"Of þam him aweaxeð wynsum gefea": The Voyeuristic Appeal of *Christ III*

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Durum est enim dicere, quod sancti talia corpora tunc habebunt, ut non possint oculos claudere atque aperire cum volent.

For it is hard to say that the saints shall then have such bodies that they shall not be able to shut and open their eyes as they please.
—St. Augustine, *De civitate Dei* 22.29

Christ III's representation of the rewards offered to the blessed in Heaven raises this question: Why would anyone offered the opportunity to enjoy the beatific vision turn his gaze toward the suffering of the damned in Hell? The poem's emphasis on vision has conventionally been interpreted as indicating its didactic purpose of effecting repentance in the reader. Critics such as Frederick Biggs, Thomas D. Hill, and, most recently, Sachi Shimomura have connected the poem to standard theological interpretations of the Last Judgment and the penitential tradition.[1] However, the unique, and perhaps troubling, issue of how and why the blessed choose to direct their gaze remains an interpretive problem.[2] In this essay, we argue that *Christ III*'s representation of the blessed gazing upon the damned forwards its penitential aims by offering the gaze as voyeuristic pleasure and promising the reader that such pleasure, experienced through reading, will continue in heaven. The poet emphasizes scopophilic pleasure as part of a rhetorical strategy that makes the conception of heavenly bliss immediately available to readers of the poem.

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1. See Thomas D. Hill, "Vision and Judgment in the Old English *Christ III*," *Studies in Philology*, 70 (1973), 233–45; Frederick M. Biggs, "The Fourfold Division of Souls: The Old English 'Christ III' and the Insular Homiletic Tradition," *Traditio*, 45 (1989–90), 35–51; and Sachi Shimomura, "Visualizing Judgment: Illumination in the Old English *Christ III*," in *Via Crucis: Essays on Early Medieval Sources and Ideas in Memory of J. E. Cross*, ed. Thomas N. Hall (Morgantown: West Virginia Univ. Press, 2002), pp. 27–49.

2. Graham D. Caie mentions briefly that the blessed look upon the tortures of the damned "rather sadistically," but he does not explore the connections between voyeurism, pleasure, and torture in the poem; see *The Judgment Day Theme in Old English Poetry* (Copenhagen: Nova, 1976), p. 211.

In addition to presenting traditional exhortations regarding the need to confess, *Christ III* invites the reader to experience pleasure in eschatological events. *Christ III*'s explicit alignment of voyeuristic pleasure for the blessed and mimetic pleasure for its readers marks the poem as an innovative synthesis of patristic, homiletic, and poetic discourses. This synthesis is most apparent in the poem's account of the individual soul's reward or punishment after Judgment (ll.1199–1326). Each soul will receive "þreo tacen" (three tokens, l.1235) that allow the blessed to experience "wynsum gefea" (pleasant joy, l.1252) by gazing upon the sensational torments of the damned.[3] The key innovation of *Christ III* is the implication that the pleasure derived from the act of reading is continued in the afterlife. The *Christ III* poet establishes the connection between vision and the act of reading by presenting the Crucifixion as a spectacle occurring "fore eagna gesyhð" (before the sight of their eyes, l.1113); it is not simply a self-evident visual event, but one performed and dependent on the interpretation of signs.[4] Consequently, the blessed's visual apprehension and interpretation of the signs on the bodies of the damned is figured in terms of the reader's engagement with the words of a text. By foregrounding the primarily visual component of the "þreo tacen," which function as visual markers that necessitate interpretation, the *Christ III* poet underscores that the blessed are engaged in an ongoing, pleasurable hermeneutic process. Consequently, he proposes that the blessed will continue to be readers in Heaven. *Christ III*'s treatment of the vision of the blessed has its origin in patristic theology, but its particular emphasis on voyeuristic pleasure makes a significant contribution to medieval eschatological thought.[5] In

3. All quotations from *Christ III* are taken from *The Exeter Anthology of Old English Poetry: An Edition of Exeter Dean and Chapter MS 3501,* ed. Bernard J. Muir, 2 vols. (Exeter: Exeter Univ. Press, 1994). All translations, except where noted, are our own. For an analysis of the meanings of *tacen,* see Catherine E. Karkov, *Text and Picture in Anglo-Saxon England: Narrative Studies in the Junius 11 Manuscript* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2001), pp. 125–41.

4. On the connection between pleasure, vision, and reading, see Mary Carruthers, *The Craft of Thought: Meditation, Rhetoric, and the Making of Images, 400–1200* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1998), pp. 118–30. For Augustine and later writers, Carruthers notes, "mentally picturing the reading" leads to delight and "[d]elight leads on to contemplation" (p. 130).

5. In this sense, the affective response of the images in *Christ III* extends beyond pity or compunction. For a discussion of this mode of interpreting medieval texts and images, see Cynthia Hahn, *Portrayed on the Heart: Narrative Effect in Pictorial Lives of the Saints from the Tenth through the Thirteenth Century* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 2001), pp. 30–51. In her discussion of medieval saints' lives, Hahn posits that "aesthetic distance is collapsed through the operation of pity and the identification of the reader/viewer with the human subject of the true narrative: the audience does not take pleasure in the tale or the images themselves. Most important, pity or compunction, founded in fear and even terror (*pavor*), prompts action" (pp. 31–32). The *Christ III* poet represents voyeuristic pleasure as a complementary means of achieving the same effect, that is, to encourage repentance and virtuous action.

what follows, we first outline the development of this concept from the patristic period through Anglo-Saxon England, and we examine the *Christ III* poet's incorporation of theological and iconographical themes in the narrative. Second, we demonstrate how the poem uses visual markers to communicate salvation and damnation during the events of the Last Judgment. Third, we trace how the "þreo tacen" of the blessed allow them to experience scopophilic pleasure and constitute their privileged, individual subject position. Finally, we illustrate how the poem's emphasis on voyeurism offers the reader the opportunity to participate in the atemporal beatific vision while still located within history.

