5-2022

'Carcern' and 'Wordcræft': Enclosure, Connection and Gender in Cynewulf's "Juliana" and "Elene"

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Carcern and *Wordcræft*:
Enclosure, Connection and Gender in Cynewulf's *Juliana* and *Elene*

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirement
for the degree of Bachelor of Arts in the Department of English from
The College of William and Mary

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Williamsburg, VA
May 12, 2022

Acknowledgements

This project would not have been possible without the guidance and support of my faculty at William & Mary and my loved ones. To Professor Jennifer Lorden, thank you for your patience and wisdom. To Professors Jenny Putzi, Scott Challener, Alicia Andrzejewski and too many more to name, thank you for your confidence and encouragement. To my family, thank you for trusting me in my pursuit of this field of study. To Andy, thank you for reading all of the nonsense drafts I send your way and for your care and compassion.

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I. Introduction

The practice of religious enclosure is broadly considered by medieval scholars[1] to be organized along strict gendered boundaries. These boundaries reveal themselves in the cloisters of convents, in the practice of anchoritism, and in literary representations of Christian journeys. Cynewulf, the elusive legendary early medieval English poet, engages with these boundaries in his Old English poems *Juliana* and *Elene*,[2] blurring the lines of gender and dissolving the rigidity so commonly associated with monastic enclosure. Cynewulf's poems date to about the ninth century.[3] In *Juliana*, Cynewulf places himself within Saint Juliana's narrative and her within his own winding religious journey, culminating in the final signature passage of the poem in the form of a runic acrostic. Confronted with the reality of Judgment Day, Cynewulf struggles to make sense of the final destination for his soul once it departs his body. In the final lines of *Juliana,* he petitions the saint for guidance. While calling on Juliana in his discussion of the fate of his soul, Cynewulf writes his signature into the text of the poem.[4] By surrounding his own name with Juliana's story, Cynewulf wraps himself in her sainthood, hoping to find

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[1] See Shari Horner, *The Discourse of Enclosure: Representing Women in Old English Literature* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2001) and Peter Brown, *The Body in Society: Men, Women, and Sexual Renunciation in Early Christianity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988).

[2] My decision to focus on *Juliana* and *Elene* of the four signed Cynewulf poems was informed by Stacy Klein's invitation for a feminist engagement with Old English literature. See: "Centralizing Feminism in Anglo-Saxon Literary Studies: *Elene*, Motherhood, and History," in *Readings in Medieval Texts: Interpreting Old and Middle English Literature*, ed. David F. Johnson and Elaine Treharne (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005): 149–165. Klein's work here offers that, "When feminists speak of apprehending certain aspects of the world as intolerable and of creating a more just one, what many have in mind is a world in which gender roles are taken up as a variety of playful possibilities rather than a set of cultural norms enforced in strict accordance with biological sex. Feminist literary criticism is driven by the belief that representational systems such as literature may help to create such a world—by contributing to enhanced understandings of gender norms and their construction, and by enabling readers to envision new ways of living as gendered beings" (150). It is this same sort of reimagining that I hope to bring to Cynewulf and his engagement with these female saints and identification with the enclosed individual.

[3] Daniel Calder, *Cynewulf* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1981), 17.

[4] Cynewulf, *Juliana*, ed. Rosemary Woolf (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1993): lines 703b–709a. Translations throughout this paper are my own.

some answer for where his soul will end up—heaven or hell. Similarly, in *Elene*, Cynewulf situates himself within Judas Cyriacus' imprisonment and conversion, grappling with his own sins and considering his path to God. While neither Juliana or Cyriacus are literally monastic, the religious and pedagogical roles they take up assert a similar position.[5] Ultimately, Cynewulf's connection with both Juliana and Judas in *Juliana* and *Elene*, respectively, unwinds the restrictive ties of gendered monastic enclosure.

Cynewulf's poems are marked by the runic signature coded into the epilogues of each of his texts. The four texts attributed to him are *Juliana*, *Elene*, *Christ II* and *The Fates of the Apostles.* Throughout these epilogues, Cynewulf incorporates runic letters, each standing in for another word. Together, they spell out his name, sometimes disjoint or out of sequence, like in the case of *Fates*. His name appears only in the runic signatures he has coded into his compositions, and beyond hypothetical musings, there is no scholarly consensus on the true identity of Cynewulf, were he a real-life poet or collective of poets—lending even more mystery to his works and their origins. In his book *Cynewulf*, Daniel Calder lays out the scholarly debate on Cynewulf's identity and the dating of his poems. Ultimately, the findings are these: Cynewulf was likely Mercian, based upon the linguistic variation between the spellings of his name across the four attributed poems;[6] and he was probably a member of the clergy, based on his focus on religious figures and work with sacred texts.[7]

[5] See: Christina M. Heckman, "Demonic Pedagogy and the Teaching Saint: Voice, Body, and Place in Cynewulf's *Juliana*," in *Medieval Feminist Forum* 54, no. 2 (2018): 28–63.
[6] Calder, 17.
[7] Calder, 16.

In terms of surviving material, what remains is a corpus of four poems attributed to Cynewulf. Across all four poems, Cynewulf is deeply concerned with Latin texts,[8] as noted in his likely adaptations of *Passio S. Iulianae*—in the case of *Juliana*— and *Acta Cyriaci* or *Acta Sanctorum*—in the case of *Elene*, as demonstrated by Michael Lapidge's work.[9] Further, with regard to the identity of "Cynewulf," Jennifer Lorden's article "Discernment and Dissent in the Cynewulf Poems" argues for a figurative understanding of Cynewulf as a literary device—one in which the author "evinces mastery of both Old English and Latin poetic conventions" in disciplined study.[10] As the poet employs various literary devices, he becomes one himself as a figure restricted to these manuscript texts, even binding the remaining poems of his corpus together as a unified body of work.[11] Bound by the threads holding the leaves of parchment, Cynewulf's identity lives enclosed within the pages of these texts. Furthermore, the signed poems are connected by links across the texts, self-referential and reaching past the boundaries and bindings of the manuscript texts.[12]

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[8] See: Jennifer A. Lorden, "Discernment and Dissent in the Cynewulf Poems," *Modern Philology* 116, no. 4 (2019): 300. Lorden writes: "The Cynewulf poems are highly studied and self-consciously literate—the poems derive from books, exist in books, and direct their readers to more books still."

[9] Michael Lapidge, "Cynewulf and the *Passio S. Iulianae*," in *Unlocking the Wordhord: Anglo-Saxon Studies in Memory of Edward B. Irving, Jr.*, ed. Mark C. Amodio and Katherine O'Brien O'Keeffe (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003):147.

[10] Lorden writes: "'Cynewulf' is, above all, a literary device, an inscribed, erudite persona whose presence marks a rareified intertextual project" (300).

[11] See: Lorden, 321. As Cynewulf's signatures and choices in phrasing appear across all four attributed poems in relatively consistent styles, "Cynewulf" as an entity becomes "the conventional authorial persona that binds the poems together."

[12] See also: Janie Steen, "The Verse and Virtuosity of Cynewulf" in *Verse and Virtuosity: The Adaptation of Latin Rhetoric in Old English Poetry* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008): 138. Steen writes: "In Cynewulf's hands... Latinity and learnedness do not displace tradition, but blend with it and enrich it." Lorden further discusses the implications of the distribution of the Cynewulf poems across a significant portion of the remaining OE poetic codices. She writes that this spread "renders legible the intertextual relationships between poems comprising this poetic project, while their apparent influence on other extant poems demonstrates the importance of the Cynewulfian body of texts as a remarkable phenomenon within the history of Old English literature" (301).

Cynewulf's epilogic signature requires that the reader be with the physical text. Although the narrator solicits prayers for the heavenly fate of his soul at the end of each of his poems, were it to be simply read aloud, the artistry and cleverness of the acrostic runes may be lost in plain recitation. Instead, the reader must see the runes on the page. Further, this requirement of physicality creates another vector for connection with the reader, necessitating a visual or tactile interaction with the texts.[13] The physicality that Cynewulf generates in the use of a runic signature concretizes his prayers.[14] Cynewulf not only writes himself into the stories of Juliana and Judas by drawing connections between his life and theirs, but he produces longevity for Juliana and Judas' stories, his story and the prayers he solicits in his final passages. Furthermore, the traditional reading of Cynewulf's signatures posits that the employment of runes as a method of signing Cynewulf's work reflects a very candid, human wish to be seen by his peers and, as this portion of the poem may serve as a prayer or call to prayer, to be seen by God. Cynewulf writes his name, coded into these runes, commonly used by the early English (among other things) as markings on gravestones,[15] in such a way that forces himself as the

[13] See: Tom Birkett, "Runes and 'Revelatio'" *The Review of English Studies* 65, no. 272: 779. Birkett writes: "Each of the signatures functions as a tangible textual revelation, and represents in microcosm the meditative process needed to illuminate the fate of the individual soul."

[14] See: Jill Hamilton Clements, "Reading, Writing and Resurrection: Cynewulf's Runes as a Figure of the Body," *Anglo-Saxon England* 43 (2014): 154. Jill Hamilton Clements refers to the tangible remains of Cynewulf in his poetry through his signature as "a physical remnant of himself in the hands of—and before the eyes of—his readers, long after he has left this world." As Cynewulf departs this life (or anticipates his departure) he leaves behind his prayers in his poetry as an enduring remainder, one in which the reader can hold physically and connect with by touch.

[15] Clements describes the use of runic scripts on gravestones and other funerary objects (135). Further, Clements writes that "As the name in a commemorative or funerary inscription long survives the person whose identity it represents, so the runic signature stands in for Cynewulf, a physical embodiment of the man who has since passed away" (137). On the other hand, Tom Birkett argues that the signatures demonstrate a "clear contrast between what lies on the surface—the 'engraved' name—and what must be apprehended beyond the authorial conceit" (778). Thus, this desire for some sort of survival on earth is at odds with Cynewulf's desire to be with God.

speaker and us as readers to reckon with our own mortality and our own sins.[16] Similarly, Tom Birkett implores us to read the signature "as an act intended to guide the reader through a process of participatory revelation."[17]

These epilogues hold the only clues of Cynewulf's identity in his runic signature. In this way, his identity is confined to his own text, his own writing, by virtue of existing just within these words, physically bound in his manuscript texts. In *Elene*, Cynewulf even describes his *wordcræft* (wordcraft, or eloquence) as being *wæf* [18] (woven) by himself. Megan Cavell's book *Weaving Words and Binding Bodies: The Poetics of Human Experience in Old English Literature* investigates this kind of woven enclosure. Cavell explores the constrictive and constructive nature of weaving and binding language in Old English poetry.[19] Likewise, in *The Discourse of Enclosure: Representing Women in Old English Literature*, Shari Horner considers the convention of enclosure and its relationship to religious women and early medieval femininity. Horner argues that, in Old English literature, religious women are both enclosed and themselves enclosure—enclosed to protect against entry from men (e.g., the cloister), and enclosure as a vessel for Christ.[20]

For Horner, these early medieval texts offer "significant precursors" to the bodily practices of female enclosure and religious reclusion apparent in the literature of the later

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[16] See Birkett 774 and 783. Birkett further asserts that "Cynewulf is enacting the unlocking of his earthly name, and as the reader expands each letter they are similarly engaged in a process in which they read beyond the earthly signifier to contemplate their own salvation."
[17] Birkett, 774.
[18] Cynewulf, *Elene*, ed. P. O. E. Gradon (London: Methuen & Co Ltd, 1958): line 1237a. Translations throughout this paper are my own.
[19] Megan Cavell, *Weaving Words and Binding Bodies: The Poetics of Human Experience in Old English Literature* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2016): 5.
[20] Horner, 7, 16.

