CYNEWULF'S *ELENE:*
THE FIRST SPEECH TO THE JEWS

In Cynewulf's poem *Elene*[1] the search for the resting-place of the True Cross involves an extended series of interrogations. Lines 276-416 show us three groups of Jews being successively subjected to Elene's questioning, in lines 555-597 she continues grilling the third group and from line 598 to line 690 one Jew, who has been pushed forward by the others as being most capable of answering her questions, forms her audience. The progressively diminishing number of listeners has already been commented on[2], as has the significance of Elene's shift from verbal to physical action immediately after her interview with Judas.[3] What I will be concerned with in this essay is the effect which Elene's questioning has on the Jews and the extent to which Cynewulf's changes of his source can be demonstrated to underline it.

Elene's ostensible purpose in coming to the Jews is to dig up the truth about the hiding-place of the cross:

> hwær se wuldres beam
> halig under hrusan   hyded wære,
> æðelcyninges rod.   (11.217b-219a)

However, this eliciting of practical information from the very start becomes a search for a more profound kind of knowledge, or we might say self-knowledge, on the part of the Jews.[4] A fierce and insistent demand is made that they confess to a crime horrible both in itself and in its consequences for the perpetrators. Now what can one expect? The Jewish law, and this is of course a theme essential for the whole of the poem[5], cannot give them any insight into the meaning or substance of their guilt. It needs a brother of Stephen protomartyr, who as it were occupies a half-way station between Jewish and Christian thinking[6], to assist them in the process of spiritual change. But before he himself has come to see the light, any attempts at converting them must be in vain.

The chief result of Elene's words is therefore fear and bewilderment[7]. There is only one explanation for the unamiable way she speaks to them that the Jews can think of- personal grievances:

> ne we eare cunnon
> þurh hwæt ðu ðus hearde,   hlæfdige, us
> eorre wurde;   we ðæt æbylgð nyton
> þe we gefremedon   on þysse folcscere,
> þeodenbealwa   wið þec æfre.   (11.399b-403)

The word *æbylgð* is clearly crucial here[8], but there are two other points to consider. First, the Jews are not aware of the implications of this word; they are engaged in a genuine attempt to account for Elene's severe tone.

Secondly, they admit they are not successful in this and consequently their apprehensions remain. They then turn over in their minds the possibility of maternal rather than personal grievances:

> geomormode   georne smeadon,
> sohton searopancum   hwæt sio syn wære
> þe hie on þam folce   gefremed hæfdon
> wið þam casere   þe him sio cwen wite.   (11.413-416)

This is really a repeated demonstration of their lack of comprehension, but as such an appropriate introduction to Judas' speech, which immediately follows and in which Elene's purposes, though not viewed with great sympathy, are at least accurately stated.

Having established that Elene's quest baffles and frightens the Jews, I shall now try to indicate just why it should be so alarming to them. Two reasons are to be distinguished: the first concerns the way Elene herself is presented, the second has to do with the way she presents her message. We can deal briefly with the first. Throughout the poem Elene is described in most approbatory terms. She is plainly someone to be respected and admired[9]. The formal introductions to her first three speeches will serve excellently as examples, since they specifically show us what kind of impression she makes on the Jews.

> Ongan þa leoflic wif
> weras Ebrea   wordum negan   (11.286b-287)
>
> þrungon þa on þreate   þær on þrymme bad
> in cynestole   caseres mæg,
> geatolic guðcwen   golde gehyrsted.
> Elene maþelode   7 for eorlum spræc   (11.329-332)
>
> hio sio cwen ongan
> wordum genegan–   wlat ofer ealle–   (11.384b-385)

Before her first speech, we learn she is not only beautiful but also self-confident enough to address these three thousand men without trepidation (the alliteration across the line-boundary of *wif* and *weras* seems to draw attention to this perhaps somewhat unusual situation)[10]. The second quotation stresses her nobility and power, or we might say the feeling of inferiority and helplessness she would inspire the Jews with, the word *cwen* in the third one briefly calling up the same idea. The half-line *wlat ofer ealle* again suggests Elene's undaunted attitude towards her audience. To sum up, she would strike the Jews as a figure clothed in royal splendour, invested with power and authority, and not to be intimidated or deflected from her plans.

