Monsters and Monstrosity
in Jewish History

From the Middle Ages to Modernity

Edited by
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Enge unpathas uncuð gelad: The Long Walk to Freedom
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Entas wæron eac swylce ofer eordan on þam dagum [Giants were over the earth in those days.]

The people of Israel (the Israhela cyn) lived in a Germanic land among gods and monsters. Giants roamed over the earth in those days (Entas wæron eac swylce ofer eordan on þam dagum). Four of these giants (entas) traversing across the earth stood along the narrow path, the unmapped way (enge unpathas, uncuð gelad) and blocked the way forward. The troop of brave soldiers (werode wiþne þegnas) hesitated. They wondered, Should they retreat? Behind them was Pharaoh’s mighty army (fyrd Faraonis) that had chased them out of Egypt. In front of them was the unknown, wandering, exilic life, as well as monsters of all shapes and sizes: giants and elves and orcs, such giants, that struggled with God for a long time (etenas ond yfe ond orceenas, swylce gigantas, hu wið Godes wumon / lange þragse). The Israhela cyn believed they were following the same trail of “magically protected ogres from the race of Cain.” For this reason the Israhela cyn sensed that they were in the presence of the “supernatural” and moved forward cautiously.

Moyzes, the leader of that band strong of hand (handrofr), looked up to Abraham’s god (Abrahames god) for guidance. Beside him stood his wife, Zipporah. She looked past him, past the Israhela cyn, to the other miserable ones treading the same paths of exile (öder earmsceapen / on were westnum weacstas tned). They were like their leader, who was greater than any other man (were mara ponne ærig man oðer). Zipporah looked back and forth between her husband and the leader of the giants (entas), these half-human monsters. Both—giant and man—wore their woolen cloaks clasped at their left shoulders. Their tunic, trimmed with decorative golden bands, stretched to their knees, and owing to the great heat of the desert, they wore no hose. The giant’s soft black shoes were just like those of Moyzes, though that much larger. Man and monster both wore their gray hair long and their gray beards forked. All raised their hands to pray—each in their own way.
Yes, the giants were larger than any man, with massive hands and heavy features, but beyond that, it was impossible to discern a difference. One group of exiled wanderers on the narrow path, uncharted way (enge ungadus, uneg gelad) was like another: both lost; both looking for guidance; both searching for a home.

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The imagined narrative above does not, we realize, accurately describe the images on folios 12v–13r of the Old English Illustrated Hexateuch. These images below represent on the verso (left) "Noah and his wife with his sons, Shem, Ham and Japheth" (Gen. 5:32), and (right) "men find women attractive and choose them for wives" (Gen. 6:2), and on the recto, "There were giants in the earth in those days."14 The figures divided by the gutter cannot see one another, and are not involved in a single scene. They are not figures of Exodus, nor of the Grendel-kin, the two humanish monsters who attack the Dane's mead-hall, Heorot, in Beowulf, as we've read them here (see Figure 1.1). To generate the collision between these subjects from the Old English poems, Beowulf and Exodus, we perform willful, strategic misreadings of texts and images to try to see old, familiar narratives—Exodus and Beowulf—from fresh perspectives and with new possibilities. In each of our imagined "vignettes," we start with a medieval

\[\text{Figure 1.1 Moses and Zipporah face the Grendel-kin [or Noah and his Family (Gen. 5–6) "there also were giants on the earth in those days" (Gen. 6)], Old English Hexateuch. London, British Library MS, Cotton Claudius B.iv, fol. Fol. 12v–13r. © The British Library Board.}\]
illumination that we then treat as if that image captures a moment in a fantastical meeting of the Jewish tribe (*Iudisc feða*) of *Exodus* with the Grendel-kin of *Beowulf*. We are trying to capture a possible past that may have happened, but that has not been recorded, when a collision of cultures—Germanic, Christian, and Jewish—lived together, perhaps amicably, perhaps uneasily, in a world encircled by conquest that was haunted by memories of a former polytheistic world.\textsuperscript{15} After all, Jewish texts are replete with overlapping dreams of the Mediterranean, situated in Northern Europe.\textsuperscript{16} Perhaps, in one such tale, a Jewish wanderer in Ashkenaz collided with two giants, remnants of a polytheist tradition, while out wandering a narrow path. The possibility is in the making, and our chapter attends to and is watchful over “absences, silences, and incongruities.”\textsuperscript{17}

Our search for a silenced and fast-fading past begins with a line shared by two Old English texts—the Old Testament narrative poem, *Exodus*, and the heroic-elegiac epic, *Beowulf*.\textsuperscript{18} This shared line is *enge unpaðas, uncūd gelad* (narrow path, unknown way).\textsuperscript{19} This narrow and unfamiliar route is from its very inception a place of wanderers, aliens, outcasts, a site of loneliness. In *Exodus*, this line appears early in the poem and figures as the route taken by the Jewish tribe departing from Egypt; in *Beowulf*, this same line appears fairly far into the poem and long after Grendel’s attack on the mead-hall, Heorot: it follows Grendel’s mother’s surprise raid of the hall and on the men therein who stole her son’s arm. The line surfaces moments before *Beowulf* travels to the underwater world where Grendel’s mother resides. In *Beowulf*, the line represents the path Beowulf will travel as he embarks on a battle with a female monster of unknown strength. Of course, characters such as the Grendel-kin, who are always already outsiders to the masculinist drama that dominates the heroic epic *Beowulf*, would be relegated to such a path that is “unknown” and “narrow.” But why would Danes and Geats—the ostensible heroes of the tale—travel along such a path? We imagine the powerful warriors of Heorot would only deign to travel on such a path in pursuit of the hunted and that Grendel and his mother traveled this path before Beowulf.