I

The ability of the blessed and the damned to see one another is found in Christ's parable of Lazarus and the rich man (Lk. 16:19–31) and was later treated by Augustine, Gregory the Great, Bede, Alfred, and Ælfric.[6] For Augustine, this ability is epistemologically grounded in the participation of the blessed in divine knowledge.[7] In his gloss on Isaiah 66:22–28 in *De civitate Dei* 20.22, he addresses the manner by which the blessed see the damned: "Numquid corporis motu beatas illas relicturi sunt sedes et ad loca poenalia perrecturi, ut malorum tormenta conspiciant praesentia corporali? Absit; sed egredientur per scientam" (Are they to leave their blessed abodes as by a bodily movement and betake themselves to the place of punishment, so that they might look upon the torments of the wicked in corporeal presence? God forbid! Rather, it is by their knowledge that they will "go forth").[8] In this mode of Augustinian vision, as Sachi Shimomura observes, "the blessed can see the damned because they share in God's knowledge, and not because the blessed (in heaven) and the damned

6. For a discussion of Augustine as a source, see Frederick M. Biggs, "The Sources of *Christ III:* A Revision of Cook's Notes," *Old English Newsletter Subsidia,* 12 (1986), pp. 26–28. In this section, we discuss Augustine and Gregory's writings on this topic. Bede, Alfred, and Ælfric rely heavily on patristic thought in their treatments of the issue; see Venerable Bede, *In Lucae euangelium expositio* II.3, ed. D. Hurst, CCSL 120 (Turnholt: Brepols, 1960), pp. 305–7; Alfred's Old English redaction of Augustine's *Soliloquiorum libri duo, King Alfred's Version of St. Augustine's Soliloquies,* ed. Thomas A. Carnicelli (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1969), p. 93; and Ælfric's *Dominica II post Pentecosten* in *Ælfric's Catholic Homilies: The First Series,* ed. Peter Clemoes, EETS s.s. 17 (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press. 1997), pp. 365–70.

7. Augustine's description in *De civitate Dei* 20 of the blessed's vision corresponds to his treatment of the three forms of visionary experiences—bodily, spiritual, and intellectual—in *De Genesi ad litteram* 27; see Ananya Jahanara Kabir, *Paradise, Death and Doomsday in Anglo-Saxon Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2001), pp. 24–26.

8. Augustine, *De civitate Dei,* ed. B. Dombart and A. Kalb, CCSL 48 (Turnholt: Brepols, 1955), p. 741; trans. R. W. Dyson, *The City of God against the Pagans,* Cambridge Texts in the History of Political Thought (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1998), p. 1020.

(in hell) exist in any sort of actual visual proximity to each other."[9] The blessed's visual extension offers an explicit illustration of the direct correlation between visual acuity and participation in divine understanding. In this mode of seeing, the Godhead acts as a concave, panoptic mirror that reveals all of creation to the blessed and, moreover, confers upon them the freedom to choose how to direct their vision.

Following the Augustinian explanation, the *Christ III* poet depicts what the blessed see as a result of their *þreo tacen* as being bound neither spatially nor temporally. For instance, the punishment of the damned that the blessed witness—"ond wyrma slite / bitrum ceaflum, byrnendra scole" (and the bite of serpents with stinging jaws, the burning multitude, ll.1250b–51), a conventional description of the torments in Hell—refers to future pains that the wicked will suffer. As Thomas D. Hill argues, "[T]he *Christ III* poet was acutely aware of the dissonance of human and divine time and . . . he suggests a resolution to this problem in terms of the theme of vision . . . since it is in terms of the concept of vision that we, as humans within time, can come closest to apprehending what atemporal cognition might be like."[10] The blessed's "þreo tacen" register the poet's attempt to extend this concept of atemporal cognition to its limits in sequential narrative because they represent two modes of seeing: the blessed's literal vision of the events of the Last Judgment and the knowledge of the damned's future punishment.

During the apocalyptic events of *Christ III,* the blessed's vision surpasses their previous visual capabilities. Before the Second Coming, the poet explains, people could only perceive the sensible world with their "heafodgimmum" (head-jewels, eyes, l.1330a) and examine their own souls with "heortan eagum" (eyes of the heart, l.1328b). Consequently, it is impossible for anyone, even a confessor, to determine the "hygeþonces ferð" (disposition of the mind's thought, l.1330b) and "hwæþer him mon soð þe lyge / sagað on hine sylfne" (whether a man is telling him the truth or a lie, in the story of himself, ll.1306b–07a). Such a portrayal of perceptual limitations follows Augustine's distinction between the senses of the body and the senses of the soul, which he outlines in the *Soliloquiorum libri duo* and which the *Christ III* poet may have known through Alfred's ninth-century translation. This Augustinian model of the senses of the soul, like the vision of the blessed, is an intellectual, rather than physical, phenomenon. The allegorical figure of Reason explains in her dialogue with Augustine that since "[i]ntelligibilis . . . deus est" (God is intelligible), he must rely upon

9. Shimomura, "Visualizing Judgment," p. 41, describes this mode of vision as metaphorical and sets it against the *Christ III* poet's representation of the literal and reciprocal vision of the blessed and the damned.

10. Hill, "Vision and Judgment," pp. 239–40.

her because "Ego autem ratio ita sum in mentibus, ut in oculis est aspectus" (I myself, the Reason, am to minds what the sight is to eyes).[11] More important, in drawing together the ability to exercise intellectual vision and the three theological virtues—Faith, Hope, and Love—Reason equates vision and understanding: "Sine tribus istis igitur anima nulla sanatur, ut possit Deum suum videre, id est intelligere" (So without these three no soul will be so healed that it can see its God, that is, understand its God).[12] Because the intellectual apprehension of God is ultimately determined by virtue received through grace, Augustine appropriately excludes the damned from seeing God in glory and accordingly restricts their vision of Christ at the Last Judgment to his wounded body.[13] Similarly, in *Christ III,* virtue determines one's visual abilities during the Last Judgment and in the afterlife.