Middle Ages.[21] Framed by Judith Butler's social construction of gender and theory of performativity, Horner examines how femininity was constructed in Old English texts in terms of its intactness and enclosure. Female spaces like abbeys or nunneries were often segregated by used of a wall or cloister, or they were wholly single-sex. Regulatory practices like those prohibiting/limiting general socialization with men and a requirement for virginity were in place to "keep both body and soul firmly enclosed and protected from penetration,"[22] a protocol in place to simultaneously protect and liberate.[23] For Juliana, Horner's discussion of enclosure and intactness largely centers on her virginity, despite her literal imprisonment. For Elene, however, she is not just enclosure herself, but also enclos*ing*. Further, Elene does not experience any form of bodily enclosure as she embarks on her journey east. As Elene decides to hold Judas captive in a hole for a prison, she is angry, *eorne hyge*[24] (with an angry mind). It is not until a week of starvation torture that Judas reveals the location of the True Cross, calling the nature of his imprisonment *þreanyd* (a cruel necessity).[25] In the case of Elene, that imprisonment is a necessity for her to wield and elevate her spiritual power in the establishment of the Church in Jerusalem. For Judas, that imprisonment is a necessity for his giving up of his family's history, a prerequisite for finding the True Cross and, by extension, his unwilling conversion.[26] Thomas Hill further argues that the entire narrative of "Inventio crucis"

[21] Horner, 17.
[22] Horner, 11.
[23] Horner, 14.
[24] *Elene*, line 685b.
[25] *Elene*, line 704a
[26] Christina M. Heckman, "Things in Doubt: Inventio, Dialectic, and Jewish Secrets in Cynewulf's *Elene*," *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 108, no. 4 (October 2009): 478. Christina Heckman writes, "That this harmony and completion come about only through the violent coercion of Judas's torment, the dark side of the victory-tree so prevalent in Anglo-Saxon cross-texts, demonstrates the fundamental irony that imperial, worldly power simultaneously supports Christian learning and imposes limitations upon it."

serves as an extended metaphor for conversion, as demonstrated by Constantine's vision of the Cross and Cyriacus' conversion by Elene.[27]

Looking to the Cynewulf signatures, they take on a similar model of enclosure. In his poetry, Cynewulf is turning to a method of enclosure in his penitence—a kind of enclosed composition. Not only is Cynewulf wrapping up his religious worries into poetry that is bound with actual threads from a manuscript, as they exist in the Exeter Book and Vercelli Book, but he himself becomes enclosed in this very poetry. In his poems, through his runic signature, Cynewulf has linguistically woven himself into his own word.[28] In manuscripts that are physically bound and hold the only clues to his identity, he has also securely bound himself into these texts, forever tying himself to Juliana and Judas. Further, Cynewulf's poetic weaving cements his own works into the larger narrative of Old English poetry.[29]

While Cynewulf's life and path to Christianity are tied to Juliana and Judas in these texts, he still struggles with the inevitable severing of the ties of his soul to his body. Cynewulf distresses over this inescapable reality through both epilogues and

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[27] See Thomas D. Hill, "Sapiential Structure and Figural Narrative in the Old English 'Elene'," *Traditio* 27 (1971): 177; Thomas D. Hill "The Failing Torch: The Old English *Elene*, 1256–1259" in *Notes and Queries* (June 2005): 155. See Hill's exploration of the history of the "Inventio crucis" tradition on Church Liturgy: "Time, Liturgy, and History in the Old English *Elene*," in *Imagining the Jew in Anglo-Saxon Literature and Culture*, ed. Samantha Zacher (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2016), 157–166. Further, see David Johnson's discussion of demonic agency and liturgy in "Hagiographical Demon or Liturgical Devil? Demonology and Baptismal Imagery in Cynewulf's *Elene*" in *Leeds Studies in English* 37 (2006): 9–29. Thomas Hill writes: "[*Elene*] is concerned with finding the Cross in a literal and immediate sense, but it also concerned with 'finding the Cross' as an immediate metaphor for conversion." demonic agency and liturgy in "Hagiographical Demon or Liturgical Devil? Demonology and Baptismal Imagery in Cynewulf's *Elene*" in *Leeds Studies in English* 37 (2006): 9–29.

[28] Clements writes of Calder that, as Cynewulf discusses his sins and transgressions in life, he "has placed *himself* in those circumstances, 'encasing his name in God's angry words spoken at the day of reckoning'" (136). Further, see: Calder, 71.

[29] Lorden, 300, 321.

reckons with the fate of his soul and his knowledge of the truth of God.[30] Leslie Lockett's monograph *Anglo-Saxon Psychologies in the Vernacular and Latin Traditions* identifies the cardiocentric conception of the soul in the early English consciousness, distinguishing between the soul and the mind and situating the soul within the chest cavity.[31] For Cynewulf, this tension between the knowledge in his mind and the fate of his soul is palpable. Particularly in *Juliana*, the saint's mental surety of God grants her protection as she faces incredible torture and a challenge to her faith. Likewise, Cynewulf's discussion of his path to religious devotion in *Elene* reflects his goal of deep faith in God and ultimate heavenly destination.

These two signed Cynewulf poems *Juliana* and *Elene* unravel the gendered constrictions of monastic enclosure. While situations of enclosure dominate much of the narratives in Cynewulf's *Juliana* and *Elene*, what reveals itself is not simply walls of prisons or fetters binding a demon, but the connections established through those types of confinement. As Cynewulf requests direction from Juliana and admires Cyriacus' conversion, he weaves himself into their narratives, electing to participate in the same type of religious enclosure that Juliana and Judas are forced to undergo. These connections ultimately break down the strict, gendered boundaries of religious enclosure.

II. *In Carcern*

Juliana's situation of enclosure is characterized by layers of protection and imprisonment. A Christian woman, she is faced with a forced marriage to a pagan man named Eleusius

[30] As Clements writes of *Fates*, Cynewulf "specifically laments his own passing, noting his need for gracious friends when his soul journeys away from his body" (143).
[31]Leslie Lockett, *Anglo-Saxon Psychologies in the Vernacular and Latin Traditions*. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2011): 41.

by her father Affricanus during the Diocletian Persecution of the year 304 in Nicomedia. When she refuses, she is sent to prison. These wrappings of confinement emerge as she is led to her cell after rejecting her marriage to Eleusius:

> gelædan bibead
> to carcerne. Hyre waes Cristes lof
> in ferðlocan fæste biwunden,
> milde modsefan, mægen unbrice.
> Ða wæs mid clustre carcernes duru
> behilden, homra geweorc; halig þær inne
> wærfæst wunade. Symle heo Wuldorcyning
> herede æt heortan, heofenrices God,
> in þam nydcleafan, Nergend fira,
> heolstre bihelmad;[32]

(he commanded her to be led to prison. Enclosed in her was Christ's praise, fastened in the locked place of her mind, in her mild heart, power unshaken. Then the door of the prison was closed with a bolt by the work of hammers; there the holy one tolerated [it], faithful within. She always praised the King of Glory at heart, God of heaven, in that prison, the Savior of men, covered in darkness)

In this passage, at Juliana's inner core is *Cristes lof* (her praise for Christ). Located within *hyre*, Juliana's *milde modsefan* (her mild heart), contains Juliana's *ferðlocan* (the locked place of her mind), secured such that her praise for Christ remains constant and steadfast. Horner writes that, "[t]he spatial dimensions of Christ within her heart, hear heart within her body, and her body within its cell evoke a striking image of Christian female piety; she is like the female anchorite, both enclosure and enclosed one."[33] Together, these layers create almost a nuclear core of Juliana and the praise for Christ that she encloses within her body. In this way, Juliana holds Christ securely and deeply within herself—past the physical shell of her body, through her mild heart, into the locked place of her mind. Surrounding this nuclear core are two more layers of imprisonment: *heolstre* (the

[32] *Juliana*, lines 232b–241a.
[33] Horner, 115.

cover of darkness) and *carcernes duru* (the door of the prison). The darkness in this passage indicates a well-sealed chamber, a cell where no light can break through, a room with no "penetration-points".[34] Together with the bolted door, it confirms that Juliana has no physical way out and implies that no one else can get in—a point quickly disproven once the disguised demon appears. Here, Juliana's body becomes fortified, first, in the face of a forced marriage and, second, as she is imprisoned. But this physical fortification of the prison wall is, at this point, weaker than the bounds of her body, as the demon is successful in entering the prison later in the poem but not successful in penetrating Juliana's heart.

But this nuclear core of Juliana is not just literally imprisoned in the content of Cynewulf's text. This imprisonment is instead extended into the juxtaposition of *carcern* with other words. In this above passage, *in ferðlocan fæste biwunden, / milde modsefan* (fastened in the locked place of her mind / in her mild heart) is physically bookended on either side by *carcern* (prison). In the first instance of *carcern*, Juliana is being led to prison. In the second, the prison door is being closed, bolted behind her. Together, they mark the entrance and sealing of Juliana in the prison. Thus, not only is Juliana—as a container for her heart, mind and praise for Christ—literally imprisoned as she journeys on her path to sainthood, but that imprisonment is duplicated for the reader as *carcern* surrounds her on either side in the lines of the text. Further, these are the only two uses of *carcern* in the entirety of Cynewulf's *Juliana*, reemphasizing the isolation that Juliana faces while in prison.

[34] Horner, 8.

The threat of a forced marriage for Juliana includes a threat of sexual violence. The rape implied by forced marriage demonstrates the permeability of a feminine individual—Juliana. As a saint, though, Juliana resists this, particularly since she refuses the marriage because of Eleusius' pagan beliefs, reestablishing not only her impenetrability as a saint but specifically the impenetrability provided by a secure faith in God. Thwarting this feminizing violation, Juliana retains her virginity throughout her poem, modeling the practice of enclosure in a convent for female monastics. However, Juliana's issue with the marriage is simply Eleusius' pagan beliefs; were he a Christian, she would have no qualms.[35] Further, as a devout woman, Juliana holds Christ within herself ("Hyre wæs Cristes lof"). Horner links this duality in *Juliana* to the very present threats of danger to female monastics posed by the Danes.[36] This historical context allows us to see that "Anglo-Saxon female saints' lives are profoundly concerned with the manipulation of the virginal body and the protection of that body when it is threatened (as it invariably is) with exposure, torture, mutilation, or rape. While Juliana is not herself English or Anglo-Saxon, she presents as an idealized model of female monasticism in her role as a saint.[37] "In its intense focus on the body of the saint, *Juliana* explores for female

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[35] *Juliana*, lines 30a–50b. See: Heckman, "Demonic Pedagogy and the Teaching Saint," 40; and Horner, *The Discourse of Enclosure: Representing Women in Old English Literature*, 5, 102–5. Christina Heckman counters Horner's focus on Juliana's retention of virginity here. While the maintenance of virginity for female monastics, particularly nuns and saints, is critical, Juliana's only issue with the potential marriage to Eleusius is his paganism. Heckman writes that "Horner's focus on the 'saint's body' and the 'enclosures of cloister and body,' as well as Juliana's resistance to the 'loss of virginity,' perhaps obscures the fact that Juliana is thoroughly willing to lose her virginity to Eleseus in marriage as long as he becomes a Christian."

[36] Horner, 104–106. See also: Heide Estes, "Colonization and Conversion," in *Conversion and Colonization in Anglo-Saxon England*, ed. Catherine E. Karkov and Nicholas Howe (Tempe: Arizona State University Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2006): 133–151.

