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Introduction

The Junius manuscript offers verse without context. The biblical emphasis of the Old English poetry in the collection is clear enough: the verse of *Genesis*, *Exodus* and *Daniel* is indeed given over in bulk to renditions of passages from the Old Testament books that lend these compositions their modern names. The final item, *Christ and Satan*, treats apocryphal and New Testament episodes. But far from certain are the origins, authorship, dates, sources, intended uses and transmission-histories of these vernacular biblical poems, or reflexes of poems, which have come down to us joined in a medieval leather binding, their texts copied out in a regular script and enlivened at times by dramatic scriptural illustrations. Their single surviving witness is Oxford, Bodleian Library, Junius 11 (s. x/xi; later provenance ?Christ Church Cathedral, Canterbury) – here cited as 'Junius 11' or, less precisely, the 'Junius manuscript'.[1] Junius 11 was produced in

[1] See *SC* II.ii, 965 (no. 5123). For a complete facsimile of Junius 11 with a useful if in some respects outdated introduction, see *Cædmon Manuscript*, ed. and introd. Gollancz. For bibliographical treatments, see Cameron, 'List', p. 29 (items A.1–A.1.4); GR, pp. 21–2 (nos. 225a–235a), 23–4 (no. 261) and 242 (no. 3895); and below, pp. 18–19, n. 26. A discursive review of scholarship on Junius 11 and its verse (to 1975) has been issued by Greene, 'Critical Bibliography'. Additional critical summaries appear among the columns of *YWOES*, published annually since 1967, and in the annual volumes of *YWES*. The manuscript receives its modern press-mark and familiar name as a result of its former inclusion in the library of the younger Francis du Jon (1589–1677), known as Franciscus Junius, whose interest in vernacular texts emerged in the course of a study of the work *In Canticum Canticorum* of William of Ebersberg, a bilingual (Latin–Old High German) treatment of the Song of Songs that remains a monumental source for the study of early Germanic languages. Du Jon issued the first edition of the Junius poems in 1655: *Cædmonis monachi paraphrasis poetica Geneseos ac praecipuarum Sacrae Paginae historiarum, abhinc annos MLXX* (Amsterdam, 1655). A transcript of verse in Junius 11, made by William Somner in the course of preparing

the later Anglo-Saxon period, in all probability around the year 1000, but the composition of the verse that it preserves is often dated to *c.* 700 or earlier.[2] Whatever conclusions are drawn regarding the specific chronology of the verse and its exemplars, the evident breadth of the gulf separating the composition of the Junius poems and the execution of their surviving copy, taken together with the fact that no comparable collection of Old Testament poetry has survived to the present day, may justify the statement that the verse of Junius 11 has no known literary-historical context before *c.* 1000.

THE LOST TRADITIONS OF THE JUNIUS POEMS

The consensus of modern scholarship holds that the Junius poems were composed by different poets, or different schools of poets, most probably over many decades and at a number of geographically dispersed Anglo-Saxon centres.[3] As I have noted, we have no assurance that the configur-

his *Dictionarium Saxonico-Latino-Anglicum: Voces, phrasesque praecipuas Anglo-Saxonicas*, ed. W. Somner (Oxford, 1659), preserved among the lexicographer's papers in the Cathedral Library at Canterbury, remains unstudied. See further *The 'Later Genesis'*, ed. Timmer, pp. 3–5 and 8–9.

2 A. N. Doane is inclined to date the composition of *Genesis A* to *c.* 650–900, adding that '[a]ny date in the eighth century seems reasonable' (*Genesis A*, ed. Doane, pp. 36–7). Edward B. Irving, Jr, acknowledges outer limits of *c.* 650–1000 for the composition of *Exodus*, personally favouring a late seventh- or eighth-century date and a Northumbrian provenance (*Exodus*, ed. Irving, pp. 23–5); cf. also Irving's '*Exodus* Retraced', p. 209. Irving advances similarly early dates for *Genesis A* in his study 'On the Dating of the Old English Poems *Genesis* and *Exodus*', *Anglia* 77 (1959), 1–11. *Exodus* is dated to *c.* 700–800 (or 'between the time of Bede and the time of Alcuin') by Peter J. Lucas (*Exodus*, ed. Lucas, pp. 69–72, cited here from p. 71). Kemp Malone, in his survey 'The Old English Period', p. 66, suggests that '*Daniel A* presumably goes back to early Northumbria (*c.* 700?)'. Robert T. Farrell, the most recent editor of *Daniel*, ventures no specific range of dates for the poem's composition (cf. *Daniel*, ed. Farrell, esp. pp. 10–13). Only *Genesis B*, whose composition has been seen to postdate the completion of the *Heliand c.* 821 x 840, is generally assigned a date after the eighth century (see *The Saxon Genesis*, ed. Doane, p. 46). For some new approaches to the problems surrounding the dating of Old English verse, see the recent, provocative essay by Wilhelm G. Busse, 'Kriterien zur Erstellung des chronologischen Systems', in his *Altenglische Literatur*, pp. 17–140, esp. 17–39.