The *Christ III* poet uses the Augustinian model in his depiction of the way the blessed see, but he models his description more directly on the interpretation set forth by Gregory the Great in his exegesis of the parable of Lazarus. Whereas Augustine explains *how* it is possible for the blessed to see the damned, Gregory explains *why* God would grant the blessed the sight of the damned's sufferings and compel the damned to witness the happiness of the blessed. According to Gregory, the rich man (connected to the damned) and Lazarus (representative of the blessed) will see differently in the afterlife because of how they perceived and reacted to events in their life. Discussing the rich man's neglect of Lazarus, Gregory explains: "Conspiciebat ille cotidie cui non misereretur, videbat iste de quo probaretur" (The rich man looked every day on one he did not pity; the poor man saw one who was putting him to the test).[14] At the

11. Saint Augustine, *Soliloquies and the Immortality of the Soul,* ed. and trans. Gerard Wilson (Warminster: Aris & Phillips, 1990), pp. 44–45 and 40–41. Translations from *Soliloquies* are taken from Wilson's edition.

12. Augustine, *Soliloquies,* pp. 40–41.

13. Augustine addresses the topic of the damned seeing God in *De videndo Dei* 15, *De Trinitate* 1.8.28, and *De spiritu et littera* 1.12. On Augustine's response to apparent scriptural contradictions, see Hill, "Vision and Judgment," pp. 236–37; for Alfred's use of this Augustinian model, see D. P. Wallace, "King Alfred's Version of St. Augustine's *Soliloquies,* III, 23–26, *The Vision of the Damned,*" *Notes & Queries,* n.s. 37 (1990), 141–43. The idea of the damned being able to direct their vision outside of Hell and look upon the blessed is not common in patristic or Anglo-Saxon theology. Susan Irvine locates only one other instance in the Old English homiletic tradition in Irvine Homily VIII, concluding that the homily and *Christ III* "are drawing on a similar tradition of commentary"; see Susan Irvine, ed., *Old English Homilies from MS Bodley 343,* EETS o.s. 302 (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1993), pp. 190–91.

14. Gregorius Magnus, *Homiliae in Euangelia,* ed. Raymond Étaix, CCSL 141 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1999) p. 41. All subsequent quotations from Gregory are taken from this edition and are cited parenthetically. Translations, except where noted, are taken from Dom David Hurst, trans., *Gregory the Great: Forty Gospel Homilies,* Cistercian Studies Series 123 (Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 1990). Hurst, *In Lucae euangelium,* p. 305, notes that Bede follows Gregory.

Last Judgment, the damned can now see and understand the blessed in order to satisfy the blessed's desire for just retribution: "Perfecta quippe ei ultio de paupere [Lazarus] non esset, si hunc in retributione non recognosceret" (Vengeance for the poor man would not have been complete unless the rich man recognized him receiving his recompense, pp. 404–5). For this reason, Gregory postulates: "Vt ergo peccatores in supplicio amplius puniantur, et eorum uident gloriam quos contempserunt. . . . Credendum uero est quod ante retributionem extremi iudicii in requiem quosdam iustos conspiciunt" (And thus the sinners' punishment will be made greater, and they will see the glory of those they despise. . . . We must believe that before they receive their recompense at the final judgment, the unrighteous behold some of the righteous at rest, p. 405). Gregory's exegesis of Christ's parable makes vision a fundamental component of God's retributive justice.

The *Christ III* poet similarly identifies the damned's vision as a source of torment; parallel to the "þreo tacen" of the blessed, the damned receive punishment in "þreo healfa" (three parts, l. 1267b), the third of which is "cwiþende cearo, þæt hy on þa clænan seoð, / hu hi fore goddædum glade blissiað / . . . Geseoð hi þa betran blæde scinan" (lamenting sorrow since they see in the pure how they exult in their good works. . . . They will see their betters shine in glory, ll. 1285–86; 1291). As the damned become aware of the beatific vision through the resplendence of the blessed in Heaven, they are constantly reminded of their own exclusion from that vision. While the blessed shine in glory, the damned are cast into Hell's "þeostre" (darkness, l. 1545b) and are denied access to the light of God. Such a restriction of the damned's sight is grounded in the Beatitudes—"Beati mundo corde quoniam ipsi Deum videbunt" (Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God, Matt. 5:8)—and is common throughout the patristic and medieval periods.

In *Christ III,* the joyful reaction of the blessed to the torments of the wicked also corresponds to the Gregorian model. Witnessing the sufferings of the damned reconfirms the blessed's decision to follow Christ in life:

> Ðonne hi þy geornor gode þonciað
> blædes ond blissa þe hy bu geseoð,
> þæt he hy generede from niðcwale
> ond eac forgeaf ece dreamas;
> bið him hel bilocen, heofonrice agiefen. (ll. 1255–59)

(Then they will thank God more earnestly for their glory and bliss in which they see both that he saved them from violent death and gave them eternal delights; to them Hell is closed and the Heavenly kingdom is given.)

