

Happiness and the Psalms

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Throughout Anglo-Saxon England, on each day of the year, at all hours of the day, thousands of men and women sang the psalms. Harried school-children fumbled with their styli as they scrawled psalm verses into the hard wax of their tablets.¹ People in the midst of profound emotion recited psalms, and during the daily liturgy and offices throughout Christendom the psalms echoed off the walls of chapels and churches, cloisters and cathedrals. If any poetry could be said to have saturated the Anglo-Saxon literate classes, it was the poetry of King David and his psalmists. It is no surprise, then, that the imagery of the psalms pervades Old English poetry. Words and phrases that were an integral part of daily prayer sound in the literary productions of those who prayed. Joseph Dyer reminds us, ‘Years of daily encounters with the prayers of the psalmist fostered a rich

1 Six such tablets were found in Springmount Bog in County Antrim, Ireland. See George Hardin Brown, ‘The Psalms as the Foundation of Anglo-Saxon Learning,’ 4. The Psalter was one of the primary books in an Anglo-Saxon education. See Bede, *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum*, vol. 3, v; and Pierre Riché, *Education and Culture in the Barbarian West*, 318. Cassiodorus says that students begin with the psalms: ‘Psalterii quoque proprium est quod per eum legis diuinae sanctitas introitur. Non enim tirones incohant a Genesi, non ab apostolo, non inter ipsa initia auctorita euangelica sancta pulsatur; sed, licet psalterium quartus codex sit auctoritatis diuinae, primum tamen tirones incohantes scripturas sanctas, inde legendi faciunt decenter initium. (A further peculiarity of the psalter is that it is the entry into the divine law. Novices do not begin with Genesis or St Paul; initially we do not knock at the door of the sacred authority of the gospel. Though the psalter is the fourth book authorized by God, it is fittingly the first with which novices begin when embarking on the holy Scriptures.) ‘Praefatio,’ cap. xvi, in *Cassiodorus: Explanation of the Psalms*, trans. Patrick G. Walsh, vol. 1, 41; *Magni Aurelii Cassiodori expositio Psalmorum*, ed. Marcus Adriaen, 22.

contextuality of associations.²² These associations included not only words but also images, later partially reconstituted in vernacular poetry. When we look for the source of an image, we may do well to look in the Old Testament, perhaps among the psalms. Patrick Wormald wrote that an 'Old Testament model is always a likely inspiration for an image cultivated or a policy pursued.'²³ When we observe the same appositional and accumulative style in both Old English poetry and the psalms, we might wonder whether the songs of the scriptorium were implicitly measured against the songs of the psalter. In short, as Dyer writes, 'it would be difficult to overestimate the power of the psalms in the lives of those who prayed and sang the Office.'²⁴ A relation between Old English literature and the psalms is felicitous since images or phrases that are found both in the psalms and in the poetry can link us to a long intellectual tradition of Christian commentary. We can make sense of the poetry in part by making sense of the psalms. Whatever else an *eadig wer* might be in vernacular verse, he was primarily the figure of the first psalm: the blessed or happy man (*beatus uir*). Thus, when we read in *Andreas* that Matthew was *eadig ond onmod* (blessed and resolute [line 54a]), the first psalm hovers around that claim. Judith, too, is called *eadig*. Strangely, she is called *eadig* at the moment that she is threatened with rape. The poem *Judith* is not very clear on the subject of her happiness. However, commentary on the first psalm may help us to understand what may have been intended by the term at that moment in the poem.

Psalms in Anglo-Saxon England

How widely known were the psalms in Anglo-Saxon England? The psalms were extant there in dozens of manuscripts, in a number of versions, and in various books. The books in which psalms are found are chiefly psalters and breviaries, although psalms occasionally appear elsewhere, as well. A psalter is an independently bound liturgical book that contains all 150 psalms along with liturgical material such as calendars,

2 Joseph Dyer, 'The Singing of Psalms in the Early-Medieval Office,' 535.

3 Patrick Wormald, *The Making of English Law*, 122.

4 Dyer, 'The Singing of Psalms,' 538. Jean Châtillon says that the psalter sufficed for the education of most medieval monks; see his 'La Bible dans les Écoles du xiie siècle,' 168. The close stylistic relation of Old English and Anglo-Latin poetry to scripture is famously made by David Howlett, *British Books in Biblical Style*.

canticles, and litanies.⁵ Of the thirty-seven remaining Anglo-Saxon psalters and psalter fragments, about seventeen are wholly or partially glossed in Old English.⁶ These include the famous eighth-century Vespasian Psalter from Canterbury and the tenth-century Junius Psalter from Winchester. On the third folio of the Vespasian Psalter, Cotton Vespasian A i, an anonymous scribe has written approvingly, 'Psalmus tranquillitas animarum est' (A psalm is stillness for the soul).⁷ Most psalters are magnificent volumes meant for public display or private devotion. Perhaps the best-known Old English psalter includes a translation of the first fifty psalms into Old English prose by King Alfred. Alfred knew the psalms as a boy and collected them into a book that he is said to have carried with him.⁸ His prose translation of the psalms are extant in the Paris Psalter (Paris BN lat. 8824, not to be confused with the other Paris Psalter, BN lat. 8846). A breviary is an independently bound liturgical book that contains all of the material necessary to perform monastic offices. Although none survives from Anglo-Saxon England, at least five books that are much like breviaries are mentioned in Anglo-Saxon records.⁹ These likely would have included the *Trinia oratio* (prayers comprised of psalms and collects), the seven penitential psalms, and various psalms and psalm verses required in daily prayer and petition. Psalms could also be found in liturgical books such as pontificals, ordines, benedictionals, sacramentaries, and monastic *regulae*.

There was no standard book of psalms in Anglo-Saxon England. The psalms themselves were composed in Hebrew and were thought by early

5 Phillip Pulsiano, 'Psalters,' 45.

6 Phillip Pulsiano, 'Psalter Glosses' in *The Blackwell Encyclopedia of Anglo-Saxon England*, ed. Michael Lapidge, John Blair et al., 380–1; Pulsiano, 'Psalters,' 61–85. See also Minnie Cate Morrell, *A Manual of Old English Biblical Materials*, 45. But see Mechthild Gretsch, 'The Junius Psalter Gloss,' 85–121, who claims that there are ten completely glossed psalters and two partially glossed psalters (85). Pulsiano, 'Psalters,' 70, records seventeen sigla for glossed psalters. Gretsch appears to discount twelfth-century psalters with Old English glosses, psalters brought to England in the tenth and eleventh centuries, and psalter fragments.

7 *Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts in Microfiche Facsimile*. I, f. 3. Tranquility is a reflex of the Greek notion of ataraxia, which was important to Epicurean and Stoic notions of happiness, discussed in terms of the psalms below.

8 The claim is made by William of Malmesbury (Allen J. Frantzen, *King Alfred*, 90). On Alfred's authorship of the first fifty Old English prose psalms, see Patrick P. O'Neill, *King Alfred's Old English Prose Translation of the First Fifty Psalms*, 73–96.

