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Sweotol Tacen / A Clear Token:
The Anglo-Saxon *Tacen* and the Medieval Donor's Model

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Sweotol Tacen / A Clear Token:
The Anglo-Saxon *Tacen* and the Medieval Donor's Model

by

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Abstract

Sweotol Tacen / A Clear Token: The Anglo-Saxon *Tacen* and the Medieval Donor's Model

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The Anglo-Saxon patron often commissioned images in which he or she bears a visual rendering of his or her donation. The donor's model is often overlooked in modern scholarship because there is no existing framework with which to address larger issues raised by the image type. This thesis proposes a framework developed through a close reading of Anglo-Saxon poetry. Using the Old English literary trope of the *tacen*, or in modern English, the token, this thesis seeks to reframe the donor's model in order to understand how the model creates meaning. Like the donor's model found in medieval donor portraits, the *tacen* in Anglo-Saxon literature is a held object that in large part symbolizes the gift giver's relationship with the community. This thesis argues that beyond merely a model used to attribute patronage, the *tacen* found in Anglo-Saxon donor portraits acts simultaneously as a visual record of an event and an object used to teach and encourage viewers. Viewing the donor's model as a *tacen* also surpasses the

purely historical function of the image type by allowing the representation of the model to transcend both time and space.

Using the concept of the *tacen* as a framework for analysis demands that an entirely new set of questions be asked of Anglo-Saxon donor portraits (and potentially all medieval donor portraits) in which a model is featured. This thesis strives to answer the how instead of the what. And in doing so it has the potential to foster a greater understanding of the image type that spread, by the requests of patrons, throughout the Anglo-Saxon world and the wider medieval world. Beyond cultivating a greater understanding of the medieval donor portrait, this thesis underlines the profound connections between medieval literature and art and highlights the advantages of interdisciplinary scholarship.

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Introduction

The east end of Poitiers cathedral houses an elaborate crucifixion window commissioned in the late twelfth-century by Eleanor of Aquitaine and Henry II of England (Fig. 1). The stained glass window is comprised of three main registers detailing representative scenes from the Christian bible. In addition to the scenes in the main registers of the window, at least four secondary narratives are presented.[1] The inclusion of such ornate and detailed images in this large stained glass window makes this object truly elaborate for its historical moment.

The uppermost register of the window features an image of Christ's ascension with the eleven apostles directly underneath converging onto the central register.[2] The primary focus of the central register is the crucifixion of Christ. In this scene, Christ is portrayed on the cross flanked most directly by Longinus and Stephaton, the infamous Roman soldiers bearing the lance and sponge used to torture the dying Christ. The Virgin and St. John the Evangelist also appear in this scene on either side of the two soldiers. A quatrefoil form that separates a number of biblical scenes arranges the window's lower register. The principal focus of this scene, located in the quatrefoil's center, is the

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1 On either side of the main event that is depicted in a particular register are secondary scenes often relating to the main event in some way.

2 The eleven apostles occupy a liminal space in this window. Therefore, I have categorized this portrayal as an example of a secondary scene found in the window. The apostles are not in the upper register per se, but they are gesturing toward the ascension scene. The apostles are technically located inside the central register but do not occupy the focus of the space. The crucifixion of Christ is the primary focus of the second register.

inverted crucifixion of St. Peter, the patron saint of Poitiers cathedral. To the right of St. Peter's crucifixion in a leaf of the quatrefoil form, an image depicts Emperor Nero overseeing the crucifixion with a devil whispering into his ears. To the left of St. Peter's crucifixion in the alternate leaf of the quatrefoil, an image portrays the beheading of St. Paul. There is an additional secondary narrative presented in this register. Just above St. Peter's inverted crucifixion is a three partite representation of three women approaching the tomb of Christ to find an angel positioned in front and the tomb itself empty. The bottom leaf of the quatrefoil depicts Eleanor and Henry II bearing a model of the crucifixion window. At the base, bordering the donor portrait, are vegetal forms filling the final spaces of the window.

The opulent crucifixion window is attributed to the patronage of Eleanor and Henry based primarily on the window's inclusion of the image of the two patrons holding a model of their donation (Fig. 2). Although this donor image connects Eleanor and Henry to the commission of the crucifixion window, the significance of the image type, specifically the model positioned in the hands of the patrons, has yet to receive adequate treatment in scholarly literature in terms of how the model signifies.[3] The scholarly

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3 For examples of scholarship that treat the donor portrait, but give little attention to the donor's model see Corine Schleif, "Men on the Right—Women on the Left: (A)ssymetrical Spaces and Gendered Places," in *Women's Space: Patronage, Place, and Gender in the Medieval Church*, ed. Virginia Raguin, SUNY Series in Medieval Studies (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2005), 207-249. This essay is concerned with identifying patronage and overlooks the function of the model. See also Corine Schleif, "Kneeling on the Threshold: Donors Negotiating Realms Betwixt and Between," in *Thresholds of Medieval Visual Culture: Liminal Spaces*, ed. Elina Gertsman (Woodbridge, UK: Boydell Press, 2012), 195-216. This essay presents an excellent discussion of images of patronage found on the liminal spaces of medieval art but

silence surrounding how images like this one create meaning is rather perplexing, especially since just such an archetype is frequently repeated throughout the course of the medieval period and beyond. This thesis aims to address the issue of the donor's model found in the donor portrait image type.

State of the Research

The donor's model has been the subject of limited research to date. E. S. Klinkenberg's 2009 study of the architectural models of Western European medieval donors was the first of its kind to devote an entire monograph to the image type. Klinkenberg's research traces how artists crafted the models as likenesses of the existing buildings of the period.[4] The study, although a welcomed addition to scholarly literature, does not concern itself with how the donor's model creates meaning.

Cedomila Marinkovic, a scholar of Byzantine art whose research focuses on medieval Serbia, has also contributed to the discussion surrounding the donor's model. Marinkovic's 2007 publication considers the nature of the donor's model.[5] In this article, the founder's model is declared to be a representation of the church created after the

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discounts the donor's model in its discussion. See also Henri Franses, "Symbols, Meaning, Belief: Donor Portraits in Byzantine Art," Ph.D. Diss. University of London, 1992. This is another example of worthwhile scholarship focusing on the images of patronage. Though Franses's research concentrates on Byzantine examples of patronage, his analysis of the image type often, but not always, discounts the donor's model.

4 E. S. Klinkenberg, *Compressed Meanings: The Donor's Model in Medieval Art to around 1300: Origin, Spread and Significance of an Architectural Image in the Realm of Tension between Tradition and Likeness* (Belgium: Brepols, 2009).

5 Cedomila Marinkovic, "Founder's Model—Representation of a Maquette or the Church?" *Byzantine Studies* 44 (2007): 145-155.

construction of the church was complete and not a maquette.[6] Once again, how the model creates meaning or what the model means is not explored. Marinkovic's 2011 article reexamines the donor portrait at the monastic church in Lesnovo.[7] She argues for a reassessment of the donor's model in terms of its position as displayed in the donor portrait. This essay maintains that the church model is a depiction of the southern side of the church in Lesnovo instead of the west façade as has previously been argued. Marinkovic also contends that the model at Lesnovo was a clear representation of the church and not a maquette. While these scholarly contributions shed light on the donor's model, the two essays fail to ascertain the significance of the models in terms of how they create meaning in donor portraits.

Scholarly literature concerning the donor's model has made little significant progress in terms of ascertaining what these images are capable of, or to put it simply, what these miniature models found on or inside commissioned objects actually *do*, and more importantly, *how* they do it. Scholars, up to this point, have simply used these images to identify a patron or group of patrons that were responsible for a particular commission, and in doing so, they have largely ignored the model depicted in the hands of the donor.

It has become clear not that scholars of medieval art are *not* interested in these types of questions but that there is no existing framework with which to address larger issues of the image type. Because of this lack, the questions raised by the donor's model

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6 A maquette is a sculptor's small preliminary model or sketch.

7 Cedomila Marinkovic, "The Representation of Architecture on the Donor Portrait in Lesnovo," *Macedonian Historical Review* 2.2 (2011): 103-114.

in images like the presentation scene in the crucifixion window at Poitiers have unfortunately been largely ignored.

It is therefore the job of this thesis to rectify the issue of the donor's model in the donor portrait image type. This thesis does not focus on finding "answers" or determining precisely what these models mean; instead this thesis works to establish *how* the donor's model creates meaning in a donor portrait. A primary goal of this thesis is to produce a useful framework with which to analyze the image type where a donor's model is present.

The framework established in this thesis is one developed through a study of Anglo-Saxon poetry. I have adapted the Anglo-Saxon literary idea of the *tacen* or in modern English, the token. Like the donor's model often found in a medieval donor portraits, the *tacen* in Anglo-Saxon literature is a held object that in large part symbolizes the gift giver's relationship with the recipient. The *tacen* appears in many Old English texts. For example, in the Old English poem *Judith* the heroine holds up the severed head of Holofernes in front of her warriors as a token of her leadership and perseverance on their behalf, as well as a sign that she had indeed fought Holofernes and, as a result, he is now dead.[8] In this poem, the Old English word *tacen* is used to define how Judith is using

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8 The *tacen* scene in *Judith* occurs in lines 177-198. A clear date of the *Judith* poem is tricky to assign. The poem survives in a single manuscript, British Library Cotton MS. Vitellius A.xv, fol. 202r-209v, which is the same manuscript that records the *Beowulf* poem. Folios 132r-201v contain *Beowulf*, while folios 202r-209v contain *Judith*. The manuscript can be dated to around 1000 C.E., but the texts contained within are likely much earlier in origin. It is unfortunate that a clear date cannot be ascertained, but bear in mind that the Anglo-Saxons were an oral culture before a written one. It is quite possible that the poem circulated orally for centuries before a scribe copied its verses to a

the head of Holofernes. In this case, the *tacen* is used as a way to teach and inspire Judith's people. In addition to its role in *Judith*, the *tacen* features in other Old English poems such as *Beowulf* and *Genesis B* (the Anglo-Saxon revision of the biblical book of Genesis, in which Adam is famously tempted first), as well as several other prose texts.

Like the characters in the Anglo-Saxon texts mentioned above, the visual renderings of donors are often represented presenting an object held in their hands, a *tacen*. By using the Anglo-Saxon *tacen* and understanding how it often functions in Old English literary texts as a framework for analysis, there is potential for a greater understanding of the function of the donor's model found in the donor portraits of the medieval world. The Anglo-Saxon *tacen* framework demands that an entirely new set of questions be asked of Anglo-Saxon donor portraits (and potentially all donor portraits) in which a model is featured. Once the function of the *tacen* in Old English texts is established, this framework can then be used to explicate the donor's model in donor portraits.

Chapter One of this thesis establishes through a study of Anglo-Saxon poetry the *tacen* framework that will be used to illuminate interpretations of donor portraits featuring the donor's model. I provide close readings of three Old English poems that

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manuscript folio. All *Beowulf* citations are from R. Bjork, R. D. Fulk, F. Klaeber, and J. Niles, *Klaeber's Beowulf and the Fight at Finnsburg* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008) 3-109. All *Judith* citations are from Elliot Van Kirk Dobbie, *Beowulf and Judith,* The Anglo-Saxon Poetic Records, Vol. 4 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1953), 99-109.

elucidate the function of the *tacen*; *Beowulf*, *Judith*, and *Genesis B*.[9] In Chapter Two I will use the theoretical model developed in Chapter One to explicate Anglo-Saxon donor portraits. Using three Anglo-Saxon examples of patrons bearing a model of their commissions, I show how the *tacen* from Old English literature can shed light on medieval donor portraits in ways that have hitherto gone unnoticed.

