

## LITERATURE

### TREASURE AND SPIRITUAL EXILE IN OLD ENGLISH *JULIANA*: HEROIC DICTION AND ALLEGORY OF READING IN CYNEWULF'S ART OF ADAPTATION

JACEK OLESIEJKO

*Wyższa Szkoła Języków Obcych, Świecie*

#### ABSTRACT

The present article studies Cynewulf's creative manipulation of heroic style in his hagiographic poem *Juliana* written around the 9<sup>th</sup> century A.D. The four poems now attributed to Cynewulf, on the strength of his runic autographs appended to each, *Christ II*, *Elene*, *The Fates of the Apostles*, and *Juliana* are written in the Anglo-Saxon tradition of heroic alliterative verse that Anglo-Saxons had inherited from their continental Germanic ancestors. In *Juliana*, the theme of treasure and exile reinforces the allegorical structure of Cynewulf's poetic creation. In such poems like *Beowulf* and *Seafarer* treasure signifies the stability of bonds between people and tribes. The exchange of treasure and ritualistic treasure-giving confirms bonds between kings and their subjects. In *Juliana*, however, treasure is identified with heathen culture and idolatry. The traditional imagery of treasure, so central to Old English poetic lore, is inverted in the poem, as wealth and gold embody vice and corruption. The rejection of treasure and renunciation of kinship bonds indicate piety and chastity. Also, while in other Old English secular poems exile is cast in terms of deprivation of human company and material values, in *Juliana* the possession of and preoccupation with treasure indicates spiritual exile and damnation. This article argues that the inverted representations of treasure and exile in the poem lend additional strength to its allegorical elements and sharpen the contrast between secular world and *Juliana*, who is an allegorical representation of the Church.

Keywords: Cynewulf, *Juliana*, St. Juliana of Nicomedia, Old English poetry, Middle Ages

Cynewulf's *Juliana*, written around the 9<sup>th</sup> century A.D., preserved in the *Codex Exoniensis*, or the so-called *Exeter Book*, compiled in the 11<sup>th</sup> century, has often been depreciated by Anglo-Saxonists as a story of gratuitous violence and sensational plot, "an uncomfortable mixture of the didactic and the spectacular"

(Woolf 1966: 45). Whilst being considered distasteful as a story, the poem has been to a large extent reclaimed by figural criticism as an allegory. Thus, what at a first glance appears to be flat characterization and violent content came to be recognized by Daniel Calder (1973), Joseph Wittig (1974), Donald G. Bzdyl (1985) and John P. Hermann (1989) as sustaining a more or less consistent allegorical structure.<sup>1</sup> None of these published attempts, however, are directed at explaining and defending the poem's heroic style. The heroic style and theme of the poem are thus either judged as idiosyncratic or, at best, serving to convey a non-literal, figurative and moral sense of the story. In both instances they seem to be of no significance in themselves and far from being central to the poem's themes apart from psychological warfare. Woolf ([1955] 1993: 17) depreciates its style close to prose and claims that the heroic details added to the story are "incongruous" ([1955] 1993: 19). Greenfield and Calder (1986: 167) in their *New History of Old English Literature* state that "as poetry, *Juliana* is the least impressive of the Cynewulf group, its diction being rather prosaic and repetitive, its syntax rather loose".

While this article cannot challenge this general critical opinion on the poem, it is written as an attempt to show the significance of Cynewulf's manipulation of the heroic diction in *Juliana*. The article will explore the heroic language of *Juliana* in terms of more than allegory. The first aim of this article is to investigate Cynewulf's idea of community in the poem. Cynewulf self-consciously uses the style of Germanic heroic diction as well as formulaic themes of Anglo-Saxon secular poetic lore. While he draws upon Latin learning, he also turns to two important Old English poetic traditions to render the story relevant to his audience's cultural milieu. The two intertwined themes of treasure and exile form a meaningful cluster of ideas that reinforce the tropological, or moral, theme of his hagiographical poem. Absent from the Latin source, the gold hoard introduced into the story by Cynewulf is an ancient motif in Anglo-Saxon poetry. Treasure is literally important to the human world in the poem, as it defines the value of the individual in his or her society and the poem centres on contrasting heroic world-view and its material values with Christian outlook. In the human world of *Juliana*, as in the secular epic *Beowulf*, the bonds between men are regulated and confirmed by the exchange of wealth and the king is just when he does not fail to reward his retainers with gold.

---

<sup>1</sup> Wittig turns to Auerbach's idea of figural narrative to read *Juliana* as a figure of Church Militant and argues that "Cynewulf uses liturgical and homiletic themes in an attempt to render the passion *significant*" (2001 [1974]: 148). *Juliana* is also read figurally by Bzdyl (2001 [1985]: 194). Hermann (1989: 161) rejects the interpretation of *Juliana* as a figure of the Church. Nonetheless, he defends the reading of the poem as an allegory of spiritual war. Erich Auerbach writes about the medieval notions of literal and figural interpretation of the Bible in his essay "Figura" (1959).

