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Title: Transitions from Direct Speech to Narration in Old English Poetry

Abstract: This paper considers how Old English narrative poems reintroduce narration after direct speech. It is based on a survey of eight poems: *Andreas*, *Beowulf*, *Christ and Satan*, *Elene*, *Genesis A* and *B*, *Guthlac A* and *Juliana*. Results show that those transitions (like the initial inquests) contribute to the sharp delimitation of direct speech in Old English poetry. However, the paper also demonstrates that sharp delimitation is not synonymous with freedom from narratorial interference as the framing of speeches is often used to orient interpretation. Further, it suggests that the strong delineation of direct speech should not be seen as an independent phenomenon, but as representative of the way narrative poetry treats coherent sequences of text more generally. Indeed, similarities in the treatment of transitions between passages of narration and from direct speech to narration suggest that Anglo-Saxon poets perceived direct speech as perhaps worthier of attention, but not as radically different from narration.

Keywords: Old English poetry; direct speech; narrative structure; *ða*

Direct speech is an essential component of most Old English narrative poems, if only quantitatively: for some poems, it represents close to 40 or even 60% of the total amount of verse.¹ It is by far the dominant mode of representation of speech in Old English verse, indirect and narrated speech being used sparingly, and free (in)direct speech virtually not at all. The amount of criticism devoted to direct speech hardly reflects this importance. Studies devoted to it are few and far between, and several have never even been published.² And yet, some major interpretative cruxes hinge on our understanding of how direct speech and narration interact in Old English poetry.³ The words immediately preceding and following direct speech constitute points of contact between speech and narration, which may provide important clues as to the nature of this interaction.

Initial inquiries (such as the famous *mápelode* formula) have attracted some critical attention, and the results yielded are undoubtedly instructive. Yet, I would argue that the way poets reintroduce narration after direct speech is equally instructive, and that only by putting both aspects in perspective can one get a proper idea of the place of direct speech in the structure of Old English poems. To that aim, I will build on what we know of initial inquiries to better understand the transitions from direct speech to narration, and thus provide an integrated analysis of the framing of direct speech in Old English poetry.

There are obvious reasons why the initial inquiry should have drawn more attention than the reintroduction of narration after direct speech. It is often rich and complex, and always highly codified, which makes it of prime interest to scholars, both in terms of formulaic tradition and for what it reveals of the intended reception of a given speech. While Modern English literature is usually keen to avoid it – often favouring a median or final position for the inquiry, or indeed omitting it altogether to fluidify the interplay between direct speech and narration – Old English poetry seems to have delighted in its systematic and highly noticeable use.

In this respect, Old English poetry differs from other early Germanic poetic traditions, which can identify speakers less conspicuously (Heusler 1902; Richman 1977). In Old English poetry,

¹ *Guthlac A*, 36.4% (298 out of 818 lines); *Beowulf*, 38.7% (1231.5 out of 3182); *Elene*, 40.7% (538 out of 1321); *Christ and Satan*, 42.7% (311 out of 729), *Genesis B*, 50.2% (309.5 out of 617), *Andreas*, 52.5% (904.5 out of 1722) and *Juliana*, 61.3% (448 out of 731). Some poems show smaller proportions: *Genesis A*, 29.7% (688 out of 2319), *Exodus*, 13% (77 out of 590), *Judith*, 12.8% (44.5 out of 349).

² The most significant are probably Heusler 1902 and Bjork 1985, though the latter is not concerned with the particular issue examined here. Several unpublished PhD theses have also been written on direct speech (Levine 1963, McNally 1975, Richman 1977, Weldon 1979, Perelman 1981, Haar 1995 and Lee 1995), most of them exclusively concerned with *Beowulf*.

