 43. Unlike Boethius, Origen was not perhaps the most widely read of Anglo-Saxon authorities, though there is evidence of a slight influence in the period; Scott DeGregorio, 'Bede's "In Ezram et Neemiam" and the Reform of the Northumbrian Church', *Speculum*, 79: 1, (2004), 1-25, p. 3.
[160] Ibid., p. 61.
[161] Richard A. Layton, 'Propatheia: Origen and Didymus on the Origin of the Passions', *Vigiliae Christianae*, 54: 3 (2000), 262-282, p. 268.
[162] Trigg, p. 31.
[163] Bottomley, p. 63.
[164] Ibid., p. 68.

> & ofor þæt næfre efngemyndige hider eft ne cumaþ, ah heora lichoman licggað on eorðan & beoþ to duste gewordne, & þæt flæsc afulað, & wyrmum awealleþ, & neþer afloweþ, & beoþ gewitene from eallum heora gefogum.
>
> (Above all be mindful that never again shall they come hither, but their bodies shall lie in the earth and turn to dust; and the flesh shall become corrupt, and with worms shall swarm, and down shall pour, and they shall issue from their joints.) [165]

Moreover, 'Se lichoma þonne on þone heardestan stenc & on þone fulostan bið gecyrred, & his eagan þonne beoð betynde' (the body, then, shall be turned to the strongest and foulest stench, and his eyes shall then be sealed up), [166] because the 'blis & seo oferfyll þæs lichoman getyhþ þone mon to synnum' (bliss and the excess of the body leadeth man to sin). [167] The *Blickling* lesson is clear: 'we witon þæt ælc wlite & ælc fægernes to ende efsteþ & onetteþ þisse weorlde lifes; forþon se lichoma ealdaþ & his fægernes gewiteþ & on dust bið eft gecyrred' (we know that all the glory and comeliness of this life hieth and hasteneth to an end, for the body grows old, and its beauty fades and returns to dust). [168]

But, and despite foregoing appearances to the contrary, Ælfric's was far from a Gnostic Church that considered the body evil, or that elevated the soul by despising the body, setting an 'antithesis between God and matter, between body and spirit'.[169] It did not see 'the flesh as evil and therefore Christ's body as in some sense unreal'.[170] The 561 Council of Braga

> condemned the followers of Priscillian and other Manichees and anathematised those who condemned marriage and procreation, those who said that the body was a demonic fabrication, that conception was due to the activity of evil spirits or who

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[165] R. Morris, ed., *The Blickling Homilies* (London, New York, Toronto: The Early English Text Society, 1967), p. 100.
[166] Ibid., p. 58.
[167] Ibid., p. 36.
[168] Ibid., p. 56.
[169] Bottomley, p. 158.
[170] Caroline Bynum, *The Resurrection of the Body in Western Christianity, 200-1336* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), p. 26.

> denied the resurrection of the body, and those who denied that the creation of all flesh is the work of God. 'In these canons it should be noted that the Church intervened from the beginning against the decrying of matter, and especially against denigration of the human body'.[171]

Certainly they were suspicious of the flesh and its tendency to lust, but Western Christianity considered the body an essential component of personhood;[172] the 'earliest Christians showed no lack of respect for the body, its dignity and significance'.[173] For Augustine (especially in his writings post-400), the pre-Fall couple shared the same bodies and sexual pleasures as we do. God's design was perfect and its beauty inherent, a beauty that had not been so diminished by the Fall. God's intent was that they use these bodies for enjoyment, both in themselves and as vehicles for social participation. Its facility for experiencing the senses made sensuous engagement with the world an inevitable consequence of His design and therefore His purpose, and the joy and satisfaction of touch and taste a natural predisposition that inevitably and naturally extended to the pleasures of tactile contact and congress. The complementary and symbiotic nature of the body and soul was thus a gift of heaven. It was for this reason that 'death was the bitterest sign of human frailty, for it frustrated the soul's deepest wish, which was to live at peace with its beloved, the body. […I]ts frightening wrench revealed the strength of the binding force associated with the "sweet marriage-bond of body and soul".'[174] In some of his better-known works – *De Noe; Hexaemeron; De Institutione virginis; Explanatio psalmorum; De Officiis ministrorum* – Ambrose was positively effusive over the glories of the body, referring to it variously as beautiful and useful, a superb example of divine art, and an image in miniature of the cosmos itself.[175]

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[171] Bottomley, p. 233.
[172] Indeed in her discussion of embodiment, Caroline Bynum considers the early mediaeval position somewhat akin to our own, where personhood seems contingent upon a specific, relational bodiliness (Bynum, *Resurrection*, p. 11).
[173] Bottomley, p. 158.
[174] Brown, p. 405.
[175] Bottomley lists a number of Ambrose's eulogies: p. 66.

What particularly exercised the Fathers of the Church was the body's susceptibility to decay and corruption, its movement away from a serene engagement with the things of God. Augustine's Sermon 362 'explicitly equates body with flux', and asserts that 'all dynamism must disappear in heaven if we are to be redeemed'.[176] Even prior to the circumstance of death itself and the subsequent material breakdown, the everyday processes of digestion are proof of the Fall, and of the body's estrangement from God. A need for food betrayed the body's lack of self-containment and sufficiency: in 'the visions and tales of the early Middle Ages, heaven was the realm of gold, gems, and crystal, whereas hell was the place of digestion and excretion, process, metamorphosis, and fluids'.[177]

And yet it was this very body, changeable, corruptible, subject to process, that was the site of absolution and reward. Pace Origen,

> from the second to the fourteenth centuries, doctrinal announcements, miracle stories and popular preaching continued to insist on the resurrection of exactly the material bits that were laid in the tomb. […] The stuff and structures of earthly body [were] integral to glorified body, and glorified body integral to self.[178]

Heaven welcomes the body; Christ's body itself had risen, evidenced by the empty tomb. Though not for him the corruption, what must rise for everyone else 'is the site of our rottenness. It is corruption that puts on incorruption. *Caro salutis est cardo*: the flesh is the pivot of salvation'.[179]

Of course this pivotal role for the corpus could not be otherwise, given that it was Christ's very flesh that saved. In *Christ III* we are chided:

> Hwæs weneð se þe mid gewitte nyle
> gemunan þa mildan meotudes lare,

[176] Bynum, *Resurrection*, p. 102.
[177] Bynum, 'Why all the Fuss', p. 25.
[178] Bynum, *Resurrection*, p. 10.
[179] Ibid., p. 43.

ond eal ða earfeðu þe he fore ealdum adreag,
forþon þe he wolde þæt we wuldres eard
in ecnesse agan mosten?
Swa þam bið grorne on þam grimman dæge
domes þæs miclan, þam þe dryhtnes sceal,
deaðfirenum forden, dolg sceawian,
wunde ond wite. On werigum sefan
geseoð sorga mæste, hu se sylfa cyning
mid sine lichoman lysde of firenum
þurh milde mod, þæt hy mostun manweorca
tome lifgan, ond tires blæd
ecne agan.[180]

(What does he expect who will not in his conscience remember the merciful law of the Creator, and all the sufferings that he before endured for mankind because he wished that we might possess forever the glories of the heavenly dwelling place? So that will be a sadness on the grim day of the great judgement when he who, corrupted by deadly sins, must look upon the Lord's wounds, his injuries and tortures. With weary hearts they will see the greatest sorrow, how the King himself with his body released them from sin by means of his merciful spirit, that they might live free from sin and own forever the hopeful joy of glory.)

Christianity is the religion of the body; its 'central belief [is] in restoration'.[181] Christ's flesh, a broken body hanging from a cross, made possible the promised resurrection of his followers' flesh, exemplified by his own rising from an abject, lifeless state to a glorified one. It required of him that he actually be a man, be instantiated as flesh, the divine inhabiting the corporeal: the 'essence of Christianity lay in the 'enfleshing' of God, belief in the Incarnation which was the full and complete union of matter and spirit, of God and man,

[180] *The Exeter Book*, ed. by George Philip Krapp and Elliott van Kirk Dobbie (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1936), p. 36, ll. 1199-1212.
[181] Bottomley, p. 158.

in the historical person of Jesus of Nazareth'.[182] For the early Church, the continuity of Christ's flesh with that of his mother was an essential element of his Incarnation:

> As Rufinus pointed out: Christ's birth from Mary had been no prodigious anomaly. […] In the conception, the birth, and the nurturing of Christ, every human physiological process had been respected, except for the hot act of male procreation and the wrenching-open of the womb at childbirth.[183]

It was a concept that opened up the transcendent thought that God had experienced sensuously the travails of His creation; the beauty of the artifice lay in the notion that Christ's becoming man was, ultimately, a gift of empathetic solidarity. Of this hypostatic relationship, Origen wrote in *Peri Archon* that

> it is to be believed that the Power of the divine majesty, that very Logos and Wisdom of God, in whom all things visible and invisible were created, existed within the contours of that man who appeared in Judaea, and, in addition, the Wisdom of God entered a woman's womb, was born a baby, and uttered a cry just like other howling babies.[184]

Christ's experience of the flesh had given him an immediate contact with man. In an adroit inversion, the Church Fathers considered man's own experiences of the flesh to be an invaluable tool in the pursuit of contact with the divine. What might shock 'lovers of the austere Origen, denigrator of the flesh and devotee of realities solely spiritual'[185] is the importance he attached to the experiences of the flesh to uncover the knowledge of the Lord. Although wary of the potential for the *Song of Songs* to be misconstrued, Origen

> resolutely confirms its eroticism. Its lush imagery is no embarrassment to be papered over by a sterile, spiritualizing interpretation, but an opportunity to draw on a

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[182] Ibid., p. 159.
[183] Brown, p. 444.
[184] Trigg, p. 25.
[185] Patricia Cox, 'Origen and the Bestial Soul: A Poetics of Nature', *Vigiliae Christianae*, 36: 2 (1982), 115-140, p. 115.

> profound human experience to illuminate the human relationship with God. […] To sever the connection between a fundamental human emotional drive, sexual love, and the love of the bride for her divine bridegroom would destroy the homonymy between the inner and outer man, between human beings created in the image of God and human beings as created from the dust of the earth.[186]

It might seem, then, that Origen, like so many others, has had the sensuous sucked out of him. The reductive 'othering' that sees the Late Antique stripped of its communion with the flesh has become a convenient commonplace; Patricia Cox rails against simplistic modern readings that situate such thinkers in a natural world that is to them somehow less than natural, and to which they must inevitably respond in a 'madness' of 'physical torment'.[187] Perhaps, deploying certain cut and paste clichés, we have found it easy – comforting – to intuit a relational dysfunction around the historical body, an arm's length contempt for it the better to throw into relief our own diligently gathered and jealously guarded liberal truths about the flesh. But the people of the past were not averse to using their lips, too, in the search for the transcendent.

This embrace of the sensuous was a method of exegesis developed initially by Philo to reconcile Hellenism and Judaism, and then refined by Origen, whose outlines for allegorical practice 'were followed, with some variations, to the end of the Middle Ages'.[188] As Gregory (Ælfric's main theological influence) explained in the preface to his *Book of Job*, we

> first lay the foundations in history; then by following a symbolic sense, we erect an intellectual edifice to be a stronghold of faith; and lastly, by the grace of moral instruction, we as it were paint the fabric in fair colours. […] For the word of God both exercises the understanding of the wise by its deep mysteries, and also by its superficial lessons nurses the simple-minded. It presents openly that wherewith the

[186] Trigg, p. 47.
[187] Cox, p. 116.
[188] Hunt, p. 47.

little ones may be fed; it keeps in secret that whereby men of loftier age may be rapt in admiration.[189]

Such a technique held multiple meanings in suspension, enabling intuitions to flow freely between spheres of apprehension – what Bishop terms a 'movement from the passions of the flesh to the passions of the spirit',[190] in which the fleshly passions are foundational. This is not in any sense a fleeing from the body and its experiences, but rather a conditioning of it to be a conduit to or a nexus of the Divine. The senses are, as Origen says in his *Commentary on the Song of Songs*, 'the "windows" through which the word of God enters the soul'.[191] The sensuous world was not so much to be feared as embraced 'as an enigmatic bearer of the kingdom of heaven itself'.[192]

Ælfric himself embraced these models, 'although he used them critically and with considerable sensitivity to the needs and capacities of his audience':[193]

Þeahhwæðere þa wundra þe crist worhte oðer ðinc hi æteowdon þurh mihte. 7 oðre þing hi getacnodon þurh geryno; He worhte þa wundra soðlice þurh godcunde mihte; 7 mid þam wundrum þæs folces geleafan getrymde: ac hwæðre þær was oðer þincg digle. on ðam wundrum. æfter gastlicum andgite.

(But then the miracles which Christ wrought demonstrated one thing through power and another thing they betokened through mystery. He wrought these miracles truly through divine power, and with these miracles confirmed the people's faith; but yet there was another thing in those miracles, in a spiritual sense.) [194]

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[189] Ibid.
[190] Nadean Bishop, 'Denial of the Flesh in Origen and Subsequent Implications', *Mystics Quarterly*, 14: 2 (1988), 70-83, p. 76.
[191] Cox, p. 117.
[192] Ibid., p. 119.
[193] Hunt, p. 48.
[194] Peter Clemoes, ed., *Aelfric's Catholic Homilies: The First Series Text* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), I.X., ll. 34-8, p. 259.

The nature of the body and its ability to engage passionately with the sensuous world is, for most of the Fathers of the Church, a gift of God. Supposedly so antithetical to the body, Origen could write that Wisdom 'not only mixes her wine in a bowl; she also supplies fragrant apples in plenty, so sweet that they not only yield their luscious taste to mouth and lips but keep their sweetness also when they reach the inner throat'.[195] He knew that for the throat of the 'inner man' to properly taste such sweet wisdom, the spirit must yield to the flesh. The body leads the soul. It is the flesh's access to the pleasure, the sensuousness, immanent in the act that enables instruction of the spirit. For

> a late antique ascetic, touched by the views of Origen, there was nothing at all strange in bursting into tears when sitting down to lunch: the very act of eating physical food, in the state of near-starvation induced by monastic fasting, reminded him of – we might say, put him in contact with – the rich feast of spiritual delight from which Adam had turned away in Paradise.[196]

The attitude of the audience of the Junius manuscript to the bodies within it would therefore likely have been nothing if not complex and nuanced, informed as it was by myriad eclectic sources all intent on having their say. The ambivalence was born of a disfiguring event in a distant history, but also of an inheritance of a disparate bequest. Much of the Patristic and Classical material available to the late Anglo-Saxon Church, and considered by it to be authoritative, was in fact internally inconsistent. Not until the efforts of Ælfric and, to a lesser extent Wulfstan, were any attempts made to author a coherent narrative from them.[197] Both monks and laity would have been fully appreciative of the beauty with which they came into contact whilst always appreciating that so-close beauty's potential to corrupt. As Augustine recognised, the body, even as it bore the convulsive taint of sin, endures as testament to the goodness of God:

[195] Cox, p. 115.
[196] Brown, p. 406.
[197] Cf. Milton McC. Gatch, *Preaching and Theology in Anglo-Saxon England: Ælfric and Wulfstan* (Toronto and Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 1977).

> There is in a man's body such a rhythm, poise, symmetry, and beauty that it is hard to decide whether it was the uses or the beauty of the body that the Creator had most in mind. It is clear that every organ whose function we know adds to the body's beauty […] I have in mind the rhythm of relationships, the *harmonia* as the Greeks would say, whereby the whole body, inside and out, can be looked upon as a kind of organ with a music all its own. […] if this total organic design could only be discerned […] there would be revealed to the soul so ravishing a beauty.[198]

But it was that very beauty, ravishing glory to and of God, which was the problem. The divine resonance of the fleshly symphony may not have been in doubt; the difficulty lay in appreciating it in all *clænysse* without introducing the theologically dissonant contact of a desire focused upon the flesh. Particularly thin was that sensuous line beyond which an individual slipped into sin. The 'passions are divine blessings, bestial food given to man by the grace of God',[199] but these 'divine beasts have a monstrous side'.[200] The power of the body occupied a liminal space – opaque, contested, protean – as though (as indeed it was) the ground zero of an encounter between the Devil and the Divine. A man's response to the beauty of a woman (or of a man) might well be concentrated in and enacted through his loins, and yet, as evidenced by the *Song of Songs*, it was a horizontal *pas de deux* that perpetually re-enacted and made accessible Christ's furious love for his Church. At the moment of orgasmic displacement, it was possible for a man to glimpse the completely immersive, shuddering joy of being touched by God's love, quivering in anticipation of the glorious Coming of the Lord. And yet the will to orgasm (long since denuded of its Roman numinescence) threatened damnation. The danger with these bestial gifts of God is that we 'lose the scent of the Spirit's breath in the beast's panting'.[201]

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[198] Walsh, *City of God*, XXII.24., p. 486.
[199] Cox, p. 131.
[200] Ibid.
[201] Ibid.

It might seem a strange miscegenation, somewhat similar in degree to that hypostatic union of God and man: co-opting the most primitive of drives to chase the most exalted of ambitions. It is the Ünter in the service of the Über. The appetites were anathema; Gregory taught that 'eating is no fault, but being hungry originates with Adam's sin' because hunger is a product of 'this infirmity of our nature',[202] and Augustine that 'bodily pleasure […] is preceded by a kind of appetite, a sensation in the flesh corresponding to a desire in the soul, familiar in the form of hunger and thirst, and commonly called *libido* when connected with sex'.[203] Surely, to incite them by repeatedly referencing the pleasure to which they led was to risk, if not sinful indulgence, then schizophrenic confusion. To successfully incorporate them into the service of the Lord, then, required the exercise of superhuman power, both of the subject in fighting the seductions of carnal love being aroused, and of the Church in enforcing acceptable meanings upon febrile emotions.

Despite the internal discord, it seems likely that Junius was conceived of, complied for, and used as a catechumenical document, in the late tenth or early eleventh century. Given that religious and political environment – the post-Viking reconfiguration of the secular and religious landscape, the Benedictine Reforming impulses – the manuscript was unavoidably situated within discourses that closely scrutinized and policed the body. Celibacy and chastity were of keen interest, promoted for laity and demanded of clergy, connected as they were with the purity of the flock and its worship.

But we have also seen the nuance of the Church; it was far from a Gnostic hater of the flesh, but rather a believer in its restoration. The senses were implicit in this movement; sensuality could be embraced as a means to understand the possible intimacy of the Christian's relationship with God. The value of the flesh resided in its direct, unmediated access to a pleasure that anticipates a love of God. It was this complexity that put the body into considerable theological and therefore practical tension.

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[202] Sherley-Price, p. 79.
[203] Walsh, *City of God*, XIV.15., p. 387.

Thus, for those didactic monks and eager catechumens looking on, Eve's breasts – paps that had nourished mankind into existence, and which anticipated the perfect and chaste paps of Mary,[204] succour of God – proffered both life and death. Out of them poured knowledge of God's love and the joy of His presence, and to imagine supping at them could be to conjure an exquisite communion with the Father. But to dwell on such communion via the flesh, to long for it, to build up an anticipation for it that might climax in an ecstatic fusion with the heavenly, also risked goading something decidedly physical. Having been blameless but then enjoined in sin, Junius Eve's so-close-to-perfect body was certainly the archetypal fallen body, but in dwelling on it, what sort of after-life would it offer? I shall, in the following chapter, explore the ways in which the Church sought to transform the erotic into the numinous.

[204] The use of 'paps' is Origen's (Bishop, p. 74).

Three

‘These are they who were not defiled with women’[1]

‘We see by this it was not sex, / We see we saw not what did move; […] /
So must pure lovers’ souls descend / T’affections, and to faculties, /
Which sense may reach and apprehend, / Else a great prince in prison
lies’[2]

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The interest and even the participation in the pleasures of the body, evinced both by the consistency of the Penitentials and the fulminations of the Church Fathers, position sensuousness as a problem for the Anglo-Saxon Church, and the earnestness of these sources perhaps accounts for the negative proscriptions that have come to organize our view of the time. But the people of the mediaeval period were not immune to beauty and to the sensual, not least because of their didactic capacity. Indeed, bodies were understood to be an invaluable resource in developing an intimacy with God. As this chapter will seek to show, this regard informed many presentations of the body in the ecclesiastical literature, which sought to deploy the erotic, albeit in highly regulated frameworks. Though tightly controlled, I see the sustained focus on bodies – especially in the explicitness of description in some of

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[1] Revelation 14: 14 – King James Bible.
[2] John Donne, ‘The Extasie’, *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*, 7th ed., vol. 1, ed. by M. H.Abrams (New York and London: W. W. Norton & Company, 2000), ll. 31-68.

the *Saints' Lives* and in certain poems – as a device intended to arouse the audiences coming to them. The dramatic juxtaposition of, the tension developed between, sex and faith required that the character within the narrative (and also the reader/listener without) wrestle the transcendent from the erotic, thereby increasing the savour of the spiritual aspect. It was a technique that could be pushed into what might be considered disquieting territory for a society of such apparent sexual reserve, to the extent that some modern critics have designated them pornographic – a description I reject. But the texts I examine here do not seem afraid to foreground dramatic tableaux of sexed bodies, opening up a sanctioned space for bodies in pleasure, that viewers of them might experience first hand the educative power of their own aroused flesh.

Alcuin certainly recognized the richness of the resource of the body; in his *Vita II Vedastis episcopi Atrebatensis*, he explained that 'beauty can lead to a right contemplation of God: beauty in men as in women, who are then *venustusa* or *pulcherra*, is a vehicle for the contemplation of God'.[3] Of ascetics 'in all ages', Umberto Eco could write about a keenness of sensuous apprehension that threw up a 'tension between the call of earthbound pleasure and a striving after the supernatural'.[4] The intuition of a more profound dimension to beauty that was revealed to them by the 'victory' of their debilitating regimen allowed them the peace to 'gaze serenely upon the things of this earth, and to see their value'.[5] True beauty is in this way a metaphysical phenomenon, partaking in but remaining detached from things earthly. But such 'intelligible beauty was in the medieval experience a moral and psychological *reality*' that impacted upon its real world cognates via 'doctrinal systems' intended to 'justify and guide' their use. [6] Eco paraphrases C. Halm:

> Alcuin admitted that it was easier to love beautiful creatures, sweet scents, and lovely sounds (*species pulchras, dulces sapores, sonos suaves*) than to love God. [...] But he

[3] Stephen J. Harris, 'Bede and Gregory's Allusive Angels', *Criticism*, 44: 3 (2002), 271-289, p. 274.
[4] Umberto Eco. *Art and Beauty in the Middle Ages*, trans. by Hugh Bredin (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1986), p. 6.
[5] Ibid.
[6] Ibid., p. 5 – his italics.

added that if we admire these things in their proper place – that is, using them as an aid to the greater love of God, then such admiration, *amor ornamenti*, is quite licit.'[7]

The concept of an approved sensuousness leading to a higher level of comprehension that then effectively negates or detaches from its origin was a Platonic one. His notion of parallels and images, echoes and shadows portending in ascending hierarchies ever purer and more exquisite contacts, was one in which Eros was fully implicated. [8] Any meaningful understanding of the Good could only originate in the erotic: for David Halperin, 'philosophy begins not in wonder but in desire'.[9] The language in which Plato frames and advances his epistemology borrows from the Greek pederastic tradition; the seeker of knowledge is active, manic, aggressive in his pursuit of the transcendent objects of knowledge, which remain 'passive insofar as they move us by eliciting our desire; as Aristotle puts it in the twelfth book of the *Metaphysics*, the final cause produces motion in the same way as an *eromenos*'.[10] The analogy is telling; the desiring older partner in such a relationship (the *erastes*) was the active agent in pursuing the indifferent and unmoved object of his affection (the *eromenos*). In depicting the philosopher as *erastes*, Plato is situating knowledge – and its ultimate objective, contact with the Good – as having its origins in completely sensual urges. The same urge was common to both activities: thus one 'cannot seek wisdom without first being possessed by the *mania* of erotic desire. […] Beauty evokes our desire; of all the objects of intellection, beauty alone is immediately accessible to our senses'.[11] The structure of Platonic thought moved logically from the spark provided by the physical sensuousness of beauty to the conclusion of contemplation of Beauty itself, a progression detailed in the *Symposium*:

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[7] Ibid, footnote 2.
[8] Though 'Plato in the Middle Ages rarely exercised his power in a direct way through his own works, he was effective, in a refracted way, through the works of others' (Ernst H. Kantorowicz, 'Plato in the Middle Ages', *The Philosophical Review*, 51: 3 (1942), 312-323, p. 314). There is evidence of knowledge of the *Timaeus* in a holding of Lanfranc: Helmut Gneuss, *Handlist of Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts and Manuscript Fragments Written or Owned In England up to 1100* (Arizona: Arizona Centre for Medieval and Renaissance Studies Tempe, 2001), p. 171. Eco has it that 'Classical pancalism [was] translated in medieval times into even more emphatic terms – a consequence in part of the Christian sentiment of love for God's handiwork, and in part also of neo-Platonism' (Eco, p. 18.)
[9] David M. Halperin, 'Plato and Erotic Reciprocity', *Classical Antiquity*, 5: 1 (1986), 60-80, p. 74.
[10] Ibid., p. 72.
[11] Ibid., p. 74.

> The man who would pursue the right way to this goal must begin […] by applying himself to the contemplation of physical beauty. […] He will first fall in love with one particular beautiful person […] later he will observe that physical beauty in any person is closely akin to physical beauty in any other. […] he will become a lover of all physical beauty. […] The next stage is for him to reckon the beauty of soul more valuable than the beauty of body. […] In this way he will be compelled to contemplate beauty as it exists in activities and institutions. […] From morals he must be directed to the sciences and contemplate their beauty also. […] This beauty is first of all eternal […] he will see it as absolute, existing alone with itself, unique, eternal, and all other beautiful things as partaking of it. […] This is the right way of approaching or being initiated into the mysteries of love, to begin with examples of beauty in this world, and using them as steps to ascend continually with that absolute beauty as one's aim […] and know at last what absolute beauty is.[12]

God is visited via the senses, especially the libidinal ones; the relationship between things beautiful and things spiritual was widely accepted. The importance of the sensuous body can be detected in Anglo-Saxon approaches to their own bodily encounters. Bodies beautiful were in fact instrumental to their Christianisation.

Gregory (or at least in Bede's portrayal of him) was fully cognisant with the symbiosis; the future Pope's encounter with the slave boys in Rome that would precipitate the mission to England is loaded with erotic potential. Wandering through the forum, he comes upon the two youths 'exposed for sale', and loiters, to look 'at them with interest'.[13] The reason for such absorption is made explicit in the text: their appearance is so striking. Leo Sherley-Price's translation describes them as having 'fair complexions, fine-cut features, and fair hair', which rather pedestrian rendering dulls the intent of Bede's Latin somewhat. For Stephen J. Harris, *candidus corporis* might be better rendered 'dazzling white bodies', as the

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[12] Walter Hamilton, trans. *The Symposium: Plato* (London: Penguin, 1951), pp. 92-4.
[13] Sherley-Price, p. 98.

adjective frequently references the shining of angels. He also notes that *venustus* – 'fine-cut' – 'connotes grace, charm, proportion, and harmony. Classical use […] is sometimes markedly sexual, but centuries later, it seems to generalize and to become roughly synonymous with *pulcher*',[14] while Uppinder Mehan avers that the adjective 'connotes the loveliness of women seen as an object of erotic attraction'.[15] That such loveliness might be wasted and lost in the service of the Devil dumbfounds Gregory, who, learning of their spiritual ignorance, cannot conceive of such outward beauty having no inner correlate. How could such beauty in the flesh not mirror a beauty of the soul?[16]

Gregory's lingering gaze is situated beyond a purely aesthetic appreciation of the boys, but it was an understanding that might perhaps have been complicated for Bede's audience had they appreciated the likely undress of the merchandise being paraded before him. Slaves were often exposed the easier for potential buyers to evaluate them, and the eyes playing over their stripped bodies would likely as not have been assessing their potential for sexual pleasure. John Boswell suggests that a 'very large percentage of [children sold into slavery] were used for sexual purposes, at least from adolescence until they were old enough to be employed as labourers. The testimony of both pagan writers and Christian apologists bear witness to the ubiquity of this practice'.[17] But whether his audience knew this or did not, Bede is of course far from impugning the reputation and character of Gregory, which was later to suffer from the anti-Catholic rhetoric that prevailed following the Reformation; John Bale expressed the sentiment when he accused Gregory, along with all Catholic clergy, of being either 'sodomites or lechers'.[18] But the beauty of the boys that Bede makes so

[14] Harris, p. 273.
[15] Uppinder Mehan and David Townsend, ''Nation' and the Gaze of the Other in Eighth-Century Northumbria', *Comparative Literature*, 53: 1 (2001), 1-26, p. 9.
[16] This account, with its Platonic underpinning, reminds me of Aschenbach's similarly structured encounter with the teenage Tadzio in the 1971 film of *Death in Venice*. The older man's struggle to wrestle the transcendental from the erotic seems fully sensible before the striking blond beauty of Bjorn Andresen's Tadzio. Set alongside Junius' suddenly aware Eve, it could have stood as a cautionary diptych on both the value and danger of sensuous knowledge.
[17] John Boswell, *Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality: Gay People in Western Europe from the Beginning of the Christian Era to the Fourteenth Century* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1981), p. 144.
[18] Harris, p. 273.

captivating for the aged man is germane to the development and outcome of the narrative; the erotic contact and all that it implies is immediately co-opted into a sanctioned, creative energy intent on securing their salvation. It is their very beauty that has rendered them deserving of God's grace, and facilitated the means of it by entrancing the agent.[19]

Bede's is therefore a fully intuitive use of the sensual to conjure the divine and precipitate a contact with God. Though corrupting and to be feared, a Christian's appetites – and especially the sexual appetites – paradoxically occupied a didactic position; as we have seen, they tutored the soul to God. In *Soul and Body*, Soul bemoans the body's fixation on assuaging the flesh, on its preoccupation with appeasing the appetites, but such preoccupation forms the corollary for Soul's own desire for the body of Christ: 'Wære þu þe wiste wlanc ond wines sæd, þrymful þunedest, ond ic ofþyrsted wæs godes lichoman, gastes drynces' (You were profligate with food and glutted with wine; you swelled up, full of your own glory, and I thirsted for the body of God and spiritual drink.) [20] The desire for God is presented as a need every bit as natural and essential as that for physical sustenance, a satiation of course realised by means of the Eurcharist but conjured, both by words and analogy, in terms much more corporeal. Similarly exploring the potential for erotic contact with the divine, this time between Christ and the Cross, The *Dream of the Rood* is the work of 'a master of compunction'.[21] With the Lord intent on climbing up onto it, the Rood tells of seeing 'þa Frean mancynnes efstan' (the Lord of mankind hasten over), and then 'Ongyrede hine þa geong hæleð / […] strang and stiðmod; / gestah he on gealgan heanne […] / Bifode ic þa me

[19] For a reading that perhaps aligns more with Bale than Plato, see Kathy Lavezzo ('Gregory's Boys: The Homoerotic Production of English Whiteness', in Carol Pasternack and Lisa M. C. Weston, eds., *Sex and Sexuality in Anglo-Saxon England: Essays in Memory of Daniel Gillmore Calder* (Arizona: Arizona Centre for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2004), pp. 63-92. I would suggest that her identification of 'national and queer desires in Anglo-Saxon England' (p. 68) is slightly too much of an anachronistic imposition, a trans-cultural projection that distorts more than it unpacks. In her search for evidence of such modern sins, for example, she misreads Ælfric's account of Benedict. Her assertion that in 'rendering the boy black […] the sermon makes the thought of sex between the wayward monk and the devil impossible' (p. 80) completely reverses the act of seduction that does in fact take place. The monk *is* tempted by the Devil in the guise of a 'blacan cildes'. She does, however, offer interesting suggestions in relation to the inter-generational same-sex contact within monasteries that so exercised the Church.
[20] G. P. Krapp, ed., *The Vercelli Book* (London: George Routledge & Sons, 1932), p. 55, ll. 39-41.
[21] S. A. J. Bradley, ed.and trans., *Anglo-Saxon Poetry* (London: Orion, 2004), p. 158.

se beorn ymbclypte'.[22] Bradley has this as 'the young man stripped himself, strong and unflinching. He climbed upon the despised gallows. I quaked, then, when the man embraced me.'[23] Bosworth and Toller's gloss[24] of 'Ongyrede' (they include 'to make naked' as one possibility) is weighted with slightly more sex than Bradley allows, and speaks to the Rood's trembling ('bifode') as it is mounted (which Bosworth and Toller offer for 'gestah') by the young God intent on hugging it. This allusion to an erotic contact is narratorially otiose but forefronts a sensuality surely being conjured by the poet in his presentation of the direct, unmediated connection between the protagonists. In putting flesh on his source's bones, the poet seems intent on realising a response beyond the rational.

For Bradley, the technique is to engage the external audience 'in vicarious participation'.[25] But the poet intensifies the effect by involving the internal audience, too, in his affective machinations. Despite his constant juxtapositioning of God's purity and sanctity with the worthlessness of the Cross, which renders their physical and emotional embrace the more poignant, he nevertheless conflates the identities of Christ and the Cross as the latter reports how the soldiers 'Ðurhdrifan [...] me mid deorcan næglum; on me syndon þa dolg gesiene, opene inwidhlemmas'[26] (pierced me with dark nails; upon me are the wounds seen, open malicious gashes), an extraordinary appropriation of Christ's suffering wherein the primary signification of the acts at the narrative's emotional heart becomes blurred between the two personae. It is an osmosis that surely invites from the listening/reading audience a corresponding sloughing of discrete identity. But the erotic element of the fusion cannot be denied; Bosworth and Toller gloss **'**Ðurhdrifan' with 'drive through, penetrate, permeate, to drive violently',[27] verbs that summon up both the violence of the juridical action and the

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[22] Krapp, *Vercelli*, p. 62, ll. 33-42.
[23] Bradley, p. 161.
[24] *Bosworth-Toller Anglo-Saxon Dictionary*: <http://bosworth.ff.cuni.cz> [accessed 5/9/17].
[25] Ibid., p. 158.
[26] Krapp, *Vercelli*, p. 62, ll. 46-7.
[27] *Bosworth-Toller Anglo-Saxon Dictionary* <http://bosworth.ff.cuni.cz> [accessed 5/9/17].

sexual shadow that, given the emotional and physical connections that have been laid down, is its cognate.[28]

An example of the proximity of sensual and the spiritual, and therefore of the tremulousness of the line to be negotiated, can be found in Alfred's translation of St. Augustine's *Soliloquies*, 'probably the most intimate moment of intra-male sexual contact in Old English':[29]

> Hu ne wost ðu nu þæt ælc þara manna þe oðerne swiðe lufað, þæt hine lyst bet þaccian and cyssan ðone oðerne on bær lic, þonne þer þær claðas beotweona beoð? Ic ongyte nu þæt (þu) lufast þone wisdom swa swiðe, and þe lyst hine swa wel nacode ongitan and gefredan þæt þu noldest þæt ænig clað betweuh were. Ac he hine wyle swiðe seldon ænegum mæn swa openlic ge(e)awian. On ðam timum þe he ænig lim swa bær eowian wile, þonne eowað he hyt swiðe feawum mannum. Ac ic nat hu þu hym onfon mage mid geglofedum handum. Ðu scealt æac don bær lic ongean, gyf ðu hine gefredan wilt. Ac sege me nu gyf ðu hwilc ænlic wif lofodest swiðe ungemetlice ofer æalle oððer þing, and heo ðonne þe fluge and nolde þe lufian on nan oðer gerað butan (þæt) þu woldest ælce oðer lufe aletan for hyre anre lufe, woldest þu þonne swa don swa heo wylnode?

[28] Mary Dockray-Miller ('The Feminized Cross of *The Dream of the Rood'*, *Philological Quarterly,* 76. 1 (1997), 1-18) also focuses upon the poem's erotic potential, reading a sexual dimension in Christ's contact with the Cross. I disagree, however, with much of her argument. Her attempts to identify the Cross with Mary would render such sexual contact unacceptably incestuous, denuded as it is of any homosocial defence; her inconsistency over the poem's narrative structure (variously homosocial and heterosexual) allows her to include and exclude women at will, according to polemical need. I find nothing within the poem to suggest that the 'feminized cross of the *Dream* finds itself in a situation strikingly similar to that of the [Old English *Genesis*] Sodomite women as they face rape' (p. 11). There again, her conclusion – 'The Christianity celebrated in this poem is actually a Christianity that serves patriarchy, a spiritual justification for the violence and oppression inherent in masculine/feminine opposition needed for naturalized domination of society by males' (p. 15) – would also seem to stem from preconception rather than anything to be found in the poem. David Clark's reading is much more nuanced. Whilst acceding some gender fluidity in the character of the Cross, he argues that the enigmatic nature of the poem accords well with the overdetermined identity of a Cross that 'is both a retainer and an anti-retainer – in this topsy-turvey world where God dies and torture brings life, heroic obedience is paradoxically to slay one's lord; to be a warrior, a man, is to submit to being feminized, impotent, placed in the passive and subject position by Christ' (David Clark, *Between Medieval Men: Male Friendship and Desire in Early Medieval English Literature*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009, p. 151).
[29] Frantzen, p. 99.

> (How do you not know that, [for] each of those men [persons] who greatly loves another [man, or person], it pleases him better to stroke and kiss the other [man, or person] on the bare body than where there are clothes between [them]? I now see that you love Wisdom very much and that you so wish to see and feel him [or it, i.e. Wisdom] naked that you do not want any cloth between [you and him, or it]. But he [it] will seldom reveal himself [itself] so openly to any man [person]. In those times when he [it] will reveal any limb so bare, then he [it] reveals it [i.e. the limb] to very few men [persons]. But I do not know how you can grasp him [it] with gloved hands. You must also place your bare body against [him, or it] if you will touch him [it]. But let me tell you now that if you loved a woman so immoderately and above all other things, and she fled from you and would not love you on any other condition except that you would forgo all other love for her alone, would you then do as she asked?) [30]

The account hovers around the sexual; irrespective of Alfred's didactic intention, the meanings inhering in kissing and stroking, in two individuals lying closely together in a naked embrace, are not easily neutered. Of course, given the rigorous codes of same-sex prescription operating at the time (which I shall discuss at length in the final chapter), it could not have been considered other than acceptable, either in intention or reception (or at least, in approved ecclesiastical or institutional reception).[31] But again of course, multiple understandings of same-sex contact, and of sex period, obtained, then as now. The 'eroticism' of the Sutergefederan relationship,[32] positioned asexually then and interpreted thus today, might have been understood and appreciated – enjoined – in ways other than those scripted for in the legal and ecclesiastical annals of the time. The Penitentials, too, attest to a virulent

[30] Thomas A. Carnicelli, ed. *King Alfred's Version of St. Augustine's Soliloquies* (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1999), pp. 75-6. The translation is Frantzen's, p. 100.
[31] But for nuance on this, see Chapter Seven.
[32] The term is found in *Beowulf* and *Widsið*, and used to describe the relationship between nephew and paternal uncle. Such associations – especially that between maternal uncle and nephew – were so notable that Martin Camargo identifies them as the 'strongest kinship bond in Germanic society' (Martin Camargo, 'The Finn Episode and the Tradegy of Revenge in *Beowulf*', *Studies in Philology*, Vol. 78, No. 5 (1981), 120-134, p. 128.)

enthusiasm for same-sex connection. But nevertheless, Alfred's translation succinctly demonstrates the access to the divine that the senses were thought to possess, both theoretically and via actual practice, as well as the affective nature of the delivery. The arousal and then deployment of the sensual was a necessary prerequisite for a fully developed and rich appreciation of and relationship with God.

'The physical senses in loving', Bishop notes, 'were the means of achieving the ideal spiritual love so that the soul climbs "the path of love of neighbour right up to union with God".'[33] Given the fire and brimstone pronouncements of the Fathers earlier, we might assume that these loving senses, educative as they might be, would stop short of coitus itself. The accounts of Alfred and Bede hover around sex, certainly, are captivated by and constantly alluding to it, but like the first fumblings of adolescence they seem nevertheless to be reticent about crossing the line, as though mesmerically interested in but ultimately fearful of love's final peregrination. But in fact the act of sex itself was considered unsurpassable as a paradigm of higher love. If the senses could show the way to God, then sex – the pinnacle of sensual experience – grabbed the lover by the hand and dragged him to the Lord. In its enactment, all the senses were fully engaged, in a figuration of the most sensual union possible – that with the Lord. *Le petit mort* was indeed a death that presaged an exquisite union with God. It was transportive, resurrective, taking the self beyond the self because beyond the rational, and so it was an apt evocation of the quivering, ineffable, ineluctable pleasure of a meet with God. The body in sex was a profound and invaluable geodesic to heaven.

Despite his somewhat austere position on it, Ælfric was himself not averse to using sex as a means of instruction. In his *Narrative of Mary*, he resists the close-focus dynamics that Alfred so touchingly dwells upon, but its context and the implications of what he leaves hanging unsaid are just as erotically leading. Mother Church was often imaged as the bride of Christ, and in his treatment of it Ælfric emphasizes those contradictory sexual assets of hers,

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[33] Bishop, p. 7.

her virgin purity and her fecundity: 'Ic beweddode eow anum were . þæt ge sceoldon gearcian clæne mæden criste . […] Seo gelaðung is ealra cristenra manna moder . on gastlicere acennednysse' (I betrothed you to one husband so that you will prepare a chaste virgin for Christ. The Church is the mother of all Christian men by means of spiritual birth). [34] The woman keeping herself (or being kept) whole for her man, to then bear the fruit of his seed, tapped into widely felt resonances of propriety and property, but the analogy could not but have signalled the inevitable de-flowering of the bride herself: such preparation of a wedding-day virgin anticipates a wedding night during which she is expected to be relieved of her untouched status. Near the end of his career in 1005-6, Ælfric developed a sermon based loosely upon Augustine's *On Holy Virginity*. In the *Nativity of the Virgin Mary*, he develops the concept of the Church's (and by analogy, that of Her limbs') purity by reference to Her faithfulness. Though the sermon did not circulate widely, 'it afforded him the opportunity to develop subjects with which he had dealt less fully in his earlier work'.[35] As the chaste bride of Christ, 'heo nele forlætan godes geleafan næfre, ne oðerne wer wolice geceosan, ac hylt þone sincipe þæs soðan hælendes on gastlicum þeawum and on gastlicum bearnteame, on clænnysse wunigende swa swa Cristes bryd' (she never wishes to abandon God's belief nor falsely choose another man but keeps the marriage of the true Saviour in spiritual behaviour and in the spiritual procreation of children, dwelling in chastity as Christ's bride). [36] The analogy relies in its entirety upon the act of consummation, of a bride's yielding to her husband that which she keeps from other sexual suitors; its power to illustrate the strength of her faithful attachment inheres in sensuality, in the love – and the act of love – she offers to him and him alone. For its instructional efficacy, the illustration needs must have provoked in its audience a close cognisance of the sexual act it parodied.

Augustine's comments on the *Song of Songs* demonstrate the centrality of the concept to Christian exegesis:

[34] Godden, *Homilies*, II.IX.93-102, n.p.
[35] Upchurch, p. 62.
[36] Ibid., p. 64.

> the allegory of sex makes more intense the anticipation of the Lord's coming. The Canticle of Canticles sings a sort of spiritual rapture experienced by holy souls contemplating the nuptial relationship between Christ the King and His Queen-City, the Church. But it is a rapture velied [sic] in allegory to make us yearn for it more ardently and rejoice in the unveiling as the Bridegroom comes into view – the Bridegroom to whom the Canticle sings: "The righteous love thee" and the harkening Bride replies: "There is love in thy delights."[37]

The experience of genital sex – and one must infer from Augustine something of the missing of and then the panting after it again – informs the pleasure to be anticipated in and consequently increases the yearning for that heavenly copulation, the union of the Royal betrothed. In the act as in that which it prefigures, there is indeed 'love in [its] delights'. In all of these accounts, the erotic is fully forefronted, centred, even celebrated, and it illustrates the sapiential efficacy of beauty, bodies, and sex. The joy of coming, Augustine is telling us, intensifies our expectation and understanding of the coming joy. Ælfric's *Life of St. Agnes* is explicit about the correlation; her relationship with God is entirely couched in the dynamics of a physical encounter: 'Ic hæbbe oðerne lufiend' (I have another lover) [38] the thirteen-year-old saint announces to a would-be suitor, and

> his bryd-bedd me is gearo . nu iú mid dreamum […] Of his muðe ic under-feng meoluc . and hunig . nú iú ic eom beclypt . mid his clænum earmum . his fægera lichama is minu, geferlæht . and his blod ge-glende mine eah-hringas'
> (his bridal-bed hath been now of a long time prepared for me with joys. From his mouth I have received milk and honey; now already I am embraced within his pure arms; his fair body is united to mine and his blood has adorned my eyebrows). [39]

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[37] Walsh, *City of God*, XVII.20, p. 77.
[38] Walter W. Skeat, ed., *Ælfric's Lives of Saints, Being a Set of Sermons on Saints' Days Formerly Observed by the English Church*, vol. 1 (London: Trubner, 1881), p. 170, l. 27. Translations are Skeat's.
[39] Ibid., ll. 42-48.

As if such sexual experience were not enough to put off any prospective Classical husband, she further rhapsodises that

> Ðonne ic hine lufige . ic beo eallunga clæne . þonne ic hine hreppe . ic beo unwemme . ðonne ic hine under-fo . ic beo mæden forð . and þær bærn ne ateoriað . on ðam bryd-lace . Ðær is eacnung buton sare . and singallic wæstmbærnyss'
> (when I love him, I am wholly pure; when I touch him, I am unstained, when I receive him, I am still a virgin, and there, in the bridal bed, no child lacketh. There is conception without sorrow, and perpetual fruitfulness). [40]

Ælfric has conjured a mystical fusion of the twin characters of sex, the divine and its physical cognate. Who, in fairness, could compete with it? This is no coy exercise in allusion; it relishes the moist mechanics of her betrothal to God, and celebrates the fusion of their bodies as she receives him. The divine union is explicated by a very earthy sex.

But such educational efficacy could be further heightened by putting transcendental sex into *dramatic* tension with what then becomes its threatening, dark twin, its Other, its shadow. Purity is the more pure when emerging from an erotically threatening predicament, and it might seem that, in exploring the Janus-like nature of sex, the lesson is rewarding proportional to the explicitness of the sex on display. Having to wrestle the transcendent from the erotic refines its savour, both for the saints and for their audience – but it had to be wrestled. Hence the frequent narrative juxtaposition of the chaste saint promised to Christ is being situated in a *mis en scene* in which the threat of physical, carnal, animal sex is looming. Eugenia, living disguised as a monk to avoid the suit her father has arranged for her, nevertheless attracts the lascivious attention of one Melantia, who informs her that 'Nu is min mod awend mycclum to ðe . […] þu wifes bruce' (mind is much inclined toward thee; thou shouldst enjoy a wife). [41] Melantia, ignoring Eugenia's rebuff, nevertheless 'beclypte […] þæt

[40] Ibid., p. 172, ll. 58-62.
[41] Ibid., p. 34, ll. 158-161.

clæne mæden . and wolde hi gebygan to bismorlicum hæmede' (embraced the pure maiden, desiring to incline her to shameful adultery).[42] Eufrasia, similarly cross-dressed to avoid an unwanted because necessarily sexual coupling, is dogged by suitors through her *Life*. Twelve years old, 'and wlytig on ansyne' (and fair in countenance), [43] she too adopts a cross-dressed persona, and yet cannot avoid pricking the lusts of her newfound community. Even as the newly named Smaragdus – again, 'wlitig on an-syne' (beautiful in countenance)[44] – the brothers 'wurdon þearle gecostnode þurh his fægernysse . and […] ealle wurdon astyrode wið þone abbod for þam swa wlitigne man into heora mynstre gelædde' (were exceedingly tempted by his fairness, and all stirred up against the abbot because he had brought so beautiful a man into their minster).[45] With St. Cecilia, the threat of sex is an early narrative device, and perhaps the most explicitly formulated. The beautiful maiden finds herself an unwilling bride, anxiously weeping over her chastity and crying 'to halgum and to heah-englum biddende heora fultumes to þam heofon-lican gode . þæt heo on clænnysse criste moste þeowian' (to the saints and to the high angels, praying their assistance with the heavenly god, that she might serve Christ in chastity).[46] The narrative focuses explicitly upon the prospective site of her undoing, the marriage bed – 'Hi wurdon þa gebrohte on bedde ætgædere' (they were then brought into bed together)[47] – and we infer that her shrill concern may be provoked as much by her own wavering resolution as by the eager hands of the expectant Valerian. The temptation before her is explicit, the scene heavy with sexual expectation: she is a beautiful young virgin on the cusp of despoilment, and the audience is drawn into a tense web of desire where the divine is threatened by its profane alter ego.