Gregory, comparing the contrast between the joy of the blessed and the

pain of the damned to a relief in a painting, emphasizes the importance of vision in eschatological events:

> Iusti uero in tormentis semper intuentur iniustos, ut hinc eorum gaudium crescat, quia malum conspiciunt quod misericorditer euaserunt; tantoque maiores ereptori suo gratias referunt, quanto uident in aliis quid ipsi perpeti, si essent relicti, potuerunt. . . . Quid autem mirum si dum iusti iniustorum tormenta conspiciunt, hoc eis eueniat in obsequio gaudiorum, quando et in pictura niger color substernitur, ut albus uel rubeus clarior uideatur?
>
> (The righteous always observe the unrighteous in their torment, to increase their own joy, since they look upon the evil that they have mercifully escaped. Their thankfulness to the one who saved them is greater, the more they see in others what they would have suffered if they had been left to themselves. . . . But what is there to wonder at if the righteous feel joy when they see the torments of the unrighteous? In a painting do we not use the color black as a background so that we can see white and red more clearly?) (p. 405)[15]

But after he finishes describing the voyeuristic pleasure that the blessed derive from seeing these torments, Gregory qualifies the blessed's joy in viewing the suffering of others by referring to Augustine's emphasis on divine knowledge: "Et quamuis eis sua gaudia ad perfruendum plene sufficiant, mala tamen reproborum absque dubio semper aspiciunt, quia qui creatoris sui claritatem uident, nihil in creatura agitur quod uidere non possint" (And although their own joys fully satisfy them, there is no doubt that they are always looking on the evils of the condemned. For those who see the brightness of their Creator, there is nothing going on among created things which they cannot see, p. 405). This recourse to an epistemologically-centered vision, which Bede and Ælfric repeat, shifts the emphasis away from the sensual joy that comes from witnessing suffering toward the blessed's participation in divine knowledge. By concluding his homily with the story of Redempta, an *exemplum* that demonstrates the importance of imitating Christ's care of the poor, Gregory reinforces the primacy of union with the Godhead over the anticipation of sensible rewards.

In the Gregorian model, therefore, the appeal to the senses gives way to conventional penitential and homiletic topoi. In *Christ III,* the poet incorporates this model and accordingly balances his depictions of physical pleasure experienced by the blessed in Heaven with exhortations to the reader to confess his sins. The joyful promise of witnessing the torments of the damned is set against the humiliation felt by the damned, who must undergo, as Allen Frantzen notes, "a disclosure before all creation."[16] In

15. On the possibility of this passage as a source for *Christ III,* see Biggs, "The Sources of *Christ III,*" pp. 26–27.

16. Allen Frantzen, *The Literature of Penance in Anglo-Saxon England* (New Brunswick: Rutgers Univ. Press, 1983), p. 176.

addition, just as Gregory commands his audience to "sollerter agite" (act wisely, p. 407) after describing the blessed's and damned's vision of one another, the *Christ III* poet exhorts readers to examine their own lives with their *heortan eagum:* "Nu we sceolon georne gleawlice þurhseon / usse hreþercofan heortan eagum, / innan uncyste" (Now we must carefully and diligently look through our breasts with the eyes of the heart at the wickedness within, ll.1327–29a). In contrast with Gregory's reliance on the Augustinian epistemological explanation, however, the *Christ III* poet never reduces the visual pleasure experienced by the blessed's vision to an accidental result of sharing in divine knowledge. Instead, he connects sight to knowledge and desire, for, as Suzannah Biernoff points out, "Sight—the sense closest to the 'mind's eye'—is both a tool for the acquisition of *knowledge,* and a locus of carnal *desire.*"[17] While Augustine finds knowledge and desire to be apposite, the poem allows them to work together in the service of increasing understanding and as an ultimate reward. The *Christ III* poet accordingly places the blessed's visual pleasure in a reciprocal economy of exchange: "Swa sceal gewrixled þam þe ær wel heoldon / þurh modlufan meotudes willan" (Thus what was bargained shall be fulfilled for those who earlier through their affection rightly observed the will of the Lord, ll.1260–61).[18] For the blessed thus "aweaxeð wynsum gefea" (pleasant joy will grow, l. 1252) because they have fulfilled their portion of the agreement by seeing the divinity of Christ and "hyra þeodnes wel / wordum ond weorcum willan heoldon" (rightly observed the will of their Lord with their words and works, ll.1235b–36). Consequently, the blessed possess the ability to choose how to direct their vision and are permitted to enjoy scopophilic pleasure.

II

Insofar as the blessed possess the freedom to observe pleasurably the sufferings of the damned, they must retain their individual perspective, for voyeuristic pleasure relies on a distance between the viewing subject and the object of the gaze. Initially, the eschatological events of *Christ III* intimate a sense of community, of general experience, as the appearance of Christ brings all souls together for general judgment: "þær gemengde

17. Suzannah Biernoff, *Sight and Embodiment in the Middle Ages* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), p. 17.

18. While the concept of reciprocation is common in both scriptural sources, the *Christ III* poet's repeated stress on it is likely due to his reliance on Caesarius of Arles' Sermon 57. For a discussion of this source, see Judith N. Garde, *Old English Poetry in Medieval Christian Perspective: A Doctrinal Approach* (Suffolk: D.S. Brewer, 1991), pp. 193–95.

beoð / onhælo gelac engla ond deofla, / beorhtra ond blacra" (There, angels and devils, the white and the black, will all be mingled together, ll. 894b–96a). The Lord's judgment is then made known not by proclamation or a spatial separation of the blessed from the damned, but by each soul's individual vision. Indeed, Christ appears "eadgum ond earmum ungelice" (differently to the blessed and the damned, l. 909). From the blessed's perspective, Christ seems "glædmod on gesihþe, / wlitig, wynsumlic, weorude þam halgan" (joyful to behold, radiant, delightful, splendid to that holy multitude, ll. 910b–11); however, to the damned he is "egeslic ond grimlic / to geseonne" (fearful and terrible to see, ll. 918b–19a). Judgment here is explicitly linked to perception and an individualized process of vision and cognition. The souls who have purged themselves of sin through contrition see Christ's luminescent and fully-healed body as a reflection of their own spiritual purity, while those who remain tainted by sin are forced to look upon Christ's wounds as a sign of their wretchedness. This correspondence between Christ's visual appearance and one's state of grace both relies upon and promotes an individualization of each soul, which is judged by its own merits and immediately rewarded (or, for the sinful, punished) with self-knowledge.

