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THE METAMORPHOSIS OF SODOM:
THE PS-CYPRIAN 'DE SODOMA' AS AN OVIDIAN EPISODE[1]

BY RALPH HEXTER

The mysteries and challenges presented by the Latin poem known as *De Sodoma* are many and varied.[2] The identity of its author will likely never be known. Date and place of composition can only be expressed in terms of probabilities, and portions of the poem are extremely difficult to read and interpret. I am currently involved in the preparation of a critical edition, with translation and commentary, of both *De Sodoma* and its shorter, perhaps superior companion-piece *De Iona*, in the hope that this might pave the way for easier reading.[3] In the present discussion I also address problems of readabil-

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[1] I first read a paper bearing this title at the annual meeting of the Americal Philological Association in December 1983. I thank the initiator of the APA sessions on Medieval Latin, John Clark, members of the original audience for the questions which first led me to expand my horizons, and all those who helped shape the present essay.

[2] *De Sodoma* is listed as no. 7477 in D. Schaller and E. Könsgen, *Initia carminum latinorum saeculo undecimo antiquiorum* (Göttingen 1977). Rudolf Peiper's text (CSEL 23 [1891] 212–20), though now nearly a century old, remains the standard one. It replaced W. Hartel's edition (CSEL 3.3 [1871] 289–97); prior to that the poem was accessible alongside the authentic works of Tertullian (e.g., PL 2.1101–1106).

[3] *De Iona* is listed as Schaller–Könsgen 12236; Peiper's text: CSEL 23.221–26; see also PL 2.1107–14 and CSEL 3.3.297–301. While the juxtaposition of five cities destroyed with one saved, Nineveh, might occur to anyone conversant with the Old Testament, the author of the two poems may well have been influenced by any number of earlier exegetes. For a massive account of the Jonah tradition, see Yves-Marie Duval, *Le livre de Jonas dans la littérature chrétienne grecque et latine. Sources et influence de Commentaire sur Jonas de saint Jérome* (Paris 1973). Duval discusses *De Iona* pp. 506–508. Lucian Müller ('Zu Tertullians Gedichten *de Sodoma* und *de Iona*,' *Rheinisches Museum* 22 [1867] 329–44, 464; here 330) had already compared Sulpicius Severus, *Historia Sacra* 1.84. Duval finds further comparisons of Sodom and Nineveh among the works of Sulpicius Severus (p. 496), Romanos (pp. 485f.), Augustine (p. 512 n. 111: PL 39.1610–11; PL 40.334), and Fulgentius, Bishop of Ruspe (p. 549 n. 345: *Epistula ad Probam* 20 [ed. J. Fraipont; CCL 91.224]). Sodom is prominent in the first paragraph of Book 1 of Jerome's commentary on Jonah, where it serves not as scriptural parallel but as part of a philological argument. Writing the commentary in 396, shortly after completion of his translation of the Biblical book based on *hebraea veritas* (391–94), Jerome is at pains to explain divergences from the LXX. He claims that while his translation differs from that of the LXX in the conclusion of Jonah 1.2 — he has 'quia ascendit malitia eius coram me,' the LXX has 'ascendit clamor malitiae eius ad me' (ὅτι ἀνέβη ἡ κραυγὴ τῆς κακίας αὐτῆς πρός με) — the difference is unimportant: 'Porro quod ait "ascendit malitia eius coram me" sive "clamor malitiae eius ad me," hoc ipsum est quod in Genesi dicitur: "Clamor Sodomae et Gomorrae multiplicatus est" [Gen. 18.20]; et ad Cain: "Vox sanguinis fratris tui clamat ad me de terra" [Gen. 4.10]' (Paul Antin, ed., *Saint Jérome. Sur Jonas* [Sources chrétiennes 43; Paris 1956] 56; PL 25.1119).

ity, returning to that aspect of the poem which first attracted my attention and which, on balance, seems to offer the greatest help comprehending it: its relation to Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. While the poet of *De Sodoma* makes explicit and dramatic reference to the tale of Phaethon as told by Ovid, Ovid's text functions at a yet more basic level. In my view, the defining characteristic of *De Sodoma* is its structure as an Ovidian episode. This structure sets it apart from earlier Latin Biblical epics, canonical school texts by the time *De Sodoma* was composed. Read against the backdrop of its Ovidian model, the poem reveals a unity and coherence which has previously not been recognized, and extends our appreciation of the interests of some early medieval audiences and of the learning and artistry of at least one early medieval poet.

Not the least of the poem's mysteries, to my mind, is that *De Sodoma* has received so little scholarly attention. Few doubt that it was written between the fourth and seventh centuries,[4] though we have no knowledge of its existence until the ninth century, when it appears in a number of well-known manuscript collections of pseudepigraphic biblical poetry. Carolingian scribes attributed it to both Tertullian and Cyprian:[5] to Tertullian with the titles *De*

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[4] Peiper believed the author of *De Sodoma* and *De Iona* to have been a contemporary countryman of the mysterious 'Cyprian,' author of the *Heptateuchos*, adding 'post Hegesippum i. Ambrosium is scripsit, antiquam uersionem bibliorum secutus, in re metrica saeculi quinti alumnus' (CSEL 23.xxviii n. 1). The first assertion still establishes the author as later than the fourth century, even if the identification of Hegesippus with the young Ambrose is no longer admitted. What Peiper means by the second assertion is that the poem cannot be later than the sixth century: 'nam sexto saeculo ex usu catholicae ecclesiae disparuit illa [sc. vetusta versio Latina]' (xxvi). In fact, there is not enough evidence to support either the major or the minor premise of Peiper's syllogism, nor, for that matter, his third assertion. Stanislas Gamber represents the common view in the wake of Peiper: he places *De Sodoma* at the end of the patristic period (fifth century rather than fourth) and reports, 'qu'il ait été composé en Gaule, ainsi que la plupart des traductions en vers de la Genèse' (*Le Livre de la 'Genèse' dans la poésie latine au V*ᵐᵉ *siècle* [Paris 1899] 30). I believe the poem is likely a yet later production (see below, pp. 21–22). It may still have been written in Gaul — indeed, I think that is overwhelmingly likely — but the presumptive force of Gamber's parallel is less, the later the date.

[5] Who is meant by 'Cyprian'? The famous Bishop of Carthage; the less well-known Bishop of Toulon (b. Marseilles, 476; d. October 3, 546), pupil of Caesarius of Arles and author of a life of Caesarius in two books (MGH SRM 3.457–501), as well as a letter to Bishop Maximus of Geneva (MGH Epp. 3.434–36); or another, otherwise unknown, Cyprian? In his edition of Avitus, Peiper proposed the Bishop of Toulon as the poet, but remained non-comittal (MGH AA 6.2 [1883] lxiii). Eight years later, editing the poems ascribed to Cyprian, he argued that the author came from Gaul and lived in the first half of the fifth century, but was otherwise unidentifiable (CSEL 23.xxiv). The corpus of this ghostly *Cyprian poeta* quickly came to include *De Sodoma* and *De Iona* as well as the poetry on the entire heptateuch (Peiper) and the utterly dissimilar parody known as the *Cena Cypriana*. To say *De Sodoma* was attributed to 'Cyprian of Gaul' is to say nothing at all, at least nothing that would have made sense to any Carolingian scholar. See Reinhard Herzog, *Die Bibelepik der lateinischen Spätantike. Formgeschichte einer erbaulichen Gattung* (Munich 1975) 56–59.

excidio Sodomę and *De incendio Sodomorum* and to the latter simply as *De Sodoma*. Not earlier than the second quarter of the ninth century, Mico of St. Riquier excerpted verses from it for his florilegium; he attributed the seventy-second of *De Sodoma*'s 167 hexameters ('restituunt tectis demens et uulgus ibidem') to Vergil, an attribution which strongly suggests that neither Mico nor his contemporaries had any idea who wrote the poem, but that they regarded it as of some antiquity.[6]

Scholars have generally abandoned hope of discovering the identity of *De Sodoma*'s author, and Marcel Dando's attempt to attribute four pseudepigrapha, *De Sodoma* and *De Iona* among them, to Alcimus Avitus, who is supposed to have composed them by a convoluted and bizarre process of self-cannibalism, remains unconvincing.[7] It is only from the point of view of its reception that *De Sodoma* has been well, if briefly, treated. Reinhard Herzog presents the *De Sodoma* as one of several 'extra-canonical pseudepigrapha' which had circulated anonymously through the eighth century, and which were then suddenly and promiscuously attributed to one of a number of prominent authors: Alcimus Avitus, Prosper, Cyprian, Tertullian, even Ovid.[8]

Likewise, scholars have shown little energy in explicating the text of the poem since the last third of the nineteenth century, when interest in the Leiden manuscript, Vossianus Q.86, and its readings provoked a flurry of activity. Lucian Müller, in articles, and Hartel and Peiper in their editions, concentrated primarily on textual problems, although Müller does take time to praise the two epyllia, as he calls them.[9] In 1899, Stanislas Gamber included

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[6] Mico's Florilegium is edited by Traube, MGH PLAC 3.2, and studied by A. Van de Vyver, 'Dicuil et Micon de St. Riquier,' *Revue belge de philosophie et d'histoire* 14 (1935) 25ff. According to Herzog, the date of its compilation must be shifted from ca. 830 to the middle of the ninth century (*Bibelepik* 55 n. 33).

[7] 'Alcimus Avitus (c. 450–c. 518) as the author of *De Resurrectione mortuorum, De pascha (De cruce), De Sodoma* and *De Iona* formerly attributed to Tertullian and Cyprian,' *Classica et Mediaevalia* 26 (1965) 258–75. Dismissed also by Michael Roberts, *Biblical Epic and Rhetorical Paraphrase in Late Antiquity* (ARCA, Classical and Medieval Texts, Papers and Monographs 16; Liverpool 1985) 101 n. 159, with reference to A. Roncoroni, 'L'epica biblica di Avito di Vienne,' *Vetera Christianorum* 9 (1972) 318–24.

[8] *Bibelepik* 55. By 'extra-canonical,' Herzog means outside the canon of major Bible epics, discussed immediately below. Dieter Kartschoke (*Bibeldichtung. Studien zur Geschichte der epischen Bibelparaphrase von Juvencus bis Otfrid von Weissenburg* [Munich 1975] is also concerned with questions of reception; his focus on Biblical 'paraphrases' places *De Sodoma* on the edge of his purview.

[9] Lucian Müller, 'Zu Tertullians Gedichten' (above n. 3); Müller discusses the conjectures of Moriz Haupt (*Hermes* 5 [1871] 316) in 'Zu dem Gedicht de Sodoma,' *Rheinisches Museum* 27 (1872) 486–88. Müller, hidden behind the anonymity of 'L. M.,' rates his own contribution highly: '... das carmen de Sodoma, in dem man vor L. Müllers Publicationen aus dem Vossianus kaum 5 Zeilen lesen konnte...' (488). Indeed, despite his own claims in 1867 not to

De Sodoma in his study of poetic versions of Genesis; while his work is, on the whole, superficial and unsatisfactory, he deserves mention as the only scholar to comment on the poet's language and prosody.[10]

As far as I can determine, only one person has dared to publish an English translation of the poem, and he was a man of God: the Rev. S. Thelwall, whose version appears in the fourth volume of *The Antenicene Fathers*.[11] Granted, Thelwall's is not a scholar's translation. He did not avail himself of Hartel's text, published in 1871, but used Migne's 1844 text, itself based on a variety of sixteenth- through eighteenth-century editions. Nonetheless, his translation of so difficult a poem and his solutions of certain cruces — about which he is excessively modest — deserve notice. I have found him helpful even when I have disagreed with him. Unless otherwise noted, all translations, from *De Sodoma* as well as from other sources, are my own. Quotations are based on Peiper's text,[12] controlled by a fresh examination of microfilms of the texts from Laon, Paris, and Leiden; I have not yet been able to examine the Vienna manuscripts, now in Naples.[13]

What follows may be regarded as a series of graded experiments in reading intertextually. Intertextuality is a modish word, and will put off some readers on that account alone. It can, however, be applied with rigor and sophistica-

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overrate the readings of the Vossianus manuscript (V), which he is bringing to light, he does just that. Still V is sometimes the sole witness to the correct text (lines 91–92 and 162, possibly lines 117, 126, 156), and Müller's work rendered all previous editions obsolete. W. Hartel, who edited *De Sodoma* among the works of Cyprian in CSEL 3 (1871) 289, was the first to be able to take Müller's work into account.

[10] *Le livre de la 'Genèse'* (above n. 4) 180–200. There are some few metrical features of the poem that are unparalleled in classical poets: *adhaerere* (ˉ ˘ - ˉ, line 150), *spiritus* (a plural - ˉ ˉ, line 28); *juvenale habet* (a hiatus, if Peiper's correction stands, line 51). None of these, however, constitutes an irregularity in the context of the other poems Gamber is analyzing.

[11] Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, eds., *The Antenicene Fathers. Translations of the Writings of the Fathers down to A.D. 325* (New York 1885; repr. of Edinburgh ed.) 4.129–32. Schaller and Könsgen omit mention of it, presumably in accordance with their stated principle to list only 'Übersetzungen ... wissenschaftlicher Qualität' (p. x).

[12] Peiper based his text primarily on the readings, if not on autoscopy, of three manuscripts: Laon 279, fols. 3ᵛᵇ–5ʳᵃ [saec. ix] (his L); Paris, B.N. lat. 2772, fols. 70ʳ–74ʳ [saec. x] (P); and Leiden, Vossianus Q.86, fols. 81ᵛ–83ʳ [saec. ix] (V), the readings of which he takes from Müller's collation ('Zu Tertullians Gedichten' [above, n. 3] 333–40). Peiper did not collate L's sister manuscript, Laon 273, fols. 5ʳᵃ–6ʳᵇ. Gamber (above, n. 4) 30 refers to yet another manuscript, 'Cluny 526,' which Hartel and Peiper are supposed to have collated carefully. This is, however, known only from the Cluny catalogue (ca. 1160) edited by L. Delisle, where it is item 526 (*Le Cabinet des Manuscrits de la Bibliothèque Imperiale* [Paris 1868–81] 2.459f.; Peiper CSEL 23.i–ii; cf. vi: 'qualis *erat* Cluniacensis 524 aut 526' [my emphasis]).