After having imagined the story that is “missing” from *Beowulf*, we return to what the Old English *Exodus* tells us: the *Iudisc feða*, like the Grendel-kin are, after all, also outsiders. As they flee *Parasones* (Pharaoh’s) pursuing army, *Exodus* reveals what could have happened in *Beowulf*: first traveled by the fleeing outsiders, the *enge unpaðas* later gets trod upon by the pursuers. Did Grendel, Grendel’s mother, and the *Iudisc feða* collide on the *enge unpaðas, uncūd gelad*? This is a question asked of the narratives absent from the manuscripts of *Beowulf* and *Exodus*.\textsuperscript{20}

Our goal is not merely to generate some sympathy for the Grendel-kin but also to (re)introduce the possibility of a Jewish presence in the Anglo-Saxon language and landscape. In so doing, this chapter reconsidered the ontological dimensionality of both the Grendel-kin in *Beowulf* and the *Iudisc feða* in *Exodus*. Others have imagined a different Grendel before, most notably by John Gardner in his 1971 novel *Grendel*, as well as in the 1981 Australian animated film *Grendel, Grendel, Grendel*, and the 2006 opera *Grendel*.\textsuperscript{21} These, though, all while letting us imagine a subjectivity for Grendel, do not fundamentally undermine the Anglo-Saxon heroic ethos out of which Grendel and his mother were born. Our plan is somewhat more subversive.
We wish, through our staging of (im)possible encounters, to destabilize the accepted vision of Beowulf and the Geats, these violent enforcers of normativity, and, thus, to capture the men who represent normativity as persecutors of the "extraordinary bodies"22 of the Grendel-kin. In so doing, we explore the consequence of this moment of outcasting that forces the Grendel-kin outward—outside the civitas of Heorot that resonates as a site of formidable unions between Geats and Danes—to the Barbary of the marginalized men.

Our move is inspired—and justified, in so far as justifying our move might be necessary—by a strange coincidence, a moment of overlap between the Old English poems Exodus and Beowulf, the single shared line of text that sets both marginalized and uncivilized beings in the same lonely, peripheral relationship as the warm heart of the power structures of their worlds, be they Pharaoh’s Egypt or Hrothgar’s hall. While everyone (the hunted and the hunters alike) in both poems may walk this path—definitely the noblemen (æþelings) and possibly the Grendel-kin of Beowulf; certainly the Iudisc fēda and maybe the Egyptians of Exodus—we are most concerned with capturing the moment when the Grendel-kin and the Iudisc fēda each flee their oppressive power structures and try to make a grab for freedom along the route of this narrow path. We also imagine an encounter between the outcasts that runs counter to tradition. Our imaginary encounter between the Grendel-kin and the Iudisc fēda involves the characters who are fleeing. Chased by the Geats and Danes and by the Egyptians, the Grendel-kin and the Iudisc fēda meet in their exilic wandering and escape from a world that attempts to subjugate them. This imaginary encounter between two communities of outsiders personifies the cultural complexities at stake in both the acts of preserving traditions and the stories of postcolonial Otherness.

Enge unpaðas, uncuð gelad [Narrow path, unknown way]

Fleeing sword and spear, the Iudisc fēda trod the enge unpaðas, uncuð gelad in the wilderness (on hisum westene).23 For years upon years, the Jewish tribe wandered until, exhausted, they saw a land of great abundance (see Figure 1.2). Attracted by a golden vineyard at the land of the sun’s rising that bore berries a hundred feet long (a gylden wingaerd at suman upgranæ se hafað bergean huntoontiges fot), they stopped their flight for a short while.24 They longed for the giant berries after their lifetime of wandering in the desert. So the Jewish tribe crept closer, stopping all movement as the giant figures rose before them:

hie gesawon swylce twegen
micle mearctapan moras healdan,
ellorgastes. Þaera oidr weas,
þæs þe hie gewislicost gewitan mealton,
ide solknes; oidr earmsceapan
on weres wastmum wraescastas treæd.25
[They saw such two, large borderland-stompers, occupiers of the marshes, alien spirits. There was one—as they most likely might be discovered walking along the exile-path—like a woman; the other creature had the form of a man.]

The larger, shaped like a man, wore a tunic the color of a wound gone bad, and the smaller, the one in the form of a woman, wore lavender. They turned to flee, clearly accustomed to avoiding the company of men. One pointed the way toward their escape, but the Jewish tribe called out to them: the monstrous-ish man and woman walking the exile-path stopped. The mighty (niele) man grasped the hilt of his old-sword (ealdsword) with a strong blade formed by giants (eotenise ecgum fyhtig). When the large man looked at the Jewish tribe, the group clustered together like the grapes over their heads. Standing tall and large, the giant that was also like a

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**Figure 1.2** The Wandering Israelites See the Grendel-kin [or The Spies of Israel See the Sons of Anak (Num. 13)], London, British Library MS Cotton Claudius B.iv, fol. 118. © The British Library Board.
man pointed back at them, or maybe at the delectable fruits, those vines full with berries and apples and food (δαμ winbogum mid berium mid ealle & æppulum & eftatum). Lured, as they were, by the bounty, the man/giant turned back and warily approached.

United as wanderers along the narrow and unknown path, these unlikely companions shared the bounty of the land and found a kinship in their new community of the misrepresented and scorned outcasts. These castaways from civilized society—these individuals of an old-sword and an old book—fled civilizations that repurposed them as slaves and rejected them as monsters who had descended from Cain.

