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Productive Destruction: Torture, Text, and the Body in the Old English 'Andreas'

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Abstract
Writing in the Old English Andreas is at once both a productive and a destructive activity. We first become aware of the dangerous power of the written word quite early in the poem, when we learn that the Mermedonians have subverted the normally productive activity of writing into a tool for calculating the execution dates of their prisoners (134-37). Later, the words uttered by the devil to incite the Mermedonians against Andreas illuminate the lexical relationship between the destructive nature of writing and the productive nature of torture in the semiotic context of the poem. Finally, in a sort of "double-subversion," these same Mermedonians are the agents by which the destructive practice of torture is itself transformed, as they "write" upon Andreas's body his identity as a type of Christ. It is precisely this analogous relationship between production and destruction, between inscription and infliction, between the act of writing and that of torture and the transformative powers bound up in each practice which I will explore in this paper, focusing on how Andreas's body ultimately serves as the page upon which this multivalent (and seemingly paradoxical) text is written. [*excerpt*]

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4. Productive Destruction: Torture, Text, and the Body in the Old English *Andreas*

Christopher Fee

Writing in the Old English *Andreas* is at once both a productive and a destructive activity. We first become aware of the dangerous power of the written word quite early in the poem, when we learn that the Mermedonians have subverted the normally productive activity of writing into a tool for calculating the execution dates of their prisoners (134-37).1 Later, the words uttered by the devil to incite the Mermedonians against Andreas illuminate the lexical relationship between the destructive nature of writing and the productive nature of torture in the semiotic context of the poem. Finally, in a sort of "double-subversion," these same Mermedonians are the agents by which the destructive practice of torture is itself transformed, as they "write" upon Andreas's body his identity as a type of Christ. It is precisely this analogous relationship between production and destruction, between inscription and infliction, between the act of writing and that of torture and the transformative powers bound up in each practice which I will explore in this paper, focusing on how Andreas's body ultimately serves as the page upon which this multivalent (and seemingly paradoxical) text is written.

An exploration of the analogy between acts of writing and of torture is central to my discussion of *Andreas*. More to the point, I wish to define the tangible results of these acts the "texts" composed through both writing and torture in the context of this analogy. To this end I will begin with a discussion of several passages in which the language of production seems, either linguistically or thematically, to be bound up with concepts of destruction. Having developed a philological model which suggests a relationship between concepts of production and destruction, I will posit a theoretical construct of the "gendered" structure of the act of writing, and show how this structure may parallel that of the act of torture. I will conclude with an analysis of the transformative power of pain, and a discussion of the literary parallels to that power as they appear in *Andreas*.

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Writing, as a means of reconstituting and transmitting the Divine Word, is the prominent unifying activity of *Andreas*. It is of note that the central narrative of the poem is framed between two distinct and self-conscious references to the act of writing. At the very onset of the poem Matthew is described as that one among the Jews who first related the gospel through the miraculous craft of writing:

Wæs hira Matheus sum,

se mid Iudem ongan godspell ærest

wordum writan wundorcræfte. (11-13)

(Matthew was one of them, the first among the Jews who began to write the Gospel in words, with miraculous power.)

This is clearly "productive" writing, the purpose of which is to lead mankind to the truth of the Word.

The poet's own writing is likewise "productive" in that it strives to serve the same purpose; but it is also productive in the creative sense, in that the poet has produced a work which is laudable on its own artistic merits. Protestations of incompetence aside, the poet's self-conscious reference to his own act of composition serves both to draw attention to the analogy between his writing and that of Matthew, and to underscore the unique nature of his own act of production:

Hwæt, ic hwile nu haliges lare,

leoð giddinga, lof þæs þe worhte,

wordum wemde, wyrd undyrne

ofer min gemet. Mycel is to secganne,

langsum leornung, þæt he in life adreag,

eall æfter orde. (1478-1489)

(Lo, I for a while now have announced in words of poetry the story of the holy one, the glory of that which he did, a manifest fact beyond my ability. A great feat is it, a challenging task, to recount all that he did in his lifetime from the beginning.)

Such a framing device in fact validates the author's own writing through its analogy to that of Matthew.