[13] The current Neapolitan numbers of the two 'Vienna' manuscripts appear to be Mus. Naz. 2 (*olim* Vindobonensis 16; fols. 52ᵛ–53ᵛ) and Mus. Naz. 55 (*olim* Vindobonensis 4194; fols. Iʳ–viiiᵛ); cf. E. Martini, 'Sui codici Napoletani restituiti dall'Austria,' *Atti della Reale Accademia di Archeologie, Lettere et Belle Arti* N.s. 9 (1926) 157–82, 169 and 178, respectively.

tion to a system of relations between two or among several texts that is charac-
terized by creative tension. A simple comparison of texts, even of a text and
its source, does not necessarily reveal a relationship of intertextuality worthy
of the name; such would be comparisons of *De Sodoma* and Genesis 19, or *De
Sodoma* and the canonical Biblical epics. Rather, while Genesis 19 provides
the story or material for *De Sodoma*, its author explicitly directs the reader to
the story of Phaethon as told by Ovid and thereby specifies the text with
which and against which one must read *De Sodoma*: the *Metamorphoses*. Even
after the reader, the modern reader at least, has turned to arcane texts to gloss
the enigmatic concluding portions of the poem, the *Metamorphoses* remains the
subtext, as I shall show. In a second stage of intertextual reading, one cham-
pions of intertextuality may regard as an overly literal interpretation of the
term, I consider the poem in the context of the ninth-century manuscripts that
preserve it. While there is no assurance that these collections reflect the
interests of the first audience of the poem, they represent the horizons of
expectations of some early readers, inestimably closer tō the circumstances of
its creation than are we.

Of course, the entire genre of which *De Sodoma* represents a subspecies,
Latin Biblical epic, demands intertextual analysis, predicated as it is on the
translation of one set of texts — the Bible — into the language and aesthetic
standards abstracted from another — classical hexametric poetry. The most
drastic recasting of the Christian message in a classical mold is that of the
fourth-century Proba.[14] Her program is clear from the dedication to Arcadius:
'dignare Maronem / mutatum in melius diuino agnoscere sensu.'[15] She patches
together her account of creation and the passion of Christ largely out of
recognizable Vergilian half-lines. Jerome's disdain for Proba's work is well
known,[16] and although significant contrasts emerge, Proba's method hardly
allows sufficient time for the original Vergilian context of the words to rever-
berate in the reader's mind. More sophisticated Christian poets composed their
own verses; but because they continued the practices of classical imitation,
their 'original' hexameters are full of echoes of Vergil, Statius, and the other
classical Latin epic poets. A list of the major authors and titles which, to

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[14] The standard edition is Schenkl's in CSEL 16 (1888) 569–609, replacing the text in PL
19.803–18. Elizabeth A. Clark and Diane F. Hatch, *The Golden Bough, The Oaken Cross. The
Virgilian Cento of Faltonia Betitia Proba* (American Academy of Religion, Texts and Transla-
tions 5; Chico, Calif. 1981), conveniently reprint Schenkl's text opposite their own translation;
they also provide some analysis and full bibliography, but appear to have overlooked Her-
zog's sophisticated treatment of the cento (above, n. 5, 3–51; bibliography, p. 3).

[15] Vv. 3–4; cf. her invocation: 'praesens, deus, erige mentem:/Vergilium cecinisse loquar pia
munera Christi,' vv. 22–23.

[16] 'Puerilia sunt haec et circulatorum ludo similia': *Ep.* 53.7 (ed. I. Hilberg, CSEL 54 [1910]
453f.; Clark and Hatch 104–105).

varying degrees, constituted a formative element of Christian literary educa-
tion throughout the entire Middle Ages should serve to remind modern readers
of the scope of the program of transcribing the scriptures into classicizing
poetry:[17]

C. Vettius Aquilinus Juvencus, *Evangeliorum libri* (ca. 325–330)[18]
Caelius Sedulius, *Carmen paschale* (ca. 450)[19]
Claudius Marius Victorius, *Alethia* (ca. 450)[20]
Blossius Aemilius Dracontius, *De laudibus Dei* (ca. 490)[21]
Alcimus Ecdicius Avitus, *De spiritalis historiae gestis* (ca. 500)[22]
Arator, *De actibus apostolorum* (ca. 540)[23]
'Cyprian of Gaul,' *Heptateuchos*[24]
'Hilarius Pictaviensis,' *Metrum in genesin ad Leonem Papam.*[25]

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[17] There is a need for a book-length survey in English of the Latin Biblical epic. M. Roberts
(above, n. 7) analyzes the major Biblical epics (not *De Sodoma* or *De Iona*) in the context of
late antique paraphrastic practice; he provides extensive references to a wide range of secon-
dary material. Two earlier studies by Roberts focus on Avitus: 'The prologue to Avitus' *De
spiritalis historiae gestis*: Christian Poetry and Poetic Licence,' *Traditio* 36 [1980] 399–406,
and 'Rhetoric and Poetic Imitation in Avitus' Account of the Crossing of the Red Sea (*De
Spir. Hist. Gest.* 5.371–702),' *Traditio* 39 [1983] 29–80. Judith McClure, 'The Biblical Epic
and Its Audience in Late Antiquity,' in Francis Cairns, ed., *Papers of the Liverpool Latin
Seminar* 3 (ARCA, Classical and Medieval Texts, Papers and Monographs 7; Liverpool 1981),
305–21, focuses on contemporary Biblical scholars and exegetes as readers of Biblical epic.
She makes no mention of either *De Sodoma* or *De Iona*. For general surveys, see Klaus
Thraede, 'Epos,' *Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum* 5 (Stuttgart 1962) 1006–42, Kart-
schoke, *Bibeldichtung*, and Herzog, *Bibelepik* (above, nn. 8 and 5, respectively). Of wider
purview are: F. J. E. Raby, *A History of Christian Latin Poetry* (Oxford 1953); J. Fontaine,
*Naissance de la poésie dans l'occident chrétien. Esquisse d'une histoire de la poésie latine chré-
tienne du iiie au vi^e siècle* (Paris 1981). The central role of Vergil in pagan and Christian
literary culture cannot be over-emphasized. One study relevant to the present context is A.
Hudson-Williams, 'Virgil and the Christian Latin Poets,' *Proceedings of the Virgil Society* 6
(1966–67) 11–21. Carl P. E. Springer, *The Gospel as Epic in Late Antiquity: The* Paschale
Carmen *of Sedulius* (Supplements to Vigiliae Christianae 2 [Leiden 1988]) gives a brief over-
view of the genre (5–7); note particularly his discussion of Sedulius' poem as a Christian
Aeneid (76–83).
[18] Four books, ed. J. Huemer, CSEL 24 (1891).
[19] Five books, ed. J. Huemer, CSEL 10 (1885).
[20] Three books, ed. P. F. Hovingh, CCL 128 (1960) 115–93, 269–97; also ed. C. Schenkl,
CSEL 16 (1888) 335–498.
[21] Three books, ed. and trans. Francisco Corsaro (Catania 1962); ed. F. Vollmer, MGH AA
14 (1905) 23–113; also PL 60.695–770.
[22] Five books, ed. R. Peiper, MGH AA 6.2 (1883) 201–74; also PL 59.323–68.
[23] Two books, ed. A. P. McKinlay, CSEL 72 (1951).
[24] Ed. R. Peiper, CSEL 23 (1981) 1–208; also PL 19.345–80.
[25] Ed. R. Peiper, CSEL 23 (1891) 231–39; also PL 50.1287–92. — Any list is provisional
and somewhat arbitrary. We know of lost Biblical epics (e.g., the *metrum Severi episcopi in
evang. libri xii*, 489 verses from books 8, 9, and 10 of which have been discovered by B.
Bischoff, and three epics of Cresconius: see Herzog, pp. xxxii–xxxiii). Other Christian epics

While the authors of this genre mentioned above imitated their formal models, the classical Latin epics, at a range of distances, each chose, by and large, to transcribe at least one book of the Bible. By contrast, the author of *De Sodoma* selected one episode. This is not unparalleled. Also attributed to Hilary is a *Carmen de martyrio Maccabaeorum*.[26] And even the 'canonical' epics based on one of the shorter books — Arator's on the Acts of the Apostles, for example — can fall into episodes.[27] Episodic composition, the building up of larger units out of a series of set-pieces, has often been regarded as the hall-mark of rhetorical composition, itself a concomitant of rhetorical education. Consideration of the Biblical epics as examples of the rhetorical exercise of paraphrase is not new, and Michael Roberts has recently published a book-length analysis of the major Biblical epics as rhetorical verse paraphrases.[28] Citing three verses of the *Alethia* —

> hinc iam fas mihi sit quaedam praestringere, quaedam
> sollicito trepidum penitus transmittere cursu,
> mutata quaedam serie transmissa referre —

Roberts notes that the poet, Claudius Marius Victorius, here neatly lists 'three characteristic procedures of the paraphrase: abbreviation (144), omission (144–45) and transposition (146).'[29]

De Sodoma uses these and other techniques described by Roberts. For example, the poet of *De Sodoma* varies the Biblical repetition of the word *angeli* (Gen. 19.1, 15) with 'duo de grege missi / angelica forma iuuenes' (27–28), *angelici iuuenes* (71), and *iuuenes* (83).[30] Roberts finds that many of the writers, especially of Old Testament epic, include elaborate set speeches following epic models. The poet of *De Sodoma* omits several brief speeches in the Biblical account,[31] but reproduces most of the rest. The first two involve

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— e.g., Prudentius' *Psychomachia* or Paulinus of Périgueux's life of St. Martin of Tours — were widely read, but are in no sense *Biblical* epics. My term 'major' is purposely vague; Herzog rightly bases his distinction between 'canonical' and 'extra-canonical' on the documentable reception of the poems; see below.

[26] Ed. R. Peiper, CSEL 23 (1891) 240–54.

[27] See Kartschoke (above, n. 8) 93: 'Arator setzt rigoroser noch als Sedulius sein *carmen perpetuum* aus ausgewählten, unverbunden aneinandergereihten Episoden zusammen, die er *titulus*artig zunächst in Prosa wiedergibt mit der stereotypen Einleitung *De eo ubi* .... Von eigentlichen *Tituli* unterscheiden sich diese Prosaeinleitungen durch ihre größere Ausführlichkeit, die sie in die Nähe wirklicher Prosaparaphrasen rücken.' Cf. M. Roberts (above, n. 7) 176, 180.

[28] See above, n. 7.

[29] *Alethia* 1.144–46: Roberts 98.

[30] On *variatio*, see *ibid.* 198.

[31] He does not reproduce in direct speech either Lot's first words to the angels or their response (Gen. 19.2); he only summarizes Lot's speech to his prospective sons-in-law (Gen. 19.4; line 79).

varying degrees of expansion. Lot's speech to the crowd (Genesis 19.7–8) is
expanded with traditional, though certainly unbiblical, zoological arguments
that purport to demonstrate the 'unnaturalness' of homosexual intercourse:

> Loth contra supplex: 'Ne uos nunc pacta libido
> incendat, iuuenes, ipsam foedare iuuentam
> luxu, quo genitura uocant, quo semina frustra,
> quo nullae nuptant animae,[32] non lustra colentes,
> non stabulis reduces, non undis subter hiantes,
> nec quae· pinnarum modulis prope nubila pendent,
> nec quae per terram protracto corpore manant,
> omne genus luxu genus est: sed femina coniunx
> omnibus, et numquam cuiquam nisi femina mater.' (42–50)[33]

The Sodomites' response (56–60) is slightly more extended than the original
(19.9). The subsequent series of angelic exhortations in De Sodoma closely
follows the speeches in Genesis (76–78 ~ 19.12–13, 85–87 ~ 19.15, 89–92 ~
19.17), but Lot's request for a nearer place of safety in De Sodoma is a drastic
compression (95–96) of a windy original (19.18–20). Finally, the angels' re-
sponse, in direct speech in Genesis (19.21–2), is rendered by the terse *favere
petenti* in De Sodoma (96).

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[32] On the usage of *animae* (v. 45) to mean 'animals,' see Gamber (above, n. 4) 191.

[33] While it has long been assumed that the peculiar sin of the Sodomites was homosexual-
ity, a number of recent investigators argue that in the Biblical account the Sodomites are
punished for the sin of impiety, specifically for their breach of hospitality: so Derrick Sherwin
Bailey, *Homosexuality and the Western Christian Tradition* (London 1955); John McNeill, *The
Church and the Homosexual* (Kansas City, Mo. 1976) 42–50; Marvin Pope in *The Interpreter's
Dictionary of the Bible*, Supplementary Volume (Nashville 1976) 415–17; John Boswell, *Chris-
tianity, Social Tolerance and Homosexuality: Gay People in Western Europe from the Beginning
of the Christian Era to the Fourteenth Century* (Chicago 1980) 93–98. What appears to be a new
consensus of Old Testament scholars concerning the events narrated in Genesis is less signifi-
cant, in the present context, than the documentable history of Biblical exegesis. While it
seems that sexual overtones, at first heterosexual, later homosexual, first entered the inter-
pretive tradition only after the story of Sodom was composed (Boswell 93, 97–98), they
entered it long before De Sodoma was composed. The homosexual interpretation became
popular, though the best scholars in their best moments have hesitated. For example, it is
interesting that while the *Vetus Latina* translated συγγενώμεθα (Gen. 19.5) as *coitum facia-
mus*, and while Jerome rendered it *concumbamus* when he quoted the verse in his commentary
on Isaiah (PL 24.65D; M. Adriaen, ed., CCL 73 [1963] 51), in the Vulgate, when he was
working from the Hebrew, Jerome close the more literal and more ambiguous *cognoscamus*.
Not long after, however, Orosius is quite explicit about the reference to male homosexuality
(*Historia adversus paganos* 1.5.8; CSEL 5.46). Still, though the poet of De Sodoma no doubt
assumes he is following the soundest exegetical tradition, he seems also to acknowledge the
original interpretation further on when, after the conflagration, in a passage which summa-
rizes the passing of Sodom, he gives the Sodomites' inhospitality extraordinary prominence:
> Nusquam sunt Sodomi, nusquam illic impia lucent
> moenia, cum dominis domus omnis inhospita nusquam (127–28).