3 As C. L. Wrenn has remarked, 'examination of the four poems of the Junius Manuscript makes it clear that they are each by different authors . . . [T]hey all differ . . . in tone, method and treatment very markedly' (Wrenn, *A Study*, p. 98).

ation of verse preserved between the boards of Junius 11 reflects the processes of the poems' composition rather than those of their transmission. The questions of dating and authorship will be discussed in greater detail below. But we can say here that in all probability the compilation of the Junius collection was preceded by undocumented traditions of biblical versification that extended across three or more centuries. The frequently intriguing manuscript contexts of the poems must thus be regarded with caution. We have no assurance, for example, that the versification of the apocryphal legend of the Revolt of Satan preceding the commencement of the Genesis-based verse of Junius 11 was invariably accompanied in earlier documents by a striking illustration of the sort we see now on the third page of the manuscript, depicting the fanged hell-mouth of 'a huge monster, or Leviathan, with jaws extended', in which Satan, 'with snaky locks and animal claws' is ensnared, 'while his associates are seen plunging into the burning gulf'.[4] Nor is it possible to say for certain that the poetic treatment of the fall of Satan and the rebel angels always served to introduce a narrative on the six days of Creation, as it now does through its juxtaposition with the versification of Genesis I–XXII attributed to *Genesis A*. In view of our lack of knowledge regarding the processes of composition and transmission of Old English biblical verse, I believe it is indeed unwise to attribute originary authority to any context arising out of the juxtaposition of episodes in the Junius poems without first supplying convincing critical justification. The point is worth stressing, because, as we shall see, many critical inferences regarding the meaning of the biblical poetry of Junius 11 have already been founded on the organization of its texts. The presence in the volume of plausibly co-ordinated reflexes of Genesis, Exodus and Daniel has been seen to recall the medieval reading of passages from these three books in the liturgy of the Easter Vigil, observed on Holy

[4] The phrases are those of Ellis, 'Account of Cædmon's Metrical Paraphrase', p. 336, and Broderick, 'The Iconographic and Compositional Sources', p. 93. The present comments are not intended to discourage exploration of the often intriguing interactions between the iconography of the illustrations in Junius 11 – as well as the blank space set aside for illustrations that were never completed – and the received narratives of its verse. See Lucas, 'On the Blank Daniel-Cycle', and L. Amtower, 'Some Codicological Considerations in the Interpretation of the Junius Poems', *ELN* 30.4 (1993), 1–10. My thanks to Prof. Amtower and other members of my 1991 seminar on Junius 11 (particularly James I. McNelis, Leslie A. Donovan and Robert Costomiris) for helpful discussion of many points bearing on the codicology and palaeography of the manuscript.

Saturday as a night service extending into the early hours of Easter Sunday. The integration in *Exodus* of narratives on the Flood, Abraham's offering of Isaac and the crossing of the Red Sea by the Israelites has been associated with the same set of lectionary texts.[5] The New Testament-influenced *Christ and Satan* has been adduced in support of the conclusion that the supersession of the Old Testament matter in Junius 11 by the christological concerns of its last item bears witness to a book-length comment on salvation history. Nevertheless, when we attempt to make sense of the heterogeneous contents of Junius 11, I believe that it remains necessary to maintain a distinction between the received text of the sequence of biblical poetry in the manuscript and the literary content and meaning of the verse itself.