This thesis strives to answer the how instead of the what. And in doing so it has the potential to foster a greater understanding of the image type that spread, by the requests of patrons, throughout the Anglo-Saxon world and, more broadly speaking, the medieval world. Beyond cultivating a greater understanding of the medieval donor portrait, this thesis underlines the profound connections between medieval literature and art and highlights the advantages of interdisciplinary scholarship.

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9 *Genesis B* is found in Bodleian Library MS. Junius 11, fol. 1-142. Junius 11 is a late tenth-century, early eleventh-century manuscript containing the Anglo-Saxon *Genesis*, *Exodus*, *Daniel,* and *Christ and Satan.* Based on metrical studies and vocabulary, the *Genesis B* text was likely composed around the middle of the ninth century. I would like to stress that dating Old English texts is a complex task, and that the exact date of composition is not so much a real concern for us here. By including information concerning the dates of these three texts, my goal is to simply make the argument that the word and the function of the *tacen* were in the Old English vocabulary at the time of the creation of the donor portraits I will use in Chapter Two. All *Genesis B* citations are from A. N. Doane, *The Saxon Genesis: An Edition of the West Saxon Genesis B and the Old Saxon Vatican* Genesis (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1991), 207-231.

Chapter 1: The *Tacen* in Old English Literature

In order to understand how the *tacen* motif works in medieval donor portraits, it is necessary to first establish the typical function of the Anglo-Saxon *tacen* as observed in Old English literature. There are 197 uses of the word *tacen* in Old English literature; 34 in poetry and 163 in prose.[10] Of these 197 uses, the *tacen* almost exclusively functions in these texts as a word describing a physical object.[11] To establish the traditional function of the *tacen* for this study, I have chosen selections from three well-known Old English poems: *Beowulf*, *Judith,* and *Genesis B*. *Beowulf* and *Judith* exemplify the customary use of *tacen* as a word that indicates a visual object, while *Genesis B* captures more nuanced definitions and functions of the word in the Anglo-Saxon literary tradition. The ways in which the *tacen* function in these literary texts create a useful paradigm that aids in explicating the medieval donor portrait image type.

In the following pages of this section, I provide a close reading of these three textual examples. In doing so, I show that the use of the word *tacen* in the Old English texts works to establish a critical link from the material object to a particular individual involved in the text's action. In other words, the *tacen* functions as a point of origin

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10 "Tacen." Dictionary of Old English Web Corpus. *Dictionary of Old English*, 2011. Web. 2 December 2013.

11 The one textual outlier in the corpus of Old English literature is found in the Old English poem *Genesis B* in which Eve understands the word *tacen* not only as a physical, material object, but also as language itself. I have written extensively on this subject, arguing that Eve understands the *tacen* as a representation of the materiality of language. Although the textual example of Eve's understanding of the *tacen* is rich, it will not feature in this thesis concerning medieval donor portraits.

critical to a reader's understanding that both the *tacen* and the *tacen*-bearer are intimately connected to one another. The *tacen* in Old English literature often also serves to create a system of belief for its bearer, and it acts as a tool for teaching and encouraging a group of people. And finally, on a more theoretical level, the *tacen* is a textual representation of an object presented to the reader through language. Therefore, the *tacen* presented in Old English literature is not an actual, physical object; it is a manifestation of the text created only by language. Much like the donor's model represented in images of patronage, the *tacen* is not a *real*, tangible object.

Likely the most recognized and celebrated example of Old English poetry is the heroic poem known today as *Beowulf*. This epic poem commemorates Beowulf's triumphs as a Geatish warrior. The text follows Beowulf and his company of men to the Danish court of King Hroðgar. When Beowulf arrives, Hroðgar's mead hall has recently suffered an attack from the monster known only as Grendel. The first half of the epic poem records Beowulf's arrival to Hroðgar's court and his defeat of Grendel, and then later Grendel's mother. The second half of the poem, some fifty years after Beowulf's defeat of Grendel and return to his homeland in Geatland, chronicles Beowulf's triumph over a dragon that has plagued nearby lands. Although Beowulf bravely defeats the dragon, he is mortally wounded in the process. The poem ends with Beowulf's remarkable burial ceremony in true epic warrior fashion.

The particular scene from the text that reveals the underlying meaning of the word *tacen* occurs during the battle scene between Beowulf and Grendel in the mead hall. Beowulf instructs his company, as well as Hroðgar's men, to go to sleep in the mead hall

as they would any other evening. Beowulf, however, remains awake awaiting Grendel's arrival. Upon Grendel's entrance into the mead hall, a fight between the two ensues. Beowulf's sword is unable to penetrate Grendel's monstrous flesh and so Beowulf latches on to Grendel's arm with his bare hands. What was likely perceived to be humorous to an Anglo-Saxon audience, and is certainly humorous to a modern audience, Beowulf clasps Grendel's arm with such strength that as Grendel tries to pull away, Beowulf dislodges Grendel's arm from his body. At this point in the text, Grendel flees the mead hall with a mortal wound, leaving his arm and shoulder behind in the hands of Beowulf.

The remains of Grendel, in this case his arm, act as a *tacen* in the poem. The arm and shoulder of Grendel are specifically labeled as such in the text. Lines 833b-835 in *Beowulf* are a standard example of how the word is used in Old English texts. The *tacen* acts as a visual object that provides evidence, as well as indicates agency and origin, in this particular passage. Just after his altercation with Beowulf, Grendel flees the mead hall and the narrator tells the audience:

> …torn unlytel þæt wæs tacen sweotol
> syþðan hildedeor hond alegde
> earm ond eaxle þær wæs eal geador
> Grendles grape under geapne hrof.
> (*Beowulf*, 833a-835).

[That was a clear token, after the battle-brave one laid down the hand, the arm and shoulder-- there was all together the grip of Grendel—under the vaulted roof.][12]

Beowulf places the physical remnants of his battle with Grendel, the monster's arm, in a visible location in the hall so that onlookers would be able to see it, and by extension

12 All translations in this thesis are my own unless indicated otherwise.

have visual proof that the battle between Beowulf and Grendel had occurred. Beowulf's placement of Grendel's arm and his use of the foreign object as a *tacen*, a visible token or sign, contributes to a system of belief, which provides the bystanders reasons to trust the foreign warrior. Beowulf uses the *tacen* to prove that he is in fact the *hildedeor*, the battle-brave warrior, to which the narrator refers who had defeated the monster Grendel. The poem's use of *tacen* when Beowulf brings forward Grendel's arm suggests that if Beowulf had not provided Hroðgar and his people with a physical *tacen*, they would not have been so inclined to believe Beowulf's story of his fight with Grendel in the mead hall. Beowulf makes a specific effort to provide evidence for Grendel's death by providing the audience with a *tacen,* a physical object that evidenced his battle.

In *Beowulf*, the *tacen* is a pivotal device that provides a system of belief for the mead hall audience just after the battle between Grendel and Beowulf. *Tacen* is modified by the adjective *sweotol*, which I translate as "clear" in the above passage. It is likely that the poet made a choice to use the modifier *sweotol* instead of another word because the *sweotol* is not necessary to maintain the expected poetics of the line. The "s" in *sweotol* is not vital for alliteration in the particular line. The alliteration in line 833 is on the "t" in *torn* and *tacen*, which makes the "s" word *sweotol* unnecessary for metrical and alliterative purposes. If the *tacen* is understood as a "clear" token of Beowulf's defeat of Grendel, then the *tacen* leaves no doubt for the mead hall audience that Grendel is disarmed, and if not already, will soon be dead. The word *sweotol*, however, has another important meaning. In *A Concise Anglo-Saxon Dictionary*, J. R. Clark Hall glosses

sweotol as "public," among other possible definitions.[13] Having *tacen* modified by a word that translates as "public" also speaks to the requirement that the token must be visual in its nature. Everyone in the mead hall is able to see Beowulf's public token, which provides further evidence that he defeated Grendel. This particular reading is supported in *An Anglo-Saxon Dictionary*, where Bosworth and Toller cite this exact example when defining *sweotol*.[14] Bosworth and Toller suggest that *þæt wæs tacen sweotol* can be translated as "it was a token that was proof." The purpose of the *tacen* in this scene is to provide visual proof that Beowulf had defeated Grendel.

The verb found in lines where the word *tacen* is employed often firmly associates the *tacen* with a specific person, usually its physical bearer.[15] The verb *alegede* (place, lay down) supports this expected visuality as well. *Alegde* is the third preterit of the infinite *alecgan*, which Clark Hall glosses as "to put, place, lay down, lay aside."[16] The use of *alegde* in this passage alludes again to some sort of physical object. In order for something to be "placed" or "laid down" that something must be a physical object and therefore visual in its form. Having any one of Clark Hall's definitions of *alecgan* apply to the actions of Beowulf in relation to Grendel's remains puts Beowulf at the center of

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13 J. R. Clark Hall, *A Concise Anglo-Saxon Dictionary* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), 331. Clark Hall also defines *sweotol* as "distinct, evident, manifest, open."

14 Joseph Bosworth and T. Northcote Toller, *An Anglo-Saxon Dictionary* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1898), 951. Bosworth and Toller, in subset three, gloss *sweotol* as "clear to the understanding, free from obscurity, plain, of proof, argument, indication."

15 The *tacen* in *Judith* does something quite similar. The *tacen* links Judith (the *tacen's* physical bearer) to the action (the slaying Holofernes) because she is the one holding Holofernes's head aloft. This is a point to which I will return in the following pages. See *Judith* (lines 177-180) in Dobbie, *Beowulf and Judith,* 104.

16 Clark Hall, *Concise Anglo-Saxon Dictionary*, 17.

the action as understood by the mead hall audience. Beowulf is responsible for the action in this scene. The use of the verb *alegde* suggests that the *tacen* does not just prove that Grendel has been defeated but also proves that Beowulf is responsible for the defeat since he is the one holding the *tacen*. Often the *tacen*-bearer uses the token as proof in order to establish belief for his or her audience, just as Beowulf uses the arm of Grendel to provide evidence of his battle with the monster.

The location of the displayed *tacen* in Old English texts is also important. In *Beowulf*, the *tacen* is exhibited in front of the large mead hall audience. Instead of handing the arm directly to Hroðgar or to one of his trusted *þegns* (warriors, men, servants), the text makes it clear that Beowulf laid Grendel's arm down on the floor of the hall. By placing the *tacen* in the hall, Beowulf is ensuring that his whole audience will have the opportunity to see the monster's arm. The mead hall is considered a public space in the Anglo-Saxon world, and so in many ways Beowulf's *tacen* is on public display. By presenting the *tacen* in this way and in this place, Beowulf publicly establishes that he slew the monster.