Valerian, like Joseph before him, is naturally concerned over the sexual continence of his new wife, and immediately following the discourse on chastity, sex again intrudes into the

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[42] Ibid., ll. 169-70.
[43] Walter W. Skeat, ed., *Ælfric's Lives of Saints, Being a Set of Sermons on Saints' Days formerly Observed by the English Church*, vol. II (London: Keegan Paul, 1900), p. 336, l. 24.
[44] Ibid., p. 344, l. 160.
[45] Ibid., ll. 162-4.
[46] Ibid., p. 356, ll. 17-19.
[47] Ibid., l. 28.

narrative: ‘gif þe oþer cniht cuþre is þonne ic . hine ic ofslea . and þe samod mid him’ (if another man is more familiar with thee than I, him I will slay, and thee together with him).[48] But of course, ‘oð þæt he ge-lyfde on þone lifigendan god’ (at last he believed on the living God),[49] and Cecilia and her chastity are triumphant, as we knew she would and all these saints will be. The victory is the sweeter for its having had to be fought for. The manner, however, in which her persuasion and his conversion are presented is significant; she ‘tihte’ (allured) him to God, which Bosworth and Toller also gloss with ‘solicited’. It is a word loaded with sex, but in God’s service words, like sex, can and must be transformed. And as with the act, so too with any voyeuristic response to it; the word suddenly becomes suggestive of the right use of beauty correctly deployed, and guides the audience’s reaction. That simple semantic transformation, it seems to me, defines the entire encounter.

For it to be permitted, sex must be seen to be transfigured. The most succinct illustration of it is to be found in the *Life of Mary of Egypt*; her (explicitly detailed) sexual decadence quite literally brings her to God. Having been something of a sexual precocity, she has no compunction about working the flesh. Penniless, she approaches a group travelling to Jerusalem, and without the wherewithal to cover her expenses, offers to pay for the journey with sex: asked for her fare, she suggests that the sailors rather ‘hæbben hi mine lichaman to gewealde for þam færehte . þæt hi me þe hrædlicor underfon’ (have my body at their pleasure for the passage-money, that they may more readily receive me).[50] The men to whom she attaches herself are evidently satisfied with the trade, sealed as it is with the promise that ‘ne beo ic na eow unlicwyrðe’ (I shall not be displeasing to you).[51] But, propitiously enough, and having now arrived and being stood before the Rood, ‘þa onhran soðlice min mod and þa eagan minre heortan hælo andgit mid me sylfre þencende […] þa onfeormeganda minra misdæda’ (a knowledge of salvation touched my mind and the eyes of my heart, while

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[48] Ibid., p. 358, ll. 41-2.
[49] Ibid., l. 50.
[50] Ibid., p.24, ll. 356-7.
[51] Ibid., p. 26, l. 374.

pondering the filthiness of my misdeeds).[52] At last 'hreafigende þurh min geðoht' (transporting myself in my thoughts),[53] Mary's sexual adventure is shown to have been a transformative journey, from a grubby world centred on sex into one incomparably more beautiful – and more beautiful because of its earthy root – that is centred upon knowledge of God. The transformation is akin to that in *Soul and Body*, where gluttony undergoes a transubstantiation like that of the Eucharist with which it is juxtaposed, and is transfigured into a hunger for God, desire that draws explicitly upon sensual knowledge.

But the accounts, of sex especially, go into detail beyond that required by a dry theory of coitus elucidating a knowledge of God. Rather the homilists seem intent on goading something more than an intellectual contact. Agnes' chaste status certainly gains additional weight and resonance from its being opposed to a love that jeopardises the ecstatic with a particularly physical instantiation of the divine ideal. Her perfunctory victory over it reaffirms the divine order. But in establishing and proclaiming so vociferously her Christian credentials, the narrative builds up significant sexual tension that it then threatens to satisfy by means of a very corporeal dénouement. The succession of conquerors that seek to act on the implicit arousal that her 'fair countenance' – and, no doubt, her aloofness – has conjured is an imperilment offering to resolve the earlier sexual impasse. So 'Ða het se woda dema hyre wæda of adon . and hi swa nacode gelædan . to þam forligres huse' (then the infuriated judge bade men take off her garments, and lead her thus naked to the harlot's house)[54] where she is to be 'fullice gebysmrod' (foully dishonoured),[55] and to where later come the Prefect's son and his 'sceandlicum gegadum . wolde þa godes þinene gebysmrian' (shameful companions, desiring to dishonour the virgin of God).[56] The narrative's oscillation back and forth, with each salacious suggestion and description having to be thwarted by God's

52 Ibid., p. 28, ll. 424-7.
53 Ibid., p. 36, l. 544.
54 Skeat, vol. I, p. 178, ll. 141-2.
55 Ibid., l. 120.
56 Ibid., ll. 163 – 4.

benevolent intervention, keeps both the fragility and the desirability (in both senses) of maidenhead firmly centre-stage.

Such interest in the mechanics of the power of sex, an interest goaded by the invariable comeliness of the women involved, is to be found outside the homilies, too. The encounter within *Judith*, for instance, develops its dramatic tension in ways similar to those in St. Agnes. The 'wundenlocc scyppendes mægð' (ringletted girl, the Maker's Maiden)[57] is a 'ides ælfscinu' (woman of elfin beauty)[58] whose chastity is established in opposition to the 'niða geblonden' (wickedly promiscuous)[59] Holofernes. She is variously 'snoteran idese' (the shrewd lady)[60] and 'þa torhtan mægð' (bright virgin)[61] whose qualities are naturally heightened by the contrast with the 'egesful eorla dryten' (fearsome lord over earls),[62] the 'inwidda' (wicked one)[63] who was 'nergende lað' (abhorrent to the Saviour).[64] But the dynamic of the movement toward her downfall, however brief narratively, is notable in its intensity: 'on gytesalum' (joyful at carousing),[65] Holofernes 'hloh ond hlydde, hlynede ond dynede […] modig ond medugal' (laughed and bellowed, sounded and resounded, proud and mead-flushed).[66] Almost a pastiche of masculinity, the inebriated king then commanded 'þa eadigan mægð ofstum fetigan to his bedreste beagum gehlæste, hringum gehrodene' (the blessed virgin, decked with bracelets and adorned with rings, to be fetched in a hurry to his bed),[67] whereupon his eager acolytes – suddenly a salacious, goading pack: 'galferhð gumena ðreate'[68] (host/threat of wanton men) – facilitate the rape by 'fromlice' (speedily)[69] leading the shining virgin to the scene of pending violence, where he 'þohte ða beorhtan idese mid

[57] Albert S. Cook, ed., *Judith: An Old English Epic Fragment* (D. C. Heath & Co.: Boston, 1893), ll. 77-8, his translations.
[58] Ibid., l. 14.
[59] Ibid., l. 34.
[60] Ibid., l. 55.
[61] Ibid., l. 43.
[62] Ibid., l. 21.
[63] Ibid., l. 28.
[64] Ibid., l. 45.
[65] Ibid., l. 22.
[66] Ibid., ll. 23-6.
[67] Ibid., ll. 35-7.
[68] Ibid., l. 62.
[69] Ibid., l. 41.

widle ond mid womme besmitan' (meant to defile the noble lady with filth and pollution).[70] Even allowing for the effectiveness of juxtaposition, the energy developed by the narrative at this point, with its repeated focus upon the urgency of the interaction, seems to have been distracted by something other than the virgin's eventual victory.

The account of *Juliana*, too, is one dramatized by sexual coercion. She 'hogde georne þæt hire mægðhad mana gehwylces fore Cristes lufan clæne geheolde' (firmly intended for the love of Christ to preserve her virginity pure from any sin),[71] whilst Maximian, in league with her father, 'þæt him mon fromlicast fæmnan gegyrede' (longed for the virgin to be made ready for him as urgently as possible).[72] Juliana is not so naïve as to misconstrue her situation; indeed, her willingness to detail her imperilment demonstrates her willingness to be martyred; 'ne meahte þu habban mec, ne geþreatian þe to gesingan. Næfre þu þæs swiðlic sar gegearwast þurh hæstne nið heardra wita, þæt þu mec onwende worda þissa' (you may neither have me nor coerce me into marriage with you; never, in violent spite, shall you contrive suffering, harsh tortures, so severe that you make me swerve from these words),[73] a rhetorical flourish that seems merely to precipitate, or even goad, the tortures she anticipates. 'ða se æþeling wearð yrre gebolgen […] gehyrde þære fæmnan word, het ða gefetigan ferend snelle, hreoh ond hygeblind haligre fæder' (then the nobleman became swollen with rage, wild and blinded in his mind; hearing the maid's words, then he ordered hasty messengers to fetch the saintly girl's father).[74]

Those inevitable tortures soon materialise, which is unremarkable in a text replete with abuses of the flesh. What is noteworthy, however, is the disparity of treatment between these various accounts of torture, Juliana's and the others. The opening lines of the piece set a rather generic scene:

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[70] Ibid., ll. 58-9.
[71] Krapp and Dobbie, *Exeter,* p. 114, ll. 29-31, their translations.
[72] Ibid., l. 40.
[73] Ibid., ll. 53-7.
[74] Ibid., ll. 58-61.

Foron æfter Burgum, swa he biboden hæfde, þegnas þryðfulle. Oft hi þræce rærdon, dædum gedwolene, þa þe drytnes æ feodon þurh firencræft. Feondscype rærdon, hofon hæþengield, halge cwelmdon, breotun boccræftge, bærndon gecorene, gæston godes cempan gare ond lige.

(Through the cities, as he had commanded, went harsh soldiers; often being depraved in their doings, they used violence, those men who in their wickedness hated the Lord's law; they promoted enmity, raised idols, murdered the pious, killed the learned, burned the elect, and persecuted God's soldiers with spear and with fire.)[75]

Following Juliana's own troubles, and even as she bears the physical wounds of Maximian's attentions, an agent of the Devil dutifully catalogues the travails of the faithful who precede her:

Ða gen ic Herode in hyge bisweop þæt he Iohannes bibead heafde biheawan, ða se halga wer þære wiflufan wordum styrde, unryhtre æ. Eac ic gelærde Simon searoþoncum þæt he sacan ongon wiþ þa gecorenan Cristes þegnas, ond þa halgan weras hospe gerahte þurh deopne gedwolan, sægde hy dryas wæron. Neþde ic nearobregdum þær ic Neron bisweac, þæt he acwellan het Cristes þegnas, Petrus ond Paulus. Pilatus ær on rode aheng rodera waldend, meotud meahtigne minum larum. Swylce ic Egias eac gelærde þæt he unsnytrum Andreas het ahon haligne on heanne beam, þæt he of galgan his gæst onsende in wuldres wlite.

(I impelled Herod in his mind to command that John's head should be cut off when that holy man outspokenly opposed his love of the woman and his unlawful marriage. I also cunningly persuaded Simon so that he began his persecution against Christ's chosen servants and in his profound misguidedness blasphemously addressed those holy men and said that they were sorcerers. I engaged in devious schemings when I seduced Nero so that he ordered Christ's servants, Peter and Paul, to be executed.

[75] Ibid., p. 113, ll. 11-7.

> Pilate, by my promptings, previously hung upon the cross the Ruler of the skies, the might ordaining Lord. Similarly I also instructed Aegeas so that in his folly he ordered the saintly Andrew to be hung on a high cross, so that he dispatched his spirit from the gallows into the splendour of heaven.)[76]

Such descriptions are comprehensive but spare and, given their subject matter, curiously bloodless – an accountant's account of persecution. It is a model of bowdlerism when compared to the (albeit brief) treatment of Juliana's troubles: she is brought to court, where 'Ðuguð wafade on þære fæmnan wlite' (all assembled were fascinated by the virgin's beauty).[77] Maximian, though, is 'frecne mode' (in savage mood),[78] and having 'bealg hine swiþe' (violently worked himself into a passion)[79]

> on þa fæmnan het þurh niðwræce nacode þennan, ond mid sweopum swingan synna lease. Ahlog þa se hererinc, hospwordum spræc: þis is ealdordom uncres gewynnes on fruman gefongen […] Ðe þa lean sceolan wiþerhycgendre, witebrogan, æfter weorþan. […] þonne ic nyde sceal niþa gebæded on þære grimmestan godscyld wrecan, torne teoncwide.

> (He ordered the virgin to be stretched out naked and, guilty of no sin, to be flogged with whips. Then the soldier laughed and spoke in mocking words: 'Thus is the mastery in our quarrel seized at the start. Horrible tortures will henceforth be your reward. I shall be obliged to take vengeance on you for this most terrible impiety.')[80]

The faithful Juliana, still naked, ends up hung on high gallows where she is 'slege þrowade, sace singrimme, siex tida dæges' (to suffer a beating and extremely savage treatment for six hours of the day).[81] These explicit scenes of torture, though fleeting, offer a flash of focus

76 Ibid., p. 121, ll. 293-311.
77 Ibid., p. 117, ll. 162-3.
78 Ibid., p. 118, l. 184.
79 Ibid., l. 185.
80 Ibid., ll. 186-203.
81 Ibid., p. 119, ll. 227-30.

that is, unlike any other in a *Life* overtly concerned with distress done to bodies, powerfully sexually centred.

Again, the technique is most obvious with the *Life of Mary of Egypt*. Her early promiscuity is of course central to the narrative's development and dénouement, and, as we have seen, necessary to evidence the potential transformative power of sex. But in recounting her adventures, the homilist may be guilty of due diligence too far, perhaps himself having taking to heart Zosimus' plea to 'tell me everything, for God's sake'.[82] It is worth quoting at length, not least because of the length at which it is recalled: Mary confesses that,

> 'on þam twelftan geare minre ylde […] ic on þam fruman ærest mine fæmnhad besmat . and hu ic unablinnendlice . and unafyllendlice þam leahtrum . and þære synlusta. […] þone unalyfedan bryne minra leahtra þe ic hæfde on þære lufe þæs geligeres . […] on . xvii . wintrum ic openlice folca meniu geondferde on þam bryne forligeres licgende ; Ne forleas ic na mine fæmnhad for æniges mannes gyfum ; Oþþe ic witodlice ahtes onfenge fram ænigum þe me aht gyfum wolden . ac ic wæs swiðe onæled mid þære hatheortnysse þæs synlustes . þæt ic gewilnode butan ceape þæt hi me þe mænigfealdlicor to geurnon . to þy þæt ic þe eð mihte gefyllan þa scyldfullan gewilnunga mines forligeres […] unafyllendlice gewilnunga swa þæt ic me sylfe unablinnendlice on þam adale þæs manfullan forligeres besylede and þæt me wæs to yrmðe. and þæt ic me tealde to life þæt swa unablinnendlice þurhtuge þæs gecyndes teonan.'
>
> (in the twelfth year of my age I first polluted my virginity, and ceaselessly and insatiably [I gave myself up] to sins, and continued in subjection to sinful lusts, the unlawful burning of my misdeeds that I felt in my love of fornication. For seventeen years I openly surpassed a number of people, continuing in the desire of fornication. Neither did I lose my virginity for any man's presents, nor would I indeed receive

[82] Skeat, vol. II, p. 21, l. 312 – his translations.

anything from anyone who desired to give me somewhat; but I was greatly excited with the heat of sinful lusts, so that I desired that they would come to me in greater numbers without any price, to the end that I might the more easily satisfy my culpable desires for wicked living, insatiable desires, so that I ceaselessly polluted myself in the puddle of wicked adultery, and this was my misery; and this I accounted as life, that I might thus ceaselessly fulfil the vexations of the flesh.)[83]

And so, having had catalogued for us these her considerable sexual appetites, we have more than evidence enough to track the transformation of sex that she – or God – will effect. But, seemingly, the base material has not been shown to be sufficiently base; having had Mary register her interest in going to Jerusalem, but asked about her means to get there, the homilist has her reply that 'Soðlice næbbe ic nan færeht to syllane . ac ic wille faran . and an þæra scypa astigan . and þeah hi nellan hi me afedað . and ic me sylfe heom befæste' ("Verily I have no passage-money to give; but I wish to go and embark on one of the ships, and they shall support me, though they do not wish it; and I will entrust myself to them.")[84] This is merely the commencement of her confession:

> Miltsa me abbud forðon ic gewilnode mid him to farenne . þæt ic þe ma em-wyrhtena on þære þrowunge mines wynlustas hæfde […] þa geseah ic tyn geonge men . ætgædere standende be þam waruðe . genoh þæslice on lichaman . and on gebærum . and ful licwurðe me þuhte to mines lichaman luste […] And ic hi þa ealle sona to þam manfullum leahtrum . and ceahhetungum bysmerlicum astyrede ; Mid manegum oþrum fullicum . and fracodlicum gespræcum . hi þa witodlice mine unsceamlicam gebæra geseonde me on heora scip . namon to him . and forð hreowan ; Eala Zosimus hu mæg ic þe areccan . oþþe hwilc tunga mæg hit asecgan . oþþe eara gehyran . þa man-dæda þe on þam scip-færelde wæron . and on þam siðfæte gefremede . and hui c to syngrigenne genydde ægðer ge ða earman willendan . and þa earman syllendan ;

[83] Ibid., p. 22, ll. 325-345.
[84] Ibid., p. 24, ll. 353-355.

> Nis nan asecgendlic oððe unasecgendlic fracodlicnysse hiwung þæs ic ne sih tihtende . and lærende . and fruma gefremed […] Næs ic na geniht-sumigende on þam geongum . ðe on þære sæ mid me . oððe on þam siðfæte hæmdon . ac ic eac swilce mænga ælðeodige . and ceaster-gewarena . on þa dæda minra scylda [gegadrigende] . and beswicende besmat.
>
> (‘Pity me, abbot, because I desired to go with them, that I might have the more associates in the passion of my desires. Then I saw ten young men standing together on the shore, sufficiently comely in body and in demeanour, and very suitable, I thought, for my bodily lust. […] And I soon excited them all to wicked vices and shameful jestings, with many other filthy and lewd expressions. Then they, seeing my shameless behaviour, took me with them in their ship and rowed away. Oh Zosimus, how can I relate to you, or what tongue may say, or what ear hear, the vile deeds that took place upon the voyage and that were done in the passage; and how I compelled to sin both the wretches who were willing and the wretches who gave me money. There is no description of lewdness, utterable or unutterable, which I did not allure to and teach, and first performed. I did not restrict myself to the young men who associated with me on the sea or on the journey, but I also gathered together many of the strangers and citizens in the deeds of my sins, and betrayed and contaminated them.’)[85]

Leaving aside any jealousy we might entertain over her sexual stamina, our reaction to such an intimate confession might revolve around the potential ‘betrayal and contamination’ of the noviciates and monks with whom she was being invited, even if only pedagogically, to consort. It could, of course, be argued that this extended concentration of sexual interest is immediately juxtaposed with the ‘þære halgan godes cennestran anlicnysse […] þe þone soðan god æfter flæsces gebyrde acendest […] þu wære symle fæmne oncnawan . and þinne lichaman hæbbende clæne . and unwemmed’ (likeness of the holy mother of God,

[85] Ibid., p. 24, ll. 356-98.

who according to the birth of the flesh didst bear the true god; thou wast ever a virgin, keeping thy body pure and undefiled),[86] and that therefore the filth is a foil for the sanctity. But the catalogue is long in the extreme, and detailed and lascivious beyond any requirement of didacticism or juxtaposition. In its salaciousness, it seems rather to be aiming for some sort of chthonic response.

Especially within the various scenes of torture, the texts' focus on the body seems to go further than that which might strictly be thought necessary. The saintly Agatha's defiance has resulted in her being 'on hencgene a-streccan . and ðrawan swa swa wiððan wælhreowlice' (stretched on the rack, and cruelly twisted like a withy-rope),[87] over which treatment she rejoices that her 'lichama beo on þinum bendum genyrwod . and fram ðinum cwellerum on þinum copsum agrapod' (body be cramped in thy bonds, and by the executioners be gripped in thy fetters).[88] As he tightens his narrative focus upon her flesh, Ælfric's account becomes ever more specific; having first sign-posted its strength – 'stanas magon hnexian . and þæt starce isen on leades gelicnysse . ærðan þe se geleafa mæge of agathes breoste . beon æfre adwæsced' (stones may soften, and hard iron become like lead, or ever the faith in Agatha's breast can be extinguished)[89] – he then shifts the tenor of his interest on her chest: 'Ða gebealh hine se wælhreowa and het hi gewriðan on ðam breoste mid þære hencgene and het siððan ofaceorfan' (then raged the cruel one, and bade men torture her on the breast in the rack, and bade it afterward be cut off).[90] The significance of the assault is not lost, least of all on Agatha: 'ne sceamode þe to ceorfanne þæt þæt ðu sylf suce' (art thou not ashamed to cut off that which thou thyself has sucked?)[91] But Ælfric, too, would appear to be cognisant with the visceral emotional capital invested in breasts: he revisits them twenty lines later – 'beseah to hyre breoste . and wæs þæt corfene breost . […] ge-edstaþelod' (she

[86] Ibid., p. 30, ll. 430-7.
[87] Skeat, vol. I, p.202, ll. 112-3.
[88] Ibid., ll. 120-1.
[89] Ibid., p. 196, ll. 29-30.
[90] Ibid., p. 202, ll. 122-3.
[91] Ibid., l. 125.

looked at her breast, and the breast that had been cut off had been restored)[92] – and then again, when Jesus himself has attended to it – he 'min breost ge-edstaðelode' (hath restored my breast).[93] This sustained period of focus upon the body of Agatha ends with the image of her being rolled 'nacode [...] on þam fyre' (naked in the fire)[94] of burning coals and broken tiles. Even allowing for the well-known correlation between the mother's breast and the nourishing Christ, the lingering narrative gaze upon the torments of the flesh seems somewhat excessive, even oleaginous.

Cynthia Hahn notes that certain critics have 'detected a pornographic subtext'[95] in these confections of sex and violence, though she is herself more circumspect: 'Read without regard to generic prescriptions, these illustrations and texts may have occasionally functioned as erotica, but this was clearly not their primary role'.[96] She is surely right to dismiss the culturally dislocated accusation of pornography, which does little to open up any situated, nuanced understanding of the genre's affective intentions. But the incessant focus on the sexual dimension of women, even if only to then thwart its outworking, cannot but have fore-grounded those erotic elements and the erotic potential, and it must surely have been intentional. Any continued meditation on virginity inevitably puts into relief that against which it is defined: its fecund other, its sexual twin. Though I would maintain that the tableaux are not pornographic, the saints are nevertheless 'sexualized through the threat of rape, forced prostitution, the eroticized display of the [...] naked body, and so forth'.[97]

Certainly 'the representation of seduction or assault opens up a licit space that permits the audience to enjoy sexual language and contemplate the naked female body',[98] and

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[92] Ibid., p. 204, ll.144-5.
[93] Ibid., l. 161.
[94] Ibid., l. 170.
[95] Cynthia Hahn, *Portrayed on the Heart: Narrative Effect in Pictorial Lives of the Saints from the Tenth through the Thirteenth Century* (Berkeley, Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2001), p. 91.
[96] Ibid.
[97] Shari Horner, 'The Violence of Exegesis: Reading the Bodies of Ælfric's Female Saints', *Violence Against Women in Medieval Texts*, ed. by Anna Roberts (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1998), pp. 22-43, p. 22.
[98] Ibid.

invites questions about cultural attitudes and audience reception. Shari Horner references Kathryn Gravdal's study of representations of rape in mediaeval French literature, which study concluded that such treatments worked to normalise and even legitimize women's sexual objectification. Horner then projects these conclusions across the Channel; with such graphic depictions, 'cultural legitimation […] becomes the 'business' of the saints' lives, to the extent that violence against women is all but invisible to many readers of these texts, because it is so common'.[99] The desensitizing outcomes that Horner and Gravdal posit are beyond the remit of this work, but to situate the *Saints' Lives* within a discourse of ecclesiastical misogyny seems to misrepresent because misunderstanding so completely what the texts seem to be doing. Both with the putatively erotic and the gratuitously violent, the writers were exploring the dynamics of a visceral explicitness to ends, one can persuasively argue, other than the self-gratifyingly titillating. Indeed, within the scenes of torture, Horner herself succinctly identifies the locus of the mediaeval methodology: 'The audiences of the texts can begin to share in these narratives of pain when the pain is made explicit through the vehicle of the saint's body'.[100] Explicitness of depiction would appear to be central to the homilists' *affective* as opposed to any *misogynistic* intentions; it is the vividness of the portrayal that makes the senses so suggestible to it, a sensory appeal intended to bypass the rational to connect directly with the emotional. They are goading the senses.[101] It enabled the audience to appropriate the emotional experiences embedded in the tableaux, and the writers deployed the technique with evident gusto. Thus

> the reader of saints' *Lives* responds to the text not only intellectually but also emotionally *and* physically in modelling his or her self *and* body after that of the saint. […] these texts and pictures recommend that their audience respond physically

[99] Ibid., p. 23. Hahn has analyzed the incidents of bodily torture relative to men and women, and concludes that tortures upon women are not over-represented: Hahn, p. 92.
[100] Ibid., p. 29.
[101] Interestingly, Philip Zimbardo has researched the impact of internet pornography on brain activity, and asserts that the virtual experience reproduces in the brain stimuli identical to actual, experienced sexual activity. Philip Zimbardo and Nikita Coulombe, *Man (Dis)Connected: How Technology has Sabotaged what it Means to be Male* (Rider: London, 2015), pp. 87-136.

> and even viscerally to a saint's actions. Such encouragements to respond may be one of the most effective devices of the hagiographer's narrative strategy.[102]

Viewers 'confronted with [the implements and effects of torture] cannot but help conceptualize and experience the unfelt, unexperienceable pain of others. The presence of weapons and wounds cues a response of pity and empathy in the viewer'.[103]

The purpose of the manuscripts was 'ideological coercion',[104] which was achieved primarily by moving the heart to compunction, and it is this coercion that drove the explicit and sensuous depictions.[105] '[A]esthetic distance is collapsed through the operation of pity and identification of the reader / viewer with the human subject of the true narrative. […E]xemplary narrative […] is didactically superior even to doctrine'.[106] Arner and Stegner illustrate the technique by reference to *Christ III*; within the poem, the Blessed look upon the sensational tortures of the Damned, and feel relief – they 'increase their own joy'[107] – over their not being so tortured. But those situated outside the narrative are afforded an all-encompassing viewpoint that takes in Christ, the Blessed, and the Damned, which 'expanded visual perspective offers them spiritual consolation and […] the voyeuristic pleasure of witnessing their future rewards and the promised punishments of the wicked'.[108] Having 'appropriately place[d] themselves within the narrative',[109] the reader participates vicariously in the joy of not being tortured by something akin to an occupation of the saved bodies within the text.

In this technique the internal protagonists operate as more than incidental extras. As with the embedded audience of the *Dream of the Rood*, that within the *Saints' Lives* too is in

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[102] Hahn, p. 87 – her emphasis.
[103] Ibid., p. 88.
[104] Ibid., p. 9.
[105] Hahn refers to one Gerald, who claimed that visualizing the crucifixion 'excited the interior soul of man […] inscribing the passion and death of Christ onto the membrane of the heart': p. 54.
[106] Ibid., p. 31.
[107] Timothy D. Arner and Paul D. Stegner, '"Of þam Him aweaxeð wynsum gefea": The Voyeuristic Appeal of "Christ III"', *Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, 106: 4 (2007), 428-446, p. 434.
[108] Ibid., p. 439.
[109] Ibid., p. 438.

some way a guide to a presumed external witness. So the 'audience *in the text* is said to weep and moan and be horrified by the tortures of the saints. […] This remarkable spectacle guides the response of the sympathetic audience'.[110] By means of such audience manipulation, Hahn avers, all the sexedness of the bodies is negated. She illustrates this by reference to St. Lucy who, mid torture and stripped to the waist, looks out at the viewer, somehow managing to convey both impassiveness and victoriousness:

> Within the image itself, five viewers respond to the challenge, looking with fixed attention at the virgin's heroic body […] with 'eyes of faith'. These believers […] are now purified and see properly. A transformation has been effected in the presence of Lucy's nudity; sexuality is defeated.[111]

So too with St Margaret: 'the saint's torture is also displayed with frontal nudity, yet Margaret looks out, meeting our gaze. The spectators within the image model our prescribed response: they cringe in conspicuous horror […] shocked by the whipping that so cruelly cuts the virgin's beautiful body'.[112] For Hahn, beauty is there to be rejected, or at least re-negotiated, included only to effect an immediate reversal of perception. Audience responses are in this way manipulated and shaped; they are being *shown* how to transform sexual desire: the narrative 'intended to displace the mundane attractions of sexuality and substitute a movement of the soul toward faith. Furthermore, they negate the allure of physical beauty and replace it with the recognition of its heavenly cognate, divine perfection'.[113]

But such an explanation seems to me to be unwilling or unable to account for the narratives' powerful focus on the bodies *qua* bodies. *The Lives*, as we have seen, indulge the viewer/reader in a fleshly parade that has – however unhelpfully – attracted the epithet of pornography.[114] The homilists demonstrate an unsettling eagerness to foreground the female

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[110] Hahn, p. 88 – her emphasis.
[111] Ibid., p. 117.
[112] Ibid., p. 121.
[113] Ibid.
[114] Peter Dendle argues 'that many readers – and just as many writers – of these texts may not have had complete nakedness in mind when they state that a saint is stripped naked' (Peter Dendle, 'How Naked

sexed body in its historical battles against the lusts and projections of a very carnal *Weltanschauung*, ostensibly to educate a similarly wayward public of their own: the ambivalence is almost Machiavellian. Though Hahn does concede the possibility of a sanctioned titillation – '[p]erhaps this image [of Agatha's brothel scene] is intended to permit thoughts of (and monkish guilt about) sexuality and companionship to surface'[115] – she goes on to extinguish any putative fire in the attending loins: '[b]ut if so, they are immediately condemned, controlled, and reassuringly defeated by the power and model of the saintly virgin'.[116] Every such image is seen to be inviting the audience to recognize a potential for difference in themselves: 'the viewer is confronted with sexuality and earthly beauty and led to reject it'.[117]

This engages neither with the dramas of the flesh being played out in the texts nor with the ecclesiastical capital being invested in them; it negates the power of the narratives and denies the contemporarily widely accepted instructive force of sex. Rather than disallowing an erotic response (and certainly rather than playing to ecclesiastic misogyny), the texts seem content to guide the audience's attentions onto the saints' splayed bodies, happy to facilitate and even encourage a brief voyeuristic interlude within the lesson. I would suggest that the succession of flesh in the homilies is precisely thus in order to make room for an arousal in an audience who can then *experience* its transformation.

Such an exposition is not impossibly contradictory. The power of the affective technique lies in its diaphanous nature, which renders it susceptible to multiple readings and

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is Juliana?', *Philological Quarterly*, 83: 4 (2004), 355-370, p. 356). That the term had a looser referent may well be true; he cites examples wherein the narrative makes clear that 'nacod' does indeed not mean naked. Often the term required 'further specification' (p. 360) to convey exact meaning. But the point is moot; whether or not there would have been 'little occasion for a career monk to know much of a woman's "secret place" or to have anything but the haziest mental pictures of a virgin martyr stripped naked', (p. 363), the very inclusion of the concept of a woman's being stripped and paraded in a manner wholly designed to render her humiliated and vulnerable could not but have eroticized the mental images. Their being stripped down to undergarments would surely have conveyed for them a sense similar to that which nakedness does for us. The denuded body inevitably connotes something that the properly clothed one does not. Further, there is the visual evidence within the manuscripts themselves to refute Dendle's premise.

[115] Hahn, p. 120.

[116] Ibid.

[117] Ibid., p. 122.

reactions. *Christ III*, paradigm of the voyeuristic pleasure that can be enjoyed by alignment with the Saved, is also and simultaneously a connection with the Damned, whereby the audience associate themselves with the tortured souls in Hell and are thereby compuncted to repentance (which mirrors even as it inverts the scenes of torture visited upon the saints' bodies). In this reading the viewer 'should consider himself a sinner in danger of suffering the tortures of Hell and experience fear and regret by appreciating the vivid descriptions of these punishments represented in the poem'.[118] The reader is compelled to identify with those who have fallen foul of Judgement Day, and to 'see Christ's address to the damned as also an address outward toward themselves'.[119] The two contradictory associations operate concurrently even as they would appear to be somewhat self-annulling.

Embedded viewers are, as we have noted, crucial. But as with those characters that model for us the expected chaste response to the narratives in which they are situated and to which we are witness, others offer models of lust, which even as they are known to be flawed and in need of transformation nevertheless frame an alternative even if subconscious response to the events being paraded before us. Hahn has related how 'Lucy is stripped to the waist, her upper body exposed. As Tertullian argued, […] 'every public exposure of a virgin is [to her] a suffering of rape'.'[120] But as well as the five suggestible viewers that were Hahn's previous focus, we also see Paschasuis' recalcitrance before the hand of the Lord: 'Unable to consummate a true violation of Lucy's body, Paschasius rapes her with his eyes, leering at the virgin from the upper register while stroking his beard'.[121] Margaret, though naked and vulnerable, looks out levelly and serenely at the audience, and she thereby invites the audience to respond in like manner; the 'cringing onlookers'[122] who are converted by the scene may well provide us with 'one of the most vivid displays of emotion in early medieval

[118] Arner and Stegner, p. 439.
[119] Ibid.
[120] Hahn, p. 117.
[121] Ibid.
[122] Ibid., p. 88.

art'.[123] But the tableau also registers another emotion, one less concerned with the nicities of decorum and less aligned with the redemptive travails of Margaret's flesh; the gaze of these others remains lustfully upon the stripped and potentially available body, a body with which the external audience too have been made intimately familiar. Theirs is a narrative of threat and desire, and perhaps the audience's is meant to be too, at some immediate and visceral level, observers voyeuristically complicit in the sub-narrative. They identify with the restraint of the saints and marvel at their continence but also and equally and simultaneously side with the characters that lust after them – and lust along with them. The *Lives of the Saints* especially are ripe for multiple, ostensibly antagonistic appropriations precisely because so many of them relish the juxtaposition of the carnal flesh and the pure body, of the virgin saint and her sexual potential. The visceral connection forged through graphic depictions that would bypass the rational provokes a primitive reaction to the sexually situated and sexually exposed body that does not necessarily consider first and foremost its purity and sanctity, even though the measured and urbane reaction – the cerebral reaction – must be one to empathy. As with the second of Arner and Stegner's expositions of *Christ III,* the audience's emotional response might be to the travails of the flesh before them rather than to its victory, to the pleasures more immediately on offer; and the more pungent the depiction, the better the contact. Perhaps the external viewer is meant to feel *their* stirrings in *his* loins; the difference is, and here he transcends his models, he is then supposed to transfigure them. 'Philosophy begins, not with wonder, but desire.' The account of St. Agnes embodies this transformative tension; its narrative is entirely concerned with the contested, almost objectified body of the saint. Agnes justifies her rejection of the suit of the son of Sempronius by claiming Christ's prior suit, whereupon her virgin status is manhandled by their desire. These competing claimants jostle the narrative, their objectification focused completely on her body and their enjoyment of and admission into it, whether this is those who would rape her – 'Ða com þæs gerefan suna *(sic*) to þære scinendan stowe . mid his sceandlicum gegadum . wolde þa godes þinene gebysmrian […] Arn þa him sylf inn . mid sceand-licum willan' (Then came the

[123] Ibid.

Prefect's son to the shining place with his shameful companions, desiring to dishonour the virgin of God. Then he himself ran in with shameful intent)[124] – or the Christ whose 'fægera lichama is […] geferlæht' (fair body is united)[125] with hers. The dynamic oscillates between the desires that both parties bring to the narrative in a succinct demonstration of the twin impulses of man, the carnal and the spiritual, sex and God, Madonna and whore. The contested meanings of Agnes' body constantly unsettle the account, making inevitable the dual interpretations laid upon her virgin body. The chiasmus figures the inner tension that sex was known to create. It is almost a subliminal statement of human response. Engagement with – even lust for – the body is essential, and it seems to me that the homilists were tacitly inviting voyeurs along for the religious ride. Rather than merely being passive observers of the transformative effect of sex, the audience were being invited to experience sex transformed.

Positing a voyeuristic intent is, of course, immediately problematic. From what the extant sources imply, Anglo-Saxon sexuality was configured differently to almost any with which we are likely to be familiar. Culturally, our (western) sex is something of a political project, for us a means to (re)inforce social liberalism, self expression and independence, identity and community, born out of the counter-cultural revolution of the 1960s. An aspect of this specific conceptualization of sex can be seen in the gay activism emerging from the de-closeting of the 1970s and 1980s,[126] wherein sexual freedom came to be reified in terms of sexual activity, a position captured by Michael Warner's comment that 'promiscuous sex is the essence of gay liberation. […] It is an absurd fantasy to expect gay men to live without a sexual culture when we have almost nothing else that brings us together.'[127] Referencing

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[124] Skeat, vol. I, pp. 178-80, ll. 163-70.
[125] Ibid., p. 172, l. 47.
[126] See Mathew Kuefler, *The Boswell Thesis; Essays of Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2006), for an eclectic gathering of reactions to John Boswell's 'gay reach' across the ages.
[127] Wikipedia, 'Sexual Ecology: AIDS and the Destiny of Gay Men', p. 11 http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/sexual_ecology [accessed 27/2/2018]. Warner was responding to Gabriel Rotillo's call for gay men to reduce their number of sexual partners in an attempt to attenuate the spread of AIDS in the 1980s and 1990s. Rotillo's book, *Sexual Ecology: AIDS and the Destiny of Gay Men* (New York: Dutton, 1997), became a best seller but was not without its critics.

Gabriel Rotillo, Allen Frantzen writes of the ‘stigma still current in homophobic discourse’ that focuses upon ‘homosexuals [who] are obsessed with sex and cannot restrain their lust’, given currency by the argument within (parts of) the community that ‘those who have the most sex are also the most gay’.[128] More troublingly, cultural sexualisation as a vehicle to claim and proclaim inalienable rights has filtered through the social fabric to embrace childhood, where prepubescent girls can sport high heels, make up, and padded bras.[129] Our sex is shop-fronted.

Sex was, of course, no less politicized for the Anglo-Saxons, though this politicization rendered it hidden from the social polity. At least in the public narratives, it was either a slipstream to Hell or a means to become one with God. Certainly, sex is thoroughly implicated in both cultures, theirs and ours, and in both there are manifestations of tensions being played out on the bodies that populate them. Despite or because of the breadth and intensity and prolixity of their sanction, the Penitentials suggest a widespread participation in sex and, we might therefore assume, an enjoyment of it: they ‘provide us with a language of sexual pleasure characterised by prohibition that implies practice’.[130] But in the cultural differences there remains considerable conceptual discord that, it might be suggested, is elided by the introduction of such terms as voyeurism. There can be no question of a simple transhistorical migration of the erotic: ostensibly comparable relations are fluid and often duplicitous; symbols and referents shift through time to become misrepresentations of that which they once were. As with the recurring instances of intra-male intimacy (which we might frame in terms of homosexuality but they almost certainly would not), the legal status

[128] Frantzen, p. 203. More neutrally – or to make a different point – Paglia notes the disparity in frequency of sexual activity between male and female homosexuals, what she calls ‘male satyriasis and female nesting’ (Camille Paglia, *Sexual Personae: Art and Decadence from Nefertiti to Emily Dickinson* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), p. 26).
[129] Any confusion we might entertain over the Anglo-Saxon’s schizophrenic relationship with their bodies might perhaps be ameliorated by ambivalences of our own: the public hysteria over paedophilia, for example, seems directly proportional to our indulgence of the sexualisation of young girls.
[130] Clare A. Lees, ‘Engendering Religious Desire: Sex, Knowledge and Christian Identity in Anglo-Saxon England’, *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies*, 27: 1 (1997), 17-47, p. 20.

of women's sex – situated within an official discourse of men's property and rights[131] – speaks less of conceptual identity (the attitude of certain unreconstructed individuals excepted) than of profound alterity. Just as we ought not to assume that our pornography would be theirs, so too the imputation of voyeurism must be handled with a sensitivity that accounts for the putative cultural object of Anglo-Saxon sex. Elusive as the concept might be, any attempt to inhabit the Anglo-Saxon mindset must be attuned to these semantic and conceptual disparities. Conveniently easy points of contact require of us an almost Columbo-esque caution, for fear of imposing meanings that would have had no contemporary resonance and that therefore do nothing but vitiate the texts.

But there is no doubt that the texts do open up space for an interest in the body that cannot merely be explained away. While there might remain valid reservations about projecting a modern conceptual category back in time, reading a voyeuristic understanding into the texts does resolve issues of narrative discord, tidying up the manuscript ambivalence around the body that so much critical literature seems intent on glossing over or ignoring. Just as fruitfully, it prevents the 'unified conclusions about complex events'[132] that so exercises Allen Frantzen: 'texts and events are 'sites' of multiple and simultaneous conflicts […] on many levels, from the most general level of cultural or social conflict […] to a level of very specific conflict of competing rhetorical strategies, images, and linguistic structure'.[133] Allowing for voyeuristic intent enables such contested readings and conclusions to emerge and to be engaged with, thwarting the convenient understandings of complex issues that might be said to have attenuated a more searching, less prudish engagement with the culture. Because of the ambivalence that characterises them, these homilies, perhaps more than most,

[131] For example, 'adultery was considered a crime against property, [and so was …] much more than a sexual offense' Frantzen , p. 142. Paglia argues rather that 'Marxist feminists reduce the historical cult of women's virginity to her property value, her worth on the male marriage market. […] I would argue that there was and is a biological basis to the double standard' (Paglia, p. 27).

[132] Allen Frantzen, *Desire for Origins: New Language, Old English, and Teaching the Tradition* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1990), p. 121.

[133] Ibid., p. 126.

deserve readings that give at least passing acknowledgement to their historic and religious inheritances, inheritances that insist on both

> the material presence of the body and an equally firm insistence that this materiality must not be overvalued. […] In both cases, the act of looking at the material body is rigorously controlled precisely because it acts as a site for cultural knowledge. The pleasures of the gaze are thus harnessed to the processes of cultural insight.[134]

Provided it is properly controlled and caveated, offering an explanatory voyeurism seems to me not only theoretically enticing because so animating but somewhat inevitable anyway, given that we cannot but approach these old texts through prisms of new theory. Any interpretation is – cannot but be – an historically and culturally situated movement towards a text.

Perhaps the biggest problem with ascribing a 'voyeuristic' intent to these homilies, then, becomes the best reason for doing so: such a reading confounds so many Anglo-Saxon critical discourses. Clare Lees' assertion concerning attitudes to the assumed Anglo-Saxon reticence about sex is succinct:

> Anglo-Saxon England is not a promising place to think about sex. Students and researchers are famously aware of this, regularly trotting out the so-called pornographic Old English riddles as our only evidence. Critical literature on these riddles suggests discomfort – or embarrassment – with the thought that a culture dominated by monasticism might have had sex, pleasurable and violent, on its mind once in a while.[135]

Perhaps the critics felt that they were merely handing on a baton of embarrassment that they themselves had been passed. Morton Donner was of the opinion that 'Anglo-Saxon writers ignore sexuality […] The idea of sexual attraction has no force in shaping the materials that

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[134] Lees, 'Engendering', p. 22.
[135] Ibid., p. 17.

make up most of the Old English literature'.[136] To that in itself foreclosing indictment, Hugh Magennis advances the claim that 'the theme of love, *per se*, was inimical to [Anglo-Saxon] literary sensibility',[137] a position certainly corroborated by some of the corpus. The Penitentials' treatment of sex is characterised by a perfunctory dryness; the sexual acts of the penitents are presented as a musty tariff that reads like an early cost/benefit analysis:

> 138. If a 'bædling' fornicate with a 'bædling', he is to fast ten years.
>
> 139. Who does this as an adult man (werlice) is to fast for four years.
>
> 140. If he is a boy and it is the first time, two years; if he does it again, four years.
>
> 141. If he does it between the limbs (i.e. interfemorally), one year or the three forty-day periods.[138]

The inaugural moments of English Christianity were concerned to divorce sex from desire, reducing coitus to a primitive, almost bestial, reproductive interaction: even though lawful (for the laity), sex inevitably involved 'bodily pleasure' that temporarily rendered the participant unworthy of Christian fellowship, 'since desire itself is not blameless'.[139] Rather than sexed, the desire coming out of such manuscripts is most frequently offered up in terms 'heroic or saintly […]: as desire for God and death'.[140]

But more recent readings of the period are beginning to see alternative sexes, detecting in the texts the contested discourses of which Frantzen speaks, and in them the negotiations over cultural narrative in which the authorities are engaged. As Jonathan Wilcox counsels, the 'appearance of descriptions or representations of the naked body in so many different kinds of discourses signals a cultural role that we should be embarrassed to look

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[136] Morton Donner, 'Prudery in Old English Fiction', *Comitatus: A Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies*, 3: 1 (1972), 91-96, p. 91.
[137] Hugh Magennis, 'No Sex Please, We're Anglo-Saxons'? Attitudes to Sexuality in Old English Prose and Poetry', *Leeds Studies in English*, (1995), 1-27, p. 1.
[138] The Canons of Theodore, in Frantzen, *Closet*, p. 179.
[139] Sherley-Price, p. 80.
[140] Lees, 'Engendering', p. 22.

away from or ignore'.[141] This reading is not embarrassed to linger over the body of Mary of Egypt, sexed and centred and dwelt upon, nor that of Agatha, exposed and paraded and made vulnerable, even as they transform before God's power and are transformative in His service. Surely the tensions and ambivalences inherent in them merely reflect those already evident within wider society, and which manifest themselves not only in our texts but in the reliefs that adorn so much ecclesiastical masonry and in the riddles embedded within the manuscripts. The Anglo-Saxon Church was fully aware of the proximity of what we term obscenity to 'ecstasy and rapture. […It was] paradoxically a vehicle of unfettered revelation and of the divine itself'.[142] Cultural and religious syncretism had bequeathed to the Anglo-Saxons a fraught relationship with the body; that the profound and the profane regularly if perhaps uneasily shared a bed is somewhat to be expected, and widely evidenced. For Michael Camille, it is the breadth and reach of profane Church art that demonstrates that 'obscenity was produced from within the sacred and not always in opposition to it'.[143] He illustrates it with the anus in the crypt, which was not 'shocking to its medieval audience […because it represented] the metaphoric power of that body to threaten, to turn back, to cross boundaries and construct limits. […T]he arse was not redolent of death, but full of life'.[144] In the mediaeval mind, the divine and the obscene were not poles of difference.

We do not therefore need the crutch of any tortuous deconstructive reading to account for the presence of the putatively erotic in the sacred; the widely attested acceptance of the body's efficacy in drawing the religious close to God aligns beautifully with the evident enjoyment of bodies in the texts as they move towards salvation. That the depictions can plausibly be defined as pornographic – that they can so easily be mistaken for it – is in itself evidence indeed of an overt treatment of things sexual. But rather than licensing any

[141] Jonathan Wilcox, 'Forward: Uncovering the Body in Anglo-Saxon England', in *Naked Before God: Uncovering the Body in Anglo-Saxon England*, ed. by Benjamin C. Withers and Jonathan Wilcox (Morgantown: West Virginia University Press, 2003), pp. 1-15, p. 7.
[142] Nicola McDonald, 'Introduction', in *Medieval Obscenities* (Suffolk and Rochester: York Medieval Press, 2014), pp. 1-36, p. 14.
[143] Michael Camille, 'Dr. Witkowski's Anus: French Doctors, German Homosexuals and the Obscene in Medieval Church Art', *Medieval Obscenities,* ed. by Nicola McDonald (Suffolk and Rochester: York Medieval Press, 2014), pp. 17-38, p. 36.
[144] Ibid., p. 37.

indulgence in self-gratification, they appear to be a creative attempt to hold in glorious tension two wholly contradictory impulses. Our lusts aroused provide the base material for an affective rather than a cerebral transformation. There need be no contradiction in an entirely orthodox homiletic tract on a voyeuristic mission.

God is visited via the senses. That the Anglo-Saxon Church knew this is evidenced, as this chapter has shown, by the many instances of the erotic put to work in His service. The contact occasioned by the body in pleasure enabled an exquisite union with the Lord, which explains the incidence of, and tight focus upon, the exposed and vulnerable bodies in the *Saints' Lives* especially, which seem fixated upon a sex that is transfigured and which delivers the saint and the reader to God.

But many of these works would go beyond any obvious didacticism. Their dwelling on the flesh, especially in its travails, is sufficiently gratuitous to have attacted the indictment of pornography. It is an enjoyment that threatens but is not incompatible with any putative chaste intent. I see these texts goading excitement and arousal, in order not just to show the audience the transformative power of sex, but to enable them to experience it. It is a voyeuristic technique that fully embraces the body to obviate it.

Romance, as C. S. Lewis averred, may well have been a seismic event occurring after the Conquest, but the Anglo-Saxons' engagement with desire was obviously more subtle than is sometimes appreciated. Even at the literary level, theirs was not simply an aversion to it. Of course, in official discourses, for it to be sanctioned it had always to be cathected to the spiritual. Sex was too heavily invested in, was too intense a site of cultural shorthand, for it to be liberated or freed from all constraint and just allowed out. But the erotic impulse, it seems, was accepted as a necessary and integral element of the human condition; even St. Augustine argued that desire, albeit controlled, roamed Paradise. The monks may well have never had any erotic contact with women, as Peter Dendle contends,[145] but the urge to sex would yet

[145] Dendle, p. 363.

have been there – and was acknowledged to have been: ‘Like the beast and the angel, the pure and the impure animals form a pair. The light in such dark figures as lust and anger is that they are natural, even necessary, to all souls’.[146] Indeed, ‘the ‘gruntings and brayings and hissings and howlings’ are the ‘voices of the soul itself’’.[147] While sex was proscribed for the religious, it was forever within and before them. In accepting such, perhaps the most effective means of control might be to facilitate its arousal in managed conditions, ‘to confront [alongside Augustine and other medieval authorities] its proximity to ecstasy and rapture’.[148] Perhaps the monks are being taught that they too can participate in the erotic – and a better eroticism at that – by channelling their energies into a sexually configured and sexually understood union with God. The erotic could be deployed and enjoyed if read aright – if the physical is always shown to be inferior to the divine. Such understandings segue effortlessly into the translation and sublimation of physical into spiritual desire.

