The *Passio Andreae* and *The Dream of the Rood*

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ABSTRACT

For nearly a century now, scholars have raised the question of the influence of the apocryphal *Passio Andreae* on *The Dream of the Rood*, but this suggestion has been discussed in terms of broad similarities. One striking specific parallel concerns the history of the Cross. In the accounts of the passion of Jesus in the gospels, Jesus is forced to bear the Cross from Jerusalem to Golgotha. In *The Dream of the Rood*, however, Jesus goes willingly to the place where the Cross (which has been used before) has already been set up. This account of the sequence of the passion corresponds exactly to the passion of Andrew in which Andrew goes willingly and of his own volition to a Cross which has been used as a gallows before. This correspondence, together with other points of similarity, suggest that *The Dream of the Rood* poet used some form of the *Passio Andreae* as a model for his narrative.

In the tradition of commentary on *The Dream of the Rood*, an idea which has been current for a long time, but never fully developed, is the claim that in one way or another, *The Dream of the Rood* was influenced by the apocryphal text, the *Passio Andreae*. Perhaps the earliest – if somewhat indirect – expression of this claim occurs in H. R. Patch's paper on 'Liturgical Influence in the *Dream of the Rood*'[1] in that he quotes a passage from the *Passio Andreae* as a parallel to *The Dream of the Rood* from the *York Breviary*. Since he does not discuss the source of the liturgical text he quotes, the relationship of the *Passio Andreae* to *The Dream of the Rood* could only be discerned by cognoscenti who recognized the source of this liturgical reading. The passage was in turn reprinted by Dickens and Ross in their edition of *The Dream of the Rood*, but in an even more abbreviated form and again without citing the source of the liturgical text.[2] More recently, Cassidy and Ringler argued for the relevance of the *Passio Andreae* to the Old English poem in their edition of the poem in *Bright's Old English Grammar and Reader*. They explicitly cite the *Passio Andreae* and do not discuss the liturgical use of the text, but they are particularly and specifically concerned with the *Passio Andreae* as a source for the motif of the Cross as a psychopomp, thus

[1] H. R. Patch, 'Liturgical Influence in *The Dream of the Rood*', *PMLA*, 34 (1919), 233–57.
[2] *The Dream of the Rood*, ed. B. Dickens and A. C. Ross (1934; New York, 1965), p. 25.

elucidating the Dreamer's claim that after his death the Cross will 'fetch' him and bring his soul to the joy of the feast in heaven (135–44).[3] I offer a more detailed criticism of Cassidy and Ringler's views elsewhere;[4] briefly, in the *Passio Andreae*, Andrew is addressing the Cross which is the physical object on which he will die and which will thus bring him to the bliss of heaven, whereas the Dreamer in the Old English poem will presumably die of natural causes and then the true Cross will 'fetch' him to the kingdom of heaven. The situations in which Andrew is and in which the Dreamer imagines himself are quite different. At any rate, in the collection *Sources and Analogues of Old English Poetry*, D. G. Calder and M. J. B. Allen quote the speech of Andreas to the Cross, in translation from the *Passio Andreae*, as a source for *The Dream of the Rood*.[5]

More recently, in his commentary on Ælfric's *Catholic Homilies*,[6] and again in a paper published separately, Malcolm Godden has observed that the *Passio Andreae* is a 'probable' source for *The Dream of the Rood*, but Godden's comments on this problem, like those of most of his predecessors, have been limited to the essential fact of the source relationship and to some remarks on broad parallels between the two texts. Thus, for example, he comments that, 'both the personalization of the Cross and the loving tenderness with which Andreas addresses it remind us that this legend is a probable source for *The Dream of the Rood*'.[7] In identifying the *Passio Andreae* as a source for *The Dream of the Rood*, these various scholars have made a very interesting source identification, which is important for our understanding of that poem, but the significance of such a claim is determined at least in part by the number of details in the derivative or target text which can be explained in relationship to the source, and these scholars do not offer a detailed discussion.

