Leeds Studies in English

THE OLD ENGLISH *ADVENT VII* AND THE 'DOUBTING OF MARY' TRADITION

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The poem of fifty verses that appears in the Exeter Book as lines
164-213 of a larger unit known as *Christ I* or the *Old English
Advent* seems to have exercised a fascination upon scholars out of
all proportion to its size.[1] Dialogues between the Blessed Virgin
and St Joseph appear in Christian writing since the second century
and flourish in the course of time in a variety of forms, apocryphal
gospel, sermon, poetry, and drama. In more than one of these
genres the story may have been told with greater insight into human
and saintly character, with deeper spiritual understanding, and in
stronger and more moving words. If the Old English poet's voice in
Advent VII, as I shall call the lines in question, continues to
attract attention - and it is no mean poem - it is partly because
it remains a matter of dispute who the speaker of many of the lines
of dialogue is intended to be. If there were some reliable
criterion for allotting words to speakers, we should be wise to
adopt it; we should be on more certain ground in establishing the
nuances of meaning that are surely there.

I think there is a clue that has been overlooked, and that the
oversight stems from our failure to mark a characteristic feature
in the tradition of the Annunciation story, and at the same time
from the manner in which editorial punctuation has forced us to
read the poem. In brief, I shall argue that what seem like words
of Joseph that have strayed into the speech of Mary, and words of
Mary that have strayed into the speech of Joseph, are indeed what
they seem but, so far from being the result of confusion or inter-
polation, are repetitions of each other's speeches, 'quotation',
and should, in modern punctuation, be shown as quotation within
quotation.

The editorial option in allotting lines to Mary and Joseph has
broadly lain between a minority, the followers of Cosijn, who dis-
cerned only three speeches,[2] and whom I shall designate for con-
venience as unifiers, and the majority, the followers of Thorpe,
who have discerned at least five, sometimes more,[3] whom I shall
designate as fragmenters.[4]

The unifiers' case rests on the fact that the poem gives firm
indication of the speaker only at three points: in the opening
line, the words "Eala Joseph min" must introduce a speech by Mary;
in lines 175b-6a "Eala fæmne geong, / mægð Maria" must be spoken by
Joseph; and in lines 195b-6 "Þa seo fæmne onwrah / ryhtgeryno, ond
þus reordade" must introduce, and the speech that follows and

completes the poem must constitute, words of Mary. None question
this last attribution, and, though contention is restricted to
lines 167b-85, I quote the whole poem as far as the last speech of
Mary and, to avoid being tendentious, do so with the punctuation
and capitalization (but not the line-division) of the manuscript.[5]
My translation cannot hope to be impartial but it is fairly literal.

EAla ioseph min iacobes bearn	O my Joseph son of Jacob
165 mæg dauides mæran cyninges .	kinsman of David great king

nu þu freode scealt fæste
    gedælan
	now you are to sever firm
	    affection

alætan lufan mine ic lungre eam	forsake my love I am forthwith
deope gedrefed dome bereafod .	deeply troubled deprived of reputation

Forðon ic worn for þe worde
    hæbbe
	for I have heard for you in
	    words many

170 sidra sorga ond sarcwida .	great sorrows and wounding speeches

hearmes gehyred ond me hosp
    sprecað
	injury and they utter insult
	    to me

tornworda fela ic tearas sceal	many words of anger I must pour forth

geotan geomormod . god eaþe
    mæg
	tears sad in spirit God can
	    easily

gehælan hygesorge heortan
    minre
	heal the mental anguish of my
	    heart

175 afrefran feasceaftne . Eala
    fæmne geong
	comfort a disconsolate (man)
	    O young maiden

mægð maria . hwæt bemurnest ðu	Virgin Mary why do you grieve
cleopast cearigende ne ic culpan in þe	cry out sorrowing blame in you
incan ænigne æfre onfunde .	any offence I never found

womma geworhtra ond þu þa word
    spricest
	from defilement committed and
	    you speak these words

180 swa þu sylfa sie synna
    gehwylcre
	as if you yourself are filled
	    with

firena gefylled ic to fela
    hæbbe
	every sin (every) crime I have
	    received

þæs byrd scypes bealwa
    onfongen .
	too many evils from this child-
	    bearing

hu mæg ic ladigan laþan spræce	how can I refute the hostile talk
oþþe ondsware ænige findan .	or find any answer

185 wraþum towiþere is þæt wide
    cuð
	to my enemies it is widely
	    known

þæt ic of þam torhtan temple
    dryhtnes
	that from the bright temple of
	    the lord

onfeng freolice fæmnan clæne	I received gladly a pure maiden

womma lease ond nu gehwyrfed
    is
	free of defilement and now it is
	    changed

þurh nathwylces me nawþer deag	through some means it profits me neither way
190 secge ne swige gif ic soð	if I speak or keep silent if I

sprece .	tell the truth
þonne sceal dauides dohtor sweltan	then must David's daughter die
stanum astyrfed gen strengre is	stoned to death yet harder is it
þæt ic morþor hele scyle manswara .	that I should conceal the crime if a perjurer is to
laþ leoda gehwam lifgan siþþan	live after hateful to every people
195 fracoð in folcum þa seo fæmne onwrah .	abominable among nations then the maiden revealed

The unifiers' case is that there is no indication that Mary's opening speech has ended before 175b where the exclamation "Eala fæmne geong / mægð maria" signals a new voice. As the close of a speech, a vocative heralded by "eala" would be unprecedented – Cosijn called it "unmöglich" – and it must therefore be the beginning of Joseph's reply. Without any firm indication to the contrary, that reply must continue to line 195 where the next indication of a new speaker appears. On this reading of the lines, Mary's initial speech, continuing to line 175a, mentions her desolation at Joseph's decision to leave her, the painful words she has heard "for þe", the insults she has herself experienced, the tears she must weep, and the consolation God offers to her (emending *feasceaftne* to *feasceafte*, 175a), or to both her and Joseph (retaining *feasceaftne*). Joseph's reply (175b-95a) asks Mary why she laments. He has never found any fault in her; and she speaks as if she were sinful. He has suffered evil from her pregnancy, and asks how he can refute the enemies' hostile words. In the remaining lines, whose attribution to Joseph is undisputed, he claims that she came to him pure and 'now it is changed'. If he speaks, Mary will die; if he keeps silent, a perjurer will live.