If we now single out one specific speech made by Elene to the Jews, we will be able to observe in detail why the phrasing of her ideas cannot fail to drive the Jews into a state of fear. She seems deliberately to exploit her medium so as to transmute thought into threat. I have chosen her first

speech (11.288-319), since it most neatly demonstrates features also found in the following ones. A preliminary point to be made concerns the line of argument in it. There is none. Instead, we are struck by abrupt transitions, the use of association rather than logic, considerable repetition and the apparent absence of any controlling idea. However, if we consider the over-all emotional drift of her words, we can isolate one underlying sentiment: "You have sinned, and punishment is inevitable." From a modern point of view, not a very cheering or inspiring message to proclaim. It is its presentation that communicates to us a sense of orderliness. The art of the passage lies in the configuration of a variety of linguistic devices which Elene uses to hammer home her point, that is, to convince the Jews of the horror of their deed and the (near-)certainty of retribution.

Below, I have tried to list the most salient and persistent features of Elene's harangue. The majority are based on some sort of formal similarity. For the first three, it is phonetic. Though they do overlap, it is convenient to distinguish them as follows:
1. alliteration – this obligatory feature is manipulated to good effect in order to achieve effects of, broadly speaking, either unity or contrast, depending on the semantic and syntactic structure.[11]
2. echoing – repetition of a stretch of sounds (not of a whole word or a morpheme); there is always a strong contrast pointed up in this way.
3. morphological chiming – use of two morphologically related words; in our passage, this tends to occur when a paradox is being stated; the same can be said of some, but not all, cases of exact repetition of a word, which may be included in this category.[12]
These first three categories, then, have to do with the "play of sound and sense".[13] The following ones depend on the handling of syntactic units and their patterning; they give rise to what we may call the play of system and sense.
4. repetition of a syntactic construction – the recurrent pattern lends more emphasis to a statement, and also provides an opportunity for significant deviations or disturbances.[14]
5. position and choice of the personal pronouns – this feature plays an important part in making plausible the conflation of past and present (i.e. of the audience and their ancestors) that is so notable in this part of the poem.
6. use of the tenses and of adverbials of time – these combine with the previous feature; at vital points, they tend to carry much of the meaning and implication.
In my following reading of Elene's speech, these six devices will be seen to form an intertwining pattern, reinforcing each other all the time. Between them, they can to a large extent account for the fact that this speech strikes terror into the Jews, and perhaps even into the impressionable reader.

Elene starts her speech by citing her authorities:

> Ic þæt gearolice   ongiten hæbbe
> þurg witgena   wordgeryno
> on Godes bocum   (11.288-290a)

This is not only a conventional,[15] but also a crafty opening: in *wordgery-no/on Godes bocum* there is a chiming paraphrase of *dryhtnes geryno* (1.280b), and the Jews, selected for their learning, may well feel alarmed at Elene's claim of complete understanding of the mysteries they have been summoned to explain[16]. At first sight, however, she appears to be very polite. The knowledge she has acquired from Holy Writ seems to be most complimentary for them:

> þæt ge geardagum
> wyrðe wæron   wuldorcyninge,
> dryhtne dyre   7 dædhwæte.   (11.290b-292)

Two full lines of praise. To be dear to the glory-king is to be in a quite enviable position. As we can see in the last line, it is under this aspect that God confers bliss on those he loves.[17] But the adverbial *geardagum*, together with the past tense of *wæron*, makes one wonder about the permanency of this situation. Thus, the emphasis on past-ness undermines her commendations even before the contrast is explicitly stated. When it is, it is not simply expressed through an adversative clause (starting, for instance, with *ac nu*). Instead, a subtle transition is made by echoing the last complimentary term: *dædhwæte . . . Hwæt!* The effect is similar to that achieved by modern English *What? . . . . . What indeed!*, but the turn of phrase is much neater. The call for attention hwæt is then further reinforced by the continued alliteration on *w* in the three lines 293, 294 and 295.[18]