Positing for these texts a sanctioned if oxymoronic function – being both chaste *and* erotic – opens up space for alternative and unorthodox understandings of the methodologies of the homilists and, perhaps, of the dynamics of the wider Anglo-Saxon relationship with sex. Such didactic literature seems designed to tread a tremulous line that would simultaneously negotiate a sex to be feared and recoiled from, but which nevertheless leads to God. To co-opt Hahn (though against her own argument), the ‘reversal of expectation reinvigorates’.[149] What seems beyond doubt is that these accounts are not especially concerned with undertaking a desiccated, cerebral coaxing to the Lord. The manner in which they use their carefully crafted emotional capital is too loaded, is deployed too artfully, engages too successfully a primitive emotional response, for it not to have been intentional. They risked arousing audiences that they might then convert them, because ‘wisdom begins with desire.’ The bodies that would coach the faithful to God are fleshy, desirable, and smell of sex. Maybe the surest way to God is via their tumescence.

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[146] Cox, p. 130.
[147] Ibid., p. 122.
[148] McDonald, p. 14 – her parenthesis.
[149] Hahn, p. 44.

Four

The Body Beatiful

KATHERINA Forward, I pray, since we have come so far,
And be it moon, or sun, or what you please.
And if you please to call it a rush-candle,
Henceforth I vow it shall be so for me.

PETRUCHIO I say it is the moon.

KATHERINA I know it is the moon.

PETRUCHIO Nay, then you lie. It is the blesséd sun.

KATHERINA Then God be blessed, it is the blesséd sun.
But sun it is not when you say it is not,
And the moon changes even as your mind.
What you will have it named, even that it is,
And so it shall be for Katherina.[1]

One of the themes threading its way through the *Lives of the Saints* is the erotic attractiveness of the women themselves, a beauty that, as we have argued, facilitates a contact with the divine. Indeed, this is often a very specifically posed beauty, its erotic potential heightened to occasion an arousal that the viewer might then transform. But deploying it risks temptation, perhaps even damnation. What is so interesting in the texts I examine in this chapter is that

[1] William Shakespeare, *The Taming of the Shrew,* ed. by G. R. Hibbard (London: Penguin, 1969), iv.5.12-22.

this risk is sometimes pushed to – beyond – its limits, to the extent that some modern readers of the Riddles, for example, see a need to quarantine them from their contexts because they are seemingly so aberrant. The sexual energy of many of these bodies would appear to jeopardise any conceivable edifying function that might be ascribed to them. I nevertheless detect in their prurience frameworks of control that allow them to remain orthodox and so continue to reinforce Church writ. In fact, these ostensibly resistant texts allow the Church to project power by demanding from them meanings or interpretations that deny the obvious, or that are counter-intutive. Further, in poems such as *Genesis* and *Christ I*, where the narratives pose types of acceptable bodies by juxtaposing them with other, abjected ones, I discern the imposition of what Bulter terms 'regulatory norms', to which the faithful are invited or encouraged to conform. These deployments of the flesh, which seek to extort meaning from it by insisting that the body is in need of theorization, construction, application, find a corollary in Foucault's *Scientia Sexualis*. Thus this chapter will analyse the processes and safeguards set up by the Church to manage its bodies.

The risks inhering in the flesh are embedded in the texts themselves; even when subjected to the various bodily torments that will expedite their union with God, and even as their sexual valency remains undiminished, the Saints still leave in their wake a high-tide detritus of sexually frustrated would-be suitors. With St. Lucy, whose body is 'only' threatened with torture and penetration before she is to be disembowelled, the narrative nevertheless seems firmly fixated upon the sexual, as though for her putative suitor, Paschasius, such physical beauty cannot but resolve into some sort of coital conclusion. Having had his carnal hopes thwarted by her celestial ones, he is reduced to fulminating: 'Ic hate þe ardlice læden . to þæra myltestrena huse . þæt ðu þinne mægð-had forleose . […] ðonne þu fullice byst gescynd' (I command that you be quickly led to the whore house, that you lose your maidenhead when you are foully shamed.)[2] Referring particularly to Aldhelm's

[2] Skeat, vol. I, p. 215. ll. 81-2.

poetic version of the *Life*, Lees and Overing note that the 'terms of Lucy's martyrdom' connote 'more, and more sexualised, violence':[3]

> Lucy's entrails ("viscera") are disembodied, radiant, white, shining ("candida") when violated by Paschasius, the verb "violare" clearly associated with sexual defilement and pollution. In such a context, it becomes difficult to avoid the sexual aspect of the rigid sword ("regido ferro"). Lucy is re-embodied in the next line when she sheds a different kind of blood, "cruro", the clotted blood associated with wounds and menstrual flow and an indication of her body as shamed.[4]

At the simplest level, Paschasius' reading of Lucy is, of course, a misreading. Certainly Gregory, guided by his boys, would have understood that the *Life*'s explicitly expressed pulchritude was a reflection and projection of the saint's innate sanctity, a fairness to be appreciated through meditation rather than enjoyed in the flesh. Such beauty was the manifestation of a spiritual preferment, the grace of God that irradiates more than just hearts. Thus, though something of a narrative cliché – the vulnerable yet soigné young woman suffering injustice at the hand of an irresistible patriarchy is still a powerful trope – the detail is no mere narrative curlicue.

My analysis, though, has suggested that such attention to form operates as more than a succinct theological shorthand. Lucy's beauty is central to the nurturing of audience compunction; it seems intended to keen a sensitivity to the saint's experiences. The power of beauty lies in the relationship – what Joe Winston terms 'the poise' – between the object and the experience the viewer brings to it: 'This poise is not the contemplative detachment of the aesthete; rather, it is a poise from which the energy of passion can spring'.[5] The intensity of empathy is conditioned by if not entirely conditional upon a subconsciously perceived relationship between outer form and inner worth. Plato argued that 'beauty is the one spiritual

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[3] Clare A. Lees and Gillian Overing, *Double Agents: Women and Clerical Culture in Anglo-Saxon England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001), p. 120.
[4] Ibid.
[5] Joe Winston, '"An Option for Art But Not an Option for Life": Beauty as an Educational Imperative', *Journal of Aesthetic Education*, 42: 3 (2008), pp. 71-87, p. 79.

quality that we love by instinct',[6] even though it might often have a less than spiritual outcome; Richard Brandt states that in the face of beauty,

> moral reactions are molded by the strength of some sentiment or the weakness of one or by the power of some small group of sentiments to conform others to their requirements. Moral valuations are not exclusively matters of intellectual insight; they are functions of the system of sentiments and emotions.[7]

These *Lives of Saints* bring the readers' experience of arousal to the object, and use the energy of passion to develop it. Only when fully engaged is the reader expected to sublimate his or her arousal. Yet what is so interesting in the *Life of St. Lucy* is its determination to sail so close to the frotting rocks, and therefore to risk courting the effect it would negate. The sacred is positioned in close proximity to the profane; the affinity as much as the difference between the two incarnations of sex is being held up before the audience. Lucy's erotic potential is not merely adumbrated to demonstrate the spiritual potency of sex; the dynamics – the very viscera – of such sexual interplay are conjured for the audience. In thus describing the outworking of Paschasius' sexualised designs, they are surely being delivered to a sexual response; foregrounding as it so obviously does the desire being played out on Lucy's body, the *Life* promotes Paschasius' reading of beauty even as it pronounces the error of it. The use of sexual imagery, couched in those so sexually loaded terms (the 'rigido ferro' and 'cruro') and focusing so closely upon that parody of sex, seems to go beyond any justifiable dramatic or theological attempt to nurture compunction in observers of it. Even as it hopes to transcend sex both within the text and without, this is a beauty that incites a sexual response, despite the risk of damnation that misdirected arousal might occasion. A sexual ambivalence is woven into the fabric of the narrative itself that simple explanations of compunction struggle to contain.

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[6] Ibid., p. 71.

[7] Richard B. Brandt, 'An Emotional Theory of the judgement of Moral Worth', *Ethics*, 52: 1, (1941), 41-79, p. 69.

For a culture apparently so ill at ease with displays of the sexual act, a disconcerting number of the Anglo-Saxon saints are similarly posed by sex, a wantonness they share with various other genres in the corpus. Despite being situated at the heart of solidly ecclesiastical documents, the explicitness of some of the *soi disant* erotic riddles has long denied critics any easy didactic explanation of them. Theirs is a ribaldry that speaks less of a sexual delicacy than of a robust prurience, and their inclusion in a work whose 'prevailing mood is penitential', and whose 'prevailing purpose is to induce in an audience that state of compunction',[8] might at first seem discordant. Riddle 23, the 'Onion Riddle', revels in the lubricious like a priapic teen; while it balances its dual meanings as any riddle worthy of the name must, the phallic symbolism allied to the sedulous ministrations of that very beautiful daughter cannot but conjure images of an angry cock and its eager mistress.

Ic eom wunderlicu wiht,   wifum on hyhte,
neahbuendum nyt.   Nængum sceþþe
burgsittendra   nymþe bonan anum.
Staþol min is steapheah;   stonde ic on bedde,
neoþan ruh nathwær.   Neþeð hwilum
ful cyrtenu   ceorles dohtor,
modwlonc meowle,   þæt heo on mec gripeð,
ræseð mec on reodne,   reafað min heafod,
fegeð mec on fæsten.   Feleþ sona
mines gemotes   seo þe mec nearwað
wif wundenlocc –   wæt bið þæt eage.

(I am a remarkable creature, a joy to women, useful to neighbours; I harm no citizen except my slayer alone. Lofty is my position, I stand in a bed, am shaggy somewhere beneath. Sometimes a very beautiful daughter of a freeman, a proud-minded woman, ventures to get hold of me, rushes upon me who am red, ravages my head, binds me

[8] Bradley, pp. 201-2.

in a fastness. She soon feels that encounter with me, she who confines me, the woman with braided locks. Her eye becomes wet.)[9]

Of course, that chaste interpretation is ever present, and the innocence of the onion remains an available and credible refuge of meaning. The Anglo-Saxons' renown for a love of riddles doubtless goes some way to explaining the inclusion of them in otherwise incongruous settings. At the very least, they could provide succinct tutelage on visual or mental duplicity; in their jostling for signification, the lachrymose lesson of onions and organs becomes for the reader one of recognising 'the dangers of relying upon the carnal/literal dimension of the texts, and by extension, of life'.[10] Due to its being a nexus of emotional and sexual investment, the body – as Gregory knew and Paschasius did not – was more than usually susceptible to misreading. For Benjamin Withers, 'the body and its potentially pornographic activities materialize as kinds of instructional citations that warn of the dangers posed by the absence of a proper, spiritual reading of the literal text'.[11] But even so flexible a justification becomes difficult to maintain with, for example, Riddle 87; the enthusiastic narration and graphic suggestibility of the so-called Key Riddle test the limits of any didactic paradigm:

Min heafod is   homere geþuren,
Searopila wund,   sworfen feole.
Oft ic begine   þæt me ongean sticað,
þonne ic hnitan sceal   hringum gyrded,
hearde wið heardum,   hindan þyrel –
forð ascufan   þæt mines frean

[9] Edith Whitehurst Williams, 'What's So New about the Sexual Revolution? Some Comments on Anglo-Saxon Attitudes towards Sexuality in Women Based on Four *Exeter Book* Riddles', in *New Readings on Women in Old English Literature*, ed. by Helen Damico and Alexandra Hennessey Olsen (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1990), pp. 137-145, p. 139.
[10] Mercedes Salvador, 'The Key to the Body: Unlocking Riddles 42 – 46', *Naked Before God: Uncovering the Body in Anglo-Saxon England*, ed. by Benjamin C. Withers and Jonathon Wilcox (Morgantown: West Virginia University Press, 2003), pp. 60-96, p. 96.
[11] Benjamin C. Withers and Jonathon Wilcox, eds., *Naked Before God: Uncovering the Body in Anglo-Saxon England* (Morgantown: West Virginia University Press, 2003), p. 8.

mod.p. freoþað   middelnihtum.

Hwilum ic under bæc   bregde nebbe

hyrde þæs hordes,   þonne min hlaford wile

lafe þicgan   þara þe he of life het

wælcrafte awrecan   willum sinum.

(My head is beaten by a hammer, wounded by a pointed instrument, rubbed by a file. Often I open wide to that which pricks against me. Then, girded with rings, I must thrust hard against the hard, pierced from the rear, press forth that joy which my lord cherishes at midnight. Sometime, by means of my countenance, I move to and fro, backwards, the entrance of the treasure when my lord wishes to receive what is left of that which he commanded from life (i.e., to death), which he thrust with deadly power according to his desire.)[12]

Here, any explicatory 'duality of meaning' merely segues into exegetical groping. For it to be a riddle, we do expect the chaste to be courted, and to risk being corrupted, by its 'wann' shadow. Both impulses are to be engaged simultaneously, and the erotic cannot but be implicated; whatever is ultimately expected from or hoped of the audience (presumably a chaste reaction in the final judgement), there is a presumption that there must first be a primal wrestling over meaning. As with the *Saints' Lives*, the chthonic must cede to the cathartic, but only if and after the chthonic has roared. With especially this riddle, however, the chaste meaning (such that it can be settled upon)[13] is all but obscured in pursuit of the salacious one, to the extent that the delicate balance upon which riddling relies is almost destabilised. Sex is forefronted, the description lascivious to the point where it stretches the credibility of any didactic function that might be ascribed to it. As with Lucy's exposed breasts, but exponentially so, the erotic is immediate, unavoidable, and visceral. Sex cannot but intrude,

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[12] Williams, p. 142.

[13] 'This riddle has been almost universally read to mean "Key" but I depart from that reading to offer the solution "Keyhole". That is, instead of forcing certain distorted meanings to apply rather doubtfully to a male instrument, I suggest accepting the very obvious allusion to a female receptacle, active though it appears to be.' Williams, p. 142.

however chaste the reader's intent. Certainly there is little interest in anything one might term compunction, and in its rampant eagerness it seems to go far beyond that required of simple instructional *double entendre*. The brio of the description itself inexorably effects a sexed connection, and the imposition or expectation of a chaste reading would seem almost counter-factual.

With both of these texts, the sexual energy threatens to confound any edifying paradigm that has been assigned to them; it is the evident enjoyment of the protagonists, and especially that of the women (and perhaps even that of the scribe), that pushes them to, or beyond, the limits of easy pedagogy. In the Onion Riddle, the freeman's daughter is 'indeed portrayed as a lively participant',[14] her eager holding, rushing, ravaging, binding hands (?) fluffing the narrative to a climax. A similar intensity pervades Riddle 87, except here the energy is suffused with and heightened by sexual aggression, where the woman is beaten, wounded, and pierced into her submissive role: the 'poem moves rapidly with a sense of power that amounts to violence'[15] in a 'metaphor of conquest couched in battle imagery which is in no way inappropriate to the sexual encounter'.[16] Whilst noting the differing conceptions of equality, ours and theirs, Edith Williams nevertheless avers that the riddle

> offers the strongest argument of all for the mutuality of the sex experience. A female persona relates the incident; four of the significant verbs in the poem describe her own actions which seem to be both voluntary and vigorous. Her allusions to joy and pleasure place the same high value on the circumstances that we have seen in the other Riddles.[17]

Though Williams is happy to do so, there may be some reservation in carrying notions of mutuality of experience over to this particular riddle, especially as there are allusions to a situation of enslavement for the narrator. Metaphors of frenetic sexual conquest

[14] Williams, p. 139.
[15] Ibid., p. 144.
[16] Ibid., p. 142.
[17] Ibid., p. 144.

no doubt carry freight that is today markedly different from that obtaining for the Anglo-Saxons, or indeed for the 1970s of Williams. But un/consensual explorations of S & M (modern or mediaeval) aside, consideration of the social understandings of the dynamics of rough sex is a very different argument to that with which we are here concerned. The point is that both the writer and earlier reader of the riddle might be expected to conclude a positive encounter with or reaction to the sexual display on offer. There is no intimation of reticence or reservation here, no redeeming meta-narrative in its dénouement, no concession to an expectant Lord. In the Homilies, the erotic is brief, controlled, and counter-evidenced; with these riddles, the energy and eagerness of the passion is overwhelming and all consuming. The explicitness of the eroticism is hard to contain within the models that would explain them.

This apparent discord would seem to underpin the critical position offered by Frederick Tupper's late Edwardian slur that such riddles 'descend into the depths of greasy *double entente*',[18] which situated them – the descent no less than the grease[19] – as somehow at one remove from the wider compilation. More recently, Michael Swanton evidenced a similar sequestering mind-set when he offered the suggestion that the riddles 'should perhaps be placed in a distinct class of primitive erotica',[20] with which opinion Hugh Magennis concurred:

> [The] riddles of the *Exeter Book* express a playful and frank attitude to sexuality which someone like Aelfric could hardly have condoned. This attitude has its likely origin in popular and oral tradition rather than in the world of Christian learning […] in their treatment of sexuality they lack an obvious moral dimension.[21]

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[18] Glenn Davis, 'The Exeter Book Riddles and the Place of Sexual Idiom in Old English Literature,' *Medieval Obscenities*, ed. by Nicola McDonald (Suffolk and Rochester: York Medieval Press, 2014), pp. 39-54, p. 40.
[19] Ibid.
[20] M. J. Swanton, 'The Wife's Lament and Husband's Message: A Reconsideration', *Anglia*, 82: 3 (1964), pp. 269-290, p. 271.
[21] Magennis, pp. 16-17.

All this might appear to align with the widely shared wisdom that, in Anthony Davis' description, insists on 'the Church's loathing of the body and its abhorrence of sensuality',[22] a position which seems to sit most comfortably with a Church whose defining obsession was, after all, an impetus to universal celibacy (or at least chaste marriage). Perhaps because its foundational text was so replete with spiritually ambiguous and misleading plot twists and intrigues, which positioned ever before it multiple opportunities for misreading, the Church *was* greatly exercised by correct reading. Inviting eroticised encounters with its texts might well seem to be the last thing on its mind. Its concern with controlling the paradigms available to the flock is captured by Ælfric in his preface to *Genesis*; with reference to the translation requested of him, he freely confessed his reservations:

> Nu þincð me, leof, þæt weorc is swiðe pleolic me oððe ænigum men to underbeginnenne, for þan þe ic ondræde, gif sum dysig man þas boc ræt oððe rædan gehyrð, þæt he wille wenan þæt he mote lybban nu on þære niwan æ swa swa þa ealdan fæderas leofodon. [23]
>
> (Now it seems to me, my lord, that it is very dangerous for me or for any man to undertake, because I fear if some foolish man reads the book or hears it read, then he will think that he might live now under the new law just as the old fathers lived.)

But of course, Ælfric's worry was less with the Bible's content than with the flock's glossing of it. It was only without the priestly intercession made necessary by the Latin or Greek that the 'heahfæder Iacobe' and his 'feower wif – twa geswustra and heora twa þinena'[24] (the high father Jacob and his four wives – two sisters and their two servants), or the ante-diluvium norms where 'nam broðer hys swuster to wife'[25] (a brother took his sister as wife), became risqué material for either the ignorant or the mischievous. In this treaty on the dangers of opening up scripture, the fretful abbot seems at pains, not to deny his flock

[22] Salvador, p. 61.
[23] Mitchell and Robinson, p. 191, ll. 7-11.
[24] Ibid., ll. 15-17.
[25] Ibid., l. 19.

these *exempla*, but to ensure only that someone be on hand to guide them, because ‘þincþ þam ungelæredum þæt eall þæt andgit beo belocen on þære anfealdan gerecednisse; ac hit ys swiðe feor þam’[26] (it seems to the unlearned that all the meaning is locked in the simple narrative; but it is very far from that). Simple narratives were vehicles for deeper and more profound meanings, and it needed only a trained exegetical eye to peel back the obfuscating layers. In Mosaic sacrifice, Ælfric saw that the ‘gatehær’ (goat hair) was not just the skin of the beast, but ‘getacnode þa stiðan dædbote þæra manna þe heora sinna behreowsiað’[27] (betokened the stiff penance of the men who repent of their sins), and that ‘se tægel sceolde beon gehal’[28] (the tail should be whole) because it signified the complete dedication of the Christian life, until its very end. Even in the simple symmetry of man’s ‘twa eagan and twa earan, twa nosþirlu and twegen weleras, twa handa and twegen fet’[29] (two eyes and two ears, two nostrils and two lips, two hands and two feet), Ælfric could divine meta-thematics. In an ironic anticipation of evolutionary homology, such correspondence naturally indicated for him that God ‘wolde eac habban twa gecyðnissa in þissere worulde geset’[30] (wished also to have two testaments set in this world). There need be no problem, then, in the chaste listening to Lot swiving his daughters, or to the blessed Job enjoying any or all of his seven new wives, provided that the fullness of meaning connoted by these interactions could be coaxed out of the narrative. Ælfric is concerned less with shielding the delicate sensibilities of his flock than in securing in them the appropriate theological conclusion.

The academic intransigence that would detach the Church from the physicality of the bodies filling its pews is of a part with the historically similar insistence on a strident Ecclesiastical anti-heroism, posited as an intransigent Christian antipathy to the martial poetry informing the pagan culture of the Anglo-Saxons.[31] But the various and invariably cited

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[26] Ibid., ll. 46-48.
[27] Ibid., ll. 91-92.
[28] Ibid., l. 94.
[29] Ibid., ll. 110-111.
[30] Ibid., l. 112.
[31] And which is, ironically enough, a snug inversion of the similar though opposite project of Greverus to purify the corpus (see p. 25).

imprecations of Wulfstan and Alcuin that counsel against any rapprochement between Christ and Ingeld would seem to be unsettled by the quantity and quality of heroic material in manuscripts associated with the Church. The *Exeter Book* is only one of a number of monastic texts that are saturated with the heroic. Its inclusion of poems such as 'Wulf and Eadwacer', 'The Wife's Lament', 'Deor', 'The Seafarer' and 'The Wanderer' – together with the often less than prudish riddles – might well evidence a 'heterogeneity for the Lord' that confounds any simplistic reading of the fathers. The Vercelli Book's *Andreas* recounts the work of the missionary in fully heroic terms:

Nu ðu, Andreas, scealt edre geneðan
in gramra gripe. Is þe guð weotod,
heardum heoruswengum scel þin hra dæled
wundum weorðan, wættre geliccost
faran flode blod. Hie þin feorh ne magon
deaðe gedælen, þeh ðu drype ðolie,
synnigra slege. Ðu þæt sar aber;
ne læt þe ahweorfan hæðenra þrym,
grim gargewinn, þæt ðu gode swice,
dryhtne þinum. Wes a domes georn. [32]

(Now you, Andreas, must venture forthwith into the grip of the enemy. Certainly there is a battle for you; your body is to receive hard sword strokes and wounds, and like water your blood will flow. They will not be able to deal your life a death blow, though you will suffer strokes, the beating of sinners. You will bear that pain; do not turn before the power of the heathens, the grim spear fight, so that you abandon your Lord, God. Ever be eager for reputation.)

The poet has here effected a fusion of traditions that fully partakes in Caedmon's achievement, and it is no casual or coincidental pastiche of a passé genre. In so situating the

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[32] Krapp, *Vercelli*, p. 29, ll. 950-59.

disciple's theocratic trial within a tableau of hard sword strokes and grim spear opposition, he seems not only sympathetic to the rigours and valour of the tradition he appropriates: Andreas' victory out of this fraught, Germanically-framed quest inevitably gathers unto itself the kudos of the heroic *lof* and *dom.* But in supplanting both the object of loyalty and the manner in which it is displayed to him, the effect is to open up fresh insights into the new tradition even as it subtly critiques the older one. It is, however, a technique that relies for its efficacy upon the audience's ready familiarity with heroic verse and heroic motifs, to manipulate the expectation upon which these devices depended. Andreas is always described in heroic terms: 'ne wæs him bleað hyge, / ah he wæs anræd ellenweorces, / heard ong higerof, nalas hildlata, / gearo, guðe fram, to godes campe'[33] (he was not timid in mind, but he was resolute for brave deeds. Hard and stout hearted, he was not battle shy, but ready for God's war, for God's fight). His disciples are described as the classic *comitatus*:

> Hwider hweorfað we hlafordlease,
> geomormode, gode orfeorme,
> synnum wunde, gif we swicað þe?
> We bioð laðe on landa gehwam,
> folcum fracoðe, þonne fira bearn,
> ellenrofe, æht besittaþ,
> hwylc hira selost symle gelæste
> hlaforde æt hilde, þonne hand ond rond
> on beaduwange billum forgrunden
> æt niðplegan nearu þrowedon.[34]
>
> (Where shall we turn – Lordless, sorrowful, destitute of your goodness, wounded by sins – if we abandon you? We will be hated in every land, abominable to people, when the sons of men that are renowned for their courage hold counsel as to which of

[33] Ibid., p. 16, ll. 231-4.
[34] Ibid., p. 22, ll. 405-14.

them has best performed for his lord in battle, when hand and shield, ground down by swords in the war play, suffered danger).

Every 'battle' Andreas is enjoined to, however, is resolved not through the expected demonstration of manly action but through passive reliance upon God's might: though he is to 'herd hige þinne, heortan staðola' (corral your mind, stiffen your heart),[35] he must nevertheless offer no physical resistance to his enemies, 'þæt hie min on ðe mægaen oncnawan' (that they might know my power through you).[36] This is a technique of building expectation in an audience and then denying it to them, and it makes explicit the alternative values immanent in each system. The stoic resolution and courage, the obstinacy in the face of death, that are staples of warrior culture and the heroic literature that celebrated it are not dismissed but fully embraced, nuanced, and then redeployed by the Christian poet, and the make over transforms them for the Lord. The *Andreas* poet is concerned to demonstrate an alternative courage that is underpinned by something other and greater than heroic violence, and is ultimately more resolute and more courageous for that. 'Interest in and knowledge of the old ways were used to create magnificent, and magnificently subtle, disquisitions on the heroic tradition that inspired respect and affection, even as it needed to be superseded by a better faith'.'[37] As we are coming to appreciate, these heroic incorporations are not aberrations to be explained away but fundamental inclusions to be understood.

A similar reconsideration seems necessary in relation to the culture's sexed bodies. The *a priori* assumptions of prudery that seem to inform opinions such as Davis' might well account for the critical need to quarantine both the riddles and the wider sexual preoccupations of some of the corpus, but the academic impulse to geld the Anglo-Saxons before the act denies so much of what they produced so much of its crucial context, and the approach to them then becomes self-referential and self-validating. It is a preconception that

[35] Ibid., p. 32, l. 1213.
[36] Ibid., l. 1214.
[37] Andrew Hyde. 'Sheep in Beowulf's Clothing: Projection and the Performance of Desire in Beowulf.' Unpublished Masters' Degree, (2007: University of Birmingham), p. 26

cauterizes the various sexual irruptions of the corpus, distorting their erotic energy and occluding any understanding of their purpose. The urge to isolate them is surely a misreading of the most acute kind and as such, given the intentionally ambiguous nature of the riddles, the Grandest of Ironies. More contemporary criticism has recognized the importance of their situatedness, that their eroticism need not be treated as a monastic slippage, and that positing a purely (or should that be grubbily?) ludic function negates completely the spiritual *terroir* that the broader text supplies. For Bradley, the *Exeter Book*

> at large sustains the address made in the opening poems to the essentials of Christian faith and Christian living. […] The prevailing mood is penitential; the prevailing purpose is to induce in an audience that state of compunction held precious by contemporary commentators, in which the soul is opened to the access of grace.[38]

Manuscript context is surely central to fathoming all that it contains; it cannot be coincidental that the *Exeter Book* puts – 'so provocatively'[39] – the majority of its riddles at its heart. Rather than demanding that they maintain a mutual because so differentiated silence, we would do better to encourage the (our) genres to communicate with one another, to put the riddles 'into conversation with other literary products of Anglo-Saxon England',[40] both wider cultural discourses and the more immediate one that is the manuscript milieu.

For Mercedes Salvador, the inclusion of the erotic riddles 'might have been to present the notion of the body in an instructional context, illustrating the conflictive twofold nature of human beings – carnal and spiritual. […T]his series could have been designed to be read allegorically, presenting a warning against the dangers of the body'.[41] The tentativeness of those auxiliary verb phrases is certainly testament to the riddles' continuing ambivalence, but that is the point (which Salvador fails to make): it is that very over-investment of the voluptuous body, with its potential to host multiple and evasive or illusive cathexes and

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[38] Bradley, pp. 201 -202.
[39] McDonald, p. 15.
[40] Davis, p. 40.
[41] Salvador, p. 63.

meanings, that provides the lesson. An initial ambiguity is essential to the process. The erotic riddles, as John Tanke argues, presented the riddled with what was and had to be an unwinnable conundrum; in answering the riddler, 'either his naiveté or his salacious imagination is bound to be exposed'.[42] Meaning was hidden from him, denied to him, and he was required to offer himself as a *tabula rasa* upon which truth could be inscribed:

> the Christian's hermeneutic self-relationship becomes clear and decipherable only through a relationship of submission. […T]he relationship of the subject to his own 'truth' is mediated by an Other, and this other requires submission and dependency. Behind confession lies a political technology of obedience'.[43]

That his position was impossible demonstrated to the student how fraught was the conceptual ground around the sexed body, how easily confusion flowed from the seemingly simple, how essential was the assistance of wise tutors in focusing the mind on Truth. Like deciphering the honeyed bounty from Samson's rotting lion (Judges 14), understanding must sometimes come from without; wresting chastity from the profanity of the riddles requires a conceptual leap that does violence to both the word and the spirit of the text.

This might perhaps be the point. It is a technique that goes beyond merely inciting homiletic compunction, or simply showing that two meanings can exist simultaneously and that God's children must choose the correct one. The manner in which such riddles do not just flaunt but push the erotic, and then and nevertheless demand a chaste reading of their sensual content, is suggestive rather of a desire to demonstrate control over meaning. Glen Davis argues for a more inclusive approach to the erotic in general, and a less sexually restrictive church in particular, but surely the riddles in the *Exeter Book* 'reinforced orthodoxy, not challenged it'.[44] Pace Davis, I agree with Mercedes Salvador that, for them to have been

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[42] John W. Tanke, 'Wonfeax Wale: Ideology and Figuration in the Sexual Riddles of the Exeter Book', in *Class and Gender in Early English Literature: Intersections*, ed. by Britton J. Harwood and Gillian R. Overing (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1994), pp. 21-42, p. 28.
[43] Jean-Michel Landry, 'Confession, Obedience, Subjectivity: Michel Foucault's Unpublished Lectures on the Government of Living', *Telos,* 146 (2009), pp. 111-123, p. 122.
[44] Salvador, p. 43.

preserved in a so obviously ecclesiastical work, the riddles must have performed an instructive role, with the eroticism somehow co-opted to edifying ends. No less than does the *Life of St. Lucy* with Paschasius, these texts insist on a certain outcome, even if as for him that outcome might seem an altogether improbable one. We can, they appear to be saying, put this angry cock before you, invite you to contemplate it in action, and at length, and still control the meanings you confer upon it and the conclusions you take from it. To parade before an audience an explicitly sexual tableau and then demand a non-sexual retort to it is to demonstrate, not only the transformative power of the Lord, but the semiotic power of the Church. It is an exercise in power, evidence of power's power to assign meaning to the body and its workings. These riddles are not in any way intended to oppose power, then, aberrances or slippages into the unorthodox, but are rather fully involved in its deployment. Certainly, this was a delicate sexual engagement that entailed considerable interpretive risk, but it nevertheless – or perhaps therefore – encoded significant investment of ecclesiastical authority and power: it was a will to mean.

As with our understanding of the fusion of epic and Christian that ultimately serves to enrich both traditions, Davis' conversations between the genres can also and most productively be set in motion here. It is a conversation that demands we hesitate before the commonplace cliché of the Anglo-Saxon prude; coming out of this quite considerable babble of eroticisms, we have been able to hear a coherent narrative wherein sex, far from being quieted, sequestered, and avoided, is in fact excited, provoked, inflamed, and paraded. The body is being allowed to speak because of all that it can be made to say. The erotic riddles and (at least in part) the homilies both treat of similar subject matter in pursuit of a common goal: the imposition of a chaste meaning upon a sexed tableau to, ultimately, conjure a numinous sex out of a chthonic one. They differ only in the manner in which they work the erotic: the riddles, to demand a certain (counter-intuitive) interpretation of a seemingly profane act; the homilies, to draw from the profane a transcendental response. Understood thus, the various excrescences of sex in these ostensibly disparate literatures cohere to

become an extended dialogue that seeks to curate a specifically sublime meaning, and to then project that meaning out over the symbolic. Over-eroticised Lucy, then, is so sexually invested in order to confront the very sex she has been made to goad.[45]

Perhaps the dialectic has been misunderstood because it is a less than obvious operation of power. While the body has long been appropriated due to its efficacy to both absorb and pronounce meaning, more usual contemporary manifestations of power tended to signal their intent early and openly. In a cultural narrative familiar to any Anglo-Saxon, punishments visited upon the body made out of it a palimpsest whereby sovereignty made no bones about the extent of its writ: 'physical punishment [was] a means to reveal both the crime and its recompense on the material body, which therefore becomes a text of both'.[46] Power was instantiated in the person of the king, and even the most tangential of crimes was often considered an attack on his person: 'a king is something more than his mere body; it is an imaginary presence in which the whole social body can recognize itself'.[47] Catherine Karkov asserts that 'Æthelberht's code emphasized both loyalty and obedience to Lord and lord [;…] thefts were, like the rebellion of the angels, acts of disobedience centered on false claims to land, property and power'.[48] Visual and permanent displays of power on the flesh of his subjects were designed to reinforce the authority and justification immanent in the sovereign. What Foucault termed 'supplice' (the public torture and execution of criminals) was an integral element of a unified technology of

> domination [,…] a carefully regulated affair, tied to a set of legal doctrines and ceremonies which controlled its use and gave it practical meaning. […] In keeping

[45] Interestingly, in discussing the penances applied to boys engaged in same-sex acts, Clark notes 'that boys are also seen as accountable for the effects of their beauty on older men (just as female beauty is seen as dangerous and culpable in innumerable patristic and medieval religious texts)' (Clark, p. 60). He furher details Euphrosyne and *Genesis A* in his footnote.

[46] Mary P. Richards, 'The Body as Text in Early Anglo-Saxon Law', *Naked Before God: Uncovering the Body in Anglo-Saxon England*, ed. by Benjamin C. Withers and Jonathon Wilcox (Morgantown: West Virginia University Press, 2003), pp. 97-115, p. 97.

[47] Laura Verdi, 'The Symbolic Body and the Rhetoric of Power', *Social Analysis, Journal of Cultural and Social Practice*, 54 (2010), 99-115, p. 103.

[48] Catherine E. Karkov, 'Exiles from the Kingdom: The Naked and the Damned in Anglo-Saxon Art', *Naked Before God: Uncovering the Body in Anglo-Saxon England*, ed. by Benjamin C. Withers and Jonathon Wilcox (Morgantown: West Virginia University Press, 2003), pp. 181-220, p. 202.

> with the military sources of this sovereign power, justice is a manifestation of armed violence, an exercise in terror to remind the populace of the unrestrained power behind the law.[49]

The role of the body in these spectacles was almost that of intercessor (or perhaps scapegoat), mediating between the subject and its sovereign, providing power with a locus for its application and a sandwich board on which to proclaim it: 'To view those eyeless, noseless faces, those scalpless heads, arms without hands, legs without feet [was] to read upon their bodies the legal enactment of punishment for crimes'.[50] On these terms, power's seizure of the body is dramatic. It produces, subjugates, makes docile and productive: 'strategies of power have their real, operative impact at the point where they come into contact with the bodies of their subjects. […] Power refers […] to the various forms of domination and subordination that operate whenever and wherever social relations exist.'[51]

This somatic seizure was no less dramatic with the Church. The Penitentials fully arraigned the body into the soteriological project, the prescriptions of the Father effecting a control that was an obvious exercise of power, even if only and always after the act. Thus, if 'boys fornicate between themselves, he [Theodore] judged that they are to be beaten',[52] which was an all too obvious demonstration of power's focus. As Frantzen notes, this is a literature concerned primarily with behaviour; though the harshness of penance and punishment was intended to modify future action through discomfort – 'a pedagogical principle that stressed the role of physical pain in training the memory'[53] – the desires that informed those actions were for the most part beyond its explicit purview. Penitential literature describes 'influential

[49] David Garland, 'Foucault's "Discipline and Punish" – an Exposition and Critique', *American Bar Foundation Research Journal*, 11: 4 (1986), 847-880, p. 854.
[50] Catherine O'Brian O'Keeffe, 'Body and Law in Late Anglo-Saxon England', *Anglo-Saxon England*, 27 (1998), 209-232, p. 214.
[51] Garland, p. 852.
[52] Franzten, *Closet,* p. 157.
[53] Ibid., p. 159.

perceptions of behaviour but cannot get beyond them to the actual deeds, much less the desires, of Anglo-Saxon women and men'.[54]

Confession, perhaps, is a format more suited to exploring the byways of desideration. But while its distraint is subtler than that of its more strident partner, it is no less preoccupied with projecting its will by means of the body. Foucault saw the 'Christian subject as hidden from himself. […] To reach the 'truth' of what he is, the cenobite must submit to a moral authority and obey him unconditionally'[55] via confessional exchange. The body's participatory, almost volitional, role in the act of sin made it the perfect nexus wherein and whereon desire is made manifest and shame is exacted:

> I confess all that I ever saw with my eyes in avarice or calumny, or heard with my ears in vanity, or spoke with my mouth in idleness. I confess to you all the sins of my body, for skin and flesh, and for bone and sinew, and for vein and gristle, and for tongue and cheeks, and for gums and teeth, and for hair and marrow, and for anything soft or hard, wet or dry.[56]

Indeed, in extremis, bodies were to be fully implicated in the ebbing and flowing of power between the Church and its members; in its ultimate sanction, the Church appropriated to itself the authority and coming judgement of a God who was wont to punish the soul via the flesh:

> Excommunication was also a punishment enacted on the body. The texts of many of the formulae that survive provide an index of body parts that were systematically cursed as part of the public ritual. […] 'Let their heads be cursed, and their necks; let their eyes be cursed, and their ears; let their tongues and lips be cursed; let their teeth and throats be cursed; let their shoulders and breasts be cursed; let their feet and shins be cursed; let their thighs and all their insides be cursed.' The formula verbally

[54] Ibid., p. 139.
[55] Landry, p. 122.
[56] O'Brian O'Keeffe, p. 211.

> fragments the body, […] symbolically dismembering [it] in what might best be seen as a verbal parallel to the sword of the executioner.[57]

These various plays demonstrate deployments of Law, whether secular or ecclesiastical. For Freudians, of course, the subject's encounter with Law – that psychoanalytical bump into the Father's 'no' – is essential to the emergence of the self. Lewandowski has it that 'the individual, with its identity and characteristics, is the product of a relation of power exercised over bodies, multiplicities, movements, desires, forces'.[58] Confessional and Penitential models of power, by definition negative over irruptions of psychic desire, would seem to correspond with such virile displays of omnipotent patriarchy being exercised over the flesh, intent on bringing forth compliant offspring. But as I suggested in the opening chapter, and will discuss more fully in the next, flows of power are, in fact, far from mono-directional; perhaps unintentionally, Joseph Lewandowski's formula elides the resistance in a contact that is replete with counter-claims and eddies. With any of these technologies of sin, power is self-subverting: it is always already an admission of defeat and failure, because it testifies to the sin already committed, and its focus is always on that fall. And in dwelling on it, as by definition the confessee and penitent must, any guilt risks being attenuated by remembrance of the pleasure implicit in the original act; sin is as likely to be rekindled as repulsed. Even at its most imperious and censorious, penance 'reminds us of bad deeds, and the resulting "confusion fogs the mind with stirred-up thoughts"'.[59] It is an innately self-referential, cannibalistic paradigm. The constancy of their focus through time might suggest that these so dogged enforcers of orthodoxy were a less than effective deployment of power.

Power, therefore, creates the subject but tends to supply it with oxymoronic characteristics: compliance and resistance. Foucault identified the will to recalcitrance in a

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[57] Karkov, 'Exiles', p. 213.
[58] Joseph D. Lewandowksi, 'Rethinking Power and Subjectivity after Foucault', *symploke*, 3: 2 (1995), 221-243, p. 227.
[59] Barbara H. Rosenwein, *Emotional Communities in the Middle Ages* (New York: Cornell University Press, 2007), p. 83.

specifically Gallic application of justice (and then inducted from it a wider theory of power); increasingly beset by audiences keen to disrupt and even thwart its executions, the public ritual of the seventeenth-century scaffold (that 'supplice') became a challenge to the writ of the sovereign rather than a support of it, eventually neutering such power deployed in so overt a form. Foucault deduced that power is most effective, is tolerable at all, 'only on condition that it masks a substantial part of itself. Its success is proportional to its ability to hide its own mechanisms'.[60] The eventual shift of the West's penal system away from avenging crime to redeeming the criminal was, in large part, an ideological one concerned with more efficiently producing productive, docile citizens; the focus moved from the body to the soul because it offered control 'without the costly use of violence'.[61]

But it was a shift with some cost attached, nevertheless; the transfiguration of criminal into citizen would entail a technology of knowledge. The aberrant (for this is what the criminal was to become) had first to be understood, and therefore analysed, which analyses became 'a form of domination to which the powerless are more and more subjected'.[62] This still dominating but now discreet power worked by constructing norms against which the subject was invited to judge himself; behaviours came to be categorized as within or without spheres of the socially acceptable. Rather than resorting to coercion, institutions aimed 'to have their commands internalized, producing an individual who habitually does what is required without the need of further external force'.[63] A course of action then becomes understood in terms of nature rather than of force; the operation of power is therefore and thereafter 'ensured not by right but by technique, not by law but by normalization, not by punishment but by control, methods that are employed on all levels and in forms that go beyond the state and its apparatus'.[64] Psychoanalysis determined normal or aberrant sexual practice; psychiatry pronounced upon the healthy or diseased mind; sociology

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[60] Foucault, *Knowledge,* p. 86.
[61] Garland, p. 847.
[62] Ibid., p. 859.
[63] Ibid., p. 847.
[64] Foucault, *Knowledg*e, 89.

prescribed the correct workings of the body politic. It was, for Foucault, the operations of this technology of power-knowledge-body that gave birth to the human(izing) sciences.

Foucault's theory is obviously an historically contingent one,[65] emerging out of his 'Classical' (i.e. '1550 – 1750 approximately')[66] period and developing to flourish in the modern age. The theory of and evidence for *Discipline and Punish* is heavily invested in the explosion of the social sciences and subsequent medicalization of much human experience and behaviour. It does not travel well; any attempt to transplant it onto the Anglo-Saxon system would distort it beyond recognition, and would anyway be confounded by the endurance and pervasiveness of their own penitential and penal models. But there is striking correspondence between Foucault's emphasis of and reliance upon the creation of norms as alternative and more effective deployments of contemporary power, and the discourses emerging out of certain Anglo-Saxon literatures. While the Pententials remain concerned with enforcing a norm by reinforcing an abnormality within the individual – the errant behaviour for which he or she seeks expiation through confession – other texts are concerned with effecting a normalization by projecting the abnormality without, onto another. Though still an operation of power upon the body, this is a literature that does not speak of or to a proscribed desire within, and so does not predicate the normalcy of that desire.

The subject matter in the account of Sodom within the Junius *Genesis* might be thought well suited to the over-weaning Patriarchal 'no', but in fact it avoids any peremptory didacticism to focus instead on normatives instantiated in manly men – a narrative that accords well with Judith Butler's 'regulatory apparatus of heterosexuality'.[67] It supplies us with a particularly succinct example of a projected abnormality, where the poetry deploys to notable effect the audience's assumed familiarity with heroic motifs and expectations that we saw in *Andreas*. But rather than confound expectation as did the *Andreas* poet, the *Genesis* poet builds and then completely fulfils and deploys it to drive home the lesson. The heroic

[65] And subject to dispute: cf. Garland's objections to its historicity (Garland, pp. 865-80).
[66] Garland, p. 847.
[67] Butler, *Bodies*, p. 12.

genre of the poem, together with its source material, means it is no gentle meditation on ethereal love, but it certainly reads as a *tour de force* of social conditioning.

Epic expectation leads us to anticipate manly men, and the poet does not disappoint. In his efforts to secure the release of his nephew, Abraham is shown to be the embodiment of the heroic warrior within the heroic tradition – strong, courageous, glorious in battle:

> Ða ic neðan gefrægn under nihtscuwan
> hæleð to hilde. Hlyn wearð on wicum
> scylda and sceafta, sceotendre fyll,
> guðflana gegrind; gripon unfægre
> under sceat werum scearpe garas,
> and feonda feorh feollon ðicce,
> þær hlihende huðe feredon
> secgas and gesiððas. Sigor eft ahwearf
> of norðmonna niðgeteone,
> æsctir wera. Abraham scealde
> wig to wedde, nalles wunden gold,
> for his suhtrigan.[68]

> (I have heard say how then the warriors ventured into battle under the cover of night. The noise of the warriors' shields and shafts, the falling of bowmen, the grinding of battle arrows; sharp spears gripped the unfortunate men under the breast, and the bodies of enemies fell thickly, where the laughing warriors and companions went after plunder. Victory, glory in war, turned back from the attack of the Northmen. Abraham gave war as covenant, not at all wound gold, for his nephew).

As with *Andreas*, the focus upon and description of the accoutrements of heroic life is sustained and intimate, suggesting a fondness for it that would deny any disconnect. *Genesis* partakes fully and enthusiastically in the martial ethos that we have come to associate with the

[68] Krapp, *Junius,* p. 62, ll. 2060-71.

Anglo-Saxon *comitatus* culture. The poet dwells on the dynamics of the encounter, loitering over the actants and their materiel, and invests in the battle milieu: circling ravens, dissonant clashes, broad and bright blades. There is evident affection here, and I would suggest that, for the *Genesis* poet, glory lies no more in victory – despite that 'sigor eft ahwearf / of norðmonna niðgeteone, / æsctir wera'[69] – than in the manly heroism instantiated in courage, pride, and action. The appropriation effects a resonant cultural cross-fertilization, a Caedmonian fusion that folds the heroic into the Christian to the improvement of both. Abraham, specifically in the context of the heroic poetry in which his tale has been couched, is seen to be performing to this heroic norm, the grandeur of his righteous courage fleshed out by its warrior deportment. In his 'giving armed conflict and not in any wise wrought gold', the medium posits a 'muscularity for the Lord'. But, perhaps somewhat surprisingly, it is not only the righteous Abrahamic side that display in their disportment such manly prowess. Even the enemies Abraham will soon vanquish, the kings of the north, are described in heroic terms; though engaged in an irreligious battle, they remain brave warriors who carry themselves well. Proper men, even those pursuing improper goals, must behave properly:

> Foron þa tosomne (francan wæron hlude),
> wraðe wælherigas. Sang se wanna fugel
> under deoreðsceaftum, deawigfeðera,
> hræs on wenan. Hæleð onetton
> on mægencorðrum, modum þryðge,
> oðþæt folcgetrume gefaren hæfdon
> sid tosomne suðan and norðan,
> helmum þeahte. Ðær wæs heard plega,
> wælgara wrixl, wigcyrm micel,
> hlud hildesweg. Handum brugdon
> hæleð of scæðum hringmæled sweord,
> ecgum dihtig. Ðær wæs eaðfynde

[69] Ibid., p. 62, ll. 2067-8.

eorle orlegceap,   se ðe ær ne wæs
niðes genihtsum.[70]

(Therefore the slaughter-hordes came together in a rage; their spears were loud. The dark, dewy feathered fowl sang under the javelin shafts, expectant of corpses. Warriors hastened on in strong troops, mighty of heart, until the nations' armies had come broadly together, from north and south, protected by their helmets. There was hard play, and exchange of war spears, the great noise of battle, the loud sound of war. Warriors drew the ring-mailed swords, the doughty edges, from their sheaths with their hands. The gains of battle were easy to find for the eorl who had not been satisfied with strife).