[37] See Horner, 105: "The Old English version of the legend of *Juliana* is generally assumed today to have been written [for Anglo-Saxon female readers], meant to inspire an Anglo-Saxon religious audience who presumably would enjoy learning about the adventures of a powerful Christian virgin." Further, "To represent and narrate heroic virginity, *Juliana* develops... gendered models... of spiritually healthy Christianity, emphasizing the need to fortify and protect the vulnerable female body" (109).

religious leaders the threats of—and desirable responses to—such violations of the dual enclosures of cloister and body."[38]

Juliana's many layers of enclosure fall into two categories: those for punishment and those for protection. The inner layers—Juliana's body, her heart, her locked mind—are protective, guaranteeing the perpetuity of Juliana's love for Christ. The outer two layers—the prison and the darkness—are instead punishers for Juliana's praise for Christ. The boundary between inner and outer is the physical body of Juliana. And as she is both enclosed within the prison/darkness and enclosing the many layers containing her faith in Christ, she continues to meet the standards of female monastic enclosure.[39] While Juliana is in prison against her will, she uses her time in prison to reaffirm her faith, amid extensive torture. Despite this enveloping punishment, Juliana is sustained throughout her imprisonment by her *singal gesið* (constant companion), the Holy Spirit.[40] Ultimately, Juliana's faith in Christ stays secure and untouched by these evil powers, and she tries to remain "sacred and impenetrable"—like her ideal religious female domain.[41]

The gendered dynamics of Juliana's narrative are almost dialectical in nature. While she is confronted with feminizing experiences (i.e., forced marriage), she resists them, making her body impermeable to feminizing violations. At the same time, this resistance to feminization is characteristic of female monastics. Thus, female monastics must work to leave behind elements of their femininity or femaleness. Still, Juliana is treated as feminine, as female, by the pagans in Nicomedia. Horner writes that "the culturally established 'expressions' of gender mandated by the terms of female religious

[38] Horner, 105.
[39] Horner, 16
[40] *Juliana*, lines 241b–242a.
[41] Horner, 7, 10.

enclosure produce the seemingly stable gender identities of women in Old English literature."[42] Yet Juliana's gender "identity" according to Horner is perhaps quite unstable, as she moves to "become male" in her binding of the demon and subsequent penetration of his mind. Juliana's gender "identity" would likely be considered "unintelligible" by Judith Butler, around whom Horner frames her argument: "Intelligible genders are those which in some sense institute and maintain relations of coherence and continuity among sex, gender, sexual practice, and desire."[43] Furthermore, the "cultural matrix through which gender identity has become intelligible requires that certain kinds of 'identities' cannot 'exist'—that is, those in which gender does not follow from sex and those in which the practices of desire do not 'follow' from either sex or gender."[44] While Horner discusses that Juliana's gender is unintelligible to the pagans—as they understand her exclusively from their own cultural perspective—for that very same reason Juliana's gender "identity" has nearly been shoehorned into "male" in Horner's reading, leaving behind crucial elements of Juliana's feminine/feminized experience as a penetrable/eventually penetrated individual, particularly in the face of potential sexual violence. The very fluidity of Juliana's gender "expression" renders her not solely feminine, not solely masculine, but both.

As the female monastic experience is perhaps best represented by practices of enclosure, the moments where Juliana herself encloses something else do not just include her holding Christ within herself. Instead, this includes, first, the act of binding God and her spirit within herself and, second, the act of binding the demon she meets immediately

[42] Horner, 7.
[43] Butler, 23.
[44] Butler, 24.

after being imprisoned. As Juliana enters the prison, she is greeted by a demon in disguise. She instantly knows that he is a demon and eventually binds him (*Heo þæt deoful genom*).[45] They converse for several dozen lines, and he informs her of her likely torturous fate: “þe sind heardlicu / wundrum wælgrim, witu geteohhad / to gringwræce” (for you, grievous torments with bloodthirsty wounds are determined as deadly punishment).[46]Juliana then moves *fæstlice ferð staþelian* (to securely fasten her spirit)[47] before calling to God for strength in the face of this adversity, and a voice replies, telling her to "forfoh þone frætgan / fæste geheald"[48] (seize that wicked one and hold him securely),

> oþþæt he his siðfæt secge mid ryhte,
> ealne from orde, hwæt his æðelu syn[49]

(... until he tells of his journey truthfully, everything from the start, what his origins are.)

Here, the demon has come into Juliana’s prison cell to threaten her, just to be foiled by Juliana's faith in God and His protection over her. Juliana *fæstlice ferð staþelian* (securely fastens her spirit) before calling out to God for protection, and then that protection is granted. In this scene, Juliana is being enclosed by the physical prison, but while she herself is enclosed she also binds her own spirit, connecting her spirit to God and herself.[50] From this secure binding, Juliana is then able to muster the confidence,

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[45] *Juliana*, line 288. Her binding of the demon is mentioned again later as the demon refers to it: "*Fæste fetrum gebunde*" (you bound me securely in chains), line 433.
[46] *Juliana*, lines 261a–266b.
[47] *Juliana*, line 270.
[48] *Juliana*, lines 284a–286b.
[49] *Juliana*, lines 284a–286b.
[50] Heckman discusses the flexibility of the prison as well: "... the prison too is a phenomenon with shifting significant, central to Juliana's redefinition of her identity as she transforms her cell, like her father's house, into a place of resistant pedagogy." Juliana's use of Christian teaching while imprisoned demonstrates the strengthening of her own faith in God. While the demon appears in the prison to make Juliana sin, Juliana's faith in Christ ultimately allows her to bind the demon and force him to confess his sins. Heckman continues, "Indeed here, the demon is the prisoner, subject to the wills of Juliana and her divine guardian

domeadig (blessed with glory), to then seize the demon. As she binds the demon herself, she rejects penetration for herself and instead enacts it on the demon, entering into the demon's mind,[51] with the wisdom of Christ (*wisdomes gæst*)[52] and forcing him to confess to his sins.

While Juliana is the obvious focal point of this text, we must also observe the demon's own multilevel enclosure. At this point in the text, there is at least one folio missing from the manuscript, due to damage to the Exeter Book.[53] And from later context clues within the Old English text of *Juliana*, it is clear that Juliana bound the demon herself, when the demon says, "*Fæste fetrum gebunde*" (you bound me securely in chains).[54] However, after the missing folio(s), the next surviving lines open up into the demon's confession, which continues for approximately 150 lines, with intermittent replies from Juliana, who asks him to continue confessing to more heinous acts.[55] The demon himself admits to Juliana's own power: "Nu þu sylfa meaht / on sefan þinum soð gecnawan"[56] (Now you know the true power in your own mind). That power in Juliana's mind offers her bodily protection from the demon. But that power in her mind is not simply just Juliana's; it is *Cristes lof*. For Juliana, the power of Christ's love in her heart and mind provides her with not just protection for her own body but the capacity to control (and enclose) those around her. From that power inside herself, Juliana is able to

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through his rejection of nobility inherent in his creation; Juliana constrains his material being as he has already yielded control of his spiritual being." Thus, Juliana penetrates the demon's spirit, a masculinizing act ("Demonic Pedagogy", 45–48).

[51] Juliana says to the demon: "Nu þu sylfa meaht / on sefan þinum soð gecnawan" (Now you know the true power in your own mind), lines 342b–343b, discussed later.

[52] *Juliana*, line 517b.

[53] Lapidge, 150.

[54] *Juliana*, line 433.

[55] *Juliana*, lines 456a–460b.

[56] *Juliana*, lines 341b–342b.

physically bind the demon and compel him to confess his sins, which he describes as being "nyde gebæded, þragmælum geþread"[57] (constrained by need, I suffer these punishments). Horner's reading of enclosure relies heavily upon the dichotomies of penetrated/penetrating and penetrable/impenetrable. These differences, for Horner, are thoroughly gendered: women are penetrated and penetrable; men are penetrating and impenetrable. However, Horner's interpretation of the question of penetration focuses on the physical and external elements of enclosure and imprisonment, such as the walls of Juliana's prison or the act of forcing the demon's confession.[58] She writes that, "[p]aradoxically, the female body can only be a site of power when it remains closed, impermeable, when it is contained—when, in other words, it is not feminine. Thus, the closed, virginal, female body is masculinized—Juliana, through this rejection of femininity (permeability), is able to... 'become male'."[59] But focusing on penetration does not need to depend on a fixed male/female binary. As we have seen with the ability of saints like Juliana to enclose and be enclosed, to bind and be bound, we must also see that Juliana can both penetrate (as with the demon) and be penetrated (as with her execution by sword). In this way, the binary imposed by "male versus female" or "masculine versus feminine" is, at best, restrictive for a discussion of Juliana's experience with enclosure. Thus, Juliana, instead of "becoming male", progresses beyond the binary and holds onto elements of her femininity even as she rejects a pagan marriage, even as she "penetrates" the demon's mind, even as she survives two attempts of execution by fire. For Juliana, it is not *either/or* when it comes to masculinity and femininity, but rather *both/and*.

[57] *Juliana*, lines 343b–344a.
[58] Horner, 119.
[59] Horner, 119.

The demon's forced confession in *Juliana* demonstrates the saint's persistent power while she is incarcerated. While Juliana is already imprisoned when the demon arrives, he still attempts to drive Juliana to renounce her faith. But Juliana, *clæne* (clean, pure),[60] resists the demon's effort to force Juliana into blasphemy. His attempted punishment for maintaining her faith results in Juliana binding him instead, compelling him into confession. The demon's failure to genuinely harm Juliana and Juliana's success at binding the demon model the failure of the pagans or other non-Christians, first, to gender Juliana correctly and, second, to truly understand the word of God.[61] Furthermore, Juliana overpowering the demon reflects a change in the gendered nature of Juliana's imprisonment. Despite her still being imprisoned, Juliana has reclaimed most of the power in this situation. While this scene may be read as a traditional narrative of the Church or God prevailing, it ultimately is Juliana herself—with perhaps Christ working through her—that prevails. At the same time, as *Cristes lof* is housed within Juliana's body, Juliana makes herself impenetrable to the demon.

The back-and-forth between Juliana and the demon illustrate the struggle between Christ and Satan, between Christ's teachings and sin. While the demon in *Juliana* is hardly a hero, his enclosure models the afflictions of religious figures like Christ, Juliana, Judas Cyriacus and (later) Cynewulf in his epilogues. Cavell notes that "the physical binding of these devout heroes, as well as their ability to overcome such affliction through their spirituality, echoes the passion of Christ."[62] Instead of Juliana being the one that truly suffers as Christ did in this portion of the text, the demon is the one confronted

[60] *Juliana*, line 32b.
[61] Horner, 112–113.
[62] Cavell, 127.

with this torture. This enclosure of the demon, resulting in his confession and acceptance of the Truth of Christ, demonstrates the function of religious binding as a mechanism for spiritual rebirth. In Part II of the demon's confession, he explains his priority in carrying out Satan's wishes:

> Ic þære sawle me,
> geornor gyme ymb þæs gæstes forwyrd,
> þonne þæs lichoman, se þe on legre sceal
> worðan in worulde wyrme to hroþor,
> bifolen in foldan. [63]

(I care about the soul more eagerly, concerning the destruction of the spirit, than for the body, that which should become the comfort of worms in the world, committed to the grave in the earth.)

In these lines, the demon explains that his real focus in doing Satan's torturous bidding is the destruction of the spirit (*gæstes forwyrd*) rather than the body (*lichoman*). The demon argues that his attention toward the spirit is because of its uncertain fate: the body is certainly going into the ground, food for worms, while the spirit may end up in Heaven or in Hell. The inevitability of the body's destination is a bore because it's already determined to be the ground, so any physical wounds to the body will only last until decomposition, whereas spiritual injury may be eternal. Furthermore, the sureness that the body would be destined for the grave is reflected in *bifolen* (committed). Here, the body is tied to its sepulchral destination. The demon prefers to work with a subject whose future is yet to be determined, and since souls can be tortured for eternity, he would prefer that level of longevity for his deeds.

While the demon's own understanding of his determination to torture souls in his confession seems to be very candid, his willingness to talk reflects Juliana's power. The

[63] *Juliana*, lines 413b–417a.

saint never wavers throughout her poem and there is no mention of wounds that she suffers as a result of her torture. This instance is no different. Juliana herself explains that she pays no mind to what happens to her body, that her faith in God and Christ will sustain her. She focuses on the fate of her soul and his, still confident in her faith.[64] And here she is, confronted by a demon who has made it clear his priority is making her spirit suffer, and she does not falter. She merely calls him cowardly (*unbealdra*) before prompting him to continue his confession. This scene shows Juliana upsetting what the pagans intended her imprisonment to be.[65] Furthermore, Juliana's capacity to retake control over her torture and imprisonment demonstrates a resistance to the sexual and sexualized violence that she faces in her father's attempt to marry her to Eleusius. This is foregrounded particularly as she delivers a sermon immediately before her execution.[66] Further, Juliana's resistance to a pagan marriage and her relative victory in the prison reflect a departure from earthly violence and gravitation toward Christian devotion.