Thus heightening the Jews' sense of expectation, Elene lays into them with a set of three specific accusations:

> Hwæt ge þære snyttro   unwislice,
> wraðe wiðweorpon   þa ge wergdon þane
> þe eow of wergðe   þurh his wuldres miht,
> fram ligewale   lysan þohte,
> of hæftnede.   Ge mid horu speowdon
> on þæs andwlitan   þe eow eagena leoht
> fram blindnesse   bote gefremede,
> edniowunga   þurh þæt æðele spald
> 7 fram unclænum   oft generede
> deofla gastum.   Ge deaþe þone
> deman ongunnon   se ðe of deaðe sylf
> woruld awethe   on wera corþre
> in þæt ærre lif   eowres cynnes.   (11.293-305)

After the lexical descent from wise (*snyttro*) to unwise (*unwislice*) to perverse (*wraðe*)[19], the level to which the Jews have allowed themselves to sink is described in three identical two-clause sentence-types: *You verb Past him who . . .* (11.294b-297a, 11.297b-302a, and 11.302b-305). This syntactic repetition helps to emphasize the utter ingratitude that seems to be respon-

sible for their crimes. In each indictment, the difference in power and moral stature between the Jews and Christ is signalled by a chiming of elements in the first and second clauses: *wergdon- of wergðe, speowdon – þæt æðele spald* and *deaþe – of deaðe.* In the last clause, there is repetition of a complete word, a simpler and more direct device which is excellently suited for the end and emotional culmination of the series.[20] All of its three members, however, bring out the paradoxical excesses of malevolence on the one, and benevolence on the other hand, in the same systematic manner.

Apart from the morphological chiming, there are some other features of the first accusation that would increase its potential as a source of anxiety for the Jews. The alliteration of *wergðe* with *wuldres* is not only part of the sustained call for attention that I have already pointed out, but it also posits two alternatives: a choice between glory and damnation has been made. The option the Jews have taken is hinted at by a faint chiming with *wuldorcyninge* (1. 291b), the Jews' endearment to whom was so much a thing of the past, and confirmed by the verb *þohte.* The past tense implies that they have indeed frustrated Christ's intention of redeeming them. Elene deals them a final blow by specifying the torments they will not be saved from now: *ligcwalu* and *hæftned.*[21] All these elements combine to form a grimly threatening prospect for the Jews:
1. they will have to undergo these carefully particularized forms of punishment.
2. they will not be rescued.
3. they have themselves to thank for it.

The second accusation contains a theme which has called forth numerous comments and clarifications, that of light/illumination versus dark/blindness[22]. For our purposes, it is interesting to see how the Jews are here momentarily identified with demonic spirits by means of the forceful opposition between *horu* (filth) and *þæt æðele spald* (the noble spittle): the word *unclænum* in 1.301, coming so soon after *þæt æðele spald,* at once recalls *horu,* and when the rest of the noun phrase, *deofla gastum,* follows in 1.302a, this will initially also be associated with the Jews. It must be with a sigh of relief that Elene's audience realizes she does not really consider them to be devils. All she implies is that they can no longer count on being protected against such foul demons.

Elene's third charge (11.302b-305) presents a difficulty in interpretation. Before outlining its nature, I would like, as a preliminary to my proposed solution, again to draw attention to a feature shared by all three accusations: the use of the personal pronoun second person plural in initial position in the first clause. The choice of the pronoun is very disturbing. Its dramatic effect is that the three thousand Jews present are implicated in and made

responsible for what their ancestors have done. The difference between past
and present is obliterated here. In hindsight, this suggests wider issues,[23] but
the immediate result for the Jews is that they cannot afford to disregard
Elene's words. Moreover, the position and case-form of the pronoun
suggest that they initiated these actions themselves and must therefore bear
the consequences. It is not accidental that, whereas the first two accusations
have *eow* as the object of Christ's beneficent intentions, this is changed to
woruld in the last one.