Analysis along such lines indeed increases our appreciation of many of the details of *De Sodoma*. However, one would miss the essence of *De Sodoma* if one overlooked the fact that the tension between classical and Biblical subtexts, which will explode at the climax of the poem, is present in the themes and language of the opening lines. The first twenty verses comprise a prologue to the action. The great flood is past, and in lines 5–9 the poet refers to the Lord's covenant with Noah (Gen. 9.8–17); with the rainbow, God promises never again to destroy the living beings of the earth by a flood. Significantly, the poet of *De Sodoma* does not mention Noah by name. His language is heavy with classical, especially Ovidian overtones. While we do have the Vulgate's *arcus*, more colorful language follows:

> frenandis uarium pluuiis mandauerat arcum
> purpureo et uiridi signantem nubila limbo
> Iridis in nomen.... (6–8)

Iris is the classical goddess of the rainbow, but the pointed emphasis on the 'name' of the goddess Iris in line 8 appears to undercut the reference altogether.[34] The poet is sounding here, faintly and for the first time, his challenge to classical poetry, a challenge which will become more explicit as he goes on. He does not, however, avail himself of every opportunity to pit one tradition against the other. While one might conceivably read the next lines of the prologue ('Sed recidiua hominum pariter cum gente secunda / impietas iterumque mali noua pullulat aetas': 9–10) against the classical myth of the successive ages of mankind, our author gives us no specific directive to do so.[35]

In line 12, the first mention of the land of Sodom occurs: 'sic Sodomum meruit tellus ardentibus uri / roribus et finis portendere signa futuri' (12–13). Interpretation of the destruction of Sodom as a prefiguration of the final judgment is the only hint of typological exegesis in the poem.[36] Likewise, in *De Iona* the poet only briefly touches, at what is probably but not certainly the end of that poem, on the interpretation of Jonah in the whale's belly as an allegory of Christ in the tomb. In *De Sodoma*, the author is more interested in presenting the horrors of Sodom in light of other texts:

> effera luxuries illic, inimica pudoris,
> instar legis erat, fugeret quam praescius hospes

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[34] Either manuscript reading (*in nomen, huic nomen*) makes this point; it becomes all the clearer if Müller's clever conjecture *Iridis en numen!* is admitted ([above, n. 3] 464).

[35] In the Christian tradition, the coordination of Noah's flood and subsequent devastations is not merely temporal; it is thematic, even theological. Cf. the significance of the episodes of Lot's wife and Jonah in Avitus' *De spiritalis historiae gestis* (Roberts [above, n. 7] 214–18; cf. 225).

[36] Cf. 'testem iudicii sui [i.e. Dei] futuram...,' Orosius, *Historia adversus paganos* 1.5.9 (CSEL 5.46).

ante uel ad Scythicas uel apud Busiridis aras
exoptans per sacra necem caestusque cruore
fundere Bebrycum et Lybicas satiare palaestras
Antaei, Circaea nouas per pocula formas
sumere, quam laesum Sodomis amittere sexum. (14–20)

The prescient guest[37] would need to be well-versed in classical literature to understand that he ought to prefer lodging with any one of several classically inhospitable hosts — the Scythians,[38] Busiris,[39] Bebryx,[40] Antaeus[41] — rather than with the Sodomites. The fifth member of this series resonates on yet another level: with the words 'Circaea nouas per pocula formas / sumere' (19–20), the poet sounds the theme of metamorphosis in language that deforms but unmistakably recalls the opening lines of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*: 'In noua fert animus mutatas dicere formas / corpora' (1.1–2).

The central narrative portion of the poem (lines 21–106) follows Genesis 19 closely to the point at which Sodom is destroyed. After a general statement of heaven's wrath at the sexual outrages of Sodom, and of God's choice of the proper time for retribution, the narrator paraphrases Genesis 19 for the first time, bringing on the 'duo de grege missi / angelica forma iuuenes' (27–28), who approach Sodom. Lot, sitting by the gate, 'de stirpe piorum / transuena, sapiens iustique colonus . . .' (30–31), 'quamquam diuinos nescius ultro / aduocat' (36–37 — this last point an obvious inference, but strictly an addition, to the Biblical account), presses them to accept his hospitality.

The classic simile of the tree is twice applied to Lot. First the poet compares him, for his wisdom and piety, to a wide-branching, goodly tree: 'solet utilis arbor in / siluis latitare ferens uelut hospita fructus' (32–33). Later, after Lot, eager to uphold public morals, has offered his two virgin daughters to the Sodomites, the raging crowd, particularly incensed that a resident alien would

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[37] 'Praescius hospes': literally 'prescient,' or merely 'very wise'? If the former, the poet is already preparing the ground for his subsequent, astounding claim that Graeco-Roman myth followed on the events of Genesis. From this perspective, a guest with these preferences would indeed be prescient.

[38] The barbarous inhospitality of the Scythians was proverbial in Classical literature. The audience of *De Sodoma* would have had no first-hand experience of this fierce tribe.

[39] Busiris, an Egyptian king, sacrificed strangers until he himself was slain by Hercules: cf. Vergil, *Georgics* 3.5; Ovid, *Tristia* 3.11.39; Macrobius, *Saturnalia* 3.5.9; *Myth. Vat.* 1.65.

[40] Bebryx, king in Bebrycia in Asia Minor (later Bithynia), excelled at the *caestus*, a type of boxing with gloves housing metal balls. He sacrificed all foreigners beaten by him until Pollux bested and then killed him: see Valerius Flaccus 4, esp. lines 99, 220, 261, 290, 315. A recently discovered eleventh- or twelfth-century library catalogue from Lobbes has revived arguments for a French connection for the tradition of Valerius; cf. M. D. Reeve in L. D. Reynolds, ed. *Texts and Transmission: A Survey of the Latin Classics* (Oxford 1983) 427, with further bibliography.

[41] Antaeus, the Libyan giant, was finally slain by Hercules: cf. Ovid, *Met.* 9.184.

dare to question their laws and customs, wish to vent their passions on him
alone. They storm the gate of Lot's home, providing the poet an opportunity
for the traditional comparison of his hero to a tree withstanding raging waters:

> si qua illic arbor rapidis offenditur undis
> haut mansura diu, quantum radice licebit
> crinitas durare moras, ubi subter adesam
> perdit humum, circumfosso iam caudice pendens
> huc illuc certam differt incerta ruinam.
> haut aliter Loth in media uertigine uulgi
> nutabat uinci prope iam, sed diua potestas
> subuenit, angelici iuuenes de limine raptum
> restituunt tectis, demens et uulgus ibidem
> poenarum auspiciis interdum lumine multant. (64–73)

Over the following thirty or so lines, the angels reveal God's decrees to Lot
and urge him to flee with his family. In vain Lot speaks to his daughters'
fiancés. At dawn the angels lead him, his wife, and his two daughters from
Sodom, admonishing them not to look behind them as they go. Lot begs that
he be required to go no farther than the 'little' town opposite Sodom, and his
request is granted. The emphasis on the size of the town becomes clear once
one realizes that the poet is playing on the etymology of Segor, the Septuagint
(henceforth LXX) spelling of the Hebrew za^cir, which means 'little' or 'insigni-
ficant.' When the poet calls it a 'little' city and has Lot say, 'nec longa[42] nec
magna mihi est' (96), he is describing how the town got its name: 'Segor inde
loco nomen uox barbara nouit' (98). The poet of De Sodoma did not know
more Hebrew than he picked up from exegetes and Biblical scholars such as
Jerome, but he knew from the Vulgate that Segor was a significant name, and
from commentaries what that significance was.[43] This etymology is one of a
number of etiologies; their significance will emerge in due course.

At this juncture the poet is giving a close paraphrase of Genesis. Verse 98
(cited immediately above) renders 19.22b, and the poet simply reverses the
order of the two clauses of 19.23 ('Sol egressus est super terram, et Lot ingres-
sus est Segor') and casts them in the present to form line 99: 'tunc Loth

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[42] longe Peiper: a ex e V.

[43] 'Idcirco vocatum est nomen urbis illius Segor,' Gen. 19.22 (Vulgate), although it is not at
all obvious that idcirco refers to parva in 19.20. The poet could have known the explanation
from any number of sources, e.g. the 'Latin Josephus': 'qui locus Zohor hactenus appellatur.
sic enim Hebraei modicum vocant' (Franz Blatt, ed. : The Latin Josephus I. Introduction and
Text. The Antiquities: Books I–V [Acta Jutlandica 30; Copenhagen 1958] 150), translating
Jewish Antiquities (henceforth JA) 1.204: Ζωὼρ ἔτι καὶ νῦν λέγεται · καλοῦσι γὰρ οὕτως
'Εβραῖοι τὸν ὀλίγον. Blatt's text of books 6–10 is finished and awaiting publication: so Louis
H. Feldman, Josephus and Modern Scholarship (1937–1980) (Berlin 1984) 43–44. On etymo-
logical interpretation of the Hebrew text, see T. W. Franxman, 'Genesis and the "Jewish
Antiquities" of Flavius Josephus,' Biblica et Orientalia 35 (Rome 1979), 146 n. 25.

ingreditur Segor, simul exoritur sol.'[44] Transposition is one of the standard techniques of the paraphrast, but it is only the poet who employs it so cleverly. This minor transposition permits him to use *sol* as the transition to the destruction of Sodom — and the myth to which he will soon direct our attention.

> ultimus ille quidem, Sodomumque incendia feruens
> infert, nam totos radios armauerat igni:
> aemula subseritur caligo, includere lucem
> coeptans atque globos confuso intexere caelo.
> fumantes coeunt nubes, nouus inruit imber,
> sulpura cum flammis flagrat chaos, aestuat aether:
> exustus crepitat liquidis ardoribus aer. (100–106)

Any student of Latin poetry reading these verses might recall the world-wide devastation Phaethon causes when he loses control of his father's chariot. The story is best known to us, as it was to the poem's first audience, in Ovid's account in *Metamorphoses* 2. The reminiscences of the destruction Phaethon wreaks (esp. 2.209–303) are not verbal — the language and treatment are quite different — but thematic. Indeed, the avoidance of echo is itself programmatic. The author of *De Sodoma* does not want his poem to 'echo' Ovid's. Instead, he makes his challenge of the Ovidian account directly, pronouncing a severe judgment upon it and claiming the priority of his own story.

> Hinc habet in falso de uero fabula fama
> Solis progeniem currus optasse paternos
> nec ualuisse leuem puerum frenare superbos
> ignis equos, arsisse orbem, tunc fulmine raptum
> aurigam inclitum, planctum mutasse sorores. (107–11)

Here the author steps back from the narrative and sets *De Sodoma* in the context of the Ovidian tradition. Or rather, as he would have it, he sets Ovid in the context of the Sodom tradition. While a number of scholars have noted in passing that *De Sodoma* has a place in the Ovidian tradition,[45] none has

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[44] *ingreditur*: *ingressus est* Vulgate, *intrauit* Vetus; *exoritur sol*: *sol (ex)ortus est* Vetus, *sol egressus est* Vulgate. Cf. *et sol exoritur*, Claudius Marius Victorius, *Alethia* 3.763. The paucity of echoes in *De Sodoma* of any of the earlier Latin poetic versions of the destruction of Sodom underscores the fact that it stands apart from the main tradition of Biblical poetry.

[45] For example, Adolf Ebert writes: 'Merkwürdig ist . . . , daß der Dichter den Mythus von Phaëtons Untergang auf den Brand von Sodom und Gomorrha zurückführt, und die Verwandlung von Lots Frau in eine Salzsäule, welcher er noch wunderbare Eigenschaften leiht, den antiken Metamorphosen, wie Wahrheit der Fabel, gegenüberstellt, und so seine Dichtung gleichsam als ein christliches Seitenstück dem berühmten Werke Ovids erscheinen läßt' (*Allgemeine Geschichte der Literatur des Mittelalters im Abendlande bis zum Beginne des XI. Jahrhunderts* [2nd ed.; Leipzig 1889] 1.123). Martin Schanz notes, 'Hierbei kommt ihm [i.e., the poet] eine heidnische Reminiszenz in den Sinn, nämlich die Sage von dem Sonnenbrand infolge des Phaethonschen Wagnisses; er steht nicht an, diese Sage aus dem Strafgericht, das über Sodoma ergangen, abzuleiten' (*Geschichte der römischen Literatur* [Handbuch der Alter-

paused to articulate or appreciate fully the depth and subtlety of the relation-ship of the poem to Ovid.[46]

The attitude of Christian writers, teachers, and poets to the Classical herit-age has itself attained the status of a *topos* of scholarly attention.[47] One cannot speak of a single Christian response, for the issue was perennially

tumswissenschaften 4.1; 2nd ed., 1914] 207; see pp. 207–209 for a summary, p. 209 for bibli-ography to early editions and studies: classicists of Schanz's day had not yet learned to ignore post-classical texts). F. Ghisalberti, that indefatigable student of the Ovidian tradition, neatly described the relationship between the texts as follows: 'L'autore del carme *De Sodoma* trova nel mito de Fetonte l'allegoria dell' incendia de Sodoma e Gomorra' (*L'Ovidius morali-zatus de Pierre Bersuire* [Studi romanzi 23; Rome 1933] 9). Gamber speaks of 'une tendance très accusée à expliquer les faits de l'Ancien Testament d'une manière symbolique' and concludes that in the author's mind 'cet ouvrage'devait servir de pendant aux récits fabuleux d'Ovide...' (above, n. 4, 30). But then according to Gamber, *De Iona* is 'un peu plus longue (505v.)' (p. 31): it is in fact shorter (105 lines) than *De Sodoma*.