As Juliana resists that marriage (and the penetration implied by that marriage), she seems to embrace the penetrating force of a sword as she is executed. Cavell's reading of Juliana's embrace of death returns again upon the actual moment of her execution. The text reads:

> Ða hyre sawl wearð
> alæded of lice to þam langan gefean
> þurh sweordslege.[67]

[64] *Juliana*, 417b–428b.
[65] Megan Cavell describes this moment in *Juliana*: “However, Juliana’s ability to take control over her surroundings is evident in her rewriting of the scene: not only does she bind when she should be bound, but she also relishes the idea of martyrdom and death rather than passively fearing it" (156).
[66] *Juliana*, lines 642a–670a. See: Christina Heckman, "Demonic Pedagogy and the Teaching Saint," 57. Here, Christina Heckman disputes Horner's reading of Juliana's sermon as an instruction to "shield their bodies from sin." Instead, Juliana focuses on "the places of the mind, the houses, walls, and foundations that provide concrete and material models for understanding spiritual resistance to temptation".
[67] *Juliana*, lines 670b–672a.

(Then her soul was led away from her body to the few long joys through sword-stroke.)

This passage describes the moment of Juliana's death. After surviving two attempts at death-by-burning, Juliana ultimately succumbs to the blade of a sword. Leslie Lockett writes, “Even when violent circumstances inflict pain upon the body, the moment of death may simply ‘divide’ or ‘loosen’ the body from the soul.”[68] That same "loosening" appears here at Juliana's death. Furthermore, the order of the prepositional phrases used in this passage demonstrates the progression of Juliana's soul into Heaven: "of lice" (from her body) is followed by "to þam langan gefean" (to the long joys), reflecting the forward movement of Juliana's soul. In the physical representation of the text, the reader can visualize the departure of Juliana's soul *from* her body *to* Heaven. This advancement of Juliana's soul from her body reinforces her readiness for Heaven, for God, as she drifts from her earthly existence with ease.

At the same time, Juliana's final moment here exhibits her singular moment of penetration. Juliana has survived thus far in the text, unwounded, unfazed, unbothered by the extensive torture she endures. Horner argues that “for the female saint… this conflict between the body and the spirit is to be resolved through their patristic insistence that women must reject not only their earthly bodies, but even — especially — their gender.”[69] She further describes a transformation of the saints’ gender performances as a movement away from feminine characteristics toward the masculine, a condition constructed by their prescribed regulations in their enclosure. Furthermore, Juliana "has distanced herself so far from her own flesh that it cannot signify, it cannot be

[68] Lockett, 25.
[69] Horner, 103.

corrupted."[70] In fact, she evades the demon's attempt at penetrating her heart to get her to renounce her faith, going as far as to bind him and penetrate his mind and heart—to where he confesses his own sins instead. Horner writes that "'becoming male' meant maintaining a closed, impenetrable body, impervious to any kind of hostile attack; to do so meant acquiring or 'layering on' those masculine attributes (whether spiritual or literal) that would serve to protect the female saint."[71] But in her poem, Juliana does both: assumes masculinity by retaining her impenetrability and penetrating the demon's mind and reverts to femininity as she is executed. But given that the penetration by sword would give rise to Juliana's ascension to Heaven, her acceptance of penetration by the sword's blade reflects a further receipt of a marriage to Christianity, if not Christ himself. Ultimately, in Juliana's final moments here, her mortal stoicism and impenetrability are foiled as she is subjected to a final moment of feminization via penetration by sword.

III. *Of Lice Sawul*

Juliana uses her time in prison primarily to reaffirm her faith. She enters the prison unwillingly as a result of her unwavering devotion to God and refusal to marry a non-Christian. Then, while in prison, she strengthens her faith in God, protected by Him during her extensive torture. It is only during a final moment of penetration that Juliana dies, feminized only once throughout her entire poem. Her soul is extracted out of her by a sword, *alæded of lice* (led away from her body). While Cynewulf looks to Juliana's enclosure and death, his epilogues attempt to recreate or model her experiences. In doing so, Cynewulf disregards and transcends the strict gendered boundaries of religious

[70] Horner, 121.
[71] Horner, 123.

enclosure, using his signature passages for his own spiritual meditation, similar to Juliana's decision to reaffirm her faith while enclosed in her prison cell. In these final lines of *Juliana*, Cynewulf finds himself consumed with anguish over the fate of his soul. As a result, a repentant and scared Cynewulf calls on Juliana for help:

> Is me þearf micel
> þæt seo halge me helpe gefremme,
> þonne me gedælað deorast ealra,
> sibbe toslitað sinhiwan tu,
> micle modlufan.[72]

(There is a great need for me that she, the holy one, bring about help to me, when the dearest of all part from me, they tear the two apart, the wedded pair, their great affection.)

In this passage, Cynewulf reflects on the fate of his soul upon his death, and he is more than concerned. His soul and body have cultivated a *micle modlufan* (great affection) for one another, but death necessitates the severing of the ties of the body and soul. It is this severing that Cynewulf is troubled over. In these lines, Cynewulf uses *micel* to refer to both the affection between his soul and body and the need for Juliana's help—*þearf micel*. This suggests that the fondness between his soul and body is of a similar caliber to his desperation for Juliana's help. At this point in the poem, Cynewulf has recounted for the reader all of Juliana's godly deeds and her violent, but still easy, death. While Juliana's soul is merely "led" away as she dies,[73] Cynewulf's soul is *toslitað* (torn apart) from his body. The "tearing" here feels particularly brutal, demonstrating that Cynewulf is dreading this moment, that this moment is almost violent to him, that he is not ready for this to occur. In Fates, Cynewulf's signature appears out of order—"FWULCYN".[74] Daniel Calder writes, "This intellectual dissection symbolizes the coming split of spirit

[72] *Juliana*, lines 695a–699a.
[73] *Juliana*, lines 669b–671a.
[74] *Fates of the Apostles*, lines 99b–105b.

and body in his solitary journey."[75] His soul is the *deorast* (dearest) part of him, and here he agonizes over the loss of it. To Cynewulf, soul and body are *sinhiwan* (the wedded pair). Leslie Lockett writes that "the depiction of a familial or wedded love joining soul and body together during life implies that the soul is capable, at least, of inclining toward life and resisting death."[76] Lockett offers great sensitivity to the intimate nature of the relationship of the body and soul here. Further, Lockett plainly lays out the fear that Cynewulf experiences at the thought of his soul's separation from his body. Jill Hamilton Clements writes that "Cynewulf's expression of his soul's departure from his body looks back to the death of the saint—whose certain and joyous destination starkly contrasts the fate of Cynewulf."[77] Unlike Juliana, his soul is not *led* away. Instead, his soul leans away from death, clinging to the physical existence of a body on earth. While ties between the soul and body produce security, the breaking of those ties produces a vulnerability for Cynewulf's spirit. This desperate intertwining of Cynewulf's soul and body further reflect the certainty that mortal life brings to Cynewulf—and by extension, the uncertainty of the afterlife.

Despite his soul's anguished grip on his body, Cynewulf's soul eventually must part from it. Here, he grapples with the uncertainty of his soul's destination:

> Min sceal of lice
> sawul on siðfæt, nat ic sylfa hwider,
> eardes uncyðþu; of sceal þissum
> secan oþerne ærgewyrhtum
> gongan iudædum[78]

[75] Calder, 38. Further, see Birkett, 779. Birkett disagrees with Calder's reading, stating that the "'intellectual dissection' here is not so much about freeing the name from the context as it is about the dissolution of the worldly name *into* this context, as a striking emblem of mutability."
[76] Lockett, 27.
[77] Clements, 144.
[78] *Juliana*, lines 699b–703a.

(On this journey, my soul shall go from my body, I myself know not to what place, in ignorance of the land; from this (land), according to my former deeds, I shall seek another journey, with my past actions.)

In these lines, Cynewulf dives further into the unsureness of his soul's final destination. As he imagines his soul's departure from his body, Cynewulf recreates that separation in the arrangement of these first two half-lines: *min* and *sawul* form a noun–adjective pair (my soul) that surrounds the *lic* (body). As the body serves, up until this point, as the container for the soul, this structure reproduces on paper for the reader the release of Cynewulf's soul from his body. Additionally, the separation of *sawul* and *lice* by a line break again echoes the breaking of the connection between the soul and the body. In this line break, the soul and body are severed once more, demonstrating not only the inversion of the body and soul—where the soul was once inside the body and is now outside—but at the same time the release of the soul from the body. Here, this release reproduced in syntax concretizes the soul's departure for Cynewulf and his readers as they bear witness to it on the page.[79]

However, where there is surety in the departure, there is doubt in the destination. In Cynewulf's reading of Juliana's life, her soul has a clear destination once it is guided from her body: Heaven. Her death, unlike the death Cynewulf foresees for himself, occurs after extreme, extended periods of torture, and due to Juliana's sinlessness (*synna lease*[80]), Heaven was the obvious terminus. For Cynewulf, though, his *ærgewyrhtes* (former deeds, i.e., sins) are following him. While Juliana lived a chaste, clean life, Cynewulf did not. Palpably unsure of the landscape of Heaven or Hell, all Cynewulf

[79] Birkett further argues that the acrostic signature demonstrated "the model of inversion of self-display at the Day of Judgment." See Birkett, 774.
[80] *Juliana*, line 615a.

knows is that God will determine his destination according to his sins in life. Even as Cynewulf's soul departs his earthly existence, the actions done on earth—*iudædes* (former deeds)— will journey with the soul into the afterlife. Again, in these last two half-lines, Cynewulf recreates on the page the concern of his soul's journey with his sins: *ærgewyrhtum* and *iudædum* are positioned on either side of *gongan* (journey). Here, the reader of *Juliana* can see how Cynewulf understands his journey to be consumed by his sins, no matter what his destination ultimately is.

As Cynewulf's epilogue progresses, he wrestles with humanity's future Judgment by God, drawing connections to different elements of Juliana's path to sainthood. While Cynewulf imagines Judgment Day, he builds himself into the story of humankind, linking his own experience to Juliana's.

Geomor hweofeð
ᛉ·ᚳ·ᚣ·ᛇ·ᛏ· Cyning biþ reþe
sigora Syllend, þonne synnum fah,
ᛗ·ᚹ·ᛇ ᚢ· acle bidaþ
hwæt him æfter dædum deman wille
lifes to leane; ·ᚨ·ᚹ· beofaþ,
seomað sorgcearig.[81]

(Mournful mankind [*cyn*][82] will depart. The King will be cruel, the Giver of victories, the one guilty of sins, the sheep [*ewu*][83], terrified, wait for what, according to their deeds, he will judge them to be, as a reward for life; the watery floods [*lf*][84] will tremble, undulating sorrowfully.)

In this passage, Cynewulf outlines the events that will take place during the Final Judgment, beginning with the departure of mankind from the Earth. This metonymy—

[81] *Juliana*, lines 703b–709a.
[82] Parenthetical notation in this translation indicates translation of runes. The *C* run stands for "cen" or torch. The *Y* rune stands for "yr" or bow. The *N* rune stands for "ned/nyd" or necessity/need. See Clements, 143.
[83] The *E* rune stands for "eoh" or horse. The *W* rune stands for "wynn" or joy. The *U* rune stands for "ur" or bison. See Clements, 143.
[84] The *L* rune stands for "lagu", or water/the sea. The *F* rune stands for "feoh" or wealth. See Clements, 143.

naming all of "mankind"—reinforces Cynewulf's preoccupation with the human condition and the conflict he sees between human sin and God's ideal, saintly humans as reflected in Juliana. The *geomor* (mournful) human race is confronted by a *reþe* (cruel) God, here called *Cyning* (the King). Subjects to the King, the humans are sheep, guided by Christ, led to either Heaven or Hell. In this passage, Cynewulf's identification of all of mankind as mournful, terrified subjects invokes the Augustinian doctrine of Original Sin. Daniel Calder writes of a similar Cynewulfian penance in *Christ II*: "Cynewulf feels he 'must' look on terror, on the punishment of sin... He projects his name into his imaginative vision of judgment to experience that apocalypse forcefully so he can atone for his sins."[85] Here in *Juliana*, Cynewulf resituates himself within the sins of humanity as a whole, further conveying his fears for the rest of humanity as they progress toward Judgment Day with him.[86] Additionally, like in *Christ II*, Cynewulf's own resituation within the sins of humanity more broadly asserts the Christian experience as one of all of humanity: "When broken into runes, his name itself automatically evokes associations with the end of the world in a Christian context: need, joy, floods, wealth."[87] For Cynewulf, the only way he can make sense of his actions on earth is through a Christian lens focused on sin and penance.