Both in its timbre and its seemingly strange commitment to both sides in the conflict, the Junius *Genesis* recalls the narrative dynamic of the contemporaneous *Battle of Maldon*, a lamentation of the Anglo-Saxons' loss at the hands of the Vikings, but in which, and despite Byrhtnoð's defeat, the poet manages to deliver a paean to the tragic poise and integrity of his warriors. Having been frustrated in their heroic designs by the tide, the two armies eventually come together, and the poet makes explicit the connection between cultural (and individual) greatness and physical engagement: 'þa wæs feohte neh, / tir æt getohte. Wæs seo tid cumen / þæt þær fæge men feallan sceoldon'[71] (then fighting was near, the glory in battle; the time was come when fated men were to fall there). There is in this description something elegiac, a poignancy in the inevitability of *wyrd*, and praise here seems sequestered not for the Anglo-Saxons specifically but for all the warriors. It is in the trials of combat that dignity – manliness – lies, averred by the well-known encomium of Byrhtwold: 'Hige sceal þe heardra, heorte þe cenre, / mod sceal þe mare, þe ure mægen lytlað'[72] (resolution must be the harder, hearts the keener, courage must be the more as our power grows less). But that which follows captures just as succinctly the spirit of the poem, and perhaps of the Anglo-Saxon era itself:

[70] Ibid., p. 60, ll. 1982-95.
[71] Mitchell and Robinson, p. 246, ll. 103-5.
[72] Ibid., ll. 310-12.

‘A mæg gnornian / se ðe nu fram þis wigplegan wendan þenceð’[73] (May he regret it forever who now thinks to turn from this war play). The allusion is to the cowardly sons of Odda, Godric and Godwine and Godwig, Anglo-Saxons who are damned eternally because they ‘þone godan forlet / þe him mænigne oft mearh gesealde’[74] (abandoned the good man who had often given them many a horse): it was behaviour that ‘riht ne wæs’[75] (was not right). Behavioural propriety centres the poem, is the mass around which the narrative gravitates, and the juxtaposition of the properly noble and the unmanly because cowardly is stark. The ethos of the sons of Odda who ‘guþe ne gymdon’[76] (have no care for fighting) is positioned against that of those who ‘Ne sceolon me … ætwitan / þæt ic of ðisse fyrde feran wille, / eard gesecan’[77] (shall not reproach me because I wish to depart from this army, and seek the homeland), to drive home the message that, despite the less than ideal result, there remains in the Anglo-Saxon ethos of action and honour something to savour, something hallowed.

This concern with deportment rehearses the narrative interplay of *Genesis* behaviours that are instantiated in the dispositions of the Abrahamites and Sodomites. As in *Maldon*, two putatively similar heroic types are contrasted with a constitutional other, and it is this other – rather than the tale’s more obvious adversaries – that provides the poem’s dramatic tension. The obvious anti-hero of the Abrahamic battles becomes rather an object of manly correspondence, and somewhat incongruously, theatrical suspense is delivered by the very people that Abraham would save.

Despite their theological and familial disparity (which becomes secondary), the Abrahamites and the Northern Kings are types cut from the same cloth, iterations of manly valour performed into life, and as such they offer little dramatic potential for the poet. Only when juxtaposed with the foil that is the people of Sodom does some form of dramaturgical focus emerge, and it is one exploring the social conventions around acceptable – normal –

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[73] Ibid., ll. 315-6.
[74] Ibid., ll. 187-8.
[75] Ibid., l. 190.
[76] Ibid., l. 192.
[77] Ibid., ll. 220-2.

behaviour. The Abrahamic code, enjoined by both Abraham's side and that of his enemies, is built narratorially on the Sodomites' abnormality. Thus Abraham's allies, 'þa broðor þry […] ellenrofe' (the three battle brave brothers), who 'spedum miclum / hældon hygesorge heardum wordum / […] and Abrahame / treowa sealdon, þæt hie his torn mid him / gewræcon on wraðum, oððe on wæl feollan'[78] (with great success relieved his sorrow with their steely words, and gave their pledge to Abraham that they would with wrath avenge his injury with him upon his enemies, or else fall in battle). Abraham will later reward such dutiful loyalty with his own dutiful recompense: 'Nelle ic þa rincas rihte benæman, / ac hie me fulleodon æt æscþræce, / fuhton þe æfter frofre'[79] (I will not deprive these warriors of their rights, because they stood by me in the combat, and fought for your restitution), he informs the King of Sodom in what amounts to a rebuke of the Sodomites' earlier conduct. Assailed by the armies of the Northern Kings, they 'Gewiton feorh heora / fram þam folcstyde fleame nergan, / secgum ofslegene; him on swaðe feollon / æðelinga bearn, ecgum ofþegde, / willgesiððas'[80] (left their homesteads to save their lives by flight; behind them fell the princely youth, slain by the sword, their willing companions destroyed by the edge). In the heroic context of the poem, such lack of martial integrity constitutes aberrant behaviour of the most acute form, and given the expectations aroused by the poetic form, would render the juxtaposition of masculinities stark.

This focus on a manly norm and its unmanly other pervades the piece, and the poet's manipulation of it is telling. The King of Sodom is repeatedly characterised as less than authoritative, both in respect of his companions and, especially, in his mien. His plaintive cries to Abraham are denuded of any regal gravitas, but rather position him as pitiable: 'Ða spræc guðcyning, Sodoma aldor' (Then spoke the war king, ruler of Sodoma) – ironic sobriquets, given his position –

secgum befylled […] "Forgif me mennen   minra leoda,

[78] Krapp, *Junius*, p. 61, ll. 2033-8.
[79] Ibid., p. 65, ll. 2153-5.
[80] Ibid., p 60, ll. 1999-2003.

þe þu ahreddest herges cræftum
wera wælclommum! […]
Læt me freo lædan
eft on eðel æðelinga bearn,
on weste wic wif and cnihtas,
earme wydewan! Eaforan syndon deade,
folcgesiðas, nymðe fea ane,
þe me mid sceoldon mearce healdan.”[81]

> (deprived of his people. ‘Give me back the maidens of my people, whom you saved through the skill of your army from the deadly fetters of men. Let me lead back in freedom the children of men, back to their native land and deserted homes the women and boys, the wretched widows. All but a few successors are dead, the companions who should have held the borders with me’).

It is a valediction framed by impotence, and far removed from the rousing encomiums of Abraham that the poet has been assiduously valourizing. The contrast with Abraham’s earlier interaction with his own womenfolk is poignant and surely intentional: ‘Ða Abraham æhte lædde / of Egypta eðelmearce; / hie ellenrofe idese feredon, / bryd and begas’[82] (Then Abraham took all his possessions out of the country of Egypt; these worthy heroes took their wives, both brides and rings). The active verbs seem to emphasize masculine volition. Indeed, Abraham himself is quick to contrast the manliness of his own retinue with the femininity of the King of Sodom’s: ‘þissa drihtwera, / Aneres and Mamres and Escoles / […] / hie me fulleodon æt æscþræce, / fuhton þe æfter frofre. Gewit þu ferian nu / ham hyrsted gold and healsmægeð, / leoda idesa’[83] (these lordly warriors, Aner, Mamre, and Escol, they stood by me in combat, and fought for your restitution. Now depart and take home the trappings of gold and the beloved maidens, the womenfolk of your people).

[81] Ibid., p. 64, ll. 2123-35.
[82] Ibid., p. 57, ll. 1873-6.
[83] Ibid., p. 64, ll. 2151-7.

But it appears that Abraham is none too concerned with the sensitivities of the King, rubbing into his wounds a strange salty melange of scorn and magnanimity. Having boasted of how he has rescued the king's warriors, Abraham goes on to anoint the King of Sodom with epithets of which he is singularly undeserving: 'guðcyning'[84] (war-king), 'hæleða waldend'[85] (ruler of warriors), 'þeoden mæra'[86] (famous chief) and 'æðelinga helm'[87] (protector of princes). Then, speaking to the King's powerlessness (with all of the sexual passivity that this might connote to an Anglo-Saxon audience), he grants that 'nis woruldfeoh, / þe ic me agan wille, / sceat ne scilling, þæs ic on sceotendum / […] þines ahredde / […] / ac þu selfa most heonon / huðe ædan, þe ic þe æt hilde gesloh'[88] (there is no worldly treasure that I wish to take for myself, neither wealth nor silver coin of yours that I have saved from the hostile bowmen, but your yourself may hence take the plunder which I regained for you in the fight). The dynamic of the interaction could not but be more acute, more obvious, by its being situated within the heroic form; the King is consistently out of sorts with everything that is expected of a normal heroic protagonist. The virility of the Israelite is repeatedly set against the passivity of the Sodomite, whose impotence is conflated with transgressive masculinity. As Allen Frantzen frames it, 'Abraham's speech drips with sarcasm, contempt and ironic praise […] the king is implicitly ridiculed as effeminate'.[89]

The poet engineers a final chiasmus that itself becomes a biting comment upon masculine inversion; before the Northmen's swords, the Sodomites' valour and passion had wilted, and they fled ignominiously to the mountains. But faced now with the comeliness of angels, they suddenly harden into a paragon of solidarity, commitment, and determined purpose: 'Comon Sodomware, / geonge and ealde, gode unleofe / corðrum miclum cuman acsian, / þæt hie behæfdon herges mægne / Loth mid giestum. Heton lædan ut / of þam hean hofe halige aras, / weras to gewealde, wordum cwædon / þæt mid þam hæleðum hæman

[84] Ibid., l. 2123.
[85] Ibid., l. 2139.
[86] Ibid., l. 2145.
[87] Ibid., l. 2146.
[88] Ibid., ll. 2142-50.
[89] Frantzen, *Closet,* pp. 218-9.

wolden / unscomlice, arna ne gymden.’[90] (Then came the men of Sodom, young and old, with a hostile multitude hateful to God; they surrounded Lot to demand the strangers by force. They ordered him to lead out of the high hall the holy messangers, to put the men into their power. They said shamefully in words that they would have sex with the men, and that they cared not for decency.)

This, rather than the more usual fire and brimstone finale, is for me the narrative’s climax, and the poet is happy to dwell upon it. Ælfric, like many of his time, was disinclined to linger over the particulars of Sodomitic sin; at the crux of the narrative, Frantzen points out that

> he departs abruptly from the text: ‘Se leodscipe wæs swa bysmorful, þæt hi woldon fullice ongean gecynd heora galnyssæ gefyllan, na mid wimmannum, ac swa fullice þæt us sceamað hyt openlice to secgenne, 7 þæt wæs heora hream, þæt hi openlice heora fylðe gefremedon’ (That people was very shameful, in that they would foully, against nature, fulfil their lust, not with women but so foully that it disgraces us to tell about it openly. And that was their uproar [outcry, “hream”], that they performed their filth openly).[91]

But the *Genesis* poet does not shy from enunciating the sin, which becomes less sex silenced than sex proclaimed. His use of the heroic, and the expectations inhering in it, has enabled him to conjure norms from which the Sodomites insistently depart. Even Lot’s offer of his daughters, replete with the valency of their virginity – and we have learned from the *Saints’ Lives* the valency of maidenhood – cannot re-norm them:

> Her syndon inne unwemme twa
> dohtor mine. Doð, swa is eow bidde
> (ne can þara idesa owðer gieta
> þurh gebedscipe beorna neawest)
> and geswicað þære synne. Ic eow sylle þa,

[90] Krapp, *Junius*, p. 73, ll. 2453-61.
[91] Frantzen, *Closet*, p. 212. The translation (and its parenthesis) is his.

ær ge sceonde   wið gesceapu fremmen,
ungifre yfel   ylda bearnum.
Onfoð þæm fæmnum,   læteð frið agon
gistas mine. [92]

(Here within are my two undefiled daughters; neither of these maidens yet knows intercourse through the nearness of man – do just as I bid, and cease from that sin. I give them to you, before you commit a sin against nature, this vile evil against the sons of men. Receive these maidens and let my guests go in peace)

The poem relates that the Sodomites reject the daughters (and the norm that they instantiate), and that damnation quickly follows. It is therefore no wonder that the end comes fully couched in an heroic declamation. Normality is reasserted in the most martial, most masculine of ways:[93]

swegles aldor
swefl of heofnum   and sweartne lig
werum to wite,   weallende fyr,
þæs hie on ærdagum   drihtan tyndon
lange þrage.   Him þæs lean forgeald
gasta waldend! […]
Strudende fyr   steapes and geapes,
swogende leg,   forswealh eall geador
þæt on Sodoma byrig   secgas ahton
and on Gomorra.   Eall þæt god spilde,
frea mid þy folce. [94]

(The glorious Prince sent sulphur from heaven and swart flame as punishment for men, raging fire, because they had from former days, for a long time, offended the

[92] Krapp, *Junius,* p. 73, ll. 2466-74.
[93] Though there is something almost sexual in the sulphur sent from heaven, His swart flame, the swelling punishment of fire, over and onto aberrant men.
[94] Ibid., p. 74, ll. 2542-62.

> Lord; the ruler of spirits gave them that reward! […] Far and wide, the ravaging fire swept down, swallowed all together what men had possessed in the cities of Sodom and Gomorra. All this, together with the people, the Lord God laid waste to.)

Sin cannot but lead to tears; *Genesis*'s comprehensive denunciation of the Sodomites is framed in terms of their abnormality, and doubtless was intended to effect a yawning cultural dissociation from the practices it would have had the flock eschew. Such behaviour is brought into sharp relief by the dying words of *Maldon*'s Bryhtwold, behaviour that would amount to a gross inversion of his desire to 'be healfe minum hlaforde, / be swa leofan men, licgan þence'[95] (expect to lie by the side of my lord, by the man so dear). But Frantzen's assertion that the *Genesis* account 'provides a sober background of discipline and obedience against which to contrast the excesses of Sodom and the weaknesses of her people'[96] sets up the drama as a simple dichotomy between good and evil, a simple choice between staying straight and going astray. This elides the power of the descriptions in the context of their poem to create and then project norms that are used to accentuate abnormality, that 'vileness against nature'. The emphasis is less on sin than on perversion of the norm, which in being displaced out onto an Other safely confirms the subject's normality; the Sodomites (and their sin) were so obviously so different from the (already Anglo-Saxon-like) Abrahamites, with whom they were further invited and encouraged to identify. This, surely, is a more efficacious argument, a more subtle flow of power, against inter-novitiate sodomy than is any penitential tub-thumping. The incorporation of sodomy into a nexus of the unnatural, into a schema of abnormality that it suggests necessarily produces effete, de-masculinized – abnormal – men, would (if anything might) dissuade the faithful from engaging in it. Indeed, the portrayal of Sodom's vanquished women might have been inserted, by a mischievious poet, to describe and touch upon characters other than its more obvious object: 'Sceolde forht monig /

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[95] Mitchell and Robinson, p. 252, ll. 318-9.
[96] Frantzen, *Closet*, p. 216.

blachleor ides bifiende gan / on fremdes fæðm'[97] (Many a terrified pale-cheeked maiden must go trembling to the embrace of a stranger).[98]

Certainly the most sensuous example of bodies being posed, of power's subtlety in extorting specific meanings from flesh, of norms being performed into being, is to be found in *Christ I*, the work of a 'masterful poet […] whose vigorous intellect and didactic purpose are happily matched by his aesthetic judgement and command of poetic form'.[99] Far closer aligned with Foucault's intensification of sex than with any putative Anglo-Saxon aversion to it, it is for Clare Lees the most erotic treatment in the vernacular literature.[100] For this reader, *Christ I* is an ovation to God's impregnation of Mary: 'Wæs seo fæmne geong, / mægð manes leas, þe he him to meder geceas, / þæt wæs geworden butan weres frigum, / þæt þurh bearnes gebyrd bryd eacan wearð. / Nænig efenlic þam, ær ne siþþan, / in worlde gewearð wifes gearnung'[101] (It was a young virgin, a maiden free of sin, whom he chose as his mother. It was done without the caresses of a man that the bride became pregnant in the bearing of a child. Nothing comparable to that woman's reward, before nor since, has come about in the world). It is the theme on which the entire poem is hung:

> Forþon þu þæt ana ealra monna,
> geþohtest þrymlice, þristhycgende,
> þæt þu þinne mægðhad meotude brohtes,
> sealdes butan synnum. Nan swylc ne cwom
> ænig oþer …

[97] Krapp, *Junius*, p. 69, ll. 1969-71.
[98] My reading agrees with Frantzen's as to the poet's tone of censure. For a more sympathetic approach, in which the poet may 'not conceive of the Sodomites' desire to have sex with the angels as particularly terrible or strange', see Clark (p. 123). Clark also analyses the normative ideals that the narrative establishes, but situates his discussion more widely than do I, dividing sanctioned and unsanctioned sex by reference to exogamic and endogamic relations (p. 115). In this, same-sex sexual activity is only one, and not automatically the most, proscribed relation among many. It is a position with which Robert Mills might concur: 'clerical thinking about sexuality may have been less "heteronormative" than what Lochrie calls "desiro-skeptical", that is to say, "suspicious of the mobility, disruptiveness, and affiliations of *all* forms of desire" ('Seeing Sodomy in the "Bibles moralisées"', *Speculum*, 87: 2 (2012), 413-468, p. 423 – italics in original). The negative treatment of sodomy is considered to be only 'one manifestation of this desiro-skepticism' (p. 423).
[99] Bradley, p. 205.
[100] Lees, 'Engendering', p. 31
[101] Krapp and Dobbie, *Exeter*, p. 4, ll. 35-40.

… þe þa beortan lac
to heofonhame hlutre mode
siþþan sende. Forðon heht sigores fruma
his heahbodan hider gefleogan
of his mægenþrymme ond þe meahta sped
snude cyðan, þæt þu sunu drytnes
þurh clæne gebyrd cennan sceolde
monnum to miltse, ond þe, Maria, forð
efne unwemme a gehealdan'[102]

(Therefore of all mankind, you alone gloriously and brave heartedly determined that you would offer your virginity to the Lord, given without sin. None such other has come with a pure heart, afterwards sent so bright an offering to the heavenly home. So the Lord of Victories commanded the archangel from his mighty host fly hither and quickly make known the abundance of power to you – that through a pure birth you should bring forth the son of the Lord, mercy to men, and that you Mary, forever henceforth keep yourself unblemished).

But as with some of the Riddles, the poem's treatment of this theme threatens the chastity of which she is paragon; the 'abundance of power' that results in her conceiving threatens to overwhelm the chastity of that which it accomplishes. Only a few lines further, the poet returns to dwell on Mary's 'sublime offering', in a reverie that effects its own sublime fusion between her gift and Isaiah's prophetic vision of heaven:

[Isaiah] gestarode þær gestaþelad wæs
æþelic ingong. Eal wæs gebunden
deoran since duru ormæte,
wundurclommum bewriþen. …
…
þæt ðas gyldnan gatu giet sume siþe

[102] Ibid., p. 11, ll. 287-300.

god sylf wile   gæstes mægne

gefælsian,   fæder ælmihtig,

ond þurh þa fæstan locu   foldan neosan,

ond hio þonne æfter him   ece stondað

simle singales   swa beclysed

þæt nænig oþer,   nymðe nergend god,

hy æfre ma   eft onluceð.

[…]

Ðu eart þæt wealldor,   þurh þe waldend frea

æne on þas eorðan   ut siðade,

ond efne swa þec gemette,   meahtum gehrodene,

clæne ond gecorene,   Crist ælmihtig.

Swa ðe æfter him   engla þeoden

eft unmæle   ælces þinges

lioþucægan bileac,   lifes brytta.[103]

(Isaiah fixed his stare on where a noble entrance was established. The huge door was bound with precious treasure, all wrapped about. At a certain time hereafter God himself will sanctify those gilded gates, Fathter Almighty with the power of the spirit, and through those fast locks visit earth, and they will then forever after him stand perpetually closed, so that none other except God the Saviour will ever again unlock them. […] You are that door in the wall, through which the Lord, the Ruler, at some time journeyed to the earth, and in the same manner Christ Almighty found you, adorned with virtue, pure and chosen. Also the Prince of Angels, the Giver of Life, locked you afterwards behind him with a physical key, unmarked by any thing).

Specifically in its conjuring images of Mary's vagina as a pair of gilded gates wrapped about with precious treasure, the poet forces the reader into an explicit confrontation with the very particulars of sex. Certainly it is gloriously couched in a poetic rapture over

[103] Ibid., pp. 11-12, ll. 307-34.

God's condescension and Mary's elevation, swaddled as she is by God's protective jealously and attention, but the portrayal also has echoes of the Key Riddle, with its themes of ownership, occupation, and coercion, and dynamics of power. As with that Riddle, the line of propriety is assaulted by rudely carnal preoccupations. Even at the most intimate moment of her maternity, the audience is beckoned forward into enthusiastic voyeurism: 'Siþþan we motan / anmodlice ealle hyhtan, / nu we on þæt bearn foran breostum stariað'[104] (Afterwards we may in one mind all rejoice, now that we gaze upon that child at your breasts).

But as with riddles, this flirting with the sinful would seem rather to be an exercise in power, in policing interpretations of ostensibly erotic events that, however, turn out to be tightly controlled. That initial introduction to the theme of divine impregnation is very specifically framed by a narratorial plea for soteriological guidance; significantly then, this so glorious sex is solidly contextualised by that which immediately precedes it:

> leoht ontyne,
> weorðe ussum mode to mundboran,
> ond þæt tydre gewitt tire bewinde,
> gedo usic þæs wyrðe, þe he to wuldre forlet,
> þa we heanlice hweorfan sceoldan
> to þis enge lond, eðel bescyrede.
> Forþon secgan mæg, se ðe soð spriceð,
> þæt he ahredde, þa forwyrfed wæs,
> frumcyn fira

> (disclose to us the light, and become to us in spirit a source of security, and enfold our feeble consciousness in glory and make us thus worthy, that he should admit into heaven us who have come miserably into this confining world, cut off from the

[104] Ibid., p. 12, ll. 339-41.

homeland. He who speaks the truth may say that he saved the human race when it had been led astray.)[105]

This exordium correlates directly the salvation of mankind with the reproductive act – or, rather, with *a* reproductive act. It is most particular about what salvation is not, does not entail: redemption is accomplished 'butan weres frigum'[106] (without man's caresses). Sex in its purest, most exalted, most pleasurable manifestation is far removed from anything so disdainful and so corrupting as coitus. It is a transfiguration of the human into the divine.

In *Christ I*, divine sex is always approved of; physical sex always denigrated. In a eulogy to the wonder of the conception, the narrator implores Mary to 'arece us þæt geryne þæt þe of roderum cwom, / hu þu eacnunge æfre onfenge / bearnes þurh gebyrde, ond þone gebedscip / æfter monwisan mod ne cuðes'[107] (relate to us that mystery which came to you from the heavens; how you ever conceived in that pregnancy, in bringing forth a child, and did not know wedlock in the manner of men), which immediately moves the joys of the interaction from the physical into the cerebral, the theological. 'Huru treow in þe / weorðlicu wunade, nu þu wuldres þrym / bosme gebære, ond no gebrosnad wearð / mægðhad se micla'[108] (Certainly trust has dwelt worthily in you, now that you have born Heaven's Glory in your womb, and your maidenhood was not corrupted). But this joyous, ethereal communion is summarily counterpointed with the physical one: 'Swa eal manna bearn / sorgum sawað, swa eft ripað, / cennað to cwealme'[109] (Just as all the sons of men sow in sorrows, thus do they afterwards reap, begetting as a torment). The rapture and pleasure of sex is there to be experienced and enjoyed, then, but only certain instantiations of it will be without corruption and pain.

The full impact of the juxtaposition, and the argument that flows from it, however, can be best intuited not in specific passages but in the meta-narrative itself: Joseph (in what

[105] Ibid., p. 3, ll. 27-35.
[106] Ibid., p. 4, l. 37.
[107] Ibid., p. 5, ll. 74-7.
[108] Ibid., ll. 82-5.
[109] Ibid., ll. 85-6.

amounts to a play within a play) intrudes a degree of misunderstanding and ignorance that threatens to sully the purity of the vision of this paean to numinous sex. It is Mary's insights that eventually confound his myopia; she is *speculum sine macula* (mirror without blemish)[110] to his Imago Homo, Imago Id.

The discourse prior to Joseph's appearance has been a celebration of the conjoining of God and Mary, an encomium to their fecund and ultimately salvific union; it is a polyphony harmonising around the beauty of the act and its outcome: 'wuldres ealdor. / Gesweotula nu þurh searocræft þin sylfes weorc, / soðfæst, sigorbeorht'[111] (King of Glory, victory bright, truly reveal now in skilful manner your own work). The poet rhapsodises that 'nu sceal liffrea / þone wergan heap wraþum ahreddan, / earme from egsan, swa he oft dyde'[112] (now shall the Lord of life save the weary troop from wrathful foes, the wretched from fear, just as he often has done). And then he courts Mary: 'nimeð eard in þe, swa hit ær gefyrn / witgan wisfæste wordum sægdon, / cyðdon Cristes gebyrd, cwædon þe to frofre / […] Nu is þæt bearn cymen, / awæcned to wyrpe weorcum Ebrea, / bringeð blisse þe, bende onlyseð / niþum genedde. Nearoþearfe conn, / hu se earma sceal are gebidan'[113] (He will take up a dwelling in you, just as the wise prophets declared with their words, long ago. They made known the birth of Christ, and spoke of comfort for you. Now is that child come, born to relieve the distress of the Hebrews. He will bring you joy, he loosens the bonds hatefully forced on you. He knows of hardship, of how the wretched await mercy). And further: 'Eala wifa wynn geond wuldres þrym'[114] (O delight of women throughout the glory of heaven), and 'Hyht is onfangen / þæt nu bletsung mot bæm gemæne, / werum ond wifum, a to woruld forð / in þam uplican engla dreame / mid soðfæder symle wunian'[115] (Hopeful joy is conceived that a mutual blessing, to both men and women, may now remain henceforth eternally with

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[110] Wisdom 7: 26.
[111] Krapp and Dobbie, *Exeter,* p. 3, ll. 8-10.
[112] Ibid., ll. 15-7.
[113] Ibid., pp. 4-5, ll. 63-70.
[114] Ibid., p. 5, l. 71.
[115] Ibid., ll. 99-103.

the Father of Truth in that heavenly joy of the angels). The leitmotif is unalloyed, and uncontested, rapture; this is, after all, an infidelity with God.

The solipsistic Joseph enters this grand amore *in medias res*, and the change of narrative timbre is immediate. Gone is the joy, the expectation, that overarching purposiveness. The usually effusive Mary is suddenly become defensive: ‘Eala Ioseph min […] nu þu freode scealt fæste gedælan, alætan lufan mine’[116] (O my Joseph, you now must completely deny your affection, lay aside my love). This shift of the sexual focus unsettles the poem’s resolve, as the types of love are transposed: the purity of her sexual union for his debasing preoccupation with her body. Joseph is consumed with a suspicious jealousy (a pale parody of God’s for His bride earlier): ‘Is þæt wide cuð / þæt ic of þam torhtan temple dryhtnes / onfeng freolice fæmnan clæne, / womma lease, ond nu gehwyrfed is / þurh nathwycles’[117] (It is widely known that I freely accepted a pure and sinless virgin from the glorious temple of the Lord, and who is now changed because of someone unknown). It is a précis that corrupts all that has gone before: yes, she has coupled with God; yes, she is pregnant; yes, she will bear another’s child, but Joseph’s interpretation of these facts misses the point. It is the wrong interpretation. She carries the saviour of the world, the Christ-child, and yet she is for Joseph ‘synna gehwylcre / firena gefylled’[118] (filled with every sin and transgression).

Such ignorance, such misreading of events, facts, and evidence, must be righted: ‘Soð ic secge þurh sunu meotudes, / gæsta geocend […] / swegles gæst / leoman onlyhte, sceolde ic lifes þrym / geberan, beorhtne sunu’[119] (I tell the truth by the son of the Lord, the Saviour of souls; the heavenly spirit irradiates me with light; I must give birth to the glory of life, the brilliant Son). And now that the truth of sex has been made manifest, the poem can resume its beatific style: ‘Nu ic his tempel eam / gefremed butan facne, in me frofre gæst / geeardode.

[116] Ibid., ll. 164-7.
[117] Ibid., p. 8, ll. 185-9.
[118] Ibid., ll. 180-1.
[119] Ibid., ll. 197-205.

Nu þu ealle forlæt / sare sorgceare'[120] (I am now made his temple without blemish; in me the Spirit of Comfort dwelt. Now you must forgo all anxious sorrow). The act of sex is returned to its ideal, divine, numinous paradigm, where Mary's impregnation is once more praise to God in all His glorious tumescence, by means of which His Coming and saving may be accomplished. Sex detached from concupiscent flesh is a pure gift.

In adducing two contradictory understandings of the same act, together with an example of someone who so completely (and so dangerously, given the existential ramifications) misread it, the poem clearly demonstrates how fraught is the theological ground around sex. As with the Riddles, the seemingly obvious meanings that attach to the body are shown to be far from self-evident, but must rather be theorised, constructed, and applied. Joseph is thoroughly implicated in this lesson; in positing a necessary correlation between sexual experience and physical body, he erred to the point of mortal (and perhaps supra-mortal) sin. But Mary shows that sex, or the translation of sexual rapture, is in its most pure state the absorption of the body into not only the most celestial of unions but also the salvation of mankind itself. Thus (eventually) enlightened, Joseph is himself translated into something of a trailblazer for all novitiates. The poet's encomium might well have been placed into his soaped-out mouth: 'helpe gefremme / wergum wreccan, þæt se wites bona / in helle grund hean gedreose, / ond þin hondgeweorc, hæleþa scyppend, / mote arisan ond on ryht cuman / to þam upcundan æþelan rice'[121] (give help to us weary exiles, so that the punishing slayer may fall into the pit of hell, and your handiwork, Creator of men, may rise and as of right come to that heavenly noble kingdom).

In its demands for a Truth of Sex, this (every bit as much as Foucault's *Scientia Sexualis*) is (a) power's seizure of the body. In appropriating sex for a sacred paradigm, and promulgating (from so authoritative a position) that paradigm as one devoid of lust, desire, or body, power projects a highly regulated ideal out into its world. The knowledge and

[120] Ibid., ll. 206-9.
[121] Ibid., p. 10, ll. 263-8.

experience of sex – initially appreciated in its sensuous guise – is configured so as to negate the physical, which comes to be seen as a corruption of what was originally an exquisite activity of the mind. The disportment of genitals at pleasure becomes a pale shadow of what desire once was and still can be – access to, even enjoyment of God Himself.

Such an approach, together with our argument from compunction, explains the otherwise gratuitous eroticism of the *Life of St. Lucy*. Her narratively redundant beauty seems intended to arouse a sexual response, that power can project itself in its demands for a certain interpretation of that beauty. The numinous is required to rise from the chthonic. Rather than provoking a Pavlovian priapism, it is an arousal attempting to condition an electrifying contact with God. As with Joseph, Paschasius becomes a narrative device against which this transcendent sex can be framed:

> Ða wolde se wælhreowa his word gefyllan . þæt heo wurde gelæd to þære laðan fulnysse . and begunnon hi teon to þære galnysse huse . ac godes miht wearð geswutelod . sona on þam mædene . swa þæt se halga gast hi heold . and mid hefe gefæstnode þæt þa manfullan ne mihton þæt mæden astyrian.
>
> (Then the cruel one desired to fulfil his word, that she might be led to loathsome pollution, and began to drag her to the house of lust; but God's might was displayed at once in the maiden, so that the holy ghost held her, and fastened her as by a great weight, so that the wicked ones could not move the maiden.)[122]

Indeed, the *Life* is structured as something of a tug-of-war over the meaning of Lucy's body – a battle of the sexes, the sacred and the profane. In promoting a certain version of arousal, Paschasius' desire is constantly juxtaposed with hers, that it may be worsted: she counsels him that

> Hluttor offrung þæt is . and licwurðe gode . þæt mann wydewan geneosige . and wreccan gefrefrige . and steopbearnum gehelp . on heora gedrefednyssum . Ne dreah

[122] Skeat, vol. I, pp. 214-16, ll. 94-9.

ic nu þrym gearum . nane oþre dæda . butan þam lyfigendan drihtne . þas lac geoffrode . nu ic wylle me sylfe him soðlice geoffrian . forðon ic leng næbbe . hwæt ic on his lacum aspende.

(A pure offering is this, and acceptable to God, that one should visit widows, and comfort exiles, and help orphan children in their affliction. I have not for three years been employed about any other deeds, but have offered these offerings to the living lord. Now I desire verily to offer myself to him, because for some time I have had nothing to spend in his service.)[123]

Into such calm balm of godliness, the violent passion of Paschasius' lust immediately intrudes: 'Ða yrsode pascasius . and hi spræcon fela . oð þæt he hire swingele behet . gif heo suwian nolde' (Then was Paschasius wroth, and they spake much, until he promised her a beating if she would not be silent.).[124] Conditioned by because subservient to his own sexual misconceptions, he proceeds to interrogate her:

Wunað se halga gast on þe eornostlice . Lucia andwyrde þam arleasan and cwæð . Se apostol behet þam ðe healdað clænnysse . þæt hi synd godes templ . and þæs halgan gastes wunung . Ða cwæð se arleasa . Ic hate þe ardlice lædan . to þære myltestrena huse . þæt ðu þinne mægð-had forleose . þæt se . halga gast þe fram fleo . ðonne þu fullice byst gescynd.

('Dwelleth the holy ghost in thee, in good earnest?' Lucy answered the impious one, and said, 'the apostle promised those who preserve chastity, that they are God's temple, and the Holy Ghost's habitation.' Then the impious one said, 'I shall straight away bid men lead thee to the house of harlots, that thou mayest lose thy maidenhead, that the Holy Ghost may flee from thee, when thou art foully dishonoured.')[125]

[123] Ibid., pp. 212-4, ll. 61-7.
[124] Ibid., ll. 68-9.
[125] Ibid., ll. 76-83.

Paschasius cannot conceive of a sexual contact that is not resolved in coitus; hence his determination to compel the theosexually inclined Lucy to the whorehouse. But the true meaning and real pleasure of sexual surrender, she informs her readers, belongs to God: 'forðon þe þu gearcodest criste . on þinum clænan mægð-had . wynsume wununge' (because thou didst yield thyself to Christ, in thy pure virginity, as a pleasant habitation).[126] Ultimately, Lucy carries that beautiful, and sexually intact, body out of a tawdry affiliation and into an ecstatic union. Positioning it in its highest form as something detached from concupiscence, the poem thus sacralises sex as an adumbration of the religious' relationship with God. Carnal joy is nothing more than an experiential *hors d'oeuvre*, nothing more than theological foreplay; it tempts its audience with what life with – under – God might be like.

Despite criticism to the contrary, there is within the Anglo-Saxon corpus evidence of a definite 'yes' to sex. It is, however, a tightly controlled affirmation. The tableaux are invariably structured to undermine the initial, idic reaction to erotically posed bodies, a reaction depicted as, if not exactly abnormal, then less than ideal. The norm that sex is made to instantiate is, paradoxically, one from which the body is all but absented. Power creates a norm out of a physically abnormal reaction. It is an audacious inversion.

This chapter's reconsideration of the widely accepted prudery of the Anglo-Saxon corpus has not repositioned the frequent physicality of the bodies into some kind of bawdyhouse. Whilst it certainly sustains a focus upon the sexed body, and indeed sometimes poses it in highly sexually charged ways, my analysis of this Church literature shows it maintaining its didacticism. Whether by the application of overt power via punishment, or more subtly in its demands for a certain meaning despite its incongruity with the signified, or even in its most subtle form of norming through abnormality, these texts situate the body and especially sex within frameworks of control. The insistence on the chaste despite the lubricious indicates the level of power being applied. As it did with the heroic, the Anglo-Saxon Church used that which might be deemed antithetical to its aims in order to further its

[126] Ibid., p. 212, ll. 32-3.

mission: Andreas appropriates a pre-Christian ethos; the Riddles do so with a ribald one. Bodies are therefore doubly instructive, both in their more widely accepted facility to connect with God, and also in the opportunity this contact offers to demand meaning and therefore obedience. These outlier texts are an exercise in power's power to assign meaning. In a very Foucauldian manner, sex is being provoked and paraded.

The *Genesis* Eve is not excused these deployments of power; the Church demands from her paraded body the same conformity as that required of the bodies of the saints and the riddles. As she is disported among the concertinaed words and historiated initials of the manuscript, both naked before the Fall and clothed after it, her flesh must succour the writing. For it to exist textually, it has to perform. Given these considerable operations of power upon it, what is so surprising is her body's continued resistance to being posed thus. There remains in her mien something of a recalcitrance that goes beyond a simple over-enthusiasm of the will to compunction, or the imposition of meaning. Even as she gives life to the discourses of which she is part, of desire and covetousness and disobedience and death, her depiction articulates a sly subtext that would disrupt power's somatic truth. I shall, in the following chapter, investigate the possible sources of this subversion by juxtaposing the seemingly antithetical but ultimately (at least in part) supportive positions of Foucault/Butler and Freud.

Five

‘And If A House Be Divided Against Itself, That House Cannot Stand’[1]

The historical moment will have its way with the bodies that populate it, and its particular somatic truths sometimes involve an intensification of sex rather than any obvious repression of it. The breasts and phalluses in the ecclesiastical literature so far under discussion are testament to this: strident reproductive battalions contesting meaning, in which stipulations over definition and invitations to compunction are but strategic deployments. There is an ontology of the orgasm at stake, wherein the ‘yes’ of the sacred climax has to become stronger than that of the profane.

Up to this point in the thesis, power has been seen to be structuralist both in its application and in the resistances to it. But there is something lacking in Foucault’s explication when applied to Eve. She does not conform to the paradigms he predicted and that we have seen in our textual analyses thus far. Because she is so aberrant, I intend to develop in this chapter an analysis of the lack within structuralism as an explanation of the subject, to then formulate a methodology that satisfactorily reveals the dynamic at play in the Junius Eve. It is necessary to explore the claims of structuralism’s construction of the subject, especially via Foucault and Butler, and language’s role in operations of power and of resistance to it. Then, in light of Eve’s failure to fulfil to these expectations, I add a Freudian

[1] Mark 3:25 – King James Bible.

inflexion that accounts for the subject's attachment to that which is proscribed. Indeed, this adaptation demonstrates the inter-relational aspects of key elements of Freud and Foucault's positions. It seems logical to undertake such an examination here; having demonstrated mechanisms of power and resistance in the other texts, we are then able to see more clearly her non-conformity to these paradigms, and what a more fruitful approach might entail.

Of course, the Church's insistence on and victory over matters sexual that we have seen in the literature thus far had its casualties. The dark twin of an insistently and exclusively spiritual sex is a flesh denied; for every properly transcendental orgasm, there must be a corresponding absence of a chthonic one. It is an overt substitution of cathexis that inevitably creates tension. To some extent, this pinch-point was for the Church just another deployment of power, something of a theological Venturi that could be used to suck in religious sensibility. Denial of the flesh was a common trope, and the vicissitudes of fighting it – and the psychic pain that this struggle generated – were considered not only of benefit to the soul but the very mark of sanctity: 'For in my inner being I delight in God's law; but I see another law at work in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind' (Romans 7: 22), and therefore 'We must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God' (Acts 14: 22). As we have seen with the Saints, the discomfort of the struggle was a validation of the Christian identity. On the simplest level, pain for God (whether trauma to the body or torment because of the body) enabled the pained to 'participate in the suffering of Christ on the Cross'.[2] The shared experience of denial and pain and suffering invited the communicant into the wider Church community and connected them tightly to it, ultimately distancing them from the outside world, thereby 'concentrating and reinforcing [their] ties to religion and a spiritual existence'.[3] Perceived thus, pain 'weakens the subject's sense of empirical identity and strengthens his or her sense of attachment to a highly valued centre of identification'.[4] In

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[2] Ariel Glucklich, *Sacred Pain: Hurting the Body for the Sake of the Soul* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 4.
[3] Suzanne Elliot Winter, 'Sex and the Single Saint: Physicality in Anglo-Saxon Female Saints' Lives', Unpublished PhD Thesis (University of Georgia, May 2004), p. 124.
[4] Glucklich, p. 7.

his discussion of ritual forms of pain, Ariel Glucklich speaks of what has been framed 'resistance' (to the flows of power of the socially initiated and therefore powerful) coming from the erstwhile powerless initiates, a dynamic defined in terms of the 'assent given by ritual participants to the ritual itself. […] If all social relations are about power – in Foucault's sense of power/knowledge – then all ritual is about the sharing of power',[5] a sharing that would seem to attenuate the brutality of (certainly the casual observation of) the experience.

Of course, the clerical imposition of so chaste (and so ambivalent) a sexual standard made failure to attain it almost inevitable; in aiming so high, the Church all but guaranteed a laying low. Those chthonic urges so often found release through indulgences of the most physical kind. But paradoxically, even such denial denied could draw the religious to God. The would-be faithful was reduced to an inadequate, desperate for the mercy of a God Who did indeed extend it to all who seek His grace.

The erotic is, therefore, completely appropriated: when sex is sublimated, it offers contact with the divine; when incarnate, it shows need of the divine. The pain, whether that involved in the denial of the flesh or that from its capitulation, is conceptualised in terms of a wider narrative and thus shown to be meaningful; the connections this pain produces are constitutional, 'cognitive-emotional changes' that alter the individual's perceptual identity in relation to 'a more fundamental state of being'.[6] It is a discourse that co-opts what are mutually contradictory experiences of sex into a persuasive *Lebenswelt*, thereby performing a gestalt psychological take-over; the body is entirely occupied and its meanings wholly determined. Power, it seems, would have its coitus and eat it too; for these religious, it is always God's face they see at the moment of climax. The real pleasures of sex are entirely divine, and He guards them jealously.

Faced with such an absolutist narrative, why then do we see, within the very documents that would reinforce Church writ, instances of this semiotic imposition being

[5] Ibid., p. 152.
[6] Ibid., p. 6.

resisted, thwarted, even baited? Such resistance becomes all the more troubling if we are to accept some of the poststructuralist claims of new historicism, anthropology, psychology *et al*, that culture and environment are central to and implicit in producing the individual: 'Subjectivity is constructed […through] a process that is always determined by the subject's location within the specific institutional topography of a particular social formation'[7] – a 'general view of culture [that] has been widely accepted, even by severe critics of the movement'.[8] Such an understanding of the individual tolerates no Cartesian ego, concedes no essentialist, trans-historico-geographical core from which identity is seeded. Environment is sperm and egg, nurturing womb, birth canal, wet-nurse. Thus Greenblatt: 'There is subversion, no end of subversion, only not for us'.[9] Only from the historian's Godlike perspective can power be seen being subverted. But it is not for us; situated within and bounded conceptually by the culture that produces us, even our attempts at subversion are in reality merely reinforcements of those very powers bringing us forth. Language is fundamental to this embeddedness; Foucault insists 'that a subject's ability to speak is ontologically bounded by the discourses through which his or her subjectivity is constructed'.[10] The subject's conceptual universe is formed by, and inhabited by means of, their ability to frame it linguistically. There can be no resistance beyond language, because such resistance cannot be conceived of. Michael Peters and Stephen Appel speak of an 'interpellation into subject positions'.[11] For Davies,

> [d]iscursive patterns are not just an external constraint (or potentiation), they also provide the conceptual framework, the psychic patterns, the emotions through which each individual takes up as male or female and through which they privately

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[7] Kevin Jon Heller, 'Power, Subjectification and Resistance in Foucault', *Substance,* 25: 1, 79 (1996), 78-110, p. 91.
[8] Suzanne Gearhart, 'The Taming of Michel Foucault: New Historicism, Psychoanalysis, and the Subversion of Power', *New Literary History*, 28: 3 (1997), 457-480, p. 458.
[9] Ibid.
[10] Heller, p. 91.
[11] Michael Peters and Stephen Appel, 'POSITIONING THEORY: Discourse, the Subject and the Problem of Desire', *Social Analysis: The International Journal of Social and Cultural Practice*, 40 (1996), 120-141, p. 121.

> experience themselves in relation to the social world. […They] trap us into the worlds we are trying to move beyond.[12]

At the practical level, Butler considers that 'language is productive, constitutive';[13] she claims that it is 'even performative, insomuch as this signifying act delimits and contours the body that it then claims to find prior to any and all signification'.[14] Discourse performs bodies into being insofar as it establishes the norms by which the subject can be considered to be valid, normal, to be socially alive at all.[15] The subject sees herself *as a self* through identificatory recognition with that which power ordains as real. Citation reifies power, power compels citation; they are mutually supportive, perhaps somewhat synonymous referents. For Butler, 'Regulatory practice produces the bodies it governs'.[16] Perhaps surprisingly, it is the arch-essentialist Freud who puts it most succinctly: 'Even as the subject seemed to speak the language, it was the language which spoke the subject'.[17] The discourse of the Church, therefore, would seem not only fascistic in the demands it makes upon the experience of sex but, in the tightly governed mind-set of the environment of the religious (always conceding the secular discourses just beyond it), even somewhat constitutive of reality.

And yet, at the very point of Eve's sinning, at the moment where sex has catapulted mankind into alienation from God, and within a narrative framework of sexual censure, it is that very sin that renders her radiant. The arch corruptor, she is also the archetypal resister, somehow able to deny these the various and considerable deployments of power ranged against her.

Pace the new historicism that adopted him so readily – 'as much as [they] owe to Foucault, their borrowing from his work has been a selective one and has resulted, however

[12] Ibid.
[13] Butler, *Bodies*, p. 30.
[14] Ibid.
[15] Ibid., p. 3.
[16] Ibid., p. 1.
[17] Sigmund Freud, *The Unconscious*, trans. by Graham Frankland (London: Penguin, 2005), p. vii.

indirectly, in some serious transformations'[18] – Foucault's account of subjectivity does in fact offer an interesting explanation of such resistance. His understanding of power is not that it isn't absolute in determining the subject, but that it is infinite in its manifestation. Power isn't monopolized by a certain group to be projected onto a mass of pliant lobotomized ciphers, but exists rather as a network of relations – what he thought of as a 'diagram' of intersecting narratives of power[19] – which polysemity not only allowed for but encouraged interaction and divergence: 'neither the caste which governs, nor the groups which control the state apparatus, nor those who make the most important economic decisions direct the entire network of power that functions in a society (and makes it function)'.[20] Power is forever in competition with other, alternative centres of power. There is always 'a convergence with other discursive regimes, whereby inadvertently produced discursive complexity undermines the teleological aims of normalization'.[21] The unpredictability of such complexity is increased by what Kevin John Heller terms the 'strategic' operation of power, wherein the tactics of power have unintended consequences 'through the inevitable disjunction between an action's *intention* and its actual *effect*'.[22]

Despite language's seminal role in the operations of power that produce the subject, it remains nevertheless a rich opportunity for counter-hegemonic resistance. Foucault noted (with characteristic ellipsis) the instability of the symbolic in relations of power, a process described more clearly by Butler as 'the course of subjectivisation exceed[ing] the normalizing aims by which it is mobilized, for example, in 'reverse discourse''.[23] Foucault's particular *bête noir*mality was sexuality, the concept of which he saw as the creation of quasi-scientific discourses of a repressive West. Prior to this, sexual acts of whatever disportment

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[18] Gearhart, p. 460.
[19] Heller, p. 85.
[20] Foucault, *Knowledge*, p. 95. This position is not without its critics, of which Marquior is only one: 'For Foucault, power / knowledge […] means (1) confining political analysis to the identifying of means of subjection and (2) excluding the possibility of forms of individuality or positions which are not the exclusive 'property' of the dominant ensemble of power relations' (in Heller, p. 92). I feel that Foucault's position is more nuanced than this, but not without its lacunae – see further.
[21] Judith Butler, *The Psychic Life of Power: Theories in Subjection* (California: Stanford University Press, 1997), p. 92.
[22] Heller, p. 87 – his italics.
[23] Butler, *Psychic*, p. 92.

had been nothing more than that – acts, be they licit or illicit. The concept of sexuality was a narrative that imposed a schema onto disparate movements of the loins, out of which projection came forth a *type* of subject. 'Sexuality' extended power's hold over the body by performing a normality into existence:

> Sex had to be inscribed not only in an economy of pleasure but also in an ordered system of knowledge. Thus sex gradually became an object of great suspicion; the general and disquieting meaning that pervades our conduct and our existence, in spite of ourselves; the point of weakness where evil portents reach through to us; the fragment of darkness we each carry with us.[24]

But it was always an unstable deployment. The norms that it had to instantiate required abnormalities against which to be defined, abject categories that were denied validity and therefore life. But the performativity of discourse – its bringing into existence the subject through normativity – requires constant reiteration, continual recitation to secure the status quo, which repetition reveals that there are in fact no essential, transhistorical norms. The constant abjectification creates a contested site around what qualifies as normal. Further, the disenfranchised are handed an identity around which to congeal by means of a vocabulary that can be used to project that identity back against the norm. Thus

> the appearance in the C19th […] of a whole series of discourses on the species and subspecies of homosexuality […] made possible a strong advance of social controls into this area of 'perversity'; but it also made possible the formation of a 'reverse' discourse: homosexuality began to speak on its own behalf, to demand that its legitimacy or 'naturality' be acknowledged, often in the same vocabulary, using the same categories by which it was medically disqualified.[25]

Discourses, then, are double agents for change: they

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[24] Foucault, *Knowledge,* p. 69.
[25] Ibid., p. 101.

