Metaphors in the *Muspilli*

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Abstract

This study delves into the metaphorical nature of the OHG *Muspilli*. Employing cognitive linguistics, the research aims to explore the deeper implications of metaphors, which are believed to be deeply ingrained in our thought processes and reasoning about the world. According to Lakoff and Johnson's theory, metaphors are more than just linguistic tools; they are integral to understanding and interacting with the world around us. Moreover, the meaning of language is not solely determined by individual words or grammar but is also shaped by the social and cultural context in which it exists.

The poet and their work are intertwined in a syncretistic world where diverse cultural expressions converge. In this context, the *Muspilli* becomes a center for religious syncretism, where metaphors of the older belief system intersect with those of the newer one. As a place of "polyvocality," it seeks to be didactic, shedding light on the complex interplay between language, culture, and religion. Overall, this research offers a nuanced understanding of the OHG *Muspilli*, revealing its significance as a cultural artifact.

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Introduction

It has been almost two hundred years since the *Muspilli* was "re-discovered" by Johann Andreas Schmeller.[1] Like many fragmentary texts from the early German literary period, there are more questions than answers about its dating, meaning, sources, and literary status in the canon of German literature. Although the *Muspilli* probably holds the distinguished first place of all these texts.

Valentine Pakis notes two striking tendencies by scholars dealing with its existence: "The first is characterized by discursive regression, or stasis, to the extent that it reinstates (or perpetuates) Grimm's bias for mythological interpretation" (Pakis, 2009, p. 55). Moreover, the other treatment is not to treat it in the literary canon.[2] Pakis states that:

> Reconciliation of these approaches entails the acknowledgment of *Muspilli* as minor literature and its exposure as a locus of polyvocality and interpretive tensions – between margin and body, past and future, monolith and patchwork, alliteration and rhyme, pagan and Christian, religious and secular, past and future, origins and existence (Pakis, 2009, p. 56).

Following this call for reconciliation, the current study focuses on literature in its cultural context and, to whatever extent, estimating its religious and didactic nature. These contexts emerge from philosophical and theological discussions of the time. The debate whether *Muspilli* is of high or low literary merit for the German canon is immaterial for this article because it does not concern itself with canonical validation. Judging this kind of literature by the standards of a different cultural mindset will not answer the poem's meaning and existence. Likewise, this essay is not searching for literary sources, a task that has preoccupied most scholars for the last 150 years.[3] These efforts were valuable for our increasing knowledge; however, an analysis of the metaphorical content might prove as illuminating. If we start from the premise that:

> Literature is an inseparable part of the totality of culture and cannot be studied outside the total cultural context. It cannot be severed from the rest of culture and related directly (by-passing culture) to socio-economic or other factors. These factors influence culture as a whole and only through it and in conjunction with it do they affect literature. The literary process is a part of the cultural process and cannot be torn away from it (Bakhtin, 1986, p. 140).

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[1] "The inappropriate title was chosen for the poem by J. Schmeller, the first editor, from line 57" (Bostock 1976, p. 121).

[2] From Schmeller's 1832 publication and criticism of the text, the interest has not waned. However, the treatment of the text has varied with Steinmeyer most notably deeming it: "das verzweifelste Stück der althochdeutschen Literatur."

[3] For further reference, Valentine Pakis provides an excellent and detail-oriented literature review of various opinions and studies in his essay (Pakis, 2009).

I want to propose neither a mythological/literary analysis nor a strictly linguistic/philological one. In fact, despite the problems of dating the poem, this study will place it within a cultural framework where the outgoing Germanic belief system is subordinated to the Christian Neoplatonic views of the mind, the soul, and the human body. The ninth century's cultural/theological context will provide the backdrop to explain the use of metaphors for the soul/body conceptualization in the apocalyptic text. The Judeo-Christian bifurcated model of soul and body contrasts with the holistic mind/body conception of pre-Christian societies. Although the word 'contrast' might be too strong here, it would be better to see these two metaphorical conceptions of humanity as a dialogue. Jola Skulj, in her article "Comparative Literature and Cultural Identity," states with the Bakhtinian quote in mind:

> The identity of a culture, if we follow Bakhtin and his notion of dialogue, is not univocal and it is neither a sum of different qualities nor of characteristics that clearly set the given culture apart from others. As any individuality, cultural identity is a meeting point of several cross-cultural influences. It is of a complex plurivocal character, open to its own changes in order to preserve its own being in a new context of interests. Our cultural identity is our intertext (Skulj, 2000).