We can now tackle the problems of interpretation. They are: what exactly
does *woruld* mean, and what does *in þæt ærre lif eowres cynnes* refer to?
Holthausen solves the difficulty by emending *woruld* to *worn* (great num-
ber; first proposed by Zupitza) and informing us in a note that *eowres
cynnes* goes with *wera corþre* in the preceding line.[24] This leaves *in þæt ærre
lif* strangely stranded and virtually unexplainable. With Krapp and Gradon,
I think emendation is not necessary. The text as it stands fits in well with the
rest of the speech. *Woruld* can mean *mankind*[25] so that 11.303b-304 might
be paraphrased: "who himself roused all mankind from (spiritual) death
when he lived among them". The final clause represents *on wera corþre*
(which, alternatively, might be a reference to his disciples). The word *lif*,
since it follows so closely after two occurrences of *deaþ* (i.e. in 1.302b and
1.303b), provides a clue to the meaning of 1.305: when Christ brought
people to life, the Jews too were still "alive", but the adjective *ærre* strongly
suggests they are "dead" now.[26] The state of grace of the Jews in the past
(11.291-292), first ascribed to or even equated with *snyttro* (1.293a), is
now simply called *lif.* They brought spiritual death on themselves when
they tried to kill Christ, the source of all life. We can then be more precise in
our interpretation of *woruld:* it does not include the Jews, but must refer to
the Gentiles, who were saved by Christ at the same time as the Jews wilfully
abandoned their ancient privileges.[27]

The next few lines at first sight look like a superfluous, overly explicit
restatement of themes from the three prior charges. Examined from a
different point of view, however, they give a striking syntactic demonstra-
tion of the mental confusion the Jews suffered from:

> Swa ge modblinde   mengan ongunnon
> lige wið soðe,   leoht wið þystrum,
> æfst wið are,   inwitþancum
> wroht webbedan   (11.306-309a)

Modblinde does recall 11.297b-300, making explicit the obvious figurative
associations there, but more interestingly, it also comments unfavourably
on *mengan:* the alliteration transfers the negative idea to the next half-line.
The actual mingling and entangling of various concepts that the Jews are
guilty of is then reflected by the intricate arrangement of the next line: *lige
wið soðe, leoht wið þystrum* (1.307). The chiastic pattern underlines the

connections of *leoht* with *soðe* and of *þystrum* with *lige*, while *lige* and *leoht* are brought into emphatic contrast through the alliteration. That the Jews should bring together such irreconcilable opposites bodes little good for them[28]. A repetition of this syntactic-semantic pattern is found in 1.308a, *æfst wið are*, but the next half-line, *inwit ancum*, although it is metrically *identical*,[29] and phonetically faintly similar (the – *wiþ* – bit partially echoes the three preceding half-lines), thus setting up an expectation of semantic similarity, is radically different in meaning. We are made abruptly aware that the Jews are no longer diluting virtue. They have reached the stage of uncompounded vice: *inwitþancum/wroht webbedan* (11.308b-309a).[30] Their web, which at first contained both black and white threads, in an intricacy not to be unravelled, has now become uniformly black.

Next, another syntactic pattern is disturbed, in the only formal threat in this speech:[31]

> eow seo wergðu forðan
> sceðþeð scyldfullum.   (11.309b-310a)

As we have seen, all non-relative clauses from 1.292 onwards have started with *ge*, very much an agentive nominative. Now, the object *eow* is put in initial position, and the clause neatly ends with its apposition, *scyldfullum*, reiterating Elene's accusations. The threat is, perhaps unintentionally, intensified by another linguistic feature- the use of the present tense *sceðþeð* with future-time reference, which might produce an effect of certainty or immediacy on the Jews present. The words *wergðu* (cf. 11.294b-296) and *forðan*, as well as the alliteration *sceðþeð- scyldfullum*, do indeed all seem to demand an eye for an eye.