> are not once and for all subservient to power or raised up against it, any more than silences are. We must make allowance for the complex and unstable process whereby discourse can be both an instrument and an effect of power, but also a hindrance, a stumbling block, a point of resistance and a starting point for an opposing strategy. Discourse transmits and produces power; it reinforces it, but also undermines and exposes it, renders it fragile and makes it possible to thwart it.[26]

Foucauldian power is therefore structurally susceptible to subversion. Even within the confessional exchange – for Foucault the most complete exercise of power: it 'is not simply one more site in which the workings of modern power may be observed; insofar as it is a technology by which power attaches itself to individuals, it is a condition of power'[27] – opportunities existed for a recalcitrant confessee to consciously subvert the protocol; along with the 'pleasure that comes from exercising a power that questions, monitors, watches, spies, searches out, palpates, brings to light',[28] there is, 'on the other hand, the pleasure that kindles at having to evade this power, flee from it, fool it, or travesty it'.[29] Power is neither omnipotent nor hermetic; there is the 'power that lets itself be invaded by the pleasure it is pursing; and opposite it, power asserting itself in the pleasure of showing off, scandalizing, or resisting. Capture and seduction, confrontation and mutual reinforcement […] *perpetual spirals of power and pleasure*'.[30] Power carries within itself the mechanisms of its own subversion.

But the resistant bodies of the Junius manuscript do not seem involved in such obvious subversion; their eroticism in spite of the texts is not tactical, nor does it appear to be

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[26] Ibid., p. 100.
[27] Dave Tell, 'Rhetoric and Power: An Inquiry into Foucault's Critique of Confession', *Philosophy and Rhetoric*, 43: 2 (2010), 95-117, p. 113.
[28] Foucault, *Knowledge,* p. 45.
[29] Ibid.
[30] Ibid. – his italics. Gearhart uses this passage to introduce the concept of sadomasochism as the 'mechanism that makes power productive in [the] 'libidinal' sense' (Suzanne Gearhart, 'Foucault's Response to Freud: Sado-masochism and the Aestheticization of Power', *Style*, 29: 3 (1995), 389-442, p. 3). She goes on, however, to state that 'Foucault makes no attempt here to distinguish a masochistic from a sadistic manner of mixing pleasure and power' (p. 3). This particular passage, though, does not posit a masochistic dimension; the subject of sadistic impulse responds here with evasion, fleeing, fooling, and travestying. These are not the yielding actions of a masochist.

the unintended effect of strategic resistance gone awry. They are not 'fooling' or 'evading', nor are they seemingly rekindling an obdurate arousal in confession. Ostensibly they support the narratives – the cultural power – out of which they emerge: despite the torture, they maintain their poise, their sexual deportment, their all-important integrity. And yet they seem somehow to confound the pious message with an attention to sex that has an almost incidental but nevertheless dogged insistence on its joy, a focus that goes beyond any pleasure immanent in Foucault's exhibitionism or scandal but whispers rather of sensual remembrance. These bodies are exposed and traumatised at the behest of a concupiscence they abjure, but they are paradoxically still somehow sexualized.

This ambivalence to the cultural settlement seems to resist post-structuralist theories of the subject. There is a need to account for such subversion, which operations of cultural power alone fail to provide. That discourses of power and normativity necessarily entail opportunities for resistance does not answer the question, Whence resistance? Certainly in his *History of Sexuality* series, Foucault's explanation of its emergence seems less than satisfactory; he postulates the appearance of subversion as an effect of power itself: 'where there is power, there is resistance, and yet, or rather, consequently, this resistance is never in a position of exteriority to power'.[31] Resistances 'are inscribed in [power] as an irreducible opposite'.[32] With regard to power mechanisms, we 'must not imagine a world of discourse divided between accepted discourse and excluded discourse, or between the dominant discourse and the dominated one; but a multiplicity of discursive elements […that results in] shifts and reutilizations of identical formulas for contrary objectives'.[33] To his discussion of nineteenth-century homosexuality, Butler appends her own homosexual experience, a 'term which not only names, but forms and frames the subject'.[34] Finding themselves thus brought into being by the signifier, a reverse discourse is enabled in which 'queer' can be taken over

[31] Foucault, *Knowledge*, p. 95.
[32] Ibid., p. 96.
[33] Ibid., p. 100.
[34] Butler, *Psychic*, p. 93.

by queers. In this way, even the most poisonous of designations can be appropriated and turned into an occasion of bold resignification. As Butler asks,

> What lets us occupy the discursive site of injury? How are we animated and mobilized by that discursive site and its injury, such that our attachment becomes the condition of our resignification of it? Called by an injurious name, I come into social being, and because I have a certain inevitable attachment to my existence […] I am led to embrace the terms that injure me because they constitute me socially.[35]

It is a neat formulation, and has been a politically efficacious one. But it fails to properly account for the ambivalence of a subject who is simultaneously made by and yet is resistant to power, and neither does it fully locate the origins of resistance. While reiteration does open up possibilities for reverse discourse, it does not explain from what resistance is derived nor from where it comes – what in fact it might attach itself to. Why does the subject mobilize against that which forms her, even accepting that she is given the means to do so? The queer inverts 'queer' and thereby destabilizes what was intended to be a normative discourse, an injunction to reproductive heterosexuality, but why does she want to? From where does the urge to queer come? Why are we not all queering queers? The resistant subject surely owes its existence to something more than a disruptive opportunity within discursive, normalizing schemas, to something that is prior to Foucauldian power and subsequently aroused by it. That inevitable attachment to an existence suggests something beyond and below a discourse that would instantiate a norm, even if the discourse is a self-defeating one.

Despite his stated aversion to psychoanalysis, Foucault seemed to recognize the lacunae. For Gearhart, the 'implications of Foucault's work' demand that

> the psychic and the cultural cannot be simply opposed. […] Foucault frequently asserts that […] the most intimate, most subjective dimension of human subjectivity,

[35] Ibid., p. 104.

pleasure or eros, is not merely opposed to power. Rather power takes root in the individual in and through libidinal forces.[36]

Although never formalizing it into a theory, his treatment of power, particularly in *Discipline and Punish*, 'represents […a] significant alternative to new historical theories of culture that assume a self determined by culture. For Foucault, […] the psyche remains a locus of resistance to cultural and social norms'.[37] Butler also appears sensitive to this lack; she co-opts Lacan and the incommensurability of the imaginary and symbolic realms, whereby identity inevitably fails at the point of its inception, at the disjuncture between the interior and exterior worlds. Resistance is enabled by this misrecognition: 'Identity can never be fully totalized by the symbolic, for what it fails to order will emerge within the imaginary as a disorder, a site where identity is contested'.[38] It is certainly difficult to see how subversion can be catalysed without a psychic back-story. For the subject who is constituted by cultural norms and identifies herself by means of and with reference to those norms, to then necessarily and paradoxically resist the very norms that make her, surely suggests an ambivalence at the psychic level, at the point where power meets the individual. Such primal or chthonic ambivalence – that attachment to a proscribed existence – seems to me born of and in reaction to something more fundamental than discursive practice.

The Freudian subject is, of course, fundamentally ambivalent, wrestling with its encounter with authority. What is serendipitous for our purposes is that – by Freud's computation if not intent – this struggle seems not only to emerge from but remains forever conditioned by the erotic.

Prior to subjectivisation, the Freudian proto-subject inhabits an Oceanic phase of existence, defined 'as an ecstatic breaking down of the boundaries between ego and the world traceable to the 'unlimited narcissism' of infancy. […It] includes an intense erotic pleasure'.[39]

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[36] Gearhart, 'Taming', p. 460.
[37] Ibid., p. 462.
[38] Butler, *Psychic*, p. 96.
[39] Freud, *Civilization*, p. xv.

Its subsequent encounter with reality necessitates an awareness of and accommodation with supervening authority, out of which psychic tension the subject emerges. That early 'No' of the Father comes to be internalized as the Superego, a discrete aspect of the psychic structure that will eventually stand for all instantiations of authority: 'Religion, morality, and a social sense – the chief elements in the higher side of man – were originally one and the same thing […] they were acquired phylogenetically out of the father-complex'.[40] The external Law that creates the subject, bringing it into being, is also absorbed by the subject to become a constituent part of the subject. The subject, then, is both situated within the matrix of power, which delimits him, and contributes to that matrix.

But paradoxically, the Superego is reliant upon the id. It is aligned with the id against the ego, and derives its energy from the id: 'desire is not subordinated to a commandment exterior to it. To state this more positively, moral obligation is rooted in desire itself; it is the energy of desire that engenders its own censorship'.[41] For Freud, 'the ego-ideal is therefore the heir to the Oedipus complex, and thus it is also the expression of the most powerful impulses and most important libidinal vicissitudes of the id'.[42] The Superego is driven by the libido, arises out of the libido. The chastisement visited upon the ego for its failure to attenuate the drives of the id is, ultimately, powered by the energy of the id. Freud's subject is psychically at odds with itself at a structural level, is by definition resistant to its own existence.

This seems to me to have more explanatory value than the simple semantic opportunities for subjective resistance advanced by Foucault. Of course, a subjectivity based upon sex was exactly that which most discombobulated him, and animated his dispute with psychoanalysis: 'these notions of human nature, of justice, of the realisation of the essence of human beings, are all notions and concepts which have been formed within our civilization,

[40] Freud, *Ego and Id*, p. 33.
[41] Szymon Wrobel, 'Foucault Reads Freud: The Dialogue with Unreason and Enlightenment', *Polish Sociological Review*, 171 (2010), 271-288, p. 283.
[42] Freud, *Ego and Id*, p. 32.

within our type of knowledge, and our form of philosophy'.[43] That we all share an essentialist, transhistorical core was anathema to him, and to (post)structuralism more generally. Certainly, there is something overly and inflexibly deterministic to Freud's formulations; his failure to account for and accommodate some measure of cultural input into the emergence of the subject diminishes the explanatory power of his work. For John Sullivan, 'its most objectionable feature is its biological and ontological determinism. […] That the cultural context […] does in fact provide stimuli and reinforcers […] seems to be apparent to everyone but psychological theorists'.[44] But Freud himself does in fact allude (perhaps against the intention of the text) to the idea that the elemental psyche is modified as a result of ongoing cultural influences: in defining sublimation as 'a certain kind of modification of the aim and change of the object, *in which social valuation is taken into account*',[45] he opens up undetermined space at the point at which the ego and the id interact. The purpose of sublimation is to divert instinctual energies 'in such a way that they cannot come up against frustration from the external world […] one gains most if one can sufficiently heighten the yield of pleasure from the sources of psychic and intellectual work'.[46] The idic energy thus employed in cultural work – the arts, science, religion – is marked by and made to perform in conformity with the pleasure principle; at the subconscious level, energy is taken up and sublimated by the ego in culturally determined directions. Such culture, or social valuation, changes in and through time, and consequently so, too, must the ego's subconscious response to it. The constitution of psychic life is therefore directly modified by its contact with an historically situated, contingent cultural reality, in which there is a constant, dynamic cross-fertilization between the psyche and its environment. As with most accounts of the human experience, it seems, the purity of the

[43] Brent L. Picket, 'Foucault and the Politics of Resistance', *Polity*, 28: 4 (1996), 445-466, p. 454. Conceptually, Foucault's disagreements with Freud were significant; Szymon Wrobel details them concisely. Though I hope here to offer something of a theoretical rapprochement, any 'similarities between Foucault and Freud should not blur obvious differences between the two' (Wrobel, p. 281).
[44] John J. Sullivan, 'Two Psychologies and the Study of Religion', *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 1: 2 (1962), 155-164, p. 163.
[45] Sigmund Freud, 'New Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis', *The Standard Edition of the Complete works of Sigmund Freud*, vol. xxii, trans. and ed. by James Strachey (London: Vintage, 2001), p. 97 – my italics.
[46] Freud, *Civilization*, p. 79.

theory is inversely proportional to its plausibility, whether Freud's aversion to cultural input, or Foucault's resistance to factoring a pan-sexual dynamic. But in fact opening up theoretical space for those originary libidinal investments, out of which the Oedipal Complex emerges, becomes as useful for Foucault as it is fundamental to Freud.

At the pre-Oedipal, Oceanic phase, there is for the child no differentiation between object and self; the world is seamless, and everything in it cathected libidinally, a state put most succinctly by Freud himself: 'The breast is part of me, I am the breast.' Only later: 'I have it' – that is, 'I am not it'.[47] Further, in *The Ego and the Id*, he states that 'at the very beginning, in the individual's primitive oral phase, object-cathexis and identification are no doubt indistinguishable from each other'[48] As Mikkel Borch-Jacobson suggests, it is not possible within this formulation that 'libidinal object-cathexis and identification are independent relationships'.[49] This all-encompassing self-identification, which Freud termed 'primary narcissism', is extended to both parents: the Father is indistinguishable from the Mother. Both are sexualized, both a source of libidinal pleasure; for Freud, the psychic structure comes about 'through the interjection into the ego of the first objects of the id's libidinal impulses – namely, the two parents. In this process the relation to these objects was desexualized'.[50] Freud elsewhere speaks of 'an original bisexuality […] intended as an explanation of the child's indifferent use of both parents as love objects and mimetic supports […] a way of describing in sexual terms an 'emotional tie' that confounds love and identification'.[51]

The child becomes aware of reality beyond the self by means of sensory perception, which becomes the ego: 'the ego is that part of the id which has been modified by the direct influence of the external world through the medium of the *Pcpt-Cs*; in a sense it is an

[47] Mikkel Borch-Jacobson and Douglas Brick, 'The Oedipus Problem in Freud and Lacan', *Critical Inquiry*, 20: 2 (1994), 267-282, p. 270.
[48] Freud, *Ego and Id*, p. 19.
[49] Borch-Jacobson and Brick, p. 270.
[50] Sigmund Freud, 'The Economic Problem of Masochism', *Essential Papers on Masochism*, ed. by Margaret Ann Fitzpatrick Hanly (New York and London: New York University Press, 1995), pp. 267 – 285, p. 281.
[51] Borch-Jacobson and Brick, p. 271.

extension of the surface-differentiation'.[52] In this way, the infant begins to formulate the boundaries of his own body and of his existence. The urge to continue in that Oceanic drift, however, is not dissolved but rather congeals into a desire to possess the mother, a wish that is seen to be threatened by the intervention of a father who then becomes simultaneously and paradoxically an object both of hostility and of respect.

The sexual nature of the relationship with the father is ultimately overcome in the resolution of the Oedipus complex. The mother is invested with the libidinal cathexis, which produces 'normal' heterosexual desire, and the hostility to and respect for the father develops into morality, civility, ultimately into civilisation itself:[53]

> A considerable measure of aggressivity must have developed in the child against the authority that deprives him of his first (and most significant) satisfactions. […] The child is obliged to forgo the satisfaction of this vengeful aggression. He helps himself out of this difficult economic situation by recourse to familiar mechanisms. By means of identification he incorporates the unassailable authority into himself; it now becomes the superego.[54]

But for Freud, whatever is in the infantile state remains in the id:

> If human beings do inherit psychic formations, something analogous to animal instincts, then these are what form the core of the *ucs*. Everything that is discarded over the course of infantile development – material not necessarily different in nature from that which is inherited – is then subsequently added to this core.[55]

[52] Freud, *Ego and Id*, p. 18.
[53] For Borch-Jacobson, the 'Oedipus complex, far from being the untamed expression (so to speak) of desire, is instead the initial instrument of its social and sexual normalization. The child is not born boy or girl, at least not from the psychical point of view; it becomes one or the other. And it does so thanks to the Oedipus complex, which teaches the child, if all goes well, to desire in conformity with its biological gender and the instinctual mechanisms released at puberty' (Borch-Jacobson and Brick, p. 271).

[54] Freud, *Civilization*, p. 65.
[55] Freud, *Unconscious*, p. 77.

That libidinal cathexis for the father – who, as we have seen, comes to stand in for all authority – may well need to be resolved oedipally for Freud, but it nevertheless remains (at the very least) as an echo in the libido, something of a libidinal resource.

Freud's treatment of masochism seems suggestive of the latent, and sometimes manifest, sexual element in relations of authority, perhaps to a degree beyond that with which he was comfortable. For Freud, resolution of the Oedipus complex had to involve the de-sexualisation of the parental relationship, so that morality and conscience might emerge; indeed, there could be little sense of morality unless the drives were neutralised by authority. Only if it were subverted was the relationship of subject to power again re-sexed, returning it to its former, primal state; the subject then desires 'punishment at the hands of a parental power'.[56] This very often manifests itself as the desire 'to be beaten by the father [which] stands very close to the other wish, to have a passive (feminine) relationship to him'.[57] In this situation, 'morality' – that relationship to authority – 'becomes sexualized once more'.[58] For psychoanalysis, this is an entirely negative development, 'to the advantage neither of morality nor of the person concerned'.[59] Suzanne Gearhart points out that, for some, such masochism might be considered reinforcement for Freudian parental authority,[60] but this would be to misconstrue Freud's understanding. For Freud, re-eroticising the relationship necessarily undoes morality; moral authority cannot properly emerge when the instincts are in the ascendant. But the situation seems less clear-cut. Freud himself is forced to concede an erotic dynamic at work in the *normal* interaction of superego and ego: the

> turning back of sadism against the self regularly occurs where a *cultural suppression of the instincts* holds back a large part of the subject's destructive instinctual components from being exercised in life. We may suppose that this portion of the destructive instinct which has retreated appears in the ego as an intensification of

[56] Freud, 'Economic', p. 282.
[57] Ibid.
[58] Ibid.
[59] Ibid.
[60] Gearhart, 'Taming', p. 464.

masochism. The phenomenon of conscience, however, leads us to infer that the destructiveness that returns from the external world is also taken up by the super-ego, without any such transformation, and increases its sadism against the ego. […] It is only in this way, I think, that we can understand how the suppression of an instinct can – frequently or quite generally – result in a sense of guilt.[61]

By Freud's own formulation here, repression – that basic operation of psychic life – entails libidinal excitation. Relations between the discrete psychic elements are characterized by the involvement of the libido. Manifestations of moral or erotogenic masochism are merely intensifications of what is a normal condition of the self's relationship to itself, a difference only of degree. This deduction is corroborated by Freud in *Civilization and its Discontents*, where he describes the normal function of the superego in discharging aggression against itself (in the form of the ego):

> There it is taken over by a portion of the ego that sets itself up as the superego, in opposition to the rest, and is now prepared, as 'conscience', to exercise the same severe aggression against the ego that the latter would like to have directed towards other individuals. The tension between the stern superego and the ego that is subject to it is what we call a 'sense of guilt'; this manifests itself as a *need* for punishment.[62]

In 'Dostoevsky and Parricide', Freud describes the characteristics of pathological masochism, which include variously a 'great need for punishment', an ego that 'offers itself as victim' and that 'finds satisfaction in ill-treatment by the super-ego', and a situation where 'every punishment is ultimately castration and, as such, a fulfilment of the old passive attitude towards the father'.[63] He then goes onto observe that the 'normal processes in the formation of conscience must be similar to the abnormal ones described here'.[64] Many analysts consider that masochism is a healthy, even indispensable function of the interior self: Charles Brenner

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[61] Freud, 'Economic', p. 283 – his italics.
[62] Freud, *Civilization*, p. 60 – my italics
[63] Sigmund Freud, 'Dostoevsky and Parricide', *The Standard Edition of the Complete Works of Sigmund Freud*, trans. and ed. by James Strachey (London: Hogarth Press, 1961), p. 185.
[64] Ibid.

writes that a ‘need for punishment, whether it be a conscious or an unconscious one, is invariably a part of normal superego functioning. It follows therefore that some degree of masochism is ubiquitous’.[65] Any significant disruption of this psychic relationship results in the ‘weakening of the masochistic equilibrium […] an impoverishment of defensive and adaptive ego functions, a disappearance of crucial controls usually provided by the defensive and synthesizing functions of the ego’.[66] For Rene De Monchy, the

> ego often accepts moral demands relatively willingly, in other words masochistically. This is not surprising in view of the influence of the parents on the origin of the super-ego. In infancy the attitude to the parents, particularly the father, contains masochistic tendencies. […] Thus even the normal functions of the conscience include masochistic trends.[67]

That aetiology of authority makes such a deduction logical; the superego *emerges* out of the id and continues to be *funded* by it. The ego’s repression of idic urges results in guilt at the hands of the superego, which guilt becomes a reward for and satisfaction of its self-effacement – or more accurately, the id’s urge for self-destruction. The ego’s genuflection before these twin chancelleries is an understandable consequence of their perversely connected and yet mutually contradictory requirements.

For Gearhart, the eroticized condition of psychic power relations also extends to relations external to the subject. In connecting as he does masochism and repression, she avers, Freud ‘implies that sado-masochism is not a restricted but rather a general phenomenon

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[65] Charles Brenner, ‘The Masochistic Character: Genesis and Treatment’, *Essential Papers on Masochism,* ed. by Margaret Ann Fitzpatrick Hanly (New York and London: New York University Press, 1995), pp. 360-382, p. 364.
[66] Shirley Panken, ‘On Masochism: A Re-evaluation’, *Psychoanalytical Review*, 54: 3 (1967), 135-149, p. 143.
[67] Rene De Monchy, ‘Masochism as a Pathological and as a Normal Phenomenon in the Human Mind’, *The International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 51 (1950), 95-97, p. 96.

and that all relations between subjects, even those of patient to analyst, have an irreducible sado-masochistic component'.[68]

Such an explanation accords more comfortably with the evidence than does Freud's disappearing-cathexis trick of sexual investment. It is difficult to see how the original libidinal attachment to power is so completely divested by Oedipal resolution and then so easily reacquired in moral and erotogenic masochism, when the relationship of ego to superego that informs it has itself changed only in intensification, in degree. Guilt is the underlying psychic response to the imprecations of the superego, whether the normal guilt of balanced individuals or the debilitating and self-lacerating manifestations in the various species of masochism: 'We have attributed the function of conscience to the super-ego and we have recognized the consciousness of guilt as an expression of a tension between the ego and the super-ego'.[69] In whatever guise, the ego would appear to adopt before the superego a more or a less supine posture, which is informed by a masochistic passivity to authority. The evidence suits an attenuated or recessive libidinal energy underpinning normal psychic life, which is inflamed by extreme circumstances rather than reborn because of them. In the *Economic Problem of Masochism*, it seems that Freud needed to maintain, against the flow of his own analysis, a sexual separation between subject and authority in order to secure the position of the analyst *vis-à-vis* the analysand, but his insistence on it and need for it 'is not in itself sufficient grounds for establishing either the existence of such a desexualized relationship or the reality of its psychic foundations'.[70]

The suggestion of a sexual residue animating psychic relations of power is a persuasive one. Certainly those latent libidinal cathexes loitering around the contiguous structures of the psyche are an economic resource that cannot easily be laundered, however much they deny to Freud the fastidious Oedipal resolution he requires. But for Foucault, the

[68] Gearhart, 'Foucault's Response', p. 4.
[69] Freud, 'Economic', p. 280.
[70] Gearhart, 'Foucault's Response', p. 4.

subversive implications of a recidivist – or general – sadomasochism is not debilitating but entirely liberating:

> whereas Freud stresses the disadvantages of sadomasochism both for the individual and for the institution of legitimate authority, Foucault stresses the critical and theoretical 'advantages' of viewing power relations from the perspective of a generalized sadomasochism […which] undercuts authority by disrupting the process of desexualisation which is its foundation.[71]

Whilst it is true that he may have elided the phrase – 'the term sado-masochism was rarely, if ever, used by Foucault in his discussion of political power'[72] – his work often reads seductively as an encomium of the dynamic. In Volume One of the *History of Sexuality*, he asserts that power is concerned, not in promising health and longevity, but rather with the

> multiplication and intensification of pleasures connected to the production of the truth about sex. The learned volumes, written and read; the consultations and examinations; the *anguish* of answering questions and the *delights* of having one's words interpreted; all the stories told to oneself and to others, so much curiosity, so many confidences offered in the *face of scandal*, sustained – but *not without trembling* a little – by the *obligation* of truth.[73]

That 'obligation'. This is the subject standing before and yielding to the father, to the eternal 'No'. The pleasure of desire is transformed into and born again as the pleasure of confession, of submitting to authority. Pleasure undertakes a *volte-face*: the delight of the completely unrestrained becomes the delight of the totally constrained, and, in a sign of the completeness of its self-effacement, it draws the energy for that Apollonian transformation from its Dionysian progenitor – the delight *comes* from the scandal.

[71] Gearhart, 'Taming', p. 464.
[72] Gearhart, 'Foucault's Response', p. 1.
[73] Foucault, *Knowledge*, p. 71 – my italics.

The masochism in the exchange is undeniable, and it is cognate with the supplicants, described by Freud, who similarly derived pleasure from the application of authority: Freud sought to identify the dynamic immanent in the 'play' of 'masochistic perverts', the manifest content of which 'is of being gagged, bound, painfully beaten, whipped, in some way maltreated, forced into unconditional obedience, dirtied and debased. […T]he masochist wants to be treated like a small and helpless child, but, particularly, like a naughty child'.[74] The nature of the willing object of power described by both Freud and Foucault is based in a subservient, infantile, masochistic and therefore sexually passive relationship with the Father, in which the pain of acquiescence subsists alongside – produces; is synonymous with – a pleasure that intensifies and is intensified by it. Thus 'pleasure and power do not cancel or turn back against one another; they seek out, overlap and reinforce one another. They are linked together by complex mechanisms and devices of excitation and incitement'[75] – what Foucault, given his almost Teutonic penchant for compounding nouns, might have termed 'pain-o-power'. Such fluidity has something of the id segueing into the superego, and it explains the ambivalence to Freud's social settlement: the 'development of civilisation […] must show us the struggle between Eros and death, between the life drive and the drive for destruction, as it is played out in the human race'.[76] The sense of guilt accompanying the struggle is the 'expression of the conflict of ambivalence, the unending struggle between Eros and the destructive drive, the death drive. This conflict is fanned the moment people are faced with the task of living together'.[77] Though differently framed, the Foucauldian subject, too, is structurally ambivalent. The masochistic delight inherent in all forms of confession – whether religious, political, scientific – is opposed to the subject's need or desire to resist those very same operations of power. Thus the subject cannot but be ambivalent to the powers that constitute him, even if consciously he submits to their writ. Albeit from oppositional theoretical positions, both Foucault and Freud understand the subject to be compelled to resist

[74] Freud, 'Economic', p. 276.
[75] Foucault, *Knowledge,* p. 48.
[76] Freud, *Civilization*, p. 58.
[77] Ibid., p. 76.

authority and simultaneously to yield passively before it. The predisposition to do so is effected by the libidinal pleasures attendant upon relations of power, howsoever relational. The ambivalence is eroticised whether in its repulsive or its attractive guise. It is a relationship to which the erotic is forever appended.

The Church had long been aware of the dangers of righting the vagaries and temptations of the flesh, even in highly controlled, purgative contexts, which demonstrated an understanding of the outcome if not of the processes driving it. In the fifth century, John Cassian wrote of confession's susceptibility to erotic subversion: he

> explicitly counsels young monks to confess to their elders […] he is also aware of how counterproductive the process can be: when an ascetic recollects his own sins or ponders the 'falls' of another, he may feel a delight and an assent that run contrary to his struggle against sin. Indeed, discussing such subjects with an elder or even hearing Scriptural verses about human generation can constitute temptation and lead a monk astray.[78]

This is an innate, subconscious, self-subverting subversion. Ælfric described it as a war against the self. Keen to expand the definition of martyrdom, perhaps to console those eager members of the flock who had little opportunity for glorious death, he was surely mindful also of the efficacy of an internalized pain in the struggle against the flesh:

> Twa cynn sind martirdomes: an dearfunge, oðer eawunge. Se ðe on ehtnysse for Cristes geleafan his lif alæt, se bið openlice martir. Eft se ðe forberð ðurh geðyld hosp and teonan, and ðone lufað þehine hatað, and his agene unlustas and þæs ungesewenlican deofles thitinge forsihð, se bið untwylice martyr on digelre dæde.

> (Of martyrdom there are two kinds: one secret, the other manifest. He who in persecution lays down his life for Christ's belief, is openly a martyr. But he who

[78] Elizabeth A. Clarke, 'Foucault, the Fathers and Sex', *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, 56: 4 (Winter 1988), 619-641, p. 629.

> through patience endures scorn and injury, and loves him who hates him, and despises his own vices and the prompting of the invisible devil, he is undoubtedly a martyr by secret deed.)[79]

Despising one's own vices is symptomatic of an internal conflict between competing value systems that cannot but generate a dynamic of self-loathing, a resistant erotic arousal despite itself. Thus, even at the point of greatest contrition, the confessee cannot but resist authority, whether that of the Church or that within himself. For Foucault, '[p]ower operated as a mechanism of attraction; it drew out those peculiarities over which it kept watch. Pleasure spread to the power that harried it; power anchored the pleasure it uncovered'.[80] But this is not Foucault's recalcitrant confessional, nor is it a discursive opportunity for resistance, nor even an unintentional resistance to authority resulting from operations of Foucauldian strategic power – his unintended consequences; this is suggestive more of an unintended reaction *within* the confessee. It is not an opportunity for resistance, but an interior operation of resistance. In Freudian terms, 'authority's imagined aggression towards the desiring subject is taken over by the subject' – this, of course, subconsciously – 'not only to discipline desire but also in order to attack the authority itself'.[81] The subject is compelled to resist against his intention and volition and will. Unwanted and unsolicited (by the Conscious), its source is libidinal frustration and its objective libidinal release. And the struggle is an unfair one:

> The feeling of happiness resulting from the satisfaction of a wild instinctual impulse that had not been tamed by the ego is incomparably more intense than that occasioned by the sating of one that has been tamed. Here we have an economic explanation for

[79] Ælfric, 'On the Nativity of Holy Martyrs', The Homilies of the Catholic Church, vol. II, 544, 546 – in Elliot Winter, p. 127 – her translation.
[80] Foucault, *Knowledge*, p. 44.
[81] Freud, *Civilization*, p. xvii.

> the irresistibility of perverse impulses, perhaps for the attraction of what is forbidden.[82]

Foucault was of course attuned to the susceptibility of power to being subverted against the intent of its operation, to its being infiltrated by a recusant pleasure. The tendency of the body to subvert the narratives of power in which it finds itself is treated at length in *Discipline and Punish*, where his tortured but nevertheless erotic bodies correspond with striking resonance with the bodies of the saints in the *Lives*. Concentrating in part on the penal system of eighteenth-century France, Foucault investigates the juridical application of power, its techniques for securing a compliant populace, and the various reactions to those deployments. His descriptions of bodies under duress are shocking both in their detail and prolixity:

> On the first day, he was taken to the square where he found a cauldron of boiling water, in which was submerged the arm with which he had committed the crime. The next day the arm was cut off, and, since it fell at his feet, he was constantly kicking it up and down the scaffold; on the third day, red-hot pincers were applied to his breasts and the front of his arm; on the fourth day, the pincers were applied similarly on the back of his arm and on his buttocks; and thus, consecutively, this man was tortured for eighteen days.[83]

Such deployments onto the body were a demonstration of the sovereign's might, in their overwhelming physicality and in the exercise of his ability to either punish or forgive. It made the 'body of the condemned man the place where the vengeance of the sovereign was applied, the anchoring point for the manifestation of power, an opportunity for affirming the dissymmetry of forces'.[84] The disproportion was essential to the technique; its aim was to show 'the dissymmetry between the subject who has dared to violate the law and the all-

[82] Ibid., p. 17.
[83] Foucault, *Discipline*, p. 54.
[84] Ibid., p. 55.

powerful sovereign who displays his strength […] the punishment is carried out in such a way as to give a spectacle not of measure, but of imbalance and excess'.[85]

Given the overwhelming resources at his disposal and the flamboyant excess with which they were deployed, the degree to and manner in which the process was subverted is instructive:

> in these executions, which ought to show only the terrorizing power of the prince, there was a whole aspect of the carnival, in which rules were inverted, authority mocked and criminals transformed into heroes. The shame was turned around; the courage, like the tears and the cries of the condemned, caused offence only to the law.[86]

It became 'evident that the great spectacle of punishment ran the risk of being rejected by the very people to whom it was addressed'.[87] So potentially subversive was it that the public aspect of the performance eventually ceased: 'At the beginning of the nineteenth century, then, the great spectacle of physical punishment disappeared; the tortured body was avoided; the theatrical representation of pain was excluded from punishment'.[88] It marked 'a slackening of the hold on the body'.[89]

But Foucault's analysis is interesting in that he too understands power's hold on the body as a sexed one, as he does the resistance provoked by that power; he 'appears to suggest that the *supplices* had an erotic dimension'.[90] Despite its intended effect, the lingering attention on the body, the however violent touching of the flesh, generates an erotic response in the observer, positioning them as – or making of them – voyeurs:

> the executioner, his sleeves rolled up, took the steel pincers, which had been specially made for the occasion, and which were about a foot and a half long, and pulled first at

[85] Ibid., p. 49.
[86] Ibid., p. 61.
[87] Ibid., p. 63.
[88] Ibid., p. 14.
[89] Ibid., p. 10.
[90] Gearhart, 'Taming', p. 467.

> the calf of the right leg, then at the thigh, and from there at the two fleshy parts of the right arm; then at the breasts. Though a strong, sturdy fellow, this executioner found it so difficult to tear way the pieces of flesh that he set about the same spot two or three times, twisting the pincers as he did so, and what he took away formed at each part a wound about the size of a six-pound crown piece. […] The confessors returned and spoke to [Damiens] again. He said to them (I heard him): 'Kiss me, gentlemen.' The parish priest of St. Paul's did not dare to, so Monsieur de Marsilly slipped under the rope holding the left arm and kissed him on the forehead.[91]

That gratuitous, soft-focus lingering upon the instruments of torture – clinical in its detachment, almost autistic in its denial of its context – before they tear the flesh is voyeuristic, even masturbatory, in its solipsism. At once a record that also records the attentiveness of the watcher and his mesmerized concern with the insignificant as it plays out alongside the profound, the account is simultaneously emotionally involved and aloof. It ties in with the performance of the torture itself, a curious baroque confection of the S&M, the caress before the cuff, a perverse *pas de deux* of actants slipping into and out of their conflictual roles. The juxtaposition of bloody gratuitousness and compassionate tenderness serves paradoxically to both intensify and unite the putatively contradictory emotions: Freud's love emerging out of hate. And the act of compassion that punctures the horror inevitably connotes something more than empathy – in the charged arena of that exposed, subjugated and vulnerable body, the erotic meanings attaching to a kiss are not so easily negated. The imploring request, the slipping beneath the supporting rope, the mouth brushing against the forehead: the pincers' touch and the touch of the lips parenthetically enfold the scene. This is no dry historical account of juridical power, but one in which the chronicler is fully invested.

[91] Foucault, *Discipline,* pp. 4-5.

With a certain Massola, 'justice did little more than deploy its magnificent theatre',[92] acting for the most part upon his dead body:

> The condemned man was blindfolded and tied to a stake; all around, on the scaffold, were stakes with iron hooks. The confessor whispered in the patient's ear and, after he had given him the blessing, the executioner, who had an iron bludgeon of the kind used in slaughter houses, delivered a blow with all his might on the temple of the wretch, who fell dead: the mortis exactor, who had a large knife, then cut his throat, which spattered him with blood; it was a horrible sight to see; he severed the sinews near the two heels, and then opened up the belly from which he drew the heart, liver, spleen and lungs, which he stuck on an iron hook, and cut and dissected into pieces, which he then stuck on the other hooks as he cut them, as one does with an animal. Look who can at such a sight.[93]

That 'blessing', 'whispered in the patient's ear', lends an intimacy to the account, providing an immersive route into the tableau that we too might share vicariously in the salvific ritual. Again, the incidental detail, the close concentration on the slaughter house bludgeon, even as the recorder protests revulsion for the event and over the implied character of those who can endure 'such a sight', 'horrible […] to see'. The irony, of course, is that he does – and we do – continue to look on, at length and in obsessive detail and with the closest regard. 'In the explicit reference to the butcher's trade, the infinitesimal destruction of the body is linked here with spectacle: each piece is placed on display'.[94] This is punishment as spectator sport, and the intention, the purpose, the demand, is that we do indeed look upon it and marvel. The connection is beyond cerebral, as through parted fingers we however cringingly cannot but loiter upon the images. The performance, like a car crash, is hypnotic, simultaneously and in equal measure repulsive and compulsive. Voyeurism is essential to it.

For Gearhart, the *ancien regime* that Foucault describes is one in which

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[92] Ibid., p. 51.
[93] Ibid.
[94] Ibid.

the body *was* 'touched'. The touched body occupied a central position in the sombre spectacle of punishment. The ambiguity of the word 'touch' is significant in this connection, since it evokes as much an erotic gesture as a violent one. That the *supplices* possessed an erotic dimension is also implied when Foucault writes that nineteenth-century methods of punishment were more 'pudiques' – more modest or chaste – than those of the classical age. [95]

Even at a societal level, we see an erotic reaction that is akin to mass masochism at work – a point upon which Foucault curiously fails to comment.[96] His *le peuple* identified primarily with the objects of spectacles of punishment, an affiliation that undermined and would eventually undo power's prurient hold upon the body: the public execution 'provided a support for a confrontation between the violence of the king and the violence of the people'.[97] The spectators' empathy with the tortured was situated in this violence towards what was a synecdochal body, a projection of themselves into the stocks. People felt connected to 'those who paid the penalty' for being the easy object of an 'invincibility of power'[98] that positioned them always as the insignificant, expendable other. Thus, even amidst the marvellous spectacle of the horror of the violence, it was 'this solidarity [with the tortured] much more than the sovereign power that was likely to emerge with redoubled strength'.[99]

And yet it seems that the violence administered onto their social body was in fact often experienced, at a visceral level, as pleasure. Operations of punitive power excited libidinal release; identification with the condemned was sublimated into abuse and jeering of them as they were led through the crowds to their final performance, and if 'the executioner triumphed, if he managed to cut off the head with a single blow, he 'showed it to the people,

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[95] Gearhart, 'Taming', p. 468. She notes that 'The English translator has rendered 'pudique' as 'reticent'' (p. 468, her footnote).
[96] But of course he wouldn't, suggestive as it is of an innate, essentialist experience. Freud's certainty is telling: he was convinced of an equivalence between the singular and multiple, between self and mass. To Jung's announcements on culture and mythology, his tart retort was that the 'content of the unconscious is collective anyhow.' (Sigmund Freud, *Moses and Monotheism*, trans. by Katherine Jones (London: Hogarth Press, 1939), p. 208).
[97] Foucault, *Discipline*, p. 73.
[98] Ibid., p. 63.
[99] Ibid.

put it down on the ground and then waved to the public who greatly applauded his skill clapping''.[100] This is something beyond compliance with the writ of the Father; it is surely rather evidence of a masochistic response to his rod. Even as they despise it, their bodies arch for his stick. Foucault's 'spirals of pleasure and power'[101] are not insular, frigid coils but contacts that touch and spark, earth and blow. Such joy in receiving (however vicariously and at whatever numerical level) the Father's chastisement is evidence of a conflicted emotional relationship to the self in its interaction with systems of power, a masochism that speaks of ambivalence both to the Father and to the subject that that Father has brought forth. Libidinal energy is excited by witnessing power's deployments *and* by resisting them.

There is, then, 'a certain pleasure connected with the body, even in atrocious 'festivals' such as those described by Foucault'.[102] Gearhart here ties her comments tightly to the *ancien regime*. However, there is evidence of something innate to bodies in matrices of power; bodies cannot but generate pleasure – the very opposite of power's ostensible intention – because pleasure (or libidinal release) underwrites all operations of authority. Libidinal energy is at the very heart of the subject's becoming a subject, from Freud's collision of id and superego to Foucault's peek-a-boo entwinings of sadism and masochism. Hence Foucault's implied acceptance that power operates upon the individual – 'takes root' – by means of his or her libidinal cathexes.[103] Despite their antipathy, the correspondences between Freud and Foucault are multiple and seductive. The however laudable political aims that drove Foucault to distance his position from Freudian essentialism cannot be allowed to obscure their parallel understandings of a conflicted self at odds with the institutions that make that self: the Freudian erotic, attempting to sacrifice his instinctual urges before the social settlement; the Foucauldian ambivalent, deriving guilty pleasure from authoritarian

[100] Ibid., p. 51.
[101] Foucault, *Knowledge*, p. 45.
[102] Gearhart, 'Taming', p. 467.
[103] Ibid., p. 460.

scourges to the social body.[104] Though repressed, that reservoir of libidinal energy is involved at a foundational level, and it will seek satisfaction. For Gearhart, the erotic dimension of the *supplices* is ‘closely connected’ to the ‘reversibility of the power relations structuring them’.[105] I might go further: all power, it would seem, is sadistic, all of it masochistic, all of it indistinguishable from a pleasure that both supports and thwarts it. The ambivalence in power, and in the selves that it constitutes, is structural.

This ambivalence, this excitation of the libido by power, seeps into our various Anglo-Saxon manuscripts, which entertain a fondness for sex in spite of themselves, but which fondness nevertheless threatens to subvert completely the supposed intent of the narratives – something like Freud’s inexorable attraction to the forbidden, or the capriciousness of *le peuple*. *Juliana* is a work-a-day piece that deploys the motifs of Saints’ literature to arrive at the somewhat hackneyed climax of eternal bliss through martyrdom. For Bradley, the poet ‘seems barely fired emotionally or imaginatively by his heroine’.[106] Its protagonist must endure the assaults on her physical integrity that so many saints must. Sex is the pervading theme, surrogate as it is for the integrity of the Christian’s relationship with God, and the poet’s manifest attitude to it is implicit when he juxtaposes the conjugal with the bestial; vexed by his virgin daughter’s obduracy, Africanus tells her that ‘þurh deora gripe deaþe sweltest, / gif þu geþafian nelt þingrædenne, / modges gemanan’[107] (you will suffer death by means of a mauling by wild animals – if you will not consent to the marriage proposition of such a magnanimous man). She will be subject to a chthonian savaging, one way or the other. But, assailed from all sides by base lust as she might be, Juliana will of course prevail.

Chthonic power, though, is one not so easily thwarted. As with Eve and her sinning yet seductive body, sexual imagos appear that jostle the direction and perhaps even the

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[104] It might seem ironic, given his abjuring Freud’s insistence upon sex defining – constituting the identity – of the subject, that the implications of his position in fact position Foucault himself as something of a sexual essentialist.
[105] Ibid., p. 467.
[106] Bradley, p. 302.
[107] Krapp and Dobbie, *Exeter*, p.116, ll. 125-7.

destination of the narrative. Ostensibly present to emphasize the sense of the sexual threat surrounding her, they rather threaten the poem's meaning and conclusions with eruptions of libidinal pleasure.

The poet's description of Satan's attack on the souls of men has received considerable attention: the Devil confesses to Juliana that 'Ic þæs wealles geat / ontyne þurh teonan; bið se torr þyrel, / ingong geopenad, þonne ic ærest him / þurh eargfare in onsende / in breostsefan bitre geþoncas / þurh mislice modes willan, / þæt him sylfum selle þynceð / leahtras to fremman ofer lof godes, / lices lustas'[108] (I open the gate of that wall by means of some injury; once the tower is breached and a passageway opened up, then I first send bitter thoughts into his mind through a flight of arrows, various wishes of the heart, so that it seems better to him that he partake in sin, the lusts of the flesh, over the praise of God). This is the supernatural dimension of the Christian predicament; John Bugge contends that 'For Cynewulf, […] not only does the unbreached castle represent the physical integrity of the body, but that integrity, in turn, stands for a profound spiritual reality, the ontological impermeability […] of the virgin soul'.[109] Significantly, Satan's violation of volition is conveyed, not only in metaphors of battle, but 'also metaphors of rape'.[110] The conjugal analogy, however, is tighter – and more revealing – than anything Shari Horner elucidates; it is specifically through 'teonan' (an injury) that the daemon pushes, the Freudian connotations of which have not, to my knowledge, been commented upon. With typically provocative élan, Camille Paglia writes that

> the female genitals do resemble a wound […] evident in those slang terms "slash" and "gash". Huysmans calls the genital flower a "hideous flesh-wound". Flower,

[108] Ibid., p 124, ll. 400-9.
[109] Shari Horner, 'Spiritual Truth and Sexual Violence: The Old English "Juliana", Anglo-Saxon Nuns, and the Discourse of Female Enclosure', *Signs*, 19: 3 (1994), 658-675, p. 670.
[110] Ibid., p. 669.

mouth, wound: the Gorgon is the reverse image of the Mystic Rose of Mary.

Woman's genital wound is a furrow in female earth.[111]

Indeed, the Freudian boy's first glimpse of female genitalia evokes terror, insomuch as they rehearse the violence of castration. The embedded sexual allusion that Horner touches upon is, in fact, far more primal, an imago far more subliminal; it is a trigger from and to an unconscious chthonic connection. (This semantic trauma recalls and then reframes the dymanics of my reading of the *Dream of the Rood*, on pages eighty and eighty one of this thesis. The eroticization there noted in the connection between the Cross and Christ – a probably intentional poetic device to promote audience compunction – also and presumably less consciously evokes this more chthonic response. The 'inwidhlemmas' (what Bradley translates as 'gaping malicious gashes') occasioned by those dark nails continue the erotic trope but also connect it to darker psychic threads. Neatly, the violence inherent in the castrating act brings us back once more to the violence of the crucifixion.)

Such trigger images pepper the opening scenes of the poem. What is in effect Juliana's deflation of Eleusius' sexual potency – 'ne meaht þu habban mec, / ne geþreatian þe to gesingan'[112] (you may not have me, nor intimidate me into marriage with you) – provokes a succession of counter-reactions that are pregnant with sexual potential. The nobleman is 'yrre gebolgen'[113] (swollen with rage) by her refusal to copulate. In something of a *non sequiteur* – there has so far been no mention of a martial consort – the voices of the ruler's men 'up astag'[114] (rose up) in an action that mirrors how they 'togædre garas hlændon',[115] (leaned spears together) and which anticipates Eleusius 'daraðhæbbende'[116] (raising of his spear) in 'frecne mode'[117] (aggressive mood) when confronted by the actuality of his sexual

[111] Paglia, p. 48.
[112] Krapp and Dobbie, *Exeter*, p. 114, ll. 53-4.
[113] Ibid., l. 58
[114] Ibid., l. 62.
[115] Ibid., l. 63.
[116] Ibid., p. 115, l. 67.
[117] Ibid.

non-conquest: ‘heo mæglufan minre ne gyme, freondrædenne’[118] (she does not care for the love of a husband, for my conjugal love). Most tellingly, this frustration of his sexual aims causes him to be ‘hygeblind’[119] (blinded in his mind), a phrase that recalls Freud’s association of blinding with impotence, with sexual failure: ‘Being castrated – or being blinded, which stands for it’.[120] Indeed, Africanus himself is dealt a sexual hand; like his ruler, he too becomes ‘yrre gebolgen’[121] (swollen with anger) by his daughter’s stubborn continence, and thus engorged, he goes to ‘þa fromlice fæmnan to spræce’[122] (quickly then, to speak to the virgin) to impose his authority on her, to demand her sexual capitulation in what might be termed the eternal ‘Yes’ of the father.

Libidinal infiltration can be seen in what should be the defining triumph of chastity over carnality, the narratorial climax wherein Juliana is pitted against the very public demonstration of Eleusius’ power. Because of her insistent sexual integrity, her refusal to sate his sexual demands, she is to be boiled alive. Still ‘yrre gebolgen’[123] (swollen with anger), he ‘scufan’[124] (thrust her, shoved her with violence) into the cauldron, which is ‘leades gefylde’[125] (filled with lead) that ‘hate weol’[126] (boiled with heat). The moment she touches it, ‘stod ungewemde wlite’[127] (standing with unblemished beauty) – I cannot but think of the Onion Riddle here – the lead ‘wide sprong, hat, heorogifre’[128] (spat wide, hot, eager to destroy). But of course, the term ‘heorogifre’ translates more literally as ‘sword greedy’,[129] which, especially in the context of spitting lead, conjures a very specific image. Indeed, the onlookers are affrighted ‘for þy ræse’,[130] what Bradley renders as in the ‘face of its

[118] Ibid., ll. 70-1.
[119] Ibid., l. 61.
[120] Freud, ‘Economic’, p. 277.
[121] Krapp and Dobbie, *Exeter*, p. 115, l. 90.
[122] Ibid., l. 89.
[123] Ibid., p. 129, l. 582.
[124] Ibid., l. 584.
[125] Ibid., l. 578.
[126] Ibid., l. 581.
[127] Ibid., l. 590.
[128] Ibid., ll. 585-6.
[129] Bosworth Toller also gloss *gifre* with ‘covetous’, ‘voracious’, ‘eager’, ‘desirous’.
[130] Ibid. l. 587.

onrush'.[131] This is a suggestive construction, and a succinct parody of the resolution that has been denied to Eleusius. It echoes the violence of passion and the wantonness of sex. The thwarted pleasure of consummation is transferred into the narrative, where it manages to contaminate the self-restraint of the Saint. Despite Bradley, this might well be a subtle and nuanced poetic device. But even if we accede to intentionality, it nevertheless troubles the integrity of an otherwise ecclesiastical text in that it effects a connection with the pleasure of sex that ultimately subverts that text's message.

This troubling of narrative authority is evident, too, in *Judith*. The poem is one animated by sex, driven forward by the looming futurity of Judith's rape; for Olsen, the poem 'seems designed to shock its audience and keep the subject of rape in their conscious minds [… – a subject of] great interest for the Englishwomen liable to receive the kind of treatment from the Danes which Holofernes plans for Judith'.[132] In this context, sex assumes a dark, disturbing patina that speaks not only of the normal spiritual violation but of an all too tangible physical one. The sex that informs the poem is irredeemably malfeasant.