The *Muspilli* is such a place of "polyvocality" where cultural identities meet and change. Starting from the premise that the text is in dialogue with the other writings from the same codex, the cross-cultural influences are a didactic Christian poem in cultural exchange with an old Germanic belief system that forms a syncretistic whole to respond to the texts in the main codex.

The text was written on the last empty pages of a manuscript containing a Latin text ascribed to Augustine dated to the ninth century, although the beginning and end have been lost. The Pseudo-Augustinian book had been dedicated to Louis the German (806–876) by the Archbishop Adalram of Salzburg (in office 821–836) (Steinhoff, 1987, cols. 821–22). The writer must have been suitably impressed by this *Sermo Contra Iudaeos, Paganos et Arrianos*, enough to put pen to a precious book, enough to write in the margins on costly parchment -- to write a poem on the end of the world and the salvation of the soul (Bostock 1976, p. 121).[4] What was it about the *Sermo* that inspired this reaction? What were the writer's circumstances? [5] How long, for example, after the book's completion, did our unknown author give an opinion on its content? We will never know.

Nevertheless, we can make several reasonable assumptions for the following metaphorical analysis of the poem. Firstly, the author was impressed with the primary text, at least enough to leave a commentary within its margins; secondly, the author was at least bilingual and must have had a passing knowledge of Latin to understand

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[4] Bostock states: "The *Muspilli* was entered by some unknown scribe who had observed that it dealt with the same subject as the *Sermo*. Parchment was costly. Even in the ninth century, there were practical men who sacrificed beauty to utility, and such a one scribbled the *Muspilli* even over Adalram's dedication to the Duke" (1976, p. 121).

[5] According to Bostock's summary on authorship, it had been proposed that the duke might have written it. However, Bostock maintains that that would have been impossible due to the dialect. But he states that Wilhelm Braune did not think it "linguistically impossible" (Bostock 1976, p. 121 and fn. 1).

the *Sermo*; thirdly, the author chose not to write in Latin but composed the poem in the vernacular. There can be two reasons for that: the author only had a reading knowledge of Latin, or the didactic nature of the poem lent itself to the vernacular, as we shall see from the metaphorical analysis of the text. Brian Murdoch supports the theory that the author was trying to reach an aristocratic audience underscoring the didactic nature of the topic (Murdoch, 1997, p. 24). Finally, considering the author's cultural influences, we have someone educated with access to court, allowed to write in books dedicated to a king, and chooses to write in the vernacular. Since the *Sermo* inspired a strong reaction in our person, why then choose an eschatological subject?

In her article on universal and individual eschatology in the ninth century, Carola Gottzmann clearly showed the author's preoccupation with the *Sermo* (Gottzmann, 2002). She elucidated the connection between the adversarial stance against Judaism and Adoptionism and the content of the *Muspilli*. For example, Thomas Noble states that Adoptionism was under serious discussion in the late eighth century (Noble, 2015, p. 289). The poet was involved in a conversation with the *Sermo*, effectively trying to answer the baptismal message of the *Sermo* with an apocalyptical poem and the salvation of the soul. When looking at both texts, they essentially describe the spiritual necessities a person had to undergo, from baptism to Final Judgment. Gottzmann pointed to the inherent criticism of non-orthodox views that the author seemed to share with the *Sermo* contents. Her convincing conclusions provide a point of departure to tackle the third aspect of the *Sermo*, those of the *paganos*. Noble states that from the 740s to about the middle of Charlemagne's reign, *norma rectitudinis* [standard of rightness] became a concept, in that "the Carolingians took it as their task to identify what was right and then to demand its implementation. Diversity was unacceptable (2015, p. 295). Following this, the ninth century, as the eighth, was influenced by religious syncretism. The terminology *pagano* represented people in different periods with vastly different religious beliefs. In the ninth century, our author would have been familiar with the *paganos* to the north.

The *Muspilli* represents a nexus of religious syncretism where metaphors of the old belief system meet those of the newer one. As a place of polyvocality, it shows a concerted effort to be didactic.

Part 1: Neoplatonism and Pre-Christian Concepts

Within the OE and OHG literature corpus, the body, mind, and soul configurations are complex systems that fluctuate between philosophical and religious conceptualizations. Leslie Lockett suggests in the introduction to *The Emergence of Mind Representations of Consciousness in Narrative Discourse in English* that OE narratives were "shaped by and in turn helped shape folk understanding of the mind as literally corporeal, or localized in and inextricably interconnected with the body" (Herman, 2011, p. 19).[6]

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[6] The study focuses on using imagery and metaphor in Old English poetry, specifically in the *Exeter Book of Riddles* and the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*. It examines how these texts use physical imagery, such as descriptions of the body and its functions, to convey psychological states and mental processes. Lockett

This holistic body and soul model views the body and soul as interconnected and interdependent parts of a whole. In such a model, the body appears more than a physical shell; a person's soul, or inner essence, is an essential component of their overall being.