Throughout this passage, Cynewulf continues to draw more parallels to Juliana's narrative, including the likely source text *Passio S. Iulianae*. The terrified sheep—the sinners—must wait to be judged by God *dædum* (according to their deeds). The use of *dædum* here echoes earlier language from line 703a when Cynewulf is reflecting on his

[85] Calder, 71.
[86] *Juliana*, lines 703b–709a.
[87] Calder, 71.

own Judgment—*iudædum* (according to Cynewulf's former deeds). The word *iudæd* (or *gudæd*) appears only three times in the entire Old English corpus: here in *Juliana*, second in *Christ and Satan*,[88] and third in *The Phoenix*.[89] While a simple search of *dæd* in the University of Toronto's *Dictionary of Old English Web Corpus* returns over 2000 uses throughout the body of Old English literature,[90] all uses of *iudæd*/*gudæd* occur in the context of sin and guilt. Here, Cynewulf is identifying with specifically sinful actions, not just any earthy deeds—but those that leave him questioning the conclusion for his spirit.

After Juliana's execution, Eleusius, the pagan man that Affricanus attempts to marry Juliana to, goes off in his ship with his friends and sails around for a bit before being consumed by the waves.[91] This unsuccessful excursion via water reflects God's washing the earth clean of sinners—and clean of sin. As Eleusius and his friends try to leave Nicomedia, their attempt is foiled by this divine intervention, demonstrating that—like Cynewulf—they are unable to escape their sins. Furthermore, the sinking of Eleusius' ship serves as a warning for the godly judgment doled out to sinners and the faithless.

In looking to Juliana, Cynewulf reveals his desperation for mercy upon the Judgment Day, tormented by his sinful past.

> Sar eal gemon,
> synna wunde þe ic siþ oþþe ær
> geworhte in worulde: þæt ic wopig sceal
> tearum manan. Þæs an tid to læt
> þæt ic yfeldæda ær gescomede,
> þenden gæst lic geador siþedan,
> onsund on eærde. Þonne arna biþearf
> þat me seo halge wið þone hyhstan Cyning

[88] *Christ and Satan*, Internet Sacred Text Archive, line 186b. https://www.sacred-texts.com/neu/ascp/a01_04.htm.
[89] *The Phoenix*, Internet Sacred Text Archive, line 557a. https://www.sacred-texts.com/neu/ascp/a03_04.htm.
[90] Dictionary of Old English Web Corpus (University of Toronto, n.d.), https://tapor-library-utoronto-ca.proxy.wm.edu/doecorpus/simple.html.
[91] *Juliana*, lines 671b–682.

geþingige.

(I always remember, all the torment, sins, wounds, or those which I at all times wrought in the world: evil that I shall [remember] with mournful tears. At one time too late, such that I am ashamed of these past evil deeds, while spirit and body journey together uninjured on Earth. Therefore I will have a need of mercies that she, the holy one, may intercede for me with the loftiest King.)[92]

Cynewulf is remembering these times of spiritual shortfalls, and understanding how these sins are happening continually, *siþ oþþe ær*, at all times. He describes himself as "*an tid to læt*" (at one time too late) to the rejection of sin. As a result, he's *gescomede*, ashamed, of his failure to challenge *yfeldæda*, those evil deeds. He wants to make peace with God for his sins, while his soul and body are still together.[93] Further, Cynewulf draws more connections to the way Juliana's body is free from harm despite her extensive torture; his body and soul are *onsund* (uninjured)—at least while on Earth. In a way, Cynewulf's internal torture over his sins mirrors Juliana's torture by the pagans. Conversely, Cynewulf is still wounded by his sins (*synna wunde*), unlike Juliana's impermeability. These wounds of sin position Cynewulf as a penitent, feminized figure—one who can be pierced by the evils of sin—in contrast to Juliana's stoic impenetrability.

This failure to be impenetrable and free from sin leads Cynewulf to beg for Juliana to, once the time of the Judgment Day comes, guide him in navigating his soul's journey to God. He has a need, *biþearf*, for Juliana's mercies, her *arna*. He requests that she field the awkwardness between him and God as a result of his sins; he is too ashamed to do so himself.[94] Constantly reckoning with sin, Cynewulf is just consumed with the presence of sin in the world and asks Juliana to intervene on his behalf with God. Calder writes that "[e]ach successive torture Juliana endures glorifies the truth for which she

[92] *Juliana*, 709b–714a.
[93] *Juliana*, 714a–715a.
[94] *Juliana*, 713a; 715b–717a.

suffers, assures her beatific recompense, and symbolizes the trials of the church in the hostile world."[95] Much like Juliana suffers for her faith under the pagans, Cynewulf's reflection on and grief surrounding his own sins reaffirms his commitment to his faith. Furthermore, Cynewulf's preoccupation with his own sins stands in contrast to Juliana's dialogue: "Cynewulf's epilogue does not present so extreme a case, but the sense of 'I' predominates. None of Juliana's speeches has a similar emphasis. Her references to herself are quickly passed by, because the central reference in every word she utters is always God."[96] Cynewulf's focus on his own sins and actions on earth underscores how he has internalized the message of Christ and how he measures his failure to observe a life free of sin.

As Cynewulf attempts to move away from his troubling acts, he is also moving toward something: communion with God, initially via his seeing himself in Juliana as a saint, and now in the composition of *Juliana*.

> Bidde ic monne gehwone
> gumena cynnes, þe þis gied wræce,
> þat he mec neodful, bi noman minum
> gemyne, modig, Meotud bidde
> þæt me heofena Helm helpe gefremme…

(I pray that every man in mankind who recites this poem, that he be earnest to me, [call me] by my own name, [that he be] noble-minded, I pray the Lord, the heavenly Protector, bring me help.)[97]

Cynewulf begins by addressing those who will read and recite his poem. He asks that his future readers follow through with his requests for prayer and use his name when they do

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[95] Calder, 80.
[96] Calder, 102. Similarly, Birkett writes that the runes *cyn* and *ewu* "can both stand in for mankind as the flock of the Good Shepherd, whilst also stressing the individual's (Cynewulf's) fate" (788). Again, with the use of these runes, Cynewulf strives to universalize his experience as one of all mortal beings while maintaining deep concern for his own fate.
[97] *Juliana*, lines 718b–722a.

so. In asking his future readers to name him specifically, Cynewulf reveals that composing *Juliana* is his way of creating another avenue of prayer to God, and he asks his readers to recite his name in prayer. In weaving his signature into this epilogue, he guarantees his name be spoken to God in prayer.[98] Cynewulf's weaving runes in this final passage represent a physical binding of him to the text and to the manuscript. But when Cynewulf asks that his readers recite the poem and speak his name in the process, he is asking for a release from the same poetry he has just bound himself with. Further, he is asking for a release from sin. Seeking God's mercy upon the Final Judgment, he is desperate. Panicked, the speaker quickly moves into asking God directly for help.[99] In writing down his work, Cynewulf's poetry becomes a physical, enduring prayer for mercy for himself—"he prays with a reverence that carries the genuine terror of the human sinner caught between devil and saint, though he is buttressed by the hope that his own poem has bestowed."[100] Similarly, as Clements writes of Augustine's *De quantitate animae*, "the meaning of the word continues to exist even after the physical reverberations of the voice—or, for that matter, the speaker himself—have passed away."[101] Sealed in the bound leaves, it is his poem that speaks to God, his poem that

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[98] In this signature, Cynewulf's runes are separated into two groups: *cyn* and *ewu*. The separation of his named in two models Cynewulf's anticipated severing of his soul from his body. Further, to truly "see" Cynewulf, the reader must piece these two halves back together. Clements writes that the reconstruction of Cynewulf's disassembled runes in his signature "does not merely render the poet's identity for the reader, but it also presents a picture of what Cynewulf ultimately anticipates from the reader's prayers—the salvation of his soul and remembrance by God" (151). Likewise, Cynewulf's severed signature—in both *Juliana* and *Fates* presents as a riddle to be solved by the reader.

[99] *Juliana*, 721b–722a.

[100] Calder, 103.

[101] Clements, 140. Further, Clements writes of *Fates* that "the epilogues suggest that Cynewulf conceived of writing as a thing left behind on earth, just like his body, severed from the soul and abandoned. But in this regard, the written word has an aura of permanence that far exceeds the longevity of the buried corpse" (152). Similarly, Clements argues, from Isidore's *Etymologiae*, that these signed poems "acknowledge the potential of writing to serve as a 'container', with his memory bound in letters even as his reader now figuratively 'binds' the letters into the whole word" (153). Along these same lines, Cavell holds that using

others will read and use to lift up both his and His names. While writing this poem ties Cynewulf to earthly affairs, it will also tie him to loftier destinations — Heaven on Judgment Day.

IV. *Wordcræftes Wis*

While the core focus of *Juliana* is Saint Juliana, *Elene* does much more than that. Recreating the eastward journey of Saint Helena (Elene in the poem), the mother of Constantine, *Elene* as a text reinterprets the bounds of female monastic enclosure. Like *Juliana*, *Elene* recounts the duality of female monastic enclosure for the female saint. In *Juliana*, Juliana encloses the power of Christ within herself, is herself enclosed, and encloses the demon as she binds him in her prison. Similarly, in *Elene*, the female saint has once held the future of the Church within herself in her pregnancy with Constantine, who would later go on to Christianize the Roman Empire upon his death. Constantine's faith is described as such: "þa wæs Cristes lof / þam casere / on firhðsefan"[102] (then was the praise of Christ in the heart of the emperor). As Elene carries Constantine in pregnancy, she is, by extension, also carrying the praise of Christ within her.

Unlike Juliana, Elene is not quite the focal point of this poem from the Vercelli Book; she does not appear in the text until over 200 lines in, and until she is named the poem focuses on Christian and military history.[103] This decision to not include Elene for almost the first fifth of the text reorients the reader of the poem to focus not on Elene but the larger Christian militant narrative the poem lays out. Thus, Elene as a figure becomes

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binding practices—usually literally, like chains or fetters, but also in metaphorical binding of words—represents an attempt to reassert one's control over a situation (Cavell 13).

[102] *Elene*, lines 212a–213a.

[103] *Elene*, lines 1a–220a.

elided into the figure she represents: *ecclesia*: the Mother of the Church or the Church Militant.[104] Calder further describes Elene as a combination of "the Christian saint, the figure of Mary, and the church striving against the very evil that has kept the Cross hidden and the Jews in dark ignorance."[105] Ultimately, Elene's presence and action in this epic poem serve the purpose of creating the Church, reproducing Christianity in not only her son Constantine but also the whole Mediterranean world. Here, she is an instrument of the Church.

Moreover, Elene, like Juliana, engages in deliberate actions of enclosure. In her journey east, Elene seeks the True Cross upon which Jesus was crucified. Once she arrives in Jerusalem, she attempts to confront and convert the Jews. They and their minds appear to her impenetrable, unable to answer her questions about the location of the Cross. Elene's frustration is outlined in her 300-line monologue in which she interrogates and shames the Jews.[106] It is not until Judas, a local Jewish man, enters the scene that Elene is able to get a meaningful response from the Jews. In order to locate the cross, she requires information from Judas, whose sacred family history contains details of its location. Judas appears in the poem at line 418b: "ðam wæs Iudas nama / wordes cræftig"[107] (his name was Judas, crafty of words). Megan Cavell writes, "*cræft* may indicate anything from the positive 'skill,' 'art,' 'talent,' and 'artifact' to the negative 'trick,' 'fraud,' and 'deceit'."[108] The emphasis on *cræft* in this initial introduction to Judas seems to foreshadow his eventual participation in the creation of the Church in Jerusalem.