The physical shape that a *tacen* assumes in Old English texts is also important. The fact that the *tacen* in *Beowulf* is Grendel's arm and not another body part or some other random object is significant. In the *Beowulf* text, emphasis is often placed on Grendel's hands and arms and the damage that these particular body parts can inflict. He is described in the text as attempting to *gefeng* (grasp, seize) his prey.[17] Grendel's *grapode* (grip) is also emphasized in the text when Beowulf retells the story of their

17 *Klaeber's Beowulf,* line 740.

battle to Hygelac, Beowulf's liege-lord.[18] In the very same line Beowulf also describes Grendel as having a *gearofolm* (ready hand), which further emphasizes the significance of Grendel's arm and, in this case, the future *tacen*. Beowulf also describes Grendel as carrying some sort of large glove or bag in which he places some of his victims: "Glof hangode sid … He mec þær on innnan … gedon wolde." (The glove hung by his side… He wanted to put me there on the inside.") From Beowulf's retelling of events later in the poem, the poem's audience can imagine Grendel approaching his enemies, picking them up, and placing them inside his glove-bag (essentially Grendel's lunchbox). This extrapolation once again highlights Grendel's ability to manipulate victims and other objects with his hands, arm, and grip.

As I have argued above, the shape that the *tacen* takes on in *Beowulf*—Grendel's arm—sends a powerful message to both the mead hall audience in the poem and to the readers of the poem. Grendel's most powerful weapon, his grip, is not only what Beowulf takes from him, but also what the hero subsequently displays to his mead hall audience. Because he uses Grendel's arm as his *tacen* of choice in order to prove that he defeated the monster, Beowulf demystifies the very weapon that Grendel used against the people in the mead hall. Beowulf quite literally disarms the monster. A similar example of removing the violent or frightening aspect of a monster or foe can be seen in another Old English poem, *Judith*.

The *tacen* in the *Judith* poem in line 197b is another example of how the word is traditionally used in Old English literature. The Old English *Judith* poem relates the story

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[18] *Klaeber's Beowulf*, line 2084.

of the Hebrew maiden Judith beheading the Assyrian general, Holofernes. Upon decapitating Holofernes, Judith places his severed head in her food bag and returns to her camp. Spoken just outside the gates of her camp, Judith's whetting speech to her people features a significant use of the word *tacen*.[19] The *tacen*, also a visual object in this passage, is held aloft by Judith and used to encourage her people to wage war. The infinitive verb form related to the noun *tacen* is *getacnian*, which Clark Hall suggests means "to betoken, represent, show, signal."[20] For the purpose of demonstrating the traditional function of the word *tacen*, I will use only segments of Judith's speech that pertain to the *tacen* and its physical function. Judith's speech to her people begins:

> "her ge magon sweotole, sigerofe hæleð
> leoda ræswan, on ðæs laðestan.
> hæðenes heaðorinces heafod starian,
> Holofernus unlyfigendes,
> …
> fynd syndon eowere
> gedemed to deaðe, ond ge dom agon
> tir æt tohtan, swa eow getacnod hafað
> mihtig Dryhten þurh mine hand."
> (*Judith* 177-180, 195b-198)

["Here you may openly stare, victorious heroes, leaders of people, on the head of the most loathsome heathen warrior, the unliving Holofernes…. Your enemies are condemned to death, and you have gained renown and glory at battle, just as the Mighty Lord has betokened to you through my hand."]

The same word *sweotol* that was used in the *tacen* scene in *Beowulf* is found in the *Judith* text, though this time it is the adverbial form of the word rather than the

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19 Found primarily in Old Norse literature, the "whetting" speech is a type of speech that is meant to incite or rally a group. Women in early Germanic cultures often perform whetting speeches.

20 Clark Hall, *Concise Anglo-Saxon Dictionary*, 336.

adjectival form. The adverb *sweotole* modifies the verb *starian*, which suggests that Judith is encouraging her people to "openly" stare upon the head of Holofernes, the *tacen*. By extension, the word loosely modifies the raised *heafod* (head) of Holofernes, which suggests that the *tacen* is once again a public token, something that is perceived in open view. Judith is purposefully extending the head upward so that her audience can see it.[21] This particular scene in *Judith* mirrors the scene in *Beowulf* where Beowulf publicly displays his *tacen* to the mead hall audience.

Ann Astell, in "Holofernes's Head: *Tacen* and Teaching in the Old English *Judith,*" argues that Judith's raising of the severed head is a teaching mechanism.[22] Astell's essay is the only published work on the *tacen* in *Judith* to date. Adding on to Astell's idea that the *tacen* is a teaching tool, I argue that Judith's actions subsequently allow the audience to believe her prophecy that they will defeat Holofernes's camp. In her speech, Judith asserts that "*ge dom agon/ tir æt tohtan, swa eow getacnod hafað/ mihtig Drihten þurh mine hand"* ("you have gained renown and glory at battle, just as the Mighty Lord has betokened to you through my hand"), which indicates to Judith's people that God will allow them to be victorious in battle. The verb *agon* is the past tense form of the verb *agan* (to possess, own, have). In addition to *agon* being a verb form in the

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21 Dobbie, *Beowulf and Judith*, 104. Lines 171-175 of the poem establish the setting of the scene preceding Judith's whetting speech. Here it is revealed that Judith displays the head of Holofernes to the townspeople. The passage uses the Old English infinite verb *ætywan*, which means "to display" alongside the dative form *þam burhleodum,* which translates as "to the townspeople."

22 Ann Astell, "Holofernes's Head: *Tacen* and Teaching in the Old English *Judith*," *Anglo-Saxon England* 18 (1989): 117-133.

past tense, *getacnod* is a past tense as well. The tense of the verbs suggests the action has already happened. Judith's speech functions as if these events have already come to pass. However, a recipient of Judith's speech would recognize that what Judith is recounting is a victory that has not yet occurred. Judith's use of past tense verbs further expresses that Judith herself is certain of her people's impending victory. Through her speech she also recounts how God willed these events, how he *getacnod* (betokened) them *þurh mine hand* (through [Judith's] hand). *Þurh mine hand* calls attention to the *tacen*, Holofernes's head, in Judith's hands during this scene.

The head of Holofernes not only serves as visual proof that Judith decapitated the "heathen warrior" but also that God has signaled that her people will defeat the enemy in battle. If Judith had not raised the head of Holofernes as proof of her actions, it is unlikely that her people would have believed her account of the events. It is also unlikely that Judith's people would have been inspired to battle against the Assyrians without the head of Holofernes as divine proof of their impending victory. The poem places emphasis on the head of Holofernes in this scene by allowing Judith to draw attention to the head in her speech to her people. The *tacen* in *Judith* functions similarly to the *tacen* in *Beowulf*. The *tacen* is a tangible object that operates as a mechanism for belief and provides evidence for a person's account of particular events.

The *tacen* in *Judith* not only serves to educate Judith's people as Astell has argued but also stands to encourage her people. Holding aloft the severed head of an enemy sends a powerful message of capability and strength, one that Judith passes on to her people in this particular textual moment. Judith's performance at the gates of her camp

compels her people to engage in battle and, moreover, to gain victory. In this particular scene, Judith acts as a model for her people because of her use of a *tacen*. The *tacen* is visual proof that she exhibits to her audience.

The *tacen* in *Judith* functions similarly to the *tacen* in Beowulf in some ways but differently in others. Like the *Judith* text, the *Beowulf* text illuminates how the *tacen* functions as a system of belief for an audience. The *tacen* in *Beowulf* also acts as a point of origin for its viewer, creating a clear link between the *tacen*-bearer and the *tacen* itself. The same can be said of Judith's relationship to her *tacen*; bearing the head of Holofernes's creates an association between Judith and the slaying of the heathen warrior. The *tacen* in both *Judith* and *Beowulf* also creates a link between the *tacen*-bearer and the audience. It can also be argued that Judith uses her *tacen* to teach and inspire her people to a final battle against the Assyrians. In addition to teaching, Judith's *tacen* functions as a way to encourage a group of people. Significantly, the *tacen* in both texts is a representation of a physical object. Beowulf holds the physical remnants of Grendel, while Judith displays the physical remnants of Holofernes. I will turn my focus to the final textual examples from Old English literature, excerpts from the *Genesis B* text in which the *tacen* does not always function as a visible object.

Another rather unique example of the *tacen* in Old English literature is found in a poem known today as *Genesis B*. The *Genesis B* poem is the Anglo-Saxon revision of the biblical story as told in the book of Genesis wherein Satan's messenger famously attempts to tempt Adam before he fails and moves on to Eve. The Old English word *tacen* occurs four times in the *Genesis B* text alone, which is striking because the word

occurs only 197 times in the entire corpus of Old English literature. With each use of the word in *Genesis B*, however, the definition and function shifts. What *tacen* means and how it functions to one character in *Genesis B* can be wildly different from how the word functions according to another character. What will become clear in Chapter Two of this thesis is that the *tacen* in medieval donor portraits functions in a similar way to the *tacen* in the *Genesis B* text. How donors used the *tacen* in their dedicatory pages, sculptures, and other media can vary. I will turn now to the exploration of the shifting function of the *tacen* in *Genesis B* in order to aid in the discussion of how the donor's model signifies in donor portraits.

The first occurrence of *tacen* in *Genesis B* appears during a conversation between Satan's *boda* (messenger) and Adam. The famous Anglo-Saxon revision occurs in this scene when the *boda* approaches Adam *before* he tempts Eve. In his first meeting with Adam, the *boda* encourages Adam to eat a bite of the fruit from the forbidden tree. The *boda* defends his desire for Adam to eat from the forbidden tree by telling Adam that God sent him personally in order to command Adam to eat. Beginning at 499B, the *boda* relates to Adam his supposed duties as a messenger:

> "þa het he me on þysne sið faran,
> het þæt þu þisses ofætes æte cwæð þæt þin abal and cræft
> and þin modsefa mara wurde
> and þin lichoma leohtra micle,
> þin gesceapu scenran, cwæð þæt þe æniges sceates ðearf
> ne wurde on worulde."
> (*Genesis B* 499b-504a)

["Then he commanded me to travel on this journey. He commanded that you might eat of this fruit. He said that your ableness and craft and your mind might become greater and your body might become a great splendor, your shape more beautiful. He said that you will not lack anything in the world."]

The *boda* suggests that God *het* (commanded) him to travel to Adam. In this passage, the *boda* strategically makes a case for his appearance to Adam, attempting to explain who sent him and for what reason he has come. The *boda* continues to speak for twenty lines, further detailing what he claims to have been his exchange with God before his travels. This is an indication of the proleptic actions of the *boda*. The *boda* anticipates that Adam will question who sent him and why he should trust him. The *boda* seems to foresee Adam's initial rejection of his proposal to eat the fruit, and he intends to compensate for this in his introductory speech. He even describes the physical and mental benefits Adam will receive if he complies with his demands. The *boda* indicates that Adam's *modsefa* (mind) would become *mara* (greater) and his *lichoma* (body) would become *leohtra micle* (a great splendor) if he eats the fruit from the forbidden tree.