The exact definition and understanding of the soul varied over time and across Germanic cultures, but some common themes emerged. Claude Lecouteux mentions that before Christianization, death did not represent an end and that there was not just one word for soul (1986, pp. 229–230). In pre-Christian Germanic beliefs, these different soul conceptions were often associated with luck, fate, and strength. A source of power and energy, they are intimately connected to a person's physical strength and prowess in battle. The different Germanic definitions of the soul were also capable of independent actions, Dag Strömbäck notes these various conceptions of the soul in Old Norse Literature, and he summarizes, "I thus imagine that as something basic in the Old Scandinavian concept we could talk of the soul as a highly mobile and separable part of human beings" (Strömbäck, 1975, p. 16). This soul could take material shape and influence its environment, however whatever happened to this form, would also happen to the body (Eggers, 1957, p. 301; Strömbäck, 1975, p. 19). The connection of body and soul in these Scandinavian concepts shows that the soul is embodied and mobile (he refers to Shamanic traditions). It is anchored to the body, and they form a cohesive unit (1975, p. 22).

In the age of syncretism, these varied conceptions were simplified into a bifurcated model, highlighting a sharper division between body and soul (Flowers, 1983, p. 119). But while this slow bifurcation and simplification occurred during the Carolingian period, pre-Christian soul conceptions were harder to eradicate. Eggers notes that the *Heliand* exhibited several words used for soul conceptions in the pre-Christian context (Eggers, 1957). However, one word, *seola*, took over the semantic domain for soul conceptions and became dominant. Eggers points to the broad semantic field in the *Heliand* as a syncretistic work in which the pre-Christian mindset meets Christian concepts that are difficult to express in a holistic model. This fracture in the translation of concepts, as *seola*, for example, is not a problem anymore by the time of the *Muspilli*, where the writer uses the term without hesitation or doubt of being misunderstood [ln. 2].

The holistic body-soul configuration conflicted with Neoplatonic philosophy and early Christian anthropologies emphasizing "the ontological and moral opposition between the fleshly body and the soul" (Herman, 2011, p. 19). Neoplatonists saw the soul as an intermediate between the intellect and the physical body. They believed that the soul was immortal and had a divine origin. According to Neoplatonism, the soul is the link between the spiritual and the material realms, and its goal is to return to its divine source. The relationship between the soul and the body was problematic, as the body was seen as a material and temporary form of existence, while the soul was spiritual and eternal. Neoplatonists viewed the body as a prison or a hindrance to

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argues that Old English literature uses embodiment and metaphor to represent the mind, reflecting the culture's holistic view of the mind-body relationship. It suggests that in Old English literature, the mind is not seen as separate from the body but intimately connected. The study also examines the use of metaphor in these texts to understand and represent the mind and its processes, such as memory, emotion, and perception.

the soul's spiritual development and believed that the soul's liberation from the body was essential for its ultimate union with the divine.

Two influential proponents, Augustine of Hippo (354–430) and Hrabanus Maurus (784–856), give a better idea of this influence. Neoplatonism held that the physical world was inferior to the spiritual realm, the true realm of being. Augustine adopted this distinction and argued that the human soul, which he believed was immortal and divine, was superior to the physical body.[7] By extension, in his theological and philosophical work, Hrabanus Maurus, a ninth-century Benedictine monk and scholar, emphasized the importance of the human soul and its role in achieving union with the divine. As Murdoch states, he was known as the "*praeceptor Germaniae*, who probably influenced the educational policies of Lewis the Pious, which, while not anti-German, were more strictly theological than his father's" (Murdoch, 1997, p. 6). Carolingian scholars, like Hrabanus, were interested in disseminating their learning on the Christian conception of the body and soul. Brian Murdoch noted the difficulties in linguistic and cultural conversion (Murdoch, 1997, p. 9). But despite the problem of translating this concept, both linguistically and culturally, the *Muspilli* is a syncretistic mixture of that effort. The choice of the vernacular emphasizes that the author had didactic goals that included an audience more versed in their native language than Latin. In short, the writer wanted to reach a broader audience.