The second aim of this article is to explore the relevance of treasure and exile in the poem to the idea of reading and interpretation and the interplay of the oral and literary culture that is reflected in *Juliana*. The poem, as Shari Horner (2001: 111) puts it, should be understood as a textual allegory. The vision of pagan and Christian community is, arguably, informed by the idea of textual culture that was central to Cynewulf's cultural milieu. Cynewulf plays with oral conventions of Germanic poetry and textual scribal conventions. The poem begins with a traditional *hwaet* formula implying an oral singer and ends with an autobiographical colophon with the runic inscription revealing the poet's name and, at the same time, points to the poem's textuality, the fact of its inscription in the manuscript. It will be shown that treasure in *Juliana*, as other heroic elements that belong to the Old English version of the story, inverts the traditional expectations of its audiences familiar with heroic themes and assists in the non-literal interpretation of the poem. The dual nature of treasure in the poem helps the reader/listener decipher the literal/oral level of the narrative in order to find out the spiritual, figurative meaning.

Cynewulf's interpretative approach to traditional heroic diction was informed by his monastic education. He was most probably a monk. His knowledge of Latin rhetoric, evidenced by his style and manipulation of Latin sources testify to this. In fact, his poetry is indebted to the early Medieval Latin literature, as three out of four of his poetic works, *Juliana*, *Christ II*, *Elene* are translations from Latin texts. Cynewulf's approach to adaptation was pervasively informed by what Martin Irvine (1994: 438) calls the interpretative reading and rewriting in his *Medieval Textuality*. This practice of adaptation of Latin works into the vernacular culture resembles the reading of a Latin text with vernacular glosses (Irvine 1994: 438). He argues that in medieval culture "the gloss as a genre ... forms a node in the intertextual network: as the gloss supplements a text through an additional text, presenting an interpretation which is itself a text, so does the writing of a new text". Accordingly, he finds that many Anglo-Saxon texts, including Cynewulf's translations, "can be thus read as extended glosses on the Latin texts that they supplement or interpret" (Irvine 1994: 428).<sup>2</sup> Irvine (1994: 422) claims that Old English poetry and prose is dialogic in Mikhail Bakhtin's sense, as "Many Old English texts presuppose Latin Textuality and discourse as a formally constitutive feature, linking English to Latin as gloss to text or commentary to prior, established work".

The notion of textual allegory in the context of Cynewulf's *Juliana* has also been explored by Shari Horner in her *Discourse of Enclosure* (2001). Horner suggests that *Juliana* is a complex textual allegory that constructs a textual

---

<sup>2</sup> Irvine (1994: 434) reads the Old English translation of Caedmon's *Hymn* as "the Old English interpretative gloss, a close parallel of which is the *Paris Psalter* (BN lat. 8824, p. ix)".

community capable of engaging in the process of figural interpretation (2001: 111). She reads the poem as a textual allegory that “constructs a masculine reader, one who reads allegorically and thus derives pleasure from the (feminine) text” (2001: 109).<sup>3</sup> The present article also turns to Stanley Fish’s concept of interpretative community, which he defines as the community “made up of those who share interpretative strategies ... for writing texts, for constituting their properties and assigning their intensions” (1976: 483). In the light of this theoretical framework, the following pages will complement on the conception of Old English religious poetry as informed by the self-referential interplay of oral and textual elements and engaging its audiences in interpretative acts directing and controlling their readers’ response.

The legend of St. Juliana of Nicomedia was adapted to Old English verse in the late Anglo-Saxon period between 850 and 950 A.D.<sup>4</sup> and signed with runes by Cynewulf. Schaar (1949: 30) argues the poem is not a mere translation of one identified source, but reveals dependence of a number of versions of the story. The earliest Latin version of the legend comes from the 6<sup>th</sup> century. In the Latin original,<sup>5</sup> Eleusius (Heliseus in Cynewulf’s translation), a Roman senator proposes to Juliana, a Christian virgin and is turned down by her on the ground of his pagan worship. As a result, she is disowned by her pagan father, Affricanus, and thrown into prison. There she is visited by a devil disguised as an angel of light. He pretends to bring a message from God and suggests that Juliana should sacrifice herself to idols in order to save her life. She identifies the visitor as an enemy, conquers and interrogates him about his intentions and eventually sends him away. On the next day she is tortured and martyred under Heliseus’s commands. While changing minor details, the Cynewulf version follows the Latin version relatively closely in terms of plot.

*Juliana* is a hybrid text, as its Christian theme inherited from the Latin and patristic culture is interlinked with its heroic diction, Germanic, and pagan, in

---

<sup>3</sup> Horner (2001: 109) states that “medieval literary theory correlates ‘good’ reading, that is, spiritual reading of an allegorical text, with masculinity. Texts themselves are figured female; the masculine reader must penetrate the literal text to access its spiritual truth. To represent and to narrate heroic virginity, Juliana develops similarly gendered models of textual allegory, of spiritually healthy Christianity, emphasizing the need to fortify and protect the vulnerable female body. The poem writes masculinity onto its own female readership, constructing a doubly (or multiply) gendered reader. To derive spiritual meaning from the text, women readers, too – especially – must read beyond its literal level, must read ‘like men’, must ‘master’ the text”.

<sup>4</sup> Strunk (1904: xv), on the ground of the spelling of Cynewulf’s name, argues the poem could not be composed earlier than around 750 A.D., as *Ciniwulf* had been the established form before 750 and began to be gradually replaced by Cynewulf after 750 A.D.