Mary's final speech, on which all agree, asserts her innocence, explains the true nature of her pregnancy, and calls on Joseph to abandon his sorrow and thank God for her true, and his assumed, parenthood. Prophecy has been fulfilled.

Although Mary's final speech raises no problems, the same cannot be said of her first, with this speech division. How is it that she is at one moment in distress ("deope gedrefed") and obliged to weep ("Ic tearas sceal / geotan geomormod"), and the next moment confident of God's power to heal her grief ("gehælan hygesorge heortan minre")? No wonder many follow S.B. Hemingway (see note 4), a disciple of the fragmenters, and emend *minre* (174) to *þinre*, thus diverting Mary's concern from herself to Joseph. Failing that too facile solution, we are reduced to expedients such as postulating an ingenuous and confused woman (far removed from the clearheaded one of the final speech), or a wise saint pretending grief in order to put her spouse to the test.

Joseph's words are even harder to interpret. If we are to avoid acknowledging that the poet is confused, we are driven to postulating a confused Joseph, or one whose mood changes in the course of his speech, in order to explain the contradictions it

embraces. How is it that he asserts Mary's blamelessness one moment, interprets her words as a confession of sin and laments his own ills at the next, then questions how he can refute the charges, and ends by acknowledging that, though he accepted her as a pure virgin, the situation is now changed? It cannot be that he has any inkling of the truth, because his final words set out the stark alternatives: Mary's death, or continuing life for a perjurer.

The fragmenters start, therefore, with some advantages. Licensed to distribute the lines according to their suitability to Mary or Joseph with the same freedom that has been employed in dividing poems like *The Wanderer*, some have no difficulty in finding that Mary's opening three and a half lines are followed by Joseph's reply, and that it is Joseph who is deeply troubled and deprived of reputation, who has heard speeches of sorrow and suffered insult, who sheds tears but has confidence that God will heal his distress, and who closes his speech with the cry "Eala fæmne geong, / mægð Maria!". It is then Mary who asks why Joseph is grieving and who says she found no fault in him, though he seems to be confessing to every sin, until Joseph returns to contrast her original purity with the change he has witnessed.

Confidence in the method, however, is not increased when other fragmenters propose quite contrary allocations of lines, sufficiently varied to make it impracticable to argue the merits of each one here. Subjective judgement often determines the choice. One of the recent fragmenters, John Miles Foley, laudably adopts an objective criterion, the presence of verbal echoes, to allocate the verses on a structural principle: lines which echo earlier passages by one speaker must have been uttered by the other. The argument is countered by Earl R. Anderson, who finds it flawed by its own premise, pointing out that the very notable echo of "fyrena gefylled" (181) by "soðe gefylled" (213) has to be consigned under Foley's principle to the same speaker.[6] Anderson feels understandably free to return to the subjective criterion of appropriateness.[7]

The fragmenters' arguments depend wholly on the likelihood or otherwise of a change of speaker occurring without an introductory signal. Yet the introduction of direct speech is always explicit elsewhere in *Advent*. The opening "Eala" of each section signals the first words of a real or supposed gathering of the faithful – here called for convenience 'the congregation' – and within each section either recognized formulas like "þæt word acwæð" (316) or unambiguous statements like "ond þa wisan abead weoroda ealdor" (229) signal the direct speech which follows. The same is true elsewhere in Old English poetry, and of course in dialogue poems,[8] while other medieval English poetry that eschews formulaic introduction resorts to other indicators, notably stanza boundary (for example, ballad and lyric). There is no cause to question the unifiers' case on these grounds.

If we accept that the poem consists of three speeches only, we should turn next to examine its nature. It has always been recognized that a dialogue poem is an interloper in a series of Advent poems otherwise based on antiphonal "O"s, only *Advent IV* (71-103) breaking the pattern by admitting an answer from Mary to the

congregation's petition. Thomas D. Hill, however, has recently
shown that *Advent VII* is less exceptional than was thought through
his discovery of a parallel in a series of antiphons included in
Alcuin's *Libri IV de laude Dei et de confessione orationibusque
sanctorum*, compiled about the year 790.[9] The last of the antiphons
in the series reads:

> O, Joseph, quomodo credidisti quod antea
> expavisti? Quid enim? In ea natum est de
> Spiritu Sancto quem Gabrihel annuncians Christum
> esse venturum.
> (O Joseph, how did you believe what before you feared?
> Why indeed? In her has been begotten of the Holy
> Spirit one whom Gabriel announced to be about to
> come as the Christ.)

Hill concludes that it must be "considered the most probable litur-
gical source" for *Advent VII*, at the same time admitting that the
poem "no doubt owes something" to the quasi-dramatic analogues
cited by Cook,[10] and that the antiphon "is only the inspiration, not
the *vorlage*" of the poem (p.14).