The text-history of the Junius poems: toward a suspension of critical assumption

For the purpose of the present study, the Old Testament verse of Junius 11 is best regarded as a black box, a mechanism whose effects are largely known but whose components and characteristic processes remain hidden from view. From a literary-historical perspective, it is accepted here that none of the Junius poems has yet been dated reliably, even in relative terms, within the range of dates assigned to the progression of Anglo-Saxon Christianity. Vernacular religious poetry might well have been put to good use in English Christian centres at any point from the commencement in 597 of the Roman mission to England led by Augustine of Canterbury, up to the time of the production of the Junius 11 manuscript itself, which roughly coincides with the formulation of a comprehensive set of English-language religious texts by Ælfric of Eynsham in the late tenth and early eleventh centuries.[6] If, as some historians of art maintain, additional illustrations continued to be added to the manuscript into the second half of the eleventh century, we must reckon with a historical window for the composition and reception of the Junius poems that looks upon five centuries of the Anglo-Saxon period. Though no critic to my knowledge

[5] Plausible connections can be drawn between the texts of the same service and certain passages of *Genesis A* and *Daniel*. See below, pp. 80–7, 138 with n. 99, 358, 375 and 422–4.

[6] Bede recounts the Augustinian mission at *Historia ecclesiastica* (hereafter *HE*) I.23–7 (*Venerabilis Baedae Opera*, ed. Plummer I, 42–62). On Ælfric's project, see Clemoes, 'The Chronology', and below, pp. 87–90.

has championed a date of composition as early as the sixth century or as late as the eleventh, questions surrounding the dating of the Junius poems defy easy resolution and for the moment are best left entirely open.

The verse of Junius 11 does little more to accommodate other traditional concerns of literary critics. None of the poems has been securely attributed to a named author or, for that matter, to an anonymous poet working in an identifiable compositional milieu. Unsubstantiated judgements have at different times associated the poems with the efforts of lay aristocrats or cloistered monks, but the fact remains that we have no reliable means to determine who composed any of the Junius poems. As I have noted above, it is now generally accepted that all of the main items of Junius 11 – the passages of verse generally assigned to *Genesis A* and *B*, *Exodus*, *Daniel* and *Christ and Satan*[7] – are by different poets, but even this assumption has yet to receive a detailed critical defence. It is not even clear precisely how many poems are in question. Estimates might range from three – taking *Genesis*, *Exodus* and *Daniel* as the main items of the Junius collection and excluding the New Testament-themed *Christ and Satan* – to as many as fourteen, if all the various verse-divisions proposed by nineteenth- and twentieth-century scholars are taken into account. Beyond the certain interpolation of verse treating the fall of Adam and Eve in *Genesis B*, critics have questioned the integrity of passages on Noah and Abraham in *Exodus* and on the rescue of the three youths in the fiery furnace in *Daniel*. The prefatory matter of the three main Old Testament compositions has been separated out in different ways, as have elements in the meandering narrative of *Christ and Satan*. As in the case of dating the Junius poems, an effort has been made in the present study to avoid ungrounded speculation about the authorship or artistic integrity of the poems of Junius 11.

Problems of oral and written transmission

Huge advances have been made in the course of the present century in our understanding of the formulaic verse produced by Germanic alliterative

[7] In referring to the extant verse of Junius 11, the present study maintains the accepted fourfold demarcation of poems, dividing the Genesis-based verse into two items (*Genesis A* and *B*) and, unless explicitly noted, regarding the fragmentary entities conventionally titled *Exodus*, *Daniel* and *Christ and Satan* as received wholes. But this practice should not be taken to exclude the possible presence of poetical 'subunits' within the compositions so distinguished.

poets and of the interaction of oral and literary textual traditions throughout the early Middle Ages.[8] However, many difficult questions still surround the details of the composition of the Junius poems and the mechanics of their transmission.[9] In particular, it is not known for certain whether some or all of the verse preserved in Junius 11 traces back to orally transmitted exemplars. Bede (*ob.* 735), who offers our most detailed witness to the emergence of Old English biblical poetry in his account of the oral poet Cædmon (to be considered in greater detail below), reports unambiguously that vernacular treatments of the matter of Genesis, Exodus and other biblical books might be composed by a poet who never learned to read or write, relying on learned interlocutors for his scriptural knowledge.[10] But it is by no means clear that all such biblical verse was produced orally, nor is it known how or when such orally composed texts might have entered the manuscript traditions that culminate in the production of Junius 11.