That the poet frames the narrative with such references to writing is significant. Perhaps even more telling than the analogy between Matthew's "miraculous" craft and the literary efforts of the poet, however, is the distinction between such holy writing and its heathen counterpart. This contrast is underscored in the description of the Mermedonians' grisly death-calendar; in what seems to be a clear inversion of Matthew's writing of the Word of Life, the cannibals have devised "death-words," a system of writing and reckoning

whereby they can determine exactly when a victim is scheduled to be put to death and eaten:

Hæfdon hie on rune ond on rimcræfte

awriten, wælgrædige, wera endestæf,

hwænne hie to mose meteþearfendum

on þære werþeode weorðan sceoldon. (134-137)

(They had written, in rune and in reckoning, the slaughter-greedy ones, the end-word of men, when they should become food to the hungry ones in that tribe.) 2

Here the Mermedonians invert a normally productive activity, and writing becomes a means of death; later, in my discussion of the transformative nature of pain, I will demonstrate how torture is likewise inverted (albeit unwittingly) in Mermedonian hands, and becomes a productive activity akin to writing, which is a means to life.

The perverse nature of the Mermedonian abuse of the act of writing is further emphasized by the poet's choice of words: While Matthew "wordum writan wundorcræfte" (l. 13) (wrote in *words*, miraculously), the Mermedonians "awriten" in *runes* and *reckoning*; though both are engaged in what would seem to be analogous acts, they do so to opposite ends.3 Indeed, as the apposition of "wordum" with "on rune" would seem to imply, these acts spring from entirely different traditions: Matthew's "miraculous" Christian writing is in stark opposition to the pagan "rune" and "rimcræft" of the Mermedonians.4 Here, clearly, we have an example of the inversion of the normally productive process of writing, an inversion which results in death instead of life.

Seth Lerer has examined acts of what he has termed "literacy" as they are manifested in various Old English texts; for Lerer such literacy comprises more than just reading and writing, and includes related issues of power, causality and intent. Lerer discusses such literacy as he perceives it in *Andreas*, and also has determined that acts of writing are central to the poem.5 Lerer finds the "subversive" literacy of the Mermedonians to be of particular note in the context of the poet's sense of the nature and purpose of his own act of writing:

Unlike that of saints, or by implication of the *Andreas*-poet himself, Mermedonian writing attempts to bind and destroy rather than release and revive. Their inscriptions emblemize a pernicious kind of letter, one that literally kills 6

There are many kinds and levels of "writing" in *Andreas*, and that of the poet is inextricably bound up with the rest. Here he clearly seems to delineate the good from the bad, the Christian from the pagan, the productive from the destructive; it is equally clear into which tradition he himself falls. Such a dichotomy is itself transformed, however, by the dynamic process of the poet's

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own "literacy," through means as subtle as word choice and as blatant as emendation.

That the relationship between writing and torture may be likewise transformed first comes to light after Andreas has come to the city of the Mermedonians. The devil, in the guise of an old man, advises the Mermedonians that Andreas is their enemy and exhorts them to seek him out and subdue him through torment:

Nu ge magon eaðe oncyðdæda

wrecan on gewyrhtum. Lætað wæpnes spor

iren ecgheard, ealdorgeard sceoran,

fæges feorhhord. Gað fromlice

þæt ge wiðerfeohtend wiges gehnægan. (1179-1183)

(Now you may readily for their strange deeds wreak vengeance upon the doers. Let the mark of weapon, edge-hard iron, cut the life-dwelling, the body of the fated one. Go boldly so that you may subdue your adversary of strife.)

The poet's language here is particularly relevant to my discussion, because his use of the terms "spor" and "sceoran" highlights just the kind of relationship between the language and concepts of destruction and those of production which I am exploring. In the context of this passage, the meanings of these terms seem fairly straightforward: "spor" can best be read here as "mark," or perhaps more poetically, "wound" or "scar;" "sceoran" clearly means "cut" in this context, or in a more general sense "destroy." The sense of this passage, therefore, seems clearly destructive, both linguistically and thematically. But though "spor" can certainly mean the mark of a wound, it can also mean a mark, or a trace, of any kind;7 and "sceran" means to cut, shear, or shave, most often in regards to the cutting or shaving of hair, but sometimes to the shearing of sheep.8 We have here then an interesting paradox in the application of these two particular terms to the meaning at hand; though the primary reading here certainly seems destructive, it is noteworthy in the context of my larger argument that both of these terms resonate with more productive meanings: "spor" could certainly suggest the act of "marking" or "tracing" upon a page, and "sceran," in its implicit sense of shearing sheep, could suggest the preparation of parchment.9 Thus both words, while explicitly referring to an act of torture, might also implicitly invoke an image of writing and of the preparation of parchment. This paradoxical image is of special significance in the context of my discussion of Andreas's body as the page upon which his spiritual identity is written through the very acts of torture invoked by the devil through these words.