The poet's extended description of the damned seeing Christ's wounds further demonstrates the underlying difference between the blessed's and damned's vision of Christ. Emphasizing the wicked's distress at seeing the wounds, the poet writes:

> Ond eac þa ealdan wunde ond þa openan dolg
> ond hyra dryhtne geseoð dreorigferðe,
> swa him mid næglum þurhdrifan niðhycgende
> þa hwitan honda ond þa halgan fet,
> ond of his sidan swa some swat forletan,
> þær blod ond wæter bu tu ætsomne,
> ut bicwoman fore eagna gesyhð,
> rinnan fore rincum, þa he on rode wæs. (ll. 1107–14)

> (And also the old wounds and the open cut upon their Lord the sorrowful ones will see as the evil men drove nails through those white hands and the holy feet and also caused blood to come out of his side, where blood and water both flowed together before the sight of their eyes, before the men, when he was on the Cross.)

Furthermore, Christ himself commands the damned to look upon his wounds: "Geseoð nu þa feorhdolg þe ge gefremedun ær / on minum folmum ond on fotum swa some, / þurh þa ic hongade hearde gefæstnad" (Now see the deadly wounds that you made before in my hands and feet also, through which I hung painfully fastened, ll. 1454–56). The poet repeatedly states that the damned perceive the wounds of Christ; they

even appear as "tacen . . . orgeatu on gode," (signs manifest on God, ll.1214b–15a).[19] However, in *Christ III,* there is no mention of the blessed seeing the wounds.

The poet's decision to omit this detail is significant given the traditional interpretation of the wounds of Christ as both an assurance to the virtuous as well as a threat to the damned. Citing writings by Augustine and Bede, Peter Witticombe notes, "They are a reminder that gives us access to the mercy of the Father, and provokes our gratitude, but they also serve as a sign of the justness of God's judgment on sinners."[20] By this logic, in apparently denying the blessed the sight of Christ's wounds, the poet would be withholding a pleasurable sight from them. In *Christ III,* though, the wounds of Christ act only as a source of anxiety and dread for the damned.[21] Thomas D. Hill argues that this problem may be solved by tracing the poet's use of medieval speculative theology, and concludes: "The sinners see those tokens, the wounds of Christ, because they see 'Him whom they pierced' [Zach. 12:10] rather than Christ as the *Deus-homo.*"[22] While this solution accounts for the vision of the damned, it does not address why the blessed cannot see the tokens because, according to patristic and medieval theologians, the wounds of Christ do not diminish his glory or divinity.

The poet's representation of the damned seeing the wounds indicates their willful ignorance in the face of the universal reaction to the Crucifixion. Like Gregory's account of the rich man's blindness toward Lazarus' sufferings, the damned must be forced to see the significance of Christ's sufferings because they were "blinde on geþoncum, / dysge ond gedwealde" (blind in their thoughts, foolish and erring, ll. 1126b–1127a).[23] The poet clearly illustrates this necessity when describing the damned's vision of Christ's wounds: "þam þe dryhtnes *sceal,* / deaðfirenum forden, dolg *sceawian,* / wunde ond wite" (those corrupted by deadly sin *must behold* the Lord's scars, the wounds and the punishment, ll. 1205b–07a;

19. On the reading of lines 1213–15 as referring to Christ and the wounds of Christ, see Hill, "Vision and Judgment," pp. 234–35.

20. Peter Witticombe, "The Wounds and the Ascended Body: The Marks of Crucifixion in the Glorified Christ from Justin Martyr to John Calvin," *Laval théologique et philsophique,* 59 (2003), 149.

21. On the significance of Christ's wounds in *Christ III,* see Christopher L. Chase, "'Christ III,' 'The Dream of the Rood,' and Early Christian Passion Piety," *Viator,* 11 (1980), 11–33, esp. 13–14. The threatening nature of the cross and Crucifixion in the poem resembles *The Dream of the Rood;* see Daniel F. Pigg, "The *Dream of the Rood* in Its Discursive Context: Apocalypticism as a Determinant of Form and Treatment," *English Language Notes,* 29 (1992), 16–17.

22. Hill, "Vision and Judgment," p. 238.

23. The poet repeats the damned's spiritual blindness more emphatically in lines 1174–99.

emphasis added). In contrast with the damned who must involuntarily view the wounds of Christ and understand their importance, the blessed, like the "foreþoncle men" (forethinking men) who prophesied the coming of Christ, have already realized the importance of the Cross in salvation history and the meaning of Christ's torments (l. 1191a). Further, the blessed's *þreo tacen,* which allow them to see Christ in glory, demonstrate that they correctly interpreted the "tacen . . . / orgeatu on gode" (signs manifest on God) during their lives (ll. 1214b–15a). The poet's decision to pass over the blessed's vision of the wounds of Christ does not indicate that they are incapable of seeing them; rather, it demonstrates that they view the wounds as part of Christ's "scynan wlite" (shining splendor, l. 914b) while the damned recognize their meaning for the first time and are filled with terror.

The penitential effect of the *Christ III* poet's treatment of the wounds of Christ thus remains consistent with traditional uses of Christ's physical appearance at the Last Judgment. By portraying how the blessed and the damned see Christ at the Apocalypse differently, the poet accentuates the necessity of confession for readers in a state of sin and, at the same time, the joys awaiting those who have recognized and repented their moral failings. To this end, the poet carefully excludes the damned from the vision of Christ in glory in order to stress their torments. By the same token, the elect are able to see the terror of the damned and feel the consolation offered by Christ. Yet the blessed can neither share the damned's dreadful vision of Christ in judgment nor experience his condemnation in the same manner as the wicked, who are singled out from the multitude and rebuked: "Onginneð sylf cweðan, / swa he to anum sprece, ond hwæþre ealle mæneð, / firensynnig folc, frea ælmihtig" (He, himself, the Almighty Lord, will begin to speak as if he were speaking to one, but he speaks to all the sinful folk, ll.1376b–78). The blessed's vision and, subsequently, the pleasures that they derive from it are directed by their relationship with Christ, who alone occupies a transcendental perspective in the poem.