Part 2: Metaphor Theory

When analyzing a poem from a metaphorical perspective, it is worth delving into the fields of cognitive linguistics and metaphor. Cognitive linguistics is a discipline within linguistics that seeks to understand how language is processed and represented in the human mind. It explores the connection between language and cognition and how our mental processes and experiences influence our interpretation of language. Cognitive linguistics asserts that language is not merely a system of arbitrary symbols or rules but is deeply rooted in our sensory and motor experiences, such as grammar and syntax. Additionally, it emphasizes the concept of prototypicality, which suggests that words and concepts have central or typical instances that are more easily recognized and processed than less typical or peripheral instances.

Furthermore, context plays an essential role in shaping the meaning of language. [8] Metaphor theory, a branch of cognitive linguistics, aims to comprehend how people use metaphors to understand and communicate abstract concepts. This theory posits that metaphors are not just linguistic devices but are deeply ingrained in how we think and reason about the world. The meaning of language is not solely determined

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[7] His arguments extended to the reassessment of an embodied deity as well. Paulsen states, "This conclusion need not rest solely on inference, because Augustine acknowledges that belief in God's corporeality was still found among contemporary Christians, whom he mocked for not being able or willing to interpret the Bible allegorically" (Paulsen, 1990, p. 116).

[8] For an in-depth explanation, please refer to "Metaphor and Beyond" (Fludernik et al. 1999) for cognitive linguistics and metaphor theory. For an analysis of culture and metaphor from an anthropological angle, please refer to "The Cultural Basis of Metaphor" (Quinn, 1991, pp. 57–60).

by the individual words or grammatical structures used but also by the social and cultural context in which language exists.

George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, two prominent figures in metaphor theory, argue that metaphors are not just linguistic expressions or figures of speech but are fundamental to our everyday thought and reasoning processes. They believe that metaphors structure our understanding of abstract concepts and help us make sense of complex and unfamiliar ideas. According to Lakoff and Johnson, metaphors are based on conceptual mappings between different domains of experience. For instance, the metaphor of "argument is war" maps the domain of war, with its concepts of attack, defense, and victory, onto the domain of argument, enabling us to comprehend and reason about argument in terms of these more concrete and familiar concepts.

Metaphors are more than just ornamental language. They are embedded in our bodily experiences and perceptions. The theory suggests that our physical encounters with the world influence our conceptual systems. Metaphors serve as a means of connecting abstract concepts with these physical experiences. They call this holistic view embodied realism and contend that it is "the view that the locus of experience, meaning, and thought is the ongoing series of embodied organism-environment interactions that constitute our understanding of the world" (Lakoff & Johnson, 2002, p. 249). This is the cognitive process behind, as Lockett agrees, "metaphor generation" but also shows that a "particular model of the mind might begin as a literal expression of folk psychology, but gradually become metaphorical" (Lockett, 2011, p. 44). Hence, the folk models of the holistic mind/body conceptualization are observable in narratives and show fluidity between Neoplatonic and pre-Christian conceptions in the case of the *Muspilli*.

Part 3: The Dead Rising

Although fragmentary, the *Muspilli* can be separated into three parts. The first deals with the fate of the soul, as the heavenly and satanic hosts fight over it. Secondly, we have the famous *Zweikampf* [ordeal by combat] between Elias and the Antichrist following the destruction of the earth. The last part describes the Last Judgment, the resurrection of the dead, and the confession of sins (Braune, 1969, pp. 85–89).[9] It is this third part that merits special attention.

A non-dualist corporeal conception of the mind and soul can be seen toward the end of the text, where it is the body that speaks of the sin that soul and body committed together ("dâr scal denne hant sprehhan,   houpit sagên,/allero lido uuelîhc   unzi in den luzîgun vinger,/uuaz er untar desen mannun   mordes kifrumita" (ln. 91–93). (It is the hand that speaks, the head that says, and all limbs unto the little finger that confess to murderous deeds). The metaphorical and vivid quality of the scene shows no split in the conceptualization of the soul and body. Although the concept of the Last Judgment is quite abstract, the author draws it back into a human conception by using a bodily metaphor. Lockett believes Lakoff and Johnson's definition of embodied

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[9] All quotations for the *Muspilli* are from Braune, 1969. Any translations are my own.

realism "shapes and constrains the blending of source and target domains, regardless of their semantic content" (Lockett, 2011, p. 56). Furthermore, she states:

> "… where the generation of a concept has been strongly constrained by embodied perception, and there exists no viable challenge to the perception that this embodied reality is literally true, then there is no reason to call that concept a metaphor … Second, this concept could move toward the metaphorical end of the spectrum if some cultural influence were to trigger a new recognition that the target domain is not accurately described by those experientially constrained features of the source domain. Eventually, the two domains might come to be acknowledged as wholly discrete, but if the mapping of features from source to target continued at the level of language alone, ornamental metaphors would emerge, and if mapping continued at the conceptual level, conceptual metaphors would emerge" (Lockett, 2011, p. 56).