It might be best to pause for a moment to discuss why such a paradox is significant. In short, am I just projecting my own arbitrary "pun" into the meaning of this passage? After all, nearly any word has a variety of possible

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meanings which may seem paradoxical or inappropriate in any number of contexts. The answer to this question is twofold, having to do with the suppression of a secondary "text" by the primary meaning, a text which is represented through a secondary sense of a term which is diametrically opposed to that primary meaning. In the simplest terms, a

pun is more than a pun when it indicates the presence of a syllepsis (as defined by Michael Riffaterre).[10] Allen J. Frantzen explains that ". . . the pun contained in the syllepsis expresses the relationship of a suppressed text or subtext to the main text," but this pun must be absolute, in the sense that the conflicting meanings must be "polar opposites."[11] Frantzen's discussion of the sylleptical nature of "writan" and "forwritan," dealing especially with how they are used in *Beowulf*, is most significant: "... their meanings to write, to kill are incompatible."[12] Here I am defining just such incompatible meanings, those of production and those of destruction, both in my discussion of "spor" and "sceoran," and in my larger investigation. In the larger case I identify the language of torture, or destruction, as the literal meaning, and the production of Andreas into a type of Christ as the figural meaning embedded within that primary one.[13]

Carolyn Dinshaw has extensively examined the relationship between the body and the page. Dinshaw is primarily interested in issues of gender as they are manifested in Chaucer, but her examination of "inscription" lends itself both to my discussion of Andreas's spiritual identity as it is written on his body through the infliction of his passion, and to my analogy of the natures of the (productive/destructive) acts of writing and of torture in this poem. For Dinshaw "language (signifying activity) is essentially structured in relation to gender," and she attempts to provide "a fuller context for the idea . . . of the text as woman's body, inscribed, read, and interpreted by men."[14] This concept of "gender," as I take it, is not a biological designation, but rather a description of socially constructed institutions. Although it is clear that I have deferred the gender implications of her argument, Dinshaw's model of the body as text is appropriate to my discussion of torture as the productive process through which Andreas's identity is "written." According to Dinshaw:

Literary production takes place on bodies on the animal skins made into pages, on cursed scribes' scalps and the rubbing and scraping that must be done to both suggests a figurative identification here between the human body and the manuscript page, the text.[15]

Though Dinshaw is describing a metaphorical relationship, in a very real way the body of Andreas acts as a page upon which his identity is written through the torture inflicted upon him. It is, after all, only through undergoing a passion himself that Andreas begins to spiritually resemble Christ. The infliction of wounds upon his body, therefore, parallels the inscription of his identity in the text. Tellingly, within the context of my discussion of the act of writing, Andreas's identity is that of a type of Christ, who is "the Word." The torture inflicted upon Andreas is thereby "written" on his body, just as the poet's words

are written on the page. In this way the acts of writing and of torture are both likewise subverted, and the relationship between the productive and destructive nature of each act is made manifest.

The composition of this poem was itself a dynamic process, as I have alluded to above; and the production of this text resulted in the "destruction" of the source texts, both through authorial translation and emendation. That the *Andreas* poet embellished his sources is certain: he did so in the passion scenes in order to instruct his audience concerning the typological parallel between the suffering of Andreas and that of Christ.[16] This shift in emphasis is significant both because it underscores the productive nature of torture in this poem (that is, it is only through this parallel process of destruction that Andreas can be "re-written" as a type of Christ), and because such an act of authorial license also serves to reemphasize the centrality of the act of writing to *Andreas* (in this case the poet's productive act of writing about destruction). I would argue that the authorial emendation which I discuss in *Andreas* serves several related functions: to demonstrate how Andreas is "rewritten" through his passion to become the "Word;" to illustrate that the torturer's scourge is the pen which does this writing upon the tablet of Andreas's flesh; and to call attention to the act of authorship of the poet, which, inverting the torturer's role, uses a pen to enact Andreas's passion upon parchment, the flesh of a "lamb." This final function, a "literary reenactment," if you will, serves to underscore the immediate and constantly re-occurring nature of Christ's passion in the world of each reader of the text, and calls attention to the act of writing in this text itself, as a particular instance of such a manifestation.[17] Through this act of embellishment the poet transforms the story of Andreas into something quite different from what it was before; in a like manner, Andreas himself is transformed through the torture of the Mermedonians from an ordinary man into one who reflects the "Word" himself.