I would like, therefore, to focus again upon the *Passio Andreae* as a specifically 'narrative' source for *The Dream of the Rood*. The personification of the Cross, although it is a striking feature of both texts, does occur elsewhere, and the loving tenderness with which Andreas addresses the Cross is, for example, a prominent aspect of the hymns of Fortunatus, notably the hymn 'Crux benedicta nitet'. And the hymns of Fortunatus were among the most famous and

[3] *Bright's Old English Grammar and Reader*, ed. F. G. Cassidy and R. N. Ringler (New York, 1971), pp. 309–17.

[4] I discuss this problem in some detail in a completed paper 'The Cross as Psychopomp: The Dream of the Rood lines 135–44', forthcoming in *Anglia*.

[5] *Sources and Analogues of Old English Poetry: the Major Latin Texts in Translation*, trans. M. J. B. Allen and D. G. Calder (Cambridge, 1976), pp. 56–7.

[6] Malcolm Godden, *Ælfric's Catholic Homilies. Introduction, Commentary and Glossary*, EETS ss 18 (Oxford, 2000), 513.

[7] 'Experiments in Genre', in *Holy Men and Holy Women: Old English Prose Saint's Lives and Their Contexts*, ed. P. Szarmach (Albany, 1996), p. 274.

widespread hymns of the early medieval Church and were well known to the Anglo-Saxons.

Before developing my argument, however, it is important to specify exactly what I mean by the *Passio Andreae*.[8] Although the *Passio Andreae* was known to the Anglo-Saxons and was indeed partially translated by Ælfric into Old English, the *Passio Andreae* is not a well preserved text and the published editions and translations are to some extent reconstructions, which quote textual material from complete and fragmentary texts in different languages. Under these circumstances I propose to treat the *Passio Andreæ* as if it were in effect a traditional 'oral' text, existing in many versions of which any one is potentially relevant to the Old English poem.[9] As a practical matter I will for the most part quote from Dennis Ronald MacDonald's edition and translation of the Greek version of the narrative, Bonner's edition of the Latin text, and Ælfric's translation into Old English, even though the poet who composed *The Dream of the Rood* probably did not know the exact Latin text edited by Bonnet, almost certainly did not know Greek, and certainly could not have known Ælfric. (The *Vercelli Book* is dated to the last quarter of the tenth century on paleographic grounds and while the *Dream of the Rood* (in the form in which we have it) is no easier to date than *Beowulf*, the texts which were included in this collection must have been composed before the *Vercelli Book* was compiled.)[10] As I hope

[8] A further difficulty of nomenclature is that the *Passio Andreae* is edited and translated under the title *Acta Andreae* or the *Acts of Andrew* in various editions and translations. In the context of Anglo-Saxon studies however it is important and convenient to distinguish between the *Passion of Andrew* and the *Acts of Andrew and Matthias* which is the basis for the important Old English poem *Andreas*. The legend with which I am concerned in this paper has the same hero but the content is quite different. The *Acts of Andrew and Matthias* are a kind of prequel to the *Passio Andreae* and some scholars believe the two narratives were originally joined as part of an extended narrative about the acts and eventual passion of Andreas. Two important relatively new books about the Andreas tradition are D. R. MacDonald, *The Acts of Andrew and Matthias in the City of the Cannibals*, Soc. of Biblical Lit., Texts and Translations 33 (Atlanta, Georgia, 1990) and Jean-Marc Prieur, *Acta Andreae*, Corpus Christianorum, Series Apocryphorum 5 and 6 (Turnhout, 1989). MacDonald and Prieur provide English and French translations of the Latin, Greek and other languages in which these texts are preserved. For an older edition of the corpus of Andrew material, see the *Passio Andreae*, ed. M. Bonnet (Lipsia, 1898), pp. 1–116. For a convenient gathering of versions of the *Passio Andreae* in translation see the 'Acts of Andrew' in E. Hennecke, *New Testament Apocrypha*, ed. W. Schneemelcher, trans. R. McC. Wilson (Philadelphia, 1964) II, 390–425.