[46] The prominence of the Ovidian subtext of *De Sodoma* is unusual in the tradition of Biblical epics. See Carlo Pascal, 'Sopra alcuni passi delle Metamorfosi ovidiane imitati dai primi scrittori cristiani,' *Rivista di filologia e di istruzione classica* 37 (1909) 1–6, and further bibliography in M. Roberts 188 n. 73. There is no definitive study of the Ovidian tradition in the Middle Ages. Several short surveys are: Salvatore Battaglia, 'La tradizione di Ovidio nel medioevo,' *Filologia Romanza* 6 (1959) 185–224; Angelo Monteverdi, 'Ovidio nel medio evo,' *Studi Ovidiani* (edd. F. Arnaldi et al.; Rome 1959) 63–78; Franco Munari, *Ovid im Mittelalter* (Zürich 1960). For further bibliography, see R. Hexter, *Ovid and Medieval Schooling: Studies in Medieval School Commentaries on Ovid's Ars Amatoria, Epistulae ex Ponto, and Epistulae Heroidum* (Münchener Beiträge zur Mediävistik und Renaissance-Forschung 38; Munich 1986). Wilfried Stroh, *Ovid im Urteil der Nachwelt: Eine Testimoniensammlung* (Darmstadt 1969) 131–62 ('Verzeichnis der seit 1935 zum Nachleben Ovids erschienenen Literatur') takes up where M. Schanz and C. Hosius, *Geschichte der römischen Literatur* (Handbuch der Alter-tumswissenschaften 8.2; 4th ed., Munich 1935, repr. 1959) 260–64, leave off. Through the late antique period and early medieval centuries, Ovid had nowhere near the impact or influence of Vergil (Hexter 3–4). Early medieval poets seemed rather to take inspiration from an Ovidian genre or Ovidian situation. See, e.g., W. Schmid, 'Ein christlicher Heroidenbrief des 6. Jahrhunderts,' in *Studien zur Textgeschichte und Textkritik* (edd. H. Dahlmann and R. Merkelbach; Cologne 1959) 253–63 (on Venantius Fortunatus 8.3.277ff.), or G. Brugnoli, 'Ovi-dio e gli esiliati carolingi,' *Atti del Convegno Internazionale Ovidiano* 2 (Rome 1959) 209–16; on medieval receptivity to the topos *Ovidius exul*, see Hexter 86–99.

[47] In lieu of a complete bibliography, the following titles suggest a number of different perspectives: H. I. Marrou, *Saint Augustin et la fin de la culture antique* (Paris 1938) and *Histoire de l'Education dans l'antiquité* (7th ed.; Paris 1977); P. Courcelle, 'Les Pères de l'Eglise devant les enfers virgiliens,' *Archives d'histoire doctrinale et littéraire du Moyen Age* 22 (1955) 5–69; Harald Hagendahl, *Latin Fathers and the Classics* (Göteborg 1958); A. Momi-gliano, ed., *The Conflict between Paganism and Christianity in the Fourth Century* (Oxford 1963); R. A. Markus, 'Paganism, Christianity and the Latin Classics in the Fourth Century,' in J. W. Binns, ed., *Latin Literature of the Fourth Century* (London 1974) 1–21; *Christianisme et formes littéraires de l'antiquité tardive en occident*, Entretiens Hardt 23 (Vandoeuvres–Ge-nève 1977); of the many studies that touch on wider issues, note Charles N. Cochrane, *Chris-tianity and Classical Culture: A Study of Thought and Action from Augustus to Augustine* (Oxford 1940; frequently repr.).

debated, though the circumstances and terms of the debate changed subtly
from place to place, from time to time. Even one person might hold seemingly
contradictory attitudes on this question, and to expect consistency or coher-
ence on this or on any point may rank as modern scholarship's single most
persistent failing. In fact, Christian critics are just carrying on the much older
feud between poets and philosophers. Indeed, none other than the poet –
philosopher Lucretius narrates the story of Phaethon only to dismiss it as so
much fabling of the Greek poets: .

> scilicet ut veteres Graium cecinere poetae,
> quod procul a vera nimis est ratione repulsum.[48]

From the tone of line 107, it would seem that the author of *De Sodoma* has
also simply transported us into the story of Phaethon to reject it and all such
pagan fictions. However, he is not about to let go of the Ovidian subtext so
quickly. Directly after his description of the holocaust at Sodom, the poet
introduces the two metamorphoses of the Heliades and Cygnus found at the
conclusion of the Phaethon episode in the *Metamorphoses* (2.340–80), albeit
with a good deal of contempt for the likelihood of their veracity:

> uiderit Eridanus, si qua illic populus albet
> aut si quis plumat senio modulatior ales (112–13).

These dubious poetic fictions appears as a foil to the true metamorphosis the
Christian poet can relate. That it was the fictional status of these stories that
counted for the author of *De Sodoma* becomes clear when one notes that in this
poem condemning the Sodomites for unnatural behavior he chose not to make
anything of Cygnus' love for Phaethon, known also from Vergil (*Aen.*
10.187–93). To the *illic* of line 112, the opening *hic aliter* of line 113 stands in
strong opposition:

> hic aliter uersae maerent miracula formae;
> namque comes coniunx, heu me, male tum quoque[49] legis
> femina non patiens diuinae, ad murmura caeli
> audaces oculos nequiquam sola retorsit,
> non habitura loqui, quod uiderit. et simul illic
> in fragilem mutata salem stetit ipsa sepulchrum. (114–19)

While the poet of *De Sodoma* rejects Ovid's narrations and metamorphoses
as fabling, he is eager to replace them with his own, or rather God's, true
history and true metamorphosis. The superiority of divine history over pagan
fiction is a common theme of the early apologists, is central to the influential
major texts of Augustine (*De doctrina christiana, De civitate Dei*), and surfaces

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[48] *De rerum natura* 380–415, here 405–406.

[49] I.e., like Eve. Lot's wife and Eve are compared by Prudentius (*Hamartigenia* 741–42; see
M. Roberts [above, n. 7] 216 n. 158).

not infrequently in earlier Biblical epic.[50] The tenth-century *Ecloga Theoduli* or *Theodoli*, the product of a school curriculum in which pagan and Christian classics were read, and often bound, side by side, systematized nearly a millennium of contrasts.[51] The bulk of its 344 hexameters (lines 37–332) is devoted to a debate between Pseustis ('Falsehood'), proponent of the pagan gods, and Alithia ('Truth'), defender of the Christian faith.[52] At the conclusion, Fronesis, who has served as judge, consoles Pseustis for his (inevitable) loss with, of all things, pagan mythological learning (lines 341–44). Orpheus and Phoebe, pagan poet and pagan goddess, remain as a reminder that, at least in the school tradition, Christian truth did not eject Graeco-Roman fables altogether. Some centuries before 'Theodolus,' the author of the *De Sodoma* is clearly less sanguine about the peaceful co-existence of pagan fable and Biblical truth.

While Lot's wife undergoes metamorphosis in *De Sodoma*, the details of the change are not particularly Ovidian. For one thing, unlike Ovid, who often (but not invariably) describes the process of metamorphosis-in detail and por-

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[50] On the 'argumentative digressions' of Avitus, see Roberts, *ibid.* 214–15: 'The Greek myths of Deucalion (IV 3–10) and a race of giants (V 88–122) are criticized as distortions of the biblical truth. ... The myth that giants piled up mountains to challenge heaven is ... in Avitus' opinion a falsified version of the Biblical story.'

[51] Text: *Theoduli eclogam recensuit et prolegomenis instruxit* Joannes Osternacher (Urfahr 1902) 1–58; Osternacher's text only, with minimal apparatus, is reprinted in Bernhard of ʾUtrecht, *Commentum in Theodolum (1076–1099)*, ed. R. B. C. Huygens (Spoleto 1977) 9–18. For a brief summary, English readers may turn to the introductory section ('Fortuna,' pp. 386–88) of Betty Nye Quinn, 'ps. Theodolus,' in P. O. Kristeller, ed., *Catalogus translationum et commentariorum* 2 (Washington 1971) 383–409. In the course of his analysis of Bernhard of Utrecht's commentary on *Ecloga Theoduli*, Hennig Brinkmann sheds light on the poem itself (*Mittelalterliche Hermeneutik* [Darmstadt 1980], esp. 348–401). I have recently discussed the *Ecloga Theoduli* in 'Latinitas in the Middle Ages: Horizons and Perspectives,' *Helios* 14 (1987) 69–92 esp. 78–80. On early medieval education see Pierre Riché, *Les écoles et l'enseignement dans l'occident chrétien de la fin du V siècle au milieu du XI siècle* (Paris 1979). For a detailed census of the school authors, see Günter Glauche, *Schullektüre im Mittelalter: Entstehung und Wandelungen des Lektürekanons bis 1200 nach den Quellen dargestellt* (Münchener Beiträge zur Mediävistik und Renaissance-Forschung 5; Munich 1970).

[52] In each exchange a pagan 'falsehood' is corrected by Christian 'truth.' E.g., the pagan gigantomachy is countered with the Biblical story of Babel (as in Avitus). Pseustis leads off, but it appears at once that Alithia's source, the Bible, orders the debate. Her first examples all derive from Genesis, but she proceeds through the Pentateuch and historical books of the Old Testament. Pseustis is not following a single text, though Ovid's *Metamorphoses* provides a significant number of Pseustis' fables. Alithia includes the story of Sodom and Lot's wife (lines 113–16) as a rejoinder to Pseustis' account of Phyllis and Demophon (109–12; not from Ovid, it seems, but from Servius' commentary on *Ecl.* 5.10). The pairing seems to turn on metamorphosis into a hard object: Phyllis into a tree, which Demophon kisses, and Lot's wife into a pillar of salt, which animals lick. Pseustis invokes Phaethon and the ensuing cataclysm (vv. 245–48) in an appeal to the evening to come quickly — he senses he is getting the worst of the debate.

trays the reactions of the 'victim' as he or she experiences metamorphosis, the poet of *De Sodoma* depicts an instant change (118–19, cited immediately above). Of course, this metamorphosis is an integral part of the original Biblical account, nor is it overlooked in earlier Latin Biblical poetry. Sedulius echoes the Vulgate's phraseology and devotes only six verses to the entire episode, two lines to the metamorphosis and four to a moralizing reading of it.[53] Claudius Marius Victor gives but three verses to Lot's wife, *in statuam conuersa salis*, although his account of the Sodom story, running to 103 verses, is the longest among the Latin Biblical poems before *De Sodoma*, and caps his poem *Alethia*. The conclusion focuses on the paradox of the metamorphosis of Lot's wife:

> in statuam conuersa salis; spolitaque luce
> sic animam infelix cum corpore perdidit omni,
> ut nullum extaret forma remanente cadaver.[54]

Rather, what is characteristically Ovidian about the *De Sodoma* is the placement of the metamorphosis in the episode and what follows it. Ovid's Phaethon episode is a paradigm for this typical pattern and serves, I would argue, as the key to the entire Sodom poem. While Ovid's 'Phaethon' may be unusual in its appeal and length (1.747–2.400), it exemplifies one of Ovid's most characteristic structural techniques. Ovid frequently places the promised metamorphosis beyond the end of the story, as it were, as a sort of 'coda' to it. In the case of the Phaethon complex, the true metamorphoses come only after Phaethon has been struck down by Jupiter's lightning bolt, even after his mother Clymene has found his grave on the banks of the Po. It is not even she who, weeping, changes shape but rather Phaethon's sisters, the Heliades, who are transformed into poplars, their tears turning to amber. And though this metamorphosis has been so long delayed, we have yet another at the end of the Phaethon story: Cygnus, king of Liguria, kinsman of Phaethon but mourning out of passionate love for the boy, is transformed into the first swan: 'fit noua Cygnus avis' (2.377).

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[53] *Carmen paschale* 1.121–26 (CSEL 10). Cf. the Vulgate's *versa est in statuam salis* (Gen. 19.25) and Sedulius' *in statuam mutata salis* (v. 122).

[54] Lines 5758–60; CCL 128. The phrase is the usual one: Cassiodorus' team of translators rendered Josephus JA 1.203 (quoted below) as 'in statuam salis conuersa dinoscitur' (*The Latin Josephus*, ed. Blatt [above, n. 43] 150). A complete survey of Sodom in early medieval Biblical poetry would look as well at: Dracontius, *De laudibus Dei* 2.405–39, 3.251ff. (MGH AA 14; a more recent ed., with Italian trans., is that of Francisco Corsaro [Catania 1962]); Avitus, *De spiritalis historiae gestis* 2.326–407, 4.352–90 (MGH AA 6.2); Florus of Lyon, *carmen* 4.51–88 (see MGH PLAC 2.509–66, additions in PLAC 4.2.930f.); *Hymns* in *Analecta Hymnica* 50 (1907) 210–18; the Anglo-Saxon Genesis, lines 2399–2575 (Genesis A); and the Old Saxon Genesis, lines 151–377. Gamber, *Le livre de la 'Genèse,'* 160–63, is not satisfactory.

