

***Fēðerhama* and *hæleðhelm*: The Equipment of Devils¹**

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Several facts about *Genesis B* set it apart from other Old English works. The first, and most important, is that it at present seems to be the only Old English poem with a clear Old Saxon antecedent.² Rather than being an “original” Old English composition, it is what Alger N. Doane calls a “transliteration”³ — a systematic movement

1 I would like to thank the two anonymous readers of this essay for their helpful remarks, many of which have been incorporated here.

2 However, Bredehoft argues that “metrical anomalies” in *The Dream of the Rood*, *Solomon and Saturn*, *The Battle of Finnsburh*, and *The Metrical Preface to Wærferth’s Translation of Gregory’s Dialogues* can be explained on account of Old Saxon influence and that this metrical evidence helps to date the poems to Alfred’s reign (which, of course, is the widely accepted date for the Old English *Genesis B* [c.900]); Bredehoft, *Authors*, 70 and 70, n. 11, where he mentions a forthcoming article entitled “Old Saxon Influence on Old English Verse: Four New Cases.”

3 Doane’s speculations about the way in which a portion of the Old Saxon *Genesis* came to be transliterated and interpolated into Oxford, Bodleian Library, Junius 11 are lengthy and fascinating, but his summary (with specifics which cannot be proven) is as follows: “About 850 a *Genesis* was composed in a recently renewed Saxon poetic medium and combined with the *Heliand* in a royal edition [. . .] In 856 it (or a specially made copy) could have been given to Aethelwulf and almost immediately donated to Canterbury and more-or-less forgotten. About 900, when the ancestor of *Genesis A* was being copied, it having been found that the exemplar lacked the story of the Fall of Man and that there was at hand an old royal book containing useful poetic material relating to the Fall, as well as illustrations, those parts were extracted, transliterated into early W[est]-S[axon] and interpolated into *Genesis A*, along with the pictures”; Doane, ed., *The Saxon Genesis*, 53-54. This “combined edition” was then the ancestor of Junius 11, which, I think, Doane dates about 50 years too late. I believe its date is c.975 rather than c.1025; see Lockett, “An Integrated Re-Examination,” and, for arguments suggesting that Ælfric may have known and been influenced by *Genesis A*, see Fox,

between mutually intelligible dialects. Second, the Saxon Genesis which was “transliterated” into *Genesis B* can be dated rather precisely and securely to *c.*850, not long after a closely related text, the *Heliand* (dated 821-840), fragments of which are found in the same manuscript as the Saxon Genesis. Third, the location of the scriptorium in which the Saxon Genesis and the *Heliand* were penned has been narrowed down to three places: Fulda (most commonly), Werden, or Essen (less commonly).⁴ In other words, we know that the poetic vocabulary of *Genesis B* is, for the most part, the poetic vocabulary of an Old Saxon poem of the mid-ninth century, most likely composed in the scriptorium at Fulda. The effect of this, as Doane points out, is to draw “the receptor language [Old English] into the intertexts of the donor text [Saxon Genesis].”⁵ What, though, are the “intertexts” of a mid-ninth century Old Saxon poem? Are these demonstrably and significantly different from the “intertexts” of other Old English poetry? Through the analysis of two of the more puzzling lexical items in *Genesis B* — *feðerhama* and *hæleðhelm* — I hope to demonstrate how a broad nexus of associations in cognate languages and in the glossarial tradition can at once illuminate and confound our understanding of Old English vocabulary.

The word *feðerhama*, first of all, appears twice in *Genesis B*, first as the fallen Lucifer encourages one of his able followers to seek out Adam and Eve in Eden:

“gif ic ænegum þegne þeodenmadmas
 geara forgeafe þenden we on þan godan rice
 gesælige sæton and hæfdon ure setla geweald
 þonne he me na on leofran tid leanum ne meahte
 mine gife gyldan gif his gien wolde
 minra þegna hwilc gepafa wurðan
 þæt he up heonon ute mihte
 cuman þurh þas clustro and hæfde cræft mid him
 þæt he mid feðerhoman fleogan meahte,

“Ælfric,” 198-99. If Junius 11 is rightly dated to *c.*975, then one must recall, too, that the Old Saxon *Heliand* was copied by an Englishman, in England, in the late 10th century, probably at Canterbury; London, British Library, Cotton Caligula A.vii (commonly referred to as “C”) is one of only two complete manuscripts of the *Heliand*.

4 Doane, ed., *The Saxon Genesis*, 44-47. See also the slightly more recent overview in Cathey, ed., *Heliand*, 17-18.

5 Doane, ed., *The Saxon Genesis*, 49. The language of the Saxon Genesis and of the *Heliand* is what Doane calls a “poetic grapholect,” that is, “an abstraction that includes a multiplicity of dialects” — never anyone’s spoken language but “an artificial language for alliterative poetry that was used by at least two poets”; Doane, ed., *The Saxon Genesis*, 43 and 45.

windan on wolcne þær geworht stondað
 adam and eue on eorðrice
 mid welan bewunden and we synd aworpene hider
 on þas deopan dalo.”