Frederick Biggs has pointed out a great many modifications and alterations of the source texts which seem to suggest that the poet of *Andreas* sought to make manifest the implicit typological relationship between the passion of Andreas and that of Christ. He examines the passion sequence itself, but pays little attention to the dialogue between Andreas and Satan which frames this sequence. I would argue that, while this dialogue admittedly seems less central than some of the material which Biggs examines, it is far from extraneous. Indeed, the very fact that this dialogue *is* so removed from the narrative of the sources seems enough reason to look carefully at its significance in the context of the other modifications. Further, to a large extent both Satan and Andreas seem to be concerned with matters related to identity, specifically Andreas's identity as it relates to Christ; this is noteworthy because carefully defining this relationship is crucial to my discussion of the natures of writing and of torture in this poem. This dialogue takes the form of what might be referred to as a "flyting" match between Andreas and Satan; just as, for instance, Beowulf and Unferth exchanged insults and boasts in the hall of Hroðgar, this too is verbal hostility of an openly competitive nature.

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This "flyting" begins directly after Satan sends forth the Mermedonians to subdue Andreas. Andreas mocks Satan's pretension in sending a host against an agent of God. He also reminds Satan that it was God, whom Andreas serves, who defeated Satan and cast him from heaven, where he was powerful and beautiful, to hell, where he was bound in torment and despair. Satan answers Andreas's challenge only after the second day of torture has passed. Andreas's spirit is, as yet, unbroken, but his torment has been described for us in agonizingly graphic detail. What is most significant about this speech of Satan in the context of Biggs's argument is Satan's linking of the torture of Christ to that of Andreas. Though he begins by merely subverting Andreas's speech with a boast of how he had tortured and defeated Andreas's lord, he concludes by extending his boast to include the analogous defeat of Andreas himself. This analogy has obvious typological implications: as Christ suffered under Herod, so now will Christ's disciple, Andreas, suffer. Satan, then, helps to elucidate the typological relationship between Christ's passion and Andreas's; Satan's words serve to make clear to the poem's audience that Andreas is a type of Christ, and that his suffering is a type of Christ's passion.

Suffering is a key concept here, and it is important to put into perspective the relationship between the holy suffering of Andreas (and Christ) and that of Satan himself. Satan's torment of Andreas, and its typological forbear, the passion of Christ, are merely the opposite side of the coin of Satan's own torment, an inversion of his own pain. It might be fruitful at this point to examine the relationship between torment, pain, and identity. Torture is, as Elaine Scarry puts it, "world-destroying;"[18] it "includes a relentless 'unmaking'" of the world.[19] This concept of "world-destroying" really has to do with the breakdown, under torture, of the individual's will, and, finally, identity; under intense physical torment the individual's entire being becomes focused on the body, and there is a vacancy of conscious being which is, during the immediacy of the pain, something akin to a *tabula rasa*. I am implying a somewhat more metaphorical application of this breakdown of identity. Scarry's interest is primarily contemporary and political and largely non-literary, yet elements of her discussion, especially those pertaining to *body* and *voice* are particularly well-suited to an examination of the parallels between the infliction of pain (the destructive nature of torture) and the inscription of spiritual identity (the productive nature of torture) in this text.

Christ is, through his passion, unmade, so that that which was once fully divine could become also fully human. Satan's world and his identity likewise have been unmade, both through his own fall and torment and through the torment of Christ, which through its inversion of Satan's experience ultimately results in a subversion of his purpose. Andreas's identity is, in effect, unmade through his torment, unmade to be recast as a type of Christ. We see through Satan's own words how very like his own defeat he perceives the "defeats" of Christ and Andreas to be; and, in a very real sense, these experiences are the same, regardless of how the outcomes might differ. The pain which Christ suffers on the cross is very real, as his words tell us; so is the pain of his disciple,