Now, it may seem odd to turn to the *Metamorphoses*, Ovid's *carmen perpetuum*, for a model of episodic treatment, but it is precisely the reading tradition of the *Metamorphoses* that articulated this enormous poem into discrete segments. Ovid, of course, knew what he was doing when he said he would write one continuous poem and then proceeded to string together a maddening collection of fables, some serially, others embedded — sometimes two levels deep — in other narrative structures. Ovid plays with his reader's expectations of metamorphosis as the 'natural' structuring principle of his poem, delighting in the often oblique relationship of fable and metamorphosis. Not surprisingly, interpreters and readers desired a firmer framework, and annotators grasped at metamorphosis as the principle of organization of the *Metamorphoses*. The segmentation of the *Metamorphoses* which one finds in the earliest of the poem's extant marginalia, the so-called Lactantian *tituli* and *argumenta*, provides a model for the articulation of Ovid's *perpetuum carmen* as a series of discrete episodes according to this principle: a model roughly contemporary with the composition of *De Sodoma*.[55]

It will be worth recalling one more aspect of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* before turning back to *De Sodoma*. While the only 'true' metamorphoses, that is, *shape*-changes, in the Phaethon-episode are those of the Heliades and Cygnus, there are any number of significant changes brought about by Phaethon's disastrous career across the heavens. Some are only temporary, but others are

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[55] In dealing with 'Lactantius' we jump from the frying pan into the fire. The only sure thing about the matter is that Lactantius, the author of the *Divine Institutes*, had nothing to do with them. The standard treatment is that of Brooks Otis, 'The *Argumenta* of the so-called Lactantius,' *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* 47 (1936) 131–63; here 132. If one consults the two published 'critical' editions (D. A. Slater, *Towards a Text of the Metamorphoses of Ovid* [Oxford 1927]; Hugo Magnus, *P. Ovidii Nasonis Metamorphoseon Libri xv. Lactantii Placidi qui dicitur Narrationes Fabularum Ovidianarum recensuit apparatu critico instruxit* [3rd ed.; Berlin 1914]), the Lactantian material appears as an integral text comprising *tituli* and *argumenta*. In reality, there is the kind of casual variation among manuscripts one must expect with ancillary as opposed to primary texts. Moreover, one cannot even be absolutely certain what the relationship between *tituli* and *argumenta* is. For our purposes, we can appeal to the Lactantian material to document a tradition of segmenting the *Metamorphoses* which is no later than *De Sodoma*. Of course, the date of compilation can be only roughly approximated. The earliest extant text of Ovid which contains the material dates from the second half of the ninth century. On the basis of a range of evidence, including errors characteristic of minuscule copying of majuscule archetypes, Otis concludes that the '*Argumenta* along with a few scholia existed in some fifth- or sixth-century codex' (140). Richard Tarrant writes that the Lactantian material 'was probably composed for an ancient edition of the poem' but 'still awaits a thorough study': Reynolds (see above, n. 40) 278. — The first four *tituli* of book two cover the material relevant to *De Sodoma*: 'Phaethon Solis et Clymenae filius fulmine ictus; sorores Phaethontis in arbores populos; lacrimae earum in electrum; Cygnus Sthenelei filius in avem sui nominis' (cited from Slater, as above). Uncharacteristically, the first of these does *not* contain a metamorphosis.

presented as permanent: for example, the darkening of the Ethiopians' skin (2.235f.), the creation of the Libyan desert (2.237f.), and the hiding of the source of the river Nile (2.255). These, as well as the 'true' metamorphoses in this episode, are all *aitia* or 'origins': they explain how things got the way they now are. Etiological explanation is an ancient and ever-popular mode of thought; for a supply of early medieval examples, one may adduce Isidore's encyclopedic *Etymologiae*, which also circulated under the title *Origines*. The more sophisticated Hellenistic poets playfully adopted etiology as the compositional principle of their works (e.g., Callimachus' *Aitia*). While the author of *De Sodoma* has no direct knowledge of Hellenistic etiological collections or 'catalogue poems,' he knew Ovid's Latin adaptation of his Greek precursors. The anonymous poet need not have been able to discourse in a scholarly mode on the organizing principle behind Ovid's epic or on its literary antecedents. He need only have intuited Ovidian principles of construction. Reading the *Metamorphoses* with marginalia like the Lactantian material might have helped, but in fact nothing more than his native powers of observation would have been required. Only after one recognizes the depth of the poet's grasp of the form of a typical Ovidian episode, and his thoroughness in setting it as his model for *De Sodoma*, can one make sense of the poem as a whole.

The fire and brimstone which consume Sodom seem to destroy, as well, the narrative course of the poem. In the aftermath of the cataclysm, the poet presents a catalogue of the changes brought about throughout the region. While the first, the metamorphosis of Lot's wife into a pillar of salt mentioned above, is Biblical, the wonders that follow are not, and this demands explanation. Digressions, catalogues, enumerations, especially of topographical details, can be paralleled in the paraphrastic epics.[56] For example, Roberts cites '[t]he Heptateuch poet [who] seizes the opportunity offered by the mention of the river Jordan at the beginning of Deuteronomy . . . to evoke a peaceful picture of the river moving gently to the sea.'[57] As Roberts shows, that anonymous poet then inserts a formulaic ecphrasis of a gently-flowing river: 'the details . . . might be applied to any river. They are, in fact, ill-suited to the Jordan. The poet depends on ecphrastic tradition, not any specific geographical knowledge.'[58]

This is what the poet of *De Sodoma* most definitely does not do. For each of the wonders he describes, he adduces geographical lore that, whether true or false, is taken to represent scientific reality. We may recur to Ovid himself and recall that the shift from narrative to geographic and 'scientific' lore is in no way un-Ovidian, corresponding as it does to the etiologies (*aitia*) with which

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[56] Roberts (above, n. 7) 203–207.
[57] *Ibid.* 205.
[58] *Ibid.* 206.

Ovid rounds out many of his metamorphoses. In the Phaethon episode, as we have seen, some of the *aitia* are brought in at the end, others in the course of the narrative. That the poet of *De Sodoma* adds *aitia* to the Biblical account, then, sets him apart from the anonymous author of the *Heptateuchos*. Roberts writes of that work that 'the aetiology that ends the biblical passage [Judges 11.40] can be excluded as a cultural Hebraism, of little interest to the poet's readers.'[59] This cannot be said of the readers of *De Sodoma*, assuming its poet correctly judged his readers' interests.

As we have seen, most of the other Christian poets who depicted the column that was Lot's wife were content with a few verses, sometimes drawing a brief moral. Against the backdrop of such summary accounts, the detailed description found in *De Sodoma* is as unexpected as the subsequent details it relates are surprising:

> ipsa et imago sibi, formam sine corpore seruans.
> durat enim adhuc nuda statione sub aethra,
> nec pluuiis dilapsa situ nec diruta uentis. (120–22)

More than that: if a passer-by mutilates her form, the figure wondrously repairs the damage; and the pillar of salt menstruates to this day (123–26)! We all know amber and swans — and part of the playfulness and delight of the *Metamorphoses* is Ovid's creation of mythic origins for these real and beautiful objects. Other, more esoteric lore Ovid found in the scientific and pseudo-scientific treatises and poems of Hellenistic authors, authors who wrote on such specific topics as snake-bite remedies, catasterism, rivers, islands, the loves of boys, and metamorphoses into birds.[60] But the pillar of salt that still stands? Who knows that?

In fact, the tradition that the pillar of salt is to be seen 'today' was already hoary by the time *De Sodoma* was written. The Greek-speaking author of The Wisdom of Solomon in the first century B.C. says:

> It was she who, while the godless perished, saved the virtuous man
> as he fled from the fire raining down on the Five Cities,
> in witness against whose evil ways
> a desolate land still smokes,
> where shrubs bear fruit that never ripens
> and where, monument to an unbelieving soul, there stands a pillar of salt.[61]

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[59] *Ibid.* 183.

[60] Nicander, Eratosthenes, Phanocles, and Boios are among the better-known names for some of Ovid's specific sources (not to mention the most important figures in Greek didactic poetry, Hesiod and Aratus). Despite the intervening years, G. Lafaye, *Les Métamorphoses d'Ovide et leurs modèles grecques* (Paris 1904), remains indispensable.

[61] 10.7 (Jerusalem Bible translation). The phrase 'fruit that never ripens' is a fine translation of the LXX, but note that the reference to the apples of Sodom is a bit more oblique in the Vulgate, which says only, 'et incerto tempore fructus habentes arbores.'

Josephus, in the *Jewish Antiquities*, says that he saw the pillar himself and that it still stands.[62] Similar testimony is not uncommon in other texts of the first and second centuries.[63]

By the late fourth century, however, when the pilgrim Egeria toured the Holy Land, the pillar could no longer be seen, as she tells her readers. Speaking of what was visible from Mt. Nabau, she writes:

> Maxima etiam pars Palestinae, quae est terra repromissionis, inde uidebatur, nec non et omnis terra Iordanis, in quantum tamen poterat oculis conspici. In sinistra autem parte uidimus terras Sodomitum omnes nec non et Segor, quae tamen Segor sola de illis quinque in hodie constat. Nam et memoriale ibi est; de ceteris autem illis ciuitatibus nichil aliud apparet nisi subuersio ruinarum, quemadmodum in cinerem conuerse sunt. Locus etiam, ubi fuit titulus uxoris Loth, ostensus est nobis, qui locus etiam in Scripturis legitur. Sed mihi credite, domini uenerabiles, quia columna ipsa iam non paret, locus autem ipse tantum ostenditur: columna autem ipsa dicitur mari Mortuo fuisse quooperta. Certe locum cum uideremus, columnam nullam uidimus, et ideo fallere uos super hanc rem non possum. Nam episcopus loci ipsius, id est de Segor, dixit nobis quoniam iam aliquot anni essent, a quo non pareret columna illa. Nam de Segor forsitan sexto miliario ipse locus est, ubi stetit columna illa, quod nunc totum cooperit aqua.[64]

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[62] εἰς στήλυν ἁλῶν μετέβαλεν · ἱστόρησα δ' αὐτήν, ἔτι γὰρ καὶ νῦν διαμένει (JA 1.203); 'Latin Josephus': 'in statuam salis conversa dinoscitur. vidi siquidem eam: ·hactenus enim manet' (ed. Blatt 150). Josephus makes a similar 'eye-witness' claim about all the wonders of the region of Sodom in his *Jewish War* (henceforth BJ) 4.485.

[63] On the commonplace that the pillar may still be seen, see John Wilkinson, *Egeria's Travels* (London 1971) 219–20, who cites, in addition to Wisdom and Josephus, Clement of Rome *I ad Cor.* 11.4, and Irenaeus *Adversus haereses* 4.31.3. Cyril of Jerusalem (?), *Cat. Myst.* 1.8 (ed. A. Piédagnel, *Sources chrétiennes* 126 [Paris 1966] 96ff.) mentions Lot's wife but does not make it clear whether or not the pillar is still standing. Kartschoke (above, n. 8) 215f. adds: Jerome; Prudentius, *Hamartigenia* 738ff.; and the Anglo-Saxon Genesis (A) 2565ff. For similar claims in Rabbinic literature, see S. Rapoport, *Agada und Exegese bei Flavius Josephus* (Frankfurt a. M. 1930), 105–106.

[64] *Itinerarium Egeriae* 12.5–7 (edd. Aet. Franceschini et R. Weber, *Itineraria et alia geographica:* CCL 175 [1965] 43). As the exact sense of Egeria's description is essential, and the peculiarities of her diction may not be patent to all readers, I provide a translation: 'The greater part of Palestine, which is the promised land, was seen from that vantage point, as well as the whole land of Jordan, as much, that is, as the eye could see. Now on the left we saw all the lands of the Sodomites, including Segor, which Segor mind you alone of those five [cities] remains standing to this day. For there is even a monument there; but of those other cities nothing remains but a heap of ruins, just as they were turned into ash. The place where the monument of Lot's wife was was also shown to us, which place is mentioned even in the Bible. But believe me, reverend ladies, that the pillar itself no longer appears. Only the place is shown, while the pillar is said to have been covered by the Dead Sea. Surely while we saw the place, we saw no column, and therefore I am unable to deceive you about this thing. For the bishop of the place, that is, of Segor, told us that it had now been a number of years since the pillar disappeared. And that place, where the pillar had stood, is about six miles from Segor, and the water now totally covers it.' The passage has also been rendered by Wilkinson, *Egeria's Travels* 107–108 as part of his complete translation of Egeria's journey (89–147).

And yet, from the sixth century on, it could once again be seen. What happened? For one reason or another, guides started to avail themselves of a younger tradition about the site of the ruins of Sodom and Gomorrah. Pilgrims eager to view this site no longer needed to make the arduous journey to the southern end of the Dead Sea, where earlier tradition had (correctly) placed the Pentapolis. Around 560, 'Antoninus Placentinus' could see the ruins of Sodom and Gomorrah on the way from Jericho to Jerusalem. Whether there were other reasons why one did not want to travel to the southern end of the sea or not, this shift was certainly more convenient for travelers' itineraries. And happily, there were bizarre deposits of marl which could be exhibited as the pillar that had been Lot's wife.[65]

Could the 'reappearance' of the pillar in the sixth century serve as an approximate *terminus post quem* for the composition of the *De Sodoma*? The connection might seem tenuous, but the sixth-century accounts themselves not only give testimony to the fact that some geological formation was again being shown to pilgrims as Lot's wife. They also point to specific tales guides were telling, matter that possibly surfaces in *De Sodoma*. Around the year 530, for instance, the otherwise unknown traveler Theodosius reports:

> Ibi est uxor Loth, quae facta est statua salis, et quomodo crescit luna, crescit et ipsa, et quomodo minuitur luna, diminuit et ipsa.[66]

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[65] For the complex problem of the two traditional sites of the cities of the plain, see Celestina Milani, *Itinerarium Antonini Placentini: un viaggio in Terra Santa del 560–570 d. C.* (Milan 1979) 270–71 (notes on 10.2, 10.5, 10.6) and 274 (notes on 15.2 and 15.3), with generous bibliography. The ruins shown 'Antoninus' were southwest of Jericho and not on the Dead Sea at all; these were the ruins of 'Herodian Jericho,' or Tell Iktanū. Commenting on 15.3 (cited below) Milani says, 'È difficile dire dove l'anonima abbia visto la statua della moglie di Lot' (274). Inventive guides will have seen to that. Milani is right in disputing the claim of E. Power ('The Site of the Pentapolis,' *Biblica* 11 [1930] 49–52) that already Egeria had located Sodom and Gomorrah to the north; this is not certain, since she is only speaking of what can be *seen* from Mt. Nebo (Egeria 12.5–7, cited above). On the same page (271), Milani unravels the confusions involved in this so-called Mt. Nebo, in fact Pisgâ. Milani's book is invaluable for the study not only of 'Antoninus Placentinus' and other accounts of Holy Land pilgrimages, but of Biblical topography and sixth-century Latinity. The map she provides, however, is confusing for the portion of the journey that interests students of *De Sodoma*, for it shows Sodom, Gomorrah, and Segor at the southern end of the Dead Sea, despite the fact that 'Antoninus' viewed the alternate, northern site. In addition to the translations listed by Milani (13), an English version of 'The Piacenza Pilgrim' is available in John Wilkinson, *Jerusalem Pilgrims before the Crusades* (Jerusalem 1978) 79–89. Wilkinson provides a considerably simpler account of the process by which Sodom 'shifted' from the southern to the northern end of the Dead Sea (*Jerusalem Pilgrims*, especially 164; cf. *Egeria's Travels* 220); I owe the information about the marl deposits to Wilkinson.

[66] *De situ terrae sanctae* 20, in *Itinera Hierosolymitana saeculi IIII–VIIII* (ed. Paul Geyer, CSEL 39 [1898] 146). Theodosius' account is also translated in Wilkinson, *Jerusalem Pilgrims* 63–71.