Therefore, the poem appears to have an emerging ornamental metaphor between the holistic and the Neoplatonic model. The cultural influence of the Christian mindset is triggering the need for discreteness in the target domain. The metaphor in the Judgment passage shows the soul and body united in testifying before Christ (ln. 91–93) and continues far more detailed than at the beginning of the text, where the author speaks quite distinctly of the embattled soul in a contest between heaven and earth. There is no mention of a body in the beginning, and it points to a common Christian conceptualization of the soul and its redemption or eternal torment.[10] The abstract beginning is a mis-en-scène. Its immediacy draws the reader in and begs them to continue, so the author leads them from the abstract to the concrete process of the embattled soul on its path to damnation or redemption.

The beginning of the text fails to evoke any pre-Christian iconography, with the usage of *sêla* in line two as a prominent indicator. A synthesis of pre-Christian soul-related concepts has culminated in the emergence of *seola/sêla* as the primary term for the soul. Unlike the author of the *Heliand*, the writer refrains from providing different concepts or explanations, signifying a sense of confidence in the reader's comprehension (Eggers, 1957).

Instead, the author's work centers on the spiritual redemption of the soul within the context of intricate pre-Christian societal frameworks while exploring the inter-relatedness of the soul and physical body as a commentary to the Pseudo-Augustinian *Sermo* within the codex. The author distinguishes between the angelic and demonic host fighting for the soul and the final Day of Judgment at the end of the text. "Each

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[10] . . . sîn tac piqueme, daz er touuan scal./uuanta sâr sô sih diu sêla in den sind arhevit,/enti si den lîhhamun likkan lâzzit,/sô quimit ein heri fona himilzungalon,/daz andar fona pehhe: dâr pâgant siu umpi./sorgên mac diu sêla, unzi diu suona argêt,/za uuederemo herie si gihalôt uuerde./uuanta ipu sia daz Satanazses kisindi kiuuinnit,/daz leitit sia sâr dâr iru leid uuirdit,/in fuir enti in finstrî: daz ist rehto virinlîh ding./upi sia avar kihalônt die die dâr fona himile quemant,/enti si dero engilo eigan uuirdit,/die pringent sia sâr ûf in himilo rîhi:/dâr ist lîp âno tôd, lioht âno finstrî,/selida âno sorgun: dâr nist neoman siuh (Braune, 1969, ll. 1–15).

man will rise from the grave, retaining his body to speak of his sins" (ln. 82–82).[11] This distinction implies that the soul cannot account for its actions without the body. Additionally, the repeated allusion that no one can hide before the judge and his host (further strengthened in the passage where no man or his kin can flee from the Muspilli [ln. 57]) suggests the corporeal conception of body and soul as a unit is needed to give testimony.

This vivid concentration on metaphor enables the author to explain the bifurcation between different belief systems: The folkloric tradition that holds to a corporeal conception of soul and body and that of the Neoplatonic ideal of Christianity. Unlike the cursory mention of reanimated dead in the *Vulgate*, the author takes deliberate care in detailing the physical and psychological ramifications of the Last Judgment:

> et vidi mortuos magnos et pusillos stantes in conspectu throni et libri aperti sunt et alius liber apertus est qui est vitae et iudicati sunt mortui ex his quae scripta erant in libris secundum opera ipsorum.
> et dedit mare mortuos qui in eo erant et mors et inferus dederunt mortuos qui in ipsis erant et iudicatum est de singulis secundum opera ipsorum.
> et inferus et mors missi sunt in stagnum ignis haec mors secunda est stagnum ignis
> et qui non est inventus in libro vitae scriptus missus est in stagnum ignis ("The Vulgate, Revelations" 2022, Chap. 20:12).
> [And I saw the dead, great and small, standing in the presence of the throne. And the books were opened: and another book was opened, which was the book of life. And the dead were judged by those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead that were in it: and death and hell gave up their dead that were in them. And they were judged, everyone according to their works. And hell and death were cast into the pool of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the pool of fire ("The Vulgate, Revelations" 2022)]

According to the *Vulgate*, the Judgment of the reanimated dead focuses not on confessing their sins but on whether their names are contained in the Book of Life. While the *Muspilli*'s author concentrates on the reanimated dead's physicality, the *Vulgate* exhibits no such fascination. The emphasis that the author of the *Muspilli* placed on the confession is extraordinarily detailed and shows a preoccupation on the author's part with the problem of the body/soul divide. Adhering to the text of the *Vulgate* was not as important as their need to didacticize the Final Judgment.