<sup>5</sup> Schaar (1949: 27) gives a list of all Latin versions of the legend of St Juliana. He also gives a detailed comparison of the Old English poem with its possible Latin sources and many analogues. Woolf (1993 [1955]: 11) points out that the earliest extant *Vita* of Juliana is from the 6<sup>th</sup> century.

origin. What is significant about the adaptation are the themes from Old English poetic lore that Cynewulf introduces to the story. His adaptation makes a story from remote time and place significant for the Anglo-Saxon audience. Treasure and material values are themes recurrent in Old English heroic poetry and are often depicted as being at the centre of communal values. In the Old English *Juliana*, Rome is depicted as the symbol of pagan material values and parallels Anglo-Saxons' pagan cultural inheritance. The Latin source does not elaborate on the wealth and splendour of the Roman Empire and vaguely indicates the historical context of the story. In fact, the historical detail only serves to characterize the chief antagonist as Caesar's friend and, therefore, indirectly involved with the persecution of the Christians: "denique temporibus Maximiniani persecutoris Christiane religionis, erat quidem senator in civitate Nicomedia, nomine Eleusius, amicus imperatoris" [in the times of Maximinian, who was the persecutor of the Christian religion, there lived in the city of Nicomedia a certain senator called Eleusius, the emperor's friend] (*Vita*, 33).<sup>6</sup> In Cynewulf's poem, the description of the place is far more important for the entire story of Juliana's martyrdom. The epic introduction with "I have heard" formula introduces Rome as a place of contention between Roman worship and Christian faith. The Roman Empire presented here prevails over Christianity:

Wæs his rice brad,  
 wid ond weorðlic ofer werþeode,  
 lytesna ofer ealne yrmenne grund.  
 Foron æfter burgum, swa he biboden hæfde,  
 þegnas þryðfulle. Oft hi þræce rærdon,  
 dædum gedwolene, þa þe dryhtnes æ  
 feodon þurh firencræft. Feondscype rærdon,  
 hofon hæþengield, halge cwelmdon,  
 breotun boccræftge, bærndon gecorene,  
 gæston godes cempaþan gare ond lige

His [Maximinian's] empire was vast and spread widely over people's nations across the entire expanse of the earth. His powerful thegns, under his command, were visiting cities; they were often responsible for deeds of violence and cruelty, as they were persecuting the Divine Law with magic craft. They were provoking animosity and raising idols, putting holy and learned people to death; burning the chosen ones and tormenting soldiers of God with spear and flame.

(*Juliana*, ll.8-17)<sup>7</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Henceforth indicated as *Vita* followed by a page number. All quotations of *Vita* are taken from William Strunk (ed.). 1904. *Juliana*. Boston & London: D. C. Heath. All translations from Latin into modern English are mine.

<sup>7</sup> Henceforth indicated as *Juliana*, followed by a verse number. All quotations are taken from George Phillip Krapp and Elliott van Kirk Dobbie (eds.). 1936. *The Exeter book* (Anglo-Saxon Poetic records, vol. 3). New York: Columbia University Press. All translations from Old Eng-

The poet also depicts Heliseus (Cynwulf's spelling of Eleusius) as an "æhtwelig" [affluent] man (*Juliana*, l.18) in possession of "hordgestreon" [treasure] (*Juliana*, l.22). The figure of Heliseus is in itself a representation of Rome's resplendent wealth that stands as a threat to Christianity.

In *Juliana*, the concept of wealth is explored in yet another way and is given other meanings nonexistent in its Latin source. In the poem, the most important critique of pagan culture comes through the identification of gold and treasure with heathen worship. The poem explores the semantic overlap that existed in Old English language between the words "treasure" and "idolatry". The Old English word *gield*, which meant "a payment of money", could also mean "deity" (Bosworth and Toller 1882: 474). This word was part of compounds like *hæpengield* and *deofolgield*, which mean, respectively, "idol" and "idolatry" in *Juliana*. Maximian "hofon hæpengield" [raised idols] (*Juliana*, l.15). As for Heliseus, "oft he hæpengield ofer word Godes, weoh gesohte neode geneahhe" [he visited shrines of idols against the commandment of God often and very eagerly] (*Juliana*, ll.22-24). When *Juliana* turns down Heliseus's offer of marriage, she says that she will not agree if "þu to sǣmran gode deofolgield dæde biþencest" [if you sacrifice to lesser gods] (*Juliana*, ll.51-52). The semantic range of *gield* is used in the poem's imagery to formulate an inventory of appellations for the heathen worship. The wealth of Romans in the poem is thus symbolic of its cruel politics of dominion over and persecution of the emerging Christianity.

In Old English poetry treasure poses the problem of moral ambiguity, since it may symbolically represent peace and life of community as well as bear a tropological association with sin. On the one hand, treasure-giving is indicative of generosity and peace. In *Beowulf*, Wealhtheow endows Beowulf with gifts and advises him to use them well, which he does on his return to Geatland, when he shares them with his lord Hygelac. Heremod did the opposite, as he withdrew treasure from his retainers, thus earning himself a reputation of "the evil king". At the other end of the spectrum, treasure may also signify transience of worldly values. In *The Seafarer* and *The Wanderer*, it is important to renounce all earthly positions to gain the celestial home. *The Wanderer*, which follows *Juliana* in *The Exeter Book*, evokes the topos of *vanitas vanitatum*, as the speaker of the poem laments that "Her bið feoh læne, her bið freond læne, /her bið mon læne, her bið mæg læne, /eal þis eorþan gesteal idel weorþeð" (*The Wanderer*, ll.108-110).<sup>8</sup> In the same line, the speaker of *The Seafarer* observes that treasure is of no value *sub specie aeternitatis*.

---

lish into modern English are mine.

