

Chapter 5

Glosses

Some of the most powerful, but also complex, evidence for the meanings of *ælf* derives from its use in glossing Latin words, since the implicit equivalence between an Old English gloss and its lemma facilitates inferences about the gloss's meanings. Although most core research on Old English glosses remains available only in unpublished doctoral dissertations, these afford a firm foundation for the glosses' analysis and interpretation. This is only useful, however, if certain methodological desiderata are met.

1. Although glosses were intended as equivalents to their lemmata, this does not mean that the reverse is true: statements like 'Latin equivalents for the term *wælcyrge* ... found in Anglo-Saxon glosses' are misguided.¹⁰⁹ Nor do glosses generally attempt to 'define' their lemmata (Kiessling 1967–68, 194; Neville 1999, 105, 106): they gloss them.

2. The meaning of a gloss is not the only variable, since the glossator's interpretation of the lemma cannot be taken for granted. A lemma's source must be discovered, so that its contextual meaning when the gloss originated can be inferred. Fortunately, most sources have now been traced; but glossators and their copyists also mis- or reinterpreted lemmata.

3. The provenance of glosses must be established—their textual history and time and place of origin. This is especially difficult with glosses and glossaries, which redactors could freely excerpt, conflate or re-order, but no less important than usual: copies of a text must not be mistaken for independent evidence. Such information is rarely considered; thus, for example, numerous words in the *Thesaurus of Old English* flagged with ^g, indicating that they occur only as glosses, ought also to be marked with ^o, indicating that 'the word form is very infrequent' (Roberts–Kay–Grundy 2000, xxi), since the attestations are merely different copies of the same text. Of course, where a redactor maintained a gloss while revising his exemplar(s), he may affirm its continued validity, but corrupt and meaningless glosses were repeated too often for us to assume this as a rule.

4. The occurrences of *ælf* in the glossaries are often in nonce-compounds, coined specifically as gloss-words, and may relate only indirectly to *ælf*'s everyday use. Such gloss-words afford quite different evidence from those reflecting everyday usage, and must as far as possible be identified. Odenstedt argued that, in Anglo-Saxon England, 'a woman could be a musician (*glīwmāden*), such as a fiddler (*fiðelestre*) or a harp player

¹⁰⁹ Damico 1984, 44; cf. Kiessling 1967–68, 194; 1977, 17; Morris 1991, 25; Neville 1999, 106.

(*hearpestre*); she could be a singer (*sangestre*), an actress (*scernicge*), a dancer (*hlēapestre*, *hoppestre*, *sealticge*) or even an athlete (*plegestre*)' (1995, 134–35). His dataset then led Norberg to infer that between the Old English period and the late fourteenth century, the number of jobs available to women in English society diminished (1996). But most of Odenstedt's Old English words are gloss-words.

5. Finally, one must also ask which Old English words glossators chose *not* to use to gloss a given lemma, and why. A gloss chosen out of desperation for an even vaguely appropriate vernacular term offers very different evidence from one selected as the ideal choice from a range of possibilities. Addressing this issue also affords leverage on questions of how male *ælf*e related other supernatural beings, particularly females: the two main textual traditions of *ælf*-glosses use feminised forms of *ælf* to gloss lemmata denoting nymphs, not only suggesting an important lexical gap concerning otherworldly females in Old English, but providing our earliest evidence for a semantic development of *ælf* which was to manifest itself prominently in Middle English.

The major concern of the present chapter, then, is to fulfil these desiderata to gain new insights into the meanings of *ælf*. *Ælf* appears in five textual traditions, whose evidence is heterogeneous. We have a unique simplex, 'aelfae' in its manuscript form, not actually a gloss but included here because it appears as an equivalent to the Latin name *Satanas*, which attests to demonisation of *ælf*. There are the compounds *landælf*e and *dunælf*a, glosses on words for nymphs and Muses, which pick up *ælf*'s positive connotations. Likewise, there is a group using the compound *ælfen* also to gloss words for nymphs: this provides an important counterpoint to *landælf*e and *dunælf*a, its similarities and differences in approach providing important insights into the changing gendering of *ælf*e. Proceeding to adjectives, *ylfig* attests to the power of *ælf*e to cause prophetic speech, providing a perspective on their mind-altering powers quite different from those of the medical texts. *Ylfig* is itself illuminated, albeit equivocally, by the plant-name *ælfbone*, and as our main evidence for the meaning of this word is also from a gloss-like context and is thematically relevant to *ylfig*, it is considered here. Finally, the adjective *ælfisc* attests in different ways to *ælf*e's associations with delusions. Each group but the last is studied in three stages: *texts*, presenting the sources of the lemmata and the texts of the glosses; *origins*; and *evidence for the semantics of 'ælf'*. This structure is not appropriate for *ælfisc*, because although first attested as an Old English gloss, it is better-attested in Middle English texts.

1. Demonisation: *ælf* and *Satanas*

1.1 Texts

Ælf occurs as a simplex in the texts studied here only once, in BL Royal 2 A. XX (the Royal Prayerbook), folio 45v, in an ‘oratio’ (‘prayer’). The Royal Prayerbook is one of four early Anglo-Saxon prayerbooks, each with some textual interrelationships, containing mainly Latin prayers; its general theme ‘would appear to be Christ as the healer of mankind’, and its concern with physical healing is sufficient to suggest that it ‘might have functioned as a devotional, and practical, tool for a physician’.¹¹⁰ The place of *ælf* in the text may, then, reflect both spiritual and bodily concerns. The manuscript seems to have been made in the last quarter of the eighth century or perhaps the first quarter of the ninth in West Mercia, probably in or near Worcester.¹¹¹

The prayer primarily invokes the power of the rood to guard the body ‘ab omnibus insidiis inimici’ (‘against all the wiles of the Enemy’), proceeding to a Greek liturgical passage, and concluding with an exorcism including the statement ‘adiuro te satanae diabolus aelfae . per deum uiuum ac uerum . et per trementem diem iudicii ut refugiat ab homine illo...’ (‘I conjure you, devil of Satan, of (an) *ælf/Ælf*, through the living and true God and through the quaking day of judgement, that he is put to flight from that person...’; ed. Kuypers 1902, 221; collated with Doane 1994b, no. 283). The ending of *aelfae* cannot plausibly derive from Old English, so it must represent a Latinisation inspired by the genitive singular ending of *Satanae*, with which *aelfae* must be in apposition. This being so, *-ae* need not be considered a feminisation, despite its feminine association in Latin. As written, *aelfae* here is integral to the text and unrelated to the tenth-century Old English glosses in the manuscript (on which see Crowley 2000, esp. 148–51). The prayer includes no other vernacular words, and Satan’s name was surely too well-known in Anglo-Saxon culture to require glossing. *Aelfae* is not a gloss, therefore, but the evidence for its meaning is its equivalence with *Satanae*.

1.2 Origins

The prayer is not known elsewhere. The Greek transliteration seems to show knowledge of the contemporary values of Greek letters (Howlett 1998, 60, cf. 65), which it shares

¹¹⁰ Brown 2001, 56, 57; cf. Sims-Williams 1990, 275–327; see Doane 1994b, 52–59 [no. 283] for contents.

¹¹¹ On date see Crowley 2000, 123 n. 2; cf. Ker 1957, 317–18 [no. 248]; on place Sims-Williams 1990, 279–80; cf. Brown 2001, 51–53.

with the Canterbury biblical commentaries deriving from the teaching of Theodore and Hadrian in the seventh century (Lapidge 1996 [1988], 130–33), and Lapidge seems to have considered some connection with Archbishop Theodore reasonably likely (1996 [1986], 145 n. 29; cf. Atkinson 1981, 15–17). But the prayer as a whole could have been composed as late as the manuscript itself. The spelling <ae> for later <æ> in *aelf-* is unusual for the late eighth century but not impossibly so (Hogg 1992a, §2.12 n. 1).

1.3 Evidence for the semantics of *aelf*

It is not immediately clear whether *aelfae* is intended as a vernacular synonym for *Satanae* ('I conjure you, devil of Satan, of Ælf/the *aelf*') or whether it is a common noun in apposition ('I conjure you, devil of Satan, of an *aelf*'). If the latter translation is best, it implies that not only Satan, but *aelfe*, were conceived to rule over *diaboli*, and correlative evidence could be argued to exist in the Old English medical texts (see ch. 6). However, *aelf*, denoting one of a class of beings, would be an incongruous counterpart to the personal name *Satanas* if so. This could in turn be a consequence of the fact that the Devil had no direct counterpart in traditional Anglo-Saxon culture, so that there was no really appropriate Old English word available to the composer of the prayer. But it seems more likely that *aelfae* was intended as a synonym for *Satanae*, which affords another piece of evidence suggesting that *aelf* (despite its feminine inflection in the prayer) denoted male beings. As Howlett pointed out, the sentence in question contains words from each of the *tres linguae sacrae*, *adiuro te* being Latin, *Satanae* being Hebrew, and *diabulus* Greek (1998, 60). The presence of the vernacular *aelfae* here would be a fitting complement to these, helping to ensure that the exorcism covered all possible threats. More speculatively, its use in the Royal Prayerbook would fit well with the hypothesis that Old Norse *álfr* could be an epithet for Freyr, as I have argued above (§2:3.1). It is possible to argue both that the Anglo-Saxon figure Ing was both a counterpart of Freyr and pre-eminent in Anglo-Saxon paganism (see §9:2.1). In this case we would see in the injunction 'Adiuro te satanae diabulus aelfae' the equation of the pre-eminent demonic foe of the Christian with the pre-eminent deity of Anglo-Saxon paganism.

It is also interesting that *os* was not used in the prayer. *Os* would, if the semantics of Old English *os* and *aelf* were the same as those of *ás* and *álfr* in the Eddas, have been the more obvious vernacular counterpart for *Satanas* because it tended to denote more prominent, individualised deities. Conceivably, *os* still retained enough of its positive associations around 800 to resist demonisation, but this seems unlikely in the present context; moreover, its absence from the Royal Prayerbook is consistent with its rare

The First Cleopatra Glossary (an A-order glossary, in which the material of *glossae collectae* and other sources has been alphabeticised by the first letter of each lemma, on ff. 5–75 of the same manuscript) repeats the Third with the entry ‘Castalidas nymphas : dúnælfæ’ (ed. Rusche 1996, 225 [C460]). However, it and the other related texts omit *Ruricolas musas: landælfæ*. This gloss could equally well have been dropped from the rest of the textual tradition, or added to the Third Cleopatra Glossary. But there is a good chance that *dunælfæ* at least is as old as the Third Cleopatra Glossary’s oldest stratum.