Unlike the blessed, however, readers share in Christ's vantage point and possess the ability to perceive not only the different aspects of Christ, but also the visual range of all the figures in the poem. The poet provides the readers with this all-encompassing vision of apocalyptic events so that they might appropriately place themselves within the narrative. For those who have not repented, this heightened visual perspective accentuates the impossibility of confessing after death and strengthens the poem's exhortations to readers to confess, thereby reinforcing the penitential elements of *Christ III*. Because such readers witness in graphic detail the judgment awaiting unrepentant sinners, they are reminded of their responsibility for heeding the poem's frequent exhortations and conforming to the

divine will.[24] But the poem also promises that those who choose to direct their vision properly in this life will be rewarded with pleasurable vision in the afterlife. For those readers who have recognized their sinfulness and confessed their sins, the expanded visual perspective offers them spiritual consolation and, more importantly, the voyeuristic pleasure of witnessing their future rewards and the promised punishments of the wicked. In response to the ongoing process of confessing and relapsing into sinfulness, the poem holds out voyeuristic pleasure as a perceivable reward for virtuous behavior. This voyeuristic appeal allows readers to anticipate the *þreo tacen* of the blessed. The act of reading therefore opens a narratological space for readers in which it is possible to share in the pleasant joy offered to the elect in advance of the Last Judgment.

III

Given *Christ III*'s employment of traditional homiletic rhetorical tropes in its exhortations to the audience to engage in repentant self-examination, critics have found that the poem forces the reader "to identify with the damned on Judgment Day and to see Christ's address to the damned as also directed outward toward themselves."[25] This notion informs Shimomura's argument that vision in the poem reflects Anglo-Saxon conceptions of shame.[26] She argues that in order for the poem to effect repentance in its audience, the reader should consider himself a sinner in danger of suffering the tortures of Hell and experience fear and regret by appreciating the vivid descriptions of these punishments presented in the poem. Such a reading limits the emotional resonance of these exhortations and depictions of suffering to those readers who associate themselves only with the damned. While the poem encourages readers to identify with both the shame and suffering of the damned and the exaltation and pleasure of the blessed, its emphasis on vision as its primary appeal assumes that the reader will identify himself with the latter. *Christ III* carefully figures the reader as critic, exegete, and privileged witness who, through the act of reading, can formulate a subject position that corresponds to that of a soul in heaven.

This subject position, removed from the site of suffering, is essential for the experience of both textual and voyeuristic pleasure through the

24. On the connection between the audience outside of the poem and the damned, see Lois R. Kuznets and Martin Green, "Voice and Vision in the Old English *Christ III*," *Papers on Language and Literature,* 12 (1976), 233.

25. Kuznets and Green, p. 228.

26. Shimomura, "Visualizing Judgment," p. 41.

fulfillment of the scopic drive and the recognition of one's individuality. Allowed to witness the tortures of the damned and knowing themselves to be safely distanced from these sites of violence, the blessed's greatest reward is the pleasure of the voyeur. The blessed watch as the damned suffer great torment, and it is this particular scopic exercise that allows the *Christ III* poet to announce: "of þam him aweaxeð wynsum gefea" (a delightful joy will grow in them from that, l. 1252). The use of the word "aweaxeð" (grows, arises, comes forth) signifies a continuous increase, indicating that the experience of these joys is an ongoing process, the nature of which is visual and epistemological. The blessed see the damned as other ("oðre," l. 1253b), thus establishing a relationship between themselves and the wicked that reinforces separation. This allows for the blessed to understand and appreciate their own salvation (cf. ll. 1255–59). Voyeuristic pleasure functions for the blessed as both the sign and the benefit of salvation.

The reader may participate in this voyeuristic pleasure by figuring himself as a potential member of the blessed. As Shari Horner explains in her examination of violence in Old English saints' lives, scenes of torture express "the *potentiality* of pain," which the audience identifies with "through the vehicle of the saints' body."[27] This idea finds support in Michel Foucault's theory of public torture as an expression of the power of the sovereign over his subjects. These displays reinforce existing hierarchies by allowing the witnesses to both recognize the authority of the ruler and, as "potentially guilty" subjects, appreciate their release from physical punishment for their own crimes. In order for public torture to be effective, each witness "must see punishment not only as natural, but in his own interest; everyone must be able to read in it his own advantage."[28] The reader's and the blessed's vision of the damned allows them to identify with their suffering counterparts as souls under the power of God while celebrating their difference as potential or actual recipients of grace. The spatial distance between the sinners and the saved and the blessed's blinding resplendence—"Geseoð hi þa betran blæde scinan" (They will see their betters shine in glory, l. 1291)—figures Hell as, to use Laura Mulvey's terminology, a "hermetically sealed world" crucial for the voyeuristic enterprise.[29]

27. Shari Horner, "The Violence of Exegesis: Reading the Bodies of Ælfric's Female Saints" in *Violence against Women in Medieval Texts,* ed. Anna Roberts (Gainesville: Univ. Press of Florida, 1998), pp. 28–29, emphasis in original.

28. Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison,* trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Random House, 1977), pp. 108–9. Although Foucault focuses mainly on post-Renaissance uses of punishment, his work provides a valuable theoretical framework that can be applied to the examination of Anglo-Saxon texts and culture.

29. Laura Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," *Screen,* 16 (1975), 9. Mulvey's terminology provides an important interpretive tool for understanding the association of

If Hell is hermetically sealed, it is also hermeneutically sealed as a site where signification constantly and unequivocally reaffirms one's own salvation. The physical manifestation of sins upon the souls of the sinners creates sites for hermeneutic examination; these bodies become texts. Horner points out that "representations of the literal enable spiritual signification" and this is the function of the *tacen* granted to the blessed and the damned.[30] Just as Christ's wounds are displayed as *tacen* revealed to the damned at Judgment in order to demonstrate His sacrifice and signify their sinfulness, so the *manwomma* represent the specific misdeeds of the condemned and signal to the blessed their own salvation. The penetrating gaze of the blessed allows them to read the markings on each soul in Hell and from this act of reading enjoy a "wynsum gefea." This visual reward can be seen both as pleasurable and as an unsettling mode of signification through the experience of what John Morreall calls "negative emotions," that is, the visceral response effected through scenes of tragedy.[31] For the blessed in *Christ III,* pleasure is effected by the knowledge of their privileged subject position through complete scopic fulfillment and the continuous process of investigation and interpretation. The display of the *manwomma* and the physical tortures inflicted upon the damned by fire and serpents allow the blessed to better enjoy their place in Heaven and appreciate the power of God's grace.