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Andreas, as well as that of his enemy, Satan. Pain becomes in this scheme a transformative force, and it is only

through the infliction of torture that each of these figures reaches his ultimate form. Pain is, in fact, the fundamental touchstone which links all three of these experiences, and this parallel is significant because, ultimately, the will of God is both the agency through which this pain is administered and the beneficiary of the results of that pain. This pain must be a part of the divine plan, as its very existence attests; therefore, it is authorized by that plan. Equally important, this pain, in turn, validates the divine plan by virtue of the fact that it allows for the salvation of Mankind.[20] Divine pain is, therefore, in a way self-referential: it both authorizes and validates itself.[21]

It is only through the infliction of such pain upon his body that Andreas's spiritual identity as a type of Christ is inscribed within the text. The concept of "inscription," according to Dinshaw, posits that writing is "a masculine act, an act performed on a body construed as feminine;" her use of the terms "masculine" and "feminine" implies "sexual identities that are socially constructed ideas," and which may be "performed by either sex:"

. . . literary activity has a gendered structure, a structure that associates acts of writing and related acts of signifying . . . with the masculine and that identifies the surfaces on which these acts are performed . . . the page, the text . . . with the feminine.[22]

I would extend Dinshaw's argument in what I see as a logical direction: just as there exists in this text a relationship between the body and the page, so does there exist a relationship between the act of writing and that of torture. Further, just as Dinshaw sees writing as a gendered activity, I would argue that torture, at least in the literary context of *Andreas*, has a similar gendered structure: just as the agency of writing is construed as masculine, and the medium upon which writing is performed is feminine, so the agency of torture is masculine, and the body upon which it is carried out is feminine. Again, in my view this assignation of gender refers metaphorically to social constructs. Andreas is, in a very real way, the page upon which God's Word is inscribed.

Further, just as the act of writing first requires the production of the pages to be written upon (through the reduction of sheep to parchment), this act of torture requires the reduction of Andreas to a blank page. This is accomplished through the application of pain; as David Morris points out, "pain so obliterates in consciousness the extended world outside the place of torture that nothing exists except the body."[23] Morris is discussing Scarry's "analysis of this return to a primal blankness," this idea that "intense pain is world-destroying," primarily in reference to the present-day torture of political prisoners. I am not using this idea in the way it was originally intended, but rather, I think, in a new and equally legitimate way: it is only through devastating pain which does, in fact, end the mortal life of Christ, that there is a divine sacrifice which may ultimately save Mankind. Likewise, it is only through his reduction to a blank

page that Andreas can be rewritten into the Word. The results of the infliction of this pain are manifested in two ways: First, Andreas's body undergoes a process of destruction, through which he may be spiritually remade as a type of Christ; second, his voice is silenced, so that he, who through his passion has been recast in the image of the Word incarnate, may echo that divine Word. This loss of voice is, according to Scarry, intimately related to the destruction of the body, and is, in fact, part of the process of losing identity:

For what the process of torture does is to split the human being into two, to make emphatic the . . . distinction between a self and a body, between a "me" and "my body." The "self" or "me," which is experienced on the one hand as more private, more essentially at the center, and on the other hand as participating across the bridge of the body in the world, is "embodied" in the voice, in language. The goal of [torture] is to make the one, the body, emphatically and crushingly *present* by destroying it, and to make the other, the voice, *absent* by destroying it.[24]

As he undergoes his passion, Andreas functions as a type of Christ, and the descriptions of his torments, and finally his own words, become more like those of Christ.[25] In this way the passion of Andreas becomes a conversion experience of sorts: he becomes something wholly different from that which he was before his torment, just as his pain itself takes on an entirely new meaning when we view it as that which links him typologically to Christ.[26] More important to my discussion of the relationship between the infliction of pain and the inscription of identity is how the destruction of Andreas's body is related to the transformation of his voice. After three days of torment a significant number, to be

sure Andreas calls out to God and appropriates Christ's speech on the cross; we are told that he cries with a "halgan stefne" a "holy voice" (1399). Andreas's production into a type of Christ is at this point most evident, just as his pain is at its greatest. Andreas's body has become the page upon which we can read his identity, an identity which is inscribed by his pain.