The other texts attesting to *dunælfæ* are likewise close relatives of the Third Cleopatra Glossary. The *Enchiridion* of Byrhtferth of Ramsey, probably composed around 1010–12 (Lapidge–Baker 1995, xxvi–xxviii), includes an invocation including the declaration ‘Ic hate gewitan fram me þa m<e>remen, þe synt si<ren>e geciged, & eac þa Castalidas nymphas (þæt synt dunylfa), þa þe wunedon on Elicona þære dune’ (‘I command to go from me the sea-people who are called Sirens, and also the *Castalidae nymphae* (which are, *dunælfæ*), those who dwelt on the mountain Helicon’; ed. Lapidge–Baker 1995, 134). Byrhtferth probably modeled this invocation on the same text of the *Carmen de virginitate* as the Third Cleopatra Glossary used for its *glossae collectae* (Lapidge–Baker 1995, lxxxiii–lxxxiv, 319; Rusche 1996, 99–104; Gretsch 1999, 139–41).

BL Harley 3376, the now-fragmentary ‘Harley Glossary’, is more advanced than Cleopatra, being alphabeticised by the first three letters of each word. Although, as Cooke has emphasised, the glossary needs re-editing (1994, 22–23, 231–34), her own analysis has established a new foundation for its study (1994, summarised in 1997). It is from Western England, and specifically, Cooke argued, from Worcester Cathedral. Earlier commentators dated the manuscript to the early eleventh century, but Cooke has made a convincing, though not conclusive, case for composition in the second half of that century (1994, 27–34; Ker 1957, 312–13 [no. 240]). The lemmata and many glosses in the Harley Glossary—particularly Latin ones—were written in continuous lines, but other glosses—particularly Old English ones—were included in smaller letters interlinearly (Cooke 1994, 24–25, 27, 34–38). Harley shows alterations to and careful conflation of various sources, including texts related to the Cleopatra Glossaries (Cooke 1994, 134–35, 144–45, 151). It seems likely enough that this editing was undertaken by the scribe of Harley 3376 itself, and for convenience of expression I assume this throughout the present study. With a characteristic development of his source material, the Harley Glossator gave ‘þa manfullan gydena . † dunelfa .’ (‘those sinful goddesses, or mountain-ælfæ’; ed. Oliphant 1966, 59 [C475]; collated with MS) for *Castalidas nymphas*, the whole gloss written above the lemma on folio 17r.

Finally, the Antwerp-London Glossary (Antwerp, Plantin-Moretus Museum M 16.2 and its *disiectum membrum* BL Additional 32,246), containing various glossaries written

in two hands in the margins of the manuscript's main Latin texts, gives 'Castalidas . dunelfen' on folio 21r of the London portion (ed. Kindschi 1955, 246; collated with MS). This entry is part of the large Latin-English class glossary (organised by subject), based either on Ælfric's class-glossary or on some shared source, written by the second hand and called *article 6* by Porter and *d* by Ker (see Porter 1999, esp. 181–88; Lazzari 2003; Ker 1957, 1–3 [no. 2]). The glossaries seem to have been written in at Abingdon in the earlier part of the eleventh century (Porter 1996, 163–64). Porter did not note Aldhelm glosses in particular as a source for the manuscript, but as the same scribe seems to have worked on the extraordinary collection of Aldhelm glosses found in Brussels, Royal Library 1650 (on which see below, §5:4.1), their presence is no surprise (though that manuscript does not itself include the gloss on *castalidas nymphas*). The entries on the *nymphae* occur in a miscellany at the end of the glossary, in a group of words for prophets, workers of magic and otherworldly beings. The dropping of *nymphas* from 'Castalidas . dunelfen' is presumably because it concludes a list of other types of *nymphae* derived from Isidore glosses (see §5:3.1), making the inclusion of the word *nymphae* itself superfluous. The innovative ending of *-elfen* is discussed below regarding this other tradition (§5:3.2–3).

The influential character of this Aldhelm-gloss in Anglo-Latin is suggested by a remedy in a text in the mid-tenth-century medical manuscript BL. Royal 12 D.xvii known as Leechbook III (see further §6:2.2). In a series of remedies for diseases mostly denoted by *ælf*-compounds, one remedy advertising itself to be against 'ælfsgoða' (probably internal pains caused by *ælf*) contains a Latin exorcism against 'Omnem Impetuum castalidum' ('all of the attacks of *castalides*'; ed. Wright 1955, f. 124v). *Castalides* seems here to denote the supernatural forces which the remedy seeks to counteract and which it denotes primarily with *ælfsgoða*. This usage surely shows that the adjective *castalis*, which was partly glossed by a compound in *-ælf*, was turned into a noun and used inversely as a Latin translation of *ælf*. The tradition of glosses first attested in Cotton Cleopatra A.iii was itself a shaping force in Anglo-Latin usage by, at the latest, the mid-tenth century. The fact that the adjective *Castalidae* was chosen as the basis for the Latinisation of *ælf* and not the noun *nymphae* may be evidence that *nympha* was considered an inappropriate equivalent for *ælf*, presumably because it denoted females.

2.2 Origins

As Herren has argued, 'the last quarter of the seventh century and, perhaps, the opening decades of the eighth might be looked upon as a sort of mini-renaissance of classical scholarship in Anglo-Saxon England' (1998, at 102), and both Aldhelm and his glossators

doubtless understood the Classical meanings of *nympha* and *musa*: that they denoted youthful, female, non-monstrous minor goddesses whose beauty was liable to attract the sexual attentions of gods and men. Isidore's *Etymologiae*, of which they made extensive use, covered *nymphae*;¹¹² Aldhelm's invocation is ostentatiously modeled on classical ones, particularly the one in Virgil's *Georgics* (I.1–42; ed. Fairclough 1999–2000, I 98–100); he was familiar with the *Aeneid*, at least parts of Ovid's nymph-packed *Metamorphoses*, and other pertinent texts (see Orchard 1994, esp. 130–35, 200–202, 225–28). Admittedly, the most prominent *nympha* known to the Anglo-Saxons must have been Circe, the witch-nymph who turned Ulysses's men into animal forms, but her exceptional status will have been clear.¹¹³ The recognition of *nymphae*'s non-monstrous character is suggested by their pointed omission from the *Liber monstrorum*, produced in an intellectual milieu associated with Aldhelm's (Lapidge 1982, 165–76).¹¹⁴ Aldhelm inverted Classical conventions by refusing the aid of *musae* and *nymphae* in composing his poetry; and the Harley Glossary explicitly calls the *Castalidae nymphae* 'manfullan' ('sinful'). But for the pointed inversions of Aldhelm's invocation to be conveyed effectively, the vernacular glosses needed to represent the Classical semantics of the lemmata, so it is reasonable to take the glosses, in origin, to represent these meanings.

The compounds *landælf*e and *dunælf*a were doubtless coined specifically to translate Aldhelm's Latin phrases (cf. Thun 1969, 380), a conclusion reinforced by the different strategies adopted towards the same problems by the *ælfen* glosses studied below (§5:3). The compounds must have been coined between the composition of the *Carmen de virginitate* (sometime before 709/10), and the earlier part of the tenth century, when the Third Cleopatra Glossary was written. Kittlick identified the source of this stratum,

¹¹² Quoted §5:3.1. For Aldhelm's use see Howe 1985; Marenbon 1979, 86–88; for glossators' Gretsich 1999, 160–63, 165–71; on Isidore's informative structuring of mythological hierarchy and divinity Chance 1994–2000, I 141–45.

¹¹³ e.g. *Aeneid* 7.1–24 (ed. Fairclough 1999–2000, II 2); *Metamorphoses* 14.223–434 (ed. Miller 1984, 316–30); *De consolatione philosophiae* 4, metre 3 (ed. Moreschini 2000, 111–12). These stories were well-known, as to Alfred the Great (Irvine 1996, 387–93; Grinda 2000 [1990]), Aldhelm (*enigma* 95; ed. Ehwald 191, I 142), and the composer of the late tenth- or early eleventh-century gloss to his *enigma* in BL MS Royal 12 C xxiii (Page 1982, 160–63). It is unfortunate that Circe's name is nowhere glossed, and that Alfred the Great, in chapter 38 of his translation of the *De consolatione philosophiae*, called her by the generic term *gyden* (ed. Sedgfield 1899, 116, 195).

¹¹⁴ Despite the inclusion of mythological figures such as the *Eumenides*, *fauni* and *satyri*, *nymphae* do not occur in this extensive catalogue of *monstra*. *Nympha* itself occurs once, in entry I.34 (ed. Orchard 2003a, 276): 'Et dicunt monstra esse in paludibus cum tribus humanis capitibus et subprofundissimis stagnis sicut nimphas habitare fabulantur. Quod credere profanum est: ut non illuc fluant gurgites quo inmane monstrum ingreditur' ('and they say that prodigies exist in swamps with three human heads and they are rumoured to inhabit the lowest of the depths of pools like *nymphae* [springs]—which it is a profanity to believe, because floods do not flow to a place into which a huge monster enters'). This puns on the mythological meaning of *nympha*, which the reader initially assumes—such sniping at Classical paganism being characteristic of the *Liber monstrorum* (Orchard 2003a, 87–91, 98–101; cf. 1997)—but does not detract from the striking absence of *nymphae* from the work.

which he numbered S11 (1998, §2.2), ‘als eindeutig anglisch aus’ (‘as unequivocally from Anglian’), with features conventionally identified both as Mercian and Northumbrian, and strong later influence from West Saxon and Kentish, probably in that order (1998, §14.3.2). The glossary also contains a scattering of features suggesting origins in the eighth century. Not all the glosses attested in the Third Cleopatra Glossary, of course, need go back to this eighth-century original, but if they are later additions, they were made with impressive care for maintaining the order of the lemmata of Aldhelm’s texts. It is likely, then, that we owe *dunælfa* and *landælf*e to an eighth-century Anglian monastery.