These scenes of torture are also disruptive since the infliction of pain necessarily creates a linguistic crisis; for, as Elaine Scarry argues, the experience of pain "resists verbal objectification."[32] Therefore, to witness or read about physical punishment requires a willing identification with the suffering subject. Theologically, pain functions as proof of God's existence as those who doubt, Scarry notes, can "apprehend him in the intensity of pain in their own bodies, or in the visible alteration in the bodies of their fellows or in the bodies . . . of their enemies." In the Old Testament, the infliction of pain serves as "a 'sign' of God's realness" and the afflicted body becomes a "source of analogical verification."[33] Thus, the ability to take pleasure in such scenes has an epistemological component, but it is also a function of the witnessing subject's desire for control. Just as one can choose to identify with a suffering subject, the impossibility of fully experiencing the same pain means that the witness can also choose to

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voyeurism to the gendered power relationship operating between subject and object. *Christ III* confers upon the reader a privileged masculine gaze, but genders masculinity in terms of power rather than in terms of sexuality.

30. Horner, "The Violence of Exegesis," p. 29.

31. John Morreall, "Enjoying Negative Emotions in Fictions," *Philosophy and Literature,* 9 (1985), 95–103.

32. Elaine Scarry, *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1985), p. 12.

33. Scarry, p. 201.

disassociate. Being able to look (or not) upon scenes of torture according to one's own volition reinforces the subject's sense of agency. According to Morreall, "being in control requires only the ability to start, stop, and direct . . . attention and thought."[34] Each blessed soul, having been granted unlimited visual powers and retaining individual will in Heaven, may freely direct its gaze as an individual subject. The blessed, therefore, can read the suffering souls of the damned as non-verbal signs that trigger a process of identification and disassociation that produces the experience of pleasure.

The *þreo tacen* in *Christ III* function as a tangible, visible reward for the blessed. They are conspicuous signs or tokens—the poet describes them as "eðgesyne" (easily seen)—that evince the blessed's previous virtuous deeds and obedience to God (l.1234b).[35] At the same time, they invite the reader to partake of the expanded visual scope that they provide. In so doing, both the blessed and the reader continue the process of individualization that separated them from damned. After the "clænan folc" (pure folk) are positioned on the right hand of Christ and the "synfulra weorud" (sinful multitude) are placed on the left (cf. ll.1221–31), each soul is awarded its "þreo tacen." For the blessed, the first *tacen* allows them to brightly display their earthly deeds:

> An is ærest orgeate þær
> þæt hy fore leodum leohte blicaþ,
> blæde ond byrhte ofer burga gesetu;
> him on scinað ærgewyrhtu
> on sylfra gehwam sunnan beorhtran. (ll. 1237–41)

(The first one manifest there is that they shine with light before the people, with splendor and brightness beyond the halls of towns. Their former works shine in them, in each one brighter than the sun.)

That these "former works" give light to each soul reveals a privileging of individual identity, as these souls are allowed to celebrate their personal behavior on earth. The phrase "on sylfra gehwam" reinforces this notion of individual accomplishment and suggests that each soul remains distinct even as it participates in the communion of heavenly hosts.[36] This

34. Morreall, "Enjoying Negative Emotions," p. 101.

35. The *Beowulf* poet uses *tacen* in the same sense when describing Grendel's arm in Heorot. *Beowulf and the Fight at Finnsburg,* ed. F. Klaeber, 3d ed. (Boston: D.C. Heath, 1950), p. 32: "þæt wæs tacen sweotol / syþðan hildedeor hond alegde / earm ond eaxle . . . / . . . under græpne hrof" (that was a clear sign when the brave in battle placed hand arm and shoulder underneath the gabled roof, ll. 833b–35b).

36. This notion finds precedent in Augustine's discussion of the visible wounds on the resurrected bodies of the martyrs in Heaven in *De civitate Dei* 22.19. For a brief discussion of Augustine's notion of the individuality of the resurrected body, see Caroline Walker Bynum, *The Resurrection of the Body in Western Christianity, 200–1336* (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1995), p. 98.

luminescent expression of each soul's virtuous acts literally highlights the retention of individuality after Judgment, which allows the blessed to continue to enjoy voyeuristic and textual pleasure in Heaven.

The individual soul, "blæde ond byrhte," understands its own luminescence through the vision granted by the second *tacen:*

> Oþer is to eacan ondgete swa some,
> þæt hy him in wuldre witon waldendes giefe,
> ond on seoð, eagum to wynne,
> þæt hi on heofonrice hlutre dreamas
> eadge mid englum agan motum. (ll.1242–46)

(In addition, the second one will be understood, that they will know themselves to be in the grace of God and will see, as a pleasure to their eyes, that they, the blessed with the angels, will be able to enjoy pure delights in the heavenly kingdom.)

Like Christ's body appearing to the blessed in glory in the beginning of the poem, the radiance of Heaven, filled with the shining corporeal forms of angels and other blessed souls, reflects each individual soul's own brilliance. Vision reaffirms salvation, allowing each soul to know itself as saved and to take pleasure both in the resplendence of Paradise and the understanding of one's own place within it.