[9] The model I am thinking of is that of the ballad or folktale which exists both in a variety of attested versions, 'Tam Lin A, B etc.' (to cite an example taken at random), and as a larger construct which one can loosely define as the 'Tam Lin' tradition.

[10] The problem of the date of *The Dream of the Rood* is of course complicated by the fact that some lines of the poem are inscribed in runes on the Ruthwell Cross. For discussion of the date and iconography of the Ruthwell Cross, see the recent substantial study by Éamon Ó Carrigáin, *Ritual and the Rood: Liturgic Images and the Old English Poems of the Dream of the Rood Tradition* (Toronto, 2005), pp. 223–79.

to show, the poet who composed *The Dream of the Rood* knew some version or versions of the *Passio Andreae*, but since it is not possible to know which texts or text he or she knew, I will cite from the most readily accessible texts in various languages presuming that these texts provide at least an approximation of the version of the *Passio Andreae* which the poet did know.[11]

The Dream of the Rood is a very familiar text – to Anglo-Saxonists at least – and the very familiarity of the text obscures the strangeness of the 'iconography' of the poem to some extent. Rosemary Woolf has illuminated the contrast between the suffering Cross and the impassive and heroic 'Crist' who hastens to the Cross and 'ascends' the Cross of his own volition,[12] but there are many other aspects of the poem that have puzzled modern commentators. One immediate one – which has never been explained to the best of my knowledge – concerns the history of the Cross. The Cross as speaking object is immediately paralleled in the tradition of Old English riddles, in which a variety of objects and even concepts are personified and tell their history,[13] but the narrative which the Cross tells in *The Dream of the Rood* is significantly different from the narrative told or implied in the gospels.

We may begin by observing that the concept of the Cross as an object significant in its materiality, as some kind of relic, is completely alien to the synoptic gospels or the Johannine tradition. The Cross is a kind of gallows, an instrument of torture and death, and the authors of the gospel narratives have no interest in the material object on which Christ died after they have completed the narrative of the passion. Again, they take for granted a working knowledge of the mechanics of crucifixion as a mode of execution in the eastern Mediterranean world, which modern scholars have had to reconstruct laboriously, and which to some degree is not fully agreed upon. But despite the essential disinterest of the gospel narrators in the Cross as a material object, there is at least a proximate narrative about the use of the Cross on Good Friday which the various narrators agree upon. Jesus was forced to bear his Cross through the streets of Jerusalem to the place where he was to be executed. Weakened as he was by flogging and torture he was unable to carry the Cross the full distance and the

[11] On the possibility of using an approximation of a given source text in literary historical argument, see T. D. Hill, 'Literary History and Old English Poetry: the Case of *Christ I, II, III*', *Sources of Anglo-Saxon Culture*, ed. P. E. Szarmach, Stud. in Med. Culture 20 (Kalamazoo, 1986), pp. 4–6.

[12] R. Woolf, 'Doctrinal Influences on *The Dream of the Rood*', *Medium Aevum* 27(1958), 137–53. See also T. D. Hill, 'The Cross as Symbolic Body: an Anglo-Latin Liturgical Analogue to *The Dream of the Rood*', *Neophilologus*, 77 (1993), 297–301.

[13] For a recent discussion of the problem of prosopopoeia in relation to the *Dream of the Rood*, see J. W. Earl, 'Trinitarian Language: Augustine, the *Dream of the Rood* and Aelfric', *Source of Wisdom: Old English and Early Medieval Latin Studies in Honor of Thomas D. Hill*, ed. C. D. Wright, F. M. Biggs and T. N. Hall (Toronto, 2007), pp. 63–79.

execution party made Simon of Cyrene bear the Cross for him.[14] Jesus and the execution party then came to Golgotha where they either raised the Cross and nailed him to it or nailed him to the Cross and then raised it and fixed it in the ground. They then waited while Jesus hung on the Cross, and after speaking a few words to his disciples and some hours of suffering, he died.