These monthly changes correspond to the more graphic report of monthly flows of blood in *De Sodoma*.[67]

Obviously, some skeptics then (as now) claimed that these ever-changing formations were merely natural salt-licks for animals. About 560–70, 'Antoninus Placentinus' denied this rationalistic explanation. In fact, he denied that there was any change in 'her' size whatsoever:

> Nam quod fallent homines de uxore Loth, eo quod minuatur ab animalibus lingendo, non est uerum, sed stat in ipso statu, in quo fuit.[68]

That these particular details are not reported before the sixth century strongly suggests that *De Sodoma* was not composed before the second quarter of the sixth century. While further research may lead to a more certain and more precise dating of the poem, these and other descriptions of the Holy Land, both early and late, illuminate more than the poem's age. The reports of historians, naturalists, geographers, and travelers to the Holy Land, in fact, parallel almost all the bizarre lore about the Dead Sea and surrounding region that the poet has packed into vv. 127–64 of *De Sodoma*. Although the vivid descriptions are his own, the material is largely traditional, even if the particular sources have been largely ignored by commentators of the poem.[69] These

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[67] The poet refers to menstrual blood in another context below (line 157), but Theodosius' report, although the only analogue that I have found to date to the claim in *De Sodoma* that the salt statue of Lot's wife menstruated, is sufficient to establish that this is not simply a doublet. We may link the specific reference here to the suggestion that Lot's wife is another Eve (*tum quoque*, line 115): menstruation was 'the curse of Eve' and the disobedience of both — explicit in lines 115–16 — leads, in both cases, to menstruation. A study of medieval lore about menstruation and its place in misogynistic literature is sorely needed. C. T. Wood, 'The Doctors' Dilemma: Sin, Salvation, and the Menstrual Cycle in Medieval Thought,' *Speculum* 56 (1981) 710–27, focuses on the ramifications of medieval scientific opinion on menstruation for Mariology, and *vice versa*. Most of the texts he discusses are much later than *De Sodoma*, but he refers (713f.) to one text that might not be so distant in time of composition from the poem: the unusually humane response of Pope Gregory to inquiries by St. Augustine of Canterbury incorporated by Bede into the *Historia ecclesiastica* (1.27.viii). The so-called *Libellus responsionum* enjoyed a wide independent circulation in subsequent centuries; see Paul Meyvaert, 'Les Responsions de S. Grégoire à S. Augustin de Cantorbéry,' *Revue d'histoire ecclésiastique* 54 (1959) 879–94, for further bibliography.

[68] 'Antoninus Placentinus,' *Itinerarium ad loca Terrae Sanctae* 15.3. For ease of citation, I reproduce the text of P. Geyer (CSEL 39.159–218: here 169–70; = CCL 175.159–218), rather than Milani's (above, n. 65), who gives parallel diplomatic transcriptions of both manuscript witnesses for the *recensio prior* and, facing, an edition of the *recensio altera* based on sixteen manuscripts of the ninth through seventeenth centuries.

[69] Scholars have noted parallels between *De Sodoma* and some of the naturalists and geographers, although I know of no systematic examination of these texts. Müller mentions the relevance of Solinus, and he no doubt served as the authority for Ebert's comments in his more widely-read handbook (above, n. 45) 123. Likewise Schanz repeats but does not expand on Ebert's reference to Solinus. It is Peiper who, in an appendix to his edition (*Auctores*

texts may seem somewhat esoteric to us today, but the author of *De Sodoma* was not the only one to pore over them in his day.

The devastation of the land is described by Josephus, 'Hegesippus,'[70] and Tacitus, whose account is in turn cited by the widely-read Orosius.[71] The poet singles out the famous 'apple of Sodom,' which looks tempting but crumbles to ashes when touched (135–38). The properties of this fruit are known from Josephus and Hegesippus, Tacitus, Solinus, Orosius, Augustine, and Isidore — to list only those authors that the author of *De Sodoma* might possibly

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imitatores, CSEL 23.295) compares Tacitus (*Historiae* 5.7), Augustine (*De civitate Dei* 21.5), Hegesippus (4.18), and Isidore (*Origines* 14.3.25) with lines 135ff.; Pliny (7.65, 28.80), Tacitus (*Hist.* 5.6), Josephus (BJ 4.8.4), Hegesippus (4.18), and Isidore (16.2.1) with lines 146ff.; Tacitus (*Hist.* 5.6) with lines 152f.; and Pliny (7.65, 28.80; 31.22) with lines 157 and 159.

[70] 'Hegesippus' is the supposed author of a popular Latin 'History of the Jewish Wars' in 5 books (CSEL 66) — in fact a shortened Latin adaptation of Josephus' *Jewish War* in seven books, heavily contaminated by numerous sources, prominent among them Josephus' own *Jewish Antiquities*. The text can be dated with some confidence to ca. 370. The author remains unknown; it has often been attributed to the young Ambrose, but that is almost certainly not true. See Heinz Schreckenberg, *Die Flavius-Josephus-Tradition in Antike und Mittelalter* (Arbeiten zur Literatur and Geschichte des hellenistischen Judentums 5; Leiden 1972) 56; Feldman (above, n. 43) 41f. The common wisdom is that the name 'Hegesippus' is simply an ignorant Latin deformation of the Greek 'Iosippus.' There was also a second-century Church historian with this very name (not infrequently noted: e.g., Schreckenberg, *Tradition* 56; André Pelletier, *Josèphe. Guerre des Juifs* 1 [Paris 1975] 25). Less frequently noted is the fact that his *Hypomnemata* are in *five* books. Ironically, Hegesippus may have used Josephus as a source (see K. Mras, 'Die Hegesippus Frage,' *Anzeiger der Akademie der Wissenschaften in Wien* 95 [1958] 143–53, and Feldmann 846). All this is simple compared to the problem of the 'Latin Josephus.' In addition to 'Hegesippus,' based only loosely on Josephus' *Jewish War*, there were good Latin translations of all Josephus' works. The *Jewish Antiquities* and the *Contra Apionem* were rendered under the supervision of Cassiodorus (*Institutiones* [1.17.1; ed. Mynors 55]). Cassiodorus also refers (*ibid.*) to a respectable translation of the *Jewish War in seven books*; Cassiodorus himself does not know who effected it (*alii Hieronymo, alii Ambrosio, alii deputant Rufino*). This translation — 'ps-Rufinus' would be perhaps the best way to identify it — deserves a critical edition; on work to date assembling the manuscripts and the difficulties, see Schreckenberg, *Tradition* 58–61, and *Rezeptionsgeschichtliche und textkritische Untersuchungen zu Flavius Josephus* (Arbeiten zur Literatur und Geschichte des hellenistischen Judentums 10 [Leiden 1977], 27–28); Feldman 44–46. It has not been published since 1524: *Flavii Iosephi, Patria Hierosoly-/mitani, religione iudaei, inter Graecos historiographos, cum / primis facundi, opera quaedam RVFFINO presby/tero interprete, in quibus post ultimam aliorum aeditionem, loca nec pauca, nec omnino le/uis momenti ex uetustissimorum co-/dicum collatione restituta / comperies lector. / BASILEAE APVD IO. FROBENIVM. / ANNO M.D.XXIIII. / MENSE SEPTEMBRI.* Cf. V. Bulhart, 'Textkritische Studien zum lateinischen Flavius Josephus,' *Mnemosyne* 4.6 (1953) 140. The most recent account of the problem is Albert A. Bell, 'Josephus and Pseudo-Hegesippus,' in Louis H. Feldman and Gohei Hata, edd., *Josephus, Judaism, and Christianity* [Detroit 1987], 349–61.

[71] Josephus, JA 1.203, Hegesippus 4.16.2; Tacitus, *Historiae* 5.7; Orosius 1.5.

have known.[72] The sea itself, as its name (*mare mortuum*) implies, contains no living thing. This is noted by the Bordeaux Pilgrim writing in the year 333, by Hegesippus, 'Antoninus Placentinus,' and Bede.[73] The author of *De Sodoma* develops this idea with a brief catalogue of forms of life *not* to be found in the dead sea (140–45).

The asphalt industry on the Dead Sea is described at great length by a number of authors, among them Strabo, Josephus, Pliny, and Tacitus, as is the peculiar method by which the local inhabitants 'harvested' their bituminous 'crop': they sail their reed skiffs on the sea and the asphalt floating on the water adheres to the skiffs.[74] How is this asphalt cut from the hulls? We would likely disbelieve or misinterpret the poet's reference to the cloth a woman wears at the time of her menstruation ('ni plaga contigerit, qua mensis femina uestit,' line 157), unless we had the irrefutable authority of Pliny, Josephus, Tacitus, Hegesippus, and Bede, that (to quote Pliny):

> quin et bituminum sequax alioqui ac lenta natura in lacu Iudaeae qui vocatur Asphaltites certo tempore anni supernatans non quit sibi avelli ad omnem contactum adhaerens praeterquam filo quod tale virus infecerit.[75]

Bede says that the bitumen cannot be cut by iron but will yield to menstrual blood or urine,[76] and the mention of urine takes us back to a tradition that

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[72] Josephus, BJ 4.484; Hegesippus 4.18 (*in cinerem*; cf. v. 138); Tacitus, *Historiae* 5.7; Orosius, *Historiae adversus paganos* 1.5; Solinus, *Collectanea rerum memorabilium* 35.6 (*in pulverem*); Augustine, *De civitate Dei* 21.5.1 (*in pulverem*); Isidore, *Etymologiae* 14.3.24–25. Ps-Rufinus, Tr. of Josephus, BJ 5.5: 'Denique adhuc in ea diuini reliquiae ignis, et oppidorum quinque uidere licet imagines et renascentes in fructibus cineres, qui colore quidem sunt edulibus [sic] similes, carpentium uero manibus in fumum dissoluuntur et cinerem' (Basel 1524, 761; note that the book and chapter number of this translation, 5.5, do not correspond to that given for Josephus. This dates from Niese's edition, 1885–1894). See also Bede, *De locis sanctis* 11 (*in cinerem*). Prior to *De Sodoma*, but certainly unknown to the poet, would be Achilles Tatius, *Leucippe and Clitophon* 3.6; cf. G. Anderson, 'The Mystic Pomegranate and the Vine of Sodom. Achilles Tatius 3.6,' *American Journal of Philology* 100 (1979) 516–18.

[73] Hegisippus, 4.18; *Itinerarium Burdigalense* 24.16 (partially translated in Wilkins, *Egeria's Travels* 153–61; 'Antoninus Placentinus,' *Itinerarium* 10.4; Bede, *de locis sanctis* 11.

[74] Strabo, *Geography* 16.2.42; Pliny, *Natural History* [NH] 7.15.65; Josephus BJ 4.476; Tacitus, *Historiae* 5.6.

[75] Pliny, NH 7.15.65. See also Josephus, BJ 4.480; Tacitus, *Historiae* 5.6 ('nec abscindere aere ferrove possis: fugit cruorem vestemque infectam sanguine, quo feminae per mensis exolvuntur'); Hegesippus, 4.18 (here closer to Tacitus than Josephus). Note, however, how Tacitus continues: 'sic veteres auctores, sed gnari locorum tradunt undantis bitumine moles pelli manuque trahi ad litus, mox, ubi vapore terrae, vi solis inaruerint, securibus cuneisque ut trabes aut saxa discindi.'

[76] Bede, *de locis sanctis* 11: 'haerere sibi bitumen et nequaquam ferro praecidi fertur, sanguini tantum milierum menstruo uel urinae cedere, utilis autem ad compagem nauium uel corporibus hominum medendis.'

antedates Poseidonius, who disputed, indeed mocked, the claims of other writers that the asphalt could not be cut without the application of 'urine and other malodorous liquids.'[77]

Many ancient authors reported that everything floats in the waters of the Dead Sea,[78] and so does the author of *De Sodoma* (158–60). Hegesippus and, in his wake, Bede, know this, and make the further claim that all living things actually pop out of the water.[79] The key word here is 'living.' This additional bit of lore developed from consideration of the name *mare mortuum*. It was the sea of dead things, and there is no place in it for living objects. Conversely, it was the place *par excellence* for dead ones. So Trogus:

> in ea regione latus lacus est, qui propter magnitudinem et aquae immobilitatem Mortuum Mare dicitur. Nam neque ventis movetur resistente turbinibus bitumine, quo aqua omnia stagnatur, neque navigationis patiens est, quoniam omnia vita carentia in profundum merguntur....[80]

This is a classic etymological explanation: things lacking life belong in the Dead Sea.

De Sodoma displays a yet more puzzling variant on the theme: while a burning (or living) lantern will float, once extinguished — in other words, dead — the light will sink and stay under (160–64). This remarkable detail is also reported by Hegesippus and Bede.[81] The so-called Piacenza Pilgrim, on

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[77] Strabo, *Geography* 16.2.43: καὶ οὖρα καὶ ἄλλα δυσώδη ὑγρά. I cite the translation of H. L. Jones in the Loeb edition, 7 (New York 1930) 295. Cf. Karl Reinhardt, *Poseidonios über Ursprung und Entartung: Interpretation zweier Kulturgeschichtlicher Fragmente* (Orient und Antike 6; Heidelberg 1928) 65, who says that 'other malodorous liquids' is a circumlocution 'für das, was bei Tacitus mit Namen steht.' Note Reinhardt's entire excursus, 'Ekphrasis und Geophysik des toten Meeres,' 60–71. It is interesting to learn that, in this tradition, the Dead Sea was an example of the operation of geophysical and volcanic rather than divine forces.

[78] Strabo, *Geography* 16.2.42; Josephus, BJ 4.476–77 (= Ps-Rufinus 5.5; ed. Basel 1524, 761) has the story that Vespasian tested this property of the lake by having several non-swimmers thrown in with their hands tied behind their backs; see also Tacitus, *Historiae* 5.6; Bordeaux Pilgrim, 24.16.

[79] Hegesippus 4.18: 'Sed iam siue naturam siue qualitatem aquarum exprimamus, ne noster quoque in eo lacu excutiatur stilus, ex quo omnia, quaecumque mergenda putaueris uiuentia, tamen resilire opinio est et quamuis uehementer inlisa statim excuti'; Bede, *De locis sanctis* 11: 'omniaque uiuentia demersa, licet et vehementer inlisa, statim resilire.' Both Hegesippus and Bede also report Vespasian's scientific experiment (see preceding note); in Hegesippus this bit of real Josephus follows at some distance the report about living things not sinking, a result of Hegesippus' practice of combining BJ with other sources and tradition.

[80] Cited by Reinhardt (above n. 77) 64.

[81] Hegesippus 4.18: 'Lucernam accensam ferunt supernatare, sine ulla conversione extincto demergi lumine, et quavis demersum arte quod uiuat difficile haerere in profundo.' This is taken over word for word by Bede, *De locis sanctis* 11.

the other hand, reports that everything, dead or alive, sinks in the Dead Sea.[82] He was clearly too critical a witness.