(*Genesis B*, 409-21a)⁶

[“If I ever gave princely treasures to any thane, back when we sat happy in that good kingdom and had the power of our thrones, then he could not repay my favour with reward at a better time [than] if any of my thanes would still consent to it that he could go up out of here, through these gates, and had the skill with him that he could fly with a ‘feather-coat,’ circle in the sky, where Adam and Eve stand created in the earthly kingdom, wrapped up in happiness, while we are thrown down here in these deep valleys.”]

The second occurrence comes as Eve attempts to convince Adam to eat the fruit:

“ic mæg heonon geseon
 hwær he sylf siteð, þæt is suð and east,
 welan bewunden, se ðas woruld gesceop.
 geseo ic him his englas ymbe hweorfan
 mid feðerhaman, ealra folca mæst,
 wereda wynsumast.”

(*Genesis B*, 666b-71a)

[“From here I can see where he himself sits, that is, south and east, wrapped up in happiness, he who created this world. I see his angels moving about him with ‘feather-coats,’ the greatest of all people, the most beautiful of hosts.”]

Significantly, I believe, both occurrences appear in direct speech, once from Satan himself and once from Eve as she experiences her false vision of heaven. In both cases, all that can be said with certainty is that the *feðerhama* is what enables Satan’s servant to fly to Eden and what Eve “sees” as enabling the angels in her false vision to move around God. One might also note the repetition of “welan bewunden” in these two passages (420a and 668a), which has the effect of linking Eve’s speech back to Satan’s: they speak using the same vocabulary.

6 Doane, ed., *The Saxon Genesis*. Quotations from *Genesis B* are taken from this edition. All translations are my own unless otherwise indicated.

The word *feðerhama* and related forms are, however, reasonably common in Old English. The *Dictionary of Old English* (hereafter, *DOE*), defining the word as “wing” or “plumage” (literally, “feather-covering”), gives the two examples from *Genesis B*, one from the *Phoenix* which clearly demonstrates that the word need not connote anything more than feathers (“Eall bið geniwad / feorh ond feberhoma swa he æt frympe wæs,” 279b-80 [All is renewed, body and feather-coat, just as he was originally]),⁷ and additional examples from the *Solomon and Saturn Pater Noster Prose* and Ælfric’s *Catholic Homilies* which are similarly unremarkable, but which do indicate that the *feðerhama* is also commonly associated with angels and can translate Latin *penna/pen-natus*. The most suggestive citation in the *DOE* entry comes from *Solomon and Saturn I*, just after Solomon has enumerated the powers of the individual letters appearing in the *Pater Noster*:

Mæg simle se Godes cwide gumena gehwylcum
 ealra feonda gehwane fleondne gebrengan
 ðurh mannes muð, manfulra heap,
 sweartne geswencan, næfre hie ðæs syllice
 bleoum bregdað, æfter bancofan
 feðerhoman onfoð. Hwilum flotan gripað.
 Hwilum hie gewendað in wyrmes lic⁸
 stranges and sticoles, stingeð nieten,
 feldgongende feoh gestruedeð.

(*Solomon and Saturn I*, 146-54)⁹

[The saying of God (the *Pater Noster*) always, for every man, may put to flight each and every demon, through the mouth of a man, a host of evil ones, may put black ones to torment, even if they wondrously change forms after they put a “feather-coat” on the body. Sometimes they attack the sailor. Sometimes they change into the likeness of a worm, powerful and biting; it stings the animal, ravages field-going cattle.

7 Blake, ed., *The Phoenix*.

8 Of course, the phrase “in wyrmes lic” is the same as in *Genesis B*, where the transformation of the tempter is described as follows: “Wearp hine þa on wyrmes lic and wand him þa ymbutan / þone deaðes beam þurh deofles cræft” (*Genesis B*, 491-92: He [the devil’s agent] then, through the devil’s craft, threw himself into the shape of a worm and wound himself around that tree of death). In *Guthlac B*, the transformation is “on wyrmes bleo” (911b; quoted in full below, n. 10).

9 *Solomon and Saturn I*, in Anlezark, ed., *Old English Dialogues*, 59-71.

This explicit association of the “feðerhama” with shape-changing is unique, at least so far as I am aware, though the opening of the *Solomon and Saturn Pater Noster Prose* (9-33) consists of a list of the forms in which the *Pater Noster* and the devil contend: shape-changing, though not specifically facilitated by a “feather-coat,” is consistently part of the devil’s repertoire in these poems; one might also compare the changing forms of the devils in *Guthlac B* and, significantly, in Ælfric’s life of St. Martin, in which the devil transforms himself into the likenesses of the “heathen” gods.¹⁰

A further example, which in the *DOE* appears instead under a different headword (*fīperhama*), comes from Ælfric’s *Catholic Homilies* I.26 on the conflict between Peter and Simon Magus. Simon not only flies with a devilish *feðerhama*, but he also changes his shape and animates a dead body “mid deofles cræfte,”¹¹ an expression which, as Robert Emmett Finnegan has noted, is often contrasted with God’s “handmægen”¹² and which particularly occurs in close proximity to the “items of power” and to the messenger’s apparent transformation into the worm in *Genesis B*:

10 “Hwilum wedende swa wilde deor / cirmdon on corðre, hwilum cyrdon eft / minne mansceapan on mennisc hiw / breahmta mæste, hwilum brugdon eft / awyrge wærlogan on wyrmes bleo, / earne adloman, attre spiwdon” (*Guthlac B*, 907-12: Sometimes, raging like wild beasts, they shrieked all together; sometimes, the evil, sinful attackers turned again into human form with the greatest of noises; sometimes, the cursed oath-breakers transformed once more into the form of a serpent: the fire-crippled wretched ones spewed poison); text from Roberts, ed., *The Guthlac Poems*. “Mid þusend searocræftum wolde se swicola deofol / þone halgan wer on sume wisan beswican / and hine gesewenlicne on manegum scinhiwum / þam halgan æteowde, on þæra hæpenra goda hiwe; / hwilon on Ioues hiwe, þe is gehaten þor, / hwilon on Mercuries, þe men hatað oþon, / hwilon on Ueneris þære fulan gyden, / þe men hatað Frig, and on manegum oþrum hiwum / hine bræd se deofol on þæs bisceopes gesihþe” (*Ælfric’s Lives of Saints*, II.31.710-18: With a thousand tricks the deceitful devil wished to trick that holy man in some way, and he showed himself plainly to that holy man in many illusory forms, in the shapes of the gods of the heathens: sometimes in the form of Jove, who is called Thor; sometimes in the form of Mercury, whom men call Odin; sometimes in the form of Venus, the foul goddess, whom men call Frig, and into many other forms did the devil change himself in sight of the bishop); text from Skeat, ed., *Ælfric’s Lives of Saints*.

11 “Simon þa mid deofles cræfte dyde þæt ðæs deadan lic styriende wæs” (*CH* I.26.115-16: Simon then, with the devil’s craft, made it that the body of the dead [man] was moving); all quotations (with abbreviations expanded, capitals added, and punctuation modified) from Ælfric’s *CH* I are taken from Clemoes, ed., *Ælfric’s Catholic Homilies: The First Series*. See also above, n. 10.

12 Finnegan, “God’s *handmægen*.”

Symon bræd his hiw¹³ ætforan þam casere swa þæt he wearð færllice gēpuht cnapa and eft harwenge, hwiltidum on wimmannes hade and eft þarrihte on cnihtthade. (Ælfric's *CH* I.26.172-74)

Petres gēpyld gēþafode þæt ða hellican fynd hine up geond þa lyft sume hwile feredon þæt he on his fylle þe hetelicor hreosan sceolde; and se þe lytle ær beotlice mid deoflicum fiþerhaman fleon wolde þæt he ða færllice his feþe forlure. (Ælfric's *CH* I.26.244-47)

[Simon varied his form before the emperor, such that he was suddenly thought a youth, and then a figure of hoary old age: sometimes in the form of a woman, and then right away back in the form of a young man.

Peter's patience permitted the hell fiends to carry him (Simon) up through the air for a time so that, in his fall, he might sink the more violently; and so that he, who a short while earlier would fly with a devilish "feather-coat," might then suddenly lose his power of locomotion.]

The evidence to this point, therefore, indicates only that the *feðerhama* enables flight in a connotatively neutral way and that it may have some connection with the changing appearances of devils.

While textual evidence is of primary importance in determining the semantic range of an Old English word, the *DOE* entries also include some instances of glossing. Most productively, the glosses can provide Latin equivalents which open up the search for meaning and sources to the entire corpus of Latin literature which might have been known in Anglo-Saxon England. For *feðerhama*, there are three glosses of note. In Cambridge, Corpus Christi College 223, the word *pennatum* in Prudentius's *Psychomachia* is scratch-glossed *feþerhamade*.¹⁴ Though there is no evidence for the putative verb behind this past participle/adjective (the verb would presumably have been **feþerhamian*, but this unique Old English form might have been invented to match the Latin past participle), the glossing of *pennatum* does indicate some uncertainty of denotation, for the Corpus Glossary, as the *DOE* entry points out, has *feðrhoman* as a gloss instead for *talaria*.¹⁵ Most interestingly, an

13 Ælfric's source, the *Passio Petri et Pauli*, has "mutare effigies"; Godden, *Ælfric's Catholic Homilies: Introduction*, 217. Godden notes that Ælfric's treatment of Simon overall is unusual and that "Ælfric presents Simon as part devil himself and therefore able to command devils to help him, much like Antichrist himself"; Godden, *Ælfric's Catholic Homilies: Introduction*, 211.

14 Page, "More Old English Scratched Glosses," 32-43, at 41.

15 Hessels, *An Eighth-Century Latin-Anglo-Saxon Glossary*, 114. CCCC 144 dates from the first half of the 9th century; Gneuss, *Handlist*, no. 45.

eighth-century fragment of Servius's commentary on Vergil's *Aeneid* has "talaria sax[onice] fether haman." The manuscript is the former Spangenberg, Pfarrbibliothek, s.n.,¹⁶ now Marburg, Hessisches Staatsarchiv, 319 Pfarrei Spangenberg Hr Nr. 1, written in southwest England and found not far from Fulda and thus probably connected with Fulda, perhaps brought by Boniface or someone close to his circle.¹⁷ What is so interesting about this use of *feðerhama* is the context: the passage of the *Aeneid* being commented upon describes Mercury's preparations (which include also a *uirga*) to carry out Jupiter's command that he urge Aeneas to move on from Carthage and leave Dido behind:

Dixerat. ille patris magni parere parabat
imperio, et primum pedibus talaria nectit
aurea, quae sublimem alis sive aequora supra
seu terram rapido pariter cum flamine portant.
tum virgam capit; hac animas ille evocat Orco
pallentis, alias sub Tartara tristia mittit,
dat somnos adimitque et lumina morte resignat.