9 Alicia Corrêa, 'Daily Office Books: Collectars and Breviaries,' in *The Liturgical Books of Anglo-Saxon England*, ed. Richard W. Pfaff, 52.

medieval commentators to have been collected from numerous sources by the Old Testament prophet and scribe Ezra.¹⁰ In ensuing centuries, several versions of the psalms circulated in late antique and early medieval Europe. After the Hebrew, the next major Western version known to us is the Septuagint Greek, translated into Alexandrian koine sometime during the second century. Of the psalms, there was no Old Latin version, *per se*, but many vulgar Latin translations from the Greek and Hebrew circulated – St Jerome, a fourth-century doctor of the Catholic church, joked that there were as many translations as manuscripts. These Old Latin texts are rare in Anglo-Saxon England, but the Venerable Bede and Bishop Boniface knew some of them.¹¹ Bede tells us that in the late seventh century, an Old Latin Bible came to his monastery at Wearmouth-Jarrow from Vivarium, Cassiodorus's monastery. Cassiodorus, author of a hugely influential commentary on the psalms, used both these Old Latin psalms and Jerome's Latin translation from the Hebrew. The Old Latin psalms were collected into an old Roman Psalter, so called by Jerome, which is close to the psalter used by Jerome's contemporary and doctor of the church, Saint Augustine of Hippo. By 392, Jerome had thrice translated the psalter into Latin at the behest of Pope Damasus, once when in Rome and twice again while he was living in Bethlehem. The first is known, as was its predecessor, as the Roman Psalter, and is probably Jerome's cursory revision of the

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- 10 Hilary of Poitiers, *Tractatus super psalmos*, in Sancti Hilarii episcopi Pictaviensis *Tractatus super psalmos*, ed. Anton Zingerle, 9: 'Esdras enim, ut antiquæ traditiones ferunt, incompósitos eos et pro auctorum ac temporum diversitate dispersos in volumen unum collegit et rettulit.' Jerome says the same thing in his second preface to the psalter; see *Biblia sacra iuxta vulgatam versionem*, ed. R. Weber et al., 768.
- 11 Richard Marsden, *The Text of the Old Testament in Anglo-Saxon England*, 53 and 70. Old Latin psalm variants are recorded in the margins of an eighth- or ninth-century Visigothic psalter, the Codex Cavensis. See Samuel Berger, *Histoire de la Vulgate*, 15. Such mixed texts were popular in Ireland, as well; see Marsden, *The Text of the Old Testament*, 49. It is not unreasonable to assume such marginalia travelled in Anglo-Saxon England. Anglo-Saxons had little or no knowledge of Hebrew, with the important exception of that had from Jerome's writings on Hebrew words and letters. Folio 7 of Cotton Vespasian A.i lists 'Hebrew' letters and their meanings; the letters are Greek, and the Hebrew names do not correspond to the phonological value of the Greek letters. The source of the incorrect meanings seems to be a misreading of Jerome; for example, Beit is said to mean 'filius' (son). In Jerome's *Liber interpretationis hebraicorum nominum*, ed. P. de Lagarde, G. Morin, and M. Adriaen (119 and 130, respectively), Beth is said to mean 'domus' (house) and 'filia vel mensura' (daughter or measure). For a better appreciation of Hebrew in Anglo-Saxon England, we await a monograph by Damien Fleming of the University of Indiana-Purdue University Indianapolis, who kindly advanced me his chapter on Hebrew letters.

Old Latin from the Greek Septuagint.¹² It is reprinted today in the Clementine Vulgate Bible. Jerome later modified the psalms further with the help of a multilingual Bible called the *Hexapla* in the library of Origen, the great Christian Platonist, in the holy land. This second version, introduced by Charlemagne into the Gaulish liturgy, became known as the Gallican Psalter, after its popularity in the early medieval Gaulish church. A third version follows the Hebrew directly and is known as the *Psalterium iuxta Hebraicum*; it is sometimes printed in the Clementine Vulgate alongside the Roman Psalter. No Western liturgy employs this third 'Hebrew' version.

Jerome's Vulgate was not readily accepted, and this antipathy continued into the ninth century. When Jerome's translation first arrived in Tripoli and her bishop read Jonah 4:6, a riot broke out – Jerome had corrected the Old Latin *cucurbita* (gourd) to the more accurate *hedera* (ivy). He was accused of sacrilege, and both Rufinus and Augustine chastised him publicly for his translation.¹³ Christians were especially severe with Jerome when it came to the psalms, their most cherished songs. Jerome's *Commentarioli in psalmos* was meant to redress his wounded dignity. However well Jerome may have translated them anew, the Old Latin psalms had already found their way into liturgical formulae and were thus frozen. In this antiquated guise they influenced Old English poems such as *Genesis* and *Exodus*.¹⁴ Early Anglo-Saxon churches employed the Roman Psalter, while Gaul (and Ireland) most often employed the eponymous Gallican Psalter. It was not until tenth-century monastic reforms that the Gallican Psalter came to dominate English practice, and English psalters like the Bosworth Psalter were emended to reflect Gallican readings. The great exception is Bede, who compiled an abbreviated psalter from verses unique to Jerome's *Iuxta Hebraicum*. Sometimes known as the *psalterium idioticum*, it was entitled *Collectio Psalterii Bedae seu Parvum Psalterium* by Alcuin, Charlemagne's celebrated court scholar,

12 The complicated history of the Old Latin psalms is discussed by Mechthild Gretsch, *The Intellectual Foundations of the English Benedictine Reform*, 21–5, esp. 24n46. Jerome was dissociated from this first revision by Donatien deBruyne, 'Le Problème du Psautier Romain,' 101–26; see Morrell, *A Manual of Old English Biblical Materials*, 211–12.

13 Stefan Rebenich, *Jerome* (London: Routledge, 2002), 57. See also Germanus Morin, ed., 'Praefatio,' in *S. Hieronymi presbyteri commentarioli in Psalmos*, 167.

14 Marsden, *The Text of the Old Testament in Anglo-Saxon England*, 52–3; and Paul Remley, *Old English Biblical Verse*, CSASE 16, 3–4.

in a letter of 802.¹⁵ Like Alcuin, Charlemagne's biographer Einhard was uneasy with Bede's version, which came to be known by the ninth century as the psalter of St Jerome.¹⁶ Alcuin's own psalmic florilegium, made a generation later, follows not Jerome's Hebrew but the old Roman Psalter.¹⁷ Perhaps Bede execrated Irish usage to such a degree that, in distinction to Irish practice, Bede championed the *Iuxta Hebraicum* psalter both in his own abbreviated psalter and in the Codex Amiatinus, the great pandect produced during his time at Wearmouth-Jarrow. He is likely also to have appreciated the fidelity of Jerome's translations to the Hebrew, and Bede's abbreviated psalter may simply have been a scholar's tool for remembering which verses differed among the versions. If Alcuin and Bede disagreed on the better version of the psalms, we are unlikely to find consensus among Anglo-Saxons generally.

Nevertheless, there is surprising consistency in Old English translations of the psalms.¹⁸ The psalms were translated into Old English in two ways. First, the Latin psalms were glossed.¹⁹ There are fourteen psalters with Old English interlinear glosses: Vespasian, Junius, Cambridge, Royal or Regius, Eadwine, Stowe or Spelman, Vitellius, Tiberius, Lambeth, Arundel, Salisbury, Bosworth, Blickling or Morgan, and Paris (BN lat. 8824). In addition, there are glosses to the fragmentary Sondershäuser Psalter and Cambridge Pembroke 312, along with a binding strip known as the Haarlem fragment. These glosses are not confined to the psalter. In the Junius Psalter, the Benedictine office of prime is given in full, and the prayers include psalm verses glossed in Old English. A second way in which the psalms were translated into Old English is represented in Paris BN lat. 8824, the

15 Edited by Fraipont, *Opera rhythmica Bedae uenerabilis*, 406: 'Insuper Alcuinus hoc opus Bedae anno 802 laudare videtur his verbis: "Psalterium paruum quod dicitur beati Bedae presbyteri, quod ille collegit per versus dulces in laud Dei ex orationibus per singulos psalmos iuxta hebraicam veritatem.'" See also Alcuin, *Epistola* 156, 'Ad Aronem,' PL 100:407B; MGH Epist. IV, ed. Dümmler, 417.