It is the third *tacen* that most explicitly marks the blessed as both readers and voyeurs and offers them the greatest pleasure. While the first two *tacen* allow the blessed to know themselves as saved through a shared, but still distinct, luminosity, the third allows these souls to recognize their privileged individual positions through difference, to understand their eternal reward by witnessing the tortures of the damned:

> Ðonne bið þridde, hu on þystra bealo
> þæt gesælige weorud gesihð þæt fordone
> sar þrowian, synna to wite,
> weallendne lig, ond wyrma slite
> bitrum ceaflum, byrnendra scole.
> Of þam him aweaxeð wynsum gefea,
> þonne hi þæt yfel geseoð oðre dreogan,
> þæt hy þurh miltse meotudes genæson. (ll. 1247–54)

(Then is the third, how that blessed troop sees those in the wickedness of darkness suffer painfully in punishment of their sins, the surging flame and the bite of serpents with stinging jaws, the burning multitude. Out of this a delightful joy will grow in them, when they see the others suffer that evil that they through the mercy of the Creator escaped.)

Although the first two *tacen* grant the blessed the ability to enjoy the "hlutre dreamas" (pure delights) of Paradise, they are also given the ability to look outside the Heavenly kingdom and turn their gaze toward the darkness of Hell. The "þystra bealo" (wickedness of darkness), bro-

ken only by the "weallendne lig" (surging flame), is contrasted with the "blæde ond byrhte" (splendor and brightness) of the light of Heaven. The third *tacen,* however, rewards the blessed with a heightened visual acuity that can penetrate this darkness and discern the specific punishments inflicted upon each damned soul, including the "wyrma slite bitrum ceaflum" (the bite of serpents with stinging jaws). By permitting each blessed soul to direct its gaze without constraint and according to its own will, the third *tacen* again affirms the existence of post-Judgment individuality. Through their unrestricted vision, the blessed are able to witness the various punishments inflicted upon the damned while remaining safely distanced from these sites of pain in the ultimate fulfillment of the scopic drive.

This epistemological process of identification and self-recognition through difference is the pleasure of the reader and the voyeur, which the poem highlights throughout its discussion of not only the rewards granted to the blessed but also the specific punishments suffered by the condemned. *Christ III*'s explanation of the three *tacen* of the damned not only "eternalizes shame" as a form of punishment, as Shimomura points out, but it also makes explicit the blessed's satisfaction of voyeuristic desire through these signs.[37] It is the damned's second *tacen,* specifically, that reinforces the blessed's privileged subject position:

On him dryhten gesihð
nales feara sum firenbealu laðlic,
ond þæt ællbeorhte eac sceawiað
heofonengla here, ond hæleþa bearn,
ealle eorðbuend ond atol deofol,
mircne mægencræft, manwomma gehwone
magun þurh þa lichoman leahtra firene,
geseon on þam sawlum. (ll. 1274b–81a)

(In them the Lord will see their horrible transgressions, not at all few; and all that resplendent host of heavenly angels, and the children of men, all the earth-dwellers, and the horrible devil will scrutinize their evil strength; they will be able through their bodies to see every guilty stain, violent sin, on the souls.)

The "syngan flæsc" (l. 1281b) of the damned will be "þurhwaden" (l.1282a) by a boundless vision previously exclusive to God alone, but now granted to the entire human race, the angels, and the devil.[38] No longer restricted by the limits of human vision, the children of men ("hæleþa bearn"), both the blessed and the damned, can peer through the bodies of the damned

37. Shimomura, "Visualizing Judgment," p. 45.
38. Shimomura, p. 46.

("þurh þa lichoman") into the most private domain of those who were formerly their brethren and fix their gaze on the "manwomma gehwone" that had been hidden on Earth.[39] The stains provide objects for inspection and interpretation, as the verb "sceawian" makes clear ("eac sceawiað"), signifying that every individual soul in Heaven will be able to investigate actively the most private transgressive actions of unrepentant sinners. For the blessed alone, however, the markings on the damned provide objects for discernment that allow them not only to behold, consider, and evaluate the souls of the damned, but also to appreciate fully God's mercy in granting them salvation. A complementary relationship exists between the damned's second *tacen* and the blessed's third *tacen* that intensifies the blessed's pleasure and the damned's shame. The promise of the opportunity for outward examination and voyeuristic pleasure in the afterlife is thus the ultimate reward for inward self-examination and repentance during one's lifetime.

IV

Christ III operates on a number of textual and theological levels in order to effect spiritual self-examination, and it succeeds not only through its direct address to the readers as sinners, but also through its figuring of the reader as one potentially blessed. By depicting the body of the wounded Christ and the suffering of the damned in Hell, the reader can enjoy these *tacen* in the poem just as the blessed and derive the same pleasure in Heaven. The poem fulfills the reader's scopic drive through textual representation of visual signs, offering the opportunity for participation in divine vision before Judgment. The pleasure derived is both epistemological and visceral, as the reader inspects the otherwise unavailable visual landscape of a post-Judgment world and locates himself within it according to his own desires. Christ's speech implicating all sinners in his Crucifixion and rebuking them for their refusal to acknowledge their spiritual corruption (ll. 1376–1515) utilizes the homiletic trope of addressing the audience in order to demand repentance. Yet *Christ III*'s remarkable achievement lies not in its conventional exhortations, but in its representation of the pleasure of a text that offers a hermeneutic space for critical and exegetical inspection. The successful reader, sure of his

39. On the motif of three companies viewing the sins of the damned at the Last Judgment, see Malcolm Godden, "An Old English Penitential Motif," *Anglo-Saxon England,* 2 (1973), 221–39, and Charles D. Wright, *The Irish Tradition in Old English Literature,* Cambridge Studies in Anglo-Saxon England, 6 (Cambridge Univ. Press, 1993), pp. 85–88.

ability to enjoy this same visual and textual pleasure in Heaven, can then respond to the poem's call for spiritual reflection not simply in an effort to escape damnation, but in order to seek a continuation of the pleasure effected by a reading of the poem. The promised reward of a "wynsum gefea" in Heaven, represented in the imagery of the poem's closing lines, is anticipated through the act of reading on Earth.