Formulaic considerations relating to the composition and transmission of Old English biblical verse overlap with the previously noted problem of the verse-division of the Junius poems in two distinct ways. First, at the level of word and phrase, the debt of Old English biblical verse to the formulaic conventions of Germanic alliterative poetry is everywhere

[8] For introductory treatments, see R. Finnegan, *Oral Poetry: its Nature, Significance and Social Context* (Cambridge, 1977); discussion and references by J. M. Foley, *Oral-Formulaic Theory and Research: an Introduction and Annotated Bibliography*, Folklore Bibliographies 6 (New York, 1991) and Foley, *The Theory*. For discussion of Old English oral texts specifically, see also Foley's study 'Literary Art and Oral Tradition in Old English and Serbian Poetry', *ASE* 12 (1983), 183–214, M. T. Clanchy, *From Memory to Written Record: England 1066–1307*, 2nd ed. (Oxford, 1993), esp. pp. 25–44, and R. Frank, 'The Search for the Anglo-Saxon Oral Poet', *BullJRL* 75 (1993), 11–36.

[9] For some new approaches to the difficult questions surrounding the composition and transmission of medieval oral and written texts, see essays collected in *Schrift und Gedächtnis: Beiträge zur Archäologie der literarischen Kommunikation*, ed. A. Assmann, J. Assmann and C. Hardmeier (Munich, 1983); essays in *Vox intexta: Orality and Textuality in the Middle Ages*, ed. A. N. Doane and C. B. Pasternack (Madison, WI, 1991); and, with special reference to Old English sources, O'Keeffe, *Visible Song*, esp. pp. 23–76 and 108–137, and C. B. Pasternack, *The Textuality of Old English Poetry*, CSASE 13 (Cambridge, 1995).

[10] As a matter of course in the early Middle Ages, Pierre Riché concludes, '[t]he faithful . . . were invited to read the Bible or, if they were illiterate, to have the sacred text read to them by someone else' (Riché, *Education and Culture*, p. 486).

apparent in Junius 11. The verse of *Genesis A* praises God as 'sigora waldend' ('wielder of victories' (126b)) in much the same terms as a poet of secular verse would celebrate the achievements of an earthly ruler. At the level of narrative, it is less clear that early Christian commonplaces such as the consignment of Satan to hell (occurring three times among the Junius poems), the extended simile likening the progeny of Israel to the stars of heaven and the sand of the sea-shore (also occurring three times) or the account of Abraham's binding of Isaac (occurring twice) were treated by Anglo-Saxon biblical poets as discrete compositional units, or 'type-scenes', comparable to, say, the treatments of the dilemma of Hildeburh in *Beowulf* and *The Fight at Finnsburh*.[11] If the likelihood is granted that some of the biblical episodes treated in the Junius poems did in fact circulate as type-scenes, then questions surrounding the authorship and artistic identity of these compositions become vastly more complex, as it follows that elements of their narrative as well as features of their diction properly belong to the formulaic stock of Germanic alliterative verse.

When we turn from the complexities of the oral tradition to consider the hypothetical written precursors of the Junius poems we should first ask whether these exemplars were transmitted as fixed or variable texts. The carefully executed layout of Junius 11 suggests that by the end of the Anglo-Saxon period the verse of its biblical poems was accorded an antiquarian sort of respect. But any speculation about the textual fixity of the texts witnessed by the manuscript has to confront the disconcerting phenomenon of the interpolation of the Old Saxon-based verse of *Genesis B*.