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[104] Calder, 110.
[105] Calder, 111.
[106] *Elene*, lines 276–416, 555–690. See W. A. M. van der Wurff's article "Cynewulf's *Elene*: The First Speech to the Jews" *Neophilologus* 66, no. 2 (1981): 301–312.
[107] *Elene*, lines 418b–419a.
[108] Cavell, 250.

At the same time, Judas is still Jewish here, echoing the antisemitic stereotype of Jews as "frauds" and "tricksters" that Cavell offers. As Judaism is a faith and cultural tradition chiefly concerned with debate and study, the notion of fraudulence or deception is particularly antisemitic. Here, *cræftig* seems to highlight both the "false" construction of God created and held by the Jews and signal the ultimate "correction" of that construction as Judas is converted and baptized after imprisonment.[109] Still, the practice of debate and discourse surrounding faith is crucial for the release of spiritual truth and knowledge.

Oddly enough, Judas' next lines present a connection to Cynewulf's signature in *Juliana*. Judas says, "Nu is þearf mycel / þæt we fæstlice / ferhð staðlien"[110] (Now there is a great need that we firmly fasten our hearts). This opening phrase "is þearf mycel" is practically identical to Cynewulf's "Is me þearf micel / þæt seo halge me / helpe gefremme" (There is a great need for me that she, the holy one, bring about help to me) in the opening of the *Juliana* invocation. This continuity across texts further joins Cynewulf's poems with one another and, at the same time, Cynewulf with his own works. Daniel Calder argues that Judas' use of this phrase is an appropriation of an otherwise genuine spiritual request, reflecting his "evil purposes" and ignorance of God.[111] However, in both of these passages, the speaker is reckoning with God, with their faith, in favor of the female saint before them. But while Cynewulf seems to passively hope that Juliana extend her help to him, Judas is deciding to share in the truth of Christ. And while perhaps Cynewulf's reading of these events assigns more agency to Judas than is

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[109] See Thomas D. Hill, "Sapiential Structure and Figural Narrative in the Old English 'Elene'," 165. Thomas Hill writes that "the debate between Elene and the Jews which culminates in the conversion of Judas is presented in terms of the sapiential theme of the contrast between the letter and the spirit, that Judas is a typal figure, and that the whole narrative of 'Inventio crucis' is in effect a metaphor for conversion."
[110] *Elene*, line 426b–427b.
[111] Calder, 120.

truly there, this notion of intent and security in the "fastening" of his heart—where the praise for Christ will be stored—reasserts Judas' receptivity to the Christian faith. Judas' receptivity to the Christian God, initiated by Elene's presence in Jerusalem, positions Judas as a feminized figure and Elene as a masculinizing one as she is able to penetrate his mind and heart with the teachings of Christ. Simultaneously, the "fastening" demonstrates the firmness and longevity of the Christian spirit, of the Christian mind, of the Christian heart—once again stressing the solidness and truth of Christianity.

Similarly, the notions of *cræft* and *wisdom* emerge repeatedly throughout the text of *Elene*. Judas is described in this way:

> He is for eorðan æðeles cynnes,
> wordcræftes wis 7 witgan sunu,
> bald on meðle; him gebyrde is
> þæt he gencwidas gleawe hæbbe,
> cræft in breostum.[112]

(He is on earth of noble kind, wise of wordcraft and the son of a prophet, bold in his address; to him it is natural that he have sage expressions and skill in his breast.)

This passage elucidates Judas' role in *Elene* as a religious leader, positioned as the builder of the Church. While Elene brings Christianity back to Jerusalem to establish the Church there, it is Judas who ascends to the role of bishop once Elene converts him from Judaism. These lines emphasize his mortality, his humanity, and reverence for his ancestry: "*for eorðan / æðeles cynnes*" (on earth of noble kind). It is this same noble kinship that connects him to Jesus' history, providing the basis for Elene's inquisition and imprisonment of Judas. *Witgan sunu* (the son of a prophet), Judas and his family history supply a direct line to Jesus and His crucifixion. This prophetic lineage further

[112] *Elene*, lines 593a–596a.

foreshadows Judas' eventual ascension to the episcopate. This family connection to Jesus and His crucifixion ties Judas to Christianity, to Elene, and to Cynewulf in his study of these figures.

Similarly, the description of Judas as being *wordcræftes wis* (wise in wordcraft) reestablishes his role in reconstructing for Elene (and for Cynewulf as a reader of these saintly events) the strength and longevity of the Christian God as he also assists Elene in the creation of the Church in Jerusalem. Furthermore, the repetition of *cræft* reiterates its dual function as "skill" and "fraud" that we see in Cavell's work. Here, Cynewulf locates Judas' *cræft* in his breast, the same place where faith in Christ will be kept. At this point in the text, though, as Judas has not been converted yet, the *cræft* seems to be the "falsehood" of Judaism still present in Judas' belief, although he appears open to the arrival of Christ within his heart. This tension between the "fraud" of Judaism and the "skill" of Christian faith situates Judas on the edge of conversion and of divulging the location of the Cross.

As he struggles with the decision to release the location of the Cross to Elene, he speaks as though he simply does not know where the Cross is. Judas is defiant to Elene—and, as she is the Mother of the Church, to the Christian God as well:

> Hire Iudas oncwæð
> stiðhycgende: "Ic þa stowe ne can,
> ne þæs wanges wiht ne þa wisan cann."[113]

(Here, Judas said, resolute: "I do not know that place, I know little of neither the field nor the thing.")

[113] *Elene*, lines 682b–684b.

In this passage, Judas feigns ignorance of the Cross's location. Here, his apparent receptivity to Christianity disappears. He is *stiðhycgende* (resolute, or literally firm-minded), closed off from the truth of Christ. Before this, he indicates to Elene that he does know what she is talking about when she inquires about the location of the Cross. But here, he backtracks, claiming he knows nothing about it. His resistance to the disclosure of information demonstrates the seeming cowardice of the Jews to early English Christians. He fears the truth of Christ, understanding his own error as foolish but still unwilling to let go of the shame he seems to feel of the Jewish faith. Here, Judas also attempts to re-masculinize himself by closing his mind to Christ and Elene. In doing so, he de-masculinizes Elene, foiling her attempt to penetrate his mind with Christ.

As Judas resists Elene and her inquest, he faces the consequences of imprisonment and torture. Elene reclaims her masculinizing presence and threatens Judas with violence for his defiance of the Christian God, warning that he will be kept *cwicne*[114] (alive), and ordered *corðre lædan*[115] (the troops to lead) him, *scufan scyldigne*[116] (pushed in his guilt), and tossed *in drygne seað*[117] (into a dry well) for seven nights.[118] There, he will be kept *under hearmlocan*[119] (prison, literally under harm-lock). She threatens him with *hungre*[120] (hunger) and tells him he will be *clommum beclungen*[121] (bound in chains). According to Calder, Judas' burial resembles Christ's three days in the grave.[122] Elene's enclosure of Judas within the prison is an exercise of

[114] *Elene*, line 692a.
[115] *Elene*, line 692b.
[116] *Elene*, line 693a.
[117] *Elene*, line 694a.
[118] *Elene*, line 695b.
[119] *Elene*, line 696a.
[120] *Elene*, line 696b.
[121] *Elene*, line 697a.
[122] Calder, 124.

her monastic power as a Christian queen,[123] particularly in terms of the practice of female religious enclosure as described by Horner.[124] Here, Elene is de-feminizing herself in order to, like Juliana, maintain the standards of Christian female monasticism, which paradoxically requires that she leave behind elements of femininity in order to retain her monastic femaleness.[125] Simultaneously, like Juliana and like Cynewulf in the epilogue passage of *Juliana*, Elene constructs a place of religious seclusion for Judas—a place where he, too, can affirm his faith in a Christian God.

Elene's enclosure of Judas in the well is successful. He eventually gives up the Cross's location once the imprisonment and torture prove to be too much: "Is þes hæft to ðan strang / þreanyd þæs þearl / 7 þes þroht to ðæs heard / dogorrimum"[126] (this captivity is too strong then, that cruel necessity severe, and this affliction too cruel in my number of days). Here, Judas also expresses regret for his errant ways—that he realized *soð to late*[127] (the truth too late). The use of *þreanyd* to refer to "prison" here is significant, too. Literally, the word is a combination of "threat" and "need". In a narrative that relies so heavily on religious enclosure as a means to achieve an affirmed faith in Christian God, this word concisely wraps up the function of prison as one of pure need.[128] Similarly, the

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[123] See: Stacy S. Klein, *Ruling Women: Queenship and Gender in Anglo-Saxon Literature*, (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2006).
[124] See also Stacy S. Klein, "Reading Queenship in Cynewulf's *Elene*," *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 33, no. 1 (Winter 2003): 77: "In torturing Judas, Elene reverses the typical hagiographical formulation of the female saint tortured by a male pagan, and Judas's subjection to a woman is figured as an enabling force in his conversion."
[125] Horner, 103. See also Klein, "Reading Queenship in Cynewulf's *Elene*," 77: "... such inversion is predicated in part on the patristic logic that Elene's Christianity renders her spiritually male, while Judas' Judaism renders him spiritually female, a logic which explains why Elene's power is significantly lessened after he converts and is imbued with a newfound spiritual masculinity."
[126] *Elene*, lines 704b–706a.
[127] *Elene*, line 708a.
[128] See: Christina Heckman, "Things in Doubt: *Inventio*, Dialectic, and Jewish Secrets in Cynewulf's *Elene,*" 479. Heckman writes that "both in the Jews' unwillingness to reveal the truth and in the empire's use of violence against them, *Elene* demonstrates that Christian learning cannot sustain itself, but rather must depend on the coercive power of secular authority in its pursuit of truth." See also Stacy S. Klein,

use of *nydcleofan*[129] in the following lines to also refer to prison is equally critical. Like *þreanyd*, *nydcleofan* expresses the necessity of cleaving one from the rest of the world to have time dedicated to their affirmation of faith.

As Judas comes into his newfound faith in Christ,[130] he very quickly begins to speak on the fate of sinners and non-believers.

> He þinum wiðsoc
> aldordome. þæs he in ermðum sceal,
> ealra fula ful, fah þrowian,
> þeowned þolian. þær he þin ne mæg
> word aweorpan, is in witum fæst,
> ealre synne fruma, susle gebunden.[131]

(He denied your authority. Therefore, he shall suffer in miseries, the foul of all foulness, suffer guilty, endure it like a slave. There, he may not degrade your words, he is secure in the knower, the ruler of all sin, bound by torments.)

In this passage, Judas discusses the consequences of sinners in hell. The fate that awaits them is similar to Judas' experience in the pit as *susle gebunden* (bound by torments). Likewise, this mirrors Cynewulf's concerns over his own sins in the epilogue of *Juliana* discussed earlier. Again, the importance of words is stressed, as words are a spoken (or written) demonstration of Christian truth. These lines also contain ample alliteration: *fula ful fa*, *þrowian þeowned þolian*, and *word aweorpan.* When spoken aloud, as is required by the request for prayer in the epilogues of Cynewulf's poems, these words fill the

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"Reading Queenship in Cynewulf's *Elene*," 62: "the verbal denigration of their community and intellectual traditions, and the actual physical torture of their leader, Judas—is also implacably anchored in a sentiment that was widespread throughout Anglo-Saxon England: that violence was both a precondition for and intrinsic part of extending Christian *imperium*."

[129] *Elene*, line 712b.

[130] See also: Manish Sharma, "The Reburial of the Cross in the Old English *Elene*," in *New Readings in the Vercelli Book*, ed. Samantha Zacher and Andy Orchard (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009): 280: "The figurative shift from ignorance to knowledge and darkness to light parallel the literal movement from confinement to release by means of which Judas is liberated from his incarceration and the cross is discovered."