The dynamic of the would-be violation is unusually close-focus. Judith is 'ofstum fetigan to his bedreste'[133] (to be quickly fetched to his bed), 'fromlice / […] lædan ongunnon / […] to træfe þam hean'[134] (lead speedily to the high tent), where Holofernes is to 'ða beorhtan idese / mid widle ond mid womme besmitan'[135] (soil the radiant lady with filth and pollution). Rather than the more quotidian allusions to coercion, such sexual violence saturates the scene. As protector of the chaste, however, the Lord naturally will not allow her despoilment; Holofernes collapses in stupor, and the sexual threat deflates with him. But at the very point where sex is vanquished and might be dispensed with, it reasserts itself in a parody of the recently aborted act. Still beside him on the bed, Judith 'Genam […] scearpne

[131] Bradley, p. 310.
[132] Horner, 'Spiritual', p. 670.
[133] Cook, *Judith,* ll. 35-6.
[134] Ibid., ll. 41-3.
[135] Ibid., ll. 58-9.

mece'[136] (took the sharpened sword), which is, significantly, 'heardne'[137] (hardy), and 'of sceaðe abræd'[138] (drew it from its sheath). Weapon in hand, she asks God for help to 'geheawan'[139] (hew down, bring low, bring about the death of) her would-be paramour. As she travails at her task, she 'genam ða þone hæðenan mannan / fæste be feaxe sinum, teah hyne folmum wið hyre weard / bysmerlice'[140] (seized the heathen man tight by his hair, and with her hands dragged him towards her *disgracefully*), the adjective surely offering to impute an element of the sexual, before the maiden strikes once more with the 'fagum'[141] (gleaming) sword. In an inversion of the expected deflowering of the virgin, Holofernes' 'heafod swa blodig / on ðam fætelse'[142] (so bloody head [is put] into the bag); she will later 'hyt to behðe blodig ætywan / þam burhleodum'[143] (display it as a bloody sign to the people of the city) in an echo of the ritual showing of the bloodied proof of virginity, offered post-wedding night: 'He layeth to her charge a very ill name, so as to say: I found not thy daughter a virgin: and behold these are the tokens of my daughter's virginity. And they shall spread the cloth before the ancients of the city.'[144] These repetitive allusions to the mechanics and instruments of sex maintain a contact with it that is completely at odds with the overt meaning and import of the poem. Sex is to be abjured, and yet it continually presses in on the narrative. Conjugal pleasure haunts the poem, subverting hoped for chastity with chthonic promise.

These manifestations of erotic cathexes are difficult to explain within the framework of ecclesiastical orthodoxies. They do not further any putative textual intention, do not facilitate compunction, nor develop reliance upon church hermeneutics. Rather they connect the reader and listener directly to a baser, primal pleasure that is situated in and sated by sex. Against the overt meanings suggested by the poems' textual narratives, these ruptures and

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[136] Ibid., ll. 77-8. Bosworth Toller also offers 'take to wife'.
[137] Ibid., l. 79.
[138] Ibid. Bosworth Toller also offer 'spread out', 'dilate', 'tug'.
[139] Ibid., l. 90.
[140] Ibid., ll. 99-100.
[141] Ibid., l. 104.
[142] Ibid., ll. 126-7.
[143] Ibid., ll. 174-5.
[144] Deut. 22: 17 – Douay-Rheims Bible.

suppurations of libidinal pleasure offer alternative, contradictory narratives that foreground the flesh and its pleasure potential.

But it is, of course, not only erotic manifestations of libidinal investment that inform and resist authority, allowing the psyche to push toward the primal oceanic; the violent aspect of those erotic *supplices* of Foucault cannot be elided. Some of the sculptural work of Sainte Marie Abbey Church at Souillac provides a dramatic illustration of how the destructive nature of psychic ambivalence can parasitize the most familiar of ecclesiastical narratives, to subvert completely any (putative) intended lesson.[145] On the left-hand face of the larger Souillac pillar is a representation of the Jewish Akedah, which takes as its reference God's expressed wish for Abraham in Genesis 22:

> And [God] said, Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering […] And Isaac spake unto Abraham his father, and said, My father: and he said, Here am I, my son. And he said, Behold the fire and the wood: but where is the lamb for a burnt offering? And Abraham said, My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering: […] and Abraham built an altar there, and laid the wood in order, and bound Isaac his son, and laid him on the altar upon the wood. And Abraham stretched forth his hand, and took the knife to slay his son.[146]

The sustained focus on Isaac's only-begotten status may be intended to emphasize the enormity of the request and Abraham's considerable investment of faith in it, but to a modern reader its chilling absence of humanity, its repulsive schadenfreude, presents God as some kind of dry-run Eichmann. The anaphoric 'and' hurries the narrative onward, almost as if to preclude any readerly consideration of what is actually happening, before the bathetic

[145] The Souillac sculptures are, of course, a different medium to that so far discussed, and come out of a different culture – though they are at least loosely connected to Junius by the conceptual / historical framework that is the Romanesque. But to adduce the sculptures here is not to conflate the imagery. The media do, however, treat of the same Genesis narratives, at a similar theological moment, in the same tangential manner. But what is most germane is the manner in which both repay a psychoanalytical reading.

[146] Genesis 22: 2-10 – King James Bible.

conjunction of verse 12: ‘And [God] said, Lay not thine hand upon the lad.’ Perhaps, attuned to the subliminal cue in verse 8 that suggests God will be offering himself as sacrifice,[147] we are being invited to add our own final, dismissive ‘ands’: ‘and yet God did sacrifice the greater Isaac. And thus we are saved.’ Isaac’s sacrificial reprieve merely amplifies the completedness of Jesus’.

In deviating from this sociopathy, the artist manages to wring something deeply humane. The pillar depicts the banal drama in all its terrible power (fig. 1), but only on the left-hand face does something discernibly of the Akedah interject itself, that cold Genesis image (figs. 2 & 3). The various tableaux on the column’s other sides, while initially seeming garrulous and unfocused – Carol Knicely has them as ‘hard to read, [their density and virtuosity] even suggesting to some, total confusion’;[148] for Deschamps, they are ‘incoherent’, a ‘confusion of a tangle of creatures devouring each other’[149] – in fact bring together themes that humanize the protagonists’ relationship with God. Indeed it is their inter-referentiality, their imaging echoing between the pillar’s three aspects, that suggests to me that they were intended to inform one another. The Akedah ram references the prey caught by the beasts on the front face, both in its inverted position and its depiction; the angel’s fingers at its neck mirror the teeth of the lion. This interest in gripped bodies is carried through to the top couple on the right hand aspect, where the bird’s talons have grasped the older man, and he in turn grasps the head of the younger man with his own, talon-like fingers. Talons, fingers, teeth, persistently striate these scenes; there is everywhere a pressing of the flesh, repetitions that, for this reader, cannot but tie the three sides together.

In a connection that is insightful and persuasive, both Dale and Knicely situate the capital (fig. 4) within the liturgy of the Passion, which concentrated on the agonies of Jesus as he contemplated his immediate future. Christ’s despair and existential struggle in the face of

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[147] William V. Davis, ‘This is What Art Could Do’: An Exercise in Exegesis – R. S. Thomas’s *Souillac: The Sacrifice D’Abraham*’, *Religion and the Arts*, 4: 3 (2000), 374-387, p. 381.
[148] Carol Knicely, ‘Decorative Violence and Narrative Intrigue in the Romanesque Portal Sculptures at Souillac’ (Unpublished Thesis: University of California, 1992), p. 112.
[149] Ibid., p. 27.

death, before the face of his Father's will, was 'rendered through poetry and song, […] as in the frequent recurrence of 'From the mouth of the lion' in the Easter liturgy [,…] a sort of ritualized struggle.'[150] Knicely refers to one recension: 'My God, my God, look upon me! Why hast thou forsaken me, and are so far from my health? Save me from the lion's mouth! Trouble is hard at hand and there is no one to help me'.[151] For Thomas Dale, the

> monks would be familiar with the oft-repeated petition of Psalms 22: 21: 'Save me from the mouth of the lion', and at Compline each day they sang of the Lord's triumphant trampling of the lion together with the asp, basilisk, and dragon […together] with the Requiem Mass['s…] 'Save them from the mouth of the lion'.[152]

Those leonine jaws were an effective dramatization of Jesus' missionary reluctance. His turmoil, that Gethsemane anguish, his pleading with his Father to be excused, but your will be done – all of it animates the fraught ambivalence at the heart even of the Saviour's saving. It is this wrestling that we see 'rendered in antithetical decorative form on the front faces of the pillars of Souillac'.[153] It is here that the artist's chutzpah becomes apparent. The Passion motif is transported over and onto, and reclaims, the raw, denuded *Genesis* Akedah to enflesh the emotionally evacuated drama of its sacrifice. The correspondences between the various sets of figures are too acute to be incidental; the body posture of Abraham and Isaac mirrors exactly that of the top couple on the other side of the pillar; all four heads are inclined in the same way and to the same degree, even to the touching contact of the heads of the youngsters against the chests of their elders, an unnatural position that, tellingly, extends their necks. In both scenes, the older man grasps the younger by the hair, and in turn the younger acquiesces in suppliant passivity. Abraham's raised hand is focused determinedly upon his son's exposed nape; his counterpart references that of his charge by clasping his hand around it – knife and

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[150] Ibid., p. 287.
[151] Ibid., p. 280.
[152] Thomas E. A. Dale, 'Corporeal Deformities, and Phantasms in the Cloister of St-Michel-de-Cuxa', *The Art Bulletin*, 83: 3 (2001), 402-436, p. 422.
[153] Knicely, p. 287.

hand segueing in anticipation of that terrible act. Such tight correspondence surely draws the two reliefs into a single narrative.

The torment of what *Genesis* has offered up as paper players is finally registered, as the artist moves away from his source. In the couples on the pillar's right-hand side (figs. 5 & 6), we are seeing Abraham's haunted yet dutiful intention as he holds his boy, chastened but ultimately not swayed by that touchingly tactile act, before the ultimate tactile act of the blade. Isaac's awful abnegation of selfhood is captured as he finally capitulates to his father's expectation. The fight, like Jesus' 'deliver me' passion in Gethsemane, is an inner wrestling brought on by wretched duty.[154] This is still the Akedah, but stepped back slightly in time, reprising not the moments of the (thwarted) blow but the emotional journey to it. The pillar is testament to psychological trauma, putting faith, obedience, and filiation in its crosshairs, and making tangible the effects of the tension between Ffathers and Ssons. The figures are meditations on the predicament of the righteous, conflations of Abraham and Isaac, of Jesus, of EveryChristian in their cosmic fight.

But in summoning such structural ambivalence, in exploring the interiority of the subject/protagonist, the artist cannot but threaten ecclesiastical intention. To the unimpeachable word of the Father is raised the questioning subjectivity of the Son. Schapiro hones in on the psychic tensions being played out: 'For a modern observer, schooled in the literature of psychoanalysis, these marginal fantasies are also symbolic projections of feelings about fathers and sons and transpose […] certain thoughts of resistance and struggle'.[155] Certainly the theme of Oedipal conflict is evident in the outplaying, and being so obvious, Schapiro's might be considered a tired (if succinctly articulated) appropriation of a generic

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[154] Meyer Schapiro ('The Angel with the Ram in Abraham's Sacrifice: A Parallel in Western and Islamic Art', *Ars Islamica X* (1943), 134-147, p. 144) and Knicely (p. 329) see the couple wrestling, and we might interpret them so, Abraham fighting with a reluctant Isaac before the younger man accedes to the will of his father – a combat borne of the apprehension and terror of Isaac that Genesis elides. But I see as much embrace as conflict, a tenderness at the point of realization and then resignation, the human and filial connexion that so informs the couple's psychological dilemma. That the artist manages to evoke such contradictory and yet still coherent responses to his sculptures is further evidence, perhaps, of his skill.

[155] Mayer Schapiro, *Words, Script, and Pictures: Semiotics of Visual Languag*e (New York: George Braziller, 1996), p. 23.

trope. But his failure is merely one of stamina. Both the Oedipal scenes on the pillar's right hand side and the agonized man on its front are connected not only by the ambivalence to authority that we have posited as the artist's intention, but also by the Killing of the Father, that primal kairotic event from which tradition, religion, and mythology emerge:[156]

> religious practices are traced to the feelings of guilt resulting from the murder of the 'primal father'. Rituals such as […] the Christian Eucharist are interpreted as commemorations of the killing and eating of this tyrannical master of the primal horde. […] The guilt accompanying the act […] derives from the ambivalent feeling toward the patriarch evidenced in the usual Oedipal conflict between *emulating* (identification) and *replacing* (hatred).[157]

Both the Akedah and the Passion have the same deep psychic origin, steeped in aggression.

It is this guilty energy that both funds the pillar's violence and explains its excess. The jaws of the lion express the violence against the self that is the superego chastising the ego, as the ego cowers before and internalises the demands of its master. But it is also violence as a reaction against that superegoic assertion. The artist brilliantly collides suggestions of tenderness and conflict in an optical elision that dramatizes psychic ambivalence, but the excess of the column is nevertheless telling (figs. 4 & 7). For Knicely, it is composed with a gratuitous 'level of violence […], a violence that goes far beyond that which is generally contained in a traditional crucifixion scene'.[158] Despite the artist's skilful deployment, the savagery jars and 'turns in on itself'.[159] Meyer Schapiro has the beasts 'entwisted, entangled and unbalanced by their own rapacious energy. […] their almost supernatural vehemence, lies in the deforming oppositions generated by impulsive

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[156] 'Christianity, in terms of its inner meaning, is the institutionally organised remembrance and recurrence of the deposing of the father by the son' (Philip Rieff, 'The Meaning of History and Religion in Freud's Thought', *The Journal of Religion*, 31: 2 (1951), 114-131, p. 125).
[157] James DiCenso, 'Religion as Illusion: Reversing the Freudian Hermeneutic', *The Journal of Religion*, 71: 2 (1991), 167-179, p. 168 – his italics.
[158] Knicely, p. 147.
[159] Ibid., p. 126.

movements'.[160] Libidinal energy is excited equally by acceding to and by resisting power; Knicely has it that the violence of the conflict even seems integral to the physics of the column itself: 'if they let go, the whole will topple and fall',[161] and yet and simultaneously the intensity of the violence suggests a desire to destroy the edifice that that violence holds together. The passion we see is the need to do God's will, but is also a subconscious need to thwart that will. Ambivalence to the demands of the superego (which, as Freud has informed us, is heir to the Oedipus complex and vicious in its punishments)[162] translates into violence that both supports and subverts authority:

> external authority is internalised *in order to be attacked*. The authority's imagined aggression towards the desiring subject is taken over by the subject, not only to discipline desire but also in order to attack the authority itself. […] The external authority's severe demands on the subject are fused with the subject's vengeful anger at those demands.[163]

But this, of course, is not surprising; the superego is itself a 'metaphor for the psychic fulfilment in each of us of a narcissistically thrilling wish to destroy the world, a wish 'fulfilled' in a monstrously ingenious phantasmatic scenario of self-destruction'.[164] What was presumably conceived of as a celebration of faith and obedience has in fact become a subversive manifestation of the psychological cost of obsequience. The pillar is a concise summation of the libido's involvement in the individual's subjectivisation, and of the inner conflict that underwrites it, both erotic and violent.

The evident resistance to instantiations of authority coming out of the examples in this chapter certainly seems to be facilitated by Foucauldian discursive opportunities that take advantage of the imprecision to which language is susceptible, whether the demands of

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[160] Meyer Schapiro, 'The Sculptures of Souillac', *Medieval Studies in Memory of A. Kingsley Porter*, ed. by Wilhelm R. W. Koehler (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1939), pp. 359-387, p. 374.
[161] Knicely, p. 107.
[162] cf. Freud, *Ego and Id*, p. 32.
[163] Freud, *Civilization*, p. xvii – his italics.
[164] Ibid., p. xviii.

Moses' Jehovah or the imprecations of a censorious Ælfric. Foucault and Butler do offer a good account of power and of how resistance to it is possible: the polysemity of language; the slippage between signified and signifier; the unintended consequences of the tactics of power. These instabilities allow opportunities for counter-discourses to establish themselves and push back. Sex and sexuality especially seem amenable to this contestation. But the structuralist explication of the subject's emergence does not account for what Butler terms the subject's attachment to itself, the individual's determination to hold onto that which is – socially, deterministically – anathema. The instability of power allows for resistance but surely does not encode for it. To what does resistance attach, and why? What is the imperative that funds the individual's need to react subversively?

It is at this point of inadequacy that a psychoanalytic insert becomes resolutionary. Both Foucault and Butler (tacitly) concede a psychic dimension to identity, which Butler frames in terms of the disconnect between the Lacanian imaginary and symbolic. There is in Freud a conflicted ambivalence similar in outcome to that of Foucault's, and this too is structural, developing as it does from that encounter with authority. It is, despite Freud's assertion to the contrary, an erotic encounter. Moral obligation is rooted in desire, draws its energy from desire. Masochism is an integral element of the ego's response to the superego. Initiated by Freudian attachments that originate at a deep, subconscious level, the libido is excited by the operation of power and by resistance to it. Such a position seems to me to provide the initial dynamic for resistance to social imperative. The implications of such an erotic interplay support a Foucauldian undermining of authority; his discussion of the intersection of power and pleasure in especially confessional exchange is buttressed, perhaps even underwritten, by the addition of Freud. Libidinal energy is at the heart of the process of subjectification, because it anchors and funds the psychic attachments that are assailed by social power. It is to be seen in Anglo-Saxon texts such as *Juliana*, where subversive interludes push through the orthodoxy. This erotic dimension is key to formulating out of Freud and Foucault a coherent approach that can fruitfully be applied to the Junius Eve. Its

impurity as a methodology is balanced by the credibility of its explanation of lived life, and of the erotic irruptions in religious texts that otherwise struggle for explication.

There is something within the nature of the relationship of the self to authority, of the self to that which constitutes it, that seems to make a physical recalcitrancy inevitable, as though the body is reaffirming its will to exist, its will to desire. The self's response to higher authorities is decidedly lowly, one that is heavily invested in the body. The self asserts itself by reference to its originary identity, a bodily recidivism that reconnects it to its earliest, most reassuring experiences. As I shall demonstrate in the following chapter, the eroticism in the Junius *Genesis* is certainly framed and posed by the orthodoxies of Church narrative. But in the slippage between text and image, in the recurring Freudian motifs that permeate much of the Junius artwork (and that undermine its orthodoxy), I detect an impulse to subvert, an unconscious need to find through articulation a measure of libidinal satisfaction.

Six

The Return of the Body

The Junius *Genesis* is a sometimes quite exquisite fusion of biblical and heroic material, and so, unsurprisingly, there are within it flights of dynamic, rousing excess:

Þa se halga heht his heorðwerod
wæpna onfon. He þær wigena fand,
æscberendra, XVIII
and CCC eac þeodenholdra,
þara þe he wiste þæt meahte wel æghwylc
on fyrd wegan fealwe linde.
Him þa Abraham gewat and þa eorlas þry
þe him ær treowe sealdon mid heora folcgetrume;
wolde his mæg huru,
Loth alynnan of laðscipe.
Rincas wæron rofe, randas wægon
forð fromlice on foldwege.
Hildewulfas herewicum neh
gefaren hæfdon. Þa he his frumgaran,
wishydig wer, wordum sægde,
Þares afera, him wæs þearf micel
þæt hie on twa healfe
grimme guðgemot gystum eowdon
heardne handplegan; cwæð þæt him se halga,

ece drihten,   eaðe mihte
æt þam spereniðe   spede lænan.[1]

(The the holy one commanded his body of retainers to take up weapons. He found warriors there, ash bearers, three hundred and eighteen loyal to their lord, whom he knew would each one carry the fallow shield into battle. Abraham then departed with the three earls, who had previously given oaths to him with their army; he certainly wished to rescue Lot, his kinsman, from misfortune. The warriors were renowned, quickly carried their shields forth on the earthway. The battle-wolves had travelled near to their camp. Then the wise man, the son of Thar, spoke with these words to his noble leaders, that it was important to him that they should go against the foreigners in two divisions in grim battle and hard hand play; he said that God, the eternal Lord, might easily grant him success in that spear fight).

This 'is exciting material', George Henderson tells us, 'which it is surprising not to find illustrated',[2] a disappointment only exacerbated by the illustrative space accorded to the story of Sarah and Hagar, a less than obvious candidate for tableaux but which is nevertheless 'given a rich infusion of picture-spaces'.[3] This disjunction between text and image might be thought to account for the narrative subversion I detect, between the orthodox message and the resistant one. Such discord is not insignificant; in this chapter, I go on to discuss at length the incoherence upon which critics focus and comment. But for me the specific tension – exegetical rather than chronological or synchronistic – is to be understood as a product of libidinal infiltration. That it is anyway an account of the emergence of moral consciousness,

[1] Krapp, *Junius,* p. 60, ll. 2040-59.
[2] George Henderson, 'The Programme of Illustrations in Bodleian Ms. Junius XI', *Studies in Memory of David Talbot Rice,* ed. by Giles Robertson and George Henderson (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1975), pp. 113-145, p. 120.
[3] Ibid.

specifically through sex, means that *Genesis* cannot but touch upon themes particularly amenable to a Freudian analysis.

Thus, in this chapter, I apply my methodology to explain the libidinal subversion of the Junius Eve via the imagery by which she is conjured. There is found to be striking correspondence between the manner of her depiction and the cathected symbolism explored by Freud in, particularly, his discussion of Little Hans. The process of emergence of consciousness in the child (dependant – as Freud insists it is – upon sex and sexual exploration) mirrors many of the posings in the Junius pictures. Though positioned within and subject to Foucauldian matrices of power, Eve's resistance issues from and is resourced by the psyche.

Whilst this analysis offers an explanation of exegetical discord, it does not dismiss or attenuate the inadequacies of manuscript co-ordination. Henderson's comments, above, do seem to capture the seeming misjudgement of the illustrative cycles of Junius, where naturally cinematic moments are elided for sometimes quite quotidian sequences. But this inability to properly gauge the *mis-en-scene* is only one of a catalogue of shortcomings for which critics have decried the manuscript. The striking absence of synchronicity between text and picture has funded various critical positions:

> the illustration actually displayed on page 31 is, as usual, jarringly out of step with the text. Before we have read that Adam yields to temptation or that Eve's euphoria has passed, they are shown suffering the bitterness of their sin, cast down in anguish on the ground while the undisguised tempter, a naked devil with a tail and serpent hair, spits at them.[4]

For Herbert Broderick,

> the artists of Junius are hard-pressed to fill fully blank or almost fully blank folios, often relying on […] combinations of narrative units stacked one on top of another

[4] Ibid., p. 125.

that from time to time do violence to the synchronization of text and illustration by forcing the artist to anticipate in his illustrations events that are narrated pages ahead in the text.[5]

Most critics see codicological inadequacy: the scribe is clumsy in his apportioning of illustrative space, which is 'often unsuited to the variable needs of the text',[6] and therefore denies to his illustrators any chance of narratorial dynamism; the artists in turn show scant respect for the work of the scribe, ignoring spatial constraint and frequently overrunning the text, as in the first artist's soaring Tower of Babel (page 82 of the manuscript), or the second's colonnaded building in front of which an agrarian Noah insouciantly ploughs (page 77), what for Richard Gameson is the 'nadir of the physical relationship between text and image'.[7] These individual inadequacies are compounded by the scribal and artistic disconnect upon which much criticism comments, what Henderson calls the artists' 'rejection'[8] of the scribe's layout, their 'criticism'[9] of his picture-cycle.[10] The apparent miscegenation of the manuscript's elements, then, would appear to stem from that of its makers.

A more generous assessment might ascribe this incoherence to the circumstances of the manuscript's origin. The 'newly fashionable English vernacular'[11] gave licence to poetic approaches to Church narratives, new and Germanic recensions that explored familiar themes in novel, acculturated ways – evidenced by that rousing Caedmonian fusion with which we

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[5] Herbert R. Broderick, 'Observations on the Method of Illustration in Ms. Junius 11 and the Relationship of the Drawings to the Text', S*criptorium*, 37: 2 (1983), 161-177, p. 164.
[6] Ibid., p. 176.
[7] Richard Gameson, *The Role of Art in the Late Anglo-Saxon Church* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), p. 38.
[8] Henderson, p. 129.
[9] Ibid., p. 130.
[10] Michael Camille, however, might dispute any such conscious subversion. He asserts that it was only following the development of the idea of 'text as written document […rather than] text as cue for speech' (*Image on the Edge: The Margins of Medieval Art* (London: Reaktion Books, 1992), p. 18) that 'extra-textual space developed into a site of artistic elaboration' (p. 18). Only when the page becomes a 'matrix of visual signs and is no longer one of flowing linear speech' (p. 21), in the later twelfth century, is the 'stage set for not only supplementation and annotation but also for disagreement and juxtaposition – […] *disputatio*' (p.21). He does concede, nevertheless, that across the medieval period the illustrator usually followed the scribe, which 'gave him the chance of undermining the always already written Word' (p. 22).
[11] Maidie Hilmo, *Medieval Images, Icons and Illustrated English Literary Texts: From the Ruthwell Cross to the Ellesmere Chaucer* (Canada: Ashgate, 2004), p. 1.

opened the chapter. This English consciousness and self-confidence manifested itself in a willingness to move away from established artistic motifs, to 'modernize' the Carolingian sources and 'reformulate' them 'with increasing confidence in order to make them their own'.[12] The Junius *Genesis* indulges this freedom, deviating considerably from the Vulgate to present us with a particularly English Eden. But in thus moving away from the conventional, neither scribe nor artist is left with an exemplar by which to guide the manuscript's development. Having no definitive pattern before them, they are left to adapt existing correlations where possible – 'it is probable that the eleventh-century artists [...] did copy from an illustrated exemplar'[13] – or, where not, to improvise and innovate. Any such venture was in equal measures bold and fraught, and a poor outcome, far from necessarily being attributable to modesty of ambition or resource base, or to miscegenation, was likely due to the difficulties of conjuring a coherent inter-relation out of aspiration.

> The production of a text with a series of integrated illustrations was a complicated business which required careful thought and preparation, and painstaking co-ordination of scribe and artist. The high non-completion rate among the surviving Anglo-Saxon specimens of the genre is surely to some extent a reflection of the complications involved. The difficulties were more pronounced if the volume in question was not based largely on an exemplar; and there was the risk that image and text might fail to correspond satisfactorily if the book was produced by a scriptorium or scribe of less than exacting standards.[14]

Occasionally, this very difficulty produced good art. The Junius' poet's iconoclastic treatment of Adam's temptation, preceding that of Eve, pushed the artist into narratorially as well as illustratively novel territory, a 'dilemma' that, for Thomas Ohlgren, he would resolve by

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[12] Gameson, p. 13.

[13] Thomas H. Ohlgren, 'The Illustrations of the Caedmon Manuscript: Literary Criticism through Art', *Medievalia et Humanistica*, 3 (Cleveland and London: Press of Case Reserve University, 1972), 199-212, p. 203.

[14] Gameson, p. 36.

creating ‘pictorial confusion’.[15] Generally, however, critical analyses of the manuscript’s technical presentation describe incoherence, what Broderick terms ‘a halting, sometimes self-defeating and contradictory attempt to provide an unusual vernacular text with a set of illustrations for the first time’.[16] The failure is deemed both synchronic and aesthetic.

Such general discord between text and image, whether suggestive of either personal malignancy or malign circumstance, would seem to threaten the objective of this work. That the illustrations do not connect with or at all develop the narrative to which they are appended might clip any hope of meaningful insights emerging from an analysis of them, and so make the analysis pointless. If they likely added little to contemporary exegesis, and not much more to current, the project seems stillborn. But what so many of the critical positions so far adduced actually tell us is that they are themselves thoroughly situated, modern in approach and predilection, and therefore rather unsympathetic to the Anglo-Saxon disposition they would interrogate. Artistic appreciation, like the meanings of bodies, is historically contingent. Henderson – especially in his comments on the ‘exciting material’ with which we opened this chapter – is merely demonstrating his modernity. Hilmo cautions us that the poor reception accorded to the illustrations accompanying vernacular poetry, and the ‘later temperate reassessments following in their wake’, might be nothing more than ‘a legacy of socially-constructed earlier nineteenth- and twentieth-century standards of art criticism’.[17] Such standards were predicated in large part upon the opinions of Giorgio Vasari, for whom the death of classicism had left art detached from beauty, and floundering in search of another umbilical. The one it found – compunction – for him rendered art ‘grotesque’, ‘awkward’, and ‘crude’,[18] in part because of its reliance on and deference to authoritative models. In Cimbue and, a little later, Giotto, Vasari discerned and celebrated a renaissance whose perfection came to lie in the ‘truth of nature […] whose purpose was largely to give

[15] Ohlgren, p. 206.
[16] Broderick, p. 176.
[17] Hilmo, p. 3.
[18] Ibid., p. 9.

pleasure'.[19] Henderson, fully aligned with this conception of a chthonic aesthetic, thus pronounces on the unsuitability of Abraham's domestic arrangements for artistic consideration, because nothing strokes the nodes of modern pleasure like the clashing of bronze-age steel.

But the Junius artists would have had little interest in such cut and thrust unless it portended something beyond the sensuous; as an object for artistic consideration, the individual and his or her attendant pleasure would have been a concept entirely alien to them. The focus of mediaeval art was rather to 'evoke the living presence of the divine, serving the viewer as a link to spiritual reality and as a manifestation of the inner vision achieved by contemplation'.[20] Vasari's predilection for and advancement of physical verisimilitude would likely have been 'viewed by many medieval readers as a blocking of faith'[21] rather than an elicitation of it. Indeed, it was ambiguity that could facilitate the desired contact with God, in that it encouraged meditation on matter and therefore on the nature of being. To take one instance, the lack of clarity in the representation of Christ and the miniature self-portrait of Dunstan in 'St. Dunstan's Classbook'[22] evokes the 'mystery of the spirit […] This delineation of the physicality of Christ in the most minimal way […] allows for ambiguity regarding the paradox of his dual nature […] which encourages meditation on the mystery of the Incarnation'.[23] The depiction's fluid, inter-representational juxtaposition of the Christ and the Archbishop helps to capture the paradox of an Incarnate Spirit.[24]

In the mediaeval schema, then, pictures were not merely passive recensions of a text but active engagements with it, dynamic, interpretative interactions, glosses that opened up multiple avenues of exploration. The sometimes off-kilter allusions were intended to guide the reader, relating seemingly disparate scriptural passages and suggesting intra-textual connections, coaxing out new and affective exegeses. In the Junius manuscript, the pictorial

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[19] Ibid., p. 10.
[20] Hilmo, p. xiv.
[21] Ibid., p. 3.
[22] Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Auct. F. 4. 32, fol. 1, Glastonbury (in Hilmo, fig. 14).
[23] Ibid., pp. 72-3.
[24] Ibid., p. 73.

Enoch of page sixty diverged significantly from the textual one: he is depicted (but not described as) standing upon a dragon whilst reading, resplendent with his halo, a disjuncture between the media that concerned Barbara Raw.[25] Catherine Karkov, however, argues persuasively that all these details

> help to identify Enoch as a type of Christ, and to establish the relationship of this episode to the Harrowing of Hell and the Last Judgement, New Testament events that are both foreshadowed in verbal and visual motifs throughout the Old Testament poems and recounted at length in *Christ and Satan*.[26]

This type of illustration was not meant to be an imprimatur of a text but a conversation with it, a polyphonic riff that sought to enrich and personalise religious experience. In practice, however, it doubtless was often as not also a digressive exploration of various social or artistic concerns – and of course an opinion. Hilmo has the artist offering the 'first critical judgment' on a work, a 'medieval mind reacting to a medieval work',[27] and the 'first professional reader'.[28] In effect, the illustrator passes judgement upon the work he is tasked with illustrating, further adding to that conversational circle. The art we see *is* art, and it surely does carry with it many of the modern connotations of the term: edgy, divisive, provocative, dialectical, emerging from 'obvious obligations to promulgate the Church's teachings' but nevertheless with 'commitments to the text' that is being illustrated, walking 'the narrow line between conventionality and artistic sensitivity'.[29] It is therefore no surprise that there was sometimes tension between the two elements of the production, both in the possibility of differently conceived objectives, and in the mechanics of the different media: 'An intellectual understanding of spiritual truth, conveyed by extended rational discourse, is set against a direct visual apprehension of spiritual truth, immediate and emotionally powerful

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[25] Barbara Raw, 'Probable Derivation', p. 148. She does offer, though, that the image may reflect a source one illustrating a putative Old Saxon exemplar.
[26] Karkov, *Text and Picture*, p. 9.
[27] Hilmo, p. 5.
[28] Ibid., p. 7.
[29] Ohlgren, p. 206.

when it occurs'.[30] This looseness of association offered revivifying connections to audiences attuned to their perception, adding depth and colour to orthodox discourse, but its imprecision allied to its affective potency rendered visual art suspect, its power 'always threatening to usurp institutional authority'.[31]

As we have seen with the sculptures at Souillac, there is no necessary antithesis between discord and truth. It was out of an artistic willingness to step away from *Genesis* that Souillac's meanings were both multiplied and finessed. In abjuring tight correspondence, the artist conjured a deeply affective conjunction in which even contemporary viewers could be a part of the glory of the Passion, could participate in the drama of the Akedah. Personal victories – and flowing from them, ecclesiastical ones – flowered through narratorial discombobulation. The occasional lack of obvious synchronicity in Junius need not have affected its mediaeval reception, even accepting its sometimes awkwardness or ingénuity. The elision, however un/successful, was likely intentional. But unleashing artistry to entrench ecclesiastical dogma risks platforming libidinal resistance to it, ultimately threatening the authority of a Church in whose service that art is sanctioned. Oedipus loomed out of obedience; the free association that supported and united those Souillac discourses also subverted and divided them, to lay bare the libidinal (and decidedly untheocratic) tensions at the heart of the story. The chaste Judith was found to be revelling in semantic sexual congress. Sometimes a key is just a key – or a cigar a cigar[32] – but sometimes it's a questing

[30] Hilmo, p. 27.

[31] Ibid. While acceding alterity of purpose, and some contingent artistic licence, we cannot ignore the various disjunctions – we still need to respect rationality and aesthetic. Modern criticism of the pictures tends towards their rehabilitation, though occasionally explanations to this effect feel tenuous. Some of Karkov's attempts at rehabilitation do seem stretched; in trying to correlate image to text on page 24 of the manuscript, she asserts that the figure being tempted is not the widely-accepted Eve, but in fact Adam. Broderick calls this an 'astonishing act of gender transformation' (Herbert R., 'Metatextuality, Sexuality and Intervisuality in Ms. Junius 11', *Word and Image,* 25: 4 (2009), 384-401, p. 391) which she is able to argue, in part, due to the admittedly crepuscular illustrations that accompany her text. Muir's digital facsimile, as Broderick is quick to point out, allows for no such obfuscation.

[32] The quote is attributed, possibly fallaciously, to Freud; his penchant for cigar smoking might perhaps have prompted (in himself or in others) the psychoanalytic connection between the phallic-shaped cigar and the penis-nipple, and its attendant issues around both castration and the child's 'passive homosexual feelings […] towards his father' (J. C. Flugel, 'Polyphallic Symbolism and the Castration Complex', *The International Journal of Psychoanalysis* (1924), 155-196, p. 186). The motif emerged during President Clinton's arraignment over his assignations with Monica Lewinski

and inexorable cock. It is from such conjunctions, such disjunctions, that some of the most interesting aspects of Junius emerge.

Such discord is of course embedded in the Ur-text, where the two creation narratives are cobbled awkwardly together and yet capture in simple binarism man's capacity for waywardness, and God's facility for awesome grace. The juxtaposition itself is straightforward enough, but it sets the scene for an exquisite theology that inverts these typologies to wring from human inadequacy a redemptive hope. The couple's corrupted love, their misguided sensuousness and devotion anticipates even as it precipitates the 'fall' of Christ, who will reclaim these perverted emotions with something wholly transcendental. But out of this atonality also comes a breathtakingly profound because so simple psychological recension of the emergence of human consciousness, that movement from the instinctual and unthinking into realms of consequence. God's interdict teaches the couple that there is a moral dimension to life – only through sin do they come to know good and bad – and thus enables them to exchange their Paradisiac ignorance, at once child-like and bestial, for the condition of self-contained responsibility: 'Moral growth can only take place in a world of genuine conflict and choice. Consciousness stands at the beginning of spiritual development, but it also drives the individual out of unconscious identification with nature'.[33] It is from that conscionable contact with the world, that first ethical act (ironically deemed transgressive for the first couple), that self-awareness seeds, and makes gods of them. Somewhat paradoxically, losing His seismic throw of the dice occasions in Yahweh a petulant sulk – 'With that Jehovah God said to the woman: "What is this that you have done?"'[34] – but it is from such loss that His children are offered religious sentience.

(<https://edition.cnn.com/ALLPOLITICS/time1998/09/14/affair.state.html> [accessed 23/11/2017]), in which a cigar featured prominently, and was used by some to pronounce on the by-then ageing President's sexual potency, his need for a better, harder, longer, more reliable penis (for example, Paul Lowinger, *Bill Clinton Meets the Shrinks* <http://zpub.com/un/un-bc9b.html> [accessed 23/11/2017]. Or is it just a cigar?

[33] Andrew D. Kille, *Psychological Biblical Criticism* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001), p. 89.

[34] Gen. 3: 13 – New World Translation. I use this translation here to connote my own, formative contact with Good and Bad.

For Freudians, such myths (and analogous dreams) are emanations of previous experience, whether those of the individual or of humanity itself. Theodor Reik suggests that there is 'at least one kind of collective production that can be compared to […] individual fantasies. They contain, distorted and transformed by changes during thousands of years, memories from an early phase of human evolution: I mean the myths'.[35] Through the interplay of prohibition and guilt, *Genesis* animates the flowering of consciousness, a self-reflexive capacity that effectively gifts another dimension to existence – hence, perhaps, God's concern that the newly cognisant couple might eat of the tree of life, and live forever. Carl Jung has it that the 'world comes into being when man discovers it. But he only discovers it when he sacrifices his containment in the primal mother, the original state of unconsciousness'.[36]

At one level, Junius might itself be seen to be a mythological account opening up this moment of God's creation transitioning from animal to man through the offices of sex. Of course, the ostensible meanings remain fully orthodox. The text in which the illustration on page eleven (fig. 8, 'Adam and Eve in Paradise') is situated adumbrates the divine injunction to procreate; page ten of the manuscript finishes: 'Temað nu and wexað, / tudre fyllað / eorðan ælgrene, / incre cynne, / sunum and dohtrum. / Inc sceal sealt wæter / wunian on gewealde / and eall woruIde gesceaft'[37] (Be fruitful now and increase; with your offspring, your kin, sons and daughters, fill the verdant earth. The salt water, and all worldly creation, will remain in your power). In what might be considered a masthead for the image below it, the top of page eleven continues: 'Ða sceawode / scyppend ure / his weorca wlite / and his wæstma blæd, / niwra gesceafta. / Neorxnawong stod / god and gastlic, / gifena gefylled'[38] (Then our Creator beheld the beauty of his work and the richness of his fruitfulness, new creation. Paradise stood good and holy, filled with gifts.) And we are, surely, supposed to

[35] Kille*,* p. 60.
[36] C. G. Jung., *Symbols of Transformation: An Analysis of the Prelude to a Case of Schizophrenia. The Collected Works of C. G. Jung*, vol. 5, ed. by Herbert Read and others, trans. by R. F. C. Hull (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1956), p. 417.
[37] Krapp, *Junius*, p. 8, ll. 196-9.
[38] Ibid., ll. 206-9.

infer that It was Good. Figure eight does indeed show the couple before a benign God; they are here pre-Fall, and so we may presume that the intended dramatization is one of them enjoying the chaste sex that the text has sanctioned, just as Augustine had imagined. The image is thoroughly, and acceptably, sexualized: the animals from among which the couple emerge are generally paired male and female, which suggests their reproductive aspect and thus frames and informs the depiction of the couple above. A small flock of sheep congregate around Adam's feet, where the artist's (uncharacteristically) *laissez faire* drawing opens up the possibility that his tableau has caught the ram in the act of tupping the ewe. The birds, too, front and centre, seem engaged in that pre-coital ritual so familiar to any birdwatcher, where the male woos his mate by a rough beak-grip to the back of her neck before and during insemination. Perhaps most significantly, the peacock looks back and up at Adam across the so suggestively intertwined branches of the central bush, from out of which a perfectly formed vulva emerges complete with penetrating phallus. Nowhere else is such an obvious vulva described by the lush vegetation, and nowhere so seductively penetrated.

The vegetation itself has a narrative all its own; it makes its first appearance proper on page eleven (at the point where sex interjects) and its last (on page 44) when the Eden account closes with the couple's expulsion. As the couple move further into sin and towards judgement, the vegetation becomes increasingly verdant, reaching its green apogee on page 34 where they 'know nakedness', now fully aware of what morality is and what sin entails. By this point, the bush has a presence that arrogates to itself the attention of the audience, marginalising and displacing what surely should be the big scene of the broken protagonists. The vegetation seems therefore intended to connote the growth (the overgrowing?) of coital knowledge, its lushness inversely proportional to Man's perfection. But here on page eleven, still safe in Paradise, it enables Adam and Eve to fully reference their innocent genital explorations as they hold onto those suggestively formed flowers, looking up to God in spiritual harmony – a sanctified *ménage a trois* that nevertheless somehow seems incestuous, or at least voyeuristic. But textually and (apparently) pictorially, this remains coitus glorious,

a pure and numinous act that effects a connection with God as only sex can. For the Junius artist, however, it is all downhill from here.

Sex once more inverts these orthodox meanings; our psychoanalytic and Foucauldian readings seem to object to such a negative and ultimately mortal journey of sexual awakening. On page eleven, the journey's beginning, the posture of Adam and Eve mirrors that of that lush vegetation reaching toward God's light; they too partake of all that fertility and fecundity, growing up out of but by virtue of simple positional dynamics becoming increasingly superior to the rampant reproductive frenzy of the animals below. They remain, nevertheless, of this environment; the central bush and its vulva seems to grow out of peacock's back, who therefore seems to carry the weight of sexual meaning but does so resentfully, anthropomorphically looking back at Adam while disdainful of his growing sexual awareness. The direct line of sight of both the lioness and the peacock pass through the bushy vulva to Adam's (vacated) groin, thereby connecting the elements high to low, Man through sex to beast (fig. 8). It is a theologically redundant contact – the sexual point is amply made by the genitals in hand – but is rather one that reifies the bestial connection. In their facial figurations and hand gestures, however, Adam and Eve give expression less to naïve innocence or animalistic insentience than to puzzlement; nonplussed by the perfunctory, unthinking rutting from which they emerge as they rise up, they seem to be querying the genital-shaped flowers in their hands (and, via vulva and animal, the implied chthonic meaning). They look to God, with His book, for guidance: 'Father, what do these genitals *really* mean?' The scene dramatizes human liminality, that point of man on the cusp of humanity, which might be defined as the urge to question that necessarily precedes the urge to moralize. Where once was merely a drive to satisfy, there comes a need to justify, which in turn gives to behaviour or experience the ethical patina required by its emergent social setting. Sex is no longer just a movement of the genitals, but a state of the mind.[39] *This* Junius

[39] All these sexual shenanigans are prior to the Fall, and are therefore (according to orthodoxy) the innocent fumblings of which Augustine spoke. Perhaps they indicate the couple's first explorations of themselves and their bodies together.

Genesis, then, performs a complete *volte-face*. Sex becomes, not something immoral, but something that confers morality, something that initiates ethics. Such a reading effects an inversion of orthodox textual reception: what is for Moses a tale of the corruption and debasement because of sex is transformed, under a Freudian/Foucauldian inflexion, into a narrative of towering sexual success. As the vehicle that takes man to consciousness, real, physical coitus becomes transcendental.

Freud himself was dismissive of the *Genesis* account, though he too believed it to be grounded in sex. For him, it recounted the Oedipal drama, for which interpretation he agreed with Otto Rank that various aspects of the myth had been altered by the process of psychic inversion. (Perhaps the biggest inversion, for Freud, was that the account made knowledge of sex a sin, whereas for him it was not only without sin – could only be sinless because of the redundancy of theology – but was central to the understanding of man.) Thus, contra to what might be expected, Eve is created out of Adam, and the woman gives a symbol of fertility (the apple) to the man. If these aberrations are corrected, Freud concluded, 'everything would be clear […] we should be dealing with the well-known motif of mother-incest, the punishment for which, etc. …'.[40] Such a reading, for me, contorts the text too much, not least because of the violence it visits on the role of Eve, reducing her to marginalia. I do, however, find it appealing that the incest taboo may have been instrumental in, or at least relevant to, the transition into consciousness.[41] That what is essentially instinctive, hormonally- and olfactory-driven rutting had to yield to the constraints of nascent social groupings and adopt a moral dimension, in order to facilitate and further the establishment of higher civilisation, might well have explanatory value: 'conscience initially arose through the suppression of an aggressive impulse and continues to be reinforced by similar suppressions'.[42] Recognising the

[40] Kille, p. 58.
[41] Admittedly, there are no explicit references to intercourse prior to the Fall or within the precincts of Paradise, but the account is traditionally understood to be a treatise on sex. Sexual motifs and symbolism saturate the text. Kille comprehensively catalogues the various analogues for Genesis motifs such as the tree of knowledge, the serpent, the apple and its eating. Given his remit, some of them are specifically psychoanalytic in nature, but many are established from classical and biblical eras. Cf. for example Jung's *Symbols of Transformation*, pp. 208, 219, 221, 222, 233.
[42] Freud, *Civilization*, p. 65.

need for exogamy, and the guilt and conflict occasioned by the failure to enact it, would surely help to reify consciousness.[43] After all, 'the behaviours that would make us happy [are] a monstrous anomaly (remember that pre-historic sniffing male on all fours)';[44] our heritage is bestial, the incest interdict our bulwark against it and our (as fully human) only universal taboo.[45] For Freudians, the urge to copulate with anything from which pleasure might be derived remains a constant libidinal drive. That it is repressed by the superego (whether conceived as societal or individual) creates the psychic tension at the heart of what it is to be human.

This was not, presumably, Moses' intention. Those sexual allusions, considered to have been consciously made and available to both original and subsequent audiences – Levy contends that the 'sexual symbolism is not unconscious […] but carefully chosen by the author and would have been quite clear to the original audience'[46] – situate the account at the centre of theological disquisitions on sexual continence. The sinful act, the movement into knowledge, was lustful sex, i.e. that beyond the requirements of reproduction. Desire, lack of control, concupiscence – all of this is very Augustinian, and is what rendered man incomplete and less than perfect. Sex is, of course, an ideal hook for the application of authority. Power's hold over the body is sexed; it operates most effectively at the level of sex. Orthodox interpretations of *Genesis*, as with those of the Riddles or *Lives of Saints*, are fully situated in Foucauldian matrices of power, where norms or truths become iterations of control. Sex, as Foucault complained, is promoted from an exchange of pleasure to an epistemology: 'you

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[43] In *Symbols of Transformation*, Jung seems content to reduce Freud's Oedipal movement into consciousness down to the bare incest taboo, and then sets about refuting its valency. He sees the incest taboo purely in terms of 'marriage classes' that are intended to 'meet the social danger of endogamy by instituting the 'cross-cousin' marriage.' The incest issue becomes incidental; at stake is the 'social necessity of spreading the family organization throughout the whole tribe.' Consciousness, then, comes out of the 'evolutionary instinct [… which] forced upon him countless taboos' (Jung, *Symbols* 418). This explanation seems to me lacking in explanatory value; in effectively replacing the role of the father figure with social institution or evolutionary happenstance, the crucial relation is negated, with the attendant emulation /replacement tension, the absorption into the psyche as superego etc..

[44] Bersani, 'Introduction' to *Civilization*, p. xx.

[45] A. L. Kroeber, 'Totem and Taboo in Retrospect', *American Journal of Sociology*, 45: 3 (1939), 446-451, p. 448.

[46] Kille, p. 61.

will seek to transform your desire, your every desire, into discourse'.[47] His example of a certain nineteenth-century French peasant is especially telling to (and of) our own particular peccadilloes. Jouey, a simple-minded itinerant labourer, 'obtained a few caresses from a little girl […playing] the familiar game called 'curdled milk''. These 'inconsequential bucolic pleasures', however, are quickly processed to become 'the object not only of a collective intolerance but of a judicial action, a medical intervention, a careful clinical examination, and an entire theoretical elaboration'.[48] As we have thus far determined, authority cannot but impose meaning onto (especially) sexual events.

Any repression of sex, then, is best achieved by a deployment of sex, and is therefore exactly that which we would expect of religion. For Freud, religion was civilisation's greatest asset in placating and making pliant the body's energies and urges, sublimating all that sniffing before the requirements of social life. The perceived benefit for the individual was its offer of a return to Oceanic bliss, the pre-cognisant phase of narcissistic life. God provides an off-the-shelf defence strategy against a so-harsh outside: 'Churches gain adherents because they relieve one of the tasks of self-control […which allows] the ego to assume a defensive network elaborated over centuries and so constitutes a net gain in ego expenditures'.[49] But this pacification of the psyche comes at psychic cost. Deferral to civilisation entails a derogation of psychic unity, not only in that necessary repression enacted upon the id, but also in denying to the ego one of its greatest achievements, its ability to test reality: 'this means that the ego renounces part of its potential powers, part of its sovereignty'.[50] Disallowing drives is the beginning of knowledge and ethics, and of civilisation, but also of psychic trauma and psychic drama. And the psycho-dynamism seeps back into cultural productions.