2.3 Evidence for the Semantics of *Ælf*

Ælf was felt by a glossator or glossators to be an appropriate basis for creating a gloss for *nympha* and *musa*. The essential correlation between the characteristics of *nymphae* and early Anglo-Saxon *ælf*e is obvious—both were otherworldly, rather than monstrous, supernatural beings; the glosses show that these characteristics not only survived conversion but continued among Anglo-Saxon monks at least into the eighth century, and probably the eleventh. Old English poetry composed around the ninth and tenth centuries attests to the beauty of *ælf*e in the compound *ælfscyne* and that too correlates with characteristics of the *nymphae*. But there is a striking problem of gender. Old English *ælf* is grammatically masculine, and in the early Old Icelandic and Old High German evidence its cognates seem consistently to denote male beings (ch. 2; *AHDWB*, s.v. *alb*). There is no serious doubt that the glossator knew that *nymphae* were females. Possibly, *ælf* could have been used in the plural to denote—in a way consonant with the patriarchal view of humanity which dominated Anglo-Saxon discourses—males and females together, like *ælde* or Old Icelandic *æsir*, a process perhaps encouraged in non-West Saxon dialects by the morphological collapse of long-stemmed masculine *i*-stem and strong feminine plurals. But it is of interest that although the sole attestation of *landælf*e uses the *-e* plural proper to the long-stemmed masculine *i*-stem declension, ***dunælf*e does not appear: rather the form in all cases but one is *dunælfa*, with the West Saxon strong feminine *-a* plural. The exception, *dunelfen* in the Antwerp-London Glossary, witnesses another development again, discussed below (§5:3.2–3). If *dunælfa* does derive from an Anglian original, this West Saxon plural must be a later introduction by a Southern redactor. Even so, given its suitability and consistency, it is surely a deliberate declension-change. Although it is sometimes said that Old English grammatical gender was not natural, this observation is misleading regarding words denoting beings. There is a small group of neuter words denoting women (e.g. *wif* ‘woman’), and another of

masculine words denoting men and women (e.g. *mann* ‘person’); but feminine words for humans invariably denoted females, while feminine words for animals were almost as consistent (Curzan 2003, esp. 45, 60–66, 91 n. 7; cf. Lindheim 1958, 490–91). The innovation of *-ælfa* looks, then, to be a deliberate feminisation of the denotation of *ælfe*, a conclusion bolstered by the parallel deployment of the feminising suffix *-en* in the other set of Old English glosses for nymphs (see §5:3). Where *landælf* fits into this is not clear: it could represent an original Anglian form (potentially feminine) which, by some slip, was not altered along with *dunælf*—if so, the consequent disjunction between gloss and lemma might explain its removal from the textual tradition—or a later addition to the tradition by a redactor who chose not to use the *-ælfa* form, perhaps because it was a neologism.

This analysis suggests two important points: that in the period when the glosses were coined, probably the eighth or ninth centuries, the simplex *ælf* was indeed unsuitable for denoting females, implying that it denoted only males; and that Old English lacked words appropriate for glossing *nympha*. The evidence for the meanings of *ælf* afforded by this qualified equation with *nympha* and *musa* is considered more fully in the next section (esp. §5:3.3).

3. Nymphs again: from *ælfe* to *ælfenne* to *ælfen*

3.1 Texts

Three Anglo-Saxon manuscripts contain glosses which use the basic root *ælfen*, compounded, like *dunælf* and *landælf*, with various topographical elements, to gloss lemmata denoting nymphs.¹¹⁵ The lemmata derive from Isidore of Seville’s *Etymologiae* (ed. Lindsay 1911, I 8.11.96–97):

Nymphas deas aquarum putant, dictas a nubibus. Nam ex nubibus aquae, unde derivatum est. Nymphas deas aquarum, quasi numina lympharum. Ipsas autem dicunt et Musas quas et nymphas, nec inmerito. Nam atque motus musicen efficit. Nympharum apud gentiles varia sunt vocabula. Nymphas quippe montium Oreades dicunt, silvarum Dryades, fontium Hamadryades, camporum Naides, maris Nereides [naides *BCT*].

They reckon *nymphae* to be goddesses of waters, so called from clouds [*nubes*, but cf. *nimbus* ‘storm(cloud)’]. For waters [come] from clouds, whence [*nympha*] is derived. [They reckon] *nymphae* goddesses of waters, just like the spirits of water. But they also call these *Musae* who

¹¹⁵ Additionally, Laurence Nowell’s *Vocabularium Saxonicum* of 1565 contains the entry ‘bergælfen’ (‘hill-*ælfen*’; cited by Peters 1963, 255; cf. Somner 1970 [1659], ‘Berg-*ælfenne*. Oreades. *Elves or Fairies of the mountains*’). This is unattested in known Anglo-Saxon manuscripts but it is a plausible formation (cf. the attested gloss *Oreades . muntælfen*). Nowell presumably either took *bergælfen* from a manuscript now lost or mis-remembered *muntælfen*. Without an Anglo-Saxon context, it can add little to the present discussion.

are also *nymphae*, not without cause. For, in addition, [their] movements create music. There are varied terms for *nymphs* among pagans: for they call *nymphae* of mountains *Oreades*, of woods *Dryades*, of springs *Hamadryades*, of plains *Naidēs* and of the sea *Nereids* [*naidēs BCT*].

These glosses must have been composed after the arrival of Isidore's *Etymologiae* in Britain, by the late seventh century (Herren 1998, 90–91), glossing of which was underway by the time of our earliest evidence for vernacular glossing, in the later seventh century (Pheifer 1987; cf. Lapidge 1996 [1988–89], 183–85, 188–93).¹¹⁶

The earliest and most conservative manuscript of the glosses is in Leiden, Bibliotheek der Rijksuniversiteit Vocius Lat. 4^o 106, being a manuscript of twenty-five leaves whose two main hands (in one of which the glosses are written) are agreed to be 'not later than the first half of the ninth century' (Parkes 1972, 215; cf. Ker 1957, 479 [appendix, no. 19]). The manuscript seems certainly to have been at Fleury in the tenth century (Parkes 1972, 212–13), and was likely enough produced there. The *ælfen* glosses occur together in a blank space on folio 10r which follows a text of the Latin riddles attributed to Symphosius (ff. 2v–8v) and the contents list of Aldhelm's enigmata (themselves covering ff. 10v–25v; ed. Meritt 1945, 61):

Nimphae aelfinni eadem & muse	<i>Nymphae</i> : <i>ælfenne</i> , and at the same time <i>musae</i> ;
Oreades duun . aelfinni	<i>Oreades</i> : mountain- <i>ælfenne</i> ;
Driades uudu . aelfinni	<i>Dryades</i> : wood- <i>ælfenne</i> ;
Amadriades ua&er . aelfinn	<i>Hamadryades</i> : water- <i>ælfenne</i> ;
Maidēs feld . aelfinne	<i>Maidēs</i> : open-land- <i>ælfenne</i> ;
Naidēs sáe . aelfinne	<i>Naiades</i> : sea- <i>ælfenne</i>

This faithfully glosses the *BCT*-texts of the *Etymologiae* (for their affiliations—which are diverse—see Lindsay 1911, 1 vi–xii), with the sole divergence (perhaps by some scribal dissimilation) of *Maidēs* for *Naidēs*. The glosses were perhaps added to elucidate Aldhelm's ensuing mention of *Castalidas nymphas* in the preface to the *Enigmata* (ed. Ehwald 1919, 98).

The second text containing *ælfen* glosses is the alphabeticised First Cleopatra Glossary, discussed above (§5:2.1), which contains a stratum of glosses derived from Isidore's *Etymologiae*: 'Amadriades : feldælbinne 1 elfenne' ('*Hamadryades*: open-land-*ælbinne* or *elfenne*'), with the archaic form *-ælbinne* itself being glossed with the updated, Kentish form *-elfenne*; 'Maidēs : sæælfenne' ('*Maidēs* : sea-*ælfenne*'); 'Nymfæ : wæterælfenne', 'Naidēs : sæælfenne' ('*Nymphae*: water-*ælfenne*', '*Naiades*: sea-*ælfenne*'); and 'Oreades : wuduælfenne' ('*Oreades*: wood-*ælfenne*'; ed. Rusche

¹¹⁶ Rusche, perhaps tempted by the fact that in Cleopatra, the Isidore glosses were copied alongside Épinal-Erfurt-type glosses, suggested that the Isidore glosses in Cleopatra come from the same glossed *Etymologiae* which furnished Épinal-Erfurt with their Isidore glosses (1996, 132–33). However, the glosses in the epitome of the *Etymologiae* which match Epinal-Erfurt do not occur either in Cleopatra or in the related Isidore material in the Antwerp-London Glossary, so this is unlikely.

1996, 184 [A463]; 373 [M356]; 384 [N200, N201]; 396 [O215]). As comparison with the Leiden text suggests, however, not only were the lemmata re-ordered in Cleopatra, but subjected to the redactor's habitual revision, so that the Old English glosses not only diverge from those in Leiden, but also from Isidore's own definitions (cf. Kittlick 1998, §2.1; Lendinara 1999, 22–26; Rusche 1996, 35–36). It is not necessary to explain these divergences fully here; sound knowledge of Classical mythology may underlie some (cf. Stryker 1951, 69 n. 463), but this is not assured.

The last text is the Antwerp-London Glossary, also discussed above (§5:2.1), where the *ælfen*-glosses are combined with 'Castalidas . dunelfen' within a class-list dealing with supernatural beings, prophets and magic-workers, presevered in the London portion. The Antwerp-London Glossary drew extensively on the same glossed text of Isidore's *Etymologiae* as the First Cleopatra Glossary (Porter 1999, 183–86), giving 'Oriades . muntælfen . Driades . wuduelfen . Moides . feldelfen . Amadriades . wylde elfen . Naides . sæelfen . Castalidas . dunelfen' (ed. Kindschi 1955, 246; collated with MS, f. 21r). This text is more conservative than Cleopatra's, but diverges from Leiden in different ways. It seems likely that the scribe's exemplar had *ælf*-forms, while he altered to the *elf*-forms of his own dialect only from the second word onwards. The alterations in both Cleopatra and Antwerp-London show that different redactors of the *ælfen* glosses were independently altering them, probably in the tenth and perhaps eleventh centuries, while maintaining the element *ælf*. This implies that both redactors, on consideration, still found *ælf* a satisfactory gloss, allowing us to draw conclusions about the semantics of *ælf* not only for the eighth century, when they probably originated, but probably also the tenth and eleventh.