<sup>8</sup> Henceforth indicated as *The Wanderer*, followed by a verse number. All quotations are taken from Anne L. Klinck. 1992. *The Old English Elegies: A Critical Edition and Genre Study*. Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press. All translations from Old English into modern English are mine.

þeah þe græf wille    golde stregan  
 broþor his geborenum,    byrgan be deadum,  
 maþmum mislicum    þæt hine mid wille,  
 Ne mæg þære sawle    þe biþ synna ful  
 gold to geoce    for godes egsan

Even though a brother may wish to fill his brother's grave with gold and treasure in abundance, the soul, which is full of sin, cannot enjoy gold, when it faces the fear of Lord

(*The Seafarer*, ll.97-101)<sup>9</sup>

In *Juliana*, as Magennis (2006 [1996]: 86-87) points out, a traditional Germanic conception of treasure is undermined. Cynewulf draws upon the complex conception of treasure in the poetic lore, as he inverts the traditional poetic conception of treasure as essential to the continuity of human bonds, reinforcing its potential to corrupt human nature.<sup>10</sup>

It is important to note that treasure in the poem is conceptualized in opposition to Juliana's chastity. Whilst in the Latin source Juliana is characterized as simply pious rather than chaste, there is a stronger emphasis on her dedication to remain a virgin in the Old English poem. Juliana spurns Heliseus's advances so as to persevere in her chastity: "[H]io in gæste bær halge treowe, hogde georne þæt hire mægðhad mana gehwylces fore Cristes lufan clæne geheolde" [her spirit bore a holy covenant, she wanted to keep her virginity intact by any man for Christ's love] (*Juliana*, ll.28-31). She attaches greater significance to her faith than to Heliseus's treasure: "Hire wæs godes egsa mara in gemyndum, þonne eall þæt maþþumgesteald þe in þæs æþelinges æhtum wunade" [the fear of God was greater in her mind than the thought of all the treasure that was in the prince's [Heliseus's] possession] (*Juliana*, ll.35-37). She rejects both Eliseus' treasure and love: "Heo þæs beornes lufan fæste wiðhogde, þeah þe feohgestreon under hordlocan, hyrsta unrim æhte ofer eorþan" [she firmly set herself against the man's love, although [his] treasure-chest enclosed countless jewels of the earth] (*Juliana*, ll.41-44). While chastity is stressed in the source, it is Cynewulf who introduces into the poem the theme of the female saint as the bride of Christ, thereby creating the tropological tension between chastity and covetousness. Whilst gold-hoard symbolizes adherence to the values of the hall (the dwelling of Juliana's antagonists), chastity defines Juliana's identity as a Christian.

<sup>9</sup> Henceforth indicated as *The Seafarer*, followed by a verse number. All quotations are taken from Anne L. Klinck (1992). All translations from Old English into modern English are mine.

<sup>10</sup> As Horner (2001: 113) observes, the text of the poem suggests that Heliseus's lust and desire of Juliana result from his affluence and a high social status: "Heliseus hæfde ealdordom micelne ond mærne. Ða his mod ongon fæmnan lufian, (hine fyrwet bræc), Iulianan" [Heliseus was in the possession of a great principality. Then his heart began to desire a woman] (*Juliana*, ll.25-28; emphasis in the original).

Juliana's adherence to Christianity in which she continues through renouncing treasure and perseverance in chastity breaks the familial relations far more violently than in the original source. The idea of Juliana breaking the bonds with society is sustained by means of the imagery of turning dependent on the verbs *hweorfan/ahwyrfan* and *oncyrran/oðcyrran*, which mean "turn away from" and "pervert" (Bosworth and Toller 1882: 574, 769). This imagery does not exist in the Latin legend. Cynewulf employs it especially in the second part of the poem that corresponds with the second chapter of the Latin version: Juliana's imprisonment and her debate with the devil. When approached by the enemy, Juliana prays to God: "þæt þu me ne læte of lofe *hweorfan* þinre eadgife, swa me þes ar bodað frecne færspeþ, þe me fore stondeð" [that You will not allow me to turn away from your glory and grace, as the messenger, who is standing before me, tells me to do] (*Juliana*, ll.275-276). Later on the devil confesses that in their evil operations, the angels of hell "soðfæstra þurh misgedwield mod *oncyrran, ahwyrfen* from halor" [pervert the minds of the righteous by means of deception and make them turn away from the path to salvation] (*Juliana*, ll.325-327). Also, the devil is afraid of the punishment for his inability to destroy Juliana's faith.

The essence of these statements is, no doubt, underpinned by the echoes of Gregorian and Augustinian ideas of sin as turning away from God. According to Daniel Calder (1973: 367), Cynewulf conceives Juliana's encounter with the devil "as a ritual series of attempts to 'turn' *ahwyrfan* Juliana from her faith". More importantly, these remarks based on the imagery of turning redefine the social structure of the world of *Juliana* and suggest that Christian values entail a violent breach of earthly values and replace them with other loyalties. Ironically, the first part of the story presents Christianity as anti-society, or an anti-hall to the Heliseus and Affricanus's hall in which they distribute their treasure. The human world in the legend and its Anglo-Saxon adaptation may well be described by the process that Wayne Meeks (1993: 32) calls re-socialization. In his study on the formation of early Christian communities he applies this term to describe family relationships in times of the Diocletian persecution. He draws upon Pauline Letters and shows that in the early Christian texts the theological turn, that is change of faith, entails the social turn, which causes an individual's dislocation in the social structure: "the social relocation and the theological transformation are mutually dependent; each implies the other, and each reinforces the other" (Meeks 1993: 31). The boundaries of Christian community are, according to Meeks, defined in terms of turning of the converts from the gentiles "who include those formerly their families and associates" (Meeks 1993: 32). A similar idea has been observed in Old English heroic poetry and Anglo-Saxon legal culture, which, in the age of Christianization and the formation of unified kingdoms, reinforced the notion that sworn bonds of lordship and