* * *

Reading the poem 'against' Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and a range of geographical texts is certainly helpful; how convinced readers will be of the relevance of the latter set of subtexts remains to be seen. Some indirect confirmation may come from another sort of intertextual analysis, the evidence of near-contemporary 'readings' of the poem. We have no commentary on *De Sodoma*, of course, but the earliest manuscript witnesses themselves can be made to reveal at least the contexts and environments in which the poem was recorded and, presumably, read. Two distinctly different types of ninth-century collections allow us to reconstruct the expectations of readerships which are considerably closer to the original audience than we are; in particular, the audience for which the Laon collections of Biblical literature were assembled may perhaps share some interests of the audience for whom the poet wrote.

Since the *De Sodoma* appears in manuscript collections on the Biblical epics discussed above, it will be appropriate to consider here what this corpus of poetry actually looked like to early medieval readers. To this end, Reinhart Herzog devised a tripartite division of the field, on the basis of testimonia and manuscript collections: (1) canonical epics — often praised and listed as a group, and supported by many manuscript witnesses (Juvencus, Sedulius, Arator, and Avitus); (2) uncanonical or peripherally canonical works — often criticized and nearly suppressed, supported only by a slender manuscript tradition (Claudius Marius Victorius, Dracontius, and Proba); and (3) extra-canonical pseudepigrapha.[83] Herzog remarks on the curious fact that the majority of the works comprising this last group are attributed to canonical patristic *prose* authors: Tertullian, Lactantius, Hilarius, Victorinus, and Cyprian.[84]

It is this third group which includes *De Sodoma* and *De Iona*. All of these works are known from a well-defined group of Carolingian collections. Seven such collections are extant, and we know of a few more manuscripts of the same type and provenance that are now lost. *De Sodoma* appears in five of these seven collections: Laon 279 (L), Laon 273 (L′), and Voss. Lat. Q.86 (V),

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[82] 'Antoninus Placentinus' 10.4: 'In quo mare nihil inuenitur uiuificatum nec paleas nec lignum supernatat neque homo natare potest, sed quicquid ibi iactatum fuerit, in profundum dimergitur.'

[83] Herzog (above, n. 5): (1) pp. xix–xxiii, (2) pp. xxiii–xxv, (3) pp. xxv–xxxii.

[84] This would suggest that those responsible for the manuscript attributions to Cyprian were thinking of a major patristic author of prose, Cyprian of Carthage.

from the ninth century; BN lat. 2772 (P), from the tenth; and BN lat. 14758, from the thirteenth.

More illuminating than a horizontal survey of the manuscripts in which *De Sodoma* occurs is a vertical section of the contents of each manuscript, for only this will define the manuscript context of *De Sodoma*. The manuscript context in which a work is collected can tell us a great deal about the terms in which an earlier age perceived the work, and provides a Carolingian background against which to read the poem. In the case of the three ninth-century manuscripts containing *De Sodoma*, L, L', and V, one can discern two distinct and very different contexts.[85]

V is the second part of an anthology of 'school authors,' written at the Benedictine house of Fleury on the Loire during the second half of the ninth century. The original manuscript presented a remarkable series of *auctores*, both Christian and pagan. The collection began with Juvencus' epic treatment of the New Testament and Sedulius' *Carmen paschale*; this portion is preserved as Vatican Reg. lat. 333.[86] The Leiden manuscript continues with two books of Arator, *De actibus apostolorum* (fols. 1^r–63^v), epigrams of Prosper of Aquitaine (fols. 63^v–79^r), two hymns by Sedulius (fols. 79^v–81^v), *De Sodoma* and *De Iona* (fols. 81^v–84ra), the popular moralizing *Disticha Catonis* (fols. 84ra–86^r), the fables of Avianus (fols. 86va–91vb), selections from the *Anthologia Latina* and the epigrams of Martial (fols. 91vb–116ra), poems of Avitus (fols. 116rb–144^v), and a section of Isidore of Seville's *Etymologiae* entitled *Ars Isidori de grammatica* (fols. 145–150^v).[87] V breaks off at this point, but there is every reason to believe that more Isidore followed, probably works that would introduce students to the study of the *artes liberales*.[88]

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[85] On 'Überlieferungszusammenhänge,' see Bernhard Bischoff, *Paläographie des römischen Altertums und des abendländischen Mittelalters*, Grundlagen der Germanistik 24 (Berlin 1979) 255: 'Durch ein planmässiges Arrangement kann auf einzelne Texte ein neues Licht fallen.' In the note to this sentence, Bischoff gives Laon 273 and 279 as examples.

[86] G. Frank, 'Vossianus Q.86 and Reginensis 333,' *American Journal of Philology* 44 (1923) 67–70. Juvencus occupies fols. 1^r–101^v; Sedulius, fols. 101^v–162^v.

[87] For a detailed description of the manuscript and its contents, see K. A. de Meyier, *Codices Vossiani latini* II: *Codices in quarto* (Leiden 1975) 197–204.

[88] See Glauche (above, n. 51) 33–35, who also cites a book listed in a twelfth-century Cluny library catalogue that might very well be a twin of V: 'Volumen in quo continentur Iuvencus, Sedulius, Arator, Prosper, quoddam metrum Tertuliani, Cato, Avianus, quedam diverse collectiones versuum diversorum a⟨u⟩ctorum, libri Alcimi episcopi, ars Isidori de grammatica artium et de disciplinis aliarum artis.' Cf. L. Delisle, *Cabinet des Manuscrits* (above, n. 12) 2.479.

The two ninth-century manuscripts from Laon represent a different, less familiar type of collection.[89] The manuscripts are so closely related that one list, based on Laon 273, will suffice:[90]

> metrum sancti Hilarii pectaviensis episcopi in genesi (C 183: 273 fols. 1^r–2^v; 279 fol. 1^r [fragmentary])[91]
>
> Proba de aeptatica (C 294: 273 fols. 2^v–5^r; 279 fols. 1^v–3^v)[92]
>
> versus Cipriani de Sodoma (C 326: 273 fols. 5^r–6^r; 279 fols. 3^v–5^r)
>
> Alcimi Aviti libri I–IIII (C 67: 273 fols. 6^r–21^r; 279 fols. 5^r–18^r)[93]
>
> Dracontii liber I (C 128: 273 fols. 21^r–25^v; 279 fols. 18^r–22^r)[94]
>
> [279 only: Liber geneseos metricus Cipriani (C 119; fols. 23^v–33^v)][95]
>
> Liber questionum super librum genesis (C 371: 273 fols. 25^v–111^r; 279 fols. 34^v–100^r)[96]

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[89] The manuscripts were already in Laon in the ninth century. As for actual provenance, a recent student of all the manuscripts at Laon in this period writes, 'Manuscript 279, which contains Wicbod's *Quaestiones in Octateuchum*, was copied somewhere in the valley of the Moselle, probably not far from Wicbod's abbey, Saint Maximinus in Trier': John J. Contreni, *The Cathedral School of Laon from 850 to 930: Its Manuscripts and Masters* (Münchener Beiträge zur Mediävistik und Renaissance-Forschung 29; Munich 1978) 45, with reference to his earlier study 'A propos de quelques manuscrits de l'école de Laon au ixe siècle: Découvertes et problèmes,' *Le Moyen Age* 78 (1972) 5–39, esp. 10–14. On Wigbod, see below. Of manuscript 273, all that can be said is that it is one of a number of books donated to Laon by Bernard and Adelelm which they had inherited from their teacher, Martin Hiberniensis (819–75). His hand is found in its margins (Contreni, *Cathedral School* 38–39).

[90] Laon 279, although presumably the older of the two manuscripts, is partially mutilated. For this reason I have chosen Laon 273 as the base, giving its wording of the manuscript titles of each item and noting any divergences of 279 from it. The following description is based on the tables of contents in Peiper's preface to his edition of Avitus in MGH AA 6.2 (1883) and his tabular comparison of the two manuscripts in his edition of Cyprian in CSEL 23.V. I have collated Peiper's summaries with the material in Contreni's recent study (1978), and give for each different work the item number assigned it by C(ontreni) in Appendix A, 'The Contents of the Library,' 169–87. Contreni surveys a great number of manuscripts; on the exact contents of Laon 273 and 279, Herzog's information (above, n. 5, especially p. xxx) is more reliable, if less systematically presented.

[91] Ps-Hilary of Arles; see above, p. 6.

[92] On Proba's Vergilian cento, see above, p. 5. 'Aeptatica' for 'Heptateuch,' although for Proba, the Old Testament events (lines 1–332) are merely the prelude to the life, passion, and ascension of Christ (lines 333–694; cf. *maius opus moueo*, line 334).

[93] *De spiritalis historiae gestis*, in 5 books. Books 1–4 are drawn from Genesis, books 1–3 covering Gen. 1–3.24 and book 4 Gen. 6–9.17 (the flood); book 5, which treats the crossing of the Red Sea, alone is taken from the book of Exodus (1–15.1) and appears separately in these manuscripts; see below. Laon 273 continues to serve as a school text: see Daniel J. Nodes, ed., *Avitus. The Fall of Man. De spiritalis historiae gestis libri I–III. Edited from Laon, Bibliothèque municipale, MS. 273* (Toronto Medieval Latin Texts 16; Toronto 1985).

[94] *De laudibus Dei*, excerpts; 1.118–561 cover Gen. 1–3.

[95] 'Cyprian of Gaul,' *Carmen in Genesim*; part of *Metrum super Heptateuchum*.

[96] Wigbod, *Quaestiones in Octateuchum*. Contreni reports (*The Cathedral School* [above, n. 89] 37–38, 186) that only Book 1 has been published (PL 96.1105–68, where it appears under

  ΄ Alcìmi Aviti̧ liber V (C 67: 273 fols 111ʳ–116ʳ; 279 fols. 100ᵛ–105ᵛ)[97]
    [279 only: metrum de Exodo (C 119; fols. 105ᵛ–114ᵛ)]
    explanatio libri Exodi (C 371: 273 fols. 116ᵛ–129ᵛ; 279 fols. 115ʳ–125ᵛ;
      [again from Wigbod's *Quaestiones in Octateuchum*]).
From this point on, the collection alternates, book by Biblical book, portions
of the anonymous *Metrum super Heptateuchum*, usually ascribed to 'Cyprian of
Gaul' but sometimes to Juvencus and sometimes transmitted anonymous-
ly — in any event, the continuation of the 'Liber geneseos metricus Cipriani'
Laon 279 already exhibited — with the corresponding section of Wigbod's
quaestiones.
    metrum super leviticum (C 119:[98] 273 fols. 129ᵛ–130ʳ; 279 fols. 125ᵛ–127ᵛ)
    capitulatio et explanatio in leviticum (C 371: 273 fols. 130ʳ–135ʳ; 279 fols.
      128ʳ–132ʳ)
    metrum super numerum (C 119: 273 fols. 135ᵛ–139ᵛ; 279 fols. 132ʳ–137ʳ)
    capitulatio et explanatio libri numeri et catalogus mansionum (C 371: 273
      fols. 140ʳ–147ᵛ; 279 fols. 137ᵛ–144ʳ)
    metrum super deuteronomium (C 119: 273 fols. 147ᵛ–149ᵛ; 279 fols.
      144ᵛ–146ʳ)
    capitulatio et explanatio libri deuteronòmii (C 371: 273 fols. 150ʳ–154ʳ; 279
      fols. 146ᵛ–150ʳ)
    metrum Iesu nave (C 119: fols. 154ᵛ–158ᵛ; 279 fols. 151ʳ[sic]–154ᵛ)
    capitula et expositum in Hiesu nave (C 371: 273 fols. 159ʳ–162ᵛ; 279 fols.
      155ʳ–157ᵛ)
    metrum super librum iudicum (C 119: 273 fols. 162ᵛ–168ᵛ; 279 fols.
      157ᵛ–162ᵛ)
    capitula et expositum de libro iudicum (C 371: 273 fols. 169ʳ–173ᵛ; 279 fols.
      162ᵛ–163ᵛ [fragmentary])
In contrast to V, which is an anthology of authorial texts reproduced, by and
large, entire, the compiler of the collection represented by the Laon manu-
scripts has as his organizing principle the first eight books of the Old Testa-
ment.[99] The Bible itself is the object of study. Biblical poetry is not here part

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Wigbod's name). However, the entire work has long been available among Bede's published
works: PL 93.233ff. See Herzog, p. xxx and n. 88, where he refers to Laistner's publication of
this information in *Speculum* 21 (1946) 527 and *Harvard Theological Review* 40 (1947) 30.
    [97] Book 5 (*De transitu maris rubri*) covers Exodus 1–15; for books 1–4, see above, n. 93.
    [98] Can Contreni have missed the (re)appearances of the *Metrum super Heptateuchum* in
(279) and 273 ? I follow Herzog, p. xxx here.
    [99] This holds true, whether Laon 279 is the original of 273 or they both descend from a
common archetype. Peiper (CSEL 23 [1891] 212), referring to a lost manuscript from the
convent of St. Nazarius in Lorsch, asserts, 'erat is haud dubie Nazarianus iste, ex quo fluxe-
runt Laudunenses nostri.' In his edition of Avitus (MGH AA 6.2 [1883] liii), Peiper lists the
contents of this manuscript according to Angelo Mai. However, Herzog has shown that the
order and nature of the lost Lorsch collection are quite different from the Laon manuscripts

of an arts course, or a prolegomenon to such a course. It is an augment to commentary, as can be seen quite clearly by the alternating *metra* and *explanationes*.

Wigbod casts his *explanationes* as a dialogue between *magister* and *discipulus*, although the form, classical in origin and imitated by many patristic and medieval authors, is stretched nearly beyond recognition by the distended responses of the teacher to the student's inquiries. These responses consist of largely undigested chunks of the exegetical works of Ambrose, Jerome, Augustine, Gregory, Hilary, Isidore, and such lesser lights as Eucherius and Junillus.[100] It is not impossible that the intermingling of these prose extracts with excerpts from a range of Biblical poems goes back to Wigbod himself, for in his poetic dedication to Charlemagne we read: 'parvula excerpi Mosaica carmina bibli.'[101] On the other hand, we know of early exclusively prose collections of *quaestiones*,[102] so it is not impossible that this might represent the original form.