Before finally sending the Jews away, Elene provides one new piece of information and also rubs in her painful message a little more:

> Ge þa sciran miht
> deman ongunnon,   on gedweolan lifdon
> þeostrum geþancum   oð þysne dæg.   (11.310b-312)

The light – dark theme is repeated (*þa sciran miht* and *þeostrum geþancum*) and as in 11.302b-305, from which a half-line recurs, the Jews' capacity for rational judgement is again put under suspicion, here through the alliteration of *deman* with *gedweolan*. The temporal adverbial *oð þysne dæg*, however, contains an important qualification to the gloomy picture. It, and it alone, may give them some hope of better days to come.

Elene then rounds off her speech with a peremptory order:

> Gangaþ nu snude,   snyttro geþencaþ
> weras wisfæste,   wordes cræftige,
> þa ðe eowre æ,   æðelum cræftige,

> on ferhðsefan   fyrmest hæbben
> þa me soðlice   secgan cunnon,
> andsware cyðan   for eow[ic] forð
> tacna gehwylces   þe ic him to sece.   (11.313-319)

The order itself is an insult to the Jews: having been specially selected for the purpose of instructing Elene (*þreo þusendo þæra leoda/ alesen to lare*), they are first subjected to a detailed account of their supposed sins and are next told to find some wise men[32]. This indignity is increased by the way Elene chooses to phrase her command. Their *snyttro* is rated no higher than as a criterion for selecting wise men. Moreover, the word itself calls to mind lines 293-294a:

> Hwæt ge þære snyttro unwislice,
> wraðe wiðweorpon

In effect, they cast aside all wisdom long ago. This is also indicated by the chiming of *geþencaþ* (1.313b) with (*þeostrum*) *geþancum* (1.312a) and, more distantly, with *inwitþancum* (1.308b). The demand that they find men *wordes cræftige* is a further affront, in view of the fact that the Jews have been silent all the time. The parallel phrase *æðelum cræftige* (1.315b) is more difficult to interpret,[33] but something along the lines of an ironic "talented because of their lineage" would seem most plausible.

The sarcasm in the rest of Elene's send-off is unmistakable, but unsystematic in the sense that it is achieved by means of lexical or conceptual discrepancies between these lines and the rest of the speech. How can Elene's opinion of the quality of the Jews' *ferhðsefan* (1.316a) possibly be favourable (cf. *modblinde* in 1.306a)? And consequently, what does a foremost place in it (1.316b) really imply? Similarly, the word *soðlice* (1.317a) is lethally affected by the meaning of the central line 307, that has made nonsense of any Jewish claim to trustworthiness. The last two lines, by drawing extra attention to the vacuity of Elene's first summons, are a final slur on the abilities of the Jews present.

In this reading of Elene's speech, I hope to have shown that it has indeed the over-all effect of terrifying the Jews, as a result of her linguistic manipulations at various levels. Derogation and threat, direct or indirect, are her favourite modes of addressing them. In the foregoing discussion I have also every now and then pointed out differences from Cynewulf's source. For the following remarks, it will be convenient to have the corresponding passage from St Gall 225, by many reckoned to be our best approximation to Cynewulf's actual source, before us[34]. It must be understood that my conclusions based on it will of necessity be mildly tentative.

Cognovi de sanctis propheticis libris quia fuistis di-
lecti Deo, sed quia repulistis sapien-
tiam et eum qui volebat de maledicto vos

redimere maledixistis et eum qui per sputum ocu-
los vestros inluminavit inmundis sputi-
bus[35] iniuriastis et eum qui mortuos ves-
tros vivificavit in mortem tradidistis. Et sicut socios
simul lucem et tenebras veritatem et men-
datium existimatis esse. Pervenit in vos
maledictum quod est in lege vestra scriptum.
Nunc autem elegite ex vobis viros qui
vestram diligenter sciunt legem ut res-
pondeant mihi de quibus interrogavero eos.

A comparison reveals that the poet has increased the number of linguistic features I have listed as producing and reinforcing the Jews' terror. I have looked at 1. echoing 2. chiming 3. syntactic patterns 4. choice of personal pronouns 5. tenses and adverbials of time, and set the results out in a diagram.

1. *dædhwæte* (1.292b) – *hwæt* (1.293a)   not in source
    wið (1.307a, 307b, 308a) – *wiþ* (1.308b)   not in source
Both instances are the poet's work.