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Is there an unspoken text that surrounds this duplicated line: enge æpædæs uncud gelæf? And why, even more, is this line about travel along narrow and unknown paths duplicated? While we cannot locate a definitive answer to these two questions, introducing a consideration of these lines’ possible meta-textual relationship allows us to interrogate some interesting possibilities that help us rethink these two poems and the cultural Others within them. The Old English shared line comprises four highly charged, deeply suggestive words that trouble a masculine economy of sword rattling and dragon slaying: a “path” that is “narrow,” and a “way” that is “unknown.” Such a route offers itself up as a site where the unusual is bound to occur. This possible mysterious adventure and magical journey brings us to wonder about the “missing” internal narrative,8 the Grendel-kin’s likely walk along this path before the Geats and Danes followed them in hot pursuit. Attending to the (known) path taken by the *Judæc fæda* of *Exodus*, we try to watch for the surfacing of another, and, possibly, displaced story about Grendel’s path home to his mother.29 We listen for the possibly denied and repressed backstory to the shared line. For a long time, perhaps an overlong time, *Exodus* and *Beowulf* have occupied a special place in Anglo-Saxon studies as legends that reproduce a deeply masculinized culture of tough warriors who carve their place into history through heroic acts of violence. For perhaps too long, scholars have reproduced a consideration of these Old English texts as embodying what is most readily visible in them—that is, a Christian ethos and hyper-masculinized culture.30 But in these poems’ core—below their more visible stories and plots—there lie narratives that unsettle those more standard, safe, comfortable, and well-trod visions of *Exodus* and *Beowulf.*31

*Exodus* and *Beowulf* are also tales of exile, wandering, and flight from groups that dominate the civic sphere. In *Exodus*, the *Judæc fæda* voice their resistance to their servitude through their God’s plagues.32 After their expulsion from Egypt, the *Judæc fæda* then flee to unknown lands in search of freedom. *Beowulf* too has a countercultural narrative embedded in its masculine epic. The Other story is a tale of an alienated son and his sword-wielding mother who seem to be crossovers from another, more ancient, time; the son, a hall-wanting man (*wonsæli wer*); the mother, woman and female-warrior (*ides aglecwif*). Together, this mother-son team, both depicted as hybrids of humans and monsters and both marked by their oppressors as *Caines cyres*
(kin of Cain),

live as outcasts from the civilization, the comitatus, embodied by the mead-hall, Hecrot, in a geography that figures as a lake or sea (mere). 16

We know that the textual path trod by the ludisc feda and Moyse of the Old English Exodus is also walked upon by the warriors of Beowulf, led by their eponymous hero as he goes in search of the Grendel-kin. In 1972, Jack Vickery pointed out that the Israelites "are described as beginning to move forward into the sea as if they were going into a battle. Not only the direction of this readiness to fight but the readiness itself seems incongruous: their enemies are behind them and not in front; in well-known fact the Israelites are fleeing from the Egyptians." 17 Perhaps it is time to acknowledge a new possibility: that the ludisc feda, who have no one in front of them to fight, are walking the same route trod by Grendel, who also has only his home in the mere and his mother in front of him. And while the path is, in Beowulf, currently walked by the warriors from the deeply masculinized economy, the thanes of Hecrot do have a battle in front of them and, therefore, are likely trailing the fleeing Grendel in his mere just as the Egyptians are in hot pursuit of the ludisc feda and Moyse. Vickery unintentionally generates a loose parallel between the underwater battle that occurs with Grendles modor (Grendel’s mother) and Beowulf, and the battle of Exodus. "We must take the step, so to speak, of entering the sea ourselves, that is, of postulating what at first thought seems so improbable, namely that in some sense a battle between the Israelites and the Egyptians does occur and that it occurs in the Red Sea." 18 In the mere, in the sea, Grendel’s mother stands her ground against those who have Othered her and her son.

With this encounter in the mere in mind, it is worth asking which poem came first. Some say Exodus, others Beowulf. 19 Of course, any final conclusion about the first appearance of the line circles back to unanswerable conversations about origins and dates, but if Exodus is written before Beowulf, the poet of Beowulf writes this line traveled by the ludisc feda into Beowulf. In this case Grendel, fully occupying space in the role of Caines cynne, is doubly touched by Jewishness, being first marked as the kin of Cain and then walking along a path trod by Jews. The fraught possibilities of the displaced narrative heighten when the enge unpadus, uncud gelad serves as the path of Others fleeing abuse. In this sense, the Danes and Geats and the Egypta folc 20 are one and the same, occupying the same role and same position on that path in chasing after the Grendel-kin and the ludisc feda. If Exodus precedes Beowulf, then so too does the relationship of their stories potentially unsettle the normative narrative. Moyse and the ludisc feda could offer sanctuary to the Grendel-kin; and then the drunon deofolgylfd (fallen idols) of Egypt inform the reopening of the haergtraum (pagan shrines) of Hecrot. 21 The Egypta folc pursuing the ludisc feda thus change our understanding of how the Danes and the Geats move along the "unknown way," for the analogy extends itself to upset the ascendant position of the Danes and Geats, whose continued passions for Germanic mythology and wyrd (fate) suggest that the two sets of rulers alike share polytheistic dreams. If Beowulf is the first time that the line surfaces and Exodus is the second, then the moniker ludisc feda becomes touched by monstrosity. Beyond this touch, though, the Exodus poem’s one use of ludisc feda as opposed to the three versions of the moniker Israhela cyn suggest some familiarity with if not ontologically vibrant Jews, then maybe with Jewish texts, Jewish languages,
or even an Aramaic Exodus. If Beowulf was written first and Exodus later, Exodus borrows the reference to unknown paths and narrow ways of travel, and then part of the Jews' exilic journey involves a possible reunion with their ancestral monstrosity since the Grendel-kin reside in the mysterious watery depths. Perhaps, herein lies the unspoken reason for a monstrous and ever-enlarging horned Moses who can barely be contained in the vellum by the close of the Old English Hexateuch. This moment of overlapping lines and enlarging monstrosities in Beowulf and Exodus, even more certainly, challenges us to rethink the Grendel-kin who are sometimes human (depicted as man [wer] and woman [modor]) and at other times as an unholy creature (wihth unhuelo) and yet also a mighty sea-woman (merewif mihiȝ). The touch of the Jewish—through Cain and the alleged heroes of Exodus—may also humanize the Grendel-kin who hail from an earlier time and claim an ancestry that reaches farther back than the newly Christianized world. If the shared lines originate with Beowulf, there are linkages, after all, in the Grendel-kin's attack on the civitas of Heorot and the Jewish tribe's resistance to servitude and their embrace of the unknown (uncud). After all, the word "Jewish" (Iudisc) resonates differently from "Israelites" (Izraela); in that the former is potentially a living people and a vibrant tribe whereas the latter is a one-dimensional biblical trope and a stand-in for Christians. In translating—even if only once—the Izraela as Iudisc, Exodus perhaps resists designing the folc of a biblical text as types for Christian readers.