There are certain points about the use and 'history' of the Cross as a material object that are implicit in this narrative. One immediate and important one is that the Cross was carried to Golgotha. It therefore was not there when Jesus came to the place of execution. A second one is only implicit in the Gospel narrative but is nonetheless important. If the Cross was in Jerusalem, it had not been used before it was borne to Golgotha. One can imagine a scenario in which a Cross was constructed, used on Golgotha, and then carried back to Jerusalem after the execution, but neither the gospels nor the extensive and elaborate commentaries and retellings of the passion that were elaborated in the patristic period or in the Middle Ages provide any support for such an idea. It follows therefore that the Cross was constructed or at least chosen for this particular purpose and that it had not been used before.

The elaborate legendary histories of the Cross, which are collectively one of the epic wonder tales of the Christian Middle Ages, tell of the history of the Cross from the garden of Eden to its recovery by Helena and then its loss and retrieval after Constantine's death, but all of these essentially fantastic stories agree on certain details in the history of the Cross. It was in Jerusalem and was carried to Golgotha and since it was carried to Golgotha, it had not been used as a gallows or instrument of execution before.

The Cross in *The Dream of the Rood* follows riddling convention in recounting its 'history'. It was first a tree which was harvested 'holtes on ende' –in other words it imagines its beginning in terms of conventional Anglo-Saxon (and pre-modern American) logging practices.[15] One does not want to fell a tree in the middle of a forest since it will almost certainly hang up in some surrounding tree or trees and even if one can clear it from such encumbrances, carrying a tree trunk in forest undergrowth is so demanding that one would not wish to undertake such a task unless it is absolutely necessary. At the edge of the forest, *holtes on ende*, one can fell a tree so that it falls away from the forest and trimming and carrying away the trunk is relatively simple. The next stage in the history of the Cross, according to *The Dream of the Rood*, is more problematical. The *feondas* who felled it fix it on a hill where it serves as an instrument of torture and humiliation on which condemned criminals are hung. Then Christ, who is depicted as a zealous and

[14] My paraphrase follows the traditional reconciliation of the synoptic and Johanine accounts of how the Cross was borne to Golgotha.
[15] Line 29: 'at the end of the forest'.

unhesitating young warrior, hastens to the Cross and ascends upon it. The Christ of *The Dream of the Rood* is very definitely the active subject of the narrative, not the suffering object of the cruelty of the Romans and the Jews as the gospel narratives imply. The history of the Cross might seem a relatively trivial detail in the history of the passion, but if the crucified one is to hasten willingly to the place of crucifixion, it is important that the Cross be already on the site and that neither Jesus nor Andreas have to carry the Cross to the place of execution.

Rosemary Woolf's symbolic interpretation of the passion narrative in *The Dream of the Rood* – in which the speaking Cross, who is fearful and suffering, represents the human aspect of the Deus-Homo and the heroic Christ of the narrative represents the divine and impassive Logos – explains the depiction of the character Christ in the poem, but she does not explain or discuss why the poet so radically revised the history of Cross as narrated and implied in the gospels. The question of the interpretation of the new 'history of the Cross' which the *Dream of the Rood* poet narrates is one which I will defer for the moment, but this account of the history of the Cross is paralleled exactly in the *Passio Andreae*. In that narrative the Cross is situated (on the sea shore) and Andreas is first led, but then hastens to the Cross of his own volition.