2. *wergdon* (1.294b) – *wergðe* (1.295a) – *wergðu* (1.309b)   in source
  speowdon (1.297b) – *spald* (1.300b)   in source
  deaþe (1.302b) – *deaðe* (1.303b)   in source
  leoht (1.298b) – *leoht* (1.307b)   in source
  geryno (1.280b) – *wordgeryno* (1.289b)   not in source
  wuldorcyninge (1.291b) – *wuldres* (1.295b)   not in source
  snyttro (1.293a) – *snyttro* (1.313b)   not in source
  unwislice (1.293b) – *wisfæste* (1.314a)   not in source
  blindnesse (1.299a) – *modblinde* (1.306a)   not in source
  deman ongunnon (1.303a) –
    deman ongunnon (1.311a)   not in source
  soðe (1.307a) – *soðlice* (1.317a)   not in source
  þystrum (1.307b) – *þeostrum* (1.312a)   not in source
  inwitþancum (1.308b) –
    geþancum (1.312a) – *geþencaþ* (1.313b)   not in source
  cræftige (1.314b) – *cræftige* (1.315b)   not in source
The four chimings of the source have been retained and ten new ones have been added. This appears to be the poet's favourite device.

3. *Ge Verb Past þone þe . . .*
  (11.294b-297a, 297b-302a and 302b-305)   in source
  A wið B (1.307a, 307b, 308a), with emphasis
    on the end of the pattern (1.308b)   only first two pairs
                               (without pre-
                               position) in
                               source; no em-
                               phasis on end.

eow as object of the relative clauses in the   in source, but
first pattern (1.295a, 298b), with change to   without the
woruld in the last clause (1.304a)   final deviation

The three patterns are in the source, but two of them have been further capitalized on.

4. the relevant instances (i.e. those of *ge*) are all accurate translations; this device then is simply taken over from the source.

5. *geardagum* (1.290b)   not in source
   wæron (1.291a)   in source[36]
   þohte (1.296b)   in source
   sceðþeð (1.310a)   this form corresponds to a
                                                  perfect; the source has a
                                                  statement of (disagreeable)
                                                  fact rather than a warning
                                                  for future events
   in þæt ærre lif (1.305a)   not in source
   oð þysne dæg (1.312b)   not in source

The two relevant verb-forms of the source are kept, one verb of the source is altered to a more menacing form, and three adverbials are put in by the poet (one of them differing from all the other devices employed in this passage in that it seems to strike a happier note for the Jews).

We may conclude that Cynewulf has deliberately manipulated his source-material for this speech. By adopting, adapting and adding several kinds of verbal strategy, and also by the more incidental alterations that we have noted, he has underlined its dramatic aim: to wake up the Jews to the position they are in, and prepare them for a renouncement of those erroneous ideas that have brought them into it. Elene's threatening mode of address in instructing them is seen to be appropriate in that it reflects her dismay at the Jews' position, at the same time as it should make them more anxious to meet her requests (whether for practical information or for other kinds of knowledge). We have, of course, quite different ideas about their position, and in that respect will find much fault with the poet's (historically determined) lack of critical abilities. But this should not blind us to the obvious care he has taken in his poem to trace the steps towards both the depths and heights of human existence, as judged by the traditional standards of his morality.[37]

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Notes

1. P. O. E. Gradon, ed. *Cynewulf's "Elene"* (revised edn, Exeter, 1977) is used for all quotations and line-references.
2. See especially Ellen F. Wright, "Cynewulf's *Elene* and the *Singal Sacu*", *NM* 76 (1975), 538-549, who relates it to other series and sequences in the poem, arguing for thematic significance of these slow progressions towards truth.
3. It is generally held that Judas' stay in the dry pit is a liminal point in his transformation from Old Man to New Man. Whether, and in what sense he becomes a figure for Christ is a question

on which no agreement has yet been reached. See Thomas D. Hill, "Sapiential Structure and Figural Narrative in the Old English *Elene*", *Traditio* 27 (1971), 159-177; Catherine A. Regan, "Evangelicalism as the Informing Principle of Cynewulf's *Elene*", *Traditio* 29 (1973), 27-52; Varda Fish, "Theme and Pattern in Cynewulf's *Elene*", *NM* 76 (1975), 1-25; E. Gordon Whatley, "Bread and Stone: Cynewulf's *Elene* 611-618", *NM* 76 (1975), 550-560; Thomas D. Hill, "Bread and Stone, Again: *Elene* 611-18", *NM* 81 (1980), 252-257.