swa hwylcne man swa hy gelæccad þonne fretað hi hyne [Certainly, any person they catch, they eat.]

Moyses led an army of many brave men through the marches (fela meoringa, fyrde gelæddo). They were a people trudging (folc ferende), taking with them all they had needed as they fled—food, livestock, books of prayer, hope. As they traversed alien lands, strange wonders were wrought around and even upon them. Utterly transfigured after his journey to the mountaintop, Moyses was later glorified and separated from his people (folc): Moyses was horned, and no one would dare come near him (Moyses was gehyrned, & ne dorston him neah cuman). Even their sheep were transformed; they kept their bristly white sheep's wool (sceapes wulfe), but their ears grew tall, like an ass's ears (eoseles ea), and their hooves were replaced by bird's feet (fugeles fêt). But the folc herded them anyway, as they always had (see Figure 1.3).

Out on the enge unpadas, uncud gelad, they met a strange being wandering like a ghost from a foreign land, an alien spirit (ellorgan), in the general likeness of a woman or a goddess (læse oltianæs). Her body was covered in dark wool, a sort of wild person out on the misty moors (mistige moras). In her heathen's sword-stick (haefenes handspore), she bore a bloody slaughter-hand (blodge beadhsporene). This lonely, great wanderer of the wastelands, the borderland-stomper (mære mearscatape), reached out to one of the followers of Moyses, a shepherd with his strange sheep. That fierce woman (wif unhyre) narrated her tale of sorrow. Her enemies had persecuted her and her kin for a generation, and in the end, at their hands death took
her son from her (sunu dead fænan). As if to mock the suffering of a grieving mother (modor), the monsters hung her son's arm from the roof:

lond alegde
earm ond eaxle — boer was eal geador
Grendles grape — under geapne hrof.55

[placed the hand,
arm and shoulder—there was all together
Grendel's grip—under the roof.]

This poor soul (gælegon), grieving in her heart, avenged her boy, boldly killed a man in the hall of her enemies (wifunhyre / hyre bearn gewæce, bearn acwælde / ellentice).56
And she, the mother, reclaimed and carried off the corpse of that beloved man, her son (lofne mannans his poet lic æther). 58

The shepherd told her tale to his tribe, just as the poet (scop) of Heorot had told his narrative about Grendel's origin myth to the massed tribes of Geats and Danes. The Iudisc feða, thinking of their own sons lost to the Egypta folc, 59 took in this solitary, dolorous (sorfulle) 60 wanderer, clutching to her breast the arm of her son; the Jewish tribe took her in as one of their own. Inside their Judenbury (Judenbyrig), 61 protected from the outside behind locked gates, the Iudisc feða embraced the brave-spirit (ellorgast) 62—an alien to the men of the comitatus from whom she stole back her son's arm. She was herself excoriated as a sea-wolf (brimwylf) 63 just as they, the Iudisc feða, had too been mocked as Christ killers by the new Christians who were increasingly populating the land and pushing them too into the margins of the territory they had once all occupied together. 64

* * *

Grendel's mother loves her son. Outcasts, both living alone, presumably, in the mere, they have each other. Until they don't.

In capturing this moment of Grendel's mother's loss, we want to bring you to be alongside, if not inside, her woe. And ask you to travel with Grendel and to listen in at the mead-hall while the warriors celebrate and sing in the warmth of their homosocial bonding. Grendel, in particular, features in the narrative of the scop as listening in at doors and troubling the daily practices of the warriors of Heorot.

Overall, however, the Grendel-kin haunt—and terrorize in this haunting—this Anglo-Saxon comitatus. Readers are simultaneously privy to the world of insiders and outsiders. One moment in the story of Grendel's problematic relationship with the warriors of Heorot is captured for us readers of Beowulf who listen outside the mead-hall as the scop regales the warrior community with the alleged story of Grendel's life. Does the presumably Anglo-Saxon writer intend to have us hear Grendel's backstory alongside the putative monster? The scop writes the episode in such a way to enable readers to experience Heorot linearly—both inside and outside the hall. But this moment, in turn, disturbs the linearity of the scop's narration. This narrative shudder creates a space where, along with Grendel, readers witness the celebratory mood, the loud cheer in the hall (hitde in healle). Troubled by the poet's story about Grendel, this narrative is also enjoyable as it is accompanied by the pleasing sound of a harp, the poet's clear song (heor wesan seorga scep / sweol sanc scopes). 65 But here, readers are also outside the hall, and there encounter Grendel, an alien to the loud, boisterous comitatus, in the nonplace of the community occupied by the borderland-stomper (mearcstapa) who lives in the mere with his mother. Grendel, thus, occupies a liminal space as an alien spirit (ellorgast), a brave-spirit, who doubles as a figure who embodies the definition of mearcstapa. Grendel, like so many other monsters, features as he who dwelled in darkness (se he in bystrum bod). 66 In this case of the scop's alleged backstory of Grendel's life, Grendel heard a dream, another's dream (dream gehyrde) in the hall, and he learns of his inevitable physical separation as the
maere mearcstapa, se þe moras heold,
fen ond fasten; fifelcynnes eard
wonsæl wer wearldode hwile,
siþan him Scyppend forscrifen hæfde
in Caines cyne— þone cwealm gewræc
eece Drihten, þæs þe he Abel slog. 69