Adam responds to the *boda* with a lengthy speech in return. Adam retells God's instructions concerning his habitation in the garden, how God gave Eve to Adam as a wife, and finally how God demanded that he follow his teachings. Before Adam concludes his first speech, he firmly declares:

> "þu gelic ne bist
> ænegum his engla þe ic ær geseah
> ne þu me oðiewdest ænig tacen
> þe he me þurh treowe to onsende,
> min hearra þurh hyldo."
> (*Genesis B* 538b-542a)

["You are unlike any of his angels that I have seen before, nor have you shown to me any token which he sent to me out of grace, which my lord (sent to me) out of favor."]

No actual *tacen* is presented in this scene, but Adam specifically requests one and uses the lack of a *tacen*, here a visual object that can prove that the *boda* was sent by God, as an excuse to disregard the commands of the *boda*. In this passage, Adam presents many reasons he cannot do as the *boda* requests. Adam argues specifically that he does not recognize the *boda* as a true messenger of God. *Gelic* (similar to, like) is used to introduce a comparative phrase, but coupled with the negative particle *ne* (not), the sense related is that the *boda* is unlike God's other angels in his appearance. The past tense form of the verb *geseah* (seen) suggests that Adam has had visual contact with a messenger of God prior to his meeting with Satan's *boda*, which provides further evidence for the significance of vision and the visual in this particular poem. Adam's desire for visible, physical evidence is explored further as he continues his speech. Adam declares specifically that the *boda* has not *oðiewdest* (shown) him a token. When the verb *oðiewdest* is used, it demands that a physical object is presented that can be perceived with one's eyes. The use of this verb demands that the recipient must look. The *boda* provides no believable evidence, no concrete or physical proof for Adam to take his word; therefore, Adam ignores his request. Adam needs to see a visual *tacen* in order to trust the *boda*, and since the *boda* cannot produce something tangible for Adam to see, his wishes are disregarded.

A reader can formulate what Adam considers to be an acceptable definition and function of *tacen* through his direct speech in the *Genesis B* text. Adam argues that a

suitable *tacen* must be visual, and he does so by pairing the word *tacen* with the verb *oðiewdest* (to show). In order for the *boda* to convince Adam that he is God's messenger, the *boda* must show Adam a *tacen*. In other words, he must present something that Adam can see for himself, a physical object that proves the allegiance of the *boda* to God. The word *tacen*, according to Adam's definition, functions as a material mechanism for belief, similar to how the *tacen* functioned in *Beowulf* and *Judith*.

The *boda*, as he *wende hine* (turned himself) to where Eve was working, learns from his mistake of not presenting a *tacen* during his first meeting with Adam. The *boda* approaches Eve, and although she initially dismisses his request, he lends to her the ability of heightened vision *þæt [heo] meaht swa wide ofer woruld ealle/ geseon* (so that she might see so wide over all the world), which causes Eve to *wendan* (turn) toward the will of the *boda* (lines 565-566a). During her vision, Eve sees as wide and as far as possible. Eve is able to see God's judgment seat through her vision. The *boda* provides Eve with precisely what he lacked in his approach to Adam: a *tacen*, some sort of visual proof that he is who he claims to be. This is explored in the poet's culminating lines just before Eve tempts Adam:

> þæt heo ongan his wordum truwian,
> læstan his lare and geleafan nom
> þæt he þa bysene from gode brungen hæfde
> þe he hire swa wærlice wordum sægde,
> iewde hire tacen and treowa gehet,
> his holdne hyge.
> (*Genesis B* 649b-654a)

[Then she began to believe his words, to carry out his teachings, and she took in faith that he had brought then the example from God, which he said to her with words so diligently. He showed to her a token, and he promised good faith, his gracious spirit.]

The *bysene from gode* (example from God) that the poem refers to in this passage is the heightened vision the *boda* had instigated for Eve. The verb *iewde* (showed) appears in this passage, and rightly so, because Eve was shown a vision. However, being given the ability to see something in the form of a vision and seeing a tangible object are entirely different concepts. The poet and Eve understand this vision, the *bysene*, as a token from God. Though this vision is a false token, it is nevertheless a token. The token revealed in this passage refers to an experience and not a visible, physical *tacen*. Eve actually saw, or rather she believed she saw *swa wide ofer woruld ealle* (so wide over all the world), but the vision given to her as a *tacen* is not a physical object.

The example of *tacen* as used in lines 770b-776a provides another modification of the word's definition and function. The poem puts forth yet another use of the word in this passage. The poet relates Eve's grief over the events surrounding Adam and Eve's expulsion from the garden:

> þæt wif gnornod,
> hof greowigmod. hæfde hyldo godes,
> lare forlætan. þa heo þæt leoht geseah
> ellor scriðan þæt hire þurh untreowa
> tacen iewde se him þone teonan geræd
> þæt hie helle nið habban sceoldon,
> hynða unrim.
>
> (*Genesis B* 770b-776a)

[That woman grieved; she grieved sad in heart. She had given up the favor of God. She had given up his teachings. Then she saw that light glide off elsewhere so that a token was shown to her through deception by he who devised injury to them so that they should have hate in hell, a countless number of shames.]

The poet just twenty lines later once again emphasizes that the vision the *boda* granted Eve acted as a token in order to convince Eve to eat the fruit and subsequently persuade Adam to do the same. The same verb *iewde* (to show) is used in this passage, which again suggests that the *tacen* from the *boda* to Eve functions as a visual representation of an experience, which is presented to a single character or group in order to provide evidence for an argument. However, the representation of an experience is not the same as a visual object like the *tacen* Judith presented to her people or the *tacen* Beowulf presented to the mead hall. An audience cannot see a physical example of a vision, because a vision is not a physical thing. Though the narrator recapitulates that the *tacen* presented by the *boda* is an *untreowa* (a deception), the word *tacen* nevertheless refers to the vision that was given to Eve, the token that caused Eve to trust the *boda*.

This particular definition and function of *tacen* in *Genesis B* is a deviation from the acceptable uses of *tacen* as outlined in Old English texts like *Beowulf* and *Judith*. While *Beowulf* and *Judith* present physical objects as *tacen*, the *boda's* understanding of the parameters of the *tacen* is more flexible. The *tacen* for the *boda* is indeed something shown to Eve, but it does not necessarily have to be a physical object. The *boda* does not show Eve something physical and tangible; instead he shows her a vision, a perception of the thing seen. However, the poet does use the verb *iewde* (to show), which effectually tricks the reader into thinking, if only for a moment, that the *tacen* is a visible, physical object. The poem deceives the reader by using a verb form that often suggests the physicality of the thing being shown.

Using the poet's rendering of Satan's *boda*, it is possible to reconstruct an acceptable definition of *tacen* according to the *boda*. On some basic level the *boda* understands that the *tacen* must be shown in order to create meaning and provide evidence. The *boda*, however, does not concern himself with how the *tacen* is shown or revealed. In other words, the *tacen* according to the *boda* need not be a visible object that can be perceived by the reader.

The definition of *tacen* in *Genesis B* is further manipulated as the narrator describes Eve's exchange with Adam. The poet defines Eve's frame of mind, as well as the events of the temptation:

> ac wende þæt heo hyldo heofoncyninges
> worhte mid þam wordum þe heo þam were swelce
> tacen oðiewde and treowe gehet
> oð þæt adame innan breostum
> his hyge hwyrfde and his heorte ongann
> wendan to hire willan.
> (*Genesis B* 712-717a)

[But she believed that she worked for favor of the heaven-king with those words that she showed to the man as a token and promised truth until Adam in his breast turned his mind and his heart began to turn to her will.]

Here the *tacen* that Eve *oðiewde* (showed) Adam was not a visual *tacen*, nor a *tacen* in the form of a vision, but a *tacen* expressed through language. John Vickrey supports this line of argument, namely that the text does not make clear that Eve presents Adam with fruit in the form of a *tacen* in line 714. Alternatively, Vickrey proposes that the *tacen* Eve *oðiewde* (showed) Adam was a verbal account of her vision she received

from the *boda*.[23] Although Vickrey notes this textual outlier, he does not call attention to the unstable meaning of *tacen* in the text as whole.

Mid is an Old English preposition that most often translates as "with" and sometimes even "among."[24] A less frequently observed function is the dative instrumental use, where *mid* would translate as "through" or "by means of."[25] I believe the reader is expected to understand that Eve's *tacen* is revealed *through* or *by means of* words in an instrumental sense, which is a stark contrast to how the *tacen* is revealed in other examples of Old English poetry. There are no visible relics of Eve's *tacen* like Grendel's arm in *Beowulf* or Holofernes's head in *Judith* because Eve's *tacen* takes its form as language itself. Eve is speaking *by means of* words, revealing her *tacen* through her language. In other words, she is showing Adam her words, not an object. The *Genesis B* text and the specific way the *tacen* is used in Eve's temptation scene further alters the customary parameters of the Old English *tacen*.

The *tacen* Eve presents to Adam is also grammatically connected to the words Eve shares with Adam. The relative pronoun *þe* (that) used in 713b connects *mid þam wordum* (with those words) to the token that Eve *oðiewde* (showed) to Adam. Using the relative pronoun, the poet syntactically connects Eve's words to the action of revealing the token. The relative pronoun *þe* modifies Eve's words and binds her words to the verb

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23 John Vickrey, "The Vision of Eve in *Genesis B*," *Speculum* 44 (1969): 86-102.
24 Bosworth and Toller, *An Anglo-Saxon Dictionary*, 683.
25 Bosworth and Toller, *An Anglo-Saxon Dictionary,* 683-684.

oðiewde, which provides additional support for the reading that Eve showed Adam her words and not a physical object.

The *tacen* that the poet refers to in lines 712-717a is Eve's words to Adam and not the often-assumed fruit.[26] As Eve attempted to persuade Adam to eat the fruit from the forbidden tree, the poet declares that *hio spræc him þicce to and speon hine ealne dæg/ on þa dimman dæd* (she spoke to him unrelentingly [literally, thickly] thus and enticed him all day about the evil deed) (684-685a). Eve entices Adam all day with her thick language, not with visual proof. The poet, just fifteen lines later, reveals Eve coaxing Adam once again:

> heo spræc ða to adame, idesa sceonost,
> *ful þiclice* að þam þegne ongan
> his hige hweorfan þæt he þam gehate getruwode
> þe him þæt wif wordum sægde.
> (*Genesis B* 704-707, my emphasis)

[She, the shiniest of women, spoke then to Adam very relentlessly [literally, thickly], until the man began to change his mind, so that he believed the promise which that woman said to him with words.]

Eve's relentless persuasion tactics, her attempt to bombard Adam with unrelenting language, appear in this passage as well. There are only 61 occurrences of *þicce* and 3 occurrences of *þiclice* in Old English literature, which emphasizes the rarity of the two words in the entire literary corpus.[27] The two words appear only 7 times in the corpus of Old English poetry, two of which are the examples from *Genesis B*. Eve does not show

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26 Vickrey, "Adam, Eve, and the *Tacen* in *Genesis B*," 7.

27 "Þicce." Dictionary of Old English Web Corpus. *Dictionary of Old English*, 2011. Web. 2 Dec. 2013. "Þiclice." Dictionary of Old English Web Corpus. *Dictionary of Old English*, 2011. Web. 2 Dec. 2013.

Adam a tangible object in order to provide proof of her argument, rather she provides Adam with a promise, which is revealed to him through her language.