4. Cf. Fish (1975), p. 4: "Cynewulf transformed the search for a physical object into a quest for spiritual perception." If this can be seen by comparing the Latin version with the Old English poem, as is claimed, then it is surprising that there is no discussion of the problem: what was Cynewulf's Latin source? See n. 34.

5. It is the familiar opposition Old Law-New Law; see the articles of n. 3. A very interesting examination of the use of the word *æ* in the poem is found in E. Gordon Whatley, "Old English Onomastics and Narrative Art: *Elene* 1062", *MP* 73 (1975).

6. Most critics seem to assume that Judas, being an Old Man, must also typologically represent the Jewish nation as a whole. This leads to severe problems in interpreting 11.419b-535. For a more persuasive account of Judas' status, see James Doubleday, "The Speech of Stephen and the Tone of *Elene*" in *Anglo-Saxon Poetry: Essays in Appreciation*, ed. L. E. Nicholson and Dolores Warwick Frese (University of Notre Dame Press, 1975).

7. E.g. 11.320-322a, 377, 555-557a.

8. See Hill (1971), p. 170 and also Jackson J. Campbell, "Cynewulf's Multiple Revelations", *Medievalia et Humanistica* 3 (1972), 257-277, p. 265. Whatley (*MP* 73, 1975) does not deal with this word, see his n. 19. He may have overlooked it, since there are not, as he claims, sixteen occurrences of the word *æ* in the poem, but eighteen (of which nine are made up by compounds with *æ* as a first element): 11. 198, 281, 283, 315, 393, 397, 970, 1041, 1062; 401, 513; 435; 321, 805; 506; 375, 590; 455.

9. This is putting it mildly. Cf. "Cynewulf identifies Elene with the missionary Church" (Regan (1973), p. 30).

10. Also important here is the choice of the designation *Ebreas* over the commoner term in the poem, *Iudeas*. It stresses the religious nature of their confrontation (cf 11.397, 448, 559). In 1.724 the point is thus made that even a Jew talking in Hebrew can give a model exposition of the tenets of Christianity once he has accepted the truth.

11. Cf. Stanley B. Greenfield, *The Interpretation of Old English Poems* (London, 1972), p. 111: "formal features of both verse and syntax can reinforce the semantic level".

12. For a general study, with many examples, of these and other kinds of word-play in medieval English see N. F. Blake, *The English Language in Medieval Literature* (London, 1977), ch. 5.

13. The title of a chapter in Greenfield (1972), which considers in detail some cases of this phenemenon, with cautionary advice not to let "the profusion of senses" get out of hand (p. 92).

14. See T. A. Shippey, *Old English Verse* (London, 1972), pp. 104-106, for an analysis of the Exeter *Descent into Hell* based on this principle, that "once similarity has been established, very small changes create a disproportionate effect."

15. See B. C. Raw, *The Art and Background of Old English Poetry* (London, 1978), ch. 3, for a discussion of the relations poet-authority-audience in Old English poetry. The distribution and exact significance of Cynewulf's many references to books and writings (11.91, 155, 204, 290, 364, 373, 387, 431, 560, 654, 658, 670, 674, 825, 826, 852, 1211, 1254, 1255) have yet to be fully investigated. Some interesting remarks on the subject are made by Wright (1975), p. 540.

16. It may be noted that a great many words related to *run* occur in this poem: *run* (11.333, 411, 1161, 1168), *hygerun* (1.1098), *leodorun* (1.522), *wælrun* (1.28), *geryne* (11.280, 566, 589, 812), *gastgeryne* (11.189, 1147) and *wordgeryne* (11.289, 323). Could there be any connection with the rune-passage?