These statements seem to require clarification. In other
sections of *Advent*, the poet (or poets) uses an antiphon as the
inspiration, the starting point, for a poem much longer than the
antiphon itself, but in every case the poem is couched, like the
antiphon, in the form of an address, an outburst of praise, or an
appeal by the congregation to God, to Mary, or to Jerusalem.
Usually overtly, first-person-plural pronouns manifest the situation,
as in lines 25 and 79-82; sometimes the situation is to be under-
stood; and once the congregation are rewarded with a second-person-
plural answer in Mary's reply at line 89f.

Similarly, the "O Joseph" antiphon in the Alcuin text is
addressed in the normal way to Joseph. What is strikingly abnormal
about *Advent VII* is that the congregation play no part in it; no
first-person narrator is implied, even if, for argument's sake, we
allow that listeners may be expected, as fallible humanity, to
identify themselves covertly with erring Joseph. The opening is
unambiguously the beginning of a dialogue between third persons,
Mary and Joseph. If I appear to labour the point, it is because
the inference should be that some such antiphon as the "O Joseph",
which it is undeniably important to have found in the work of an
eighth-century Anglo-Saxon, was the justification for the presence
of *Advent VII* in the series, but that the poem takes the place of
the antiphon, rather than deriving from it. The issue is not
trivial, because Hill uses the presence of a fearful Joseph in the
antiphon ("quod antea expavisti") to support, albeit moderately,
the argument of those fragmenters who allot all of the "grieving
speeches" to Joseph, without allowing for the possibility that
Advent VII is an independent poem and may even have had a prior
existence.

It is not impossible that *Advent VII* is a fragment of a longer
poem, but the question will not be pursued here. What is certain

is that we enter *in medias res* and that the dialogue posits ante-
cedent events, including speech between Mary and Joseph. Two
elements in those 'events' are beyond doubt: Joseph has already
announced that their betrothal is at an end (166-7), and others
have spoken slightingly of one or both of them (169-72, 183-5).
Yet it cannot be supposed that the audience knew no more. If the
audience of *Beowulf* was familiar with the stories alluded to in
digressions, and that of *Deor* with those alluded to in the core of
that poem, even more certainly must the audience of *Advent VII* have
known the story of the Doubting of Mary in one of many possible
apocryphal forms.

Unfortunately we do not know the exact nature of the tradition
that lies behind our poem, although we can be sure that it already
had a long life. All versions appear to stem ultimately from the
probably second-century *Book of James* (or *Protevangelium*), which is
in narrative form but includes reverie and dialogue. The *Book of
James* survives both in the original Greek and translated, either
complete or in fragmentary form, into Latin, Armenian, and Old
Church Slavonic, and into various oriental languages such as
Ethiopic, Sahidic, and Syriac. Adaptations in Greek, Latin,
Armenian, and oriental languages also survive.[11]

Scholarly opinion has differed on the question of whether the
Book of James was available to the West in the medieval period in
Latin translation. The only widely disseminated Latin version at
the time the Exeter Book was transcribed is an adaptation known as
the *Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew*,[12] but *Pseudo-Matthew* omits a number
of details which appear in *Advent VII* and which must stem ultimately
from the Greek *Book of James*.

In the first place *Pseudo-Matthew* has no dialogue between Mary
and Joseph; instead it transmutes the seven virgins who play an
unimportant role in the *Book of James* into five virgins who acquire
names and engage in dialogue with Joseph in Mary's defence (VIII.5
and X.1). Joseph turns to reverie, but his only communication with
Mary is in the form of a confession delivered after an angel has
revealed the truth to him: "Et consolatus est super Maria [sic]
dicens: 'Peccavi, quoniam suspicionem aliquam habui in te'" (XI)
('And he was reassured about Mary, saying: "I have sinned because
I had some suspicion of you"'). This has no parallel in *Advent VII*.

We must return to the Greek *Book of James* both to find dialogue
between them (XIII.1) and to trace the ultimate source for two
passages in *Advent VII*. To one (lines 185b-9a) corresponds, in the
translation of M.R. James, part of Joseph's reverie: "for I received
her out of the temple of the Lord a virgin, and have not kept her
safe [literally 'guarded her']" (XIII.1). To Joseph's next words
(189b-95a) corresponds more generally part of a second reverie: "If
I hide her sin, I shall be found fighting against the law of the
Lord; and if I manifest her unto the children of Israel, I fear lest
that which is in her be the seed of an angel [literally 'be angelic'],
and I shall be found delivering up innocent blood to the judgement
of death" (XIV.1, my gloss). On the other hand, in the *Book of
James* Mary forgets the angel's message at the Annunciation when she
meets Elizabeth (XII.2), grows fearful as her pregnancy becomes

apparent (XII.3), and declares to Joseph her ignorance of its source (XIII.3). It is left to the angel to inform Joseph of the truth (XIV.2). The situation is quite at odds with *Advent VII*, where a confident Mary is fully aware of Gabriel's words and reveals the truth to Joseph in her final speech.