3.2 Origins

Despite the Continental origin of Leiden Voss. Q 106, the glosses are Old English. As with the language of the *Leiden Riddle*, a later addition to the same manuscript (Parkes 1972, esp. 211–16), their orthography is archaic, showing <uu> for /w, u:/, <ae> for later <æ>, and <i> in unstressed syllables. Likewise, the form *feldaelbinne* in the First Cleopatra Glossary shows <i> in an unstressed syllable and the retention of for etymological /β/, features found elsewhere in this stratum of the glossary and once more associated with the seventh and eighth centuries (Kittlick 1998, §§4.2, 6.1.1, 14.2.5). The nominative plural inflection *-e* is non-West Saxon (Campbell 1959, §590). Accordingly, Kittlick considered the *ælfen* glosses in the First Cleopatra Glossary to be part of a tranche of around 200 *Etymologiae*-glosses, which source he numbered S21 (1998, §§2.2, 14.2.5; cf. 14.1.5), concluding that 'dieses Glossar ... nicht nur sehr alt, sondern

auch anglischer, evtl. merzischer Provenienz ist' ('the provenance of this glossary is not only very old, but also Anglian, evidently Mercian'; 1998, §14.2.5; cf. Rusche 1996, 129–34).

As with *landælf*e and *dunælf*a, *ælfen* must have been compounded with words for topographic features specifically to gloss Isidore's terms, a point emphasised by the punctuation in Leiden, which puts a point between the two elements of each compound. The status of the compound *ælfen*, however, is less clear-cut. *Ælfen* is a transparent compound of the root *ælf* with the suffix *-en* (earlier *-inn* < **-injō*), used to form feminine derivatives from masculine nouns.¹¹⁷ Other Old English examples are *gyden* ('goddess', < *god* 'god'), *mennen* ('handmaid, female slave' < *mann* 'person') and *mynece*nu ('nun' < *munuc* 'monk', with irregular transference to the feminine *ō*-stem declension; cf. Campbell 1959, §592c). The last example seems to have been coined in the tenth century, emphasising the productivity of the suffix;¹¹⁸ likewise the unique *mettena*, which Alfred used to gloss *Parcae* in chapter 35 of his translation of Boethius's *De consolatione philosophiae*, seems likely to be a nonce-word (ed. Sedgefield 1899, 102; the other manuscript gives *gydena* 'goddesses'). Contrary to earlier beliefs, *ælfen* has no Middle English reflexes (see Appendix 1.1); it also has no Norse cognate, Scandinavians coining *álfkona* ('*álfr*-woman') to render terms such as Marie de France's *fée* (*Guigemar* line 704; ed. Cook–Tveitane 1979, 34; Ewert 1995, 21). But it has parallel formations elsewhere in medieval West Germanic languages, also used, amongst other things, to translate *nympha*. If these are cognates rather than shared innovations, they would demand the reconstruction of a West Germanic **alβ(i)injō* (Verwijs–Verdam–Stoett 1885–1941, s.v. *elvinne*; Grimm–Grimm 1965–, s.v. *ELBE*). However, the **-injō* suffix has remained the normal suffix for forming nouns denoting females from nouns denoting males throughout the history of continental West Germanic and so would have been the obvious means of feminising *alp* and *alf*. More significant is the fact that that (-)*ælfenne* uses a different strategy for feminising *ælf* from that deployed in the gloss *dunælf*a, which, as I have discussed, simply changes *ælf*'s declension. These factors strongly suggest that there was no morphologically or semantically feminine form of *ælf* available in Old English: otherwise both traditions of Old English glosses would surely have used it.

¹¹⁷ See especially Lindheim 1958, 480–83; also Campbell 1959, §592c; Kluge 1926, §§39–42; Voyles 1992, §7.2.26.

¹¹⁸ Foot 2000, 129–30, cf. 97–107; cf. Stafford 1999, 10. Foot did not address the *i*-mutation in *mynece*nu, which must be analogical.

3.3 Evidence for the Semantics of *Ælf*

Of the batches of Isidore glosses in the First Cleopatra and Antwerp-London glossaries deriving from S21, the *ælfen* glosses are almost alone in glossing lemmata which denote Classical mythological beings, so we have little other evidence for how the glossator who composed S21 tended to handle words for Classical mythological figures.¹¹⁹ But the glossator's original intention was presumably the same as Isidore's: to explain Classical mythology to a Christian audience. As with *dunælf* and *landælf*, then, we may infer that the *ælfen*-glosses understand their lemmata in their Classical senses. Although it is possible that one set of glosses inspired the other, the different approaches to feminising *ælf* suggest that we owe the glosses to different and, if not independent, then independent-minded scholars. It is striking, then, that both chose *ælf* as the basis for their glosses. This consolidates the evidence for the semantics of *ælf* deduced from the *dunælf* and *landælf* glosses, that *ælf* continued to denote anthropomorphic otherworldly beings after the conversion. It also emphasises the inapplicability, on the grounds of gender, of *ælf* in its unmodified form as a gloss for words for *nymphae*.

These facts suggest that *ælf* was co-opted to gloss words for *nymphae* because no appropriate feminine counterpart to *nympha* existed in eighth- to ninth-century Old English—at least in the registers used by glossators—and because *ælf* was in some way the most suitable option. This is striking and rare evidence for a lexical gap among Old English words for supernatural beings, which I discuss further below. Moreover, the Antwerp-London Glossary suggests a *terminus ad quem* for this situation. There is no doubt that by the time when Laȝamon wrote his *Brut* around the early thirteenth century, *ælf* had become able to denote females: Arthur is taken ‘to Argante þere quene; aluen swiðe sceone’ (‘To Argante the queen, a very beautiful *alue*’); Laȝamon adds a few lines later that Argante is ‘fairest alre aluen’ (‘the most beautiful of all *aluen*’, lines 14277, 14291; ed. Brook–Leslie 1963–78, II 750). Laȝamon presents us concomitantly with the analogical transference of *ælf* to the weak declension and its semantic extension to the denotation of females. This suggests an important development not only in the semantics of *ælf-elf*, but in the history of English folklore: it seems to represent the rise of beliefs in female otherworldly beings similar in character to the *nymphae* of the Classics and to the *fées* of high medieval francophone romance.

The form of *ælfen* in Leiden and Cleopatra is the plural *ælfenne*, but the form used in the Antwerp-London Glossary is *elfen*. If this word was understood to be in the same

¹¹⁹ The certain exception is ‘Furiæ : burgrunan’; ed. Rusche 1996, 300 [F440]; ‘Parce . hægtesse’ in Antwerp-London appears to be another example; ed. Kindschi 1955, 247; collated with MS, f. 21v.

declension as *ælfenne*, it would, as the *Dictionary of Old English* concluded, be a nominative singular, despite the plural forms of its lemmata (s.v. *ælfen*). But Antwerp-London does not normally gloss plurals with singulars, and the adjective *wylde* in ‘wylde elfen’ would, if a feminine nominative singular, have been *wyld*. *Elfen* must, therefore, have been intended as a plural form. Nor is it likely to reflect some miscomprehension of the exemplar’s *ælfenne* forms, since the *-en* ending was extended to the inherited gloss *Castalidas nymphas: dunælfa*, giving the form ‘castalidas dunelfen’. Rather, the only likely explanation for Antwerp-London’s *elfen* plurals is that *ælfenne* was deliberately altered to become a weak plural, and that concurrently with, though not necessarily consequently on, this alteration, it became able to denote females. The emendation would have been facilitated by the phonological leveling of unstressed vowels and shortening of unstressed long consonants widespread in eleventh-century English (Hogg 1992a, §§6.62, 7.80), which not only encouraged the identification of <-enne> with <-an>, but permitted their replacement with <-en>. This <-en>-spelling is surprising, as although it is consistent with early Middle English spellings of weak inflections and probably more representative of eleventh-century phonology, it does not occur for etymological *-an* elsewhere in the glossary. Presumably, the redactor of the Antwerp-London Glossary, rather like the later Tremulous Worcester Scribe, copied *-an* inflections in his exemplar conservatively, but when formulating his own weak plurals opted for a spelling more representative of his own speech (see Franzen 2003), perhaps being encouraged in this by his exemplar’s spelling <-en->. The levelling of the endings of both *ælfenne* and *dunælfa* to *-en* would, by this reading, show the transference of words to the weak declension evident in Southern and West-Midland Middle English. That the *n*-stem declension was growing already in spoken (Southern) Old English despite the conservatism of the written language is suggested by its popularity as a declension for loan-words, second only to that of the *a*-stem declension (Gneuss 1996, ch. 6). As I have mentioned, moreover, this process began early for the long-stemmed masculine *i*-stems: weak variant plurals of long-stemmed masculine *i*-stem words such as *Seaxe*, *-sæte* and *-ware* appear already in early West Saxon, suggesting that the nominative plural */ælfən / might have emerged in some varieties of Old English already by the tenth century.

The rise of a female denotation of *ælf* appears concurrently, then, with the transference of *ælf* to the weak declension—at least in the South. However, although this morphological change could have been a factor in creating the conditions for semantic change, but is not a sufficient explanation for it: other innovative early Middle English weak plurals like *cnihten*, *kingen* or *brethren* continued to denote males alone. The arrival of female *elven* in English culture must have involved extra-linguistic factors. Just such an extralinguistic factor has long been posited. The origin of the *fées* of medieval

romances has long been attributed to ‘Celtic’ influence, directly on Old French and Anglo-Norman literature and, indirectly through this, on English, where they were denoted either by the French loan-word *fairy*, or by *elf* (e.g. Philippon 1929, 78; Larrington 1999, esp. 35–36). By this theory, the meaning of *elf* was basically extended by semantic borrowing from French. However, the Antwerp-London Glossary, from the earlier eleventh century, suggests a pre-Conquest *terminus ad quem* for this semantic extension. Antwerp-London is from well before either the Norman Conquest or the twelfth-century blossoming of French vernacular literature. This earlier date does not preclude influence from Celtic- or French-speaking communities, but it does suggest one more development in English gender relations which can no longer be pinned on the Norman Conquest (cf. Stafford 1994; 1995; Crick 1999). It points instead to developments in Anglo-Saxons’ non-Christian beliefs—which were evidently living and growing beyond the conversion—and in Anglo-Saxon gendering. I return to these prospects at the end of this thesis, when the full range of pertinent evidence has been assembled (§9:2.2).