³ This is true for instance for *Beowulf*, in which the changes in the use of direct speech have been seen as a possible sign of the gradual failure of the poem and / or of the heroic world (Klaeber 1950, pp. li-lvi; Leyerle 1965; Georgianna 1987), and for *Genesis B*, where much of the interpretation of the character of Eve depends on one's understanding of the contradictions between Eve's words and those of the narrator (Barry 1976, pp. 107-133; Burchmore 1985; Doane 1991, pp. 139-153).

initial inquit is usually at least one line long (sometimes much longer),⁴ and can provide all manners of details about the speaker and occasionally about the audience, the situation or the nature of the speech itself. These long and formulaic introductions greatly contribute to the solemnity of Old English poetry (Heusler 1902; Richman 1977; Stévanovitch 1998). Their systematic use breaks dialogue into separate units and prevents rapid back-and-forth interaction between the characters. Richman is particularly concerned with this phenomenon and sees it as the cause of the supposed failure of Old English dialogue:

If Old English writers took this much advantage of direct discourse, why did they fail to create dialogue comparable to that written by Old Icelandic and later English writers? An immediate cause is the form which direct discourse usually takes in Old English, and this form is largely a matter of the inquit, the introduction to the speech. (...) The inquit in Old English presents a bulky and formidable barrier separating speech from speech or, more often, from its narrative context. (Richman 1977, p. 263)

In a recent study devoted to the dramatic character of Old English poetry, Frantzen (2007) has suggested a more favourable interpretation of this ‘bulky and formidable barrier.’ For him, it corresponds to a deliberate wish to keep the voices of the characters strictly separate from that of the narrator. This interpretation ties in with traditional definitions of direct speech as *showing*, when one purports to represent the words of another without interfering with them or taking responsibility for them in any way, as opposed to indirect speech or *telling*, when one ‘expresses what was said in one’s own words’ (Leech & Short 1981, p. 318).⁵ Frantzen refers more specifically to Pizarro’s concept of the ‘rhetoric of the scene’ (1989, pp. 55-56, quoted by Frantzen 2007, p. 108). For Pizarro, showing stories through direct speech rather than telling them is a typical feature of narratives meant to be performed orally, and it suggests that ‘the oral narrator tries to become transparent, to vanish from the scene or from his listener’s awareness; by appealing primarily to their dramatic imagination, he invites them to follow an action that does not include him as a judge, critic, or interpreter.’

While Old English narrative poems were very likely meant for oral performance and while it is undoubtedly true that direct speech is a prominent feature in them, the contention that Old English poetic narrators try to fade into the background to let characters take the stage is more doubtful. In fact, the mode of speech representation favoured by Old English poets, if it does keep

⁴ The most typical length is one or two lines, but it may be as much as nine (*Genesis B*, ll. 347-355). *Genesis B*, ll. 263-277 may also be taken into consideration, but that passage could just as easily be interpreted as indirect speech ‘slipping’ into direct speech (Schuelke 1958) rather than as a genuine speech introduction. Other examples of very long introductions, less likely to be a reflection of Old Saxon practice than *Genesis B*, include *Beowulf*, ll. 499-505 and 2041-2046, *Andreas*, ll. 669b-675, and *Christ and Satan*, ll. 75-80.

⁵ The opposition of direct and indirect speech as showing vs. telling ultimately goes back to Plato’s opposition between *mimesis* and *diegesis*, such as it is presented in the third book of the *Republic* (393b-c), but it has been reformulated variously in the course of the twentieth century, perhaps most influentially in Clark & Gerrig 1990.

the narrator's and the characters' voices ostensibly separate, is above all an effective way of controlling the audience's reception of speeches.

First of all, poets can and often do use different types of introduction to suggest differences in the relative status of speeches in a poem. Added emphasis may thus be provided by expanded inquit (Richman 1977, p. 175). *Beowulf* is also notable for its repeated use of the *mapelode* formula (e.g. *Beowulf mapelode, bearn Eþeowes*, ll. 529, 631, 957, etc.), which enhances the ceremonial aspect of key public speeches (Stévanovitch 1998, p. 21).