It was long held that no true Latin translation of the *Book of James* was available at the time when the author of *Advent VII* adopted the dialogue form with the details just noted. M.R. **James** threw this assumption into question by his discovery, in two manuscripts of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, of versions of a Latin infancy gospel that combined material from the *Book of James* with extracts from *Pseudo-Matthew* and with yet other material, some closely related to that in the Pseudo-Augustine *Homily* no.195 discussed below.[13] The combination results in a speech of reproach from Joseph that postulates public knowledge such as is presupposed in *Advent VII*, but does not require it to have actually occurred: "et quare uoluisti animam tuam sic infamare *ante filios Israel*?" ('And why were you willing to disgrace yourself thus before the sons of Israel?' §42; italicized words not in the *Book of James*). Joseph groans and cries out to heaven. Mary's reaction and reply are more fully developed than in the *Book of James*, and both are (as in *Advent VII*) afflicted with grief:

> At Maria uidens tanto merore Ioseph et tali eiulatu affectum ipsa quoque miseracione ducta et tota misericordie uisceribus commota super dolore ipsius lacrimisque completa dixit ad eum Noli flere O Ioseph, noli flere neque timere, sed pocius habe fiduciam in domino deo tuo et ne innitaris estimacioni tue. Viuit dominus deus meus qui solus nouit unde sit hoc in utero meo.   (§42)
>
> (But Mary, seeing Joseph affected by such great grief and by such lamentation, was herself also drawn by compassion and moved by utter pity for his sorrow in her heart and filled with tears, and said to him: "Do not weep, Joseph, do not weep or be afraid, but rather have faith in the Lord your God and do not rest upon your own assumptions. The Lord my God lives who alone knows whence is that which is in my womb.")

Joseph then resorts to reverie in words mostly derived from Pseudo-Augustine (see, below) and finally resolves to divorce her (§43). The general similarities to *Advent VII* cannot, however, obviate the fact that the dialogue takes place before, not after, Joseph's dismissal of Mary.

More recently E. de Strycker has printed a second, and quite independent, Latin translation of the *Book of James* found in a manuscript of the early ninth century having connections with Autun and Worms. This version is without the opening chapters and furnishes an incomplete translation of the rest, substituting for parts of the *Book of James* passages from canonical scripture that show characteristics of an insular text of c.800.[14] In some form, therefore, a Latin version of the *Book of James* existed in the early

ninth century in a locality where an insular text of the Gospels
was current.

In both these adaptations the fearfulness of Mary at her
pregnancy and her forgetfulness of its source are replaced by
scriptural accounts. Although they are thus less at variance with
Advent VII than is the original Greek *Book of James*, both adap-
tations differ in that it remains the task of Gabriel, not of Mary
herself, to reveal the truth. That the poet of *Advent VII* could
have had access to a Latin version of the *Book of James*, as well
as *Pseudo-Matthew*, is a possibility; but the uniqueness, in the
case of de Strycker's version, and the lateness, in the case of
M.R. James's, of surviving copies of these Latin versions render
it dubious.

Far closer parallels are afforded by Latin and Greek homilies
which contain passages in dialogue and reverie form amplifying the
account in the *Book of James*. As A.S. Cook sufficiently demon-
strated,[15] they include between them six significant parallels to
Advent VII, of which only the two cited above (p.106) hail ultimately
from the *Book of James*.

The one Latin work among them, a Pseudo-Augustine *Homily on
the Annunciation*, no.195, was circulating in the West already by the
eighth century. It is found in the Homiliaries of Vienne (*c*.650-
750), Fleury (*c*.750), and Alanus of Farfa (744-57), and is appar-
ently as old as the sixth century. It gives Joseph a reverie which
parallels lines 189b-95a far more closely than the *Book of James*:

> Prodo, aut taceo? . . . Si prodidero, adulterium
> quidem non consentio, sed naevum crudelitatis incurro;
> quia secundum librum Moysi lapidandam esse cognosco.
> Si tacuero, malum consentio; et cum adulteris
> portionem meam pono.[16]
> (Shall I denounce her or be silent? . . . If I make
> the disclosure, I dissent from the adultery, but
> incur the reproach of cruelty, since I know that
> according to the law of Moses she is to be stoned.
> If I am silent, I assent to the evil, and take my
> portion with the adulterers.)

But such dialogue as it contains is confined to one exchange
between Mary and Gabriel.

To find fully developed dialogue between Mary and Joseph, one
must turn to the Greek works cited by Cook. They are an authentic
Homily on the Annunciation by Germanus (*c*.634-*c*.733), a Pseudo-
Chrysostom *Homily on the Annunciation*, and a Pseudo-Proclus *Homily
in Praise of St Mary*.[17] Though it is not to be supposed that these
would be directly accessible to the Anglo-Saxon poet, the fact that
only Greek versions of the Doubting of Mary develop a full dialogue
strongly suggests that the dialogue form preserved in *Advent VII*
was mediated to the West through Greek channels. The same infer-
ence may be drawn from the fact that it is only in the Greek
analogues that Mary goes any way towards enlightening Joseph
(Germanus and Pseudo-Chrysostom) or actually succeeds in doing so

(Pseudo-Proclus). The possibility of such channels should not be discounted. Burlin cites a Pseudo-Athanasius *Sermon on the Annunciation* as an analogue to *Advent IX*.[18]

A characteristic feature of two of the three Greek homilies is the expansion of the dialogue by making the participants quote each other's words back, or quote the words of a third party (Gabriel or scripture) in their own justification. In Pseudo-Chrysostom Mary is already using the device in the dialogue at the Annunciation. The angel repeats his words to the sceptical Mary (single quotation marks are mine):[19]

> "I deceive not; he shall be great." The virgin made
> answer: "How great? My betrothed is poor . . . He
> will pay only a half-shekel; yet thou sayest: 'He
> shall be great' . . ." (p.429).

Later she replies to the angel's explanations:

> "A little while ago thou saidst 'He shall be called
> the Son of the Highest'; and now thou callest him
> 'the son of David'" (p.430).