4. *Ælfe* and prophecy? *Ylfie*

4.1 Texts

The first of my two adjectival glosses is the compound *ylfie*, again unique to glosses. Four of the five occurrences are textually related glosses on the word *comitiales* (‘epileptics’), three of them interlinear, in chapter 52 of Aldhelm’s *Prosa de virginitate*, composed sometime before Aldhelm’s death in 709, in a passage describing the miracles of Saint Anatolia. I quote from the *Prosa de virginitate* as edited by Gwara, but including the extensive glosses from Brussels, Bibliothèque Royale, MS. 1650, since these have the most direct bearing on interpreting *ylfie*:¹²⁰

Anatolia uero in exilium [*Hand A: on wræcsip*] trusa signorum [*Hand C: uel*] miraculis crebrescente [*Hand CD: wide springende*] praeftam sociam in uirtutibus aequiperauit; execrata etenim filium consulis inerguminum [*Hand C: deouelseocne*] rigidis catenarum nexibus [*Hand CD: bendum*] asstrictum [*i. ligatum*] expulso habitatore dicto citius curaut. Quo rumore [*fama*] clarescente [*l crescente*] et laruos [*Hand A: æfærede; Hand C: inerguminos infirmos; Hand CD deofelseoce*] et comitiales [*Hand A: i. garritores, ylfie; Hand C: lunaticos, wanseoce*] ac ceteros ualitudinarios [*Hand A: adlie*] pristinae sanitati restituit...

Anatolia, however, forced into exile and becoming famous for her miraculous signs, equalled her aforementioned associate in virtue; for, having cursed the son of a consul who was bound tightly by the rigid links of demoniacal chains, she cured him (again) in the twinkling of an eye by

¹²⁰ Ed. Gwara 2001, II 696–97; Langenhove 1941, f. 48r; cf. Goossens 1974, 456–57 [nos 4815–21]; trans. Lapidge–Herren 1979, 121. Gwara did not assign a hand to one stratum of the glosses in his edition, which do not appear in Goossens’s edition, hence the lack of attribution here.

expelling the demon who inhabited him. As her renown became more illustrious, she restored to their former health those possessed (with devils), epileptics and other diseased persons...

Brussels 1650 dates from the beginning of the eleventh century, but Hand A, which added to it the gloss *ylfie*, is later, of the first half of that century (Ker 1957, 6 [no. 8]; Goossens 1974, 51). Although Brussels 1650 has long been associated with Abingdon (Ker 1957, 6–7 [no. 8], cf. 3)—indeed Ker even thought that it was originally part of the same codex as the London-Antwerp glossary (1957, 7, cf. 3)—Gwara has recently argued for a Canterbury provenance (2001, 194*–101*). Brussels 1650 seems to have been an exemplar of Oxford, Bodleian Library MS. Digby 146, the manuscript probably from late tenth-century Canterbury and the Old English glosses probably from the mid-eleventh, contributing its gloss *ylfige* (Gwara 2001, 147*–56* 191*, 197*–99*). However, British Library Royal MS. B.vii, whose text and glosses were both written at Exeter in the late eleventh century (Gwara 2001, 113*–22*), must with regard to *ylfig* derive independently from an ancestor of the other two manuscripts (Gwara 2001, 191*, 199*–216*).

The remaining two instances of *ylfig* occur in the eleventh-century Harley Glossary, discussed above (§5:2.1). Folio 31r includes the gloss ‘Comitiales .i. garritores’, adding above it and into the right margin ‘† dies mensi . † ylfie . † monapsoece . † dagas .’ (‘or a day of the month, or *ylfige*, or lunatics, or days’; ed. Oliphant 1966, 85 [C1211]; collated with MS). Here, *ylfig* must derive from the Aldhelm-glosses just quoted (cf. Cooke 1994, 79–81, 158–59; 1997, 459–61), the glossary exhibiting its characteristic conflation of different definitions for the same lemma (using Isidore of Seville’s *Etymologiae* and other glosses found in Brussels 1650; cf. Cooke 1994, 157–58, 77–79, 144–45). However, folio 76r also includes the entry ‘Fanaticus .i. minister templi’ (*Fanaticus*: i.e. the priest of a temple’) with ‘futura praecinens . † ylfig’ (‘one foretelling things to come, or *ylfig*’; ed. Oliphant 1966, 178 [F151]; collated with MS) written above. Here, only *futura praecinens* and *ylfig* gloss *fanaticus* as adjectives, and the lineation further allies them, so *ylfig* presumably means something like ‘foretelling the future’ rather than ‘priest of a temple’. *Ylfig* is clearly an innovation here: the Harley Glossary entry must be based on entries like those in the Corpus Glossary, ‘the glossary closest to Harley in content’, which lack *ylfig*.¹²¹ Corpus gives ‘fanatici . futura . precinentes .’ (*Fanatici*: those foretelling things to come’; ed. Lindsay 1921a, 74 [F38]; Bischoff and others 1988, f. 28r)¹²² and ‘Fanaticus . templi minister .’ (*Fanaticus*: the priest of a temple’; ed.

¹²¹ Cooke 1994, 133–34, at 133; cf. 1997, 456–57; the entries there probably derive from the seventh-century Continental Abstrusa Glossary, Lindsay 1921a, 74–75.

¹²² Although ‘the scribe ... used the *punctus* after each lemma, after each different interpretation of the same lemma, and at the end of each gloss’ and ‘errors in punctuation are rare’, the glosses here demand to be understood together in a syntactic relationship (Bischoff–Parkes 1988, 24, cf. n.

Lindsay 1921a, 75 [F78]; Bischoff and others 1988, f. 28v). *Fanaticus* in the latter sense seems still to have been associated with prophecy since a different but apparently contemporary hand (Bischoff–Parkes 1988, 24) annotated the entry with ‘qui in templo . arguitur’ (‘he who prates in a temple’).¹²³ Whatever the textual history of the Corpus Glossary here, it seems clear that two glosses like these have been conflated to produce the Harley Glossary’s one. What is not known is whether the Harley Glossator added *ylfig* because it was part of the common lexicon, or simply because he knew it from the Aldhelm glosses.

4.2 Origins

Gwara has recently argued convincingly for the existence of a corpus of glosses to the *Prosa de virginitate*, early enough to have contributed to the early ninth-century Corpus Glossary and preserved as a stratum in surviving glosses to the poem, which he termed the Common Recension (2001, 1 235*–308*). If the strata of Brussels 1650 and Royal 6 B.vii containing the gloss *ylfige* derive, as Gwara thought, independently from the Common Recension (2001, esp. 1 191*, 209*–11*, 266*–72*), the glossing of *comitiales* with *ylfig* must derive from this eighth-century text, probably compiled in Canterbury or Malmesbury.¹²⁴ That said, the poor attestation of this particular entry leaves open the possibility of some later origin, with a transmission outside the lines of Gwara’s stemma. As I have said, the instance of *ylfig* in the Harley Glossary which is not in this textual tradition was either borrowed from it or introduced from the everyday Old English lexicon on the glossator’s own initiative.

Ylfig has no Germanic cognates and is transparently composed of the late West Saxon form of *ælf* and the denominative adjectival ending *-ig*; as this suffix has been productive from Common Germanic (Kluge 1926, §§202–6) to present day English, *ylfig* could have been coined at any time. Parallel Old English formations are *werig* (‘weary, tired, exhausted’ < *wor* ‘ooze, bog’); *sælig* (‘happy, prosperous’ < *sæl* ‘prosperity, happiness’); and *gydig* (‘possessed (by a god)’ < **γuðaz* ‘god’). All these suggest ‘(like) one engaged with noun X’: ‘like one in a bog’, ‘one in good fortune’, ‘one engaged with a god’, and so forth. The etymological meaning of *ylfig* seems therefore to be ‘(like) one engaged

145).

¹²³ Corpus also has a third *fanaticus* gloss, ‘fanaticus . qui templum . diu . deseruit [MS *deserit*]’ (ed. Lindsay 1921a, 75 [F76]; Bischoff and others 1988, f. 28v; omitted from the *Dictionary of Old English Corpus*). This need not concern us here, but its presence emphasises Corpus’s complexity regarding *fanaticus* glosses.

¹²⁴ These are guesses, but the only likely candidates (2001, 1 294*–308*); a detailed linguistic analysis is desirable. Place of origin might be significant, insofar as if the *ylfig* glosses derive not only from the same time but also the same place as other glosses containing *ælf* then we must reckon with the possibility of the inspiration of one gloss by another.

with an *ælf* or *ælfē*. As Jente pointed out, *gydig* may provide a particularly important parallel, since it involves a semantically similar root, which must on phonetic grounds go back to Common Germanic.¹²⁵ It is attested only in textually related glosses on *lymphaticus* ('diabolically possessed'), again in the *Prosa de virginitate* (ch.53; ed. Gwara 2001, II 704–5; cf. Goossens 1974, 461 [no. 4892]). However, it is fairly common in Middle English, with the primary meanings 'insane, crazy; possessed by a devil', which correlate precisely with the Old English and etymological evidence (*MED*, s.v. *gidī*; cf. *OED*, s.v. *giddy*). It is salutary that, unattested in other Germanic languages and so poorly attested in Old English, *gydig* might have been taken as a gloss-word were it not for its etymology and later popularity, so it is plausible that *ylfig*, despite its sparse attestation, was in general use in Old English. Its early loss from the lexicon might be explicable by the ascent of the adjective *elvish* (see below, §5:5), alongside the arrival of new medical terminology from Latin and French.