kingship were stronger than bonds of kinship (Earl 1994: 124). Earl (1994: 124) believes that “in overcoming the natural and primitive claims of kinship in favour of political order and civilization, the hall and its heroic values function like the Church”. Cynewulf depicts Juliana’s renunciation of her kinship bonds in a more dramatic way than it happens in the source text. The theme of the bride of Christ dramatizes these processes, as Juliana turns away from her family to seek a relationship with Christ characterized in terms of kingship and protection of a lord over a thane.

Heliseus and Affricanus react so violently to Juliana’s recalcitrance because, by renouncing the treasure, Juliana rejects the traditional female function of the peace-weaver. If the primary audience of *Juliana* had been a community of nuns, the figure of *Juliana* must have been an inverted symbol of commodification<sup>11</sup> and peace-pledging. In Old English poetry women such as Wealhtheow in *Beowulf* are depicted as gifts and treasures exchanged between kings and tribes. Married to a king from an enemy tribe, she was a peace-weaver, that is she “weaved” peace between men.<sup>12</sup> The importance of treasure in the poem not only implies the necessity of renunciation of earthly values on the part of converts, but also it necessitates a comprehensive restructuring of the conception of community and family. Becoming a “Bride of Christ” exempted Anglo-Saxon nuns from social obligations that made spiritual and sexual purity impossible.

Cynewulf introduces another heroic theme, which is second in importance to treasure in the poem, namely exile. The theme of exile sets in motion another dramatic irony, as Juliana’s action inverts the notion of exilic existence shared by many Old English poets. Although it is Juliana who turns away from society, the members of the heathen community, which she rejects, become exiles in spiritual terms. Juliana is never described as an exile in the poem. Turning away from her father, she rather escapes from the society of exiles. Ironically, exile, as well as the resulting displacement from community and human companionship, is often formulaically expressed in terms of the absence of treasure in some Anglo-Saxon poems.<sup>13</sup>

Paradoxically, in *Juliana*, what allows people to stay within the boundaries of their communities causes their spiritual exile *sub specie aeternitatis*. At the

<sup>11</sup> Luce Irigaray (1985 [1977]: 31) offers a critical reading of Levi-Strauss’s *Elementary Structures of Kinship*, in which she demonstrates the social process by which women are changed into properties exchanged by men: in the patriarchal society “woman is traditionally a use-value for man, an exchange value among men; in other words, a commodity”.

<sup>12</sup> As Jane Chance (1986: 1) observes in *The Woman as a Hero in Old English Poetry*, “Child-bearing became a specific means of making peace between two tribes by literally mingling their blood; because of this political function, the aristocratic woman was often termed a “peace-pledge” or “*friðusibb*”.

<sup>13</sup> In *The Wanderer* (ll.32-37) the speaker longs for the joys of hall life and the ritual of treasure-giving which used to cement his relationship with his lord (ll. 32-37).

end of the poem, Heliseus, who earlier was described as living in the hall and enjoying of its warmth and security, is depicted as an exile. The thematic thread of exile is introduced in the dialogue between Juliana and the devil. The devil, which approaches and tempts Juliana, is characterized with two formulaic expressions that Greenfield (1989: 126-127) classifies as central to exile imagery in Anglo-Saxon poetry. He is described as “wræcca wærleas” [faithless outcast] (*Juliana*, l.351) and laments his exilic existence: “ic sceal feor þonan heanmod hweorfan, hropra bidæled” [I will depart far away hence, humiliated and deprived of comforts] (*Juliana*, l.389-390). Like Juliana, the devil does not want to *hweorfan* his lord. He laments, however, that if any devil fails and “soðfæstra þurh myrrelsan mod ne oðcyrreð, haligra hyge, we þa heardestan ond þa wyrrestan witu gepoliað þurh sarslege” [does not pervert the minds of the righteous through a hindrance, he will sorely suffer the worst and hardest punishments] (*Juliana*, ll.337-341). The failure to turn the steadfast from faith will result in exile for the devil. Interestingly enough, Cynewulf is consistent in degrading kin relationship to earthly and evil bonds. While Juliana refers to Christ and God as her *mundbora* [protector] and king, the devil describes Satan as his “fæder” [father] (*Juliana*, l.312).

The idea of damnation as exile is reiterated in the third part of the poem, which culminates in Juliana’s martyrdom. After Juliana’s decapitation, Eliseus and his companions go on a sea voyage, during which they drown together with the sinking ship. Cynewulf changes a number of details from the Latin source to continue the theme of treasure and spiritual exile. In the Latin source, the men drown as a result of the storm:

... praefectus autem Eleusius cum navigasset in suo suburban, venit tempestas valida et mersit navem ipsius, et mortui sunt viri numer viginti quator; et cum aqua jactasset eos in locum desertum ab avibus et feris corpora eorum sunt devorata

... then while the prefect Eliseus was sailing to his province, there came a great tempest and drowned his ship. As a result, twenty four men were killed. And when water tossed their bodies at a deserted land, they were devoured by beasts and birds.