Understandably, the goal of didacticism resulted in a deviation from the *Vulgate*. In many cultures, the connection between the soul and body is considered strong, making it difficult to accept the concept of disconnecting the two. Germanic beliefs, for example, emphasize the notion of the reanimated dead, where deceased family members rise from their graves and communicate with the living. Reanimation

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[11] denne varant engila uper dio marha,/uuechant deota, uuîssant ze dinge./denne scal manno gilîh fona deru moltu arstên./lôssan sih ar dero lêuuo vazzôn: scal imo avar sîn lîp piqueman,/daz er sîn reht allaz kirahhôn muozzi,/enti imo after sînên tâtin arteilit uuerde (Braune, 1969, ll. 79–84).

differs from the Christian perspective, where the soul departs from the body to the afterlife. Instead, according to the pre-Christian belief, there is an intermediate stage where the body and soul remain connected, allowing interaction between the living and the dead.

For example, a *draugr* (plural: *draugar*), a creature from Norse sagas, is a type of undead or walking corpse (Strömbäck, 1975, p. 8). In Old Norse literature, the term *draugr* describes a variety of undead beings, ranging from ghosts and spirits to powerful warriors who have risen from their graves. *Draugar* could be incredibly strong, grow enormous, shape-shift into various forms, and resist physical attacks and spells. They were associated with death and decay and said to haunt graveyards, burial mounds, and other sacred sites as vengeful beings, seeking revenge on those who had wronged them in life or disturbed their resting place. They were also depicted as greedy and hoarding treasure and sometimes said to guard sacred objects. Highly skilled in magic, they could use spells to control the weather and cause other supernatural phenomena (Lecouteux, 1986, pp. 228–229). Claude Lecouteux notes that the idea of the *Wiedergänger* [walking corpse] ultimately changes meaning between the ninth and twelfth century (Lecouteux, 1986, p. 221). He summarizes that the *Wiedergänger*, which had been corporeal in the early middle ages – not shadows or ghosts – became designated as *fantasmata* under the influence of the Church (1986, p. 221).

With cultural concepts such as ghosts and the reanimated dead in conflict with the soul, leaving the body behind as a mere shell, it is logical that the author spent more time on the idea of destruction, dismemberment, dislocation, and isolation. To emphasize their didactic intent, the author detailed the destruction of the world, the dislocation and isolation of kinship groups, and lastly, the dismemberment of the body, emphasizing it having risen from the earth. Therefore, the poem progresses from a cosmological end to an individual one, which Gottzman pointed out in her article (Gottzmann, 2002). Framing this metaphorical and didactic endeavor is the first passage, where the author explains the Christian model of the soul leaving the body and concludes with the Judgment.

Using the undead as a didactic tool is common in medieval literature. Lecouteux states,

"Die *exempla*, die darauf abzielen, die Menschen zu belehren und zu erbauen und sie zu einem Leben im wahren Glauben anzuspornen, verwenden das Thema Wiedergänger: Der Tote bringt den Beweis der göttlichen Allmacht oder führt den Menschen das Bild der ewigen Verdammnis vor Augen" (1986, p. 219).

[The *exempla* that aim to educate humans, lift them and encourage them to live a life in the true faith use the *Wiedergänger* theme: The Dead displays the evidence of God's omnipotence or shows humans an image of eternal damnation.]

One could argue that the writer of the *Muspilli* had the latter intent in mind when he skillfully and passionately dismembered the undead body as a didactic tool to explain the importance of the Final Judgment.

Part 4: Discussions on Heresy

The writer appears to have been actively participating in the ongoing discourse surrounding the *paganos* who reside in the Northern region, as this subject matter was a commonly discussed and fairly controversial topic during the Carolingian period. Carola Gotzmann states: "Es kann also davon ausgegangen werden, daß der Verfasser bestimmte Absichten verfolgte, die sich vielleicht eher aus den theologischen Gegebenheiten der Traditionen und der Zeit erklären lassen" [Therefore, it can be assumed that the writer had certain intentions that might be better explained by the theological factors of traditions and the time.] (Gottzmann, 2002, p. 11). She believes that the author, considering the Pseudo-Augustinian text with which it was found, can be inserted into the discussion or as she states, there is: "…ein breites Spektrum von Auseinandersetzungen, in dem Judentum, Arianismus und Adoptianismus Gegenstand heftigster Diskussionen waren, zumal das Universalgericht mit Christus als dem göttlichen Richter gegenüber den Kritikern bzw. Häretikern der Verteidigung bedurfte" [… a broad spectrum of conflicts in which Judaism, Arianism, and Adoptionism are objects of fierce discussion; especially since the universal Judgment with Christ as the divine judge in opposition to critics (heretics) needed defense.] (p. 12). She calls for the placement of the *Muspilli* into said discussion. One aspect of this argument is the use of metaphor in the judgment scene.