[famed borderland-stomper he who occupied the moors,
marsh and stronghold; the dwelling place of the race of monsters
hall-wanting man occupied (a)while,
since Scyppend has proscribed him
in the kin of Cain —until eternal Drihten 68 avenge the killing
because he slew Abel.]}

The Beowulf-poet gifts us a few such moments when readers encounter Anglo-Saxon traditions that figure in his multiplex society: the polytheistic, Jewish, and Christian elements overlap as the scop regales his audience with Grendel's (and Grendel's mother's) alleged origin myth. The touch brings the audience to the Christian version of the Jewish story of Bereshit (Genesis) through the biblical story of Cain's slaying Abel in Gen. 4:8 for a direct touch of epical Old English and Jewish monsters.66 Here, Bereshit figures as a forceful touch of Jewishness in Beowulf and possibly a link to Exodus, as well as its tribe of ludisc feda stepping from the vellum of the Old Testament narrative poetry onto the folios of the heroic epic. Grendel, Jews, and Old Testament narrative poetry are then thrown in with Cain, the slayer of his brother, as well as "giants and elves and orcs . . . that contended with God for a long time" (etoenas ond yife ond orcneas, / . . . ja wið God wumon / lange þrage).65 In essence, Grendel is cast as the perpetual outsider to the mead-hall, exiled to the mere, the borderland between civilization and the wild, in a model that parallels Jewish narratives of exile; the echoes of expulsions from Eden that bring the Jews to the Diaspora. Grendel may even speak to audiences as a figure who links forceful Christian missionizing to lingering Germanic polytheism.61

Could the touch of the Grendel-kin's origin story give visible form to a memory of and possible anxiety about moving away from another, previous, polytheist-Germanic culture before moving toward a newfangled Christianity?62 In this psychic crossover, the shared line, enge unpaðas uncuðe gelad, could speak of a link between monstrousies and two groups escaping the civilizations that enslave them. The outcasts are running toward a borderland of their own design. The enslaved warriors of Exodus perform two simultaneous roles: most of the time, the heroes of Exodus figure as the Israelæa cyn or biblical types lifted from Christian scripture, the embodiment of a good Christian; but at other times, these enslaved warriors appear as ludisc feda, and in this latter role, they resonate as contemporary Jews, who also represent lingering dreams of a past time. Represented as a tribe rightly fleeing the contained world of Egypta fól and the rule of Farao, the ludisc feda heroically opt for a period of living as exiles as they embrace a future in wilderness-contained border-dwellings (mearchofæu mor heald).63 The exilic life of the ludisc feda touches Grendel's as the embodiment of the borderland-stomper
is born of a race of monsters (fìflecynnes) that slay their siblings and eternally (for a længe þrage) fight with God. In the Grendel-kin’s long fight with the civitas of Heorot, readers witness the complexities of a colonized people who, as the Anglo-Saxons may be doing, can deflect their own internal conflict over their Christianizing selves if they project onto the Grendel-kin the long period of fighting with God.

In this moment when Heorot’s scop regales Heorot’s warriors with a narrative of the Grendel-kin’s putative ancestry, the Grendel-kin are rendered proximate to Cain’s cymme and touch the identity of the ur-monsters of an allegedly vengeful Old Testamental God. The scop translates the Grendel-kin’s backstory into an Old Testamental origin myth, thus bringing familiar monsters and the Grendel-kin’s ancestry to be more accessible to the Heorot warriors who are slowly Christianizing and becoming familiar with new origin myths. Or perhaps the Grendel-kin always already emerge out of the folios of Old Testament history like the ludic foda of Exodus? Not desirous of being conflated with the barbaric and monstrous (“pagan”) Grendel with his ffelecynnes ancestry, Anglo-Saxons warriors would instead want to be associated with a more modern and recent religion that represents “civilization”—a civitas, though, that seeks “to soften and to humanize the character of the Germanic tribesman to bring him, however slowly and painfully, to a world of knowledge and culture.” Medieval Christianity needed to prove itself a rational discourse in opposition to the putatively irrational beliefs of the “pagans” and the Jews. For this reason the monsters of Beowulf are inscribed as Cain’s cymme. Cain is invoked to demonize Grendel, and Grendel’s connection to Cain seems act as a ploy to rally the warriors’ hatred of this elsewhere-spirit (ellogast), this Heorot-Other, who is not a part of the community. The warriors of Heorot are, however, more likely, borderland-stompers themselves, caught in between a polytheist-Germanic world and a Christian one, as they are slowly but persistently being Christianized and continuously expected to relinquish their old faith systems.

Hreopon mearcweardas middum nihtum  [The borderlands’ people cried out in the middle of the night]

The people of Israel (populus Israel) had gathered together in Ramesse, and left the land of Egypt after Passover (terra egipti post pesca). The morning after Passover (heus pesach), while setting out, they were chilled by the distant screams of the mandaere (mandtorgora), with its body like that of a man, that herb of marvelous virtue (extra minabiliter virtus). They were too far, they hoped, for the screams to drive them mad, though some wondered about this in later years, after having seen sea partes and pillars of cloud and fire guide their way.