[131] *Elene*, lines 767b–772b.

speaker's mouth, almost tongue-tying them, reminding them of the fullness of Christ in their bodies and in their words.[132] Particularly with the recurrent labiodental fricatives in "fula ful fah" and the repeated dental fricatives in "þrowian þeowned þolian", there is a lot of air required to sustain the repeated production of those sounds, prompting the speaker to remember Christ as the source of their breath. The speaker must put forth substantial effort to support the production of these sounds, reinforcing the necessary dedication to Christ's word as faithful Christians. Further, as the sounds are made at the front of the mouth, they propose a forward motion of the breath of Christ, suggesting the perpetuity of the His word: "wuldres on heofenum / a butan ende / ecra gestealda"[133] (Glory in Heaven, without end, in the everlasting mansions).

Judas' speech post-release centers on the notion of eternality and permanence. As he discusses his newfound faith in Christ, he says, "Ic gelyfe þe sel / ⁊ þy fæstlicor / ferhð staðelige"[134] (I believe in you the better and by you I firmly institute my soul). Here, Judas is fully converted. Once again, Judas insists on the secure establishment of his soul in the house of Christ, much like the *ecra gestealda* (everlasting mansions). The notion of construction in these short lines matters not just for Judas' own solidified faith, but the stability of the Christian Church in Jerusalem more broadly.

V. *Synnum Ascæled*

The element of construction appears throughout both *Juliana* and *Elene* repeatedly. As examined earlier, Juliana "firmly fastens her spirit" before binding the demon when she is

[132] Jill Hamilton Clements explores the Augustinian writing *De quantitate animae*, which posits that "the word is inherently physical, tied directly to the body in its pronunciation and aural reception" (140).
[133] *Elene*, lines 801b–802b.
[134] *Elene*, lines 796b–797b.

imprisoned. This firm fastening of her spirit gives her divine power enough to seize the demon, eventually allowing her to survive two bouts of attempted execution by fire. This securing of the spirit mirrors the construction of the Church in Jerusalem led by Elene and carried out by Judas, who becomes a bishop after he is converted and baptized many times over.[135] The "fastening" of the spirit implies the tightening of ties between the person's spirit and God. Similarly, these fastening ties ultimately provide structure and longevity for these individuals' faith in God and, by extension, God's rule over humanity through the Church.

For Cynewulf, poetry emerges as a constructive tool, created by weaving words. In *Elene*, Cynewulf finds himself once again anticipating the fate of his soul. As he contends with the two paths—toward Heaven or toward Hell—he turns to poetry for guidance and to galvanize his own faith in God. However, his relationship to poetry is complicated by his distress over his own corporeality. At the beginning of the epilogue of the poem, Cynewulf summarizes how he connects with God and poetry in *Elene*. He opens,

> Þus ic frod 7 fus, þurh þæt fæcne hus,
> wordcræft wæf 7 wundrum læs.
> þragum þreodude 7 geþanc reodode
> nihtes nearwe[136]

(Thus I, old and ready, in that deceitful house (body), have woven with wordcraft and gathered miracles, at times deliberating and sifting thoughts, in the closeness of night.)

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[135] *Elene*, lines 1033b–1036a and 1042b–1047a. See: Lockett, *Anglo-Saxon Psychologies*. See also Stacy S. Klein, "Reading Queenship in Cynewulf's *Elene*," 53: "Elene enters the poem as Constantine's biological mother, then takes up the role of spiritual mother to Judas in his conversion, and ends up as the textual mother-muse of Cynewulf himself—the subject of a Latinate source which inspires and motivates the poet, liberating him from both spiritual lethargy and writer's block."

[136] *Elene,* lines 1236a–1239a.

In this passage, Cynewulf describes his poetry as *wordcræft*. Like earlier passages, *cræft* here in *wordcræft* implies a physical construction — the product of which is this composition of *Elene*. Not only is this a tangible handheld deliverable, but it's one that has been *wæf* (woven) into existence.[137] In this passage, Cynewulf alliterates or rhymes in every single line (*frod*/*fus*/*fæcne*; *þus*/*þurh*/*þæt*; *wordcræft*/*wæf*/*wundrum*; *þragum*/*þreodude*; *þreodude*/*reodode*; *nihtes*/*nearwe*). As Cavell writes, in this way, he has woven these words together: "a metaphor for the joining together of statements in poetic composition."[138] Although conventional in Old English poetry, Cynewulf links these words to one another via alliteration and rhyme, joining them in a singular, secure creation. These words are tightly bound, having been woven *nihtes nearwe* (in the closeness of the night). Here, the darkness of night encloses Cynewulf out of protection or safety, providing him with intimate isolation so he can properly meditate on his life and faith. Cavell writes that "the significance of the link between poetic skill and divine inspiration is made clear, and the well-organized nature of Cynewulf's mind is set in opposition to the affliction of the unenlightened and those trapped in bodily states."[139] It is under the dark night sky that he is able to weave these words, *þreodude ⁊ reodode* (deliberating and sifting) in a place of peace and penitence. But for Cynewulf, the closeness of night does not offer him all the contentment he desires. Rather, he feels

[137] See: Catherine A. M. Clarke, "Power and Performance: Authors and Patrons in Late Anglo-Saxon Texts" in *Writing Power in Anglo-Saxon England: Texts, Hierarchies, Economies*, (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell & Brewer, D. S. Brewer): 118. Clarke writes: "In addition to its mirroring of Elene's own identity, the feminised image of Cynewulf as a 'weaver' is potentially suggestive of his status as a humble handmaid to his spiritual patron and her story as well as, ultimately, to God." Clarke here links Cynewulf's experience to Elene rather than Judas. Still, the act of weaving is a feminizing one for Cynewulf. Moreover, he takes on this feminizing role here as he composes this text, weaving words together, so he can connect with Judas more deeply, feminizing himself further to receive the spiritual truth from Judas.
[138] Cavell, 235–236.
[139] Cavell, 235.

trapped by his corporeal existence. This darkness also alludes to Juliana's situation in the darkness of her prison cell.[140]

His body is called *fæcne hus* (a deceitful house) suggesting that Cynewulf is preoccupied by a sense of betrayal by his mortal being. The physical construction of a body as a house represents permanence or surety, but Cynewulf experiences distress over this permanence. Instead, Cynewulf emphasizes the physical construction by referring to his body as a house, one that he has disdain for, as if he were yearning for some incorporeality, some freedom from his bodily existence; Cynewulf is *fus* (ready) to go. Furthermore, the implications of permanence in the physicality of Cynewulf's body-house are extended to the composition of *Elene* that he produces and is reflecting on in this passage. In weaving together the words of his poem — by simply writing them and by juxtaposing them such that they appear zippered together on the page — Cynewulf constructs and ensures longevity for his message to God. At the same time, Cynewulf rejects his body's enduring presence on Earth, looking to God and Judas instead. Similar to Juliana's fortified body, Cynewulf's body rejects its position on earth. Here, he finds himself in the midst of both construction and constriction: held within a constructed body-house, constructing a composition of poetry, the words of which are tightly interwoven with one another and firmly committed to God.

Cavell argues for a dual understanding of binding in Old English poetry as both constructing and constricting. The construction Cavell describes is that which the early medieval English tended to "construct and understand the world in terms of human experience."[141] As this same construction is building, the use of binding in poetry

[140] *Juliana*, line 241a.
[141] Cavell, 13.

functions as constriction, demonstrating the "human struggle for control over its situation and surroundings."[142] Cynewulf's weaving of his words in his epilogues for *Elene* and also for *Juliana* demonstrate his struggle to make sense of the world around him, to make sense of his past actions, and to connect these meditations to one another across his texts. For Cavell, as the Pre-Conquest English employ binding materials like fetters and chains in their poetic literature to illustrate an attempt at managing, directing and restraining their conditions, in a way that revolves around a constructed human (English) worldview.[143]

Cynewulf experiences that trapping element of weaving when he considers his own sins:

> ic wæs weorcum fah,
> synnum asæled, sorgum gewæled,
> bitrum gebunden, bisgum beþrungen[144]

(I was guilty by my actions, tied up with sins, afflicted with sorrows, bound bitterly, enclosed by afflictions.)

In this passage, Cynewulf struggles with his history of sin. *Synnum asæled* (tied up with sins), he finds himself wrapped in sin, *beþrungen* (enclosed) by his past. Agonizing over these offenses, this enclosure leaves him wrestling with his own fate, with the fate of his soul. Cavell writes:

> "The human situation imagined in [*Elene*] is one that is fraught with affliction and continually bound. It is because of this permanent state of binding that humans in turn inflict their situation upon those around them, weaving and binding objects in nature in order to create useful things over which to exercise control."[145]

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[142] Cavell, 113.
[143] See Birkett, 783. He writes: "Control of the material world gives a dangerous impression of power and insight, and a false prospect of revelation that passes away, grows still, and is re-veiled before the clouds have parted."
[144] *Elene*, lines 1242b–1244b.
[145] Cavell, 301.

The rhyming throughout this passage—"synnum asæled / sorgum gewæled" and "bitrum gebunden / bisgum beþrungen"—recreates on the page Cynewulf's almost systematic way of considering his past actions. Birkett describes this rhyme as "reinforc[ing] the catalogue of binding and unlocking imagery."[146] The rhymes reflect a rhythm, a pattern, with which Cynewulf can think through his earthly activities as he tries to reconcile his sins with the afterlife that he wishes for himself.

Still, though, despite his attempt to reconcile his faith and sins, Cynewulf struggles to untie the shackles of sin. Thus, he remains enclosed in his transgressions, even amid his pursuit of a heavenly afterlife. This enclosure in sin calls back to Judas' when Elene tortures him in the well (*is in witum fæst / ealre synne fruma / susle gebunden*).[147] Cynewulf's connection with Judas' sins and path toward Christ establishes a clear link to the male Christian experience. At the same time, Cynewulf adopts a receptive role as Judas delivers the truth of the Cross to him; Cynewulf must become penetrable for the Word of God. When compared with his identification with Juliana, Cynewulf appears to transcend any rigid lines of gender prescribed by gendered monastic norms.

Cynewulf's epilogue in *Elene* appears to be primarily concerned with his own conversion to Christianity. Cynewulf connects with Judas' as Judas delivers the story of the Cross:

> nysse ic gearwe,
> be ðære [rode] riht ær me rumran geþeaht,
> þurh ða mæran miht, on modes þeaht,
> wisdom onwreah[148]

[146] Birkett, 782.
[147] *Elene*, line 771b–772b.
[148] *Elene,* lines 1239b–1242a.

(I did not know clearly about the true cross there before the more generous counsel, then through more glorious might, into the thoughts of my mind, released wisdom.)

In this passage, Cynewulf relates directly to Judas and his path toward the truth of God as Elene moves to locate the True Cross upon which Jesus was crucified. Admitting to his ignorance of the Cross, Cynewulf writes that Judas' story *wisdom onwreah* (released wisdom) into his mind through the disclosure of the Cross's location. Here, this *internal* conflict between Cynewulf's aim for Heaven and his concern over his sinful past becomes *externalized* as he composes this text. Rather than keeping them in the enclosure of his mind and heart, Cynewulf releases these concerns onto the page, no longer tied up within himself, but instead laid out for his future readers and, by extension, for God.[149]

But as it is released onto the page, it remains enclosed within the text—only hopeful that it is one day released to God's ears through prayer. Like Juliana, and like Judas/Cyriacus, Cynewulf's time of enclosure in this text becomes one during which he can strengthen his faith in God, attempting to atone for his sins. Here, Cynewulf describes the release of the truth of God through poetry and the story of Elene and Judas, as well as the parallels to his own conversion to Christianity:

> ær me lare onlag þurh leotne had,
> gamelum to geoce, gife unscynde
> mægencyning amæt 7 on gemynd begeat,
> torht ontynde, tidum gerymde,
> bancofan onband, breostlocan onwand,
> leoðucræft onleac þæs ic lustrum breac,
> willum in worulde[150]

(before he bestowed to me the instruction by manner of light, a help to the old ones, a noble gift to the

[149] See Hannah M. Bailey, "Memory, Sight and Love," *English Studies* (2016): 13. Bailey writes "... [Cynewulf] can guide [his readers] on a parallel journey of contemplating past, the present and future, and so encourage them to apply their memory, intelligence and will."
[150] *Elene*, lines 1245a–1251a.