The *Passio Andreae* is, as scholars have noted, a probable source for *The Dream of the Rood* in other respects as well. One ongoing theological and literary problem which the various gospel narratives of the passion present is that the gospels depict Jesus as the victim of his enemies, as a man who was flogged, tortured, humiliated and then executed in a particularly cruel and humiliating way. Indeed the famous outcry 'Eloi, Eloi lamma sabacthani?' (Mark XV. 34) could be taken to imply that Jesus himself despaired as he was dying on the Cross.[16] How could the Son of God be subjected to such a death?[17]

There is of course a voluminous tradition of Christian commentary on the passion narratives of the gospels and a variety of answers, some quite cogent, have been proposed in the centuries of discussion and commentary upon these issues. One answer is that Jesus' death upon the Cross was a deliberate choice on Jesus' part, since his sacrificial death was necessary to complete the process of redemption. This is a cogent theological answer to the question that the

[16] Note that in the Greek version of *The Acts of Andrew and Matthias in the City of the Cannibals*, the suffering Andrew makes this claim in dialogue with the resurrected Jesus; *The Acts of Andrew*, ed. and trans. MacDonald, p. 147. This bit of dialogue is echoed in the Anglo-Saxon prose version of this narrative which is most conveniently available in *Bright's Old English Grammar and Reader*, ed. Cassidy and Ringler, p. 215. On the problem of Jesus' emotional response to the passion and the contrast with his response and conventional 'stoic' attitudes in such situations, see R. E. Brown, *The Death of the Messiah: From Gethsemene to the Grave* (New York, 1994) I, 157–8, 216–18.

[17] The dialogue between Andreas and 'Egeus' [Ageates] in Ælfric's Andreas homily is focused on precisely this issue. *Ælfric's Catholic Homilies. The First Series. Text*, EETS ss 17, ed. Peter Clemoes (Oxford, 2000), pp. 513–15.

passion narrative raises, but it does not respond to the literary effect of the passion narratives that depict Jesus as the suffering object of the hatred of his enemies rather than as the active protagonist of the drama of redemption.

The *Passio Andreae* is only preserved in the modern world in textually problematical versions and fragments in a variety of languages; it is, or at least one of its versions is, heretical in that the text seems to condemn marriage, as well as sexual behaviour which is more normally condemned by Christian moralists,[18] and no one has ever made very great claims for the literary merit of this text as a whole, although there are some passages which are very powerful indeed. But one aspect of the *Passio Andreae* that is very clear is that this narrative is in a sense a response to the account of the suffering of Jesus in the passion narratives. If Jesus is depicted in these narratives as one who grieves and who suffers, Andreas, in this *passio*, shows no fear or concern and rejoices in his forthcoming crucifixion. At one point when Andreas is being led to the place of execution, Stratocles the brother of the ruler, a believing Christian, and apparently the co-regent of Aegeates, the persecutor, attacks the execution party and beats and humiliates the executioners, who then return to Aegeates to ask for further instruction. One would think that this intervention would end the execution process, but Stratocles and Andreas walk hand in hand to the execution site.[19] From a common-sense point of view this account of the martyrdom of Andreas is absurd, since the apostle has the option of escaping crucifixion without renouncing his faith at this point and at least two other times in the narrative. But this strange narrative serves to underscore the voluntary nature of the passion that Andreas is about to undergo. He walks freely to the place of execution and his executioners follow along behind.

Again, when Andreas approaches the Cross, he leaves the party of sympathizers who are accompanying him and approaches the Cross alone and 'spoke to it in a loud voice.'[20] This parallel between the *Passio Andreae* and the speaking Cross in *The Dream of the Rood* is clear, and the prayer that Andreas speaks at this point is one of the seminal texts in Cross mysticism, in that the Cross and the Platonic world soul are here identified.[21] After this prayer Andreas summons

[18] The narrative of Maximilla and Euclia in which the devoutly 'Christian' wife of Ageates plays the bed-trick, substituting the slave girl Euclia for herself in her husband's bed for a period of months is both implausible and particularly morally problematical in that even apart from the morality of the bed-trick, Euclia is eventually mutilated and killed for her part in the deception. *The Acts of Andrew*, ed. and trans. MacDonald, pp. 347–55.