This "new" identity is wrought through the destructive process of torture and the transformative nature of pain; it is perhaps noteworthy that the agents of this "productive destruction" are none other than the self-same Mermedonians who, earlier, had subverted the act of writing into what one might term "destructive production." This issue of agency is particularly illuminating in the context of Lerer's comment (which I mentioned at the beginning of this paper) that this poem "shapes its heroes and its villains through the kinds of literacy they practice." In this case what is of interest is that Andreas, rather than practicing any kind of literacy at all, seems to be having "literacy" practiced *upon him*.27 Writing, broadly defined, is a central and unifying activity throughout *Andreas*: At the conclusion of his passion, Andreas has been "re-written" into the "Word" through the application of the text of torture upon the parchment of his flesh; the source texts, too, have been rewritten, in order to illustrate more fully this

very same transformation.

Notes

1. George Philip Krapp, ed. *The Vercelli Book* (New York, 1932). All citations are from Krapp; except where noted, all translations are the author's.

2. Allen J. Frantzen, "Writing the Unreadable *Beowulf*: '*Writan*' and '*Forwritan*,' The Pen and the Sword," *Exemplaria* 3.2 (1991), 327-57. I am indebted to Frantzen for this apropos reading of "endestæf," p. 346.

3. Though I certainly find it significant that the poet utilizes "writan" and "awriten" in a parallel manner in order to emphasize the diametrically opposed ends of these two writing practices, it may also be significant (in the context of my discussion of "sceoran" below) that a primary meaning of both forms is to inscribe, carve or cut. See Frantzen's discussion of the "sylleptical" nature of "writan" and "forwritan" in "Writing the Unreadable *Beowulf*," p. 333, and my discussion of syllepsis below. See also Lerer's discussion of the implication of incision (specifically runic) of "writan" in Seth Lerer, *Literacy and Power in Anglo-Saxon Literature* (Lincoln, Neb., 1991), pp. 142, 167, 232, and 234.

4. Lerer, *Literacy and Power*, p. 17: " . . . runes stand for all forms of an alien or ancient form of communication." See also p. 54: "Whether it be through rune ond rimcræft or through drycræftum and scingelacum, magic practice or the credence in its spells are associated with the antitypes of Christian heroism."

5. Lerer, *Literacy and Power*, p. 53: "From its initial presentation of Matthew as the writer of the Gospel, Andreas shapes its heroes and its villains through the kinds of literacy they practice."

6. Lerer, *Literacy and Power*, p. 53.

7. All statistical and textual references to appearances of terms in the Old English Corpus are from *A Microfiche Concordance to Old English*, ed. Antonette DiPaolo Healy and Richard L. Venezky (Toronto, 1985).

8. The form "sceoran" is only attested to in this single instance, so we must look to other forms of the verb for information. "Sceran" is attested three times, always in reference to the cutting or shaving of one's hair; "scere," however, is used at least once in regards to sheep: "ic scere scep oððe hors" (ÆGram., 157.9). Further, there are several examples under "scyran." In any case, it is clear that the primary meaning has to do with the shaving or cutting of hair, and a secondary meaning invokes an image of the shearing of sheep. "Sceoran" in a destructive sense seems something of an anomaly, therefore, and I do not think it is too radical to assert that its use here might simultaneously conjure a sense of its more common meanings.

9. Shearing sheep, of course, is not the same as skinning them; in its primary sense, however, *sceran* implies a shaving of hair from the skin, and I would argue that here it evokes a sense of the shaving and scraping clean of the flesh of an animal being rendered into parchment. Such an animal

need not be a sheep, of course, but knowing that the term could be used in reference to

sheep and shearing serves, in this context, to reinforce the image of Andreas as the page upon which his passion will be written.

10. See Frantzen, "Writing the Unreadable *Beowulf*", pp. 332-335.

11. Frantzen, "Writing the Unreadable *Beowulf*," p. 333: "Syllepsis is created when a word is understood in two ways at once and when those interpretations are opposite."

12. Frantzen, "Writing the Unreadable *Beowulf*," p.333.

13. See Frantzen, "Writing the Unreadable *Beowulf*," p. 332. See also Frantzen's extensive notes and references concerning intertextuality and the role played by syllepsis, pp. 330-35.

14. Carolyn Dinshaw, *Chaucer's Sexual Poetics* (Madison, 1989), pp. 15, 17.

15. Carolyn Dinshaw, *Chaucer's Sexual Poetics*, p. 4. This particular citation resonates nicely with my discussion of the dualistic (productive/destructive) nature of writing: the "rubbing and scraping" extends from the reduction of sheep to parchment, through the production of parchment into text, and through Andreas's inscription within that text.