16 Benedicta Ward, *Bede and the Psalter*, 13. The Codex Regius, a ninth- or tenth-century two-volume Bible (BN lat. 3563 and 3564), modelled on the revision by Theodulf of Orleans, contains a 'Hebrew' Psalter. See Berger, *Histoire de la Vulgate*, 97.

17 Marsden, *The Text of the Old Testament in Anglo-Saxon England*, 225. Alcuin was concerned that monks know and understand by heart what is sung by the mouth and tongue; see his *Enchiridion*, PL 100:345B.

18 Old English glosses are collated for the first fifty psalms by Phillip Pulsiano, *Old English Glossed Psalters*.

19 See Gretsch, *The Intellectual Foundations*, 26–7.

Paris Psalter, inscribed by Wulfwinus Cada in the eleventh century.²⁰ In this manuscript, two columns contain, in the first, the Roman Psalter corrected with Gallican and Hebrew variants and, in the second, an Old English prose translation of the first fifty psalms attributed to Alfred; these are followed by a verse translation of the remaining hundred. The complete psalter is followed by canticles, that is songs from other Old Testament books, as well as other liturgical material. Almost every psalm is prefaced by an Old English introduction that describes the meaning and use of the psalm. These introductions are distinct from the titles and introductory verses to the Vulgate psalms, which are called inscriptions to the psalms.²¹ The third psalm, for example, begins in the Vulgate with an inscription noting that David sang the psalm when he fled from his son Absalom. The Old English prefaces that inscription with its own: 'David lamented this evil to God, as does each man who sings this psalm; his own difficulty, either of body or mind, he laments to God; just as Christ did when he sang the psalm: to the Jews he sang it, and to Judas Iscariot who betrayed him.'²²

This Old English inscription and the traditional Latin inscriptions illustrate how a psalm was set into a wider theological and liturgical tradition. Each psalm, in fact, carried with it interpretations established by the church fathers.²³ Cassiodorus, one of the most prolific commentators on the psalms, wrote concerning the third psalm that when Absalom fled from David, he was ensnared around the neck by the branches of an oak tree. 'This was a prefiguration of the Lord's betrayer.'²⁴ Through the image of an ensnaring tree, Cassiodorus associates the third psalm with Judas,

20 Dating by N.R. Ker, *Catalogue of Manuscripts Containing Anglo-Saxon*; see Morrell, *A Manual of Old English Biblical Materials*, 134. A similar psalm is the so-called Kentish hymn, a paraphrase of Psalm 50, *The Anglo-Saxon Poetic Records*, vol. 6, 87. See Sarah Keefer, *Psalm-Poem and Psalter-Glosses*.

21 One of the only available commentaries dedicated to these inscriptions is *Gregory of Nyssa's Treatise on the Inscriptions of the Psalms*, trans. Ronald E. Heine.

22 O'Neill, *King Alfred's Old English Prose Translation*, 101: 'David ... seofode þa yrmðe to Drihtne; swa deþ ælc þæra manna, þe þisne sealm singð, his sylfes earfoðu, ægðer ge modes ge lichaman, he sofað to Drihtne; swa dyde Crist þonne he þysne sealm sang: be Iudeum he hine sang and by Iudan Scarioth þe hine læwde.' The phrase *be Iudeum he hine sang* may be clarified by O'Neill's note to the verse that cites a commentary, 'Aliter, vox Christi ad Patrem de Iudaeis' (169).

23 Joseph Dyer, 'The Psalms in Monastic Prayer,' 66: 'As the Psalms began to take on an important role in the prayer life of the Christian church, there arose a considerable literature of Psalm commentaries that provided not only orthodox interpretations of every line of the psalms but also models of text interpretation.'

24 *Cassiodorus*, trans. P.G. Walsh, vol. 1, 68.

which is likely why the Old English inscription to this psalm mentions Judas, who hanged himself after betraying Christ. Other than Cassiodorus, major sources for psalm interpretations are Augustine, Jerome, and Hilary of Poitiers. Their works on the psalms were extant in Anglo-Saxon England. The Old English inscriptions to the psalms follow not these but an Irish compilation long attributed to Jerome, *Breviarium in psalmos*.²⁵ Other sources for the Old English include an anonymous Gaulish commentary known as the *Glosa [sic] psalmorum*; a seventh- or eighth-century anonymous commentary called the *Expositio psalmorum*; and an incomplete, anonymous Latin Psalter commentary from Northumbria in the eighth century, now Vatican MS Palatinus latinus 68 (Gneuss, *Handlist of Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts*, 909).²⁶ In addition, there are dozens of medieval commentaries on particular psalms or groups of psalms, such as Alcuin's commentary on the seven penitential psalms and his commentary on the gradual psalms.²⁷ These offer literal, allegorical, and spiritual interpretations of various terms and phrases.

As a brief example of how such interpretations might illuminate Old English poetry for us, Psalm 50:17 (which Benedict, in his monastic rule, directs every monk to say upon arising) asks the Lord to 'open my lips, and my mouth shall speak out your praise.'²⁸ Alcuin comments that these are the lips of the prophet, which were closed by the condition of sin and are opened by forgiveness. Only when the lips are opened by forgiveness can the inner heart speak praises of the Lord.²⁹ The Junius Psalter glosses this verse, 'Dryhten **weleras** mine **ontyn** ðu & **muð** min bodað lof ðin' (emphasis mine). In the Old English poem *The Whale*, part of the Exeter Book's Physiologus, the poet remarks:

þonne hine on holme hungor bysgað
 ond þone aglæcan ætes lysteþ,
 ðonne se mereweard **muð ontyned**,
 wide **weleras**;

25 O'Neill, *King Alfred's Old English Prose Translation*, 35. It is number 629 in *Clavis Patrum Latinorum*, ed. Eligius Dekkers; ed. Vallarsi in *PL* 26, 821–1270.

26 O'Neill, *King Alfred's Old English Prose Translation*, 34–44.

27 See Richard Sharpe, *A Handlist of the Latin Writers of Great Britain and Ireland*, 42. Alcuin's commentaries are printed in *PL* 100.

28 Jerusalem Bible translation; Psalm 51:15 in the Protestant reckoning. Here and hereafter I use the Vulgate numbers. The Benedictine regula was adopted for Anglo-Saxon use; the results are the *Regularis Concordia*, ed. and trans. Thomas Symons.

29 *PL* 100:586B. Alcuin takes this directly from Cassiodorus.

[When hunger occupies him on the sea, and seduces the monster with food,
then the sea warden **opens** his **mouth**, his wide **lips**.]