(*Aeneid*, 4.238-44)¹⁸

[He (Jupiter) had spoken. That god (Mercury) prepared to fulfill the command of his great father: first, he ties to his feet golden "feather-shoes" which, swift like the wind, carry him on wings to the heights, whether over water or land. Next he seizes the wand; with this he summons souls growing pale from Orcus, others under gloomy Tartarus he sends, gives and takes away sleep and opens the lights of the eyes at death.]

Here we have a situation analogous to that in *Genesis B*, involving a command given to a subordinate agent.

There are also examples from the Old Saxon *Heliand* and from Old Norse. The *Heliand* examples are rather unexceptional. The word is applied to birds and to a visiting angel and appears to have been part of a formulaic phrase, for we find "farad an

16 An image of the folio in question (f. 1 of one bifolium) and a description of the manuscript may be found in Lowe, *Codices Latini antiquiores, Supplement*, no. 1806.

17 Gneuss, *Handlist*, no. 849.6. See also the comments in Lowe, *Codices Latini antiquiores, Supplement*, no. 1806, and Reynolds and Wilson, *Scribes and Scholars*, 81-82.

18 Translation adapted from Fairclough, rev. by Goold, *Virgil: Aeneid*.

feðarhamun” (1669) and “faran an feðerhamon” (5798).¹⁹ The notion of the *cræft* of the *feðerhama* is supported by its association in Old Norse with Velent, or Völundr, the ultimate artisan of Norse legend, and B. J. Timmer, in his edition of *Genesis B*, makes much of the link between Weland and the devil.²⁰ Though the story of Velent/Völundr appears in Norse in *Piðreks saga af Bern* and *Völundarkviða*, only the former preserves the word *fjaðrhamr* in this sequence:

Pat er eitt sinn, at Velent biðr Egil, bróður sinn, fá sér allar fjaðrar, bæði stórar ok smáar, ok segir, at hann vill gera sér einn flygil. Egill ferr í skóg ok veiðir alls kyns fugla ok fær Velent. Nú gerir Velent einn flygil, en þá er gerr var, þá er því líkast sem fjaðrhamr væri fleginn af grip eða af gambr eða af þeim fugl, er strúz heitir.²¹

[There was one time that Velent asked Egil, his brother, to get all the feathers he could, both large and small, and said that he wished to make a wing (a set of wings; a flying device). Egil went into the forest and caught birds of all kinds and brought them to Velent. Now Velent made a wing, and when it was made, it was as if it were a “feather-coat” of a vulture or another kind of vulture or from the bird which is called an ostrich.]

19 “Huuat, gi that bi thesun fuglun mugun / uuárlíco undaruuitan, thea hir an thesoro uueroldi sint, / farad an feðarhamun: sie ni cunnun ênig feho uuinnan, / thoh gibid im drohtin god dago gehuuilikes / helpa uuiðar hungre” (*Heliand*, 1667-71: Listen, you can truly understand that [that God knows what those who serve him well need] from these birds which are here in this world, and travel in “feather-coats”: they are not able to win any wealth, and still, every day, the Lord God gives them a stay against hunger). “Sô thiú frî habdun / gegangen te them gardon, that sia te them grabe mahtun / gisehan selbon, thuo thar suôgan quam / engil thes aloualdon obana fan radure, / faran an feðerhamon” (*Heliand*, 5794-98: As the women had gone to the garden, that they might see the grave itself, then there came swooping an angel of the All-Ruler from heaven above, travelling in a “feather-coat”). Text from Cathey, ed., *Hêliand*.

20 Timmer, ed., *The Later Genesis*, 105.

21 Jónsson, ed., *Piðreks saga*, chap. 77; translation adapted from Haymes, trans., *The Saga of Thidrek of Bern*. The passage in *Völundarkviða* is difficult — Dronke remarks that the first four lines of stanza 29 are “perhaps the most difficult lines in the poem” (Dronke, ed. and trans., *The Poetic Edda*, 2:321) — but Völundr is clearly employing some kind of flying trick: “Vél [á] ek, kvað Völundr — / Verða ek á fitiom, / þeim er mik Níðaðar / námo rekkar! / Hlæiandi Völundr / hófz at lopti” (29.1-6: “I have a trick,” said Völundr — / “May I be on those webbed feet / that Níðuðr’s brave men / bereft me of!” / Laughing, Völundr / lifted himself to the sky). Text and translation from Dronke, ed. and trans., *The Poetic Edda*, 2:251.