4.3 Evidence for the Semantics of *Ælf*

Comitalis was an obscure word. Although it occurs both as a lemma and a gloss in early medieval Insular Latin, only Aldhelm seems to have used it in connected prose (*DMLBS*, s.v. *comitalis*). Although *comitalis* is usually translated 'epileptic', the connotations of this word today are probably thoroughly anachronistic (cf. Temkin 1971, 86–102). The probable source of *comitalis* for Aldhelm and his glossators is the entry in Isidore of Seville's *Etymologiae* for 'Epilemsia' (ed. Lindsay 1911, 4.7.5–7). This, according to Isidore,

Fit ... ex melancholico humore, quotiens exuberaverit et ad cerebrum conversus fuerit. Haec passio et caduca vocatur, eo quod cadens aeger spasmos patiatur. Hos etiam vulgus lunaticos vocant, quod per lunae cursum comitetur eos insidia daemonum. Item et larvatici. Ipse est et morbus comitalis, id est maior et divinus, quo caduci tenentur. Cui tanta vis est ut homo valens concidat spumetque. Comitalis autem dictus, quod apud gentiles cum comitorum die cuiquam accidisset, comitia dimittebantur. Erat autem apud Romanos comitorum dies sollennis in kalendis Ianuarii.

is caused by the melancholic humour—how often it may have overflowed and been redirected to the brain. This is called *passio* [suffering] and *caduca* [(epileptic) falling], because the epileptic [*cadens aeger*] suffers [*patiatur*] convulsions. These indeed the common people call *lunaticos* [those made mad by the moon], because the attack of demons follows them according to the course of the moon. So also *larvatici*. That too is the comitalian sickness [*morbus comitalis*], which is more significant and of divine origin, by which those who fall are gripped. It has such power that a healthy person collapses and froths. However, *comitalis* is so used because among the pagans, when it had happened to anyone on the day of the *comitium* [assembly for electing

¹²⁵ 1921, 127; cf. *OED*, s.v. *giddy*. An Old English root-vowel *y* is demonstrated by Middle English reflexes and the lack of palatalisation in *giddy* (the manuscript form *gidig* showing unrounding: see Goossens 1974, 78–79); this must derive from the *i*-mutation of **/y u ði y -/*, predating the Germanic lowering of */u...a/ > /o...a/* in *god* (< **/y u ða z /*; see Campbell 1959, §§115, 572–73).

Roman magistrates], the *comitia* was broken up. But the usual day of the *comitia* among the Romans was during the Calends of January.

Isidore's discussion is consistent with Aldhelm's association of *comitiales* with *laruati* ('the demonically possessed') and provides an origin for the gloss *lunaticos* ('those made mad by the moon'; on the obscure gloss *wanseoce*, see §2:1.230). *Ylfig* must, then, denote some altered state of mind—possibly one which was 'maior et divinus'. We may set this alongside its pairing with the Latin gloss *garritor*. This word is even more unusual than *comitalis* (though see *DMLBS*, s.v.), but is a transparent deverbative formation from *garrio* ('I chatter, babble, prate'), meaning 'babblers'. It seems unlikely, however, that *comitiales*, at least in the *Prosa de virginitate*, was taken simply to denote people who talked (*contra DMLBS*, s.v. *comitalis* §1c; *DOE*, s.v. *ælfīg*). Chapter 44 of the *Prosa de virginitate* mentions 'a pithonibus et aruspibus uana falsitatis deleramenta garrientibus' ('empty gibberish of falsity from *garrientes* prophetesses and soothsayers'; ed. Gwara 2001, II 625), suggesting connotations of prophetic speech (viewed pejoratively) for the root of *garritor*—which matches the usage of *ylfig* in the innovative gloss in the Harley Glossary. This correlation may not be independent: if the Harley Glossator took *ylfig* from the *comitalis* gloss he may have inferred an association with prophetic speech in the same way as I have.

This evidence—the parallel with *gydig*, the meanings of *comitalis* and *garritor*, and the Harley Glossator's usage of *ylfig*—all militates in favour of understanding *ylfig* to mean 'one speaking prophetically through divine/demonic possession'. Admittedly, the Common Recension glossator may not have had too many options for glossing *comitalis*. By the tenth century, scholarly Old English had a well-developed lexicon for altered states of mind: attested to gloss at least one of Isidore's terms relating to epilepsy (besides *gydig*), we have *bræccōpu* ('phlegm-sickness'), (*ge*)*bræcseoc* ('phlegm-ill'), *deofolseoc* ('devil-sick'), *fylleseoc(nes)* and possibly *fyllewærc* (both 'falling sick (ness)'), *monapseoc* ('month-sick'), and *woda* ('madman').¹²⁶ But most of these were probably originally coined in response to Mediterranean and Christian medical traditions: early glossators like the Common Recension glossator probably had only *gydig*—which they were apparently unwilling to use—and variants on *wod* ('frenzied, enraged, mad').¹²⁷ This makes the usage of the Harley Glossator crucial: he had access to the full

¹²⁶ Cf. Roberts–Kay–Grundy 2000, §§02.08.09.02 Epilepsy, 02.08.11.02.01 Insanity, madness; *DOE* s.vv. where available; Bosworth–Toller 1898, s.v. *monapseoc*, *monapseoc-ness*; Toller 1921, s.v. *monap-seoc*.

¹²⁷ *Fylleseoc* and *fyllewærc* are probably calques on *morbus caducus* ('falling sickness'), while *bræccōpu* and (*ge*)*bræcseoc* probably reflect Isidore's association of *epilepsia* with *melancholia*, an excess of phlegm; *monapseoc* is probably a calque on *lunaticos*. Cf. Erfurt 'epilenticus uuoda' ('epileptic: madman') and Épinal-Erfurt 'lymphatico uuodendi' ('possessed man (dative singular): raging one (dative singular)'; ed. Pfeifer 1974, 21 [383], 31 [575]; collated with Bischoff and others 1988, Erfurt ff. 5v, 7v, Épinal f. 100r); Corpus adds 'inergumenos . wodan' (ed. Lindsay

late Old English lexicon of altered states of mind, and could have chosen any of its other members to gloss *fanaticus: futura praecinens*, but chose *ylfig*. This suggests that *ylfig* was precisely the right word for the job. Moreover, the Harley Glossator tended to prefer Latin glosses (Cooke 1994, 24–25; 1997, 455); while fanatical completism was not beyond him, it seems unlikely that he would have added *ylfig* here if he only knew it as a gloss to *comitalis: ylfīg* was surely a member of the common lexicon, like *gydig*.

It follows from these arguments that *ælf* was once sufficiently intimately associated with people predicting the future, and possibly with possession, that a derived adjective meant something like ‘predicting the future’. Although the evidence is ambivalent, it is worth showing that a striking correlation for this argument may exist, in our evidence for the significance of the plant known in Old English as *ælfþone*. Although this word is attested only in medical texts, mainly in remedies for fever, madness, or ailments caused by *ælfē*, its attestations there are not very revealing about *ælfē*.¹²⁸ More useful evidence for its meanings comes from a gloss-like context, and is more pertinent to *ylfig*. I turn to it here, therefore.¹²⁹

4.4 *Ælfþone*

The medical texts provide no evidence for what plant(s) *ælfþone* denoted; its second element is unique in Old English, but cognate with Old High German *thona*, ‘vine, creeper’ (*AHDWB*, s.v.; Thun 1969, 391–92), suggesting that *ælfþone* is archaic. Thun observed that German plant-names in cognates of *ælf-* most consistently denote the vine woody nightshade (L. *Solanum dulcamara*), which is consistent with the meaning of *þone* (1969, 391–92). Bierbaumer reached the same conclusion, apparently independently (1975–79, 19–10). *Ælfþone* is presumably to be equated with Middle English *elf-thung* (*MED*, s.v.), its obsolete second element being replaced there with a productive element meaning ‘poisonous plant’, and this supports Thun’s inference. The most useful attestation of *elf-thung* is an annotation made by the renowned Tremulous Worcester Scribe to an Old English text of the *Herbarium* in Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS. Hatton 76 around the first half of the thirteenth century (see Franzen 1991, 66–69). The annotation, on folio 112r, adds ‘elueþunge tunsingwurt’ (ed. Crawford 1928, 21) as the title for the Old English entry ‘Ðeos wyrt þe man elleborum album 7 oðrum naman

1921a, 92 [I 74]; Bischoff and others 1988, f. 34r).

¹²⁸ Bierbaumer 1975–79, 19–10 and *DOE*, s.v. *ælfþone*, list the references, though they do not show textual interrelationships.

¹²⁹ A full analysis is unnecessary here; I have undertaken one for the *Anglo-Saxon Plant-Name Survey* (<<http://www2.arts.gla.ac.uk/SESSL/EngLang/ihs1/projects/plants.htm>>), expected to be published in the *Survey*’s second volume of papers.

tunsingwyr̥t nemneð 7 eac sume men wedeberge hatað byð cenned on dunum, 7 heo hafað leaf leace gelice' ('This plant, which is called *helleborus albus*, and by another name *tunsingwyr̥t* ('*tunsing*-plant'), and [which] some people also call *wedeberge* ('madness-berry') grows on mountains, and it has leaves like a leek/onion'; ed. Vriend 1984, 180).¹³⁰ It should be admitted that the *Herbarium* description does not match woody nightshade; my assumption is that English terms here were adopted because of linguistic correspondences rather than formal ones, based perhaps on glosses like Erfurt's 'elleborus poedibergæ' ('helleborus: madness-berry [reading *woedibergæ*]'; ed. Pheifer 1974, 21 [388]; Bischoff and others 1988, f. 5v). After all, the gloss *wedeberge* itself mentions berries, but *L. helleborus* or *veratrum*—the genera denoted by *helleborus* in ancient and medieval mediterranean usage—are not berry-bearing (Cameron 1985, 131). When the Tremulous Worcester Scribe came to the passage in the Old English *herbarium*, it seems that he recognised a plant denoted by words for woody nightshade, and inserted another term for that plant—*elf-thung*. If *elf-thung* is indeed *ælfpone*, then, this is another piece of evidence that that too was woody nightshade.

If *ælfpone* denoted woody nightshade, then Aldhelm's riddle *Helleborus*, composed sometime before he died in 709/10, affords remarkable evidence for its cultural associations, since Cameron has shown that it describes woody nightshade:¹³¹

Ostriger en arvo vernabam frondibus hirtis
 Conquilio similis: sic cocci murice rubro
 Purpureus stillat sanguis de palmite guttis.
 Exuvias vitae mandenti tollere nolo
 Mitia nec penitus spoliabunt mente venena;
 Sed tamen insanum vexat dementia cordis,
 Dum rotat in giro vecors vertigine membra.

A purple flower, I grow in the fields with
 shaggy foliage. I am very similar to an oyster:
 thus with reddened dye of scarlet a purplish
 blood oozes by drops from my branches. I do
 not wish to snatch away the spoils of life from
 him who eats me, nor do my gentle poisons
 deprive him utterly of reason. Nevertheless a
 certain touch of insanity torments him as, mad
 with dizziness, he whirls his limbs in a circle.