On that first day, they slipped past the Eale, with its giant, outstretched horns more than a cubit long (corna ultra cubitalem longa), with its horse’s body, elephant’s head, and black color (equino corpore, cauda elephanti, nigro colore). They had seen other wonders and horrors in the distance. On the far side of the Nile, a faunus, possessing the body of a horse, cavorted. He wore a hat and danced lewdly with a snake. They saw a naked man, armed with an ax, riding a fearsome cocadrillus.
The journey of the sons of Israel (filiorum Israel) took them along enge ąṇądas, uncuğ gelad, through the Red Sea, past the giant phoenix (phenix)—a bird unique in the world (unica avis in orbe)—standing on a burning mound. They passed mountains, crossed rivers, and covered as they crept behind the marsek, a shape-changing beast (bestia transmutata), which wavered in their sight, first human, then cow, then duck, then wolf, and back again in senseless and terrifying alternation. And then, in the land of their old rivals, the Ammonites, they came across a different sort of marvel. It was a female figure, large and sorrowful, standing by the strange cold waters of the Asphalt River, where iron floats and a feather sinks (ferrum natat et pluma mergitur). There, they saw

```plaintext
ides aghæcwif  yrnape gemunde
se þe wateregeasan  wunian scoide
cealdæ streamas.⁵⁷
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[a woman female warrior with misery in her mind who inhabited fearsome waters, cold streams.]
The woman, a female-warrior, the one a story introduces as Grendel's mother (Grendis modor), stood like a rock, petrified (mutata in petra). The Jews (Iudei) slipped 38, marveling at a distance, eager to be gone from that strange place, eager to make it, at last, to a promised territory, the city of Jericho (civitatem Jerico), just visible across the river, in the distance and where the wandering ludisc feða can celebrate a life away from enslavement. 39

* * *

The path shared by Beowulf and Exodus — enge anpadas uncud gelad — is double-edged, bringing characters liberation tainted by conflict. Resonating as an unfamiliar precipitous path, the route involves disarray, chaos, and, therefore, danger. Pursued by characters who occupy positions of relative authority and seats of power (Egypta for Danes, and Geats), the pursued (ludisc feða, Grendel, and especially Grendles modor) escape to exilic freedom along this “narrow way.” Monsters, Jews, Jewished monsters, monstrous Jews, all the pursued are the outsiders to and of the dominant groups.

Reflecting on the line shared by Beowulf and Exodus involves (re)telling literatures as well as spectral encounters. The literal encounter figures in the shared line. The other encounter haunts both Old English texts. Subjugated by a more powerful group and involved in nightly terrorist attacks, the Grendel-kin of Beowulf flee along paths of exile (wrocclastus trewad) to their waterland just as the ludisc feða of Exodus travel through their own border-dwellings (mearchofu mar healh). The two groups of outsiders, escaping from a threat that means to destroy them, both “confirm and destabilize” the civitas of both Heorot and Egypt because efforts to colonize and control the uncontrollable always fail. Like Steven Kruger’s spectral Jew, the ludisc feða of Exodus and Grendel-kin of Beowulf presumably serve the narrators as figures that underscore the need for the power structures to contain them. That is, as monsters who are invented to “confirm” the power structure’s authority, their representation is invariably always already “forked.” In essence, these Others, beings, these worthy foes, simultaneously subvert and undermine the normalized humanity of their pursuers.

The final trip on the enge anpadas uncud gelad involves this shared line, a battle, a stolen sword, and a postcolonial moment. These four things bring us to a heathenish encounter where the other member of Caines cynne — namely, Grendis modor — engages in a battle with Beowulf as she fights both for justice for her son and eventually for her own life. Characterized as a water wolf (brimwyulf) as she struggles with Beowulf, the grieving modor fights her last armed conflict with a land wolf far outside her sphere of influence. Proving himself to be adept at translating the weapons of others as always already his own, Beowulf comes to the battle after having traversed enge anpadas uncud gelad with a borrowed sword, Hrunting, which falls him. When one borrowed sword fails, Beowulf grabs another, the old, enge giant’s sword (ealdswerd coteenis) of Grendles modor. When Hrunting, whose edge was iron (egg was iren) fails, Beowulf steals the mighty old-sword (ealdswerd coteenis) of Grendles modor. Perhaps, unsurprisingly, this weapon is both more enduring and more effective. The endurance is a moment of postcolonial mimicry and a
of repurposing: possession of the old-sword involves gestures of colonization and the civitas successfully penetrating the mere and completely eliminating the threat of the non-normative Other. In this act of deterritorialization, stories are told and retold.\(^9\) The failure of newfangled masculinities—of wielding a weak sword like Hrutning—introduces repressed anxieties about ineffective acts of power that are better left forgotten.\(^9\) Colonizing narratives are more sustaining.

Rending the sword from its heathenish traditions and its ellorgast owner, Beowulf claims what was never his to possess: he adopts the ealdsword of the woman-female-warrior (ideus algheowif) and brings the weapon into his normative masculinist world. So too are the Jewish traditions pulled into the world map of the Danes and the Geats in the anxieties about and responses to conversionist energies. The ellorgast—whether the Grendel-kin of Beowulf or the Iudisc feda of Exodus—all fall under the social and cultural category of the kin of Cain in the new dispensation that repurposes and depersonalizes old things, projecting monstrous identities onto Jewish characters. Stealing the warrior woman’s sword—a warrior who has herself been translated into a sword-slayer like Cain (Cain weard / to ecbbanan)—Beowulf familiarizes us with the modern methods of writing new stories without paying due homage to their heathenish (haephra) sources.\(^10\) In the ultimate act of postcolonial appropriation, Cain, the unchecked and jealous brother of Abel in Bereshit, comes to embody (all) Jews, and all creatures who kill their brothers. In mapping the flight of the Iudisc feda against Beowulf, the latter is revealed as an anti-epic about intense alienation and Otherness, about times past and almost forgotten, about a civilization whose greatest night-danger (nihtealwa maest)\(^10\) is men, not monsters.