16. See Frederick M. Biggs, "The Passion of Andreas: *Andreas* 1398-1491," *Studies in Philology* 84.4 (1988), 413-27. Biggs discusses the passion sequence in the poem in order to demonstrate that the poet purposefully modified his sources in order to facilitate a typological reading of the poem; according to Biggs, "the poet preserves the narrative sequence of the legend Andreas endures three days of torture, witnesses a miracle, and is restored to bodily health before he invokes the flood that leads to the conversion of his captors but he explicitly develops the idea, which is latent in his source, that Andreas's suffering is an imitation of Christ's passion."

17. See Lerer, *Literacy and Power*, p. 146. In his discussion of authorial elaboration of the source texts in the Old English *Daniel*, Lerer notes that: "The poem reworks its source to call attention to the immediacy of the prophetic utterance, and in so doing, it illuminates the possibility of its own written poetry to vivify the presence of the prophet or the immanence of the divine hand in the conveyance of God's word."

18. Elaine Scarry, *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World* (Oxford, 1985), p. 29. Scarry's first chapter, "The Structure of Torture: The Conversion of Real Pain into the Fiction of Power" deals with "the world-destroying structure of torture," while the balance of the book deals with "the creative, world-making activities of human labor and imagination, where pain's transforming powers take a kinder shape." See David B. Morris, "How to Read *The Body in Pain*," *Literature and Medicine* 6 (1987), 139-55, at p. 142.

19. Morris, "How to Read *The Body in Pain*." Once again, my use of the phrase "unmaking of the world" (p. 141) is somewhat broader than the original application, but I feel is a logical extension of that application in this context. Morris discusses the radical change since 1960 in the medical community's conception of the nature of pain; he is primarily interested in what this

change means to literary theorists, and, as his title suggests, he uses Scarry's book as a foil.

20. For a discussion of the relationship of applied pain to political power, see Morris, "How to Read *The Body in Pain*," p. 141: ". . . torture, in its structure, converts bodily pain into disembodied, political power. The prisoner's pain, that is, serves through its unquestionable and all-absorbing physical reality to confer a corresponding reality and objective existence upon whatever political group or regime or state authorizes the torture."

21. In a way, then, divine pain is "perfect" due to its self-referential nature, in much the same way that Eugene Vance suggests that Christ, as the "perfect sign," is the only sign which refers to itself. Vance, *Mervelous Signals* (Lincoln, 1986), pp. x, 24.

22. Dinshaw, *Chaucer's Sexual Poetics*, p. 9.

23. Morris, "How to Read *The Body in Pain*," pp. 142-43.

24. Scarry, *The Body in Pain*, pp. 48-49.

25. Biggs, "The Passion of Andreas," p. 419: "The most dramatic change that the poet has made is to have Andreas follow his acknowledged quotation of Christ's words on the cross (1412-13) with a second quotation (1415-17) of Christ's final words: 'Pater in manus tuas commendo spiritum meum.' None of the other versions of the legend includes this second allusion although the idea is suggested . . . ."

26. See Biggs, "The Passion of Andreas," p. 420. The language which the poet uses to describe the destruction of Andreas's body helps to make clear that typological connection. As Biggs has pointed out, Andreas's lament to God on the third day of his torment not only echoes Christ's speech on the cross, but, "moreover, in this speech, the *Andreas*-poet stresses the effect of the torture, the shedding of the saint's blood, rather than the means of the torture, which differs from a crucifixion. He varies three phrases 'banhus blodfag,' 'benne weallað,' and 'seonodolg swatige' (1405-06) that call attention to the saint's blood . . . ." By focusing on Andreas's blood, the poet is clearly inviting comparison to the blood Christ shed on the cross, and therefore, by extension, he is implying a parallel between Andreas and Christ. Hence we see, in the very terms used in Andreas's description of his own bodily destruction, the poet's inscription of Andreas's spiritual identity.

27. See Lerer, *Literacy and Power*, p. 195. Lerer discusses literacy as a creative and transformative power in his conclusion; he is discussing the power of Anglo-Saxon authors, a power which they wield by drawing on the "social practice" and "cultural mythology" that comprise writing in Anglo-Saxon England in order to "represent the past to their readers" through their depiction of scenes of reading and writing. In my final paragraph I am exploring twin levels of this power, both in the literal sense of the poet's authorial emendation (the poet's writing of the text), and in the metaphorical sense of the acts of "writing" which the poet inscribes *within* the text.