Adam proclaims in line 540 that he cannot obey the *boda* because he has not *oðiewedest* (shown) him *ænig tacen* (any token). Yet Adam *wende* (turns) to Eve's will after she coaxes him *þiclice* (relentlessly) throughout the day. The poet's text suggests that Eve's *þicce* (relentless) words are as powerful as a physical object such as Grendel's arm and Holofernes's head. It is necessary to note, though, that words alone are not enough to produce a functioning *tacen*. For example, Adam disregarded the words of the *boda,* because he did not produce a physical object proving that he was a messenger of God. The words of the *boda* failed. The fact that Eve spoke *þicce* and *þiclice* allows for her words to be used as a *tacen*.

According to the poet's version of Genesis as offered in *Genesis B*, Eve's *tacen*, revealed in the form of relentless words, carries the same weight as Beowulf's or Judith's *tacen*. Eve's *tacen* was ultimately successful (Adam was in fact tempted), because Adam believed her *tacen* to be true. Adam trusted Eve's language-based *tacen*. What gives Eve's words significance in this scene is *how* she speaks them. The rare uses of *þicce* and *þiclice* support this conclusion. In the poem, *þicce* supports the alliteration of its line, while *þiclice* does not. The poet purposefully chose these words, not because they were sufficient filler words that sustained the line's alliteration and meter, but because they carried a specific meaning. The fact that Eve coaxed Adam *þicce* and *þiclice* (and that the narrator repeats this rare word in the poem) suggests that Eve's token gets its power from her delivery. Eve's language has power— at least enough power to change Adam's mind.

The definition and function of *tacen* is consistently modified throughout *Genesis B*. The characters that employ the *tacen* in this text present altogether different definitions for it, as well as establishing an innovative way of utilizing the word. Adam understands the *tacen* as a visible, material object, the *boda* conceives of the *tacen* as something that is visual, but not necessarily material, while Eve believes the *tacen* can be presented in the form of words, and that visuality is unimportant. Adam accepts Eve's language as a *tacen* because he perceives its materiality, its literal thickness, or visual form. Adam believes that Eve has presented a visual *tacen,* which is an aspect that Adam deems necessary for a *tacen* as demonstrated through his first encounter with the *boda* in lines 499 and following. Adam trusts the deceptive language-*tacen* revealed to him by Eve, and as a result man falls from grace because of the nature of language.

Up to this point, I have attempted to demonstrate how the *tacen* functioned in Old English literary texts. Through the textual examples explored in this chapter, I have shown that the functions and definitions of the word can vary from text to text, but all share common threads. The *tacen* is most often a physical object that can be perceived by a group of people. The *tacen* can act as an educational device for an audience, as well as a tool for encouragement. The *tacen* is able to establish a system of belief for its audience and provide evidence of a particular event. In Old English literature, the *tacen* is often, but not always, on public display in a location where a large number of people are able to see it for themselves. In most cases, the *tacen* creates an intimate link between its bearer and audience. The *Genesis B* text also shows, however, that the *tacen* can shift its function and definition depending on the circumstances surrounding its use.

It is also necessary to understand the textuality of the three poems I have explored in this chapter. These texts discussed produce no real, visible *tacen* for readers—only an imagined *tacen* created through language. The texts used in this study are literary texts, not historical documents presenting a truth to their readers. This is strikingly similar to how the donor's model can function in a donor portrait. The representation of an object held in the hands of a patron is not the actual object; the model is simply a representation, a signifier in a system. This particular undercurrent, that the *tacen* produced in both literature and in art is not a real object, that it is only a signifier, has the ability to shape new interpretations of the donor's model and donor portraits as a whole.

As I turn my focus now to medieval donor portraits and the models that are often found in these images, it will be helpful to bear in mind the established criteria of the Old English *tacen*. In the following section it is my goal to establish how one can use the framework provided by Old English literature, specifically its use of the *tacen,* to revitalize the discussion of medieval donor portraits and the donor's model repeatedly found in these images.

Chapter 2: The Anglo-Saxon *Tacen* and the Donor's Model

In the Middle Ages, the donor portrait was the most popular image type used to ascribe patronage. These images are often found on the exteriors or interiors of architectural spaces, in the first few folios of manuscripts, in the liminal spaces of metalwork, and the lower registers of stained glass windows. One can expect to find a donor portrait somewhere on many objects commissioned by a member of the upper classes of society. Often in these images, the patron or group of patrons is represented with a model of the object they commissioned.

A clear example of the image type can be found in the stained glass window cited briefly in the introduction (Fig. 2). In this particular image, Eleanor of Aquitaine and Henry II of England grasp a perfect model of their commission; the exact registers of the window are even outlined in the model. This donor image is located on the lower register of the crucifixion window that Eleanor and Henry commissioned for Poitiers cathedral. Scholars often use images like this example of Eleanor and Henry bearing a model of their donation in order to identify the patrons of particular works of art. Alexa Sand's 2014 monograph is the first full study dedicated to the self-reflexive nature of the donor portrait image type.[28] Yet Sand's study focuses on the image as whole and does not include a full discussion of the donor's model. Even after this groundbreaking study

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28 Alexa Sand, *Vision, Devotion, and Self-Representation in Late Medieval Art* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014). This full length study argues that the donor portrait as a whole contributed to a patron's ability to perform devotion in front of the divine.

concerning the private devotional practices of the elite, little attention has been given to the models that donors are often holding in this image type, and few questions have been raised in terms of the model's signification.

Emanuel Klinkenberg published the single study of the medieval donor's model in 2009.[29] In this study, Klinkenberg focused primarily on the concept of likeness in terms of the architectural models often found in donor portraits. Klinkenberg used the architectural models to reconstruct our visual knowledge of medieval structures. Klinkenberg's rich study is a worthy contribution to the study of medieval donor portraits and donor's models. While Klinkenberg asked questions about the accuracy of the donor's models in donor portraits, he did not question how the donor's models create meaning for an audience. What does the presence of the model actually do for the donor in a donor portrait? What does the model actually do for the audience of a donor portrait? These rather straightforward questions concerning donor's models in donor portraits have simply not been asked.

I argue that the donor's model in medieval donor portraits functions in a similar way that the Old English *tacen* functions in Anglo-Saxon literature. By using the *tacen* framework established through a study of Anglo-Saxon poetry in the previous chapter, a greater understanding of the function of the donor's model is possible. Similar to Beowulf's *tacen*—Grendel's arm—and Judith's *tacen*—Holofernes's head, the model that a medieval patron often bears in her or his dedicatory image can be considered a

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29 See Klinkenberg, *Compressed Meanings*.

tacen. In fact, the donor's model *needs* to be considered a *tacen* in order for one to understand its powerful and complex signification.

Approaching the donor's model through the framework of the Anglo-Saxon *tacen* demands that an entirely new set of questions be asked of Anglo-Saxon donor portraits (and potentially all medieval donor portraits) in which a model is featured. If the *tacen* in Old English texts works to create a system of belief for its bearer and audience like in *Beowulf*, as well as to teach and encourage as we see in *Judith*, can the donor's model found in medieval donor portraits not do the same types of things for its bearer and audience? If explored in the same vein as in Old English literature, reading the donor's model as a *tacen* can provide insight into how the donor's model actually creates meaning for its bearer and audience. The model found in donor portraits is not a passive agent. Viewing the donor's model through a literary framework has the ability to highlight the active nature of the model.

There are multiple extant examples of Anglo-Saxon donor portraits that could feature in this series of case studies. I have selected three examples of relatively well-known donor images that include a patron or pair of patrons and a model of their donation in order to demonstrate how the literary concept of the *tacen* can help to understand how a donor's model creates meaning. The extant examples are predominately manuscript illuminations, because this is what has survived from the

Anglo-Saxon period.[30] Based simply on what types of artifacts have survived, I have selected three examples of donor portraits found in manuscripts. In fact, all three manuscripts are connected to the New Minster Abbey at Winchester. King Edgar's offering of the charter to Christ in the New Minster Charter manuscript, Queen Emma and King Cnut's presentation of an altar cross to the New Minster in the New Minster *Liber Vitae* manuscript, and Ælfwine's manuscript presentation to St. Peter in a tenth-century manuscript from the New Minster all feature patrons displaying models of their commissions.[31] Because of the inclusion of a donor's model, these manuscript illuminations are suitable case studies for the application of the *tacen* theory explicated above.

The New Minster Charter of King Edgar

The New Minster Charter is a document in the form of a book that confirms the newly reformed regime at New Minster, Winchester. The charter was written in gold and signed by King Edgar in front of witnesses in 966.[32] It contains, on folio 2v, a full-page miniature of King Edgar offering an image of the charter to Christ (Fig. 3).[33]

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30 For more information on the types of artifacts that have survived from the Anglo-Saxon period, see chapter one of C. R. Dodwell's *Anglo-Saxon Art: A New Perspective.* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1982), 1-23.

31 All three examples of owner portraits are roughly contemporary to the manuscripts containing the *Beowulf*, *Judith*, and *Genesis B* poems.

32 See *The Golden Age of Anglo-Saxon Art*, ed. by Janet Backhouse, D. H. Turner, and Leslie Webster (London: British Museum, 1984), 47, no. 62.

33 Edgar's charter and presentation image are found in British Library Cotton MS. Vespasian A.viii.

Approaching this miniature in light of the Anglo-Saxon *tacen* literary motif, a fruitful analysis of the donor's model is possible more than ever before. King Edgar is the crowned figure shown in the lower center of the composition, with his arms stretched above his head in a gesture suggestive of giving. The Virgin and St. Peter flank King Edgar in a similar way that a group of angels surround Christ in the upper register of the miniature. In his left hand, King Edgar holds a small rectangular object, a model of the charter in the form of a manuscript.

On a more basic level, King Edgar's charter-*tacen* establishes him as responsible for the physical charter document. A visual representation of Edgar bearing the charter acts as concrete proof that Edgar is responsible for the charter's creation. That the dedicatory image is present in this manuscript at all is also noteworthy. Why did Edgar need to commission an image of himself bearing the charter to Christ? Why is the text of the charter not enough to eternally link Edgar to the charter and ultimately to Christ? The dedicatory portrait of Edgar holding aloft the charter creates a visual record of the event. The audience of this image would have an ability to identify Edgar as the centrally placed, crowned figure and would likely have understood the charter in his left hand as a sign of patronage. In many ways the visual image of Edgar and his charter obviate the capabilities of language and literacy. If a viewer had the opportunity to see this particular image, she or he would not necessarily have to have had the ability to read in order to gain an understanding of the manuscript and the document it held. The dedicatory image acts as a summary of the manuscript's commission, with the *tacen* at the forefront of this memorialization. Without the physical representation of the object itself, a viewer would

likely miss the connection between the king and the commissioned object. This reading of the *tacen* in regard to Edgar's model parallels the function of the *tacen* in Old English texts. The arm of Grendel, the head of Holofernes, and the vision of Eve all become visual records of events. The physical remains of Grendel and Holofernes and the memory of Eve's vision are examples of visual recordkeeping. Edgar's charter-*tacen* from the prefatory image also manages to visually record the event of Edgar granting the charter. The viewers of this image also play a vital role in its performance. If a viewer understands the model of the charter as Edgar's *tacen*, an object that he presents to Christ and the community, then the visual ramifications of the image make it clear that the viewers also act as witnesses to Edgar's legal document and to the presentation event.