[11] The early discussion of A. R. Skemp, 'The Transformation of Scriptural Story, Motive and Conception in Anglo-Saxon Poetry', *MP* 4 (1906–7), 423–70, remains a useful introduction. The treatments of the offering of Isaac in the verse of Junius 11 have been treated by R. P. Creed, 'The Art of the Singer: Three Old English Tellings of the Offering of Isaac', in *Old English Poetry: Fifteen Essays*, ed. R. P. Creed, Brown Univ. Bicentennial Publ. (Providence, RI, 1967), pp. 69–92, and L. N. McKill, 'The Offering of Isaac and the Artistry of the Old English *Genesis A*', in *The Practical Vision: Essays in English Literature in honour of Flora Roy*, ed. J. Campbell and J. Doyle (Waterloo, Ont., 1978), pp. 1–11; see also U. Schwab, 'Zum Verständnis des Isaak-Opfers in literarischer und bildlicher Darstellung des Mittelalters', *FS* 15 (1981), 435–94. For some classic statements on the circulation of type-scenes in ancient oral tradition, see M. Parry, 'On Typical Scenes in Homer', *Classical Philol.* 31 (1936), 357–60; see also more recent discussion by W. Arend, *Die typischen Scenen bei Homer* (Berlin, 1975). For complementary work in this area by biblical scholars, see M. J. Buss, 'The Study of Forms', in *Old Testament Form Criticism*, ed. Hayes, pp. 1–56, with references.

At some stage in the transmission of the Genesis-based verse a copyist (or redactor, or recensionist) undertook to recombine material drawn from multiple exemplars so as to produce a new and in some sense proprietary text. It is especially troubling that the resulting interpolation, at least when viewed from a twentieth-century perspective, appears to disrupt the narrative progression of *Genesis A* while evincing a gross disregard for the poetic qualities of *Genesis B*. It holds to reason that similar recastings of material may have taken place in the course of the transmission of *Exodus*, *Daniel* and *Christ and Satan*, albeit with less disruptive results. Indeed, specific arguments alleging interpolation have been offered for all of these poems. In sum, when we turn to study the Junius poems, we encounter a group of texts which defy nearly all of the expectations of modern literary scholarship: origin, authorship, historical context, artistic integrity and so on. Moreover, the intrusive interpolation of *Genesis B* suggests that we have to reckon with the certainty that at least some of the verse in Junius 11 has been altered in the light of an aesthetic (or an attitude toward texts) that is wholly foreign to the sensibilities of modern readers.

Recent scholarship on the Junius poems has attempted to surmount the critical obstacles sketched out above by recourse to extrabiblical sources: traditions of biblical glosses and encyclopaedic learning, apocryphal legends and, especially in recent years, the works of patristic authors writing in the Latin tradition, such as Augustine, Jerome and Gregory.[12] This approach seems reasonable insofar as the status of the Junius poems as products of early medieval Christian tradition is not in question. The words of patristic theologians exerted a pervasive influence on the educational and devotional practices of religious communities throughout Europe, and it thus holds to reason that, say, the doctrinal background of

[12] See esp. Huppé, *Doctrine and Poetry*. The 'exegetical' approach has been criticized by B. Brockmann, '"Heroic" and "Christian" in *Genesis A*: the Evidence of the Cain and Abel Episode', *MLQ* 35 (1974), 115–28; Boyd, 'Doctrine and Criticism'; W. G. Busse, 'Neo-Exegetical Criticism and Old English Poetry: a Critique of the Typological and Allegorical Appropriation of Medieval Literature', *REAL: The Yearbook of Res. in Eng. and Amer. Lit.* 2 (1984), 1–54; and Busse, *Altenglische Literatur*, pp. 198–229. Nevertheless, J. N. Garde and B. J. Muir, 'Patristic Influence and the Poetic Intention in Old English Religious Verse', *Lit. and Theol.* 2 (1988), 49–68, have recently reasserted the viability of a doctrinally centred approach to Old English biblical poetry (since developed further by Garde, *Old English Poetry*). Work in this area perhaps will be encouraged by the continuing appearance of volumes of *Biblia Patristica*, ed. Allenbach *et al.*

the Junius *Exodus* might be illuminated by consideration of patristic writings on the liberation of the Israelites. Even if we doubt that Old English biblical poets commonly had direct access to voluminous copies of works by Augustine and others, there are plausible intermediary channels for the transmission of patristic traditions, including homiletic, classroom instruction, the circulation of extracts in compilations and pastoral care. (Some specific examples will be discussed below.) The present study, however, endeavours to facilitate future interpretation of the Junius poems through consideration of a yet more fundamental set of background texts: the books of the Old Testament.