Notes

* We dedicate this piece to our little monsters—our daughters, Shoshana, Yetta, and Lela—who have their own unknown paths to tread in their hopefully expansive futures. Many thanks and debts of gratitude are owed to Patricia Clare Ingham and Jack Vickrey who first introduced Miriamne A. Krummel to the wonders of the Old English language and the Anglo-Saxon world.

1 Old English Hexateuch, London, British Library, Cotton Claudius B. iv, folio 118r. For a full transcription, see The Old English Hexateuch and Alfric’s “Libellus de veteri testament et novo,” ed. R. Marsden, EETS, o.s., 330 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008). See B. Withers, The Illustrated Old English Hexateuch, Cotton Claudius B. iv: The Frontier of Seeing and Reading in Anglo-Saxon England (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007), chap. 2, esp. 85, for discussion of the dating and provenance of the Hexateuch. Withers places the Cotton manuscript around 1020–40. The full manuscript is available in high resolution at “Cotton MS Claudius B 4,” Digitized Manuscripts (no date) http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/FullDisplay.aspx?ref=Cotton_MS_Claudius_B_IV&index=0 (accessed January 2018). Translations of the passages directly surrounding the Old English passages—either following upon or preceding the text—even as not to interrupt the narrative flow. Translations are our own unless otherwise noted.

2 Hexateuch, folio 12v.


5. *Exodus*, line 156.


8. See Robinson, *The Tomb of Beowulf*, 21–22. A “supernatural” *Beowulf* does not sit well with Robinson, and he seeks instead to prove that Beowulf’s powerful feats of strength are humanly possible (22–35). See also Jess Byock’s work, especially his introduction to *The Saga of Hrolf Kraki* (New York: Penguin, 1998), discussing the links between Anglo-Saxon and Icelandic sagas (xxv–xxviii) and the intersections between myths of pagan gods mixed in with Christianity (xxix–xxxii). We continue to discuss the possibilities of a Germanic polytheism and its pantheon below.


13. We are invoking beings like the “monsters of Tevel” that David I. Shovitz discusses in Chapter 8 of this volume. Shovitz remarks that there is a long tradition of depicting these “monsters of Tevel” as sometimes the embodiment of “physical monstrousness” while at other times the representation of human or “ostensibly animalistic creatures.”


15. This point introduces the fraught temporality of a postcolonial world that these two monstrous Others live in. On the postcolonial nature of the Anglo-Saxon Middle Ages, see especially the comprehensive timeline in (x–xxvii, esp. xi–xvii) and the first chapter (1–20) of Lisa Lampert-Weissig’s *Medieval Literature and Postcolonial Studies* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010); Jeffrey Jerome Cohen’s *Hybridity, Identity, and Monstrosity in Medieval Britain: On Difficult Middles* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006); and Kathleen Davis’s *Periodization and Sovereignty: How Ideas of Feudalism and Secularization Govern the Politics of Time* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008). Robin R. Mundill, *The King's Jews: Money, Massacre and Exodus in Medieval England* (New York: Continuum, 2010), points out that there were a small group of Jews in Roman Britain (1–4). Perhaps, members of that small group remained in *Angle-lond* or England.


19 Exodus, line 58 and Beowulf, line 1410. On the shared line, see Lucas, Exodus, 69–72.


23 Hexateuch, folio 118r.

24 Wonders of the East, line 52.

25 Beowulf, lines 1347–52.

26 Beowulf, line 1558.


28 Scala, Absent Narratives, 9.

29 Ibid., 12.

30 Sometimes these exegetical readings were too forceful about their assumptions and silenced alternative readings. D. W. Robertson Jr.'s work is a case in point; see his A Preface to Chaucer: Studies in Medieval Perspectives (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963), esp. 286–309; and also Robertson Jr., Essays in Medieval Culture (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), esp. 3–20, where Robertson defines the critic of "historical criticism" as a scholar who seeks out the "artistic integrity" of a period and who recognizes, if nothing else, that "medieval literature was produced in a world dominated intellectually by the church" (4). In fact, to Robertson this intellectual domination was received well. Alongside Robertson's forceful claims, consider Lucas's observation that the Exodus poem does not closely follow the Vulgate in the note to lines 1–7 on page 75.

31 Robinson, The Tomb of Beowulf, 45–51, introduces this possibility of a polytheistic world circling around the Beowulf poem only to withdraw into the safety net of the standard argument that the old Germanic religions had largely disappeared from view through the efforts of Christian missionizers.

32 Exodus, line 312.

33 Beowulf, lines 105, 1259.

34 Beowulf, line 107a, 1261b.

35 Beowulf, line 1362b.


39 Exodus, line 50b.

40 Exodus, line 47a; Beowulf, line 175b. This moment of hæþenra hyht (heathenish hope, Beowulf, line 179a) could be an expression of anxiety about the lack of power that prayer to a Christian God has offered; an introduction to "pagandom" within a


43 See *Beowulf*, especially lines 105–25, 1518–38.

44 Krämmel has discussed the choice between selecting a word that has ethnic resonances versus one that offers up only hermeneutic links to a biblical type, where Jews figure as simulacra of themselves and awaiting Christians to help Jews realize their true dimensionality. On this point see her "Globalizing Jewish Communities: Mapping a Jewish Geography in Fragment VII of the *Canterbury Tales*," *TSLL* 50 (2008), 132–36, where Krämmel wonders whether the Jews in some of the Monk’s tragedies might be multi-dimensional rather than hermeneutical.