Instead of following the biblical passage with a cursory list of the saved and the damned, the author extends the meaning of the poem into an *Indvidualeschatologie* as Gottzmann stated: A call by the poet for an individualized and personal confession of sins, against the kinship idea of pre-Christian groups.

In this context, one could argue that the word *muspille* (ln. 57) exemplifies religious syncretism and shows a word of Germanic origin but with the Christian meaning of the end of the world. Christian conceptions of the world replace the old kinship system of pre-Christian culture and folklore. The word seldom occurs, probably because it was not needed for very long and was soon replaced with biblical derivatives.

For context on usage, there are passages in the *Heliand* "anttat mûdspelles megin oƀar man ferid /endi thesaro uueroldes" (Taeger, 1996, ll. 2591–92) ["until the might of Doomsday may come /over men, the end of this world" (Dewey, 2011)]. The second mention occurs in line 4358 with added context to line 4377 in the Taeger edition.[12] Tonya Dewey notes that in OHG, the word translates to the end of the world, a reference to the *Muspilli*, and Old Norse, for a god. However, she translated it as Doomsday once and then kept the original in the poem. I agree with her decision because it is far more logical that the word in both contexts has semantic similarities.

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[12] "The Muspilli comes in the dark night, /just as the thief goes secretly in his deeds, /so the day will come to men, the last of this light, /so that these people know it not before. /Just as the flood did in ancient days, which destroyed people /with wave-streams there in Noah's times, /except that God redeemed him with his household, /the Holy Lord, against the onrush of the flood. /So was the fire also come hot from heaven, /which encircled the high mountains around Sodom-land /with black flames, grim and greedy, /so that no man there was saved except Lot alone. /The Lord's angels led him thence, /and his two daughters, onto a mountain, /so that burning fire destroyed all the others, /both land and people, with flames. /As the fire had come before, as was the flood before the same, /so will be the last day./ Of this shall each of all people think before the assembly. /There is great need of this for each of men. /Therefore let you take care in your minds" (Dewey, 2011, ll. 4360–4380).

In the Christian tradition, Doomsday could easily fit into pre-Christian parameters, as in the *Muspilli* and the *Heliand*. One could even go a step further and postulate that since the *Heliand* was quite a literary undertaking, the writer of the *Muspilli* might have had access to it. Since the conversions of the Saxons were a controversial topic in the eighth and ninth centuries, the insertion of the word *muspille* could have been on purpose. This would emphasize the author's didactic goal and be a nod toward the *Heliand* and its syncretic content.

This is further underlined by the metaphor because the soul and body as one (in the pre-Christian mindset, a typical conceptualization) stand before the judge. However, the metaphor fragments the body into different parts, outlining the need to sever kinship ties and accept the sinner's individuality and confession. By using the holistic idea of soul and body and fragmenting it, the author didacticizes the event for their readers. The metaphoric usage underscores Lakoff and Johnson's assertion that "we typically conceptualize the nonphysical in terms of the physical – that is, we conceptualize the less clearly delineated in terms of the more clearly delineated" (Lakoff & Johnson, 1981, p. 59). The poet and their written work are connected within a syncretistic world where various cultural expressions converge. Such an amalgamation is not always a deliberate choice on the writer's part; rather, it is a natural aspect of their experiences and the cultural milieu in which they are immersed (Lakoff & Johnson, 1981, p. 57).

Fragmentation of the body and the landscape is one of the common denominators in the text, and both are intimately linked. For example, as the blood of Elias falls onto the earth - his broken body and its fragmentation - triggers the world's destruction. Again, mirroring mythological and Biblical sources, the world is disjointed, like the body of the prophet and the bodies of the sinners. The itemized description details what will burn, from mountains to trees, until all *mittilagart* is engulfed. The reminder that no aid comes to the individual from his kin, that they will stand alone at the end of the world, shows the poet point from the destruction of the macrocosm (*mittilagart*) to the detailed description of the dismembered body, the microcosm, whose parts give witness after death [ln. 50–60].[13] Likewise, the individual is dismembered like *mittilagart* and rendered helpless before an overpowering end. It is clever to show the destruction of the microcosm mirrored in that of the macrocosm. It is evident to the reader that the social connections and family ties that formed the foundation of pre-Christian society will disintegrate, and even the physical body will be devoted entirely to serving Christ, right down to its smallest component. A person cannot hide their sins within the safety of the group, nor does the body hide any sins at the Judgement.