The image of Edgar's *tacen* can also be understood as an educational tool used to instruct and encourage its audience. Edgar's special relationship with Christ as outlined in this image has the potential to encourage the viewer of the image to also commission objects for or supply monetary donations to the monastic community. Edgar does not stand in front of an altar at the New Minster or in some other constructed space. Edgar is placed in the heavenly realm of Christ and his attendants. The scene of Edgar flanked by the Virgin and St. Peter, as well as Edgar's close proximity to Christ and the heavenly realm in this image, assists in perpetuating the idea that if one gives gifts to a religious community, his or her salvation is in some way guaranteed. This use of the *tacen* is similar to the function of the *tacen* in *Judith*. Judith holds aloft the head of Holofernes as she speaks to her people in order to encourage them in battle. Her message is clear; if she can murder the Assyrian leader, her people can surely defeat the Assyrians in battle.

Edgar's charter-*tacen* works in a comparable way. The image of Edgar's *tacen* could potentially encourage viewers to make their own commissions or donations to the monastery.

King Edgar's *tacen*, the model of the charter, also works to create a visual link between Edgar and Christ in this image. Edgar is the individual presenting the charter to Christ in this scene, not the abbot of the monastery or some other important Church figure. Edgar, the patron of New Minster's reform, is selected to present the charter to Christ. Without a donation of some sort to Christ, Edgar had no legitimate reason for placing an image of himself alongside an image of Christ. However, if Edgar presents a substantial offering, legitimacy is created. In fact, it is only through the representation of the *tacen* that the visual link between Edgar and Christ is possible. In other words, it is the *tacen* in this particular image that creates the legitimacy of the scene.

The *tacen* in this image also acts as merit for King Edgar. Not only does the small object in Edgar's hands represent his sanctioned reform practices and monetary donations to the monastic community, the model of the charter also represents Edgar's gift to the community at large. Edgar's support of the religious institution at the New Minster, Winchester, was his contribution to all members of the community. His donations would have allowed the church to continue to thrive, which therefore would have supported the religious community in Winchester. Edgar's presentation of the charter to Christ in this image is not only indicative of Edgar's attempt to secure his own place in the Christian afterlife but also his attention and care of his people. If Edgar provided monetary support

for religious foundations, he was enabling these communities to continue to worship and educate the populous.

Edgar's charter to Christ in many ways works to collect merit for Edgar himself, but it is also possible to read this image as a way for Edgar to safeguard other Christians in the community. The image of Edgar's charter-*tacen* is similar to Beowulf's slaying of the monster Grendel and subsequently placing his arm on the floor of the mead hall. When Beowulf lays out Grendel's arm for the community to see, he is drawing attention to his own victory while simultaneously demonstrating that the community is now safe from harm. The same use of the *tacen* is true for Edgar's presentation image: his *tacen* glorifies himself while also preserving the religious community.

Beyond acting as a mere historical document and visual record of the charter, the dedication page shapes the idea that the manuscript itself is divinely sanctioned by its dedicatory-page audience, namely Christ, the Virgin and St. Peter. Understanding the textuality of a literature proves crucial for this reading. As I have mentioned previously, the tokens presented in *Beowulf*, *Judith*, and *Genesis B* are not physical objects, they are representations of signs through language. Just as the *tacen* in literature is a manifestation of language, so is the *tacen* in Edgar's dedicatory page. The *tacen* in the donor image is a *representation* of the charter, not the charter itself. The representation can therefore be placed in the presence of Christ, the Virgin, and St. Peter, because, after all, it is an imaginary scene, a scene created through the reorganization of signifiers. However, as a viewer of the dedicatory page, we are tricked, signification is faked. We understand the charter in the donor image to be a representation of the real, visible manuscript in which

the image exists. As the viewer steps away from the donor portrait and examines the manuscript as a complete object, the understanding that this exact book was in the presence of Christ is overwhelmingly powerful. The manuscript in some way becomes a relic of Christ's divine presence.

The particular reading of the charter-*tacen*, that the charter-*tacen*, as was visually recorded in the dedicatory page, was in the presence of Christ, can be pushed further. The representation of the charter in Edgar's hands signifies the reforms he had sanctioned by King Edgar, while the actual, text of the charter inside the manuscript establishes the rights and privileges of the New Minster, Winchester. By placing an image of the founder bearing a representation of the charter to Christ, Christ himself becomes a witness to the document's creation.

The implication that Christ receives Edgar's gift as presented in the dedication page also bears weight on the interpretation of the scene. If Christ accepts the charter for the New Minster, not only is the manuscript containing the charter divinely sanctioned but the abbey itself is too. The *tacen*, broadly speaking, signifies the abbey at the New Minster. In other words, the *tacen* has a metonymic function in this donor portrait.[34] Paul De Man, a deconstructionist literary critic, argues that in language there is a surplus of

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34 Paul De Man, a major proponent of deconstruction in the 1970s and 1980s, argues that there is a metonymic function to language. Meaning is created through a constant web of metonymic substitutions. An attempt to identify a signifier leads only to another signifier, and ultimately meaning is continuously deferred. I propose the same thing in this particular image. As the viewer examines the *tacen* in this image, the function of the *tacen* goes through a series of substitutions. Meaning is constantly deferred. See Paul De Man, "Semiology and Rhetoric," *Allegories of Reading: Figural Language in Rousseau, Nietzsche, Rilke, and Proust* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979), 3-19.

signification, which creates indeterminacy and obstructs understanding. The *tacen* attempts to signify simultaneously as the charter itself, a representation of the charter, an object that has been approved by Christ, the manuscript as a whole, and even the abbey itself. The charter-*tacen* can be read as one or all of these signifiers.

In summary, the dedicatory folio commemorating Edgar's charter for the New Minster abbey is thus imbued with meaning through the use of a representation of the donor's commission, a *tacen*. In this image, the donor's model aids in the creation of new readings of this particular folio. The framework provided by Anglo-Saxon poetry and its uses of the *tacen* add to the potential readings of the image. Though there is the possibility that some of these readings are conceivable without the use of the *tacen* concept, I argue that the *tacen* framework developed through a reading of Anglo-Saxon poetry helps to ground these interpretations.

The Altar Cross of Queen Emma and King Cnut in the *Liber Vitae*

The *Liber Vitae* of the New Minster at Winchester is a manuscript that records the monks and benefactors of the same New Minster religious community that Edgar's charter had supported.[35] Dated to 1031 in an inscription, this manuscript contains a historical record of the gifts given to the abbey by royal patrons. The prefatory pages of the *Liber Vitae* feature a full-page illumination on folio 6v detailing a gift to the abbey

35 The manuscript, British Library Stowe MS. 944, contains a register, charters, customs, the will of Alfred the Great, benedictions, and the order of Mass.

from Queen Emma and King Cnut (r. 1016-35) followed by illuminations featuring scenes from the Last Judgment.

The image of Emma and Cnut presenting an altar cross to the New Minster and to Christ, who appears in the upper register of the scene, is another example of the donor portrait image type in which the patrons bear a model of their donation (Fig. 4). In the scene, Emma and Cnut approach the altar with outstretched hands. Cnut's hand is grasping the base of the altar cross, while Emma extends her hand in a gesture of giving. The angels floating in the central register of the scene are crowning the king and veiling the queen, while gesturing above to where Christ sits in majesty inside a mandorla.

The prefatory image in the *Liber Vitae* depicts Emma and Cnut with their donation, the altar cross, which in this case acts as a *tacen*. The *tacen* in this image establishes the act of patronage. Emma and Cnut are represented as presenting their donation to both the New Minster abbey and Christ. The appearance of the altar cross in the scene creates for the viewer concrete proof of the identity of the patrons. Aided by the Old English and Latin inscriptions, viewers are able to easily identify Emma (Ælgyfu Regina) and Cnut (Cnut Rex) as the abbey's benefactors.[36] The model of the cross serves to mark Emma and Cnut's donation visually.

Similar to how Edgar's charter-*tacen* educates and encourages viewers to donate to the abbey in order to further their own salvation, the cross-*tacen* instructs viewers to become benefactors. Beyond encouraging potential benefactors to donate objects or other

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36 The Old English is preserved in the name labels of Emma and Cnut on the manuscript page. For example, the ash (æ) character is used to write Emma's Anglo-Saxon name, Ælgyfu.

means of financial assistance, by donating an altar cross to the religious institution, Emma and Cnut are taking an active role in ensuring the community's ability to worship Christ. The altar cross is above all else a devotional tool for individuals to use in rituals and other observances. Emma and Cnut's donation not only aids in their own spiritual development but in the development of the community too. The cross-*tacen* in this particular scene is vital for this reading. Without the presence of the model of the cross in this image, the significance of Emma and Cnut's donation would be lost, and this scene would encourage neither private devotion, nor patronage.

The image of Emma and Cnut presenting their model to Christ perhaps pushes the idea of divine reward even further than Edgar's charter image. Christ's attendants are veiling Emma and crowning Cnut in this prefatory page, which suggests that their right to rule has been divinely sanctioned. The visual link between king and queen and Christ through the artist's depiction of their *tacen* is striking. Although Emma and Cnut are positioned at the altar of presumably the New Minster, the visual nexus places Emma and Cnut firmly within the heavenly realm and in the presence of Christ. This scene presents a visual argument to a viewer; if one commissions objects or gives monetary donations on Christ's behalf, a special relationship between the giver, Christ, and the heavenly realm is possible. The *tacen* in this particular donor portrait enables the action of the scene.

The model of the cross in the folio also serves to visually record the event of Emma and Cnut bestowing a gift on the New Minster. The *Liber Vitae* itself is a document that records monks and benefactors and their gifts to the community. It is

important to bear in mind that the manuscript function was to record the transactions of the New Minster abbey. However, recording the donations in writing, through language, is not the only way this manuscript records historical information. The prefatory page on which Emma and Cnut present their bejeweled altar cross operates as a visual record of the donation as well. The *tacen* must be present in the image for this reading to be possible. If a viewer understands the cross as Emma and Cnut's *tacen*, then they are performing the record of the donation. The viewers themselves act as witnesses, along with Christ and his attendants, to the gift being made to the New Minster. If viewed in this light, in a unique way, the donor portrait is just as binding as a legal contract or document.

This reading is furthered by the inclusion of an audience in the lower register of the prefatory page. Seven figures are situated at the base of the folio, separated from the scene by a semi-circle, which serves as the foundation for Emma and Cnut's ground. These seven figures are likely community members connected to the New Minster. The members of the audience all raise their heads in order to see the action of the scene. The figures play an active role in witnessing Emma and Cnut's donation to the New Minster. In addition to acting as witnesses to the donation, the community members represented are also recipients of Emma and Cnut's gift.