[19] *Ibid.*

[20] *Ibid.*

[21] For a reconstruction of Andreas's speech to the Cross, see *ibid.* pp. 409–15. On the problem of Cross mysticism, the celebration of the Cross as a symbol of cosmic order, see H. Rahner, *Greek Myths and Christian Mystery*, trans. B. Battershaw (London, 1963), pp. 46–68, 'The Mystery of the Cross'.

the executioners who bind him rather than nailing him to the Cross and then leave him in the company of a band of Christian converts to whom Andreas preaches for two days. At the end of this time, when the Christian multitude are angry enough to threaten the pagan king, Ageates, the latter appears on the scene and offers to release Andreas. Andreas, however, indignantly refuses this mercy and prays for death, which is speedily granted him.

The absurdities and inconsistencies of the story are manifest, but these absurdities underscore the central ideological point of the story. Andreas was martyred and crucified, but he freely *chose* to endure his martyrdom and crucifixion and he could have turned aside from this destiny on numerous different occasions. In this revision of the passion narrative, the theological explanation, which Christian exegetes offered to explain the suffering and death of Jesus – that Jesus, the suffering victim, chose to die – is articulated at the surface level of the narrative of the passion of Andreas.

The points of correspondence between *The Dream of the Rood* and the *Passio Andreae* are numerous. In addition to the fact that the history of the Cross in the *Passio Andreae* corresponds to the account of the prehistory of the Cross in *The Dream of the Rood*, Andreas, like Christ in *The Dream of the Rood*, went of his own free will to the place of execution. Once there he unclothed himself (*he hine unscrydde*), just as Christ in *The Dream of the Rood* prepared himself (*ongyrede hine*).[22] Since he summons the executioners to bind him to the Cross, he can be said to ascend the Cross of his own free will, which again corresponds to the account of the passion in *The Dream of the Rood*. And once on the Cross he chooses to suffer and die even though the Christian populace wish to free him, and eventually compel his persecutor Ageates to offer him mercy.

The account of the passion in *The Dream of the Rood* corresponds to the account of the passion in *Passio Andreae* much more closely than it does to any of the various accounts of the passion in the gospels, in that the poet depicts the crucified one hastening to the Cross, stripping himself, and 'ascending' the Cross 'na geneaddod ac sylfwilles', to quote Ælfric's phrasing.[23] Again, the living, sentient and grieving Cross who is such a prominent character in the poem corresponds to the Cross to whom Andreas prays as if it were an aspect of the divinity in the *Passio Andreae*. As I have mentioned, the Old English riddle tradition does provide parallels for the notion of a speaking object, but the emotional and aware being who speaks in the Old English poem is much closer to the quasi-divine being whom Andreas addresses in the *Passio Andreae* than to such speakers as the shield or the sword in the corpus of Old English riddles.[24]

[22] *Ælfric's Catholic Homilies*, *First Series*, ed. Clemoes, p. 528.
[23] *Ibid.* p. 513: 'not compelled but of his own will'.
[24] There may indeed be Cross riddles in Old English; such solutions have been proposed,

If these arguments make the parallel which scholars have noticed and which I have reargued seem a plausible one, then two immediate questions are why the poet turned to the *Passio Andreae* as a model for this aspect of his narrative, and what difference if any this source interpretation makes for our understanding of the poem. The answer I would propose to the first question is essentially the one proposed by Rosemary Woolf. The narrative of the passion of Jesus Christ is simultaneously the narrative of cosmological triumph and human suffering, and the poet in effect 'split' the Deus-Homo, in that the Christ of the poem is the impassive divine being, while the 'Cross' speaks for the suffering human aspect of Jesus. Since the poet wanted a narrative of a willing heroic crucifixion, the *Passio Andreae*, a narrative that was in a sense a response to an essentially similar narratatological problem, provided a ready and appropriate model. Medieval Christian artists, particularly those of the early Middle Ages, are rarely wholly original, and the *Passio Andreae* also provided an authoritative model for the apparently innovative narrative of *The Dream of the Rood*.