The literary technique of conveying devastation through disintegration holds significant power over those who read it. Germanic mythology and Biblical passages share a common understanding of the impact of destruction at the end of the world. In the poem, the deceased are portrayed as emerging from a shattered landscape,

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[13] sô daz Eliases pluot in erda kitriufit,/sô inprinnant die perga, poum ni kistentit/ênîhc in erdu, ahâ artruknênt,/muor varsuuilhit sih, suilizôt lougiu der himil,/mâno vallit, prinnit mittilagart,/stên ni kistentit, verit denne stûatago in lant,/verit mit diu vuiru viriho uuîsôn:/dar ni mac denne mak andremo helfan uora demo muspille/denne daz preita uuasal allaz varprinnit,/enti vuir enti luft iz allaz arfurpit,/uuâr ist denne diu marha, dâr man dâr eo mit sînên mâgon piehc? (Braune, 1969, ll. 50–60).

symbolically dismembered, proclaiming their sins. The text teaches us that Christian doctrine emphasizes individual responsibility, resulting in a separation between the body and soul. Even if one endeavors to conceal their misdeeds from God, their body parts prove the truth. The repetition of each figurative concept in the poem reinforces the message and provides a clearer understanding of it. Additionally, the unusual depiction of the suffering Christ at the end of the text further strengthens the personal responsibility for the sins committed.[14]

The mention of Christ's wounds and suffering for the love of humanity stands in opposition to the typical depiction of Christ in Glory as the world ruler (Gottzmann, 2002, p. 21). However, the poem's context expresses the individuality of the resurrection and forgiveness scene by focusing on Christ's body and wounds. Comparing the fragmented body of the confession scene with the wounded body of Jesus equalizes and personalizes the experience for the reader and calls for a conceptualization of the self and its sins in opposition to pre-Christian ideas of soul and body and, by extension, the kinship framework. Carola Gottzmann states: "Vom Universalgericht ist zwar kein einziger Mensch ausgeschlossen, denn es müssen sich ihm alle stellen, aber es ist und bleibt eine Entscheidung über das jeweilige Verhalten des einzelnen und nicht eines Volkes oder anderer verbandsartiger Gemeinschaften" [In fact, not a single human is excluded from the uinversal judgment, because everyone hast to confront it, but it is and remains a decision about the behavior of individuals and not that of a people or other communities] (Gottzmann, 2002, p. 21). One thing to note here is that Carola Gottzmann proves that the author of the *Muspilli* intentionally inserted their text with the Pseudo-Augustinian text in mind to show the kerygma of Christ and the unity of Jesus and God. The poet aimed to pronounce the resurrection and forgiveness of sins as a personal message (Gottzmann, 2002, pp. 30–31).

The intentionality of the poet shows their interest in placing the text in dialogue with the *Sermo.* The carefully paralleled theme of dismemberment illustrates their preoccupation with showing that individual responsibility for all actions and sins is at the heart of the Final Judgement. The author highlights the theme of physical disintegration through various instances, including the blood of Elias, reanimated corpses, and the depiction of Christ with distinct wounds. The question remains, however, whether the poet wrote with conscious intentionality or their writing exhibits an unconscious reaction to cultural stimuli in their environment. This question has no answer because we do not know the mind of the writer nor the environmental circumstances of the codex (such as access to or general importance of the work).

The writer responded to the *Sermo* with a well-defined and elaborate depiction of the End of Days. They listed concepts that may already be familiar to Christian readers but would have a more profound effect on individuals who still had some association with pre-Christian beliefs. The didactization of the Judgment shows a fluid cultural environment of Christian and pre-Christian conceptualization of the body and soul. The author inserts this personal appeal to understand and comment on the Augustinian text beforehand and frames the different conceptualizations of body and

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[14] denne der paldêt der gipuazzit hapêt,/denner ze deru suonu quimit./uuirdit denne furi kitragan daz frôno chrûci,/dâr der hêligo Christ ana arhangan uuard./denne augit er dio mâsûn, dio er in deru menniskî anfênc,dio er duruh desse mancunnes minna fardolêta (Braune, 1969, ll. 99–101).

soul metaphorically. This "polyvocality" of the text proves its strength and shows the fluctuating cultural and religious beliefs in its form, not only in its contents.

Declarations

Competing interests The author has no competing interests to declare that are relevant to the content of this article.

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