Then a sweet fragrance is emitted from deep inside the whale, and unwary prey are drawn in and trapped by this figure of the Devil.³⁰ This image is doubly strange: whales don't have lips. However, it begins to make more sense to us if we set the whale's open mouth in its psalmic context. The poet's appositive does not ask us merely to imagine a whale's lips but to recall the language of the daily monastic psalms. We can then observe a contrast between a physically alluring, appetitive fragrance of food and a spiritually alluring sweetness of prayer.³¹ By invoking the first prayer of the monastic day, this portion of *The Whale* reminds hungry monks that upon waking, their minds should be on prayer, not on food.³² Consistent with this image, the poem suggests allegorically that a change of heart brings God's immanent mercy, which gives salvation from the tempting mouth of hell.³³ In this example, then, the psalms offer us a wider field in which to observe the poem's images at play.

Eadig

References to the psalms are scattered throughout Anglo-Saxon poetry. They are unsurprisingly most frequent in poems like *Genesis* or *Christ* that deal directly with scripture, or poems like *Guthlac* or *Elene* that deal with explicitly Christian topics. Today's readers are less likely to recognize these allusions than were Anglo-Saxon monks whose common duty it was to memorize the entire psalter in Latin. The importance of these allusions can be illustrated by examining an intriguing instance of the first psalm's

30 Jerome associates the whale with the devil, as does this poet. See Jerome, *Commentaria in Jonam*, PL 25:1131B.

31 This metaphor is used by Cassiodorus of the psalms: 'Their marvellous sweetness does not grow bitter with worldly corruptions, but retains its worth and is continually enhanced with the grace of the purest sweetness' (Walsh, *Cassiodorus*, vol. 1, 25).

32 Thus Ephesians 5:14 reminds readers that sleepers should rise to be in Christ, and after waking (Eph. 5:19), 'speak to one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs.'

33 The whale is a site for conversion, as the Jonah story indicates. The significance of the Jonah story in Anglo-Saxon England is discussed by Paul Szarmach in 'Three Versions of the Jonah Story,' 183–92. This is the *significatio* given the same image in 'The Whale' of Arundel 292, a thirteenth-century English Physiologus. See Szarmach, 'The Whale,' 350–1. The whale 'doð men hungren and have ðrist, / And mani oðer sinful list; / Tolleð men to him wið his onde [breath], / Woso him folgeð, he findeð sonde [shame].'

first line in the Anglo-Saxon poem, *Judith*. In the Vulgate, the psalm begins, '[B]eatus vir qui non abiit in consilio impiorum et in via peccatorum non stetit et in cathedra pestilentiae non sedit' (Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful [1611 King James Version]). The first psalm is said to contain within it all other psalms, some say the entirety of scripture. Jerome writes in his homilies on the psalms that the psalter is like a mansion, and the 'main entrance to the mansion of the Psalter is the first psalm.'³⁴ Gregory of Nyssa writes in his *Treatise on the Inscriptions of the Psalms* that the psalter is 'arranged sequentially according to the logic of virtue.' The psalms, he continues, 'have been formed like a sculptor's tools for the true overseer who, like a craftsman, is carving our souls to the divine likeness.'³⁵ The first psalm directs the reader to that likeness.

Gregory writes, 'The goal of the virtuous life is blessedness.' The blessed man is the *beatus vir*. The Hebrew term behind *beatus* is *ashrei*, meaning 'happy or blessed,' but it implies 'fortune or luck.' *Happy* derives from the Old Norse *happ*, and it also means 'good luck or good fortune.'³⁶ *Ashrei* was translated into the Greek of the Septuagint as *makarios*, the same term used in the Beatitudes of Matthew, chapter 5, and Luke, chapter 6.³⁷ The Old English equivalent of this Greek term is *eadig*, an adjective cognate with Old High German *otag* and Gothic *audag*, presumably derived from the proto-Germanic *audanaz.³⁸ All glossed Old English psalters gloss *beatus vir* as *eadig wer*.³⁹ In that consistency, we can presume a connection between Old English *eadig* and Latin *beatus* in the minds of literate Anglo-Saxons. King Alfred's Paris Psalter translates Psalm 1:1 as 'Eadig byð se wer þe ne gæð on geþeaht unrihtwisra.' The phrase *eadig bið se* is as ubiquitous in the psalter as it is in the Old English psalms (for example, Psalms 64:4, 83:5, 93:11, 111:1, 126:6, and 145:4). The phrase appears in

34 *The Homilies of St. Jerome*, trans. Sister Marie L. Ewald, vol. 1, 3.

35 Gregory of Nyssa's *Treatise*, II.cciii, 193, and II.cxxxvii, 165, respectively.

36 This is also the meaning of *beatus* in secular Roman school texts. Varro reports that *beatus* is a word having to do with fortune and luck. See Roland G. Kent, *Varro*, vol. 1, 88–9.

37 W.E. Vine, *Vine's Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*, s.v. 'Blessed.'

38 Sigund Feist, *Vergleichendes Wörterbuch der Gotischen Sprache*, s.v. 'audags.' See also Helmut Gneuss, *Lehnbildungen und Lehnbedeutungen im Altenglischen*, §21, 61–2.

39 Pulsiano, *Old English Glossed Psalters*, 1. Dialect variants are represented by the Eadwine Psalter, Cambridge, Trinity College R. 17.1 (which uses the term *Æði*), and the Arundel Psalter, London BL Arundel 60 (which uses the term *eadī*).

poems of the Exeter Book like *The Seafarer* (*eadig bið se þe eaþmod leofaþ* [Blessed is he who lives humbly/obediently], line 107) and *Maxims I* (*eadig bið se þe in his eple gepihð* [Blessed is he who thrives in his homeland], line 37). Old English *eadig bið se* maxims, it seems, ultimately take their form from the psalms.

Old English poems allude not only to a psalm, and do so across languages, but also to the interpretative apparatus of a psalm. At the outset of the fragment *Judith*, neighbour to *Beowulf* in Cotton Vitellius A.xv, the poet characterizes Judith as an *eadigan mægð* (blessed maid [line 35a]).⁴⁰ It is a strange epithet at this particular point in the poem. The poem begins in media res in the fortress of Holofernes, with the depraved commander of the Assyrian forces threatening Judith's Hebrews. Holofernes is feasting with his thanes, as Belshazzar was in Daniel, chapter 5. He and his men become loud, *blydde* (line 23a), so that they can be heard from far off. One is reminded here of Hrothgar's celebrations in *Beowulf*, during which Grendel hears from far off *hludne in healle* (loudness in the hall [line 89a]).⁴¹ Loudness in both poems brings the downfall of the partygoers. This loudness recollects, and in *Judith* is distinguished from, the loud praise of God in Psalm 32 (33): 'Cantate ei canticum nouum bene psallite ei in uociferatione' (glossed in Old English in the Stowe Psalter, 'Syngað him canticc niwne well syngað him on stemne *hludre*').⁴² The same loudness characterizes the doomed soldiers as they wait outside the dead Holofernes' tent (line 270b). Now noisy, drunk, and lustful, Holofernes, looking to physical rather than to spiritual pleasure, threatens to rape Judith. The poem reads:

Het ða niða geblonden
þa **eadigan** mægðe ofstum fetigan
to his bedreste **beagum** gehlæste,
hringum gehrodene. (lines 34b–37a)

40 On the manuscript and major critical approaches to the poem, see Andy Orchard, *Pride and Prodigies: Studies in the Monsters of the Beowulf Manuscript*, 5–16.