The defining characteristic of the undeniably heterogeneous verse of Junius 11 is its consistent attempt to provide, at least at the level of narrative, approximations to the content of continuous passages of Old Testament scripture. *Genesis A* offers a sequential and essentially complete treatment of the first twenty-two chapters of the book of Genesis (extending from the Creation to Abraham's offering of Isaac), and *Daniel* closely follows the episodic structure of Daniel I–V (the reigns of the Babylonian kings). The poetic innovations of *Exodus* have been deservedly celebrated by many critics of Old English verse, but at a basic level the poem offers a rendition of the matter of Exodus XI–XIV (the passage from Egypt and the crossing of the Red Sea). Even the heavy-handed interpolation of the account of the Fall and its aftermath in *Genesis B* has been effected in such a way that the Junius *Genesis*, regarded as a whole, embodies the basic narrative sequence of Genesis II–IV. Viewed in this light, nearly every sequence of lines in the Old Testament verse of Junius 11 may be seen to rest ultimately on a continuous exemplar of some passage of scripture. The common debt of its contents to the model of Old Testament narrative, in my view, serves to set the Junius Manuscript apart from all other surviving collections of Old English verse. These observations in turn raise a number of source-critical questions. Are the poems founded directly on the words of Latin biblical texts?[13] Or, as in the case of patristic writings, should we suspect the influence of intermediary traditions of Christian religious instruction and devotional practice? Do the biblical renditions of the Old Testament-based

[13] On questions of literacy and knowledge of Latin texts in Anglo-Saxon England, see Cross,'The Literate Anglo-Saxon'; Bately, 'Evidence for Knowledge of Latin', stressing the evidence of Old English prose but discussing verse at pp. 36–7 and 46–7, nn. 6–9; and the recent study by G. H. Brown, 'Latin Writing and the Old English Vernacular', in *Schriftlichkeit*, ed. Schaefer, pp. 36–57.

Junius poems bear comparison with texts of Genesis, Exodus and Daniel preserved in surviving medieval Bibles? Does the innovative treatment of certain biblical episodes in the poems resemble the handling of the same passages in early liturgical documents?

The biblical basis of the Junius poems has generally been taken for granted. In discussions of the biblical sources of the poems, scholars have most often cited passages from critical editions of the Latin Vulgate or, in a surprising number of cases, from modern translations of the Bible. It is a central premise of the present study, however, that the biblical resources available to the poets of this verse bore only limited resemblance to the modern canon of scripture. The textual uniformity that has emerged in recent times through the efforts of biblical scholars did not exist in the early Middle Ages. Rather, the revised readings of Jerome's Vulgate text continued to cross paths with the remnants of the earlier Old Latin translation, resulting in the emergence of so-called 'mixed' exemplars. Identifiable groups of textual variants and differing systems of verse- and chapter-division also arose within the Vulgate tradition itself. Complete copies of the Latin Bible were precious and physically unwieldy commodities in all phases of Anglo-Saxon history.[14] It is possible and perhaps probable that none of the poets of the verse of Junius 11 owned a complete Latin Bible. It is more likely that the verses of Genesis, Exodus, Daniel and other biblical books reached our poets in a variety of formats: discrete copies of individual books of the Old or New Testament; so-called 'part-Bibles' comprising several biblical books, often in configurations reflecting the main divisions of the Bible itself (Pentateuch, prophets, gospels, etc.); liturgical documents containing biblical lections or biblical adaptations (in canticles, antiphons, prayers, etc.) prescribed for the ceremonies of mass and Office; documents serving doubly as part-Bibles and as liturgical texts, such as psalters employed in the recitation of the Office or copies of the gospels marked to provide the evangelical readings at mass; and private manuscripts of many types prepared as adjuncts to Bible-study, meditation or other activities undertaken as part of the medieval devotional routine. Even if we assume the intervention of an intermediary, oral

[14] For discussions of the circulation and physical forms of early medieval Bibles, see Marsden, *Text of the Old Testament*, esp. pp. 39–47; McGurk, 'The Oldest Manuscripts' and other essays assembled in *The Early Medieval Bible*, ed. Gameson; P. Petitmengin, 'La bible à travers les inventaires de bibliothèques médiévales', in *Le moyen âge et la bible*, ed. Riché and Lobrichon, pp. 31–53; and Brown, 'A New Fragment'.