Inquits may also be used by the narrator to suggest how a given speech should be interpreted or how the audience should respond to it. This phenomenon is particularly obvious in texts allowing comparison with Latin sources, like this extract from *Elene*:

Judas dixit: Et quis in solitudine constitutus, panibus sibi apposis, lapides manducat?
(*Inventio sanctae crucis*, § 7)⁶

Iudas hire ongen þingode (ne meahte he þa gehðu bebugan,
oncyrran rex geniðlan; he wæs on þære cwene gewældum):
'Hu mæg þæm geweorðan þe on westenne
meðe ond meteleas morland trydeð,
hungre gehæfted, ond him hlaf ond stan
on gesihðe bu samod geweorðað,
streac ond hnesce, þæt he þone stan nime
wið hungres hleo, hlafes ne gime,
gewende to wædle, ond þa wiste wiðsæce,
beteran wiðhyccge, þonne he bega beneah?' (*Elene*, ll. 609-618)⁷

The Latin text keeps the inquit to a minimum, so that the interpretation of Judas' words depends exclusively on the reader's sagacity: is Judas genuinely yielding to Elene's threatening demands or is he merely trying to buy himself time? The Latin provides no explicit answer. By contrast, the Old English inquit casts the speech as an unconditional surrender, which allows Cynewulf both to avoid ambiguity and to give the passage warlike undertones without altering in any way the content of the speech itself. In this way, the poet not only clarifies a minor aspect of the narrative, but also suggests a wider frame of reference – the heroic ethos – which would presumably appeal to an audience keen on heroic poetry.⁸

⁶ 'Judas said, "And who, kept in isolation, would eat stones when he is offered bread?"' All translations are my own.

⁷ 'Judas answered her (he could not avoid that anguish, turn away his royal opponent; he was in the queen's power): "How could it happen that someone who is treading the wilderness in desolate places, exhausted and deprived of food, seized by hunger, and who sees both bread and stone appear in front of them, the hard and the soft, would choose stone to stave off hunger and care nothing about bread, turn to deprivation and reject sustenance, refuse the better choice when both are available?"' All references to or quotations of Old English poetry are from the Anglo-Saxon Poetic Records, by line numbers.

⁸ In his letter to the bishop Speratus, Alcuin's famous comment about Ingeld (*Verba Dei legantur in sacerdotali convivio: ibi decet lectorem audiri, non citharistam, sermones patrum, non carmina gentilium. Quid Hinieldus cum Christo?*, 'God's words should be read during the meal of bishops: in that place it is fitting that a reader should be heard, not a harpist, the words of the Church Fathers, not pagan songs. What does Ingeld have to do with Christ?')

Instances of inquit being used to guide interpretation are numerous and reflect a wider trend in Old English poetic narrative techniques: it is not uncommon for narrators to comment on specific points of the narrative to clarify or reveal important implications of the text. Famous instances of this phenomenon include gnomic statements or phrases such as *þæt wæs god cyning!* (*Beowulf*, ll. 11b, 863b and 2390b), which marks the reigns of Scyld Scefing, Hrothgar and Beowulf with the narrator's seal of approval. What is striking in *Beowulf* is even more obvious in religious poems, whose didactic dimension is explicit. In these poems, the narrator's comments aim to direct not only the audience's understanding of the text, but, from there, their behaviour too. This feature is particularly noticeable in *Christ and Satan*, where narratorial comments are numerous and call for specific courses of action.⁹ While direct speech may theoretically be used to decrease this type of overt narratorial control by allowing other voices to be heard, the Old English preference for rich inquit seems to have the opposite effect and to orient the audience of the poems towards specific interpretations and responses.

It is debatable whether transitions from direct speech to narration play a comparable role in helping the narrator influence audience response. A survey of eight Old English poems, totalling a number of 161 relevant instances of direct speech,¹⁰ shows a small but relatively homogeneous group of phrases which seem to play such a role.¹¹ They follow roughly the same pattern: the adverb *swa* (exceptionally *þus*) followed by a *verbum dicendi* in the past tense,¹² and then by some information on the speaker or the speech itself. These elements often fill just one line, but additional comments or details are usually added so that the whole sequence often extends over several lines. The same initial half-line occurs three times (*swa hleoðrode*, *Guthlac A*, l. 513a, *Andreas*, l. 461a, and in the plural l. 692a), but on the whole it seems to be a rather loose formula.