The possible effects of ingesting parts of woody nightshade plants are little known, and clinical research has focused on their toxic properties; but if we accept agitation for arm-whirling, Aldhelm's symptoms are among those observed of eating all parts of the plant (e.g. Cooper–Johnson 1984, 217–18; Bruneton 1999 [1996], 479–83). For the riddle to be meaningful, Aldhelm must have expected his audience to recognise the symptoms which he described, so they presumably reflect reasonably widespread cultural knowledge rather than some unique observation, which further implies deliberate ingestion. Whether the consumption of woody nightshade can be controlled to produce

¹³⁰ Vriend himself did not read *eluepunge*, but *cluchpunge*; I have not been able to consult the manuscript. *Cluchpunge* is not a word, however, and though it could be an error for *clufpunge*, *eluepunge* seems likelier to underlie the readings of Crawford and Vriend.

¹³¹ 1985, 131–33; cf. 1993, 110–12; ed. Ehwald 1919, 1 144; trans. Lapidge–Rosier 1985, 93; for Aldhelm's paronomasia here see Cameron 1985, 131–32.

the effects described by Aldhelm is not clear from the clinical evidence, but it is not implausible—in which case my inference that *ylfig* associates *ælf*e with causing prophetic states may be set alongside the implication that Anglo-Saxons deliberately consumed parts of a plant called *ælfþone* in search of mind-altering experiences.

However, it must be admitted that *ælfþone* poses a riddle of its own, since it is prescribed in the Old English medical texts to help cure states of fever or madness. Indeed, among the other ailments for which *ælfþone* is prescribed, one of three interrelated remedies, in section 68 of Leechbook III (ed. Wright 1955, ff. 126v–27r), prescribes *ælfþone* ‘wip wedenheorte’ (‘against a frenzied-heart/mind’), a term to which Aldhelm’s *dementia cordis* surely alludes. This state could be understood as possession: another remedy ‘Wip wedenheorte’ occurs in Bald’s Leechbook I, section 63, in a sequence of remedies prescribed ‘Wip feondseocum men . þonne deofol þone monnan fede oððe hine innan gewælde mid adle’ (‘For a fiend-sick person: when the/a devil nourishes a man or controls him from within with illness’; f. 51v).¹³² In the same way that *dweorgedwostle* (‘pennyroyal’) was used to alleviate symptoms denoted by *dweorg* (denoting both some sort of monstrous being but probably also fever, see Cameron 1993, 151–53), *ælfþone* may have been employed to alleviate symptoms caused by *ælf*e—a function also prominent for *helleborus*, which, according to Isidore, ‘Romani alio nomine veratrum dicunt pro eo quod sumptum motam mentem insanitatem reducit’ (‘the Romans call by the alternative name *veratrum*, because when consumed it leads back the mind withdrawn into insanity [cf. *verus*, ‘true, real’]’; ed. Lindsay 1911, II 17.9.24). *Ælfþone* might be named for its powers of curing the influence of *ælf*e rather than for its powers of inducing states associated with the influence of *ælf*e. Both understandings of the name may have existed at once, or we may see the effects of diachronic change in the construction of *ælf*-lore and healing.

Equivocal though the evidence of *ælfþone* is, it at least suggests some of the possible cultural constructs which may have surrounded the association of *ælf*e with causing prophetic speech attested by *ylfig*. Though not necessarily viewed positively by the Anglo-Saxon scholars who recorded it, it seems reasonably likely that *ylfig* shows that *ælf*e’s influence might be viewed positively. Similarly ambiguous cultural reactions to such ailments are well-attested in constructs of nympholepsy in the Classical Hellenic world and of possession in more recent cultures (Connor 1988, esp. 156–58, 165, 174–79; cf. Temkin 1971, 3–27).

¹³² This text is itself related to another in Leechbook III, in section 64, which also prescribes *ælfþone*, this time, however, simply ‘Wip deofle’ according to the main text, f. 125v.

5. *Ælfe* and delusion: *ælfisc*

Unlike the other glosses considered here, *ælfisc* has well-attested reflexes in Middle English and is paralleled by the Middle High German *elbisch*, but only one Old English attestation. Chaucer's use of *elvish* of himself in the prologue to *The Tale of Sir Thopas* (line 703; ed. Benson 1987, 213) has garnered a fair amount of commentary (recently Burrow 1995; Green 2003), but the Old English and medieval German evidence has not been much considered. *Elbisch* hints at a West Germanic origin for *ælfisc*, and although the words could be independent formations, their extensive albeit relatively late attestation and similar semantics suggests a common origin. The parameters for the semantics of *ælfisc* are suggested by its suffix *-isc*, which 'forms denominal adjectives ... with the meaning "being like, having the character of", e.g. *ceorlisc* "of a churl, common", *cildisc* "childish", *mennisc* "human". The suffix is also frequently used for the derivation of ethnic adjectives, e.g. *denisc* "Danish" ' (Kastovsky 1992, 390). However, not all of *elves*' characteristics need have been reflected in *elvish*, more specific meanings perhaps developing as they did for *ceorlisc*. This prospect is complicated by the transparent etymology of *elvish* and its consequent potential to be interpreted literally, and Green has recently shown adeptly how many of *elves*' characteristics could be active at once in the word's semantics. But it also emphasises that Green's scorn at the glossing of *elvish* as 'mysterious' or 'strange' instead of 'elvish, having the character of elves' might be misplaced (2003, at 28–29). How far *elvish* had an ethnic sense is hard to determine: some examples definitely do not exhibit an ethnic sense, and ambiguous instances could all be interpreted to mean 'otherworldly'.¹³³ These issues present a pretty problem for the lexicographer: fortunately, lexicography is not my concern here. Instead I examine the Old English attestation and its more proximate comparisons to determine what *ælfisc* tells us about *ælfē*.

Direct evidence for Old English *ælfisc* comes only from a late-twelfth-century section of a German manuscript, Oxford, Bodleian Library, Junius 83 (Madan and others 1895–

¹³³ The earliest likely example of *elvish* in an ethnic sense is from *Lazamon's Brut*, in which Arthur's mailcoat is made by 'on aluisc smið' in Caligula, 'an haluis smiþ' in Otho (ed. Brook-Leslie 1963–78, II 550–51). But the syntax of the passage in question is full of ambiguities and its meanings have been much debated (see Le Saux 1989, 196–400; Edwards 2002, 85–87). Another possible example occurs in the early fifteenth-century Middle English translation of *Gui de Warewic* in Caius College, Cambridge, MS 107. The text says that Guy 'girde him with his bronde, / That was made in eluyssh londe' (ed. Zupitza 1883–91, 223; cf. the independent Auchinleck version, lines 3861–62 of which have the sword 'y-made in eluene lond'; ed. Zupitza 1883–91, 222). But the French original has 'Puis ad ceinte un espee / Ke faite fu en un isle faee' ('Then on his waist a sword / Which was made on an otherworldly island', lines 3869–70; ed. Ewert 1932–33, I 118), suggesting the sense 'otherworldly'. See also the later fifteenth-century translation, in Cambridge University Library, MS Ff 2.38, lines 11315–19; ed. Zupitza 1875–76, 325–26; cf. lines 12223–32 in the French; ed. Ewert 1932–33, II 167.

1953, II 981–82 [no. 5194]). The word occurs on folio 397v in a note to chapter 52 of Fulgentius’s *Expositio Sermonum Antiquorum ad Grammaticum Calcidium*, an explanation of the verb *alucinare*. Helm’s critical edition (1970, 124–25) gives Fulgentius’s text as

Alucinare dicitur uana somniari tractum ab alucitas quos nos conopes dicimus, sicut Petronius Arbiter ait: ‘Nam centum uernali me alucitae molestabant’.

Alucinare [‘to wander in mind, speak while in such a state’]¹³⁴ is said [when] foolish things are (day)dreamt. Derived from *alucitae* [attested only in this passage, and assumed to have the meaning ‘gnats, mosquitos’ implied here], which we call *conopes* [i.e. *κόνωπες*, gnats]. Thus Petronius Arbiter affirms: ‘for a hundred *alucitae* would bother me in the spring’.

However, Junius 83’s text is rather different, and the quotation from Petronius seriously corrupt (ed. Steinmeyer–Sievers 1879–1922, II 162):

alucinare dicitur uana somniare. tractum ab alucitis quos cenopos dicimus. sicut petronius arbiter uernalia mā inquid mā lucite molestabant. Hos Galli Eluesce wehte uocant.

Alucinare is said [meaning] ‘to (day)dream foolish things’. Derived from *alucitae*, which we call *cenopos* [not a real word]. Thus Petronius Arbiter said ‘vernal things ... would bother’. The *Galli* call these [the *cenopos*] *Eluesce wehte* [*ælfisc* beings].

Despite the provenance of the manuscript, there is no doubt that the term ‘Eluesce wehte’ is Old English—apparently a late Kentish form.¹³⁵ The provenance of the gloss is unknown, but it surely reflects textual transmission from Anglo-Saxon England, presumably of a glossed copy of the *Expositio*—though we admittedly have no such manuscript (see Gneuss 2001). The attribution of the term to *Galli* has caused puzzlement, since its most obvious meaning, ‘Gauls’, makes little sense, as Gauls ought not to be speaking Old English. Schlutter rather desperately suggested corruption of *<āgli> ‘Angles’ (1907, 300). Presumably, however, we should understand *Galli* as the homophone meaning ‘emasculated priests of Cybele’.¹³⁶ An association of *eluesce wehte* with ecstatic pagan priests is semantically appropriate, and can plausibly be understood as a distancing strategy, whereby the glossator attributed the term *eluesce wehte* to pagan priests because he himself was cautious of being seen to endorse it. In view of the association of *ylfig* with people *futura praecinentes* demonstrated above (not to mention *ælfes*’s feminine associations), the attribution is intriguing; but concluding that this gloss refers to the terminology of some close equivalent of the *Galli* in Anglo-Saxon society would be risky.

¹³⁴ An apparently unique variant on *alucinator*, but doubtless of the same meaning.

¹³⁵ The development of *wehte* would be **wihtī-* > **wiohti-* > **weoht-* > *weht-* (Hogg 1992a, §§5.24, 5.160, 5.210–11).

¹³⁶ *OLD*, s.v. *Gallus*⁴. Cf. ‘gallus .i. spado belisnud’ (‘*Gallus*: i.e. a eunuch, castrated’), glossing a reference to the prototypical *gallus*, Attis, in line 398 of Prudentius’s *Peristephanon*, book X (ed. Meritt 1959, 42). This attestation can be added to *DMLBS*, s.v. *4 Gallus*.