17. Cf. 11.963 and 1304.

18. See George Philip Krapp, ed. *The Vercelli Book* (New York, 1932), note to 1.293 (p. 136) for the various emendations and rewritings of line 293 that have been proposed and put into the text. Gradon, in a footnote, adduces reasons not to emend. A further reason may be that the Latin source (at least in the St Gall 225 version; see n. 34) does *not* have the word *omnem*.

19. The more or less violent physical overtones in the verb *wiðweorpan*, suggesting a deliberate, though ungodly, act of will, are another pointer.

20. A definite improvement on the source, with its less climactic *mortuos vestros - in mortem*.

21. There is nothing in the source corresponding to 1.296a and 1.297a.

22. See Robert Stepsis and Richard Rand, "Contrast and Conversion in Cynewulf's *Elene*",

NM 70 (1969), 273-282, for the seminal study of this theme; an independent reading of the poem, which identifies the same theme, making it part of a somewhat rigid structure, is presented by Daniel G. Calder, "Strife, Revelation, and Conversion: the Thematic Structure of *Elene*", *ES* 53 (1972), 201-210; Fish (1975) criticizes Stepsis and Rand, asserting that their ideas ". . . describe the Latin version, where the contrast between darkness and light, conceal-ment and revelation, good and evil are clearly and emphatically expressed. But they do not explain what Cynewulf saw in it or what use he made of it in his *Elene*." But cf. their remarks on pp. 280-282.

23. See Doubleday (1975) for a good examination of this unpalatable aspect of the poem. He argues that the "alliance of ferocious piety and imperial power" (Shippey (1972), p. 168) is at times so close that we can indeed no longer respect or admire Elene.

24. F. Holthausen, ed. *Cynewulfs Elene* (4th edn, Heidelberg, 1936).

25. See Krapp (1932), note to 1.304, and surprisingly also Holthausen (1936) in his *Nachträge zu den Anmerkungen.*

26. Again, it is an adverbial of time (*in þæt ærre lif*) that alerts us to the full meaning and implication.

27. See Campbell (1972) for a full discussion of the contrast life-death in the poem, relating it to the contrasts examined by Stepsis and Rand (1969).

28. See Stepsis and Rand (1969), p. 276.

29. They are all A-types in the Sievers analysis.

30. These two half-lines are not found in the source.

31. That is, if we assume that Widdowson's structural description of present-day New-foundland threats also holds for Old English (John Widdowson, *If You Don't Be Good: Verbal Social Control in Newfoundland* (St John's, 1977), esp. chapters 3 and 4). Obviously, the use and form of threats in literature will be more complex than in ordinary verbal exchange (as I hope I am demonstrating in this essay).

32. Cf. Wright (1975), p. 546.

33. See Krapp (1932), notes to lines 314 and 315, for attempts to emend the parallel away. Fred C. Robinson, "Two Aspects of Variation in Old English Poetry" in *Old English Poetry: Essay in Style*, ed. Daniel G. Calder (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London, 1979) shows that the rule motivating the "suggested improvements" in this and similar cases is almost certainly incorrect.

34. See Gradon, Introduction, pp. 15-22; Campbell (1972), p. 258; Gordon Whatley, "Cynewulf and Troy: A Note on *Elene* 642-61", *N&O* 218 (1973), 203-205; and most recently Hill (1980), n. 7. Holthausen's composite text is no longer trusted: it is "much interpolated, abridged and misleading" (Whatley, *NM* 76 (1975), n. 2). The text of St Gall 225 can be found in Alfred Holder, *Inventio Sanctae Crucis* (Leipzig, 1889). For ease of reference, I keep his line-divisions.

35. This is corrected to *spiritibus*. The version Cynewulf had before him seems to have contained both words (cf. 11.297b and 301a, 302a).

36. Cynewulf's art of translation strengthens the effect of this past tense by the addition of *geardagum* on the one hand (negative foreshadowing) and by the expansion of the three Latin words *fuistis dilecti Deo* into two lines of verse on the other hand (the positive statement).