The other well-known appearance of the *fjaðrhamr* in Old Norse is in *Brymskviða*, where Thor borrows a flying apparatus from Freyja as Loki sets out to retrieve Thor's hammer.²² The *fjaðrhamr* is central to the episode because it appears three times in the first ten stanzas, once as it is borrowed and twice in a kind of formulaic envelope pattern as Loki departs and returns. Loki, of course, has also been linked to the devil, and Rosemary Woolf has suggested that the parallel between Loki and the devil is more convincing than that between Weland and the devil, primarily because both of the former are “foe[s] of the gods” and delight “in giving evil advice for evil's sake.”²³ It is likely that the Anglo-Saxons were familiar with both stories: Weland's name often appears in Old English texts (most significantly in *Deor* and in the Old English *Boethius*), though the only evidence for knowledge of this particular episode lies in the carvings on the Franks Casket, one of which appears to show Egil gathering feathers. There is no explicit reference to Loki in Old English, but another famous artefact of Freyja's, the Brising necklace (again from *Brymskviða*) appears in *Beowulf* (the “Brosinga mene,” 1199b), suggesting that her *fjaðrhamr* may have been known as well. It is worth noting, however, that there is, so far as I know, no evidence in Old Norse for the association of the *fjaðrhamr* with shape-changing. Still, one of the favourite understatements of Icelandic authors was that a character was “eigi einhamr,” or “not single-shaped,” as, for example, in the case of the great Stórolfr Haengsson of *Orms þáttr*.²⁴ The nature of the compound in Old Norse, therefore, is at least suggestive of a change of shape having taken place.

22 The *fjaðrhamr* does appear elsewhere, however. One interesting use is in *Alexanders saga*, where Sompnus, sent to relieve Alexander with rest, flies on his way after strapping on the flying device. Interestingly, the source of the saga, Walter of Châtillon's *Alexandreis* (in a passage which seems to echo the *Aeneid*, 4.238-44; see above) does not mention the “talaria” but only his “madidas [...] penas” (4.442). Toller's *Anglo-Saxon Dictionary: Supplement* mentions that Loki is elsewhere said to fly in “valsham Friggjar” (in Frigg's falcon-form), having completely taken on the form of a bird; Sturluson, *Edda: Skáldskaparmál*, section 18, p. 24.

23 Woolf, “The Devil in Old English Poetry,” 3-4, at 4.

24 For example, Egill Skallagrímsson's ancestry is traced back to Úlfr inn óargi. Egil's grandfather, Úlfr Bjalfason, becomes known as Kveld-Úlfr, or Evening-Wolf, on the basis of his strange nocturnal habits: “Var hann kveldsvæfr. Þat var mál manna, at hann væri mjök hamrammr” (*Egils saga*, 1: He was fond of sleep in the evening. That was the talk of men, that he was a great shape-changer). ON *hamr* can be “skin” but also “shape, esp. in a mythol. sense, connected with the phrase *skipta hömum*, to change the shape”; Cleasby-Vigfusson, *An Icelandic-English Dictionary*, 236. Thus, *hamramr* is an adjective denoting the ability to shape-change.

Not one of the parallels, analogues, and possible sources for the *feðerhama* cited above includes the second piece of equipment, the *hæleðhelm*.²⁵ As Satan's emissary prepares to leave hell, he binds a *hæleðhelm* firmly on his head:

Angan hine þa gyrwan godes andsaca,
 fus on frætsum, hæfde fæcne hyge,
 hæleðhelm on heafod asette and þone full hearde geband,
 spenn mid spangum. wiste him spræca fela
 wora worda. wand him up þanon,
 hwearf him þurh þa helldora, hæfde hyge strangne,
 leolc on lyfte laðwendemod,
 swang þæt fyr on twa feondes cræfte.

(*Genesis B*, 442-49)

[The enemy of God then began to prepare himself, eager in his armour, he had a deceitful mind, set a *hæleðhelm* on his head and bound it full hard, fastened it with clasps. He knew many speeches, many crooked words. He circled up from there, turned through those hell-doors, he had a firm resolve, flew in the air, hostile-minded, divided the fire in two by the enemy's craft.]

Many commentators have noted that the form *hæleðhelm* would have to mean “hero-helm”; this word would be a hapax legomenon in Old English (and also the only *hæleð-* compound to survive), and the meaning “hero-helm” would seem somewhat unlikely given the context.²⁶ However, there is a very similar word in *The Whale*:

Þonne þæt gecnawed of cwicsusle
 flah feond gemah, þætte fira gehwylc
 hæleþa cynnes on his hringe biþ
 fæste gefeged, he him feorgbona
 þurh sliþen searo siþþan weorþeð,

25 While the etymology of *feðerhama* is straightforward, that of *hæleðhelm* is less so; the word is probably “related to OE, OS *helan*, Go *huljan*, Lat. *celare*, ‘hide,’ hence ‘helmet of hiding,’ ‘helmet of invisibility’ [. . .]. In OE and OS the *heliðhelm* is particularly associated with devils, in OHG and MHG with dwarves, assisted perhaps by the common etymology of **helid-*, *heoloð-*, *helið-*, *helm*, and *hell* < IE **kel-* ‘cover,’ ‘hide’”; Doane, ed., *The Saxon Genesis*, 277.

26 Were the term found in direct speech, the suitability of “hero-helm” would be different, for Satan has previously addressed his companions as *hæleþas* (*Genesis B*, 285a). As it is, especially given the later repetition of *hæleða forlor[e]* (721b; 757b) as a descriptor for the consequences of eating the fruit, it seems highly unlikely that the “transliterator” consciously chose to describe the item as a “hero-helm” against his source.

wloncum ond heanum, þe his willan her
 firenum fremmað; mid þam he færinga,
 heolophelme biþeaht, helle seceð,
 goda geasne, grundleasne wylm
 under mistglome, swa se micla hwæl,
 se þe bisenceð sæliþende
 eorlas ond yðmearas.