As far as the second question is concerned, one point that I would emphasize is that identifying this narrative source does not somehow vitiate the frequently repeated claim that *The Dream of the Rood* is a strikingly Germanic version (and vision) of the passion of Jesus Christ. The epithets and the formulas which the poet uses to characterize the character Christ in the poem have deep roots in Germanic heroic poetry, and the poet's apparent sensitivity to the problem of the depiction of the suffering passive Jesus in the gospels again reflects the concerns of one who was steeped in Germanic heroic poetry and tradition. That these concerns were anticipated within the Mediterranean Christian world does not invalidate the traditional understanding of the Christ of *The Dream of the Rood* as an Anglo-Saxon warrior, a 'hæleð' who seems indifferent to suffering and pain. A poet's choice among the different strands of pre-existent tradition can be as clear-cut an indication of his ideological preferences as a wholly 'original' creation. The corpus of Germanic heroic poetry is a rich body of extraordinary literature, and, as with any other body of sophisticated literary texts, scholars and critics disagree among themselves about issues of interpretation. But no one would seriously dispute the claim that the depiction of Christ in *The Dream of the Rood* is more compatible with Germanic heroic

but since these solutions are not universally accepted I forbear from the comparison. Early medieval Latin Cross riddles are quite different in tone from the Old English poem. For a recent discussion of the *Exeter Book* Cross riddles and the difficulties of this interpretation, see J. Frederick, 'At Cross Purposes: Six Riddles in the Exeter Book', in *Cross and Culture in Anglo-Saxon England: Studies in Honor of George Hardin Brown*, ed. K. L. Jolly *et al.* (Morgantown, 2007), pp. 49–76. For a more general comparison of *The Dream of the Rood* and the Old English riddles, see P. Orton, 'The Technique of Object-Personification in *The Dream of the Rood* and a Comparison with the Old English Riddles', *Leeds Stud. in Eng.* n.s. 11 (1980), 1–18.

tradition than with the suffering and essentially passive Christ of the gospels. In this respect, my view of *The Dream of the Rood* is quite conventional; my source argument is simply concerned with the models to which *The Dream of the Rood* poet might have turned when he (or she) fashioned his version of the Passion narrative.

Although *The Dream of the Rood* is very much part of the Anglo-Saxon canon, and, in translation, a part of the larger canon of English literature, and a number of critical and scholarly papers have been written about it, the study of the sources of *The Dream of the Rood* and of the literary history of the poem is still relatively inchoate. Various editions and some critics, at least, tend to present the poem as if it were a kind of isolated masterpiece created *ex nihilo* by a poet of genius. I would not question the 'genius' of the poet who composed this text, although I use scare quotes to show that I am aware of the ambiguities implicit in using literary terminology of the Romantic period in the context of Anglo-Saxon poetry. But I would argue that this poem is one literary text among many which celebrate the Cross in the early Middle Ages. Looking at the poem in the context of other comparable texts from the late patristic and early medieval period hardly diminishes our respect for the artistic accomplishment of the poet – indeed it allows us to understand his aesthetic and ideological choices more clearly. Scholars have long recognized that it is appropriate to compare *The Dream of the Rood* with the Cross poems of Fortunatus or the Cross riddle of Symphosius, and more recently others have argued that the Old English *Elene* and various versions of the legendary history of the Cross should be added to the list of sources and analogues. If those scholars who have been concerned with this problem and I are correct, the *Passio Andreae*, which has long been recognized as a seminal text in the history of Cross mysticism should also be recognized as a source for *The Dream of the Rood*. The literary merits of the *Passio Andreae* are hard to determine; it is after all preserved in various versions, many of which are fragmentary. Without sufficient expertise in the appropriate languages, I would still offer the suggestion that if a case for the merits of the text were to be made, a critic should read the *Passio Andreae* as a response, as a text in dialogue with the gospels in general, and the passion narratives in particular. Portions of the text are certainly quite remarkable, and if my arguments seem cogent, a millennium or more ago an Anglo-Saxon poet read the text in some version or other, responded in his turn to the *Passio Andreae* and drew on it in composing *The Dream of the Rood*.