(*Vita*, 49)

Cynewulf alters the narrative detail to have Heliseus die after a long period of aimless sea journey:

Heliseus ehstream sohte,  
leolc ofer lagufloed longe hwile  
on swonrade. Swylt ealle fornóm  
secga hloþe ond hine sylfne mid,  
ærþon hy to lande geliden hæfdon,  
þurh þearlic þrea.

Heliseus went on a sea journey and travelled for a long time over the whale-road. Death surprised them all, the band of men and himself before they managed to reach land as a terrible punishment.

(*Juliana*, ll.673-677)

The journey lasting “lange hwile” suggests the fate of an exile and aimless wandering. Moreover, he and his companions are described as villains, they are characterized as “sceaþena þreat” [a band of thieves] (*Juliana*, l.673) and as a “secga hloþe” [a band of men] (*Juliana*, l.676), who, as a result of their death in the sea, “helle sohton” [sought out hell] (*Juliana*, l.682).

There is yet another major and significant addition that is absent from the poem’s Latin source. Heliseus and his crew find themselves in hell, which is the inverted image of hall life:

Ne þorftan þa þegnas in þam þystran ham,  
seo geneatscolu in þam neolan scræfe,  
to þam frumgare feohgestealda  
witedra wenan, þæt hy in winsele  
ofer beorsetle beagas þegon,  
æpplede gold.

The retainers could not expect receiving treasure from their lord [Satan] in the impenetrable abyss; or that they would be given rings and gold while sitting at the benches and drinking beer.

(*Juliana* ll. 683-688)

The scene is absent from the Latin source and is an inheritance of Anglo-Saxon poetic imagination. Hell is here an inverted hall, or rather an “anti-hall” to use an expression coined by Kathryn Hume (1974: 68). The final description of hell is reminiscent of the account of the hellish existence the devil gives to Juliana in the earlier part of the poem. The devil says he was sent to Juliana “of þam engan ham” [from a narrow house] (*Juliana*, l.323) and from “gnornhofe” [prison] (*Juliana*, l.324). Satan, who is also called the father of the fallen angels, “ne biþ us frea milde” [is not a mild lord to us devils] (*Juliana*, l.328) and is also “egeslic” [cruel] (*Juliana*, l.329). Satan is therefore a parody and inverted image of a good lord. Also, the hellish hall is disintegrated, as the devil is described as “wræcca wærleas” [an exile and pledge-breaker] (*Juliana*, l.351).

Since Juliana has often been read as an allegorical poem, it is now pertinent to consider the relevance of the treasure and exile imagery to the figural elements in the poem. A number of critics have advanced a figural interpretation of Juliana as the figure of *Ecclesia*. Wittig says that “the poem’s force arises from something other than convincing mimesis – from the connection of *Juliana* with central and potent Christian events, of which she is imitator, embodiment and

new exemplar” and that “a multi-term figural relationship operates in *Juliana* between Christ, the Church and the Saint and the individual Christian soul” (Wittig 2001 [1974]: 148). Anderson reads the character of Juliana as “a ‘figural’ character, representing the Church in time of persecution” (Anderson 1983: 102).<sup>14</sup> When it comes to the figural representations in *Juliana*, the theme of treasure and exile definitely strengthens the theme of the spiritual warfare, which, according to Hermann in *Allegories of War*, is a major addition to the story on the part of Cynewulf (Hermann 1989: 162). He may well be right, however, in claiming that Juliana does not represent the Church, as Cynewulf removed an important typological reference from his Latin source.<sup>15</sup> In fact, the heroic elements in the poem discussed so far depict human and secular society as prone to evil and make it resemble the representation of hell as anti-hall, in which treasure is the tropological image of sin and in which people are cut off from social bonds and inflicted with exilic suffering.

Rather than *Eccelesia*, Juliana is depicted as the ideal Christian subject and Cynewulf’s technique of characterisation works to humanize, not universalize her. Wittig (2001 [1974]: 160) proposes the typological reading of the poem and emphasizes the importance of Juliana’s preaching speech that she delivers before she is decapitated – in this speech, she urges those who came to see her execution to convert. Surely, she fulfils the evangelical role of *Eccelesia*, as Wittig claims. However, her exhortative speech followed by her decapitation in the last part of the poem depicts a more personal relationship between an individual and God, which is cast in terms of lord-retainer bonds. The speech is informed by the heroic concept of *sibb* or “peace”:

Ge mid lufan sibbe,  
leohte geleafan, to þam lifgendan  
stane stiðhydige stapol fæstniað,  
soðe treowe ond sibbe mid eow  
healdað æt heortan, halge rune  
þurh modes myne.

You, with the love of peace and the light of faith, make firm the foundation of the living rock. Hold the truth and peace in your hearts, the holy mystery through the strength of you mind.

(*Juliana*, ll.652-657)

<sup>14</sup> Anderson (1983: 100) reads Heliseus’s shipwreck as “the typology of the flood and the idea that Noah’s ark is a type of the Church”.

<sup>15</sup> Hermann (1989: 152) points to the fact that in the Latin source, but not in the Old English poem, Juliana “utters a lengthy prayer asking for divine protection, during which she alludes to the passage of Israelites through the Red Sea ... Those familiar with the typological criticism of Old English poetry will have no difficulty in grasping the significance of Cynewulf’s failure to mention such an instance of divine protection”.