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[47] Foucault, *Knowledge*, p. 21.
[48] Ibid., p. 31.
[49] Volney P. Gay, 'Against Wholeness: The Ego's Complicity in Religion', *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 47: 4 (1979), 539-555, p. 584.
[50] Ibid.

Within the discourses of Church teaching, then, the choreographed sex evident in the Junius *Genesis* is to be expected. The manner, though, in which power functions upon the body likewise makes resistance to such choreography inevitable; certainly, some of the illustrations unsettle the putative aims of any author we might reasonably posit, where the sex seems to assume a role that over-partakes of or over-indulges its numinous aspects. But even accepting a subconscious dynamic at work, the picture on page eleven, for example, pushes the chaste reading of risqué material to new levels of intellectual suspension, stepping into ecclesiastically disquieting territory the likes of which even the most outré of riddles might be (cautiously) proud. Adam's masturbatory grasp of his penis could well be thought to have echoed with those monks and catechumens who were from time to time visited by Penitential punishments for their own similar, mutual holdings, and to which any higher exegesis might have been secondary.

The textual subversion I detect, however, is not one of transhistorical gay appropriation. Nor is it that of an oft-posited Oedipal squabble in which God and Adam vie for Eve's affections, a reading that not only contorts the text, as we have noted, but requires a considerable glossing over of questions of Oedipus' universality. Indeed Robert Banks has it that the scientific evidence for the Oedipus complex,

> though confirming the Freudian concept, does not establish [it] as a central conflict of mental life or show it to be the kernel of neurosis […] this, therefore is an example of where the objective evidence so far confirms the Freudian theory but suggests that Freud may have attached too much importance to it.[51]

Even those already-noted and persuasive correspondences with the pictures of Junius that emerge out of a Jungian emergence-of-consciousness approach provide only a useful starting point; as Kille notes, the theoretical underpinnings of such interpretations rarely consider

[51] Robert Banks, 'Religion as Projection: A Re-Appraisal of Freud's Theory', *Religious Studies*, 9: 4 (1973), 401-426, p. 413.

> sexuality or incest to be a central theme of the story. The creation of Eve is important for its portrayal of the emergence of the male-female polarity out of androgynous unity, not as a comment on familial psychodynamics. Consciousness brings with it an awareness of opposites; awareness of sexuality is a *consequence* of Adam and Eve's actions, not its cause or the act itself.[52]

But this obviation of libidinousness seems an elision too far. As my own reading of the emergence of consciousness has indicated, the addition of a causal sexual element not only illuminates certain textual incongruities but itself appears congruent – perhaps even necessary – to the plausibility of the theoretical approach. Although he did not (to my knowledge) formulate it into a theory of consciousness-emergence, Freud's analysis of Little Hans and speculations over Leonardo, charting infantile movement into the social sphere (and therefore into consciousness and conscience), are ineluctably tied up with and dependent upon sex and sexual exploration. Sex and knowledge are fused to the point of symbiosis. Epistemology itself is sexual: 'the instinct for knowledge in children is attracted unexpectedly early and intensively to sexual problems and is in fact possibly first aroused by them'.[53] That he considered the memories of the collective historical and of the individual to be analogous – 'infantile amnesia [...] turns everyone's childhood into something like a prehistoric epoch and conceals from him the beginnings of his own sexual life';[54] the 'mental impulses of childhood embody the factor which enables us to understand the nature of myths'[55] – suggests that, for Freud, the emergence of consciousness must have been erotic.

Hans is not yet three when his epistemological enquiries begin, investigations in which genitals will play a full and active part – as they will with all children: 'Children's curiosity about their erogenous zones, those of their parents, and the role of genitalia in

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[52] Kille, p. 102 – his italics.

[53] Sigmund Freud, 'Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality', *The Freud Reader*, ed. by Peter Gay (London: Vintage, 1995), pp. 239-292, p. 270.

[54] Ibid., p. 260.

[55] Sigmund Freud, 'Family Romances', *The Freud Reader*, ed. by Peter Gay (London: Vintage, 1995), pp. 297-301, p. 298.

producing new babies is as deep and compelling as Freud depicted it'.[56] One of his father's first recorded observations notes his interest in the ubiquity of the penis: of his mother he asks: 'Mummy, have you got a widdler, too?'[57] This was not just a theoretical interest; Freud notes that Hans was 'impelled to *touch* his member',[58] a tactility discouraged by his mother: 'When he was three and a half his mother found him with his hand on his penis. She threatened him in these words: 'If you do that, I shall send for Dr. A. to cut off your widdler. And then what'll you widdle with?''[59] Such genital focus extends to both exhibitionism (at least prior to repression) and voyeurism, what Freud termed 'scopophilia […] in its active and passive forms. […] So little Hans began to try to get a sight of other people's widdlers; his sexual curiosity developed, and at the same time he liked to exhibit his own widdler'.[60] The penis (and this is the only genital in which Hans is interested; indeed, the only one he acknowledges) fully occupies him to the point that it might justifiably appropriate to itself the modern, often vacuous, use of phallo-centricism. Gaps in the infantile episteme seem both to arise out of sex, genitals, and reproduction, and be resolved by them: 'Like all other children, he applied his childish sexual theories to the material before him without having received any encouragement to do so'.[61]

Animals, and the sexual lives of animals in particular, are essential to this knowledge acquisition. Their openness, their shameless genital displays and unguarded sexual behaviour (in contrast to that of adults) simultaneously provoke – 'they rouse in him the spirit of enquiry'[62] – and resolve many of Hans' enquiries, and not only those of a sexual nature. Hans is able to classify and categorize lions, horses, steam engines, and tables by reference to their sex, relating widdlers to the animate or inanimate nature of being; the penis therefore

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[56] Daniel Burston, 'Freud, the Serpent and the Sexual Enlightenment of Children', *Colloquia,* 1-19, p. 18 <http://laingsociety.org/colloquia/psychotherapy/serpent1.htm> [accessed 14 / 2 / 2017].
[57] Sigmund Freud, 'Analysis of a Phobia in a Five-year-old Boy', *The Standard Edition of the Complete Works of Sigmund Freud,* vol. X, trans. and ed. by James Strachey (London: Hogarth Press, 1955), p. 7.
[58] Ibid. – his italics.
[59] Ibid.
[60] Ibid., pp. 106-7.
[61] Ibid., p. 105.
[62] Ibid., p. 9.

becomes the facilitator of abstract reasoning.[63] By means of his nascent biological observations, he intuits relations of size and proportion: in respect of his mother, he infers that because she is so big, she'd 'have a widdler like a horse'.[64] Knowledge and sex seem inseparable, mutually supportive, indistinguishably entwined. And animals are a key because so-readily available resource in this; knowledge of the world in all aspects emerges out of a contact with them.

Page eleven of Junius (fig. 8) could be a textbook illustration of Hans' infantile fumblings. The array of animals from which the first couple rise no longer seem an uneasy adjunct, a passé connection with or reference to inchoate, innocent sexual activity, but a context and an environment that funds the Edenic movement *out of* ignorance. So, too, those unabashed genital displays (which have something of the playground about them, a 'show me yours, and I'll show you mine' wonder) take on resonance as the exhibitionistic and voyeuristic fact-finding of Hans and his would-be playmates. These infants stand before their Father, seeking to know from Him 'what these genitals *really* mean?'

But this triangular *ménage* takes on new significance when the dynamics of the couple are juxtaposed with Freud's further analyses of Hans. The openness of the couple, their innocent yet knowing grasp of the genitals, their expansive expressions and open-palmed gestures seem disquieting as we have already suggested, connoting something of an eroticism of complicity. Freud notes with Hans, and extends to other children as a normal part of psychosexual development, a reflex to parental seduction: 'Among these tendencies the first place is taken with uniform frequency by the child's sexual impulses towards his parents, [...] plainly incestuous phantasies'.[65] The incest urge, driven by the idic quest for pleasure, is situated in a fumbling for knowledge within newly recognised social settings and restraints:

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[63] Ibid.
[64] Ibid., p. 10.
[65] Freud, 'Three Essays', p. 291.

‘Thirst for knowledge seems inseparable from sexual curiosity. Hans’ curiosity was particularly directed towards his parents’.[66] The evidence becomes concrete at bath time:

> As his mother was powdering round his penis and taking care not to touch it, Hans said: “Why don’t you put your finger there?”
>
> ‘*Mother*: “Because that’d be piggish.”
>
> ‘*Hans*: “What’s that? Piggish? Why?”
>
> ‘*Mother*: “Because it’s not proper.”
>
> ‘*Hans* (laughing): “But it’s great fun.”[67]

To this account, Freud appends a supporting footnote:

> Another mother, a neurotic, who was unwilling to believe in infantile masturbation, told me of a similar attempt at seduction on the part of her three-and-a-half-year-old daughter. She had had a pair of drawers made for the little girl, and was trying them on her to see whether they were not too tight for walking. To do this she passed her hand along the inner surface of the child’s thigh. Suddenly the little girl shut her legs together on the mother’s hand, saying: ‘Oh, Mummy, *do* leave your hand there. It feels so lovely.[68]

Through this filter, Adam and Eve’s proffering of their genitals to God, a votive offering, enhances and resolves the image even as it disturbs it. It is a reflex made all the more explicit by the phallic column of vegetation thrusting up towards and into God’s space. This over-determined frame is a scene of seduction, their invitation to a cosmic trey. It is far removed from its textual context, an audacious libidinal corruption of the poet’s rhapsody only a few lines before: ‘him drihtnes wæs / bam on breostum / byrnende lufu’[69] (in the breasts of both

[66] Freud, ‘Phobia’, p. 9.
[67] Ibid.
[68] Ibid., p. 19, footnote 1 – his italics.
[69] Krapp, *Junius*, p. 8, ll. 190-1.

of them was a burning love of the Lord). The very Augustinian injunction to chaste reproduction is transformed into an affiliation of the most tawdry sort.

But of course propriety must attempt to assert itself. The Father denies these clumsy sexual advances, and the couple's exploration of sex in relation to social mores meets His 'No'. His imperious omniscience is juxtaposed to their ignorant researches; he is remote, unassailable, untouchable, completely defended against their incestuous overtures, secure in His impregnable, castellated fortress.

The nature of the visualisation of this impregnableness is interesting. For Freud, all childish enquiries around sex, and not just those of an unsettling incestuous nature, are generally met with a frustrating evasiveness. Hans is repeatedly thwarted by his father's obfuscations over the birth of his sister; to his requests for information, the 'stork' answer failed to accord with anything that he had himself intuited. His father therefore and thereafter is precluded as a source of essential insight and information: 'His father had told him the lie about the stork and so made it impossible for him to ask for enlightenment upon these things'.[70] With regard to evaded questions of sex, children 'date their intellectual independence from this act of disbelief, and that they often feel in serious opposition to adults and in fact never forgive them for having deceived them here about the true facts of the case'.[71] But the child's own experiments are similarly disappointing; physical immaturity prevents any satisfactory consummation of sexual exploration, and even inchoate attempts at such an embarkation are censured or threatened. Hans' quotidian and no doubt comforting fondling of his penis is transformed into a phobia by his parents' attentions. He 'was warned, before his afternoon sleep, not to put his hand to his widdler'.[72] They even threaten to get him a bag to sleep in to 'prevent your *wanting* to [touch your penis]';[73] at four and three-quarters,

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[70] Ibid., p. 134.
[71] Sigmund Freud, 'Leonardo Da Vinci and a Memory of his Childhood', *The Freud Reader*, ed. by Peter Gay (London: Vintage, 1995), pp. 443-480, p. 452.
[72] Freud, 'Phobia', p. 24.
[73] Ibid., p. 31 – my italics.

‘he was actually engaged in a struggle to break himself of the habit’.[74] Indeed, so concerned has he become that he infers his horse phobia is ‘so bad because I still put my hand to my widdler every night’.[75] The severity of his concern, of course, is exacerbated by this parental fetishization but dates back to that maternal threat seeded a year or two previously, though not at that time heeded – leave it alone, or I’ll cut it off: ‘this was the occasion of his acquiring the ‘castration complex’’.[76] Only now, having through observation and intuition realised that penis-less people do exist, does it seem possible that he might actually lose his own precious portion, which is so integral both to his sense of self and to these pressing sexual investigations: ‘The piece of enlightenment which Hans had been given a short time before to the effect that women really do not possess a widdler was bound to have had a shattering effect upon his self-confidence and to have aroused his castration complex’.[77] Sex has moved from something pleasurable and interesting to something fearful; even his former enjoyment of looking at the genitals of animals is spoiled, ‘owing to the general reversal of pleasure into unpleasure which had come over the whole of his sexual researches’.[78] The search for the truth is now circumscribed by the threat to the cock.

This castration fear, then, would seem to underpin all sexual explorations, no less those that our young couple have taken to the Father. It is significant that God’s ‘No’ is framed, as we have seen, by that castellated ovoid fortress, its tooth-like defences repelling the proffered genital advances of His children. What is so striking with this image is the investment of colour afforded to it, as nowhere else in the manuscript. Set off by and against the monochrome line drawing of the drama below, God is a solid block of pigment from the illustrator’s palette, a gorgeous smear of racing green enfolding a dried-blood-red inflammation of undergarment that segues into the red of His flowing hair. Framed by and presented from within the pulled-back labia of the teeth, this makes of God a Huysmans-like

[74] Ibid., p. 27.
[75] Ibid., p. 30.
[76] Ibid., p. 8.
[77] Ibid., p. 36.
[78] Ibid., p. 34.

gash of mutilated male-to-female genitals, even to the bold clitoral face hooded by that enflamed red cap. This is every bit as sexually invested as the literary depiction of Mary's genitals in *Christ I*. Adam might well have cause to worry for his penis, offering it hopefully up to a God who might bite it off.[79] And of course, to heighten any castration anxiety, he has before him that image of the after-effect, as Eve holds up before his face her own penis-less genital flower. *Vagina dentate*, the classic Freudian mythological motif of castration, looms large in this Anglo-Saxon Eden.

The cultural ubiquity and longevity of this toothed vagina comes from its acuity. For Paglia, it 'is no sexist hallucination: every penis is made less in every vagina';[80] it enters proud and outstanding, an angry projectile,[81] and yet emerges vanquished because rendered useless, a broken flaccidity. And it is something experienced by both sexes: Freud wrote that 'I have had occasional opportunities of being told women's dreams that had occurred after their first experience of sexual intercourse. They revealed an unmistakable wish in the woman to keep for herself the penis which she had felt'.[82] That the analytical paradigm of infantile frustration should partake of this symbolism is not accidental. In the face of (implied) physical threat and (certain) parental frustration, the questing child withdraws from its searches to shy away in a state of psychic emasculation. For Freud, the outcome is that inquisitiveness is stunted and delayed, the effect of which 'appears to be of a lasting and deeply depressing kind'.[83] Following such frustration, the 'instinct for research has three distinct possible vicissitudes open to it [:…] curiosity remains inhibited and the free activity of intelligence may be limited for the whole of the subject's lifetime';[84] in the second form,

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[79] He holds it out almost as an offering. Is Adam here inviting the castration, in the manner of desiring a passive sexual relationship with father? See Freud, 'Three Essays', p. 291 and Flugel, p. 186.
[80] Paglia, p. 47.
[81] Such a metaphor may have sat nicely with Andrea Dworkin, whose book *Intercourse* was characterised as defining 'all sex is rape. That was the notorious interpretation […] by many when it first came out in 1987' (Ariel Levy, Preface to *Intercourse*, (Free Press: New York, 1987), p. 1.) Dworkin disagreed, but the opinions advanced in it were without question provocative and polarizing.
[82] Sigmund Freud, ' On Transformations of Instinct as Exemplified in Anal Eroticism', *The Standard Edition of the Complete Works of Sigmund Freud*, vol. XVII, trans. and ed. by James Strachey (London: Hogarth Press, 2001), pp. 125-134, p. 130.
[83] Freud, 'Leonardo', p. 452.
[84] Ibid.

‘the intellectual development is sufficiently strong to resist the sexual repression […but still] the suppressed sexual activities of research return from the unconscious in the form of compulsive brooding’; in the third type, it ‘escapes both inhibition of thought and neurotic compulsive thinking’.[85] Sexual repression is still effected, but libidinal energy is immediately sublimated into curiosity and ‘attached to the powerful instinct for research’.[86] The inevitable consequence, then, of infantile frustration is repression, howsoever configured. The Junius manuscript’s reflection of this knock-back is striking; the initial epistemological peregrinations of Adam and Eve-as-Everychild are undertaken by an erect and confident couple, bold, engaged and interactive, inquisitively offering to the F/father their sex even as and while H/he threatens castration. On page ten of the manuscript (‘Adam and Eve before God’, fig. 9), they are hanging on his every word as he expounds upon and directs, with authoritative and imperious fingers, the nature of (their) reality. Like Little Hans and the delayed reaction to his mother’s threat, the couple are here and through subsequent illustrations possessed of the same insouciant manner, open and expansive and unconcerned, until Eve tempts Adam with the apple on page 31 (‘Eve Tempts Adam’, fig. 10). At this point, sex[87] – knowledge – is close, understanding suddenly within reach; the apple is there, touchable, tangible … and Adam begins to eat. It is only now that the forbidden nature of the fruit becomes apparent. It is shameful, and informs the father’s refusal to divulge this deepest and most important of secrets.[88] For the first time, breath still fresh from the fruit, the couple

[85] Ibid.
[86] Ibid.
[87] The symbolism of Eve offering to Adam her apple is well founded; it is freighted by the fecundity of fruit, by the plucking, by the possession that is suggested in the eating / incorporation. Fruit itself is the end product of a union, of the interaction of pollen and stigma (often by means of the intercession of a third party – in this case, God). Kille paraphrases (the German of) Levy: ‘“Eating” is a common euphemism for intercourse, he writes, and the fruit was traditionally considered to be an apple, an erotic symbol corresponding to the female breast’ (in Kille, p. 61). Cf. Jung, *Symbols*, pp. 221, 201, 232, etc..
[88] Badalamenti suggests that ‘the fact that it is forbidden is taken to represent the child’s sense of guilt over his or her sexual ambitions’ (Anthony F. Badalamenti, ‘Freud and the Fall of Man’, *Journal of Religion and Health,* 27: 1 (1988), 23-61, p. 46). But as Freud makes clear, the initial investigations do not illicit guilt in the child; only when it comes up against the frustrations laid down by the parents, which are then reinforced by the dawning worry over genital loss, does guilt emerge. The theory accords well with the illustrative cycle of Junius.

are rent by guilt over their sexual experimentation, and it breaks them psychically; [89] but, as the lower frame of page 31 demonstrates (fig. 10), it is a guilt that is also registered bodily. Gone is the open, receptive posture of particularly pages ten and eleven, the easy rapport with and free approach to the father, the unabashed and reflexive invitation to intimacy; rather the bodies from here on in are closed and self-protective, their curious, playful, alert aspects now suppressed in attitudes by turns submissive and guilt-ridden.

The broken motif is repeated until (and indeed after) the expulsion; the couple appear either in shameful self-regard, observing one another through gritted fingers, or else are remonstrating with one another. Their interests have *volte-face*d; from studiously hoovering up the glories of the world around them, they are now an insular, self-cannibalising exercise in solipsism. In the upper frame of page 39 ('Adam and Eve's Remorse', fig. 11), Adam's fully extended arm is thrust into Eve's space, a threatening, aggressive deliverer of guilt; her arms are held close, in a self-defensive attitude that tries to deflect his accusations. Knees pulled tightly together (as they are nowhere else), she shrinks in a reductive attempt to disappear. They are consumed by themselves, spirals of self-regard, of inverse narcissism. And then, in the lower frame, they return to the sullen, laconic, introspected self-recrimination that has more often characterised them, post-Fall. Psychoanalytically, Junius plays out the moment that Freud observed in his Leonardo analysis: sexual enquiries run contra to the father's wishes; his frustrating efforts become not merely annoying to the children but actually dangerous to them, as they realize the threat to their happiness. Adam and Eve are seen physically shrinking away from inquisitive contact.

Such a reading resolves Eve's otherwise troubling pensive expression. In the standard exegesis, she is deceived by Satan's agent and therefore ignorant of the fate awaiting her – she is effectively without sin; it is Adam, with his cosmic awareness, who should be worried.

[89] For Freud, this symbolized the primal act, the killing and eating of the father. Rubenstein sees 'tantalizing parallels […] In both the original sin involves a forbidden act of oral incorporation. […] According to Freud, the forbidden fruit was the primal father' (Justine Glenn, 'Pandora and Eve: Sex as the Root of All Evil', *The Classical World*, 71: 3 (1977), 179-185, p. 182).

And yet, in an inversion of traditional understanding, the artist depicts Eve as the one troubled by the developing conflict with the Father (upper illustration of page 31, fig. 10). Adam rather seems distracted by his sexual musings, his pondering on the now oh-so-close coital apple. Perhaps the artist intended to foist on the hapless Eve more blame than even Paul was wont to do, when he claimed that 'Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression'.[90] But of course, psychoanalytically, Eve does not fear castration, even if Adam very soon will; she is already castrated. With regard to the different genital configurations, a girl assumes that 'at some earlier date she had possessed [a penis] and had then lost it by castration. […] The essential difference thus comes about that the girl accepts castration as an accomplished fact, whereas the boy fears the possibility of its occurrence'.[91] This conclusion predates that of the boy; his initial reaction to penis-less people is one of disavowal. When Little Hans observes his baby sister's absence of penis, he reports not the fact of her lack, but rather its (in his eyes) diminution – '"But her widdler's quite small"', then adding the succouring, '"When she grows up it'll get bigger all right"'[92] – which accords with his assumption that 'every animate object […] possesses a widdler'.[93] Eve's fear, then, is not that of any looming toothed vagina, it is that of the loss of the love object; her desire, to bear her father's child. In 'The Dissolution of the Oedipus Complex', Freud links the girl's feelings of loss of love and desire to take the mother's place in respect to her father to her Oedipal urges.[94] Hence the very different physical dynamic: Adam is for the immediate moment content, however naïvely and misguidedly; Eve is already troubled by their continued exploration of sex, which threatens to thwart her incestuous union. In the Junius picture, she is self-evidently beseeching him, but beseeching him to do what exactly? Is it that he partake

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[90] 1 Timothy 2; 14 – King James Bible.
[91] Sigmund Freud, 'The Dissolution of the Oedipus Complex', *The Freud Reader*, ed. by Peter Gay (London: Vintage, 1995), pp. 661-665, p. 665.
[92] Freud, 'Phobia', p. 11.
[93] Ibid., p. 11 – footnote.
[94] Freud, 'Dissolution', p. 665.

of the fruit and join her? Or is it rather that he *not* take the fruit and eat, for fear of the Father's judgement?[95]

The artist's adroitness in capturing Eve's emotionally charged fruit-exchange registers her tension and anguish, perhaps to suggest an awareness – pace Paul – of the impending doom. But he has also dramatized the painful movement into knowledge that Freud observed in a child's development, the limnal moment of close-to-understanding anxiety in which idic desires come close to fruition but are on the cusp of being foreclosed; where the parental knock-back traumatizes the infant with social mores and yet simultaneously teaches it about independence and identity: 'All thinking and all cognition, including self-awareness, grows out of drive-inhibition'.[96]

Thus the child moves into responsibility and independence, but at a cost. The frustration of the father creates inquisitive trauma, his deceit a generational rift. The developmental outcomes of the child's attenuated enquiries are alienation, rebellion, and the need for revenge. As Freud notes,

> the fable of the stork is often told to an audience that receives it with deep, though mostly silent, mistrust. […The solitary researches following on from it] constitute a first step towards taking an independent attitude in the world, and imply a high degree of alienation of the child from the people in his environment who formerly enjoyed his complete confidence.[97]

Indeed, children 'date their intellectual independence from this act of disbelief, and they often feel in serious opposition to adults and in fact never afterwards forgive them for having deceived them here about the true facts of the case. […] The impression caused by this failure at this first attempt at intellectual independence appears to be of a lasting and deeply

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[95] Or does she perhaps project her Father-complex onto Adam, positioning him as the Father-surrogate?
[96] Gay, p. 547.
[97] Freud, 'Three Essays', p. 272.

depressing kind'.[98] It is through the child's overcoming of these incestuous fantasies, aided by the father's imperious injunctions, that 'one of the most significant, but also one of the most painful, psychical achievements of the pubertal period is completed; detachment from parental authority'.[99] As Little Hans demonstrates with his 'countless extravagant lies'[100] about his sister, the need for 'revenge upon his father, against whom he harboured a grudge for having misled him with the stork fable'[101] is acute. For Freud, this is a necessary infantile developmental stage away from the parental. This seems to be an accurate summation of the paradise narrative that ends with complete relationship fracture, and ultimately expulsion from the uterine or oceanic Eden. The biblical account is a wonderful elucidation of infantile development – and its vicissitudes – through the emergence of consciousness.

Hans' rebelliousness is, of course, manifested overtly. He provokes and attacks his father for the frustrations visited upon him: 'Hans had quite unexpectedly butted his head into his [father's] stomach […who] now recognized it as an expression of the little boy's hostile disposition towards him, and perhaps also as a manifestation of a need for getting punished for it'.[102] He goes on to confess his desire 'to beat his mother',[103] which thought reprises the 'phantasy of teasing and beating horses, […which] reproduced the obscure sadistic desires directed towards his mother'.[104] But these are frustrations, however obviously realised and consciously recognized, that are funded by the subconscious libidinal energies of the id. Freud concludes that Hans' destructive behaviour results from his being misled 'with the stork fable';[105] the father's effective prohibition of the child's early cathexes does not cause them to evaporate, only to short-circuit, in this case into violence and sadism. But however managed, the energy of the libido remains active, potent, and subversive. In motor terms, the id enters into and continues in conflict with the superego, a dynamic in which psychic tension

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[98] Freud, 'Leonardo', pp. 452-3.
[99] Freud, 'Three Essays', p. 291.
[100] Freud, 'Phobia', p. 129.
[101] Ibid.
[102] Ibid., p. 42.
[103] Ibid., p. 130.
[104] Ibid., pp. 129-30.
[105] Ibid., p. 129.

remains unresolved: idic urges may well and most often be managed into acceptable, functional outcomes – ideally sublimated into artistic or creative work – and the superego's libidinal appropriation does offer the ego an ally against (societally) distasteful urges, but the interaction nevertheless codes for resistance. As shown by the inversions of page eleven, the id's instinct is to assert itself, sometimes within the most counterintuitive framework. There is a subconscious will to remain in and of and with the body.

What is so striking in Junius is that, at the moment of its greatest shame – articulated by the text accompanying it – the body manages such an erotic assertion. Page 33 informs us that 'He æt þam wife onfeng / helle and hinnsið, / þeah hit nære haten swa, / ac hit ofetes noman / agan sceolde / […] Men synt forlædde, / […] Forþon hie leng ne magon / healdan heofonrice, / ac hie to helle sculon / on þone sweartan sið'[106] (He accepted hell and departure from that woman, though it was not so called, but had the name of fruit. Mankind is led astray. Therefore they may no longer inhabit the kingdom of heaven, but go on the dark journey to hell.) The upper illustration of page 34 (fig. 12) shows that 'Adam and Eve Know Nakedness', which pictoral occasion should be – and ostensibly is – a demonstration of penitential grief, a loathing of a flesh that, through a surfeit of self-love, has brought mankind to crisis. After all, the Christian community was from its inception cautioned: 'For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live'.[107] Within this orthodox discourse, the manuscript seeks to show bodies broken because of that original, solipsistic sin, degenerate bodies reliant upon the dispensation of grace. Suddenly stripped of their lush-landscaped surroundings, Adam and Eve are hunched, exposed, stood without relief or excuse before God. Desperate fingers attempt to offer some succour before the coming divine stare, but they are but a weak parenthetical embrace of the eyes and groin. The couple's post-prandial shame, captured on pages 31, 34, and 39 (figs. 10, 12, and 11), focuses upon miniaturising and concealing these wayward bodies. Instantiated in those now furtive and disgraced genitals, sex might perhaps be redeemable, but it is only after

[106] Krapp, *Junius*, p. 25, ll. 717-33.
[107] Romans 8: 13 – King James Bible.

accepting its abjection and abjuration that such a rehabilitation can be conjured. Iterations of shame bring forth a body shamed and shameful. By inversion, this would seem to be a narrative performing acceptable bodies into being.

But such Foucauldian posing of the body merely enables a reverse, subversive discourse. In its necessary focus upon the body's necessarily eroticised failings, power gifts to its opponents the conceptual (if not here the linguistic) means to occupy the contested site of sin. Damning the sensuality of the body accomplishes nothing more than foreground the body's sensuality. Thus at this moment of expected self-reflective remorse, that so-beguiling body is never more appetizing; at this its point of greatest shame, it is never more flagrantly and defiantly erotic.

On the upper illustration of page 34 (fig. 12), at the moment of knowing nakedness, the disgustingly sinful Eve is self-evidently being put on high. She stands above Adam, sequestered on her rock plinth, a mound that references in its rotundness the roundnesses of her (sexed) body. For Paglia, it was woman's connection to the earth that initially rendered her worthy of worship: 'Her mysterious procreative powers and the resemblance of her rounded breasts, belly, and hips to earth's contours put her at the centre of early symbolism. […] Woman was an idol of belly-magic. She seemed to swell and give birth by her own law'.[108] The image draws deep on the primal physicality of the female body that made her an early object of veneration, that gained her promotion to Mother-God, and that in turn translated her body into an erotic artefact. It is her procreativity, her fecundity, that deified her, and it is this sensuality – a primal religious cathexis – that is being fore-fronted here. Paglia's analysis, serendipitous for us, is acute: 'fertility religion makes pubic deltas or ridged ovoids. […] the *mons veneris* echoes earth's rounded hills'.[109] The pedestal is a literal demonstration of her body being hauled skyward to a position where it might be adored,

[108] Paglia, p. 8.
[109] Ibid., p. 285.

where its sexual allure may be the better appreciated: 'Freud remarked that landscapes (in dreams) often symbolize the female genitalia […and are] intensely vulvic'.[110]

Her engorged nipples, too, refute their sinful role, or rather revel in it. Far from coming across as visual agents of concupiscence or soon-to-be sucklers of the products of the bodies' sinfulness, they hang luscious, distended, suckable, swollen here as they are in few other places in the manuscript; they assert their right to a physicality that frustrates society's interpretive overlay. Even in her attempts to screen her wayward genitals, Eve achieves nothing so much as to draw attention to that which has heretofore been an absence of reference, an elision that rendered her somewhat sexless. Now those fretful long fingers splayed against the piercing male eye (of both Father and husband) conjure out of pre-pubescent lack a fine lush bush of pubic hair that only serves to complement and complete her transition into fully sexed womanhood. It intensifies rather than deflates her eroticism. This is the body desirable *qua* body. Far from being broken, and about to 'heofonrice / […] forlæten'[111] (forfeit the kingdom of heaven), as the text would have her, Eve is here transfigured into something divine.

There is here a Grand Synthesis of resistant bodies, where Freud, rather than being antithetical to Foucault, actually provides him with a necessary First Cause. Whilst acknowledging their politically divergent objectives, Foucauldian narratives of resistance are supported by Freudian ones, indeed can be seen to draw on Freudian energy to initiate and fund the subversive deployments they describe. That view of the fully lush pubic region, which so adroitly undoes the (presumed) chaste intent of its draughtsman, contests the space so effectively because it evokes – it is a reminder of – one of the most significant of the infantile cathexis, the 'intense scopophiliac desire with which the child had longed to see its mother's penis', which must undergo an 'immediate redistribution […] if thought is not to be

[110] Peter Benson, 'Freud and the Visual', *Representations*, 45 (1994), 101-116, p. 103.
[111] Krapp, *Junius*, p. 26, ll. 752-3.

immobilized in an aphanisis of desire'.[112] The nipples, too, are the very first point of libidinal cathexis, a surrogate umbilical by means of which the child reaffirms its blissful connection to the Oceanic. These visual symbols are echoes of the most important of preconscious libidinal investments. The illustration has come to be a dramatization of infantile development; it is therefore no surprise that these latent triggers assume enlarged and prominent proportions at the moment of greatest trauma, at the ingress of reality by means of the F/father's injunction. The subject merely seeks to return to such early indices of comfort, but it is a recidivism that is also a strident reassertion of the body against an imperious society. The inversion is a beautiful and coherent mélange of erstwhile competing methodologies.

But this is a Faustian coupling. The breast, as well as conveyor to the Oceanic, is also the child's first experience of unpleasure at that moment of the mother's withdrawing it. The child's nascent teeth enable a vengeful reply to this event, where the breast becomes the first focus of infantile aggression and conduit to a derived libidinal pleasure from the oral-sadistic. It is a kairotic moment. For Solimar Otero, the child's realisation of the violence of this act unconsciously provokes fears of the mother's retribution 'via her other 'mouth'. [...T]he first impulses of sadism as associated with orality and teething are the keys in creating an unconscious link to the mother's projected aggression taking on a similar form'.[113] Thus not only does the father have the power of castration, but so too does the phallic mother: 'she becomes phallic like the father, obtaining the power to castrate'.[114] This is the crucial developmental moment where that early cathexis on the nipple instantiates that greatest of man's psychological fears, the *vagina dentate*.[115]

[112] Ibid.
[113] Solimar Otero, '"Fearing Our Mothers": An Overview of Psychoanalytic Theories Concerning the Vagina Dentata', *The American Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 56: 3 (1996), 269-288, p. 271.
[114] Ibid.
[115] Women are not excused this dynamic. Flugel concludes that a 'satisfactory' female castration is achieved by cutting off the breasts, which 'constitute an outstanding and vulnerable part of the female reproductive anatomy, corresponding in these two respects to the penis of the male. We know, moreover, that the penis and the breast are often unconsciously identified and that the breast is already

Thus the breast is connected directly with that fearsome maternal genital that Eve so insouciantly parades before Adam. For Freud, the connection between castration – which he linked with decapitation: 'To decapitate = to castrate'[116] – and the 'sight of the female genitals, probably those of an adult, surrounded by hair, and essentially those of his mother'[117] was beyond doubt. Indeed, his mythological analyses convinced him of the correlation between the castration complex and the head of Medusa, whose hair was so often depicted 'in works of art as snakes, and these are once again derived from the castration complex'.[118] For Paglia, the mother is 'Medusa, in whom Freud sees the castrating and castrated female pubes',[119] and for Peter Benson, her 'writhing hair evokes her pubic foliage'.[120] The recalcitrant Eve takes this symbolism to extremes; her 'pubic fingers' are proud serpentine emanations, a writhing viper's nest escaping the space the artist has allotted them. Like Athena emblazoning Medusa's head on her shield as protection – and thereby becoming a woman who is 'unapproachable and repels all sexual desire',[121] 'the sight of whom extinguishes every idea of sexual intimacy'[122] – Eve flaunts her improvised Gorgon as protector of her own procreativity, and guarantor of her chastity. In this reading, she is the very cliché of Madonna and whore, both inciting and repelling sexual desire.

Eve's representation therefore captures the ambivalent tension within the psyche. For Benson, the 'Medusa's head, as "a *representation* of the female genitals […] isolates their horrifying effects from their pleasure-giving ones." The image serves to divide and protect pleasure from horror'.[123] But this, surely, is less isolation than conflicted over-determination, a Janus-like equivocation that is symptomatic not of the child's ability to compartmentalise but of its psychic confusion, of the self-contradictory cathexes coming out of a body that is

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for other reasons frequently associated with the earliest development of the castration complex' (Flugel, 'Polyphallic', p. 176).

[116] Sigmund Freud, 'Medusa's Head', *The International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 22 (1922), 69-70, p. 69.
[117] Ibid.
[118] Ibid.
[119] Paglia, p. 14.
[120] Benson, p. 101.
[121] Freud, 'Medusa's Head', p. 69.
[122] Flugel, p. 175.
[123] Benson, p. 113 – his italics.

simultaneously and paradoxically point of succour and of trauma. In respect of the process of parturition, Paglia writes that ‘Sexual necessity drives men back to that bloody scene, but he cannot approach it without tremors of apprehension’,[124] because even as he worshipped her, man ‘feared her. She was the black maw that had spat him forth and would devour him anew’.[125] Thus the over-determined Divine gash of the imperious Lord of page eleven of the manuscript (fig. 8**,** noted on page 225), which evokes the horror of castration even as it recalls and incites interest in the object of (uncastrated) male focus. The psyche’s dynamic is built upon and emerges out of binary oppositions that concomitantly assuage and provoke, occupying space that so often seems to hover at the liminality of neurosis and functionality. Even those psychically terrifying Medusan snakes militate against the very horror they inspire, for they ‘provide compensation for the actual feeling of castration […in that they] represent the regenerative phallus’,[126] the displaying of which was for Freud an ‘apotropaic act […] To display the penis (or any of its surrogates) is to say: ‘I am not afraid of you. I defy you. I have a penis’.’[127] Thus, in his depiction of the moment of the Fall, the Junius illustrator has conjured (albeit unintentionally) the instability of our psychic inheritance, its contradictory and competing resistances, and its poisonous legacy – though he may perhaps be credited with capturing the bittersweet taste of its most compulsive of pleasures.

The ambivalent pleasure and threat of the body, the self’s fraught relationship with itself as it tries to become a self, is here paraded in all its considerable confusion. It is a psychic tension that has been self evident from prehistory. Paglia notes the schizophrenic adoration of and fear over the (especially female) body in primitive religious rites, an ambivalence that psychoanalysis suggests made it inevitably susceptible to – made it prime meat for – eventual translation into the various religious formulations that would make it their business to resolve the body’s immanent self-contradictions. Andrew Weigert notes that ‘phenomenologists place ambivalence and its resolution at the heart of religious experience

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[124] Paglia, p. 16.
[125] Ibid., p. 8.
[126] Otero, p. 273.
[127] Freud, ‘Medusa’s Head’, pp. 69-70.

[…] the daunting and the fascinating […] combine in a strange harmony of contrasts'.[128] For Christianity, the body, as the vehicle that dragged mankind down into the abjected mire but also the one in which God had been enfleshed and via which mankind would be redeemed, was both loved and despised. It recognized the body's potential for divinity even as it acknowledged its corruptibility and filth. Opposites are embraced and contradictions resolved, to conjure out of psychic confusion a rational and coherent world-view. The Junius bodies cycle through their various incarnations – chastened and de-eroticised; resistant and re-eroticised; re-resistant and repellently dangerous – to ultimately return the body to a religious if not a numinous position, because religion resolves. It is as if that puritanical Church view may in fact have been right, after all, in reconciling the Oceanic breast and the Medusan teeth into a functional (if repressive) system.

Of course, for Freud, such psychic reconciliation and therefore resolution is only truly possible through psychoanalysis. Religiously framed coherence is necessarily illusory, because religion is a product of infantile wish-fulfilment that merely wants *x* to be so in the face of so harsh reality. Just as the father provides the child with security before the sudden intrusion of an indifferently hostile world upon its Oceanic bliss (even as he himself instantiates that hostility), nascent mankind too was seduced by the offer of an all-powerful Father figure that ameliorated life's harshness, and gave justice.[129] The idea of an after-life was necessary to solve the lacunae that in fact, objectively, He more usually did not. Freud concluded that the 'god of each of them is formed in the likeness of his father, that his personal relation to god depends on his relation to his father in the flesh and oscillates and changes along with that relation, and that at bottom god is nothing other than an exalted father'.[130]

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[128] Andrew J. Wiegert, 'Joyful Disaster: An Ambivalence Hypothesis', *Sociological Analysis*, 50: 1 (1989), 73-88, p. 76.
[129] And also out of Oedipus: 'religious practices are traced to the feelings of guilt resulting from the murder of the 'primal father'. Rituals such as the 'totem meal' and, less explicitly, the Christian Eucharist', are interpreted as commemorations of the killing and eating of this tyrannical master of the primal horde' (DiCenso, p. 168).
[130] Sigmund Freud, *Totem and Taboo*, trans. by James Strachey (London: Vintage, 2001), p. 147.

This wish fulfilment positions religion as a neurosis, a mechanism to defend against painful experience: 'The religion which emerges from such traumata is the social equivalent of the ego's creation of a side-cathexis with which it seeks to avoid repetition of the original loss'.[131] The account of *Genesis* is frequently cited as a paradigm of the genre, where the

> expulsion from Eden can be taken for a metaphor for the neurotic's longing to return to the state of blissful dependence on the all-caring family. It captures the neurotic resistance to giving up the frustrated claims of childhood in favour of discovering one's own strengths [,…] the narcissistic infantile longing for a return to the completely satisfying prenatal and intra-uterine life.[132]

Hence Freud's connection of religion and neurosis: the 'formation of a religion, too, seems to be based on the suppression, the renunciation, of certain instinctual impulses',[133] wherefore 'one might venture to regard an obsessional neurosis as a pathological counterpart of the formation of a religion, and to describe that neurosis as an individual religiosity and religion as a universal obsessional neurosis'.[134]

Freud's main objection to religion is therefore its denial of reality, its 'amentia, a happy state of hallucinatory confusion',[135] which makes it inimical to individual progress. It is religion's facility to assuage human pain that renders it 'antithetical to the ego's toleration of real suffering and which prevented, therefore, real solutions to human misery'.[136] Indeed, religion

> is so patently infantile, so remote from reality, that it pains a philanthropic temperament to think that the great majority of mortals will never be able to rise above such a view of life. It is still more embarrassing to learn how many of those

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[131] Gay, p. 548.
[132] Badalamenti, p. 28.
[133] Sigmund Freud, 'Obsessive Actions and Religious Practices', *The Freud Reader*, ed. by Peter Gay (London: Vintage, 1995), pp. 429-435, p. 434.
[134] Ibid., p. 435.
[135] Sigmund Freud, *The Future of an Illusion*, trans.by J. A. Underwood (London: Penguin, 2008), p. 56.
[136] Gay, p. 549.

> living today, who cannot help seeing that this religion is untenable, nevertheless seek to defend it, bit by bit, in pathetic rearguard actions.[137]

Risking the exposure of my own pathetic, perhaps recidivist action here, there is, by Freud's own analyses, something niggardly in this position. We have noted with Junius the utter incompatibility of the elements structuring the psyche, where Eve's body has generated an *impasse* that would appear resistant to intellection. Freud notes such irresolvability in the infantile movement out of the narcissistic stages of development, as the Oceanic phase is displaced by reality and ego-formation:

> we know that the human child has difficulty in making the transformation to culture without passing through a more or less clear period of neurosis. The reason for this is that the child is unable to repress many of the subsequently unusable drive-demands by rational intellectual effort but must curb them through acts of repression, the usual motive behind which is fear.[138]

Freud is quick to state in the following passage that such functional neurosis provides but a temporary benefit, and in order to enter properly into the adult world, the child must forgo its childish wish-fulfilment, either unilaterally or by means of psychoanalysis. It remains, however, that neurosis is shown to be essential to a healthy and well-disposed outcome at a crucial yet fragile stage of the subject's development. Freud's description of neurosis supplies the key to this all-important feature wherein the psyche attempts to facilitate functionality: the 'manifestations of neurosis (its symptoms, including the obsessive actions) fulfil the conditions of being a compromise between the warring factions of the mind. They thus always reproduce something of the pleasure which they are designed to prevent; they serve the repressed instinct no less than the agencies which are repressing it'.[139] Yet such access to pleasure is central to not only infantile but also adult functionality.

[137] Freud, *Civilization*, p. 12.
[138] Freud, *Illusion*, p. 55.
[139] Freud, 'Obsessive', p. 434.

In an overarching discussion of religion, Freud conceded that even the healthy individual was in need of consolation against the harshness of life: 'the life imposed upon us is too hard to bear […] if we are to endure it, we cannot do without palliative measures'.[140] These he listed as powerful distractions, substitutive satisfactions, and intoxicants.[141] Noticeably absent from this list is scientific knowledge, which may well provide an explanation of life's ills but little succour for them. Something of the pleasure of the subject's urges depends rather upon that beyond any education to reality he proposed, because 'power over nature', which presumably includes increasing knowledge of that reality, 'is not the sole condition of happiness, just as it is not the sole aim of cultural endeavours'.[142] Despite his quest to discover and classify reality, the subject's psychic wellbeing would be served by achieving a resolution between that reality and his/her unconscious needs that in fact bypasses and/or modifies reality. Such resolution requires the transformation of drives into something more palatable – less real – but which nevertheless still offers satisfaction to the original urge and to its displacement: that compromise between the warring factions of the mind. Sublimation, the process he defined as 'a certain kind of modification of the aim and change of the object',[143] is concerned less with any objective scientific reality than with managing the urges of the id into something less conflicted with it.

The 'purpose of life' is 'simply the programme of the pleasure principle',[144] wherein the subject is sufficiently able to negotiate between the ego and the id to achieve some measure of satisfaction. The interpolation of reality is no guarantee of comfort: 'substitutive satisfactions, such as art affords, are illusions that contrast with reality, but they are not, for this reason, any less effective psychically'.[145] Freud's comments on art would seem to unsettle his puritanical position. Though himself famously insensible to it, he conceded the consolation that art could afford to those who were able to connect with it. Indeed, it is

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[140] Freud, *Civilization*, p. 13.
[141] Ibid.
[142] Ibid., p. 26.
[143] Freud, 'Introductory Lectures', 20: 97.
[144] Freud, *Civilization*, p. 14.
[145] Ibid., p. 13.

'impossible for anyone who is receptive to the influence of art to rate it too highly as a source of pleasure and consolation in life'.[146] This consolation was not dependent upon any truth-value; Freud freely admitted that art was another illusion, originating out of the same wish-fulfilment as religion, that of mitigating life's harshness. Art allowed those sympathetic to it to impose a structure on life, conferring on it and offering to them some sort of meaning.

The whole of Freud's psychic structure details a series of mechanisms for neutering and coping with the experience of reality, in which the subject's reality is modified. Dreams, neuroses, sublimation, art – all of them are the psyche's transformation of experience to maximise the pleasure principle in the face of necessary drive repression. The self is constituted to avoid the pain of frustrated urges by changing them into something from which culturally acceptable pleasure can be derived. Such alteration of reality is the subject's way of dealing in cultural terms with his or her experiences and feelings, and such alteration seems necessary for healthy living.