46 Exodus, lines 62.
47 Exodus, lines 45a.
48 *Old English Hexateuch*, Exodus 34:30.
50 *Beowulf*, line 162a.
51 *Beowulf*, lines 986a, 990a.
52 *Beowulf*, line 103a.
53 *Beowulf*, line 2120b.
54 *Beowulf*, line 2119b.
56 *Beowulf*, line 1277a.
57 *Beowulf*, lines 2120b–22a.
Krummel remains fascinated by a dramatic moment in Beowulf when the warriors (backslide) to their polytheistic-Germanic past by returning to the nearly forgotten altars as a way of appeasing the gods and putting a hoped-for end to Grendel's attacks: see Beowulf, lines 175–88. Seeking to underscore the fraught tensions that might go unseen in this complicated moment when the scop narrates Grendel's alleged backstory, Krummel opts to keep in rather than translate away the "the many older Germanic words for lord, ruler, or divinity": see Seth Lerer's Inventing English: A Portable History of the English Language (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), at 15. Mittman is kindly willing to go along with Krummel's decision, and so this chapter retains the Anglo-Saxon names for various functions of god and references to Metod, Demend, Drihten God, Helm, and Waldend rather than translating these words as God and at once, by doing so, translating away the Anglo-Saxon identity and suggesting that all of these names for god(s) always already refer to the Christian god. Important to this conversation about gods is that there is also mention of the G-o-d god in Beowulf. On the subject of a lingering polytheistic-Germanic tradition despite the encroaching borders of Christianity, see Rudolf Simck, "Germanic Religion and the Conversion to Christianity," in Early Germanic Literature and Culture, ed. Brian Murdoch and Malcolm Read (Rochester and New York: Camden House, 2004), 73–101. Benson, “The Pagan Coloring of Beowulf,” 200–06, discusses the complexities of this world.

For another, and more nuanced, view of the influence of Jewish scriptures, see David William's Cain and Beowulf: A Study in Secular Allegory (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1982). Williams discusses a link to the Hebrew tradition of Cain, esp. on 20–26. On the relationship between Cain in the Jewish and Christian traditions, see Ruth Mellinkoff, The Mark of Cain (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2003), 14–21. For the Jewish tradition of this subject, see Shovitz's contribution in Chapter 8 of this volume. As Shovitz explains, "medieval Jewish discussions of Tevel betray signs of familiarity with these geographical and etiological discourses, and attentiveness to Christian debates over the human identity (or lack thereof) of far-off monsters can help us make sense of the spectrum of views on the matter found in rabbinic and medieval Jewish sources."

We have to remind ourselves, as Michael Alexander points out in regard to the manuscript tradition, that we are building all of our theories—whether those dramas resemble Mittman's or something closer to the standard fare—on the ground that the Anglo-Saxon past is "sketchy" (1). How were these texts changed and
altered? And by whom? After all, manuscripts “were copied at least once before they reached their present form” (3), and interpolations may have entered into the text. Alexander points out that “there are relics of their heathenism left at such cardinal points as place-names and the names of the days of the week” (6). On the possibility of a cathedical past and embedding protected and cherished memories; see Alexander, A History of Old English Literature (Ontario: Broadview Press, 2002), 1–9. On invasive interpolations, see Ruth Nisse, Jacob's Shipwreck: Diaspora, Translation, and Jewish-Christian Relations in Medieval England (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2017), 19–26.

72 Krummel developed these ideas about the polytheist-Germanic pantheon and a pre-Christian mythology in conversation with the ideas about cultural translation in Mary Kate Harley, Jonathan Hay, and A. B. Kraebel’s “‘Thinking Across Tongues’” postmedieval 8 (2017): 270–76, esp. 272.

73 Exodus, line 611.


75 Anderson, The Literature of the Anglo-Saxons, 105.

76 Beowulf, line 807. Ruth Mellinkoff, “Cain’s Monstrous Progeny in Beowulf: Part I, Noachic Tradition,” Anglo-Saxon England 8 (1979), too cautiously claims that the connection to Hebrew scriptures is not, finally, absolutely provable, but her work suggests otherwise and certainly illustrates how the pseudopigraphical I Enoch, and, in particular, the Noah fragments from the Dead Sea Scrolls introduce giants who “having consumed the possessions of mankind, turn and devour some of mankind itself” (145); see also, 143–46.

77 Exodus, line 168.

78 Westrum, The Hereford World Map, 129.

79 Ibid., 179.

80 Ibid., 123.

81 Ibid., 133.

82 Ibid., 131.

83 Ibid., 125.

84 Ibid., 123.

85 Ibid., 115.

86 Ibid., 171.

87 Beowulf, lines 1259–612.

88 Westrum, The Hereford World Map, 117.

89 Ibid., 123, 165.

90 Beowulf, line 1352b.

91 Exodus, line 61a.

92 Steven P. Krueger’s The Spectral Jew: Conversion and Embodiment in Medieval Europe (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006), at 206; see also 1–72, 204–97.

93 On the postcolonial drama of producing two opposite results at one and the same time, see Homi K. Bhabha, The Location of Culture (New York: Routledge, 1994), 85–92.

94 Beowulf, line 1599a.

95 Hrunting is the Dane, Unferth’s, sword.
96 Beowulf, line 1558a.
97 Beowulf, lines 1459a, 1663a.
98 On the subject of how the structures of power, claim what was never its to take away, see Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia, trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987).
99 Our ideas about the “colony” (the mere) and the “metropolis” (civitas) are informed by Bhaba, The Location of Culture, 212–29. About the need to translate masculine failure into a success narrative, see Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, ed. Davis, 1131, and its anxious close, where a scribe wrote in the motto of the order of the Garter (“Hony soyt qui mal pence”) as a way of rewriting Gawain’s failure to prove his masculinities by standing up to the Green Knight.
100 Beowulf, lines 1261b–62a.
101 Beowulf, line 193b.