In her dialogue with Joseph Mary puts a hypothetical reply (which of course occurs elsewhere in the New Testament) into his mouth:

> "If I tell thee what the angel told me, thou wilt
> say: 'Thou bearest witness of thyself, and the witness
> is not true'" (p.432).

In all there are nine such passages in the homily, some containing two quotations, and a remarkable tenth which involves quotation within quotation within quotation: Mary in reverie declares:

> "I will shut my lips in silence, and will plead with
> the unseen angel: 'Where now art thou who addressed
> me with "Hail, thou that art highly favoured"? In
> what region doest thou dwell? . . .'" (p.433).

Germanus's *Homily on the Annunciation*, by far the longest of the three, contains two dialogues. That between Mary and the angel is unremarkable in this particular. Gabriel sometimes prefaces the elements of his announcement, which is split up and spread over many speeches, with such introductions as "I tell thee plainly that . . ." (p.437), but the presence of these periphrases does not quite amount to what we are seeking. However, the second dialogue, between Mary and Joseph, exhibits the feature a number of times.

To Joseph's claims, "I received thee undefiled from the house of the Lord, and a stainless maiden I left thee in my house . . ." Mary replies "'Stainless' as thou sayest, didst thou leave me in thy house" (p.441). Mary several times quotes to Joseph the words of Gabriel, in part or whole. After describing Gabriel's visit and failing to convince Joseph, she laments: "and the angel who said unto me 'Hail' is perchance in hiding". This is expanded a little

later by longer quotation from the *Ave Maria* (p.443). There are
five such instances. The dialogue is made to flow without explan-
ation into another which strictly belongs after Joseph himself has
been visited by Gabriel, and here Joseph tells her: "Perchance it
was an angel who appeared to me in sleep and said to me: 'Joseph,
thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife . . .'",
to which Mary responds: "Perchance, O my lord, he was the very one
who addressed me with 'Hail' . . ." Their dialogue continues with
Joseph quoting the Messianic prophecy of Zechariah ix 9 and Mary
that of Numbers xxiv 17 (pp.445-6).

My purpose in drawing attention to this feature of the Greek
homiletic versions of the Doubting of Mary is to ask whether the
same device is not present in *Advent VII*, masked by the unusual
brevity of the poem. As I studied it, and before I had noticed the
presence of the feature in the analogues cited by Cook, it had
already occurred to me that a possible explanation of the abrupt
transition from "ond þu þa word spricest / swa þu sylfa sie synna
gehwylcre / firena gefylled" to "Ic to fela hæbbe / þæs byrdscypes
bealwa onfongen! / Hu mæg ic ladigan laþan spræce, / oþþe ondsware
ænige findan / wraþum towiþere?" (179b-85a) was that these sentences
were not uttered by different voices, "þa word" looking backward
to the speech before, but that the phrase looked forward to, and
introduced, the following words as a quotation: "and you utter
these words as if you yourself are filled with every sin, every
crime: 'I have received too many evils from this childbearing. How
can I refute hostile talk or find any answer to my enemies?'" If
that is so, all three sentences belong in the speech of Joseph,
though the last two are his repetition of earlier words of Mary.
Germanus puts into the mouth of Mary the words: "the bearing of my
child accuses me" (p.443), confirming the attribution of one
sentence, but the other seems to have no parallel in the analogues.

It hardly needs saying that formulaic half-lines of the type
'þæt word acwæð / gecwæð' and 'þa word acwæð' are regularly used in
Old English poetry to introduce direct speech (as at *Advent* 315-6)
and, though *sprecan* is more commonly used without a direct object
or with dative *wordum*, "ongan þa word sprecan" (*Dream of the Rood*,
27) affords one parallel out of several. As here in *Advent VII*,
such formulas are often separated by phrases, clauses (*Advent* 401-
2), or several lines (*Maldon* 168-72) from the speech they introduce.

There are, it seems to me, at least two more instances of
unnoticed quotation in the poem but, before they are examined, it
is well to acknowledge that those which occur in *Advent VII* differ
in one important respect from the instances in the analogues: the
quoted words are not, in fact, recorded earlier in the poem. The
audience were so familiar with the apocryphal tradition of the
Doubting of Mary that the earlier exchanges between Mary and Joseph
could be omitted.[20] As in *Wulf and Eadwacer*, as in the later lyric
manner, we enter into a situation where not only has much taken
place but much has also been said (see above p.106).

The lines immediately before those just examined afford the
second instance. Joseph asks Mary: "Hwæt bemurnest ðu, / cleopast
cearigende 'Ne ic culpan in þe, / incan ænigne, æfre onfunde / womma

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geworhtra'?" ("Why do you grieve, cry out sorrowing 'I never found fault in you, any offence from defilement committed [by you upon me]'?").[21] In Germanus Joseph demands: "Reveal, O Mary, the plotter against my house; bring into the midst the libertine . . .", to which she replies "Thou art righteous and blameless. Perchance God will reveal to thee what shall befall me . . ." (pp.441-2). The suspicion she here counters, that Joseph himself had anticipated the marriage-bed, is a feature of the *Book of James* and *Pseudo-Matthew*. In *Advent VII*, too, Mary must be supposed to have exonerated Joseph immediately before his dismissal of her - which is precisely where the words of exoneration appear in Germanus.

A third instance occurs in the opening speech of Mary, where it is masked by modern punctuation, as in the other instances, and also by unusual spelling. No scholar, with the exception of Cosijn and rare converts to his view, has doubted that the speaker of lines 167-71, whether Joseph or Mary, refers in some way to his or her partner by the words "for þe":

> forðon ic worn for þe worde hæbbe
> sidra sorga ond sarcwida,
> hearmes gehyred . . .