The visual representation of the *tacen* in this folio is also significant in terms of the meaning of the *tacen*. One of the few examples of color in this folio, the altar cross is depicted using gold paint, while the use of red paint ornaments the ends of the arms of the cross. The book in the hands of Christ is also painted with the same gold color used in the

altar cross. In addition to Christ's book, the Virgin holds a similar golden book outlined in red paint. These are the only examples of the golden color of the cross on this folio besides possible traces in the outline of Christ's mandorla. The name labels of Emma and Cnut are the final examples of color found on this folio. Color, in this particular scene, works to connect important signifiers. The altar cross painted in gold is connected to the object in Christ's hand and the object held by the Virgin. The color of the cross mirrors the color of the object in the presence of Christ, creating a visual link between the tacen and Christ himself. Another visual link is created between Emma, Cnut, and the cross-*tacen* with the red paint applied by the illustrator. The name labels highlight Emma and Cnut's involvement in the commission of the cross.

Just as we saw in King Edgar's charter image, the representation of the *tacen* in this image has a kinship to the literary *tacen* in terms of its textuality. The cross is not a real, physical cross; it is only a representation of an object, just as the tokens from the literary examples are not producible objects. This particular interpretation, that the cross is only a representation, allows for the reading of the imagined presentation of the cross to Christ. This scene did not *actually* take place, it is simply a projected imagination that aids the viewer, whether Emma and Cnut as patrons, or the New Minster community, in spiritual devotion.

In the case of Emma and Cnut, seeing an image that presents them crossing into Christ's heavenly realm to give a donation to an abbey in his honor is powerful. Meditating on this image can strengthen one's intimate relationship with Christ by imagining oneself in his presence. The ability to return to this particular image in a

manuscript also transcends the particular historical moment represented. A viewer does not have to experience this image only once. Instead, there is potential for the viewer to revisit the image as often as they would like in this manuscript miniature.

In the case of the New Minster community audience, meditating on the cross-*tacen* in this image also allows a closer connection to Christ because audience members are able to see themselves in the lower register of the image. Beyond this, however, is the fact that the actual altar cross donated by Emma and Cnut was likely housed inside the abbey in a public location where viewers had access, if not at all times, certainly on special ceremonial occasions. Therefore, the *tacen* in this image signifies a real object that is placed somewhere in the abbey. A link is forged between the actual altar cross and the *cross*-tacen represented in the donor image. Upon viewing the representation of the cross-*tacen* in the presence of Christ, the Virgin, and St. Peter, this relationship would transfer to the actual object. A member of the New Minster community, after seeing the dedicatory page, could then associate the physical cross as having been the very object that was presented in the presence of Christ. The significance of the actual altar cross thereby increases exponentially when understood as a product of the metonymic function of the *tacen* in the donor portrait.

Using the *tacen* framework to explicate the prefatory page from the *Liber Vitae* yields fresh readings that add to a viewer's understanding of the overall image. A viewer's meditation on the image and the relationship created therein are activated by the *tacen* contained in image. The *tacen* framework elucidates multiple layers of meaning that can be found in the donor portrait. Similar to how the *tacen* shifts its function and

signification in the Old English poem *Genesis B*, the *tacen* can shift its function in a single image, like the prefatory page of the *Liber Vitae*, wherever a donor's model is present.

The Private Devotional Manuscript of the Monk Ælfwine

The private devotional manuscript commissioned by the monk Ælfwine of the New Minster, Winchester, features on folio 19v a drawing of the donor holding a model of his book at the feet of St. Peter, the patron saint of the abbey (fig. 4).[37] In this image St. Peter sits enthroned holding an open book and keys. St. Peter is the primary focus of the composition due to the artist's use of hieratic scale. Located at his feet, a small image of a monk appears on St. Peter's right side. The monk, identified as Ælfwine from the cryptogram located in the calendar, reaches toward St. Peter with his right hand and holds a model of his manuscript in his left.[38] The model of the manuscript in Ælfwine's hand acts as a *tacen* in this image. Although the *tacen* in Ælfwine's prayer book is in some ways similar to how the *tacen* is used in the two previous examples, it also functions in different ways. There is an essential difference in this example and the previous two examples: this was a private devotional manuscript, while the other two examples explored thus far would have been more public in their nature. I will begin by considering the similar uses of Ælfwine's *tacen* and the former examples before I discuss how this particular image uses the *tacen* in alternative ways.

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37 Ælfwine's prayer book is catalogued as British Library Cotton MS. Titus D.xxvi.
38 Dodwell, *Anglo-Saxon Art*, 58.

Like the charter of King Edgar and the prefatory page of the *Liber Vitae*, the image from Ælfwine's devotional manuscript uses the donor's model in order to establish the patron of the manuscript. The representation of the manuscript-*tacen* in the hands of Ælfwine also helps to situate Ælfwine not only as the book's patron but also as the book's owner. The same way that Beowulf holds the arm of Grendel and Judith displays the head of Holofernes, Ælfwine bears a model of his manuscript to his audience. The arm of Grendel connected Beowulf to the action of fighting the monster, just as the head of Holofernes connected Judith to his slaying. In the same vein, Ælfwine is connected to this manuscript as its patron because he documents himself holding a model of the manuscript inside the actual manuscript. The manuscript-*tacen* creates visual proof of Ælfwine's commission.

In addition to establishing Ælfwine as the manuscript's patron and owner, the *tacen* in this image can be understood as a teaching device just as we have seen in Edgar's charter and Emma and Cnut's dedication page. Even though this manuscript contained texts used for private devotion, and it is unlikely that individuals other than Ælfwine used the object, the *tacen* can still educate its audience. As a viewer (or even Ælfwine himself) looks at the image of Ælfwine presenting a model of his manuscript to St. Peter, one is reminded of the expected duties of a monk. The image depicts a monk paying homage to the patron saint of his abbey by commissioning a religious text and bearing it alongside the figure. As Ælfwine or another viewer came upon this folio in the manuscript, he would be reminded of his duty as a monk.

In a similar vein as has been argued concerning Edgar's charter-*tacen* and Emma and Cnut's cross-*tacen*, Ælfwine's manuscript-*tacen* is only a representation of the manuscript. The *tacen* in Ælfwine's donor portrait creates a link between Ælfwine and St. Peter. More than just a visual link, the *tacen* places Ælfwine in St. Peter's celestial realm because the image is an imagined scene. The image depicts the monk Ælfwine, having been transferred to the saint's celestial location, kneeling at St. Peter's feet and not in the New Minster's cloister. Using the manuscript-*tacen* as a means to be in St. Peter's proximity, Ælfwine has managed to transport himself to the heavenly realm, even if just in this symbolic image. His private devotional practices would still allow him to meditate on this image of himself at the feet of St. Peter enthroned and mentally transport himself there. Along with encouraging his relationship with St. Peter, Ælfwine's manuscript image allows for the interpretation that the particular manuscript has been in the divine presence of St. Peter. That this object is now some sort of secondary relic of St. Peter heightens the object's devotional power.

There are essential differences in this image depicting patronage and the previously studied examples. Firstly, where Edgar's charter and Emma and Cnut's cross were considered gifts to the New Minster, this particular manuscript was commissioned and owned by Ælfwine and not donated to the monastery. The prayer book was not "presented" per se to a divine figure in the same way that Edgar's and Emma and Cnut's objects were. Although a relationship between Ælfwine and St. Peter is still created by the *tacen*, it is not because St. Peter receives a manuscript from the monk. Secondly, the nature of the creation of the prayer book in relation to the other two objects differs. The

charter and the cross were public donations given to the monastic community, while the prayer book is a private manual meant to aid in spiritual devotion—specifically Ælfwine's spiritual devotion.

Although Ælfwine is not presenting his devotional manuscript to St. Peter in an obvious way, the *tacen* in this image still creates meaning. As the monk meditates on this particular image, he is able to gaze at a representation of himself at the feet of St. Peter. The monk's owner portrait symbolizes the unique relationship he is able to develop with saint through his procurement of the manuscript. Instead of merely being a public *tacen* that elucidates ownership, the representation of Ælfwine's manuscript acts as a private *tacen* for Ælfwine specifically.

Just as I have argued for the charter of Edgar and the prefatory images from the *Liber Vitae*, the *tacen* in Ælfwine's manuscript is also a clever record-keeping technique. However, like Edgar's charter-*tacen* and Emma and Cnut's cross-*tacen*, Ælfwine's *tacen* surpasses the simple historical function of documenting a commission. The representation of the manuscript allows Ælfwine to transcend the tired parameters of the prayer book in order to enter the heavenly realm of St. Peter through meditation. Ælfwine's *tacen* works to reactivate the donor portrait after the viewer associates Ælfwine with the manuscript's commission and ownership.

Conclusions

The donor's model often depicted in medieval donor portraits presents a complex system of signs to a viewer. I have proposed in the previous pages a framework with which to approach the donor's model found in examples of Anglo-Saxon art. The *tacen* framework provided by Old English literature is a profitable mode of analysis that is capable of yielding new and insightful interpretations these images. The *tacen* theory invigorates the study of these images and gives special attention to the signification of the donor's model found in the image type. I have argued that there is a deep connection between the literary tradition and artistic innovation produced in the Anglo-Saxon period by connecting these two threads of discourse. A pressing question, however, remains. Can the *tacen* framework, developed solely from a close reading of Old English texts, aid an art historian in the analysis of donor portraits produced during the medieval period across Europe? In other words, is the usefulness of the proposed *tacen* theory restricted geographically and temporally?

I argue that the *tacen* theory is unequivocally useful for the analysis of medieval donor portraits and should not be restricted to a specific geographic region or culture. The theory should also not be limited to analyzing donor images only from the medieval period. Although initially it may seem to be focused on a particular Old English word and how that word functions in a particular group of Old English texts, the *tacen* framework encourages the viewer to closely scrutinize an often-overlooked aspect of the donor portrait image type. Whether a culture or language recognizes the word *tacen* or not, the

proposed framework inspires a closer look at the donor's model. By identifying the donor's model as a *tacen* of sorts, I have taken the first step towards gaining a better understanding of the donor's model and how it creates meaning in an image. In the same way that the *Genesis B* text allowed the *tacen* to function in multiple ways depending on the character involved in the scene, the *tacen* in a medieval donor portrait can signify in multiple ways.

For example, a late fifteenth-century sculpture of St. Elisabeth bearing a model of the church of St. Elisabeth at Marburg is a fine example of the *tacen* functioning in a different geographic location and time period (Fig. 6). While the model held by St. Elisabeth can still be read as a *tacen*, it is significant to note that there are essential differences. The medium in which this example of the *tacen* is presented has shifted from manuscript page to stone. The presence of the donor image has changed; it is now a three-dimensional representation of a patron saint bearing a three-dimensional model of the church dedicated to her. Elisabeth was responsible for founding the predecessor to this church. Though the church model in the hands of St. Elisabeth can be considered a *tacen*, the dynamic of the *tacen* and how it creates meaning has shifted. The church model or *tacen* in this sculpture links St. Elisabeth to church, if not monetarily, certainly symbolically. The *tacen* in this example does not, however, create a visual record of an event as I have argued for the three manuscript images. The sculpture of St. Elisabeth is a prime example of how the *tacen* can be used to explore other examples of donor images, and it also shows that the *tacen* can shift its meaning and function in images just as it does in literary texts.