(*The Whale*, 38-49a)²⁷

[When the deceitful and evil fiend from his living torture realizes that any member of the race of men might be caught in his circle, he through hard tricks becomes that person's killer, high or low, who sinfully carries out his will here on earth. Covered with a *heolophelm*, he immediately seeks hell with him, that one lacking in good seeks the bottomless surge under the misty gloom, just as the great whale, who drowns seafarers, men, and ships.]

The form *heolophelm* is also unique in Old English, but the apparently related *heolophcynn* (the only other *heoloph-*, alone or as the initial element in a compound in Old English) appears elsewhere in the Exeter Book in reference to the devils in hell, thus suggesting an association with devils or concealment.²⁸

The initial element and the meaning of both of these unusual Old English compounds may be explained, in part, with reference to the Old Saxon equivalent in the *Heliand*, the *heliðhelm*, which is mentioned in the context of Satan's attempt to help Christ by sending visions to Pilate's wife:

That uuif uuarð thuo an forahnton,
 suiðo an sorogon, thuo iru thi u gisiuni quâmun
 thuru thes dernien dâd an dages liohte,
 an heliðhelme bihelid.

(*Heliand*, 5449b-52)

27 *The Whale*, in Muir, ed., *The Exeter Anthology*, 270-73.

28 For *heolophcynn*, Bosworth-Toller offers "a race living in a place of concealment [?], the devils in hell," and associates the word with OE *heolstor* (529). The passage in question reads as follows: "Ne mæg þæt hate dæl of heoloðcynne / in sinnehte synne forbærnan / to widan feore, wom of þære sawle" (*Christ in Judgement* [*Christ C*], 675-77 [1541-43]: That fiery pit cannot, in eternal night, over all time, purge the sin from the dweller[s] in hell, the stain from that [those] soul[s]). Squires glosses *heolophelm* "devilish protection"; Squires, ed., *Physiologus*, 126. It might even be argued that the variation between *hæleð* and *heoloð* is not significant: cp. the extant forms of *hindhæleðe* ("water agrimony," glossing *ambrosia*) in OE.

[That woman (Pilate's wife) was then afraid, very concerned, when those visions came to her in the light of day, through the deeds of the evil one, concealed by a *heliðhelm*.]

The use of the verb *bihelan* clearly indicates that the helmet offers a method of concealment, but the passage as a whole does little to clarify what sort of item the poet might have imagined the devil to be wearing. In fact, the form *heliðhelm* would seem to suggest that the same confusion or substitution as in Old English occurred first in the Old Saxon Genesis, for OS *helið* “hero” matches the OE *hæleð*. In other words, the “transliterator” of *Genesis B* accurately copied his Old Saxon source. Fortunately, there are several examples of Old High German glosses and many uses of the Old Norse cognate, *huliðshjálmr* (or *hulinshjálmr*), which do provide a better idea of what the *hæleðhelm* might be. In Old Norse, the term usually appears not as an actual helmet, but as a covering of darkness or invisibility, often placed over a ship or an approaching party of men and usually involving travel (much like the “feather-coat”) to and/or from an other-worldly place such as Hel, Jötunheimar, or Glæsisvellir, as can be seen in the following examples:

Gerði Eyvindr þeim hulizhjálmi, ok þokumyrkr svá mikit, at konungr ok lið hans skyldi eigi mega sjá þá.

(*Ólafs saga Tryggvasonar*, 63 [*Heimskringla*])

[Eyvindr made them a “helmet of invisibility” and a great dark fog, so that the king and his men should not be able to see them.]

Kerling hafði ráð fyrir liði þeirra, ok hún hafði hulizhjálmi yfir skipinu, meðan þau reru yfir fjörðinn til Hofstaða.

(*Gull-Þoris saga*, 17)

[Kerling had command over the host, and she put a “helmet of invisibility” over the ship while they rowed over the fjord to Hofstaðir.]

Það Þorsteinn þá eigi fela sik: “því at ek kann at gera þann hulinshjálmi, at mik sèr engi.” Goðmundr segir þat góða kunnáttu.²⁹

(*Þorsteins þáttr bæjarmagns*, 5)

29 In this case, the “helmet of invisibility” is created by a black flint which has been given to Þorstein by a dwarf as a reward for saving the dwarf's son.

[Thorstein then bade them not to hide him: “For I can make myself a ‘helmet of invisibility,’ that no one may see me.” Goðmundr called that good (magical) knowledge.]

Smiðr hafði hulinshjálmr yfir skipi þeira.³⁰
(*Bósa saga ok Herrauðs*, 11)

[Smiðr put a “helmet of invisibility” over their ship.]

A particularly informative use of the word, however, occurs in verse, in *Alvíssmál*, which offers a long list of kennings for “ský . . . er skúrum blandask” (clouds which mix with showers):

Ský heita með mönnum,
en skúrván með goðom,
kalla vindflot vanir,
úrván iǫtnar,
álfar veðrmegin,
kalla í helio hiálm huliz.
(*Alvíssmál*, 18)³¹

[They are called clouds among men, hope of showers among gods, wind-float among the Vanir, hope of drizzle among giants, weather-might among elves, and, in hell, the “helmet of invisibility.”]