These transitions are remarkable in that they are not used in replacement of initial inquit but in addition to them, so that the whole speech is heavily framed and effectively cut off not only from narration, but also from any possibility of internal response (i.e. response from the characters *in* the poem, rather than from the audience of the poem). See, for example, the frame of the messenger's

certainly suggests that some were fonder of secular heroic tales than of Christian narratives, though it is hard to extrapolate much from only one such comment.

⁹ See for example *Christ and Satan*, ll. 545-554.

¹⁰ *Beowulf*, *Genesis A* and *B*, *Christ and Satan*, *Andreas*, *Guthlac A*, *Juliana*, and *Elene*: these poems have been chosen because they represent a wide cross-section of the Old English poetic corpus, in terms of theme, genre, relation to a possible source, and manuscript. They have a total of 169 speeches, but some of them could not be taken into account because of lacunas where the conclusions should have been.

¹¹ Only twelve occurrences in total (*Beowulf*, ll. 2057-2058, 2267-2270a and 3028-3030a; *Andreas*, ll. 461-465a, 692-694a and 1455-1456; *Christ and Satan*, ll. 65-67, 279-281, 512-514 and 659-661a; *Guthlac A*, ll. 323-325a and 513-515), eighteen if slightly diverging patterns are taken into account (*Andreas*, ll. 818-821, using *þus* instead of *swa*; *Genesis B*, ll. 588-590a, where *swa* is not in the initial position and, more distant still, *Genesis A*, ll. 1314-1317a, 1492-1496, 2370-2372a and 2736-2738a, in phrases such as *Abraham fremede swa him se eca behead*, l. 2370).

¹² To be compared with Old Saxon *sô sprac*, *Heliand*, l. 949a, or Modern German *also sprach*, 'thus spoke'.

speech in *Beowulf*:

Lyt swigode
niwra spella se ðe næs gerad,
ac he soðlice sægde ofer ealle:
(...)
Swa se secg hwata secggende wæs
laðra spella; he ne leag fela
wyrda ne worda. (ll. 2897b-3030a)¹³

Here, the framing effect is particularly vivid as the conclusion forms a threefold envelope pattern with the initial inquit: *lyt swigode* – *ne leag fela*, *niwra spella* – *laðra spella* and *sægde* – *secggende*.¹⁴ It is worth noting that in this case, it is not so much meaning that the narrator is trying to control but the emotional response of the audience and their belief in the truth of what is being expressed. This type of transition, which delays narrative and forces the audience to reflect on the import of what has just been said, is particularly well suited to contemplative scenes, whether secular or religious.¹⁵

In most cases, however, the transition from speech to narration is marked much more lightly, most often with the simple use of the adverb *ða*. The survey shows that, in the eight poems considered here, return to narration is marked by the presence of *ða* in more than 60% of cases, on rare occasions in association with another marker,¹⁶ but most often alone. The predominance of *ða* makes perfect sense if one considers the role usually played by this adverb in Old English prose or verse narratives; *ða* is not only a grammatical marker, but also an essential tool for narrative organization:

(...) many narrative passages are composed of strings of largely independent units marked and coordinated by *þa*, which functions as an infinitely-repeatable marker of temporal sequentiality and carries little or no grammatical information. (Foster 1975, p. 404)

In other words, *ða* is used to introduce any narrative section possessed of a certain degree of independence and coherence, whether this passage intervenes after direct speech or after narration, or indeed whether the passage is itself direct speech or not: speech introductions very often start

¹³ ‘He kept little silent about the news, the man who rode to the headland, but he truthfully said in front of all: (...) Thus the brave man was telling the bad news; he wasn’t lying much, neither concerning facts nor words.’

¹⁴ Elsewhere, the conclusion sometimes echoes elements of the initial inquit (e.g. *Andreas*, ll. 461-465a and *Christ and Satan*, ll. 659-661a), but nowhere is the envelope pattern so perfect. My thanks to Prof. Colette Stévanovitch for pointing out this pattern to me.