41 A number of translators render *hlude* as 'laughter,' but there is no connotation of laughter to the term. Cocks crow with *hluda* voices, and the month of March is called *Hlyda* because of wind and storm. See Joseph Bosworth and T. Northcote Toller, *An Anglo-Saxon Dictionary*, s.v. 'hlud.'

42 Emphasis mine. Andrew C. Kimmens, *The Stowe Psalter*, 56. 'Sing unto Him a new song; play skilfully with a loud noise' (King James Version).

[The one corrupted by evil commanded then that the **blessed/happy** maid be fetched hastily to his bed, laden with **rings**, adorned with **bracelets** (emphasis mine).]

The passage is thick with biblical allusion, not only to Psalm 1:1 but, in lines 36b and 37a, possibly to the story of Tamar and Judah in Genesis, chapter 38. (In Old English, Judah is often spelled *Iudas*, just like Judas of the New Testament and of the Old English commentary on Psalm 3.)⁴³ The story of Tamar and the first psalm coincide in their portraits of blessed or happy persons. Tamar pretended to be a harlot so that she might conceive a child with Judah. Seeing her, not knowing who she was, and lustful for a harlot, Judah gave her his bracelets and rings as a token. The Old English Heptateuch translates the relevant scriptural passage as *ðinne bring & ðinne beah*.⁴⁴ In the Old English poem, Judith is adorned allusively with the same rings and bracelets as is Tamar. They signify Judith's blessedness and her role in the salvation of her people. Later in the scriptural story, Tamar reveals these rings and bracelets in public to shame Judah and to save her own life, using the same words Judah had once used to wound his own father, Jacob, as he presented Jacob with the bloody cloak of Joseph. Similarly, when Judith approaches Bethulia, the poet adds the extraneous detail that she and her handmaid are *beahbrodene* (ring adorned [line 138b]) as they approach the city gate to be identified. She is greeted by crowds who approach *ða Peodenæs mægð þusendmælum* (the Lord's maid in the thousands [line 165]). Why this poet, perhaps alone of all Old English poets, would number the crowd, is uncertain – perhaps in recollection of the crowds that gathered around Jesus or St Alban. However, the number may be read as more allusive than descriptive: *folc ... þusendmælum* (lines 163–5) recollects Psalm 3:7, *milia populi* (Old English, *þusenda folces*). And the psalm, like the poem, expresses the thought that the speaker will not be afraid of the Lord's enemies.

43 See for example, Matthew 26:47 in R.M. Liuzza, *The Old English Version of the Gospels*, vol. 1, 56.

44 Emphasis mine. Gen. 38:18. *The Old English Version of the Heptateuch*, ed. S.J. Crawford, 176. Fred Robinson argues that the rings are a means to allure men. See his 'Five Textual Notes on the Old English Judith,' 47–8.

An allusion to the story of Tamar (and possibly to Psalm 3) associates Judith with the righteous, the blessed, the *happy* women of history,⁴⁵ but it still does not reveal anything about the nature of early medieval happiness. After all, it is unlikely that at a tense moment, threatened with rape, Judith is experiencing an affective mental state synonymous with gladness, Old English *sælig*. Old English *eadig* is not synonymous with a pleasurable feeling, and this may be difficult for a twenty-first-century reader to appreciate. We tend to equate happiness with pleasure. This may be an effect of a semantic collapse among terms that once distinguished various sorts of pleasure – joy, contentment, glee, happiness, and so forth – but there may also be philosophical considerations. Nineteenth-century philosophers Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill, like ancient Greek and Roman Epicureans, saw in happiness a close relation to pleasure. Bentham went further than the Epicureans and developed a calculus of pleasure by which he hoped to reach true happiness. He famously asserted that if one had more pleasure from playing push-pin (a pub game like skittles) than from reading Shakespeare, one should play push-pin. Mill, unconvinced by this hedonistic calculus, distinguished quantities of pleasure from qualities of pleasure, as well as higher pleasures from lower ones.⁴⁶ With contributions from Nietzsche and Hegel, the philosophy of happiness turned to physiology for evidence, and that turn eventually relegated happiness to the realm of psychology. This more recent physiological legacy more often than not alienates *Judith* from our empathetic appreciation of early medieval happiness. Chief among the difficulties that modern students of the poem seem to face in understanding medieval Christian happiness is modernity's secularization or abandonment of a human telos, an end to which all human life ought to tend. Alisdair MacIntyre famously argued that with 'the elimination of any notion of essential human nature and with it the abandonment of any notion of a telos leaves behind a moral scheme' alienated from its teleological context. Since nothing impels secular man to achieve salvation, the argument runs, he is without an idea of a human

45 Judith is called blessed by Hraban Maur in his *Expositio in librum Iudith*, PL 19:540D. The title of his eleventh chapter includes the phrase 'Judith, whose beauty and wisdom were admired by all.' On the influence of Maur, see Orchard, *Pride and Prodigies*, 6n42.

46 John Skorupski, 'John Stuart Mill,' 566–9. I follow Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 62–6. I would like to thank Professors Liam Harte of Westfield State College and Garreth Matthews of the University of Massachusetts for their guidance in the philosophy of happiness – all errors are my own.

nature that requires improvement.⁴⁷ This has been celebrated as the autonomy of the self, but one of its consequences is the equation of happiness with achieving pleasant emotion.⁴⁸ MacIntyre then deduces what he calls the 'emotivism' of contemporary life, a subject that bears significantly on our understanding of Judith's *eadignes*.

By supposing Judith's *eadignes* to be similar to a secular and affective, internal disposition towards happiness, we allow the possibility that Judith's motivation is ultimately self-serving rather than self-sacrificing. Of course, this makes no sense of the moment in the poem where her happiness seems predicated on a potential rape. Were one to try to formulate her happiness as self-serving, one might suggest that Judith desires to do what is right, and it is Holofernes' unintentional confirmation of that desire, by providing Judith with an antagonist for her virtue, which makes her happy. However, this formulation profoundly misrepresents the poem's Christian *eadignes*, not least because it is entirely possible that a Christian can feel miserable and yet be *eadig*. In the Old English poem *Andreas*, the apostle Matthew is pinioned by spears jutting through his hands before his eyes are gouged out, yet he is *eadig ond onmod* (happy and resolute [line 54a]). Guthlac, the English saint whose verse life appears in the Exeter Book, is racked with sickness and disease but, nevertheless, *eadig on elne* (happy/blessed in courage [line 1026a]) as he coughs and sputters. These examples illustrate that Christian, Anglo-Saxon *eadignes* is not a physical affect. Nor is it akin to Michel Foucault's idea of pleasure that derives ultimately from an exercise of power, which he suggests is the unfettered dominion of one body over another (be it a human body or an institution). Foucault's pursuit of power is analogous (but not equivalent) to a Benthamite pursuit of pleasure: both imagine pleasure as a telos of

47 MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 54–5. Without an external telos, the inward turn of theology is fastened onto the self. In his *De vera religione* (xxxix, 72), Augustine famously says, 'Noli foras ire, in teipsum redi; in interiore homine habitat veritas' (Do not go outward, return within yourself; in the inward man dwells truth [trans. Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self*]). But he intends for each man to seek God from there. It was Descartes who argued that the moral order was not found externally but built internally. The self thus became the maker and justification of moral identity. See Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, 129–44.