The association of the *huliðshjálmr* with a covering of cloud is important, for, as Doane notes in his discussion of *hæleðhelm*, Cynewulf uses *misthelm* in a way which suggests that it means much the same thing as the devil “draws a *misthelm* over the eyes of sinners,”³² and the *Exodus*-poet, though deception is only implied in the sort of land that it is and its occupants, employs *lyfthelm* with the verb *beþeccan* (the same verb which is used with *heoloþhelm* in *The Whale*). In *Juliana*, the devil is forced to explain his methods to the captive Juliana:

30 Smiðr was tutored in magic by Busla, who is said to be highly skilled in *taufr* (“sorcery”); *Bósa saga ok Herrauðs*, chap. 2, p. 285.

31 Neckel, ed., *Edda*.

32 Doane, *The Saxon Genesis*, 277-78. Doane further comments that “in all the OE and OS instances [of the word *hæleðhelm* and its cognates] the issue is not invisibility, but true and false seeing”; *The Saxon Genesis*, 278.

“Oft ic syne ofteah,
 ablende bealoþoncum beorna unrim
 monna cynnes, misthelme forbrægd
 þurh attres ord eagna leoman
 sweartum scurum, ond ic sumra fet
 forbræc bealosearwum, sume in bryne sende,
 in liges locan, þæt him lasta wearð
 siþast gesyne.”

(*Juliana*, 468b-75a)³³

[“Often I have taken away sight, blinded with evil thoughts a countless number of members of the race of men; in a ‘helmet of mist,’ I have snatched away the lights of their eyes through the poison point, in black showers, and I have destroyed the feet of some with evil crafts; some I have sent into the fire, into the embrace of the flame, so that the last trace of them was seen.”]

Near the beginning of *Exodus*, as Moses first leads his people away from the lands of Pharaoh, the regions through which they pass are inhospitable:

Oferfor he mid þy folce fæstena worn,
 land ond leodgeard laðra manna,
 enge anpaðas, uncuð gelad,
 oðþæt hie on guðmyrce gearwe bæron:
 wæron land heora lyfthelme beþeaht.

(*Exodus*, 56-60b)³⁴

[Moses passed through countless wastes with his people, the lands and territories of hostile men, narrow single-file paths, unknown ways, until they bore their equipment among warlike border-dwellers: their lands were covered in a “helmet of cloud.”]

33 Woolf, ed., *Juliana*. Earlier in the “confession,” in terms which especially echo *Solomon and Saturn I*, the devil explains that he appears in various guises: “þus ic soðfæstum / þurh mislic bleo mod oncyrrē” (362b-63: Thus I, in various forms, turn the minds of the righteous).

34 Lucas, ed., *Exodus*. In his helpful discussion of the passage and its vocabulary, Lucas points out the possible link between the “uncuð gelad” and the “ignota via” of Wisdom 18:3, which in turn would suggest that the *lyfthelm* is connected with the pillar of cloud (in Wisdom 18:3, the “igni ardentem columnam” [burning column of fire]); Lucas, ed., *Exodus*, 83-85, at 84. Irving suggests that it is more likely to be a description of a cloud-covered land derived from Diodorus; Irving, ed., *The Old English Exodus*, 19 and 71, n. 60. For more on *-helm* compounds and their relationship here, see Squires’s commentary on *heolophelm*; Squires, ed., *Physiologus*, 85-86.

The kennings listed in *Alvíssmál*, therefore, combined with the *misthelm* and *lyfthelm* of *Juliana* and *Exodus*, suggest the importance of cloud or mist, and, in the case of *Exodus*, even a possible scriptural connection for our understanding of *hæleðhelm*. The glossarial tradition would seem to confirm that view.

Though there are no extant Old English glosses to indicate which Latin term *hæleðhelm* might translate, the Old High German tradition preserves several late eighth- and early ninth-century glosses, all of which suggest that the Latin word is *latibulum* (or *latibula*).³⁵ *Latibulum*, in turn, is frequently glossed in Old English, but never with *hæleðhelm* or with any *-helm* compound or, in fact, with any word which might suggest a familiarity with the Old High German tradition. Instead, there is a wide range of equivalents, all of which are generally associated with dimness, darkness, or shadow. For example, glosses for *latibula* in Aldhelm's *De uirginitate* are *dimhoua* and *dimhus*; *latibulum* is glossed *digelnysse*; and *latibulo* is glossed *heolstre uel digelnysse*.³⁶ In the Cleopatra glossary (Cleopatra 1), *latibulum* is glossed with the apparently unique *syretum* (*sirutun*)³⁷ which may mean "lurking place" and seems to be connected to deceit or trickery.³⁸ One of the most widely known uses of *latibulum* would have to have been that in Psalm 17:12 — "Et posuit tenebras latibulum suum in circuitu eius tabernaculum eius tenebrosas aquas in nubibus aetheris" (And he made shadows his hidden place, all around him, his tent the dark waters in the clouds of the air) — and a look at the *DOE Corpus* demonstrates that the Old

35 So far as I know, there are three such glosses. See Unterkircher, *Notitiae*, which contains a full facsimile and description of Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, MS 162 (St. Emmeram, Regensburg, 820-830), showing the word *latibulā* glossed by "helothelm" (f. 33v). Similiar glosses appear in two other late 8th- or very early 9th-century manuscripts from around Lake Constance: Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Junius 25 (*CLA* II.243; Bischoff, *Kat.* II.3801) and Karlsruhe, Landesbibliothek, Aug. perg. IC (*CLA* VIII.1079; Bischoff, *Kat.* I.1630). The former has "helanthelm" for *latibulā* (f. 97v); the latter "helant helm" for *latibula* (f. 103v). See Steinmeyer and Sievers, *Die althochdeutschen Glossen*, 1:205, item 8 and 2:316, items 31-32. For further comments on these glosses, see Bischoff, "Paläographische Fragen," 107-109.