¹⁵ The second part of *Beowulf*, more contemplative and elegiac than the first, has two similar instances: after the Last Survivor’s Lament (ll. 2267-2270a) and after one of Beowulf’s dying speeches (ll. 2817-2819a). Elsewhere this type of conclusion is often used to draw attention to particularly pious behaviour (*Guthlac A*, ll. 513-515a, *Andreas*, ll. 461-464, 818-821 and 1455-1457).

¹⁶ Nine instances in total: six times with another adverb (*ða git*, *Beowulf*, l. 1866a; *ða ðær*, *Andreas*, ll. 1296a and 1569a; *þa eft*, *Andreas*, l. 1675a; *þa ædre*, *Genèse A*, ll. 2296a and 2399a) and three times with an expression referring to speech (*æfter wordcwidum*, *Andreas*, ll. 1446-1447 and *Beowulf*, ll. 2752-2753; *þa hit se allwalda eall gehyrde*, ‘when the almighty heard all this’, *Genesis B*, ll. 292-295a).

with *ða* as well.¹⁷ The conventional character of this practice probably facilitated its correct interpretation by the audience. This convention relies on the enunciative properties of *ða*, which, like its modern equivalent *then*, is a marker of disconnection and contrast with a pre-established reference point (or ‘locator’). The incipit of *Juliana* may serve as a telling example:

Hwæt! We ðæt hyrdon hæleð eahtian,
 deman dædhwate, þætte in dagum gelamp
 Maximianes, se geond middangeard,
 arleas cyning, eahtnysse ahof, (...).
 Sum wæs æhtwelig æþeles cynnes
 rice gerefā. (...) Wæs him noma cenned
 Heliseus, hæfde ealdordom
 micelne ond mærne. ða his mod ongon
 fæmnan lufian, (hine fyrwet bræc),
 Iulianan. (*Juliana*, ll. 1-28a)¹⁸

Once the initial situation is established (Heliseus’ power under Maximian’s reign), *ða* introduces the first disruption of this initial state and thus the beginning of the story proper. At the same time, *ða* signals that the narrative is set in the past and thus at a time disconnected from the present of utterance. This dimension of *ða* is of particular relevance when it follows direct speech as the transition between direct discourse and narration corresponds to a transition between two distinct utterances, one of which is located with relation to the character and the other to the narrator. Direct speech is typically very much in the here and now (identification with the moment of utterance) so that the introduction of *ða* is enough to suggest not just a contrast within the same frame of reference (as it does elsewhere when *ða* follows narration), but a change of reference and thus of utterance.

As such, there is a good case for believing in the effectiveness of the device to mark return to narration after a passage of direct speech. Yet, it is striking to note the discrepancy between the ponderous nature of speech introductions and the brevity and limited semantic weight of the most frequent type of conclusion. This asymmetry has no equivalent in the Latin sources of the poems taken under consideration here. First of all, while *autem* (a link word often suggesting opposition) seems to be a fairly common equivalent of *ða*, it is only one possible speech conclusion among many, rather than the dominant marker.¹⁹ Second, Latin hagiographies are much more likely to

¹⁷ Nearly 60% of all cases, but with important variations from one poem to another: the adverb is almost systematically present in *Genesis A*, *Genesis B* and *Andreas*, but not nearly as much in *Elene*, *Beowulf* and especially *Guthlac A*, whereas *Juliana* and *Christ and Satan* show average figures.

¹⁸ ‘Listen! We have heard heroes, bold thinkers, meditate on this, which took place in Maximian’s time, the cruel king who instigated persecutions throughout the world (...). He was a powerful and prosperous prefect, of noble lineage. (...) His name was Heliseus and his power was great and famous. Then his heart started to love a girl (he was driven by curiosity), Juliana.’