48 This argument is made by Kenneth Minogue, 'Ideal Communities and the Problem of Moral Identity,' 61. He is critiquing normativism, which 'misunderstands individualism by identifying it with the content of individual desires and satisfactions.' Normativism is 'the belief that moral and political philosophy should *demonstrate* the basic practical rules for distributing goods so as to constitute a just society' (41).

human activity; both suggest that a selfish pursuit of pleasure can be justified as a selfish pursuit of a common good.⁴⁹ In short, Judith's happiness has little to do with emotions, feelings, or self-interest.

What kind of happiness could Judith know at this moment of grave danger? Clearly, she is selflessly pursuing a course that she believes to be right, but is not her opinion of right and wrong culturally defined? Does her blind obedience to her religion not delude her into mistaking Christian opinion for universal moral truth? For those who reject or downplay the revelation of moral law in scripture, morality or immorality are arbitrated ultimately by reason (in which case happiness is either rational or irrational) or by shared feeling (in which case happiness is either a shared or inappropriate emotion). The eighteenth-century Scottish philosopher David Hume argued for arbitration by feeling. Sentiment, says Hume, is the gauge of morality (and sympathy with other people's pain and joy directs our reason). If we are happy at other people's pain, then our happiness is inappropriate. In this view, Judith's happiness would arise from her sensing the happiness of others – and the only one showing joy at this point in the poem seems to be Holofernes, leaving us with an inappropriate conclusion about the source of Judith's happiness.⁵⁰ Twentieth-century moral philosophers went further: Bertrand Russell argued that there are no 'moral facts,' that is, dispassionate criteria whereby something may be judged good or evil.⁵¹ Morality, and the happiness had from its exercise, is in this view a matter of personal opinion. Accordingly, individuals are imagined to establish their own criteria for the pursuit of pleasure, and these criteria are valued differently by different individuals and are thus called *values*. Postmodern moral philosophers, inheritors of Hume and Russell's more materialistic views, are thus tasked with conceiving moral grounds for common action without privileging what philosopher Todd May calls 'incommensurable values.'⁵² From this perspective, Judith's happiness

49 It is important to recognize that Foucault does not seek a common good. His program is, according to Allan Megill, more extreme than Marx's. Megill writes that for Foucault 'there is no ultimate social and political truth, no possibility of a final end of repression ... All one can do is struggle against the condition [of the extant social order], engaging in a continual guerrilla warfare, in a political theater of cruelty directed against the existing order' (Allan Megill, *Prophets of Extremity*, 188).

50 That is, Judith would be sympathetic to Holofernes' joy: she is happy because he is happy. Obviously, the potential victim of a rape does not feel happiness for the rapist. So, sympathetic or empathetic happiness is ludicrous in this instance.

51 Richard Norman, 'History of Moral Philosophy,' 590.

52 Todd May, *The Moral Theory of Poststructuralism*, 3.

would be of her own making and of equal moral worth to the happiness Holofernes takes in his wine and rapine. Any postmodern, non-traditional 'normative theories' that assent to a definition of happiness elastic enough for local variation would be entirely alien to the author of *Judith*. Consequently, they will not help us make sense of this poem.

Judith's Happiness

In both Christian and non-Christian early medieval contexts, *eadig* connotes wealth and happiness, joy and good luck. Its material sense is illustrated in *Beowulf*, line 1224, *eadig æþeling*, and line 2468, *eadig man*. Given the incommensurability of emotivist or materialist views of happiness with *Judith*, assessing the term's Christian connotations is essential to understanding how Judith can be thought happy when she is threatened with rape. Greek philosophers like Aristotle and Plato spoke of eudaimonia, which refers to long-term happiness, the sort of happiness one means when speaking of enjoying a happy life. Aristotle also uses the term *makarios* (used in the Septuagint Psalm 1:1 and uses *eudaimonia* and *makarios* interchangeably in his *Nichomachean Ethics* I, x. In a study of late antique and early medieval happiness Jiyuan Yu and Jorge Gracia write, 'It is a deeply rooted assumption of the Greeks that everyone has a final end in life and this end is happiness.'⁵³ John Calvin will write much the same thing almost two thousand years later.⁵⁴ Notably, Greek happiness is not an egoistic gratification of appetite but a pursuit of 'the gratification of the rational part of the soul.'⁵⁵ Reason was thought divine, and the pursuit of happiness was conceived as a pursuit of divinity. Later, among Christians, divinity was no longer thought to be pure reason but a being. Reason was subordinated to this being. Thus, to 'achieve happiness is not a result of cultivating reason, but rather it involves reestablishing a relationship with the divine persons.'⁵⁶ Reason might help an individual to

53 Editor's introduction to Jiyuan Yu and Jorge J. E. Gracia, eds., *Rationality and Happiness*, 3.

54 John Calvin, *Commentaries on the Epistle of Paul*, chap. 4.7 (96): 'And doubtless as the highest happiness of man is to be united to his God, so ought to be his ultimate end, to which he ought to refer all his thoughts and actions.' It is important to note that this ecstatic happiness comes to be associated with an internal affection as the moral law is internalized during the Reformation. See Jaroslav Pelikan, *Christian Doctrine and Modern Culture*, chapter 3.

55 Yu and Gracia, introduction to *Rationality and Happiness*, 4.

56 Ibid., 9.

achieve a relationship with the divine, but for Christian theologians the divine was beyond that which could be thought, to paraphrase Anselm of Canterbury. This early medieval sense of Christian happiness is most effectively described by Augustine.

Augustine considered happiness in both its experiential and formal aspects. In the first, Augustine inquired into the experience of happiness. He sought to know how the Platonic form of happiness manifests itself in human life. He distinguishes between pleasure (*gaudium*) and happiness (*beata vita* [a happy life]) and argues that hearing the term *beatus* recalls in each of us a memory of pleasure. In the *Confessions* he notes that while everyone wants happiness, each has his or her own memory of pleasure and therefore finds a different way to achieve happiness. Here, he seems to anticipate postmodern claims of a value-centred happiness: one can be happy insofar as one is free to pursue a self-gratifying pleasure. But Augustine makes an important distinction. Augustine proposes that perhaps what everyone wants is not really happiness but a revival of an experience of pleasure, 'to live according to one's own pleasure (*delectatio*).'⁵⁷ He distinguishes pleasure and pleasurable memories from happiness, in that happiness consists not only in having what one wants but also in ensuring that what one wants is good. In this last condition on happiness – that it aim at the good – Augustine takes happiness beyond an individual's orbit by positing an external 'good,' as can be found in Plato and Plotinus. The good is an objective standard beyond the exigencies of human appetite or of one's personal perspective. Thus, Augustine's second aspect of happiness is the rational pursuit of what is good for one;⁵⁸ he does not mean that one ought to rationalize personal pleasure. Augustine's second, formal aspect of happiness is fulfilled by rationally pursuing what has been set out through faith. Scripture and tradition tell a Christian that the greatest object of desire is God; thus the greatest happiness is had in His pursuit. Furthermore, true happiness, Augustine says, cannot be achieved on earth by our own means but only through Christ.⁵⁹ Christian happiness,

57 From his *Confessions*, 13.5.8, in Gareth B. Matthews, 'Two Concepts of Happiness in Augustine,' 169. I owe my understanding of this topic and my thanks for his guidance to Professor Matthews.

58 Matthews calls this Augustine's Formal Concept of Happiness, as opposed to his Experiential Concept of Happiness, described earlier. Augustine thus combines *beatitudo* with *felicitas*. See R. Spaemann, 'Glück, Glückseligkeit,' 691. Isidore of Seville follows suit in his *De differentiis verborum*, PL 83, §72.