Yet the phrase is untidy, as the variety of renderings offered by translators exposes (e.g. Gollancz "because of thee"; Campbell "for you"; Burlin "on your account"); and "worde" which follows stands so awkwardly placed ("in words"?) that it is frequently emended to a genitive plural "worda" dependent on "worn". In place of "for þe" Cosijn proposed reading "for þy", without explaining how it was to be taken and, though the emendation is strictly speaking unnecessary, it holds the key. The spelling *þe* occurs frequently in late Old English manuscripts in place of the earlier *þy*, *þi*, for the instrumental singular neuter of the pronoun *sē*.[22] It is true that *þē* is normally written only in the position before a comparative, as in *þē mā* or in the compound conjunction *þē lǣs þe*, but it occurs at least once independently in *Beowulf* 2638; and the generally accepted explanation for the Exeter Book scribe's transcribing *þy*, an instrumental singular neuter, in *Juliana* 467 in place of the expected relative pronoun *þe* is that he was familiar with the spelling *þe* as an instrumental in his exemplar (perhaps non-West-Saxon in such a context), and mistakenly normalized it into West-Saxon *þy*.[23] In *Advent VII* he interpreted *þe* as the personal pronoun *þē* and preserved the unusual form. The phrase "for þe worde" means 'as a result of those words [of yours]',[24] and it introduces the quoted words of Joseph in lines 172b-3a, "Ic tearas sceal / geotan geomormod". The whole opening speech of Mary may be rendered:

> "O my Joseph, son of Jacob, kinsman of David the famous king, now that you are to sever firm affection [between us], forsake my love, I am forthwith deeply troubled, deprived of reputation; for I have heard a multitude of great sorrows and wounding speeches, of injury, as a result of those words [of yours] (and

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> ·they utter insults to me, many words of anger):
> 'I must pour forth tears, sad in spirit'. God
> can easily heal the anguish of my heart, comfort
> a disconsolate man."

That the words "Ic lungre eam / deope gedrefed, dome bereafod" are Mary's, as the unifiers think, is supported by the attribution to Mary in Germanus of the cry "The day of tribulation hath got hold upon me, and the reproach of suspicion is come upon me" (p.443). That it is Mary who suffers insults - "ond me hosp sprecað, / tornworda fela" - appears from the speech of Joseph in Germanus: "thou art become a byword to the children of Israel" (p.442). That Joseph expects to lament also and was the author of the words Mary attributes to him, "Ic tearas sceal / geotan geomormod", appears from the Joseph of Germanus who says "How shall I not be struck with horror and smite my face . . . ?", evoking from Mary the reply "Believe the prophets of God, and consume thyself not thus in excessive grief . . ." (p.444). Thus we must add to the situation antecedent to the opening of the poem a speech by Joseph expressing his expectation that he will have cause to weep.

If it is accepted that Mary's and Joseph's speeches contain hitherto unnoticed quotation, it must be acknowledged that they are indirect in their replies to each other. That is not strange. Indirection is already characteristic of the poem. The harsh reality of the act of divorce has been transmuted into 'sever firm affection, forsake my love'; the accusation of bearing an extra-marital child is implied but finds actual expression only obliquely as 'now it is changed through some means'; and the supposed lover of Mary is concealed euphemistically in the word 'perjurer' - if indeed the word refers to the 'lover' at all and not to Joseph as conniver in the situation.

Indirection is no stranger to the tradition of the Doubting of Mary. In Pseudo-Chrysostom Mary replies to Joseph's demand that she should reveal the father of her child: "If thou seekest his father, thou shalt never find him; but if thou deemest him an orphan, thou art mistaken" (p.432). In Germanus, Joseph's threat:

> "Beware, O Mary, of the judgment-seat, the austere
> council, the undeceivable tribunal of the Jewish
> synagogue. Tell me plainly; thou wilt not conceal
> from me what is to happen."

is countered by Mary with:

> "Beware, O Joseph, of the judgment-seat, and the
> immutable decision of the future, before which
> tremble the angels who have never sinned; but mind
> not an earthly king or an earthly court" (p.441).

The question from Joseph which follows is evaded similarly.

The whole dialogue in Pseudo-Proclus is a tissue of evasions, neither speaker answering the other's questions or charges directly;

Mary and Joseph pursue their own lines of thought until Joseph exclaims with understandable exasperation: "Thinkest thou by this prodigality of words to deceive the discretion of my hoary head?" (p.434).

In the same way, there is indirection in *Advent VII* both in the words Mary and Joseph choose to repeat and in the answers they give each other. The words of Joseph that Mary quotes, "I must pour forth tears, sad in spirit", refer only to the grief he felt at the discovery of her pregnancy, not to the nub of the case, the public accusation which accompanied the expression of grief (we have no means of telling whether the tradition familiar to the poet pictured this as taking place before the Council of Priests, as in the *Book of James* (XV.2-XVI.1), or more publicly still, as in *Pseudo-Matthew* (XII.2)). In his reply Joseph ignores Mary's hint that an easy remedy is at hand for his and her distress, which she is to reveal in her final speech, and addresses her, paradoxically at first sight, as "young maiden, Virgin Mary". The words (ironically true) may be interpreted as sarcasm from Joseph's point of view.[25]

In a similarly indirect manner – in this case by question – Joseph indicates that her earlier words, which he quotes, "I never found fault in you, any offence from defilement committed [by you upon me]", while exonerating him from implication in her pregnancy, indirectly accuse her; for, if Joseph committed no defilement, another must have done. Her earlier despondent reverie: "I have received too many evils from this child-bearing. How can I refute hostile talk or find any answer to my enemies?", he twists against her, treating the words as an acknowledgment that she is "filled with every sin". The acknowledgment leaves him in a dilemma, for he is a just man, as central Christian tradition ("iustus", Matthew i 19) affirmed, and he resorts to reverie, as the use of the third person indicates ("David's daughter", "a perjurer"). Mary, over-hearing him, reveals the true mystery ("ryhtgeryno" 196), and indirection gives way to plain truth.