¹⁹ Other frequent markers include *statim* (‘immediately’), *et* or *-que* (‘and’), *igitur* (‘then’, ‘so’), *ergo* (‘therefore’) and *tunc* (‘then’, ‘next’).

develop transitions from direct speech to narration than their Old English counterparts,²⁰ so that there is much less contrast between speech introductions and conclusions. Consider for example the following passage:

*Dæmon autem rogabat eam, dicens: Domina mea Iuliana dimitte me, iam amplius noli hominibus me ridiculum facere (...). Et dum hæc diceret dæmon, S. Iuliana trahebat eum per forum (...). (Passio Iulianae, § 12)*²¹

The corresponding Old English passage is much more asymmetrical, as its introduction is relatively long while the conclusion is signalled by *ða* alone:

Ongan þa hreowcearig
siðfæt seofian, sar cwanian,
wyrd wanian, wordum mælde:
‘Ic þec halsige, hlæfdige min,
Iuliana, fore godes sibbum,
þæt þu furþur me fraceþu ne wyrce,
edwit for eorlum, þonne þu ær dydest
(...).’ ða hine seo fæmne forlet
*æfter præchwile (...). (Juliana, ll. 536b-554a)*²²

The *Passio Iulianae* presents us with a much more closely knit passage, making use of several types of linguistic resources to ensure the coherence and smooth flow of the text: conjunctions (*autem, et* and *dum*), present participle (*dicens*), and anaphoric pronoun (*hæc*). In this way, speech introduction and conclusion act as real transitions, i.e. as connections between narration and direct discourse. By contrast, the Old English passage appears as the succession of two separate episodes, each with its own introduction, but without any genuine conclusion or transition. This tendency to add new episodes one after the other without attempting to integrate them into a subordinate structure is very characteristic of Old English poetry and one of its recognizably oral features.²³

The privileging of introductions over conclusions is also quite typical of Old English verse:

Bartlett’s influential study of Old English rhetoric (1935) lists a number of introductory formulas, but acknowledges the relative paucity of concluding formulas.²⁴ The greater weight of the introduction of speech by comparison with that of narration may also be accounted for by the persisting prominence and prestige of orality in Old English culture: obviously the devil’s speech is

²⁰ However, such is apparently not the case in the source of *Genesis A*, as the Vulgate favours concision and conjunctions such as *et* or *-que*.

²¹ ‘But the demon begged her, saying, “Juliana, my lady, let me go. I don’t want to be made even more ridiculous in front of people. (...)” And as the demon was saying those words, Saint Juliana was dragging him through the main square.’

²² ‘Then, full of sorrow, he started lamenting his expedition, deploring his pain, bemoaning his fate, and said in these words, “I beg you, my lady, Juliana, for the sake of God’s peace, not to insult me, not to disgrace me in front of the braves any more than you already did (...)” Then the girl let him go after that hard time.’

²³ See Ong ([1982] 1988, pp. 36-37) on the matter of additive rather than subordinative structures in oral narratives.

²⁴ Bartlett is mostly interested in the formulas used to introduce and conclude whole poems. However, these formulas may equally be used to introduce or conclude smaller sections within poems (Pasternack 1995, pp. 137-142).

taken as an element deserving greater emphasis than what follows.

An apparent exception to the pattern outlined here is the occasional use after direct speech of the formula *æfter ðam / þyssum wordum* ('after those / these words'), which looks very much like the type of transitions used in Latin hagiographies, such as *hoc dicto*, *haec audiens* (literally 'this having been said', 'hearing these [words]') or various phrases of similar meaning. It is found in only seven of the 161 cases examined here,²⁵ but it is distinctive enough for several critics to have noted its use (Capek 1970; Foster 1975, p. 410; Pasternack 1995, p. 47; and Fulk 2001, p. 8). Its appearance in a closely related poetic tradition, Old Saxon,²⁶ also lends credence to its status as a conventional feature of speech representation in Old English poetry.