59 John Bussanich, 'Happiness, Eudaimonism,' 413–14. See also Augustine, *Confessions*, trans. Pine-Coffin, IX, 4, 185–9. Happiness in Augustine has to do with the right use of the will; see his 'On Free Will,' in Augustine, ed. J.H.S. Burleigh, 130–1.

according to Augustine, requires one to set out on the road to salvation according to the mandates of revelation.

Augustinian and Greek views of happiness were combined uneasily in Anglo-Saxon England with the ninth-century translation of the *Consolation of Philosophy* of Boethius. Boethius was a Christian but wrote his *Consolatio* without reference either to God or to Christian doctrine. King Alfred translated all or most of the *Consolatio* into Old English and transformed it into a Christian text.⁶⁰ Throughout Alfred's dialogue, refashioned as between Mod (Mind) and Wisdom, happiness derived from earthly sources is pronounced false or illusory. As Allen Frantzen notes, 'Wisdom commands Mod to "study wisdom" because wisdom is the secret of happiness and the source of power.'⁶¹ Wisdom's central lesson is that 'true power and happiness cannot be found in the rewards of the world, but only in the strength of the soul.'⁶² Alfred introduces an image of a wheel to explain how happiness and a knowledge of God combine. Frantzen explains:

The axle of the wheel represents God, the unchanging, unmoving center, outward from which, and along the wheel's spokes, are men. 'The nave moves nearest the axle; therefore it moves more surely and more securely than the rim; so the axle may be the highest good, which we call God, and the best men travel nearest to God, as the nave rotates nearest to the axle.' The farther men range from the axle, the greater their physical suffering and spiritual confusion ... The greater one's distance from the center, the greater one's difficulty in seeing God and understanding the workings of the universe.⁶³

Alfred links proximity to God with wisdom, and wisdom with happiness. Happiness is had by seeking to know God's will. This is true happiness, as opposed to a false or illusory happiness had from material gain, wine, or lust. Let us call this latter sort *joy*.

Augustine's distinction between a *beata vita* and *gaudium* is borne out in *Judith*. His distinction is a function of the same distinction in the psalms and in psalm commentary. *Gaudium* is a sensual pleasure, a feeling of joy. In Christian contexts, the term is used to speak of spiritual joy, but also an

60 See Frantzen, *King Alfred*, 45.

61 Ibid., 53.

62 Ibid., 56. See also Matti Rissanen, 'In Search of *Happiness*,' 237–48.

63 Frantzen, *King Alfred*, 59.

imperfect joy.⁶⁴ It is the joy that accompanies the harp and drum in Genesis 31:27. It is the good fortune and abundance of the land in Deuteronomy 28:47. And it is the joy that Jesus saw before submitting himself to suffering on the cross, according to Paul's letter to the Hebrews 12:2. It is first and foremost a sensation prompted by physical or spiritual things. In Anglo-Saxon glosses, *gaudium* is often glossed *gefea* or *blisse*.⁶⁵ Anglo-Saxon hymns also tend to gloss *gaudium* as *gefea*.⁶⁶ In *Judith*, the term *gefea* describes the joy of the lean wolf as it rejoices in the forest before the Hebrews battle the troops of Holofernes (line 205b). Here the poet offers us an image of appetite at its most fundamental. There is nothing spiritual about this joy. The wolf anticipates slaughter, and that anticipation prompts its joy. The human correlative in *Judith* of joy had from anticipation is expressed with the term *bliðe*. When Judith returns home to Bethulia after being held by Holofernes, the poet tells us that the Jewish people were *bliðe* (line 159a); they anticipate victory, as Judith promises. Also *bliðe* is Holofernes; he anticipates raping Judith and becomes *on mode / bliðe* (joyful in his mind [lines 57b–58a]). However, these are short-term forms of joy that will be realized on earth. The wolf will eat his fill, the Hebrews will win their battle, and Holofernes hopes he will rape Judith. None of these expresses the long-term sense of *eadige* or *beatus*.

Also borne out in *Judith* is Alfred's link between wisdom and happiness. From an Augustinian perspective, Judith is *eadig* insofar as she pursues God in faith – and, as Augustine makes clear in his letters to his sister, in chastity. Her anticipation of happiness will be fulfilled only in heaven, not on earth. Her pursuit of God demands that she isolate herself from whatever is evil. Psalm 1 describes the just man and the wicked man, setting the image of one against the image of the other.⁶⁷ Gregory of Nyssa writes that the first psalm 'pronounces separation from evil to be blessed,

64 See s.v. 'gaudium' the *Oxford Latin Dictionary*; Alexander Souter, *A Glossary of Later Latin to 600 A.D.*; and R.E. Latham, *Revised Medieval Latin Word List from British and Irish Sources*. It is this sense of joy that C.S. Lewis pursues in *Surprised by Joy*.

65 The Lindisfarne Gospels (Skeat, *The Four Gospels*, 25–245), Matt. 5:12 and 18:13, etc. The Rushworth Gospels (Skeat, *The Four Gospels*, 25–245), Matt. 2:10, 13:14, 18:13, etc.

66 For example, Hymn 38, line 7; Hymn 73, line 10; Hymn 74, line 5; Hymn 75, lines 5 and 7, and so forth. Edition by Stevenson, *The Latin Hymns*, 1–147. See also Aldhelm, *De laude uirginitatis*, line 1346 (Arthur S. Napier, *Old English Glosses*, 36).

67 This is the substance of Jerome's homily on the first psalm, 'Homily 1,' in *The Homilies of St. Jerome*, trans. Ewald, esp. 10–11.

since this is the beginning of turning to what is better.⁶⁸ Cassiodorus concurs after following Jerome's exposition of the tripartite disposition of sin that this verse suggests. Bede writes in a homily on the Gospel of Mark, 'The first hope of salvation for anyone is to desert those with vicious habits.'⁶⁹ And the Lord's Prayer famously asks for deliverance from evil. Likewise, the poet of *Judith* sets Judith's qualities firmly against those of Holofernes. As Lori Ann Garne points out, 'In a significant departure from the [Vulgate] *Liber Iudith*, the Old English poet further highlights Holofernes' inherent wickedness by removing Judith from the feast altogether.'⁷⁰ Thematically, however, the poet follows his or her immediate source very closely. The Old Testament book of Judith describes Nabuchodonosor's charge to Holofernes. Nabuchodonosor instructs Holofernes to go out against all the Western kings and to destroy all those who oppose him. The oppositions are clear in both scripture and in the Old English poem: good against evil, Judith against Holofernes, Hebrews against Assyrians, and God's power against secular power.