Our text, then, declares *conopes* to be called *Eluesce wehte*. Accordingly, Schlutter took it ‘als altenglische benennung [sic] für schnaken (κόνωπες)’ (‘as an Old English term for gnats (κόνωπες)’; 1907, 300; tacitly followed by the *DOE*, s.v. *ælfisc*). This assumes, however, that the glossator who wrote *Eluesce wehte* understood *cenops* as ‘gnat’—which, even disregarding the corruption in Junius 83, is optimistic. Since *alucita* is unique to this passage a glossator would have had no help from that; he may have known material like the Corpus Glossary entry ‘Conopeum . rete muscarum’ (‘mosquito net: flies’ net’; ed. Lindsay 1921a, 42 [C531]; Bischoff and others 1988, f. 17v), but it is unlikely that this would have led him to divine the meaning of *conops*. The Harley Glossary’s response to Fulgentius’s text is instructive: ‘Conopes .i. alucinaria’ (‘*conopes*, i.e. hallucinations’), with ‘uana somnaria’ interlinearly above (‘foolish (day)dreams’; ed. Oliphant 1966, 109 [C1979]; collated with MS, f. 45r).¹³⁷ This identifies *conops*, not *alucita*, as the word requiring a gloss, and takes it to denote delusions and dreams rather than mosquitos. The gloss *Eluesce wehte* probably interprets *conops* in the same way, thus meaning something like ‘delusory beings; delusions’. That these products of the mind are denoted by *wihte* (‘beings’) is no cause for surprise: Anglo-Saxons did not share our distinctions between visions and corporeal beings, as numerous medieval demonic and angelic visions suggest. So too does a remedy *Wið dweorg* (‘against a *dweorg*/fever’), which includes a charm describing a ‘wiht’ treating the sufferer as its ‘hæncgest’ (ed. Grattan–Singer 1952, 160–62; see further below, §6:3.4 n. 173).

Although the denotation of *eluesce wehte*, then, is now clear, the precise meaning of its constituent words is more problematic: are *eluesce wehte* ‘beings like *ælfe* (i.e. delusory beings)’ or ‘beings who are *ælfe*’? This cannot be answered conclusively, but some comparative evidence shows that the Old English usage is at any rate well-paralleled. The collocation *eluesce wehte* is well-paralleled by Robert Semphill’s late sixteenth-century invective against Patrick Adamson, the bishop of St Andrews, which characterises him as ‘Ane elphe, ane elvasche incubus’ (line 7; ed. Cranstoun 1891–93, I 352); but this still not very informative. The closest parallels are Middle High German (cf. Grimm–Grimm 1965–, s.v. *ELBE*; Lexer 1869–76, s.v. *elbisch*); they occur most fully in Rüdiger von Munre’s *Irregang und Girregar*, a fabliau probably of about 1300 (ed. Hagen 1850, III 43–82), in which a woman, her daughter and their respective lovers convince the woman’s husband that his discovery of their adulterous antics is merely the product of delusion by the evil spirits Irregang and Girregar, in a discourse characterised by its use of *elbisch* (in lines 648, 934, 1206, 1310). At her husband’s first protestation, the wife says ‘dich hât geriten der mar, / Ein elbischez âs’ (‘the *mar* [nocturnal assailant,

¹³⁷ *Alucinaria* and *somnaria* seem to be neologisms, but are transparent secondary formations on *alucinare* and *somniare*.

normally female and feminine but here masculine; see further §§6:3.4, 7:1.1] has ridden you, an *elbisch* spirit', lines 646–47). The husband responds (lines 650–53)

[Sêt.] da3 hât man von iu wîben,
Swenne uns mannen iht geschiht,
da3 ir immer des jeht,
Uns (be)triege der alp...

You see! Men always get that from you
women, whenever anything happens to us
men, you always say that
the *alp* is deluding us...

at which his wife insists, 'dich zoumete / ein alp, dâ von dir troumete' ('an *alp* put a bridle on you, therefore you dreamt it', lines 675–76). Whether we should consider *der mar* to be ethnically *elbisch* or merely like an *alp* is unclear, but the husband interprets the phrase to imply that *der alp* has deceived him—a conception of *alpe* earlier attested in an eleventh- or twelfth-century remedy 'Ad feminam quam alb illudit' ('for a woman whom an *alp* deludes'; ed. Steinmeyer 1916, 385). The other attestations in *Irregang und Girregar* conform to these. They imply that while *elbisch* indeed meant 'having the character of an *alp*', the characteristic which was to the fore was one of deluding people with dreams.

The meaning 'delusory' is likewise demanded by some Middle English attestations. I have only one citation which has not been considered hitherto,¹³⁸ but it is quite important. It occurs in a macaronic sermon of 1421, which declares that 'mundi honor est a sliper þinge and an elvich' ('worldly glory is a treacherous and 'elvish' thing'; ed. Haines 1976, 92). The meanings of *elvish* here must reflect sermonisers' views of *mundi honor*, themselves also expressed by *sliper* ('deceitful, false, treacherous': *MED*, s.v. §b): 'delusory' is an obvious candidate, correlating nicely with the Old English and German evidence. Current dictionary definitions of *elvish* do not clearly accommodate this. The *Middle English Dictionary* offers '(a) Belonging or pertaining to the elves; possessing supernatural skill or powers; (b) mysterious, strange; (c) elf-like, otherworldly' (cf. *DOE*, s.v. *ælfisc*; *OED*, s.v. *elvish*). But *delusory* also makes particularly good sense as a translation of *elvish* in lines 751 and 842 of Chaucer's *Canon's Yeoman's Tale*, whose protagonist's long and lamenting description of the deceptions which he and other alchemists perpetrate mentions 'Oure eluysse craft' and 'this eluysse nyce loore' ('our *elvish* art', 'this *elvish*, foolish learning'; ed. Benson 1987, 272, 274; this is also the essence of Green's reading: 2003, esp. 51–52). In Old English, *ælf*'s association with ailments involving fever and hallucination is clear, but there are no clear-cut attestations of *ælf* or *elf* with a sense like 'one who deludes' to the fore,¹³⁹ so although 'elf-like'

¹³⁸ By the *MED*, s.v. *elvish*; *OED*, s.v.; *DOST*, s.v. *Elvasche* (also cited s.v. *Elriche*, presumably by mistake); and Green, who added 'any elvish godlinge', used by Herod of Jesus in the Chester mystery cycle (play 8, line 326; ed. Lumiansky–Mills 1974–86, 1 170; Green 2003, 44).

might comprehend the usage of *elvish* in the sermon, it is probably better to accept that *elvish* had a developed meaning, as *ceorlisc* did.¹⁴⁰

It is clear from the Middle English evidence that *ælfisc* had been part of the everyday lexicon. Moreover, the extensive attestation and similar semantics of Middle High German *elbisch* suggest that it was coined before the Anglo-Saxon migrations. Despite the challenges in reconstructing its precise connotations, *ælfisc* attests clearly to an association of *ælf* with causing hallucinations or delusions. Its relationship with *ylfig* is also of interest. In theory, the two adjectives might have existed in complementary distribution, as *ylfig* is West Saxon/South-Western in form, whereas our attestations of *ælfisc* and *elvish* are from other dialects. However, their different meanings suggest that the two words existed side by side in Old English, one denoting those affected by *ælf* (such as to gain prophetic speech), the other denoting the delusory character of *ælf* in bringing about such states of mind. The later extension of *elvish* to denote those affected as well as those affecting might partly reflect its replacement of a putative Middle English reflex of *ylfig*.

6. Conclusions

The evidence of the glosses consolidates and elaborates the evidence considered in chapters 2–3, and presents new questions. The use of forms of *ælf* to gloss words for *nymphae* in two distinct textual traditions is consistent with my arguments for the anthropomorphism of *ælf* in early Anglo-Saxon traditions, and also recalls *ælf*'s association with (feminine) beauty in the word *ælfscyne*. The grammatical feminisation

¹³⁹ Two possible examples come from Capgrave's mid-fifteenth-century *Life of St Katharine of Alexandria*; Book 3, chapter 5, line 327 and 5.28.1629 in the Rawlinson MS (ed. Horstmann 1893, 190, 392; cf. 191 for Arundel).

¹⁴⁰ Another meaning again is attested in 1530, when Palsgrave's *Lesclarcissement de la langue francoyse* (ed. Génin 1852, 774) gives the phrases

I waxe elvysshe, nat easye to be dealed with. *Ie deuiens mal traictable* ... He waxeth so elvysshe nowe a dayes that I dare nat medell with hym: *il deuiet si mal traictable tous les jours que je ne me ose pas mesler avec luy*.

The earliest attestation of this meaning seems to be Chaucer's other use of *elvish*, where Harry Bailey claims in line 13 of the *Prologue to Sir Thopas* that Chaucer himself 'semeth eluyssh by his contenance' ('seems from his expression to be *elvish*'; ed. Benson 1987, 213): Chaucer portrays himself as reserved, to the point of being withdrawn (Burrow 1995). This usage seems to show *elvish*'s extension from a meaning like 'delusory, distracting' to a meaning like 'deluded, distracted'. This may relate to the simplex *elf*: it is attested as a term of abuse and seems to be the etymon of *oaf*, so it could mean 'elf-like' in these senses. These meanings of *elf* and a similar meaning of *elbisch* occur in Middle High German. But both usages look like later developments.

of *ælf* as a gloss for *nympha* in the earlier glosses consolidates the arguments that *ælf* specifically connoted males at this time; by the eleventh century, however, *ælf* could indeed denote females. Explaining these patterns and developments will, as I have said, have to wait for the assembly of other pertinent evidence later in this thesis. Alongside this evidence for change with continuity, *Beowulf*'s demonisation of *ælf*e is also paralleled, in the use of *ælf* around 800 to gloss *Satanas*. This is the continuation of an innovative strand which, as I discuss below, we can also see in the Old English medical texts, and was to continue an uneasy co-existence with *ælf*'s traditional, positive meanings, for many centuries.

The other evidence provided by glosses, being adjectival formations based on *ælf*, helps us to establish other aspects of *ælf*'s meanings. *Ylfig* shows that *ælf*e, or their predecessors, were at some point associated with causing prophetic speech. Its evidence provides a suggestive context for interpreting the hints that a plant called *ælfþone* was deliberately eaten for its mind-altering effects, though the evidence here is equivocal. *Ælfisc* also shows associations for *ælf* with causing hallucination. These words not only foreshadow the evidence of the Old English medical texts, but show that these associations for *ælf*e could be assumed and utilised in quite different kinds of discourse, and so that they were well-established. It is the medical texts which I examine next.