The theory developed throughout this study has the potential to reshape the scholarly discourse surrounding donor portraits and the models found within them. This study uses a device conceived in a literary tradition to shed light on an artistic innovation. The framework, on a most basic level, demands that the donor's model re-enter scholarly conversation surrounding aspects of artistic patronage. Although the theory originates in the literary tradition of the Anglo-Saxons, the usefulness of the model should not be discounted and implemented only on Anglo-Saxon objects, as I have demonstrated with the sculpture of St. Elisabeth at Marburg. The *tacen* theory developed here can be used to explore any donor portrait that includes a representation of the object being given. The primary goal of the framework is to call attention to the donor's model and the possible significance it could bear on the meaning of a donor portrait. The *tacen* theory is absolutely rooted in the Old English language and literature, but that should not hinder the framework's ability to raise questions about the signification and meaning-making capabilities of the donor's model.

It is highly unlikely that even the Anglo-Saxon artists creating objects and patrons commissioning projects called the visual representation of the commission a *tacen*. The *tacen* is a literary trope found only in the textual practices of the period. What is useful about this mode of analysis is the fact that the donor's model found in art conforms to the function of the *tacen* as observed in literary traditions. Reading the donor's model as a *tacen* weaves together strains of both artistic and literary traditions in order to show that there are intimate connections between art and literature of this time period.

The *tacen* theory creates a lens with which to read the images anew. Tracking the function of the *tacen* in Anglo-Saxon literature creates an organized model capable of permeating the signification of the image type created relentlessly throughout the Middle Ages. How the *tacen* is implanted in texts like *Beowulf*, *Judith*, and *Genesis B* helps one to think about how the donor's model works to create meaning in a donor portrait.

Like Beowulf's *tacen* of Grendel's body, the models in donor portraits establish a relationship between the *tacen*-bearer and the object itself. Beowulf's *tacen* shows that he battled Grendel in the poem, while the patron in a donor portrait bears a *tacen* in order to exhibit his or her act of patronage. Similarly, in the *Judith* text, the *tacen* is used to simultaneously instruct and encourage Judith's people to battle. The *tacen* found in donor portraits often presents the same function. As explored in Edgar's charter, the *Liber Vitae*, and Ælfwine's prayer book, the model represented often works to educate and encourage a viewer to commission and donate additional objects. The *tacen* in a donor portrait also creates a visual record of the donation or commission of the object. The presence of the object-model (the *tacen*) in the donor image allows the viewer to be a legal witness of patronage. For the same reason Adam protests the veracity and sincerity of Satan's messenger in *Genesis B*, an Anglo-Saxon donor portrait regularly features a model of the donation. Adam demands the messenger produce visual proof of his identity. The messenger is unable to comply, so Adam disregards his instructions. The Anglo-Saxon patrons commissioning objects and establishing religious foundations provide visual proof of their commissions and donations by employing the *tacen* motif in

their donor portraits, which leaves little doubt of their involvement in the minds of viewers.

The *tacen* can also signify in a unique way that surpasses a purely historical, record-keeping interpretation. As I have argued throughout this thesis, there is a textuality of both the literary texts and the donor images represented in the three manuscript illuminations that defers meaning. The *tacen* in both literature and art are representations of things, not physical objects in their own right. They are constructed through language and systems of signs and are ultimately imagined scenes presented to the reader or viewer. In examples of donor images where a model is presented, the *tacen* allows for a strengthened relationship to the heavenly realm and even to Christ himself. Meaning is constantly substituted, which allows for multiple, simultaneous interpretations of the *tacen* at a given time. All at once, the *tacen* can refer to the actual manuscript, the representation of the manuscript, the religious institution, and even the very object that has been in the presence of Christ. The shifting nature of the *tacen* permeates in both literary texts and artistic images.

As Linda Safran has recently noted, it is important to bear in mind that each donor image brings its own set of historical and iconographical contexts that are likely regional or even local.[39] Safran correctly argues "these figures and texts should be evaluated individually and not reflexively assigned to a fixed category."[40] My project has explored multiple ways the models that donors present can create meaning in a donor portrait.

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39 Linda Safran, "Deconstructing 'Donors' in Medieval Southern Italy," in *Female Founders in Byzantium and Beyond*, ed. Lioba Theis (Vienna: Böhlau, 2013), 135-152.
40 Safran, "Deconstructing 'Donors' in Medieval Southern Italy," 152.

However, it is important to recognize that the framework developed in this project does not tightly package and conclude precisely how or what the donor's model means. In fact, quite the opposite is true. I have set out to ask new questions concerning the image type and have merely scratched the surface of how the donor's model creates meaning. Each donor image that features a model, if approached with the *tacen* concept in mind, can create layered and differing interpretations based on a number of factors. This framework provides only the starting point for analysis and seeks to bring the donor's model back into the conversation of medieval donor portraits.

Beyond merely elucidating the necessity for a closer examination of the donor's model in images of patronage, adopting this line of inquiry sheds light on the insightful connections between literature and art produced in the Anglo-Saxon world, as well as the interrelations between the disciplines of literature and art history more broadly. The model I have proposed in this project demonstrates that the study of a group's literary culture can impact the ways in which other aspects of that culture are viewed. Using the literary model of the *tacen* presented in Old English texts allows for a greater understanding of the iconography used by Anglo-Saxons.

The treatment of the *tacen* motif in *Beowulf*, *Judith*, and *Genesis B* aids in the organization of the Anglo-Saxon understanding of the visual object as perceived in literature. The literary texts help to structure the function and impact of presented objects on an audience. I have shown that observing how the Anglo-Saxon audience potentially understood these objects in literature can help modern scholars to construct interpretations of their images. The connections between the art and literature of the

Anglo-Saxons are plentiful and the connectedness of the two fields works in both directions. The art of the period can also aid in the assessment and understanding of literary texts. It is important to remember that literary and artistic currents were hardly understood as separate entities in the medieval period. As this project has shown, creating ways to re-join these seemingly disparate factions yields insightful results.

I would be remiss if I left the impression that the donor's model found in donor portraits is an exclusively Anglo-Saxon innovation. Although it would be difficult to prove definitely that the function of the *tacen* in Old English literature directly inspired the Anglo-Saxon scribes and artists creating these donor images, it is certainly possible to draw connections between the Anglo-Saxon's profound desire for the visible object in both their literary and artistic traditions.

The image type appears throughout the pan-European Middle Ages. The image continues to be a repeated form commissioned beyond the medieval period and throughout the history of art. This speaks to the success of the image type as perceived by medieval patrons. If the donor's model did not "do its job," so to speak, it is unlikely that the image type would have been nearly as popular as extant artistic examples prove.

As I conclude this study, I want to return to the title of this thesis. An enigmatic phrase borrowed from *Beowulf*, *sweotol tacen* manages to capture quite clearly much of the argument garnered in this study. *Sweotol tacen* can be rendered as "a clear token." On the one hand, this phrase signifies clearly, can be translated easily, and promises the reader an argument of plain, unambiguous signs. However, on the other hand, this phrase encompasses the very nature of the *tacen* itself; the adjective *sweotol* does not explain

what the *tacen* does in a text or an image, the word only assures the reader that it is "clear." The donor's model is, after all, often a plainly presented token, but how it signifies is "clearly" up to the reader.

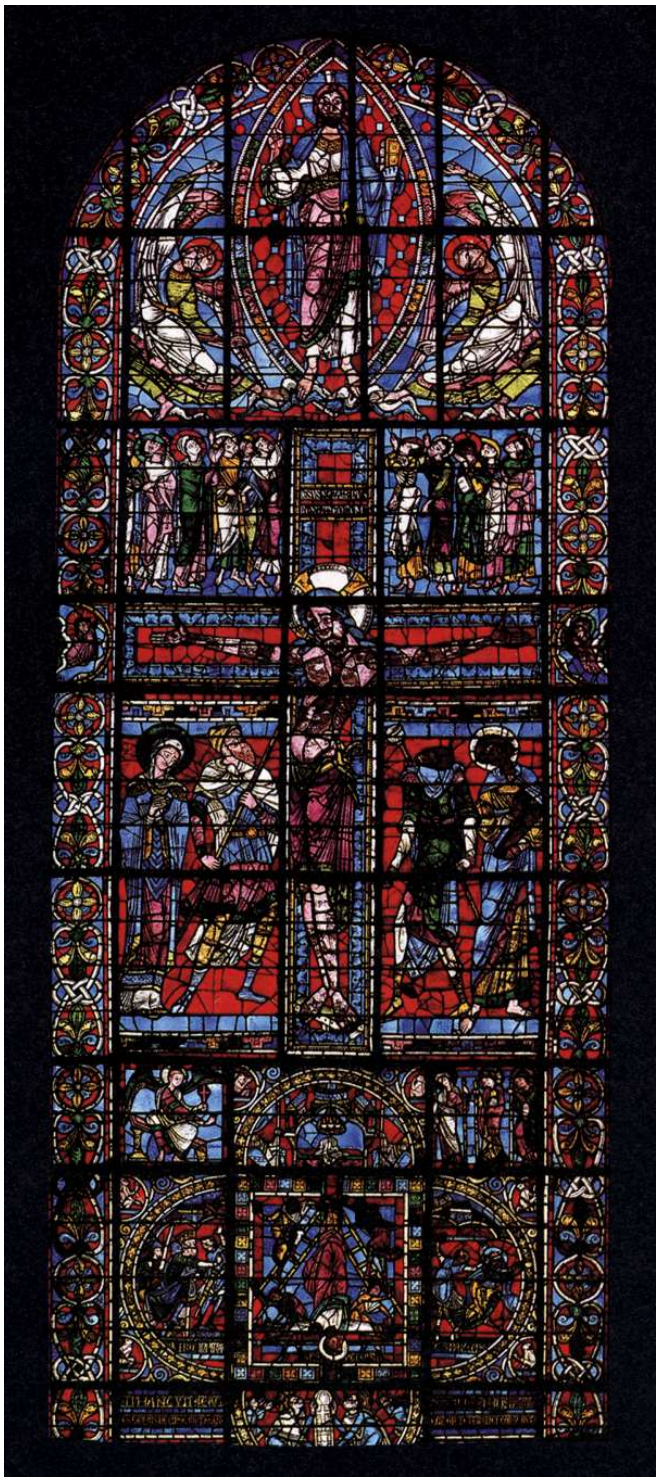

Figure 1: Crucifixion window, east end of Poitiers Cathedral, France, c. 1165-1170.

Figure 2: Detail of Crucifixion window, Eleanor of Aquitaine and Henry II of England holding a model of their commission, Poitiers Cathedral, France, c. 1165-1170.

Figure 3: The New Minster Charter, dedication page with King Edgar presenting the charter to Christ, c. 966 (BL Cotton MS. Vespasian A.viii, fol. 2v).

Figure 4: The New Minster *Liber Vitae*, dedication page showing Queen Emma and King Cnut presenting a golden alter cross to the New Minster, Winchester, c. 1031 (BL Stowe MS. 944, fol. 6r).

Figure 5: Ælfwine's Prayerbook, the Winchester monk Ælfwine holding his devotional book at the feet of St. Peter, the patron saint of New Minster, Winchester, c. 1023-1035 (BL Cotton MS. Titus D.xxvi, fol. 19v).

Figure 6: St. Elisabeth holding a model of her church, Margburg, St. Elisabeth's, c. 1470-1480.

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