Where Chaucer or Shakespeare might have explored the complexities of an evil character like Holofernes, the Anglo-Saxon poet has no such interest. Holofernes is called *nīða geblonden* (one corrupted by evil [line 34b]); *nergende lað* (loath to the Saviour [line 45b]); *se deofulcunda, / galferhð gudfreca* (the devil-kin one, licentious and destruction-greedy [line 61b]); *bealofull* (full of cruelty [line 63a]); *unsyfra / womfull* (unclean and impure [lines 76b–77a]). Holofernes, so obviously antithetical to Judith, wants only to defile Judith, to stain her with *womme* (sin [line 59a]). There is a similar phrase describing the cross in *Dream of the Rood*: *forwounded mid wommum* (thoroughly wounded with sin [line 14a]). Both Judith and the Rood, unlike those who merit the scourge of God, suffer undeservedly. Augustine makes a distinction between deserved and undeserved suffering in his tract on the happy life. Undeserved is 'the evil spirit which invades the soul from the outside,' while a soul 'defiled through vices and sins' deserves its own penance.⁷¹ Holofernes is an evil spirit, a character like Iago who seeks to do others undeserved harm. In testament to Judith's undefiled soul, the Lord (promises the poet) restrains Holofernes in this

68 Heine, *Gregory of Nyssa's Treatise*, 85.

69 Bede, 'Homily II.6 on the Gospels,' in *Bede the Venerable*, trans. Lawrence T. Martin and David Hurst, vol. 2, 53.

70 Lori Ann Garne, 'The Art of Translation in the Old English *Judith*,' 175.

71 Augustine, *The Happy Life (De Beata Vita)*, trans. Ludwig Schopp, in *The Fathers of the Church*, vol. 5, 29–84 and 65–6.

act. However, the warlord's concupiscent urge is merely steered wide of its mark, not eliminated. Holofernes' wickedness is an irremediable quality of his person, of his devil kinship, as well as a quality of the acts he commits. The poem thus raises the question of the nature of sin – whether it is fated or chosen. Judith is clearly on the side of the elect, but what of Holofernes, the devil kin? Can he be redeemed, or is he destined to fulfil the mandate of his role? Lynn Grundy points out in her study of grace in Ælfric, 'Neither Augustine nor Ælfric is quite happy to say that the non-elect are predestined to evil, at least in the sense of being made capable of sin but incapable of redemption.'⁷² But there is a compromise position. The constant, voluntary sin of a man is thought to make him hard-hearted, a condition that 'comes from within him, and is not imposed by God.'⁷³ This internal vice places blame squarely on Holofernes' shoulders, even though he seems to be acting according to God's plan.⁷⁴

Judith is *eadig* primarily because she is wise. She knows to seek God. Happiness and wisdom are twinned in many Anglo-Saxon sources. The first psalm declares that blessed is she who does not take *consilo impiorum* (the counsel of the ungodly). *Impietas* also means 'cruelty or wickedness' and is glossed *arleas* in Old English psalters. Psalm 72:6 reads: 'Operti sunt iniquitate et impietate sua' (They are clad with their iniquity and their wickedness). Cain is called *arleas of earde* in the Old English poem *Genesis* (line 1018). Holofernes' equally damnable wickedness derives in part from his inability to take good counsel. It seems a strange detail to choose, but understandable in light of the psalm. The poet writes that once Holofernes

72 Lynne Grundy, *Books and Grace*, 130. See also Ælfric, 'Feria III de dominica oratione,' in Ælfric's *Catholic Homilies, The First Series*, ed. Peter Clemoes, 326: 'Witodlice se man þe deofle geefenlæcð. se bið deofles bearn. ná þurh gecynde. oððe þurh gesceapennysse. ac þurh ða geefenlæcunge. & yfelum geearnungum' (Truly, the man who imitates the devil, he is the devil's child, not through kinship or through creation, but through imitating and earning evil). In stressing imitation, Ælfric suggests the opposite of the *imitatio Christi*, as seen in Ambrose of Milan, *Explanatio super psalmos xii*, PL 19, cap. 35: 'qui ergo beatus est, imitator erit domini Iesu.'

73 Grundy, *Books and Grace*, 131. Ælfric's text is Romans 9:18, but the question is equally pertinent to the heart of Pharaoh in Exodus 10:1, which is made stubborn or hard. The Latin is *induravi*, from *indurare* (to make hard); the Hebrew is from the verb *hobed* (to make heavy or unresponsive). One issue in this verse is pertinent to *Judith*: does Pharaoh act as he does because he is unresponsive to God, because God has hardened his heart, or because he acts of his own accord?

74 This middle position is also King Alfred's. As Frantzen explains, Alfred 'did not believe that man was fated to a preordained role in the world, but rather that he had the power to make his own world, to do evil or to do good' (*King Alfred*, 65).

is thoroughly drunk, *he nyste ræda nanne* (he did not know any counsel [line 69b]). Moments later in the poem, and in direct contrast to Holofernes, Judith is inspired by God precisely because she *him to helpe seceð / mid ræde ond mid rihte geleafan* (seeks help from him / **with counsel** and correct faith [lines 97–8, emphasis mine]). *Rihte* is a word often used to imply lawfulness, and here implies orthodoxy, or correctness of belief. Judith has just spoken her prayer to God (lines 83–94). She has called on the Trinity in its parts – *frymða God ond frofre Gæst, / Bearn Alwaldan* (God of created things and Holy Ghost, Son of the Almighty [lines 83–4]) – and as three in one, *Ðrynesse* (line 86a). She has asked God for *soðne geleafan* (true belief [line 89a]). Thus, she appears not only as the vehicle of God's vengeance but also as the recipient of his true faith. In the end, the Hebrew victory is ascribed to *Judithe gleawe lare* (Judith [through her] wise/prudent doctrine/advice [line 333]).

Her wisdom is not a home-made thing but a gift of God. It is Judith's understanding of this gift, her ability to look beyond herself and to see her telos in the infinite divine, that enables her to succeed and to enjoy *ead-ignes*. Thus, Judith rightly gives thanks to God at the end of the poem (lines 341–2). But those who do not see beyond themselves, like Holofernes and his men, suffer the torments of hell. In a deservedly famous scene, Holofernes' soldiers wait uncomfortably outside his tent. They think he is lying with Judith, but he is fast dead. To wake Holofernes the soldiers begin to cough, to cry loudly, and to grind their teeth (lines 270–2). Literally, it seems a strange thing to do; after all, how loudly can one gnash teeth? But the psalms report that the wicked shall see the justice of God and gnash their teeth (111:10 [112:10]). The same psalm verse says that the wicked shall be grieved. The poet of *Judith* likewise says that the soldiers are not only gnashing teeth but also *torn þoligende* (suffering grief [line 272a]). And the Psalm verse concludes that the wicked man shall *tabescet* (melt/waste away). This short scene in *Judith* also concludes of the soldiers that 'Þa wæs hyra tires æt ende, / eades ond ellendæde' (Then was their glory at an end, / success and brave deeds [lines 272–3]). By reading this scene against Psalm 110, we come to see that the terrestrial lord of the soldiers, unlike the Lord of the psalms, does not answer the grieving of his supplicants. In fact, by this point in the poem Holofernes' spirit is deep under the ground, nethered and wound in torment, bound in punishments, imprisoned firmly in hell's burning brine (lines 112b–117a). Psalm 110, which provides some context to this scene in *Judith*, begins, 'Beatus vir qui timet Dominum in mandatis eius volet nimis' (Happy/Blessed is the man who fears the Lord, that delights greatly in his commandments). It is

Judith's *rihte* faith, her delight in God's commandments, that makes her *beatus* (or, rather, *beata*). Her happiness arises solely from her service to God. The abstract level of her happiness is continually reinforced by the poet's reference to her mind and spirit, ubiquitous in the poem. In this more abstract notion of happiness she is contrasted to Holofernes, who is described chiefly through physical characteristics and who pursues physical pleasure. Judith is a type of the *beatus vir* of the psalms, and her happiness makes little sense to us today unless we define it in the context of the Old Testament and in the light of the psalms.