The Laon manuscripts establish that at least as early as the ninth century and perhaps earlier, *De Sodoma* had a place, along with other extra-canonical Biblical epics, as a poetic augment to eclectic Biblical exegesis.[103] The manuscript context of the Laon manuscripts might be described, then, as one of Biblical study — perhaps not at the highest level of Biblical scholarship of the day, but earnest and pious; it grew from the central project of Christian education since Augustine, and the basis for monastic devotion, the *lectio divina*.[104]

(above, n. 5, 56–68). On Mai's own fabrications and the vexed relationship obtaining among the Lorsch catalogues, see Bernhard Bischoff, 'Lorsch im Spiegel seiner Handschriften,' in Friedrich Knöpp, ed., *Die Reichsabtei Lorsch. Festschrift zum Gedenken an ihre Stiftung 764* (Darmstadt 1977) 2.7–128 (also published *separatim* as a *Beiheft* to Münchener Beiträge zur Mediävistik und Renaissance-Forschung [Munich 1974]) esp. 8–18.

[100] In this summary of the matter of Wigbod, I follow Herzog (above, n. 5) xxx–xxxii closely; see also Contreni, *Cathedral School* (above, n. 89) 68.

[101] Ed. Dümmler, MGH PLAC 1.88f.: line 88. See Herzog xxxi for other, supporting arguments. In addition to the Laon manuscripts, we know of another such contemporary collection from the catalogue of St. Riquier, dating from 831; see G. Becker, *Catalogi bibliothecarum antiqui* (Bonn 1885), no. 81: 'quaestiones Hilarii, Cypriani, Alcimi Aviti, Hieronymi, Augustini super Pentateuchum in I. vol.' (cited by Herzog, *ibid.*).

[102] Becker, *Catalogi*, no. 258 (Lorsch) (cited by Herzog, *ibid.*).

[103] Herzog summarizes: 'Die Kette der kommentierenden patres Ambrosius, Hieronymus, Augustinus, Gregorius und Isidor wird für die Leerstelle anonymer Poesie mit den Namen Cyprian und Hilarius aufgefüllt; die Bibelepik substituiert sich als eine Art sekundärer Kommentar der fehlenden alttestamentlichen Exegese der vorambrosianischen Kirchenväter' (*ibid.*).

[104] The relationship between Biblical scholarship and Biblical poetry makes an interesting topic. McClure (above, n. 17) has made a first step toward such a study, although she does not go later than the sixth century. In this context, Herzog (*ibid.*) reminds us of the plans Alcuin, the great Carolingian Biblical scholar, had for a project combining commentary with the poetry of Juvencus (*epist.* 143, *ad Karolum*).

Is there any comparable historical justification for adducing as subtexts of *De Sodoma* the reports of geographers, natural scientists, and pilgrims cited above, as analogues to the lore in the poem? For this purpose, one might profitably move from an examination of the manuscript context of *De Sodoma* — the other pieces collected with it in ninth-century *compendia* — to the study of what might be called manuscript *environment*. Here one's purview must extend beyond the covers of one book. In different environments, different factors might be significant, but elements almost always worth considering would include: the circumstances surrounding the writing of the manuscript (e.g., scribe, patron, exemplars), the activities and careers of its creator and users, other books found in the same library. In short, manuscript environment involves the immediate institutional setting in which a manuscript is created and subsequently finds itself.

Contreni's study of all the manuscripts known to be at Laon in the period 850–950 permitted him to develop sketches of several generations of Laon masters. One individual left so many traces that we now have a clear portrait of 'Martin Hiberniensis (819–875), *Magister Laudunensis*' and a picture of 'The Reading of Martin Hiberniensis.'[105] Contreni was able to identify the hand of Martin in twenty-one Laon manuscripts. That patristic Biblical exegesis figures prominently among them is no surprise. What makes Martin so interesting are his Greek–Latin glossary and grammar (MS 444 — Martin was considered something of an authority on Greek in his own day), the glossaries to Vergil and Sedulius accompanied by a guide to the liberal arts (MS 468), the collection of computistic texts (Berlin, Deutsche Staatsbibliothek, MSS Phillipps 1830 + 1832), and two medical manuscripts (MSS 420 and 424). Three of his manuscripts are of particular relevance to *De Sodoma*: MS 273, which contains, in addition to the poem, Wigbod's *Quaestiones in Octateuchum* and 'Cyprian,' in which Martin 'made extensive marginal notes'; MS 24, Jerome's *Liber interpretationis hebraicorum*; and MS 92, which contains the two *De locis sanctis* of Bede and Adamnan.[106] These manuscripts bear the marks not simply of Martin's ownership, but of intensive use by him. To the Jerome manuscript Martin

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[105] The titles of chapters eight (95–111) and nine (113–34) respectively of Contreni, *Cathedral School* (above, n. 89).

[106] *Ibid*. 96. MS 92, which also contained Bede's commentary on Mark, 'was partially copied and annotated by Martin' (*ibid*. 129). The text of these works was originally faulty and incomplete; 'Martin must have had access to a complete text since he corrected and completed passages in his own copy' (*ibid*. 72). Not clearly Martin's book, but available in the library at Laon in his day or soon thereafter, were copies of 'Josephus *Libri antiquitationes Iudaicorum latino sermone*': i.e., the 'Latin Josephus' translated under Cassiodorus' supervision (*ibid*. 180, item 246); also available, no later than the third quarter of the tenth century, was 'Hegesippus *De excidio Hierosolimorum*,' the title given it in nearly all medieval manuscripts (MS 402bis, fols. 1ʳ–162ᵛ; see *ibid*. 52 n. 51; 72).

'added a table of contents . . . in order to facilitate reference to this handy guide to Hebrew words.' In MS 273 his frequent annotations of Wigbod, in particular, will have 'served . . . as reminders of passages that were particularly useful in teaching.'[107]

Since the identity, provenance, and precise date of the poem remain doubtful, it is not unhelpful to examine in some detail an intellectual milieu on which a qualified reconstruction of the original audience's horizons of expectations might be based. Martin was surely more fortunate in terms of his education and the richness of his library than the author of *De Sodoma* was, wherever and whenever in the three preceding centuries he may have lived. Martin was the heir of Irish learning and a participant, after all, in the Carolingian renaissance. Yet there were scholarly impulses and trends that predated the beginning of this renaissance, as is now clearly recognized in the case of the later one. As all Christian intellectuals, from Jerome and Cassiodorus to Isidore and the Carolingian scholars, testify — no one more articulately and more influentially than Augustine in *De doctrina christiana* — all science was to be directed toward a better, fuller understanding of scripture. The same spirit that animated Jerome's study of Hebrew names led countless others to study and treasure Josephus and Pliny, and to pore over the accounts of other less eminent authorities, whether geographers or travelers, whenever there was information to be garnered that cast light on the *realia* of Biblical stories.

* * *

In the absence of any programmatic statement on the part of the author of *De Sodoma*, all we have as a basis for reconstructing its author's aims is the poem itself, and our general understanding of the milieu and literary institutions shared by poet and audience.[108] The evidence of the manuscripts which contain the poem — their contents and number — provides eloquent testimony to the educational value of Latin Biblical poetry: the canonical Biblical poets became canonical school authors. Lest we think only of Augustan poets as classics, V bears eloquent testimony to the early prominence, even the near monopoly these Christian Vergils — now largely unread by modern Latin stu-

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[107] *Ibid.* 130; see also p. 113 (on MS 273 as a teaching manuscript).

[108] One might be more confident about the suggestions offered above if it were possible to match the manuscript contexts exemplified by V and L(') with any of the dedications or programmatic statements that appear in the canonical and earlier Biblical poems. Note, e.g., Claudius Marius Victorius, *Alethia*, preface, lines 104f.: 'dum teneros formare animos et corda paramus / ad verum virtutis iter puerilibus annis.' Victorius, a public orator in Marseilles in the third quarter of the fifth century, ostensibly wrote his *Alethia* for his son (so Gennadius, *De viris illustribus* 61; cf. McClure [above, n. 17] 321); cf. also Avitus, *Ep.* xxxxiii (38) *ad Euphrasium* (MGH AA 6.2 [1883] 73), in the first decade of the sixth century: 'Quocirca volumen per vos temperatius ingerendum si supradictus frater vel infantibus legi debere censuerit, possum per quaecunque magnificentiae suae scripta cognoscere.'

dents — had in the literary portion of the curriculum, a prominence maintained during subsequent centuries, as Glauche's collection of testimonia, manuscripts, and library catalogues bears out.[109] Rather than continuing to refer to the classical tradition of medieval schooling, then, it would be more accurate to speak of a school tradition embracing Christian and pagan *auctores* together.[110]

We must, however, be wary of the potential disparity between the ideal audience an author addresses or speaks of, and the actual readers for whom he writes. Even though Victorius or Avitus — to take authors whose programmatic statements have survived — may have written with edification and education in mind, they also wrote for their fellow *littérateurs*, who would truly appreciate the achievement. The circles of aristocratic families in Rome, or in the old Italian and provincial centers of Roman culture, do not, of course, present the same context for literary production as do the courts of half-Romanized Gallic princelings, or the monasteries in their lands. A nobility of blood and land has been replaced by one of the sword, on the one hand, and of literacy, on the other. Kartschoke, whose purview includes both Latin and vernacular Biblical poetry, is one of the few scholars who have posed the question of public in the later centuries of antiquity. I think he is right to remind us — in the context of vernacular poetry, to be sure — of Bede's well-known account of the illiterate Cædmon. His dream, and the song it inspired, are well known. It was after this first demonstration of his gifts that the abbess of Whitby had him instructed in scripture.

> At ipse cuncta, quae audiendo discere poterat, rememorando secum et quasi mundum animal ruminando, in carmen dulcissimum conuertebat, suauiusque resonando doctores suos uicissim auditores sui faciebat.[111]

There is a truth to be seen in Bede's clever formulation, 'doctores suos uicissim auditores sui faciebat.' Bede nowhere says that Cædmon's audience was composed exclusively of *doctores* — Cædmon's 'teachers,' but also (at least relatively) 'learned individuals.' Nonetheless, the people best able to appreciate Cædmon's poetry were those who already knew, and knew well, both the Biblical content and the poetic forms. This holds true, whether the form is Anglo-Saxon alliterative verse or Vergilian hexameters. The one would appeal more to the sons and daughters of Northumbrian nobility, the other to clerics, the upholders of the Latin literary and educational tradition.[112]

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[109] Above, n. 51.

[110] See Hexter (above, n. 51).

[111] Bede, *Historia ecclesiastica* 4.24 (edd. Bertram Colgrave and R. A. B. Mynors [Oxford 1969] 418).

[112] Cf. Kartschoke, *Bibeldichtung* (above, n. 8) 219–20.

The best evidence for the author's ideal readers lies in the poem itself. The difficulties and pretensions of *De Sodoma* strongly suggest that the ideal readers of the poem would have been *magistri* and *doctores*. It is a virtuoso performance, an attempt to clear a place for itself in the traditions of both Biblical exegesis and Latin epic. The author must have known that the poem's novelty could only be appreciated by those who were thoroughly versed in both scriptural and Latin hexametric traditions. A few readers may have been up to all its demands, but if the ninth-century manuscripts are any indication, most readers would have appreciated the poet's achievement in one rather than in both contexts. The Vossianus suggests the liberal arts tradition of classical literature, the Laon manuscripts represent more the tradition of eclectic patristic exegesis; still, as a collection of poetry and prose, the Laon texts come perhaps closer to satisfying the poet's aims and providing a fit context for *De Sodoma*.

What links the poet's evident attention to the natural phenomena of the Dead Sea, as reported in a range of sources, with that of a scholar like Martin in the ninth century, might be epitomized in a phrase Martin himself seized on. In MS Laon 298, Martin had a copy of Origen's *Homiliae in Numeros* in the translation of Rufinus. In the eighteenth of these twenty-eight sermons, on the text 'Omnis sapientia a Deo est,' Martin marked the titles of sections he found of particular value. One is: 'Origo totius scientiae a Deo est.'[113] In the concluding line of *De Sodoma*, the poet chooses as his final epithet for God, 'unus rerum dominus.' The prominence of natural wonders in *De Sodoma* gives special meaning to this phrase. The Lord is the Lord of the things of this world; he speaks his displeasure at Sodom through the unnatural devastation of the region. The peculiar phenomena the Dead Sea exhibits are *res significantes* in no need of allegoresis. To understand God as Lord of all things, poet and reader alike required all the information they could gather about the Holy Land.

For their study of scripture, students obviously needed such information. But why write about Sodom in Latin hexameters? Why refer to Ovid, and why adopt the shape of an Ovidian episode while simultaneously claiming that the pagan's fables are distorted versions of Biblical truth? Note that another phrase Martin marked, in that same eighteenth homily of Origen, was *Quia omnis ars a Deo est.*[114] The Lord is the Lord of all things, *grammatica* and the *auctores* — even Ovid — included.

In the final four verses of *De Sodoma* (164–67), the poet concludes that all unjust people should note the punishments meted out to Sodom and Gomor-

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[113] Contreni discusses the annotations to this sermon in some detail: *Cathedral School* (above, n. 89) 115–17.

[114] *Ibid.* 116.

rah, and that they should fear God and the commandments of heaven. In contrast to Ovid, who presents his etiological lore anecdotally, with characteristic light touch, the concluding section of *De Sodoma*, with its list of natural wonders from the Dead Sea region, gets entirely out of hand; the poet's earnestness and credulity are all the more blatant when compared with Ovid's playfulness. However, there is more than heightened contrast to be won by insisting on the Ovidian subtext, and reading the etiological lore of the concluding section of *De Sodoma* in light of Ovidian *aitia* — indeed, by reading the whole of *De Sodoma* against Ovid's 'Phaethon.' It is illuminating that while the later, Christian poet claims that the transformations he relates are more authentic than Ovid's, he adopts the Ovidian structure of codal metamorphoses and subsequent strings of etiologies as the ordering principle of his own poem. This Ovidian pattern takes over where Genesis leaves off; yet it is the structure of the Ovidian episode that provides the key to the poem's unity, however vexed and attenuated it remains. We are only taking the poet seriously if we follow his lead, and read his poem against the episode in the *Metamorphoses* to which he refers.

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