One could legitimately suspect Latin influence as this type of transition is much more common in Latin hagiographies than in Old English poetry, but it does not seem to be the case. None of the instances noted directly translate an equivalent Latin phrase, while distribution argues against Latin influence: Cynewulf's verse is recognized as the most Latinate (Steen 2008, p. 137) and yet the formula is altogether missing from *Juliana* and *Elene*, whereas *Beowulf* has two instances. The strongest argument against Latin influence is actually the way it is used. In several cases, there is a strong suggestion that the meaning of the formula goes beyond that of a mere transition and might be better translated as 'in conformity with those words' or even 'because of those words' rather than 'after those words'. Compare the following examples:

	Scealt nu dædum rof,
æðeling anhydig,	ealle mægene
feorh ealgian;	ic ðe fullæstu.'
æfter ðam wordum	wyrm yrr e cwom,
atol inwitgæst,	oðre siðe (...). (<i>Beowulf</i> , ll. 2666b-2670) ²⁷
	'(...) ic me mid Hruntinge
dom gewyrce,	oþðe mec deað nimeð.'
æfter þæm wordum	Wedergeata leod
efste mid elne,	nalas ondsware
bidan wolde;	(<i>Beowulf</i> , ll. 1490b-1494a) ²⁸

In the first case, the meaning of *æfter* is likely temporal as there is no obvious logical connection between Wiglaf's words and the sudden onslaught of the dragon. In the second one, however, it is no mere coincidence that *Beowulf* should dive into the mere immediately after the utterance of his

²⁵ *Beowulf*, ll. 1492a, 2669a, *Andreas*, ll. 88a, 761a, 1026a, 1219a and *Christ and Satan*, l. 628a; see also *Exodus*, ll. 299a, 565a.

²⁶ *Aftar them uuordun*, *Heliand*, ll. 330a, 2030a, 2067a 2718a and 4808a. The relation between the Old English and the Old Saxon formulas is discussed by Capek (1970). It should be noted that the Old Saxon formula is used slightly differently, never appearing immediately after the end of speech but always shortly after.

²⁷ "You must now, brave in your deeds, a single-minded nobleman, defend your life with all your strength; I will help you." After those words, the dragon came angrily for a second time, the awful and evil guest (...).

²⁸ "(...) I will achieve glory with Hrunting or death will take me." In conformity with those words, the prince of the Weder-Geats hastened bravely, he had no intention of waiting for an answer.'

oath. In doing so, he shows that his deeds conform to his words, which is an essential characteristic of the true hero in Old English poetry (Clemoes 1979; 1995, pp. 157-166; Orchard 2003, pp. 203-237). All other uses of *æfter ðam / þyssum wordum* similarly point to a strong connection between the words pronounced and the subsequent actions: a prayer has immediate effects (*Andreas*, l. 88a), a crowd reacts to a particularly impressive speech (*Andreas*, l. 761a, *Exodus*, ll. 299a and 565a), a divine prediction comes true (*Andreas*, l. 1219a), demons enforce a divine condemnation (*Christ and Satan*, l. 628a).²⁹ Such uses may be compared with instances where *æfter* has a clear causative meaning, as in *Beowulf*, ll. 1605b-1607a, where the blade dissolves because of the blood.³⁰ As such, it seems that *æfter ðam / þyssum wordum* is only occasionally a device enabling the narrator to create a smoother transition between two units of the narrative, and more often a formula drawing attention to an existing connection between two events.

Quite clearly then, the stylistic conventions of Old English poetry do not require smooth transitions between speech and narration, but narrators do not shun from using such points of contact between speech and action to suggest specific interpretations whenever appropriate. What is perhaps most remarkable about the representation of direct speech as separate blocks is the fact that it is perfectly consistent with Old English narrative structures more generally. Whereas modern narratives tend to present direct speech in a way that differentiates it radically from narration (both visually and stylistically), Old English verse seems to treat it as something maybe particularly important, but certainly not distinct in nature from the rest of the narrative.

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²⁹ One possible exception might be *Andreas* 1025, which occurs after a lacuna and thus cannot be interpreted.

³⁰ *þa þæt sweord ongan / æfter heaþoswate hildegecelum, / wigbil wanian*. 'Then the sword, the battle-blade, started to disappear because of the war-sweat, the drops of blood.'

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