Techniques of punctuation in Old English texts made great strides at the end of the tenth century,[26] but the advance was not applied to poetic texts, the punctuation of which is rarely of help to the editor, except to indicate the beginnings and ends of com-plete poems or their parts. The refinement we call quotation marks was not generally adopted until many centuries later, and the practice of distinguishing quotation within quotation later still. Nevertheless passages of quotation within quotation not infrequently faced the Anglo-Saxon reader or reciter, for instance in the Bible, whether Latin or Old English. In Genesis xxiv 14 Abraham's servant prays to the Lord:

> Nu þam wimmen þe ic secge sete hwon þin æscen . þæt ic
> mahge drincan . and heo me anwirdan þus . eac ic sylle
> drincan þinum olfendum . nu seo his þe þu geearcodest
> yssaace þinum þeowan .[27]
> ("Now the woman to whom I shall say 'Set down a little
> your vessel, that I may drink', and she answers me
> thus, 'I will also give your camels drink', she it is

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whom you prepared for Isaac your servant.")

They occur even in *Advent* (134-5). It would be unwarrantable to suppose that a reciter could not easily indicate a change of speaker by methods such as a change of tone. We need not therefore be surprised by the appearance of quotation within quotation in *Advent VII*.

If the argument is acceptable, the poet or poets who used the indirection of typology in the other Advent poetry turned in *Advent VII* to other forms of indirection to produce a work of considerable complexity. I hope that the Monarch of Sources and Disseminations to whom this volume is dedicated, gazing from the walls of his *burh* at this guerilla raid into the territory where he reigns supreme, will accept the rash incursion as a token of admiration and an acknowledgment of a mighty debt.

1   I adopt the title *Advent* from R.B. Burlin's edition, *The Old English
    Advent*, Yale Studies in English 168 (New Haven and London, 1968), where
    the poem is section VII; in quotation and reference, unless otherwise
    indicated, I use the more accessible edition in *The Exeter Book*, ed.
    G.P. Krapp and E. van K. Dobbie, ASPR 3 (New York, 1936), where the poem
    bears the title *Christ I*.

2   P.J. Cosijn, "Anglosaxonica IV", *Beiträge zur Geschichte der Deutschen
    Sprache und Literatur* 23 (1898) p.109. So J. Zupitza and J. Schipper,
    Alt- und mittelenglisches Übungsbuch (Vienna and Leipzig, 9th ed., 1910,
    and evidently in some earlier and later editions which I have not seen);
    also Burlin, *The Old English Advent*. The unifiers' case is supported by
    Mary Clayton, "The Cult of the Virgin Mary in Anglo-Saxon England, with
    Special Reference to the Vernacular Texts", D.Phil. thesis (Oxford, 1983)
    pp.179-83. My own study was already in typescript when Professor J.E.
    Cross kindly drew my attention to Dr Clayton's important work. Although,
    as I am glad to find, our arguments often follow similar lines, her
    interpretation differs from mine. Where I am indebted to her for infor-
    mation or support, this is indicated in the footnotes.

3   *Codex Exoniensis*, ed. Benjamin Thorpe (London, 1842); C.W.M. Grein,
    Bibliothek der angelsächsischen Poesie (Göttingen, 1857-8), and the
    revision by B. Assmann, 3.Band (Leipzig, 1898); *Cynewulf's Christ*, ed.
    I. Gollancz (London, 1892); *The Exeter Book I*, ed. I. Gollancz, EETS OS
    104 (London, 1895); *The Christ of Cynewulf*, ed. A.S. Cook (Boston, 1900);
    Krapp and Dobbie (see note 1); *The Advent Lyrics of the Exeter Book*, ed.
    J.J. Campbell (New Jersey, 1959).

4   Among fragmenters may be included those who have continued the debate on
    the issue: S.B. Hemingway, "Cynewulf's *Christ*, ll.173b-176a", *MLN* 22
    (1907) pp.62-3; N.D. Isaacs, "Who Says What in 'Advent Lyric VII'?",
    Papers in Language and Literature 2 (1966) pp.162-6; E.A. Anderson, "Mary's
    Role as *Eiron* in *Christ I*", *JEGP* 70 (1971) pp.230-40; J.M. Foley, "*Christ
    164-213*: A Structural Approach to the Speech Boundaries in 'Advent Lyric
    VII'", *Neophilologus* 59 (1975) pp.114-18; A.L. Klinck, "'Genesis B' and
    'Christ I'", *Neophilologus* 63 (1979) pp.602-7; and E.A. Anderson, "The
    Speech Boundaries in Advent Lyric VII", *Neophilologus* 63 (1979) pp.611-18,
    where may be found a convenient summary of various proposed allocations of
    the lines on pp.612-13.

5   Based on the facsimile, *The Exeter Book of Old English Poetry*, introd.
    R.W. Chambers, M. Förster, and R. Flower (London, 1933) fol.10^{a}ff.
    Manuscript word-division is ignored.