The idea of *sibb* fuses the Pauline conception of spiritual warfare found in the Letter to Ephesians with an Anglo-Saxon heroic obligation. Juliana imagines the soul of a Christian as a strong house, whose “Weal sceal þy trumra / strong wipstondan storma scurum, / leahtra gehygdum” [wall shall withstand the strong showers of storm and sinful thoughts] (*Juliana*, ll.650-653). People should watch against “hettendra hildewoman” [the battle-terror of the enemies] (*Juliana*, l.663) and pray to God as “sigora Sellend” [the giver of victories] (*Juliana*, l.668). More significantly for the poem, Juliana’s use of *sibb* is contrasted with the way the concept informs Heliseus and Affricanus’s idea of kinship bonds, which Juliana renounces.<sup>16</sup>

In the poem, heroic diction does not serve as foundation to any allegorical structure. It results, however, in something more profound. *Juliana*’s diction and content do not refer to any non-literal representation veiled behind them, but to the interplay of orality and textuality. *Juliana* dramatizes the opposition between the oral pagan culture and the textual Christian culture to which Cynewulf points at the end of the poem by means of the runic inscription. The interplay of oral and textual culture gives support to the most important theme of the poem: the conception of a Christian and, ideally, religious community as opposed to a secular one; the signature turns an oral poem into a visual object of interpretation. The poet, who leaves the runic inscription *CYNEWULF*, prays to the saint whose martyrdom was the poem’s subject for intercession and the audience for prayer.

According to Horner, the heroic means of expression and the poem’s textuality give life to the textual allegory that is present in *Juliana*. Horner points to a number of misreadings in Cynewulf’s translations. For example, Affricanus and Heliseus are depicted as rejecting the Christian truth as if it was available to them (2001: 113). As she observes, Eleusius often goes “ofer word godes” [against the word of God, 23a] to visit heathen idols. The devil that comes to Juliana in prison in the second movement of the poem is disguised as an angel of God. He also confesses that he attacks people “mishelme forbraeged” (*Juliana* l.470). As Horner points out,

because she correctly perceives him to be a devil beneath his angelic disguise, Juliana demonstrates that the disguise, the literal appearance, is the veil that must be stripped from a text to uncover its spiritual “truth”. Also, “the two interpretative sides of battle – the torture of Juliana and Juliana’s own debate with the devil – exemplify the ... process of Christian reading and pagan misreading.

(Horner 2001: 113)

---

<sup>16</sup> Eleusius and Affricanus demand that Juliana should respect the *sibb* established between the three on account of kinship obligations she owes to her father and to her future husband. Affricanus promises not to punish Juliana with tortures, if she “sibbe gesette” [pledges peace] with their (pagan) deities (*Juliana*, l.200). For Juliana, there is “soðe sibbe” [true peace] only between herself and God (*Juliana*, l.219).

It is notable that the tropological symbolism of treasure as sin in the poem is connected to its textual allegory that Horner describes. The love of treasure and lust which distort human perception of values is a thematic thread throughout the poem. Affricanus and Heliseus are described as “hygeblind” [blind minds] (*Juliana*, l.61). The imagery of turning in the poem relies on the clash between the pagan community and Christianity.

It seems, therefore, that Cynewulf inverts the heroic ideals and imagery in *Juliana* to accelerate the process of figural as opposed to literal interpretation. In contrast, Claude Schneider (1978: 117) claimed that Cynewulf devalues the rhetoric of Germanic heroic lore, as in *Juliana* the “villains have inherited the values of heroic society” and claims that heroic epithets are “used exclusively of the heathens in this poem”. Cynewulf does not devalue the heroic diction. For Cynewulf, the diction serves to reconceptualize the poetic notion of community. The text like *Juliana* presupposes a textual community, in which reading and interpretation replaces the exchange of treasure.<sup>17</sup> If a community of nuns had indeed been the audience for whose sake the poem was composed,<sup>18</sup> *Juliana* would have served as a model for such a community, as the poem opposes the textual community to the heroic community of Germanic poetic tradition. In this community the exchange of stories would have mirrored the exchange of treasure in a secular community. *Juliana* rejects, after all, an expected role of the peace-weaver to become the “Bride of Christ”.

According to some religious Anglo-Saxons, the existence and popularity of heroic verse exposed the newly converted people to spiritual danger. Alcuin of York rebuked the Anglo-Saxon monks of Lindisfarne for their interest in heroic poetry asking them in a letter “Quid Hingeldus cum Christo?” [What has Ingeld got to do with Christ?] (Fulk and Cain [2003] 2005: 193). Cynewulf addresses the audience that is well-versed with the heroic conventions. Returning to the conception of the interpretative community by Stanley Fish, the heroic diction of the poem ensures “the stability of interpretation among different readers” (Fish 1976: 484).<sup>19</sup> It was appropriate for Cynewulf to utilize the heroic tradition in order to redefine the notion of community in such radical terms, as heroic poetry was central to the perpetuation of the ideals of this society. Texts

<sup>17</sup> As Horner (2001: 110) points out “the relationship between (male) reader and (masculine) spirit is thus a homosocial one, with the feminized text as the medium of exchange” and makes an interesting point saying that in Old English culture “the pagan text assumes the role of the peace-weaver, ‘shuttling’ diplomatically between two hostile forces”.

<sup>18</sup> Woolf (1966: 45) claims that *Juliana* was written for a community of nuns. “While no Anglo-Saxon nun need to expect to endure such persecutions, there was a model for them in *Juliana*’s rejection of a prosperous lover and committal of her virginity to God”.