The pictures of Junius have delivered up a classic illustration of Freud's understanding of the conflicted self, and of the mechanisms for coping with that reality. He observes that the subject

> is constantly wishing to perform this act (the touching), [and looks on it as his supreme enjoyment, but he must not perform it] and detests it as well. The conflict between these two currents cannot be promptly settled because – there is no other way of putting it – they are localized in the subject's mind in such a manner that they cannot come up against each other.[147]

The psychic structure's impossible position is perfectly captured by Eve's conflicted breasts and vagina (or, more accurately, by our reaction to them), artistic instantiations of a fraught psychic contradiction; perhaps the creation account has proved so emotionally resonant because its dynamic is *of* the psyche. But the religious narrative in which the first woman

[146] Ibid., p. 18.
[147] Freud, *Totem*, p. 29 – all parentheses in original.

finds herself works brilliantly as a technique of resolution, and its concordance with Freud's own criteria is striking. More than Freud and his explanations of a consoling Father-figure, the religion of Christianity is a reaction to and attempted resolution of the psyche's elemental ambivalence to the body. As with neuroses, it settles the localization by bringing the conflicting currents together. Christianity takes the elemental wariness over the body – Paglia's fertility-rite violence, expressed in this instance by the degradation and sinfulness of Eve in Satan's conquest – and resolves it in a formulation of the psyche's desire for the body, where Eros is instantiated in some configuration of the Incarnation. By conflating fear and desire into a single, coherent, and meaningful narrative (a synthesis that can offer a degree of satisfaction to both contradictory positions simultaneously), psychic discord is ameliorated: in the specifics of Junius, *Genesis* is resolved (thematically if not pictorially) by *Christ and Satan*. Eros must of course undergo some sublimative makeover, but by means of the reconfiguration, Freud's 'touching' is sanctioned and so his 'detestation' is defused. Sublimation attenuates prohibition. In the Freudian equation, this resolution *cannot but* acknowledge the erotic dimension of the flesh, even if it is an acknowledgement couched in an act of alteration. Thus the well-travelled tropes of the Adoration of the Madonna, and of Christ on the Cross – captured so sensuously in, for example, *Christ I* and the *Dream of the Rood* – evidence a shift in instinctual desire 'in order to escape from the *impasse* [,…] endeavour[ing] to find substitutes – substitute objects and substitute acts – in place of the prohibited ones'.[148]

These shifts are not passive. Freud's 'finding', above, invests them with a restless, even compulsive, energy. I detect similar substitution in the correspondence of the Fathers of the Anglo-Saxon Church, like Alcuin. John Boswell, in his iconoclastic treatment of homosexuality in the Church, positioned Alcuin's letters in a 'literature celebrating gay

[148] Ibid., p. 30.

love'.[149] Certainly effusive and tactile, the missives do appropriate erotic tropes: writing to an older ecclesiastical friend, Alcuin declaims that

> Love has pierced my heart with its flame, And love always burns with fresh fire. Neither land nor sea, hills nor woods nor mountains Can impede or block the path to him, Loving father, who ever licks your breast And who washes, beloved, your chest with his tears.[150]

It is easy to imagine that piercing, breast-licking flame – a most intimate act – personified in the cloistered tongue of Alcuin. But I see rather in these effusions a pacing Eros, caged and agitated, seeking (a socially acceptable) release. Physical love denied will find an outlet in whatever sanctioned form becomes available to it. Alcuin's sexuality (if it is not anachronistic to posit such) seems less relevant than the interior dynamic such declarations of love reveal. As V. A. Kolve notes in a different context, monasteries were

> inevitably attractive to men whose desire sometimes or always tended toward love of their own sex, but even more importantly, [were…] inevitably productive of what sociologists call "situational homosexuality". […] What we must allow in our reconstruction is the way heterosexual need and longing […] sometimes becomes indiscriminately sexual, rechannelling itself toward the only available objects of desire.[151]

The point is that desire is a moveable feast, where satisfaction and thus control is achieved through sublimation. The erotic choice is less that of genital preference than that between chastity or sin, between spiritual or carnal love. One way of talking acceptably about – finding release for – the drive urges is in the language of the divine; Alcuin's earthy passions are spoken into numinous ones. Such shifting of cathexes is of course not without risk. Surreptitiously stroking a pleasure that society would deny risks arousing interest in and

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[149] Boswell, p. 186.
[150] Ibid., pp. 188-9.
[151] V. A. Kolve, 'Ganymede/Son of Getron: Medieval Monasticism and the Drama of Same-Sex Desire', *Speculum*, 73: 4 (1998), 1014-1067, p. 1037.

excitement for the forbidden. But this is an erotic charge (long known to test the faithfulness of the religious – a common enough theme) that also tensions the very tenets and structure of religious understanding itself. As Freud concluded, religion operates to reinforce civilisation and then offer consolation for its privations. Such consolation is occasioned by engaging with the desires of the id, to allow for some satisfaction of them; the substitutes it offers must 'reproduce something of the pleasure which they are designed to prevent'.[152] In balancing the needs of reproduction and chaste assertion, the poetry and the riddles that we have adduced test to breaking point the orthodox requirements demanded of them. Even insisting (as we have done) on the requirement for a certain interpretation, the material nevertheless participates in a substitutive sleight of hand that rubs provocatively up against the line. These are erotic shifts seeking assuagement, bodily cathexes in search of an acceptable outlet, substitutes *finding* satisfaction, that perhaps shift onto new ground the religious arguments with which they must negotiate. Though perhaps less obviously, the Junius Eve has also shown herself to be embroiled in a contestation of the social and the personal, to provide a glimpse of the energies at work in balancing and reconciling the competing claims over the body. Her physicality, that flagrancy of the flesh, is born out of a psychic determination to bypass the *impasse* and secure a measure of substitutive satisfaction. Power, as much as does the psyche, has to negotiate, engaging with the urges around Eve to find an accommodation that may well entail new responses to and new technologies of the flesh. It might seem, here in the big eleventh-century codices, to be a rebalancing favouring the juicy mechanics of congress, the joy and the possibility to be found in the moist, dark maw. In the concatenation of civilizational imperiousness, resistant Foucauldianism, and psychical pushback, might there be evidence of a little flexing of the Anglo-Saxon religious consensus? The more visceral, affective worship of Hildegard might seem a plausible and neat or satisfying or convenient destination for them. There is a case – in another thesis – for tracking such a putative shift that incorporates the increasingly sexualised and joyful experiences of the body

[152] Freud, 'Obsessive', p. 434.

into sanctioned worship. The signs coming out of Eve's joy in her body, like those of Mary in *Christ 1*, are promising. But this Eve is not there yet.

These erotic ripostes to power's repressive impulses are inexorable. The confluence of a seething id's urges in search of relief and the inevitability of power's subversion of itself in its operation guarantees disruption. Theoretically, Foucault and Freud would appear to be antithetical but, as we have seen in Junius, they come together to form a magnificent, unified putsch that speaks 'no' to 'No'. Their oppositional theories of sex, alternately positing a normative and an imposed type onto the flesh, are paradoxically unified in the very archetype of concupiscent sexual congress. Eve turns society's sanction against itself by means of the mélange of opportunities immanent in psychic power and in power's impotence. But, again paradoxically, the resolution offered by Eve is ultimately a unity through an intellection that is also, and yet again paradoxically, a sublimation via faith. Such sublimation is, of course, illusory (and delusional), but it nevertheless offers a resolution of ambivalence that confers validity by occasioning a reduction in the psychic tension characterizing these illustrations. Eve's castrating teeth are subsumed into an emotionally credible schema that offers to transform their threat into eternal Oceanic bliss, at the bosom of a just and benevolent Father. Both psychic symbols are rehabilitated. Fear of the body becomes succour by means of the body. The manuscript is a demonstration of sublimation in action, where unconscious urges find consolation through fictive meaning that brings comfort to the afflicted.[153]

Eve is thus re-read. The ostensibly aberrant body with which we are presented, abjuring God's eternal love for a fleeting parody of it, is itself revealed as a parody and that narrative itself an aberration. The Junius Eve has demonstrated that the natural state is one in

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[153] This is of course not to make a truth judgement about such modification, nor to argue that reality is actually changed by our perceptions of it, only to assess the validity and efficacy of one of the psyche's various techniques for securing a reduction in tension and an increase of pleasure. Religion is an illusion that allows for a coherent fabulation to gloss inner events, a means to reconcile conflicting demands into a workable, liveable thesis. It hopes for something from the sky, but is born out of the most chthonic of dreams. While he assiduously details its demerits – and there are many current manifestations of them – there would appear to be insufficient acknowledgement on Freud's part of religion's facility for comfort and grace. His position is, paradoxically, somewhat fundamentalist.

which Eros is anything but cerebral, and wo/man anything but passive. There is something (epically?) redemptive in this: despite the overwhelming operations of power upon the body, there remains central to it an identity that is not so easily co-opted and constrained. For all the historical and theoretical weight piled upon her, Eve is defiantly herself.

The Fall is centred upon the movement from obedience (to God and of the body to self) to a condition characterised by a lack of self-control, via the agency of sex. As this chapter has demonstrated, the images of Junius capture this movement. Figure 8 is saturated with sex, where the animals below become that against which the couple should define themselves, as they lift sex out of the animalistic into a rational, controlled, ethereal contact with the divine. Their presentation of their own genitals to God emphasises what sex can be. But this focus also encapsulates its danger, where an incorrect interest in sex threatens the soul. It was this latter misjudgement that was to have cosmic ramifications, a moral the Church sought to impress on its flock: behold the consequences of sexual pleasure.

But even here, from out of orthodoxy, there is something subversive, that sin might be a necessary First Cause of morality. The Junius image illustrates even better than does the original account this development – that the couple come to know Good through Bad. The *Genesis* account, and especially the Junius recension of it, is a brilliantly concise imagining of the emergence of moral sentience through the auspices of sin.

Freud's dismissal of *Genesis* as an imprint from early historical experience is, of course, not universally accepted. Critics might argue that Junius' focus on the bestial and genital merely incorporates an ecclesiastical commonplace, that the Fall always was about sex. The picture's emphasis on coitus and those suggestively proffered floral genitals recalls some of the more outré riddles with their possible chaste meaning, yet which nevertheless cannot but conjure a more primal one. Here perhaps is a Church again attempting to wield its authority through definition. But this still fails to account for the tension in the Junius Eve. Even before we apply any Freudian gloss, we are compelled to look and wonder, for example,

at the contrast between the elided and cauterized crotch of the pre-Fall Eve and that rich, thick pubic mons of the sinful one. The effect is surely the reverse of any we might expect.

As with Juliana and Judith, orthodoxy is under unconscious pressure from the multiple correspondances between these images and the meanings Freud attached to similar ones in, especially, the development of infant consciousness (which he considered analogous to that of human consciousness). The tableau of figure 8 is a striking visualization of Freud's discussion of Little Hans. The *mise en scène* that would assert Church teaching concomitantly reaches down into our earliest experience, via symbols that paradoxically connect us with our primal, defining libidinal cathexes. This drama replays the infant's drive to know, conducted through sexual exploration. The image is thick with sex, even depicting the infantile reflex to parental seduction, and the threat that these uninhibited sexual peregrinations precipitate. In a simple line drawing, the Junuis artist has distilled the over-determined complexity of sex, from the child's fetishization of the penis to his dread fear for it.

Thus we see the hope for and joy of sex, and its repression before civilizational authority. Here is the efficacy of Foucauldian power as it cows the flesh. But repression, as we have noted, encodes for a resistance that emanates from the libido. The response of the body is at its most intense in figure 12, where Eve asserts the body's will to pleasure, its affirmation of those early cathexes. Towering over the would-be imperious, censorious Adamic Father figure, the chthonic joys of tit, mons, Earth Mother are put on high.

But these are bitter pleasures. Even as they succour, the memory of them is also one of unpleasure; they disturb as they console. This is the Freudian double bind, a post-Oceanic world where pubes both castrate and regenerate, and the comforting nipple nevertheless recalls its withdrawal and thence that dental vengeance. To this already confusing milieu, born from the imposition of civilizational writ, the Church adds another layer of didactic opacity. Again paradoxically, this further layering of confusion and repression itself offers (some sort of) resolution for the multiplying contradictions, even as it exacerbates them.

This conflicted, ambivalent and psychically regressive subject becomes comprehensible to us via a synthesis of resistant theories, which turn out in this regard to be rather more co-operative than antithetical. There is no contradiction in the fusion of Foucault and Freud offered here. Foucault's analyses of power are seductive, but resistance to it seems better explained by Freud's First Cause, by the individual's reaction to civilizational repression. It is a psychic attachment to a self supported by a masochistic response to all forms of power, both internal and external. Foucauldian norms do conjure abject others, but it transpires that the norms are as much psychic as societal.

The subject is conceived in conflict, one that is enunciated separately by but better understood as a conjunction of Freud and Foucault. Eve's response to Foucauldian power's demands to reign in her sex is, significantly, to flash her pubes at us. It is here, at the intersection of an innate, predisposed self and a situated, deterministic imperative, that the individual's parturition takes place. Against a backdrop of constraint and taboo, it comes about in the sexual explorations of self and peers, animals and authorities. Junius captures it all.

There seems something appropriate, and poignant, about leaving Eve here, up on her rocky pedestal. It is in some ways a satisfying *au revoir*, her body thoroughly sinful and yet transcendent because of its corruption. She is pregnant with contradictory possibility, conduit both to damnation and to regeneration. She looks forward to Christ's redemptive transfiguration and back to the rage of Paglia's earth mother – to the overcoming of the body and to its reassertion. She is a most succinct figure of tension and its resolution. In this, these simple line drawings animate the over-determination of bodies: what they are and mean; their liminality, caught as they are between self and society; their torn identity, inherited and imposed. As our co-option of Butler and Foucault suggested at the outset of this project (from p. 18), and as Junius has demonstrated, sexed norms do indeed conjure abject others, but this reading reveals that the abjected is in fact as much the subject wrestling with psychic norms as any third party with society's. And yet, in part constituted by means of their reaction

to or accommodation with it, these Junius bodies *do* speak volubly of the society in which they are situated. Eve is bowed by her wretched sex before an omnipotent Father, participating in a thoroughly and recognizably Anglo-Saxon trope. But her body no less voices a need to test and question her society's sensibilities; she unsettles those orthodox discourses with an affirmation of her body and its glorious sex, with her constant enunciation of a limbic eroticism – a narrative that runs parallel to and in contestation of the Church's chaste one. This cacophony, we might assume, was the lived life of the Anglo-Saxons inhabiting the interstices of the required and the desired, which some readings of the formal codes and manuals elide. The Penitentials detail a dry catalogue of offences on the body, but Eve speaks rather to and of her audience's experience of the body. Their lives, works, and insights were informed by the dynamic that this reading of the Junius Eve has revealed to us; perhaps they, too, intuited the subversive signals written on and coming out of Junius flesh, signals that succoured a much more primal connection than *Ecclesia* was wont to entertain. Paradoxically (like so much around the body), in framing the confection of contradictory and sometimes self-destructive desires within a grand narrative of Pauline wrestlings with the flesh, that Church simultaneously strong-armed the subject into conflicted compliance even as it offered it an effective consolation for acquiescence. What Eve certainly sets before us is the body's manifest capacity for elision.

Seven

‘Striking Music from the Flesh’[1]

In countering the arguments of Henderson, Broderick *et al* concerning the disjointedness of Junius text and image, I made space for this project to move forward. The refutation was sound and evidence-based. The conclusions coming out of the project, however, have actually affirmed the ill-fittedness of the media, albeit a misfit of a different kind. My approach has shown the manuscript to be engaged in a dialectic far more radical, far more disconnecting, than anything Henderson proposed, the pictures an exegesis far exceeding any described in Karkov’s thematic embellishment or theological deviation; they offer us something more than a riff on a divine bassline. Theirs is a debate in which the very meaning of the bodies situated within the manuscript is contested. The written and the drawn *are* antithetical, battling over which particular bodies are in fact allowed to be bodies at all.

With reference to the competing individuating inputs of psyche and society, I have been able explain the ambivalent body of the Junius Eve with which I started. Her resistance is born of the struggle, the negotiation, between impulses internal and external, out of which collision the self seems to emerge. In now drawing the thesis to a conclusion, I shall further apply these insights to more contemporary somatic understandings.

The specifics of the contestation between text and image in Junius have been seen to parade wider Anglo-Saxon preoccupations, and demonstrated the manner in which power is wielded in relation to them. Continuous orthodox citations and presentations are intended to

[1] Bynum, ‘Why All the Fuss’, p. 15.

bring forth and normalize a socially acceptable body, one whose sex is sublimated to ends other than coital pleasure. In its insistency, the technique reveals the ongoing need to frame the Christian body in a highly regulated pose, and the aberrant bodies with which it is so often juxtaposed merely emphasize this regulatory compulsion. The tension is a product of the religion itself, a religion that both adores and abhors the flesh in equal measure, and the Janus-like equivocation coming out of it demands that the flesh always take a position, always give an opinion. Thus the virile Abraham surrounded by sodomy; concupiscence stalking those virgin saints; the insistence on eroticising and then gelding onions. A certain model of normativity is being projected out into and amongst the abnormalities of society, and in its subtlety of application this is a power more efficacious than that of any Penitential code.

But the documentary evidence suggests that the approach, though perhaps more effective than proscription, was still ultimately impotent. And there is something desperate – certainly a fragility of position – in the Church's dogmatic and obsessional fixation on the presentation of the flesh. Judith Butler argues that any such repeated iteration of a norm reveals the instability of that norm, that it is in fact a confected norm; the constant need to validate a definition suggests invalidity. We see this instability and this validation-manqué being seized upon and projected out through the illustrations of Junius. The Edenic couple do indeed shield their genitals to conform to orthodoxy and connote a bodily shame, but the picture inverts completely that putative aim to rather emphasize sex, genitals, flesh, and the body is thereby reappropriated as and for Eros. Eve's body, standing in for all women's bodies, and for all mankind's, remains determinedly eroticised in spite of its context, asserting its sex through a battery of symbols and themes that Freud connected directly to primal sexual experience.

This inversion occasions a sublime contact. In its take on the *Genesis* creation, the specifics of the Junius manuscript capture better even than does the original the process of the emergence of consciousness, of personhood coming out of the collision of power and self. It

is a magnificent moment of Freudian frisson. In the fissures of repression, the psyche is able to gain satisfaction for those obdurate idic urges and so reassert a deepest sense of self. Power necessarily represses the psyche, but the psyche will respond in the ways open to it; both are altered by the interaction. The subject is, finally, a conflation of and a negotiation between these two poles of influence, a dynamic distortion that encodes for the individual and for society. To refer to our earlier discussion, queer sensibilities, proclivities, predilections are squeezed and travailed upon by Butleresque heteronormativity, but that unwanted heterosexualizing caress only affirms an identity, distils down to a position. Butler defers to Irigaray, who responds to such sexual disallowal

> [by saying], Fine, I don't want to be in your economy anyway, and I'll show you what this unintelligible receptacle can do to your system; I will not be a poor copy in your system, but I will resemble you nevertheless by *miming* the textual passages through which you construct your system and showing what cannot enter it is already inside it (as its necessary outside), and I will mime and repeat the gestures of your operation until this emergence of the outside within your system calls into question its systematic closure and its pretension to be self-grounding.[2]

This subversive impersonation – which is in Irigaray's description almost a djinnic occupation – captures the process of appropriation both of symbol and of power, though Irigiray fails to reflect the distortion of both system and individual that it entails. Identity (which is of course different to predilection) is not merely reified by but emerges out of the contact with an Other. And power does flex to accommodate the assertion (even to the point of being inverted by it), albeit in ways that are often erratic and unpredictable and circular: hence those Foucauldian spirals. Thus the body is synecdochal; it stands in for the self – the sexually particular self, the black or white self, the gendered self – because of its being so convenient a proxy for the powers and interests (psychic and social) that invest in it.

[2] Butler, *Bodies*, p. 45 – parenthesis and italics in original.

Rather than the expected discourse on the corruptibility of the flesh, delivered from on high, we have seen opening up before us an encomium on the glory of the flesh, funded from below – ultimately from the limbic. And my approach resolves the seeming contradictions attending an ecclesiastical manuscript whose bodies appear to subvert its textual intention. In identifying the drivers of this somatic resistance as subconscious ones, it becomes less contradictory than obvious why such socially transgressive bodies might appear in so religious a context. The lauded breasts and genitals of the sexed body were a conduit not only to the Oceanic but also to the daemonic, to the threat of castration and annihilation, to psychic unpleasure. No less than is Christianity, the self is preternaturally ambivalent to the symbols parading through the manuscript, symbols of both succour and trauma; the dynamic they so resonantly embody is one of conflict and turmoil. In this context, religion is a framework that holds out comfort by resolving inner struggle through the illusion of God's grace. It is difficult to conceive of a better medium for such a psychically dangerous putsch than one that simultaneously provides the psychic comforts of the Divine. Thus is the manuscript concomitantly agent of hated authority, host to the dispute concerning that authority, and provider of a shoulder when that authority has been debunked – paradoxically by recourse *to* authority. It is this insight that offers to animate the somewhat and heretofore desiccated lives of the Anglo-Saxons we seek to understand.

In this search for understanding, the modern body might be instructive, given that (certainly western) society has never been more concerned with the flesh. As with the mediaeval body, it too is caught between and stands in for multiple and disparate interests that would seek to pose it, and its contemporaneity has shown in close focus how those interests operate on bodies and lives. Our theoretical smorgasbord would seem to invite such transposition; social concern over heteronormativity, gender fluidity, racial identity, are of course entirely played out upon and through the epidermis and its various folds, appendages, and excrescences, metynomic surrogates for deeply personal, deeply subjective experience. These idic identities – the queered self demanding a hearing for its queer voice; the female

self abjuring the male (not masculine) hegemony; the transitioning self negotiating erstwhile uncharted social pathways – are finding ellipses in the social fabric that enable their own resistance and thence affirmation; any appeal to putative normative models has merely demonstrated the synthetic nature of such models. Indeed, 'normal' has long been ceding to 'traditional' as the adjective of choice. Foucault's insight, however, was that the nature of power was not linear but cyclical, or at least peripatetic. In the various vortices that characterize its application, resistance to power becomes power at the moment of efficacy and effect. The shifting of nomenclature noted in my introduction, and the shift of citation of which it is emblematic, came centre-stage in Benedict Cumberbatch's use of the term 'coloured people' in a 2015 interview (in which, ironically, he was bewailing the paucity of non-white roles). The subsequent furore over the 'outdated phrase' and its supposed racist overtones elicited from the actor an apology of sweeping abjection, grand in scope and social comment.[3] Such inflexions and reversals of power are perhaps most succinctly demonstrated in the current vogue for non-platforming speakers whose views are deemed to be offensive – contrary – to those of any would-be audience. Thus Germaine Greer, held (perhaps now only in some circles) to be one of the pioneers of second wave feminism, fell foul of (female) transgender activism when opining that surgical redefinition could never confer women's experience and that thus transgender men-to-women could not be considered fully women.[4] Her intervention was, characteristically, both witty and provocative, but begs the question, To the experience of which particular women was she referring? Is woman's experience really so uniform and universal, any more than is that of men and their supposed 'masculinity'? The fluidity and abstractedness of personal experience cannot be reduced down to any simple

[3] Joseph Harker, 'Cumberbatch's 'Coloured' Gaffe Reveals Just How White the Film Industry Is', *The Guardian*, 27 January 2015 <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2015/jan/27/cumberbatch-coloured-gaffe-white-film-industry-black-actors> It was an exchange about which the National Association for the Advancement of Coloured People was, to my knowledge, curiously silent.
[4] Heather Saul, 'Germaine Greer defends 'grossly offensive' comments about transgender women: 'Just because you lop off your d**k doesn't make you a ******* woman' *The Independent*, 26 October 2015 < https://www.independent.co.uk/news/people/germaine-greer-defends-grossly-offensive-comments-about-transgender-women-just-because-you-lop-off-a6709061.html>

signifier: the ‘male values and ways of perceiving, feeling, and acting’[5] by which masculinity is explained (away) seems to me to be a specious definition, and one that is becoming increasingly tenuous. Are sensitive/gay/pacifistic/transvestite men any less men, inhabiting any less male a persona or identity, because of their refusal or inability to conform to an imposed ‘masculinity’ that is defined by aggression and domination? Seeking to explain men in relation to some cultural norm of behavioural expectation is surely performativity – normativity – of Butleresque proportions. The irony, of course, is that ‘it was feminism that insisted on debunking universalised experience and that, Jehovah-like, separated out the female from the male’.[6] In a sign of another shift of citation, of power moving full circle, Allen Frantzen suggests that masculinity should problematize its own definition and ‘now refuse […] to be the object of the feminine gaze’.[7] This is not of course to posit the vanquishment of any traditional – might we revert here to normal, or normalizing? – discourses of power, nor to hail any new world order in favour of the previously disenfranchised. But these dynamic shifts *are* evidence of the Foucauldian sparring between and reversals of resistance and power that I have already noted, the classic Anglo-Saxon interlace wherein the beginning becomes indistinguishable from the end, shifts that are opening up and nuancing erstwhile convenient because simplistic understandings of lived lives. It is by means of such instability that radical insights emerge.

Such a politically amorphous or ambiguous end point may or may not sit comfortably as the *terminus ad quem* of a theory predicated in part upon Michel Foucault. The Populist movements currently sweeping the West are considered in some measure a reaction to the self-perceived disempowerment of what are normally conceived of as the ‘empowered’. Whether such assessments withstand historical scrutiny remains moot. But the point here is not that operations of power experienced at the individual level are sometimes nuanced, contradictory, counter-intuitive, and unexpected. It is rather that they ebb and flow; the king

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[5] M. H. Abrams*, A Glossary of Literary Terms* (Orlando: Harcourt Brace College Publishers, 1999), p. 90.
[6] Hyde, ‘Sheep’, p. 34.
[7] Allen Frantzen, ‘When Women Aren’t Enough’, *Speculum*, 68: 2 (1993), 445-471, p. 455.

must sometimes – oh, how apposite – play the fool. Through the bodies of Junius, the Anglo-Saxon psyche has shown a steely need to assert itself despite Anglo-Saxon proscriptions to the contrary. Being somewhat analogous to our modern embrace of disparate somatic incarnations, it is perhaps tempting for us to intuit a similar, mediaeval inclination toward the rehabilitation of the body that would find its apogee in the tremulous adorations of Catherine of Sienna and of Hildegard of Bingen. Such music from such flesh! Those hymns, those monophonies might seem to be ecstatic collusions detailing a linear determination to enjoy the flesh *qua* flesh. We have, however, seen the machinations of power, and that for every hymn to the body there will be a counter-argument.

But this is surely the point. It is in conflict that the self is forged; only out of instability and alterity does identity emerge at all. Sisyphus needs his hill; the self, modern or mediaeval, must keep on rolling the rock because the task of being is an unending one. And it is in analysing this ongoing collision of individual idic desire and wider societal demand that we have the chance to uncover uniquely Anglo-Saxon subjectivities. Of course, in positing any such transhistorical equivalence, we run the risk of forcing a transcultural correspondence onto ostensibly very different sensibilities. The experience of selfhood, theirs and ours, would appear to be culturally specific, enjoined to conceptually distinct world views. Cynewulf's visit to his 'mistress', referenced in our introductory chapter, throws the misalignment into relief; the Chronicle account is anyway unusual in its choice of material, and having introduced the idea of heterosexual congress, hurriedly moves on from it.[8] The more usual treatment of intimacy is to be found in works such as *The Wanderer*, where the exile, dwelling on his wretched condition, seeks solace in remembrance of his lord's body – 'þinceð him on mode þæt he his mondryhten / clyppe ond cysse, ond on cneo lecge / honda ond heafod'[9] (in his heart it seems to him that he embraces and kisses his Liege Lord, and lays hands and head on his knee) – a contact the poet problematizes by distancing it from the

[8] McLaughlin offers a succinct overview of various extra-marital configurations in the tenth/eleventh centuries, and their status relative to legitimate/approved unions (especially from p. 36).
[9] Krapp and Dobbie, *Exeter,* p. 135, ll. 41-43.

validation offered by its more usual public demonstration. The theme is reprised in, among other pieces, *Beowulf*, which focuses upon and lingers over the close connection between Hrothgar and his thane. Thus much of the corpus emphasises an alternate intimacy, one that privileges not interactions between the sexes but those between men, which have subsequently been framed in terms of homosociality. This speaks of a society configured, at least in its literary manifestations, differently to our own.

The homosocial, however, can suggest a collision of id and society, and so reprises the themes and thrust of this project, but writ large; thus structural similarity offers to open up cultural difference. Such a theoretical approach has significant potential for reappraising wider cultural behaviours. As with increasingly unstable 'masculinities', academic adoption of 'homosociality' to discuss and categorize male disportment may be a gloss that elides rather than fully captures male experience because it posits a comfortable, resolved cultural practice in which there is neither tension nor ambivalence. As a descriptor of all-male groupings, from which women are ritually absented, it is (in Anglo-Saxon study) often delimited by the widely attested contemporary antipathy to *argr*. Jacqueline Murray's formulation, however, demonstrates the care with which this animus must be used; she states that Germanic societies strongly disapproved of 'any type of homosexual (and any other) activity that was perceived as gender-discordant. The passive-effeminate male, designated […] *argr* in Old Norse, bore the brunt of overpowering contempt and hostility.'[10] This is a seemingly obvious but in fact deeply problematic correlation, gathering as it does all male-male intimacy that *we* understand by the term homosexual – which would surely include, for example, the unclothed caressing and stroking of the *Soliloquies* – and conflates it with *argr*, that thing of loathing. Thus we are obliged to read the eroticism of the *Soliloquies* entirely allegorically, and not at all physically. All such instances of intimacy in the corpus must then

[10] Jacqueline Murray, 'Hiding Behing the Universal Man: Male Sexuality in the Middle Ages', *Handbook of Medieval Sexuality*, ed. by Vern L. Bullough and James A. Brundage (New York: Garland, 1996), p. 159.

be denuded of any non-numinous erotic content, because to be otherwise would be to cross that uncrossable line.

Yet there is nothing to show that a man's stroking and caressing another man in a manner that we would think erotic – homosexual, to use Murray's term – was thought to effeminize either, and thereby court gender discord. Rather, it is such a (literary) commonplace as to suggest an easygoing cultural insouciance with the practice. The difficulty for us lies in recovering the nuance, the import, of this touch; what did such physicality mean to the men engaging in it? As Robert Mills shows, even overt same-sex sexual contact was not necessarily socially problematic: pederastic relationships would not 'traditionally compromise […] masculinity'.[11] He (cautiously) quotes David Halperin: 'If anything, pederasty and friendship are both traditionally *masculinizing*, insofar as they express the male subject's virility and imply a thoroughgoing rejection of everything that is feminine.'[12] Sexual arousal in pederasty is given, as is (presumably) penetration.[13] Evidently, object choice was considered unimportant, if considered at all; what mattered was observance of gender norms.[14] Thus, whilst an adult man's being the passive partner in sex – being penetrated rather than penetrating – would most certainly have attracted censure, his being touched intimately, in what we would surely consider to be a sensuous manner and which they perhaps did too, need not.

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[11] Robert Mills, *Seeing Sodomy in the Middle Ages* (Chicago and London: Chicago University Press, 2015), p. 87.
[12] Ibid.
[13] The evidence for widespread or routine pederasty in Anglo-Saxon England is not conclusive but, from the available sources, persuasive. David Clark concludes that it is 'certainly very probable that same-sex activity *occurred* in all Germanic tribal societies to some degree […] and it is also probable that this was largely age differentiated. […] There is no reason to doubt that that same-sex activity was an institutionalized feature of some Germanic tribal societies.' Clark, p. 48 – his italics. He discusses at some length the evidence from classical ethnographers (Chapter Two).
[14] There is, however, some uncertainty over the status of the OE term 'bædling', and whether it constituted an identity based upon sexual preference. If so, this would of course introduce the idea of a recognized predilection based upon object choice, in a schema governed by gender role. See Clark, pp. 55-67, especially p. 66, and Frantzen, *Closet*, Chapter Four. For a discussion of a later, fourteenth-century case, see Ruth Mazzo Karras and David Lorenzo Boyd, '"Ut cum muliere": A Male Tranvestite Prostitute in Fourteenth-Century London', *Pre-Modern Sexualities*, ed. by Louise Fradenburg and Carla Freccero (New York and London: Routledge, 1996), pp. 99-116.

I would, then, tentatively concur with Eve Sedgwick as to an element of desire in homosociality – she seeks to 'draw the homosocial back into the orbit of "desire", of the potentially erotic'[15] – though I am less sure exactly what it is a desire for. To prefer – desire – the company of men, and to have an easy tactility with them – does this constitute an outlier of homosexuality? Or does that identity depend upon more explicit, genitally focused wishes? Does the first necessarily segue into the second? Whilst she is careful to caveat her union of homosociality and desire – she notes especially the '*historical differences* in […] the structure of men's relations with other men'[16] – Sedgwick's 'hypothesiz[ing] the potential unbrokenness of a continuum between homosocial and homosexual'[17] has been taken up less cautiously by others. In transplanting wholesale the concept of homosexuality to the mediaeval, Gareth Lloyd Evans risks the same category error as Murray:

> The homophobia that Sedgwick identifies as functioning to cause a symbolic rift between homosociality and homosexuality has its medieval Icelandic counterpart in the discourse of nið. Nið insults, much like modern homophobia, function to abject from the normative masculine position that which is seen as unmanly.[18]

But homophobia is not cognate with nið, because their points of reference – object choice vs. gender role – are entirely different. Modern homophobic aversion to soft or gentle tactility does not obtain for the Anglo-Saxon world, even though that world was governed by *argr*. The intimacy evident in much of the literature suggests rather that the only significant solecism was passivization.[19] David Clark opens up the opacity of the dynamics of Anglo-Saxon homosociality:

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[15] Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), p. 1.

[16] Ibid – my italics. I have removed her italicization of 'structure'.

[17] Ibid.

[18] Gareth Lloyd Evans, *Men and Masculinities in the Sagas of Icelanders* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019), p. 5.

[19] Carl Phelpstead's treatment of Icelandic sagas demonstrates the importance of gendered roles to that society. In discussing the meaning of *blauðr*, he notes that the word requires a different translation into English, depending on what/whom it is directed towards. 'When it occurs in insults directed towards men [it] is normally translated "coward", but when used of women or of female animals it seems to

> Is [their] comfort with and openness about male intimacy […] predicated on the unimaginability of homosexual activity or, more subtly, the invisibility of homosexuality? Alternatively, does the absence of a concept of homosexuality give male relationships a latitude in terms of intimacy which might create anxiety for many modern men?[20]

The gender boundaries formed by *argr* may have licensed a physically enacted closeness or even sensuousness that we, conceptually bounded by object choice, must define in sexual terms, but that they did not. Different fundamentals often produce different outcomes. It is, in this conceptualization, possible to conceive of a man stroking and kissing another man with erotic feeling, but feeling just as powerfully a revulsion over the idea of having sex with him.

Such readjustment would push Anglo-Saxon homosociality into novel understandings of that which we use it to describe. But, as a lived experience, it would also have the potential to exacerbate tension between individual desire and societal demand. Paradoxically, it is that posited nonchalance over erotic contact that might, in some instances and for some men, have pushed it closer to sex – and therefore to sanctioned gender inversion. Thus my reading of Anglo-Saxon homosociality both distances all-male groupings from sex because of the constraints of *argr* (thereby denying the homosexual continuum of Sedgwick) and also, in its allowance of the erotic and sensuous, conceivably jostles the line that social constraint lays down. As with the eroticism of the *Saints' Lives*, rousing the beast risks getting bitten. For those so inclined, psychic excitement, and consequently psychic tension at its frustration, would likely be increased rather than reduced. Similar to the Junius bodies, this then becomes fraught territory wherein culture and self fight over the sexedness of the flesh.

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mean "female". The need for two different English words to translate one Norse word is indicative of differences between the gender systems in operation in the two cultures' ('Size Matters: Penile Problems in Sagas of Icelanders' in *Exemplaria*, 19, No. 3 (2007), 420-437, p. 426).

[20] Clark, p. 4. His use of homosexual here is of course different to Murray's; he is positing the disjunction between possible concepts of same-sex contact, theirs and ours, whereas Murray exports – projects – our concept across cultures.

The tension that this juxtaposition of the social and the self might throw up is succinctly articulated by Hrothgar's 'secret longing' for Beowulf:

> Gecyste þa cyning æþelum god,
> þeoden Scyldinga ðegn betstan
> ond be healse genam; hruron him tearas,
> blondenfeaxum …
> […]
> … Wæs him se man to þon leof,
> þæt he þone breostwylm forberan ne meahte;
> ac him on hreþre hygebendum fæst
> æfter deorum men dyrne langað
> beorn wið blode. [21]

> (Then the Prince of the Scyldings, the good king of noble blood, kissed the best of thanes and took him about the neck. Tears fell from him, the grey-haired one. That man was so loved by him that he could not bear the emotion in his breast. But in his heart, fastened in his heart strings, a secret longing for that beloved man burned in his blood.)

This exchange is thick with that which is unsaid, with the unsayable, which taciturnity is only intensified by the phrase chosen to articulate Hrothgar's pain; most 'sexually inclined' readings focus upon the 'dyrne langað', but it is the 'breostwylm' (translated, for example, as 'surging emotion'[22] or 'the breast's surging'[23]) that is the more suggestive of a psychic cathexis. Bosworth and Toller gloss it, *inter alia*, with 'the fountain of

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[21] Fr. Klaeber, ed., *Beowulf and the Fight at Finnsburg* (London: D. C. Heath and Co., 1950), ll. 1870-80.
[22] George Jack, ed., *Beowulf: A Student Edition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), p. 137, l. 1877 – thus even at the introductory level, the sexual is elided.
[23] Michael Swanton, ed., *Beowulf* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1997), p.124, l. 1876.

the breast', and 'teat', and illustrate it with 'Ðu eart hiht min fram breóstwylmum módor mínre' (You are my joy as that from my mother's tit). The shadow that Horthgar's longing projects is born from within the earliest of his sexual investments. This is a longing, then, that may not necessarily have consciously sought resolution in a genital union, but it is surely suggestive of a desiring id wrestling with the social constraints that frame and imprint it (that some form of repressive power is operating here is implied by the need for secrecy), and that the socially acceptable 'homosocial' sublimation was not in fact satisfaction enough.

Attempts to chasten the implicit desire seem to me unsatisfactory. David Clark suggests that the 'illicit longing here is for Beowulf to remain as Hrothgar's heir',[24] Allen Frantzen that Hrothgar's secret longing is for a son, [25] and John Hill that the scene contrasts two worlds, young and old.[26] Such ambivalence may have enabled the passage to survive transmission, but for me these explications fail to account for the tactile context and emotional import. Is there then evidence within these various texts of an articulation of – a *need to* articulate – a subconscious resistance to societal and ecclesiastical power, analogous to the psychic subversion coming out of the Junius bodies? The cultural breadth and depth of such valourized same-sex intimacy is manifested by its frequency within the poetry, and counterpointed by a similar frequency for its proscribed cognate in the various Penitential and censorious literatures, the apogee of which work might be considered that of Peter Damian. Though a skeletal analysis, this would seem suggestive of Foucauldian and Freudian plays of power, resistance, and inversion that parallel the cut and thrust we have seen both with the Junius bodies and with more contemporary ones. Applying my methodology onto this specific posing of the body and the regulation of its behaviours might offer to uncover a

[24] Clark, p. 132. In support of this proposition, he notes the earlier adoptive offer of Hrothgar following Beowulf's slaying of Grendel, and Wealtheow's troubled reaction to it. But for me, it is that psychoanalytically-persuasive combination of secrecy and early cathexis that validates a libidinal interpretation.
[25] Frantzen, *Closet,* p. 94.
[26] John M. Hill, 'The Sacrifical Synecdoche of Hands, Heads and Arms in Anglo-Saxon Heroic Story', in *Naked Before God: Uncovering the Body in Anglo-Saxon England*, ed. by R. M. Liuzza (New York and London: Routledge, 2002), pp. 116-137, p. 125.

subconscious narrative confounding not only the putative Germanic abhorrence of same-sex sexual contact, but also the prevailing modern assessment of Anglo-Saxon … masculinity.

These themes repay consideration because they offer to resuscitate the lived Anglo-Saxon experiences that have been deadened by our more usual approaches to them, via the Homilies and Penitentials, catalogues of either idealistic sanctimony or browbeaten remorse. Such narratives – even ostensibly neutral ones like the *Chronicles* – are obliged to conform to the regulatory frameworks governing their production, and the lives emerging from them are inevitably deformed by that contact with power. But the bodies we have seen through Junius speak rather of red blood coursing through real veins, of tumescence and degenerescence responding to deeply felt subjective need. Even as they are contorted by the Lord's requirements, they abjure the anaesthetizing effects of power – that Foucauldian and Freudian need for pliant bodies – to suggest to us the pleasures that the Anglo-Saxons took from and in their daily lives. As much as does any cultural imperative, these pleasures constitute (and reveal) the individual as individual, a self-affirmation grounded in the id, and the various slippages and counter-narratives in the corpus open up compelling possibilities for reanimating the Anglo-Saxon soma. It is a dynamic captured, though in a different context and for different ends, by Joseph Conrad: 'It pacified its unrest; and in their own way the most ardent of revolutionaries are perhaps doing no more but seeking for peace in common with the rest of mankind – the peace of soothed vanity, of satisfied appetites, or perhaps of appeased conscience'.[27]

[27] Joseph Conrad, *The Secret Agent*, ed. by John Lyon (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), p. 61.

Plates 1 – 12

Souillac images sourced from Google Images

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Fig. 1 Trumeau, Sainte Marie Abbey Church, Souillac

Fig. 2 Trumeau, left hand face, Sainte Marie Abbey Church, Souillac

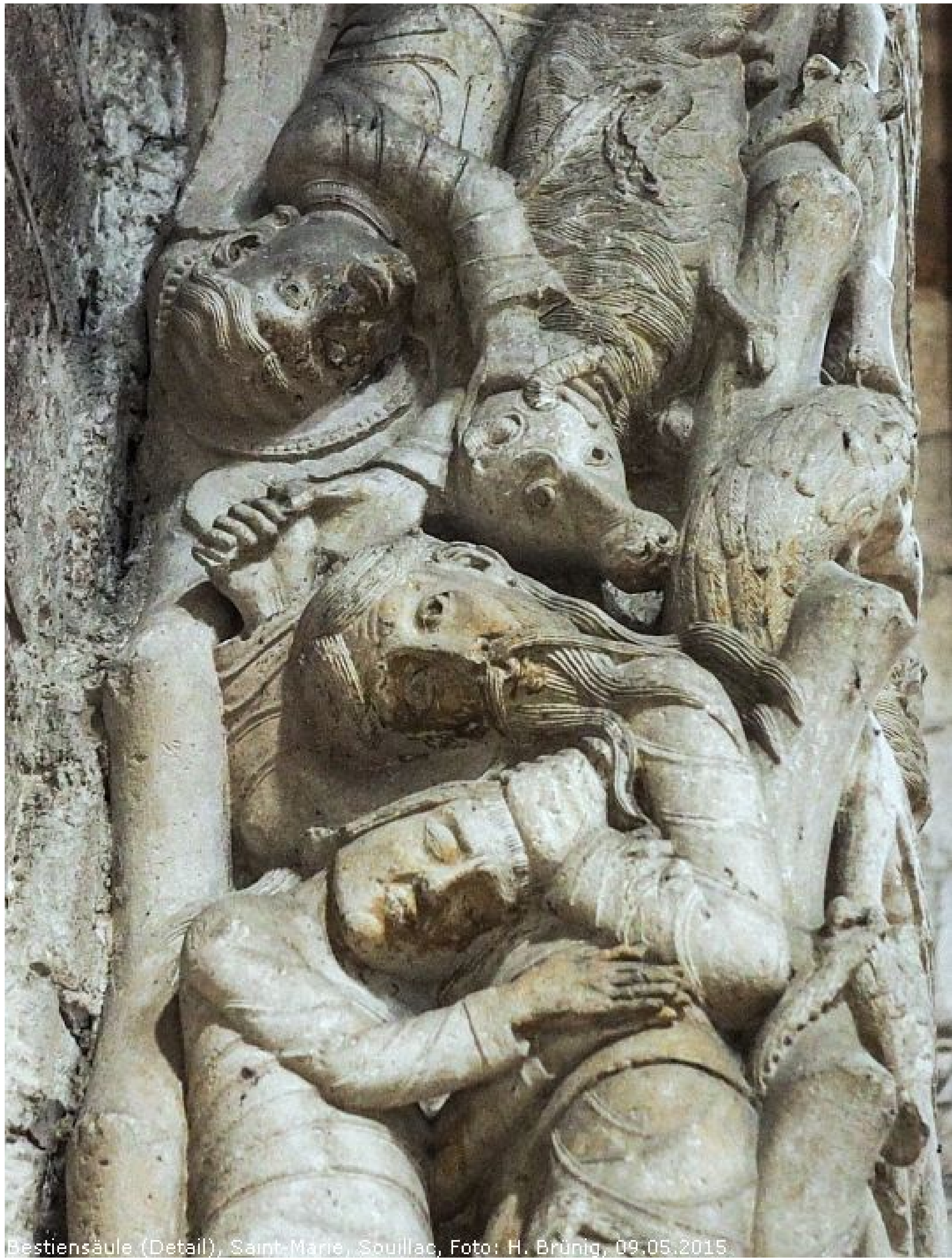

Fig. 3 Trumeau, left hand side, Sainte Marie Abbey Church, Souillac

Fig. 4 Trumeau, capital, front face, Sainte Marie Abbey Church, Souillac

Fig. 5 Trumeau, right hand side, Sainte Marie Abbey Church, Souillac

Fig. 6 Trumeau, right hand face, Sainte Marie Abbey Church, Souillac

Fig. 7 Trumeau, front face, Sainte Marie Abbey Church, Souillac

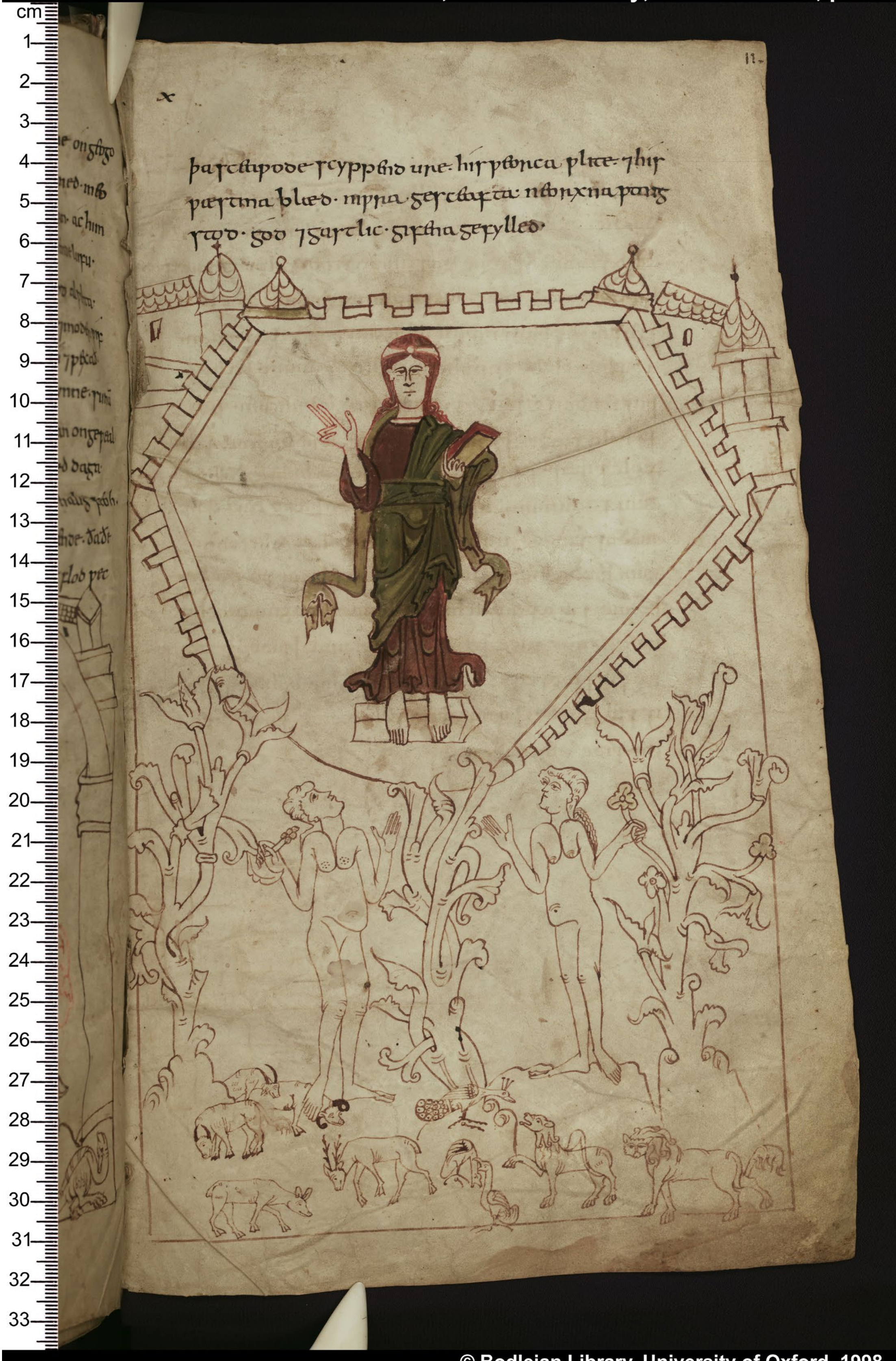

Fig. 8 ‘Adam and Eve in Paradise’

Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS. Junius 11, p. 10

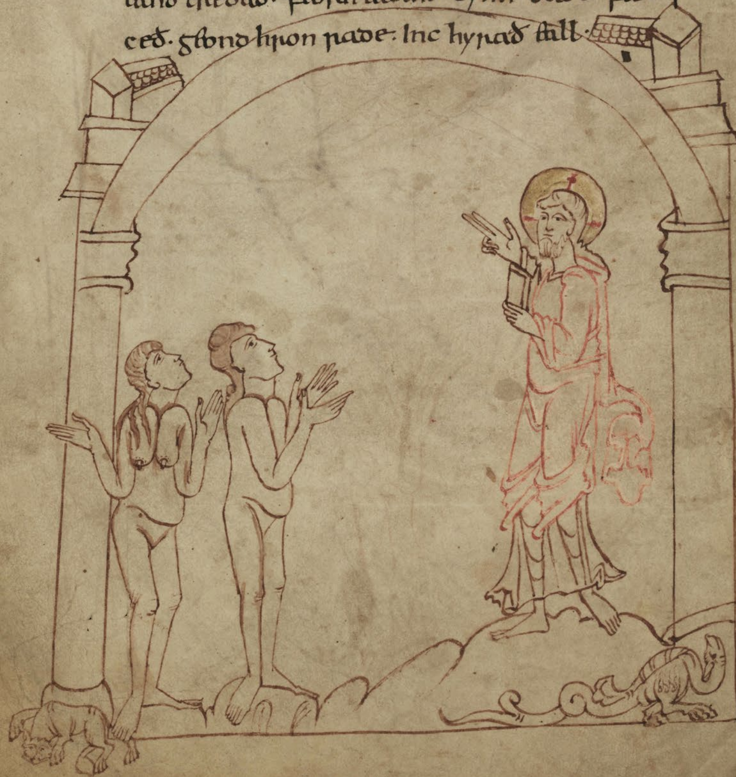

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Fig. 9 ‘Adam and Eve before God’

Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS. Junius 11, p. 31

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Fig. 10 ‘Eve Tempts Adam’

Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS. Junius 11, p. 39

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Fig. 11 ‘Adam and Eve’s Remorse’

Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS. Junius 11, p. 34

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Fig. 12 ‘Adam and Eve Know Nakedness’

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