6   See note 4.

7   For Foley's and Anderson's views see note 4.

8   E.g. *Soul and Body I*. In *Solomon and Saturn* the signals "Saturnus cwæð",
    "Solomon cwæð" are extrametrical, as is apparently the parenthetic "cweþ
    he" in *Finnsburh* 24, but the important point is that they are there.

9   Thomas D. Hill, "A Liturgical Source for *Christ I* 164-213 (Advent Lyric
    VII)", *MÆ* 46 (1977) pp.12-15. An antiphonal source for *Advent X* was pointed
    out by Simon Tugwell, O.P., in "Advent Lyrics 348-77 (Lyric No.X)", *MÆ* 39
    (1970) p.34.

[10] A.S. Cook, "A Remote Analogue to the Miracle Play", *JEGP* 4 (1902) pp.421-51. It will be apparent that I am deeply indebted to Cook's discoveries, and I use his translations, to which the page references relate, except where the argument requires a closer translation.

[11] See E. de Strycker, *La forme la plus ancienne du Protévangile de Jacques* (Brussels, 1961) and "Une ancienne version latine du Protévangile de Jacques", *Analecta Bollandiana* 83 (1965) pp.365-410. I am greatly indebted to Professor J.E. Cross for calling my attention to the latter. I quote from the edition of Émile Amann, *Le Protévangile de Jacques et ses Remaniements Latins* (Paris, 1910). Translation by M.R. James, *The Apocryphal New Testament* (Oxford, 1924) pp.38-49.

[12] Printed by Amann, p.272ff. English translation in summary form in M.R. James, *The Apocryphal New Testament*, pp.73-9; French translation in Amann.

[13] M.R. James, *Latin Infancy Gospels* (Cambridge, 1927). The fuller version is found in Hereford Cathedral Library MS O.3.9, thirteenth century, of unknown provenance (James's attribution to the Grey Friars of Hereford is rejected by N.R. Ker, *Medieval Libraries of Great Britain* (London, 2nd. ed. 1964) p.100); the other, briefer version is in British Library MS Arundel 404, fourteenth century, of Mainz provenance.

[14] De Strycker, "Une ancienne version latine". For the date and provenance of the manuscript, l'École de Médecine de Montpellier MS 55, see pp.368-9.

[15] Cook, "A Remote Analogue", p.426.

[16] PL 39.2109. See also Cook, "A Remote Analogue", p.447. On the date and circulation of this homily, see H. Barré, "Sermons marials inédits 'in Natali Domini'", *Marianum* 25 (1963) p.61. I owe this reference to Mary Clayton, "The Cult of the Virgin Mary", p.200.

[17] Germanus, PG 98.320-40; Pseudo-Chrysostom, PG 60.755-60; Pseudo-Proclus, PG 65.736-7.

[18] Burlin, pp.144-5. He notes also that Alcuin incorporated an authentic Chrysostom homily into his exposition of Hebrews (p.102). For the general question of patristic sources, see J.D.A. Ogilvy, *Books known to the English, 597-1066* (Cambridge, Mass., 1967). Mary Clayton, "The Cult of the Virgin Mary", p.177, suggests that the possibility of direct Greek influence should not be ruled out.

[19] My translation reproduces the Greek more closely than Cook's.

[20] This explanation seems preferable to the alternative hypothesis that the poem is a fragment.

[21] For *clipian* introducing direct speech, see for example *Juliana* 618. *Bemurnan*, a fairly rare word, is mostly transitive, but intransitive in *Genesis* 2311.

[22] A. Campbell, *Old English Grammar* (Oxford, 1959) §709; e.g. in many manuscripts of Ælfric and Wulfstan.

[23] *Juliana*, ed. Rosemary Woolf (London, 1955) p.42.

24 The metrical status of the resulting a and b verses remains uncertain.
    If the line is divided "forðon ic worn   for þe worde hæbbe", the a verse
    would seem to be of the rare 'light' type, B3 in Sievers, or perhaps that
    designated e by A.J. Bliss in *The Metre of Beowulf* (Oxford, 1958; rev. ed.
    1967) §73 (but cf. *Christ* 1202). If "forðon ic worn for þe" constitutes
    the a verse, we have a demonstrative pronoun in the lift (cf. *Advent* 39,
    Resignation 70), which the sense demands, and an unusual position of the
    caesura; but a prepositional phrase is awkwardly divided elsewhere in
    Advent, notably at 341, and in *Ascension* (*Christ II*) 481.

25 Intended sarcasm that history turns into irony is also present in the
    tradition of *Pseudo-Matthew*. When Mary draws the lot which allows her
    to weave the coveted purple cloth for the veil of the temple, her fellow-
    maidens begin to call her Queen of Virgins - "quasi in *fatigationis sermone
    coeperunt eam reginam virginum appellare*" (VIII.5, my italics). For the
    sense "sarcasm" for *fatigatio*, see Amann, p.311, note 5.

26 As evidenced by manuscripts of Ælfric and Wulfstan. For Ælfric, see my
    "Punctuation in Some Manuscripts of Ælfric", *RES* 10 (1959) and P. Clemoes,
    *Liturgical Influence on Punctuation in Late Old English and Early Middle
    English Manuscripts* (Cambridge, 1952); for Wulfstan, see A. McIntosh,
    "Wulfstan's Prose", *PBA* 34 (1949).

27 *The Old English Version of the Heptateuch . . . ,* ed. S.J. Crawford, EETS
    OS 160 (London, 1922; repr. 1969) p.148. The text and punctuation are
    those of the twelfth-century MS Cambridge Univ. Lib. Ii.1.33. See also,
    for instance, Gen. xx 4-5; xxiv 7; John x 36; xii 27; xvi 5, 17-18, 19.