Might-King measures and gets in my mind, disclosed brightness, at times extended, unbound the body, unwound the breast-lock, unlocked the art of poetry, that which I have enjoyed with pleasure and willfully in the world)

In these lines, Cynewulf begins to make sense of his path to Christianity alongside Judas' conversion. On the one hand, Cynewulf seems to credit Judas/Cyriacus with his conversion to Christianity. On the other, Cynewulf appears to deeply identify with Judas' acceptance of the Christian God. Daniel Calder discusses Cynewulf's identification with Constantine's conversion to Christianity in the first 200 lines of *Elene*, which mirrors Judas' and Cynewulf's: "The kind of relational themes he exploits in *Juliana* become, in *Elene*, more perfectly realized: the conversions of Constantine, Judas, and Cynewulf himself are three panels that contain contrasting poetic, psychological and religious perspectives on the 'finding' of the Cross, that is the true Christian life."[151] While Cynewulf does relate to Constantine, Constantine is not enclosed like Cynewulf or Judas. Thus, Cynewulf's identification with Judas and his conversion goes deeper into a "profound examination of error and sin,"[152] particularly as only "Judas, of the Cynewulfian protagonists, presents a full conversion narrative."[153]

These above lines further demonstrate Cynewulf's thorough engagement and connection with Judas and the newfound truth of God. That Christian truth *on gemynd begeat* (gets in my mind) reveals once more Cynewulf's spiritual receptivity, here displaying his penetrability. Now a Christian, Cynewulf is open to the Word's entrance into his mind, feminizing himself. This feminization is not at all a negative thing; in fact,

[151] Calder, 105.
[152] Calder, 107.
[153] Lorden, 317. See also Manish Sharma, "The Reburial of the Cross in the Old English *Elene*" (283). Sharma writes "... the introduction of the theme of containment and the container with the conversion of Constantine resonates elsewhere when we take into consideration Judas's incarceration, which precipitates his conversion."

Cynewulf treats it as necessary for his salvation, although processing his sin and errors is a painful venture. Simultaneously, Judas *torht ontynde* (dislosed brightness) unto Cynewulf, feminizing himself as well as he opens up to release the Christian truth to the poet in his narrative. Here, Cynewulf finds one small moment of reprieve from his sins: *bancofan onband* (unbound the body). Cynewulf's recovery from his own sins left him "bitrum gebunden / bisgum beþrungen" (bound bitterly, enclosed by afflictions).[154] But since coming into this devout Christian faith, Cynewulf finds himself liberated from this enclosure of sin and internal torments, although he still looks ahead to his uncertain afterlife with fear.

This release from sin is reiterated as Cynewulf writes that Judas *breostlocan unwand* (unwound the breast-lock). This emphasis on the chest reinforces the new permeability of Judas' and Cynewulf's chests—now open to, first, release the truth of God in the case of Judas but, second, to receive it in the case of Cynewulf. This secondary mutual permeability again repeats each man's spiritual openness and receptivity, feminizing them both once more.

As Cynewulf composes the text of *Elene* and his signature passage, he attributes his ability to formulate this text to Judas as well. For Cynewulf, Judas *leoðucræft onleac* (unlocked the art of poetry). Here, the notion of *cræft* reappears, denoting at this time an intention or skill rather than a fraud—as Cynewulf is coming into the Christian truth here, not only just now leaving behind his former false beliefs. Clements writes: "Read as a play on words, then, Cynewulf's *leoðucræft* is tied both to the *wordcræft* he exercises in composing this poem and the bodily metaphors with which *leoðucræft* is grouped in the

[154] *Elene*, line 1244.

epilogue."[155]

Similarly, *crœft* implies an enduring strength for Cynewulf's poetry, as if the poet foresees the survival of this construction of text.[156] That this text will live on seems to provide Cynewulf comfort as he uses this space to engage in deep spiritual meditation, wrestling with his sins, while he releases his poetry onto the page.[157] Composing the text of *Elene* is a liberating activity for him and provides him with a space to engage with his earthly sins. At the same time, while the art of poetry is "unlocked", the text is still restricted to the page unless spoken aloud. Birkett writes: "We break the surface display of solving the runic epitaph to Cynewulf, so that it reveals its true meaning, and we 're-veil' the author as we take up the meditative, participatory challenge presented to us."[158] While the epilogue of *Juliana* includes an extended request for prayer, the invocation in *Elene* is quite brief: "ꝛ to suna metudes / wordum cleopodon"[159] (and called out with words to the son of the Maker). His plea for prayer on his behalf here is a final act of desperation, and the brevity reflects his old age: *frod ond fus*[160] (old and ready to depart). Thus, Cynewulf becomes resigned to be liberated only through his poem—and only *into*

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[155] Clements continues: "Because Cynewulf states that God *onleac* his *leoðucræft*, this noun carries an undeniably physical sense of the body being unshackled" (148).
[156] Clements: "... the epilogues suggest that Cynewulf conceived of writing as a thing left behind on earth, just like his body, severed from the soul and abandoned. But in this regard, the written word has an aura of permanence that far exceeds the longevity of the buried corpse" (152).
[157] Clements: "... Cynewulf's poem [*Fates*] acknowledges the potential of writing to serve as a 'container', with his memory bound in letters even as his reader now figuratively 'binds the letters into a whole word. Read through the lense of the word-as-body analogy, these runic letters may be regarded as the poet's physical presence on the page, a vestige that stands in for the now-mute and long-dead bearer of this name" (153).
[158] Birkett, 789.
[159] *Elene*, lines 1319b–1320a. Birkett writes: "Engaged reading leads to revelation, and finally to a model for subsequent action" (784). At the same time, Jill Hamilton Clements Jill Hamilton Clements holds that "the written word served as the material trace of the dead and ensured their remembrance among the living, whose prayers were an aid to their salvation." See Clements, 137.
[160] *Elene*, line 1237a.

his poem.[161]

VI. Conclusion

Cynewulf's signed poems *Juliana* and *Elene* challenge Shari Horner's scholarship on monastic enclosure as a gendered phenomenon. Her foundational work in *The Discourse of Enclosure: Representing Women in Old English Literature* provides an argument focusing on the regulatory practices of female monastics in early English Christianity. [162] For Horner, the situation of enclosure for the female religious is constituted by monastic women being closed and being enclosed. Within the texts, looking to both Judas and Juliana, Cynewulf bypasses and breaks down these rigid religious gender boundaries. Elene employs the constricting binding upon Judas (*clommum beclungen*, "clung to with chains"),[163] and Juliana binds her demon (*fæste fetrum gebunde*, "firmly bound by fetters").[164] Both women use binding to force the conveyance of information. For Elene, it's the location of the True Cross from Judas' family history. For Juliana, it is the confession she wrangles out of the demon. Both of these women saints use this practice of binding their opponents as a means to manage, direct and restrain them. Cynewulf's connection with Juliana and Judas relies specifically on their situations of enclosure; while Juliana is enclosed and enclosing, Judas is enclosed and releasing. As Cynewulf identifies with both Juliana and Judas in his signature passages, the strict gendered boundaries begin to dissolve.

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[161] See Birkett, 779. This moment echoes again Birkett's argument that the severing of body and soul here is about the "dissolution of the worldly name *into* this context."
[162] See: Horner, *The Discourse of Enclosure*.
[163] *Elene*, line 696a.
[164] *Juliana*, line 433.

In *Juliana*, the saint struggles against the prospect of a forced marriage, her own resulting imprisonment, and torture at the hands of Eleusius. Still, per standards of female monasticism, Juliana resists the penetrations implied by these feminizing events. While in prison, the demon she meets there attempts to have her denounce her faith and make a pagan offering. Rejecting his demand to sin, the saint instead manages to have the demon confess to his own sins, demonstrating the masculine power of Juliana's impenetrability. Thus, as she resists this renunciation of faith, the prison becomes a place of strengthening her faith in God, much like the walls of a convent would for nuns in early England. This unsuccessful punishment has the opposite intended effect: pious, Juliana emerges from her enclosure protected by God. Ultimately, though, Juliana's execution marks her first and final penetration as she is beheaded. The ease of her death—coming on the heels of extended, violent torture—is contrasted with the fear and concern Cynewulf feels as he foresees his own death and Final Judgment.

In the signature passage in *Juliana*, Cynewulf grapples with the fate of his soul. Calling upon Juliana for guidance, Cynewulf goes beyond simple admiration; he instead struggles with processing the weight of his own sins, finding himself wrapped in shame. His inclusion of his runic signature in this passage further situates himself (through his coded name) within the binds of sin and internal torment. As he requests prayers from his future readers, he calls to Juliana for counsel on how to achieve a heavenly afterlife. This solicitation of prayer is an attempt at a release from his sins; not only will (ideally) Cynewulf be delivered from sin and his sinful past, but to have his readers speak out loud in his favor and on his behalf would necessitate the literal release of Cynewulf's petition for prayer and, ultimately, Cynewulf from sin itself. But while he attempts to reconcile

his devotion to Christ and his sins in life, he simultaneously encloses himself within this narrative of sin and the sinfulness of humanity more broadly, himself taking part in the practice of monastic enclosure—another connection to Juliana.

In *Elene*, the Christian Queen travels east to recover the True Cross upon which Jesus was crucified. There, she encounters a group of Jews who refuse to answer her inquiry about the Cross's location. Ultimately, Elene finds Judas—later Judas Cyriacus, after his conversion—who acknowledges what she wants at first but withholds the relevant information. When Judas refuses to disclose the Cross's location despite appearing to know what Elene is after, the queen imprisons him for a week. Judas' enclosure by Elene both fulfills the standards of female monastic enclosure—Elene is enclosing him—and feminizes Judas as he eventually succumbs to the torture. Elene's ability to penetrate Judas' heart and mind with the truth of Christ reads as a correction of Jewish fraudulence. From his entrance, Judas is described as *wordcræftes wis* (wise of wordcraft). The emphasis on *cræft* throughout the entirety of *Elene* reinforces and reflects, first, antisemitic stereotypes held by the early English Christians but, second, the longevity and solidness of the Christian Truth.[165]

In the signature passage of *Elene*, Cynewulf identifies with both Constantine and Judas, though his connection to Judas is deeper than his with the Emperor. Judas' experience with enclosure in the form of imprisonment mirrors that of Cynewulf as he dives into his poetry, further cementing his devotion to Christ in his spiritually meditative

[165] See also Samantha Zacher, *Imagining the Jew in Anglo-Saxon Literature and Culture*, ed. Samantha Zacher (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2016): 19. Although Zacher writes in this passage of Bede, the same idea can be applied to Judas, Elene and *cræft*: "This typological redefinition of building materials would seem to carry with it a straightforward anti-Judaic message... Bede repeats and perpetuates the stereotype that the tomb-like Jews are closed to the spiritual Christian message." Similarly, in the case of Judas and Elene, Judas' initial impermeability during the interrogation illustrates how closed off he—and the other Jews present—are to the Truth of Christ.

and poetic enclosure. While Judas, now spiritually open, discloses the Truth of Christ to Cynewulf, it implies Cynewulf's spiritual receptivity—a permeability that feminizes Cynewulf at the same time as it does Judas. As Cynewulf uncovers more of the Christian Truth through Judas' story, he begins to find some level of liberation from sin, only to be reconfined to the bounds of his composition.

Cynewulf's poems *Juliana* and *Elene* reshape existing scholarly understandings of monastic enclosure. Shari Horner's work firmly cements monastic enclosure as an aggressively gendered practice. While the experiences of monastic women and monastic men undoubtedly differ on some level, that difference does not quite appear so starkly in these two signed Cynewulf poems that follow female saints. As a saint, Juliana does maintain the standards that Horner ascribes to her: she is herself enclosed in prison and does enclose Christ within herself, in addition to the demon that greets her in her cell. Elene, on the other hand, does not; she holds some anticipated version of Christ in herself in the form of her son Constantine and encloses Judas in a dry well, but she herself is not enclosed like Juliana. At the same time, the narrator for these two poems finds himself struggling among the fetters of sin and enclosure. Wrapped in shame and sin, Cynewulf identifies with the enclosed individual, regardless of gender, becoming feminized at varying points in his self-reflection and dissolving these seemingly rigid boundaries of gendered enclosure.

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