<sup>19</sup> Central to the stability of interpretation in medieval culture was the theory of exegesis, according to which the Scripture had four senses: historical, tropological (moral), typological, and anagogic. Patristic culture explored secular writings for these four senses.

like *Juliana* were written to deflect their audiences' attention from secular poetry. These texts also redefine the secular poetry itself as profane and ingrain in their audience a reformed interpretative approach to their secular culture. Although Cynewulf was not the most skilful Old English poet regarding the composition in the heroic technique, he followed the Germanic tradition with a view to fulfilling his ideological objective, rather than merely a means of artistic expression.

Treasure is something more than an ornamental element of formulaic poetic composition and still more than a mere metaphor. Cynewulf addresses an idealized reader in order to construct a sort of ideal community. The way he uses themes and formulas borrowed from earlier heroic poetry is similar to the way the early Christian Latin poets like Prudentius borrowed from the themes of Roman classical epic in order to write poems on Christian themes. What is important is that ancient values of Germanic pagan society remained essential for the Anglo-Saxons long after conversion. The idea of literacy and textual community may be captured by an analogy drawn between the enjoyment of treasure, the warmth of the heroic hall and the pleasure of solving the allegorical meaning of a text.

## REFERENCES

- Abraham, Leonore MacGaffey. 2001 [1978]. Cynewulf's *Juliana*: A case at law. In Robert Bjork (ed.), *The Cynewulf reader* (Basic Readings in Anglo-Saxon England), 171-192. Routledge: New York.
- Anderson, Earl R. 1983. *Cynewulf: Structure, style and theme in his poetry*. London & Toronto: Associated University Press.
- Auerbach, Erich. 1984 [1959]. *Scenes from the drama of European literature*. (Theory and History of Literature 9.) Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Bosworth, Joseph and T. Northcote Toller (eds.). 1882. *An Anglo-Saxon dictionary*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Bzdył, Donald G. 2001 [1985]. *Juliana*: Cynewulf's dispeller of delusion. In Robert Bjork (ed.), *The Cynewulf reader* (Basic Readings in Anglo-Saxon England), 193-206. Routledge: New York.
- Calder, Daniel G. 1973. The art of Cynewulf's *Juliana*. *Modern Language Quarterly* 34(4). 355-371.
- Connor, Patrick W. 2001. On dating Cynewulf. In Robert E. Bjork (ed.), *The Cynewulf reader* (Basic Readings in Anglo-Saxon England), 23-56. New York & London: Routledge.
- Earl, James W. 1994. *Thinking about Beowulf*. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press.
- Fish, Stanley. 1976. Interpreting the "Variorum". *Critical Inquiry*. 2(3). 465-485.
- Fulk, R. D., Christopher Cain. 2005 [2003]. *A history of Old English literature*. Malden: Blackwell Publishing.

- Greenfield, Stanley B., Daniel G. Calder. 1986. *A new critical history of Old English literature*. New York & London: New York University Press.
- Greenfield, Stanley B. 1989. *Hero and exile: The art of Old English poetry* (Edited by George H. Brown). London & Ronceverte: The Hambledon Press.
- Hermann, John P. 1989. *Allegories of war: Language and violence in Old English poetry*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Horner, Shari. 2001. *The discourse of enclosure: Representing women in Old English literature* (SUNY Series in Medieval Studies). Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Hume, Kathryn. 1974. The concept of the hall in Old English poetry. *Anglo-Saxon England* 3. 63-74.
- Irigaray, Luce. 1985 [1977]. *This sex which is not one* (Translated from French by Catherine Porter and Carolyn Burke). Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Irvine, Martin. 1994. *The making of the textual culture: 'Grammatica' and literary theory, 350-1100*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Klinck, Anne L. 1992. *The Old English elegies: A critical edition and genre study*. Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press.
- Krapp, George Phillip and Elliott van Kirk Dobbie (eds.). 1936. *The Exeter book* (Anglo-Saxon poetic records, vol. 3). New York: Columbia University Press.
- Magennis, Hugh. 2006 [1996]. *Images of community in Old English Poetry* (Cambridge Studies in Anglo-Saxon England 18). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Meeks, Wayne A. 1993. *The origins of Christian morality: The first two centuries*. New Heaven: Yale University Press.
- Rice, Robert C. 1977. The penitential motif in Cynewulf's *Fates of Apostles* and in the epilogues. *Anglo-Saxon England* 6. 105-119.
- Schaar, Claes. 1949. *Critical studies in Cynewulf group* (Lund Studies in English 17). Lund: C. W. K. Gleerup.
- Schneider, Claude. 1978. Cynewulf's devaluation of heroic tradition in *Juliana*. *Anglo-Saxon England* 7. 107-118.
- Strunk, William (ed.). 1904. *Juliana*. Boston & London: D. C. Heath & CO.
- Wittig, Joseph. 2001 [1974]. Figural narrative in Cynewulf's *Juliana*. In Robert Bjork (ed.), *The Cynewulf reader* (Basic readings in Anglo-Saxon England), 147-169. Routledge: New York.
- Woolf, Rosemary (ed.). 1993 [1955]. *Cynewulf's Juliana*. Reed Hall: University of Exeter Press.
- Woolf, Rosemary. 1966. Saints' lives. In E. G. Stanley (ed.), *Continuation and beginnings: Studies in Old English literature*, 67-103. London: Thomas Nelson.