36 There are many examples in Brussels, Royal Library, MS 1650 and in Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Digby 146. See Goossens, *The Old English Glosses*, items 84, 476, 885, 1677, 3043, 3210, 3245, 3657, 4632, and 4875; and Napier, *Old English Glosses*, pp. 1-138, items 392, 821, 1677, 3144, 3318, 3354, 3768, 4754, and 4993.

37 Stryker, "The Latin Old English Glossary," line 3833.

38 "Pone insidias" in Joshua 8:2 is rendered "sete nu syrwa" (Bosworth-Toller, 877 [*siru* entry]); Marsden, ed., *The Old English Heptateuch*, 1:183.

English versions of this verse use the same range of words as the glosses: *digelnesse* (with variant spellings) is most common, but *heolstru* and *dymhofan* also appear. It would seem that the earliest attested form of *hæleðhelm* is the OHG *helôthelm* (*helôt* means “covering”), which is then reproduced accurately in ON *huliðshjálmr* and OE *heoloðhelm* but was modified even in Old High German (*helanthelm*) before the term was confused even further in the *Heliand*, the Saxon Genesis (we assume), and *Genesis B*.³⁹

Both *feðerhama* and *hæleðhelm*, therefore, are difficult lexical items, partly because the attested early history of each in closely related languages and in vernacular/Latin glossing is so rich. While *feðerhama* has a clear link to classical mythology via the *talaria*, the most famous user of which is Mercury, the *hæleðhelm* is more difficult to trace, perhaps originating, at least partly, in the Old Testament and the way in which God and his angels might conceal themselves in cloud,⁴⁰ though one might also recall how Venus shrouds Aeneas and Achates as they approach Carthage, “obsкуро [. . .] aëre” and “multo nebulae [. . .] amictu.”⁴¹ Still, it is surely curious that there seems to be no vernacular

39 Carr, *Nominal Compounds*, 7 and 49. See also Jente, *Die mythologischen Ausdrücke*, 313-14, item 178. The problem whether *hæleð-* and *heoloð-* represent the same elements cannot absolutely be resolved, and a detailed philological explanation of the possibilities is beyond the scope of this article. Thinking a “magic helmet” perhaps appropriate in *Genesis B* but inappropriate in *The Whale*, Squires poses another difficult question: do “identical compounds in Old English verse necessarily have the same meaning”? Squires, ed., *Physiologus*, 85-86.

40 The *latibulum*, though not mentioned by name, would certainly have been associated with the “columna nubes” (pillar of cloud) which leads Moses and the Israelites by day (Exod. 13:21) and which becomes a “nubes tenebrosa” (gloomy cloud) so that the Egyptian and Israelite camps might remain hidden from one another (Exod. 14:19-20). The clearest statement about God and cloud is probably that in Job 22:14: “Nubes [sunt] latibulum eius” (The clouds are his hiding place). See also Jacob Grimm’s comments: “Of one thing there is scarcely a trace in our mythology, though it occurs so often in the Greek: that the gods, to screen themselves from sight, *shed a mist* round themselves or their favourites who are to be withdrawn from the enemy’s eye”; Grimm, *Teutonic Mythology*, 330 (emphasis Grimm’s). Grimm gives several examples from the *Iliad*: Aphrodite cloaking Paris in mist (3.381); Hera veiling herself and Athena in mist (5.776); Athena covering Achilles with a bright mist (18.205); and Apollo veiling himself, then Agenor, in mist (21.549, 21.597).

41 “At Venus obscuro gradientis aëre saepsit / et multo nebulae circum dea fudit amictu, / cernere ne quis eos neu quis contingere posset / molirive moram aut veniendi poscere causas” (But Venus shrouded them, as they went, with dusky air, and enveloped them, goddess as she was, in a thick mantle of cloud, that none might see or touch them, none delay or seek the cause of their coming); text and translation from Fairclough, trans., rev. by Goold, *Virgil: Aeneid*, 1.411-14.

or classical source in which the *feðerhama/talaria* and the *hæleðhelm* appear together as the equipment or possessions of one character. The closest example is a character who has never been mentioned in this context, and that is Perseus, who receives from Mercury several magical items as he sets off to combat the Gorgons.

Perseus's possession of a flying apparatus (*talaria*) and a "helmet of invisibility" is not mentioned in obvious sources such as Vergil and Ovid, and the story of Perseus and the Gorgons is, in fact, difficult to find in Latin. The fullest accounts appear in Greek, in the Hesiodic *Shield (of Heracles)* and in the *Library* of Apollodorus. The only Latin account which I have been able to find is also the most interesting. It appears in Hyginus's *De astronomia*:

Qui missus a Polydecte, Magnetis filio, ad Gorgonas, a Mercurio qui eum dilexisse existimatur talaria et petasum accepit, praeterea galeam qua indutus ex adverso non poterat videri. Itaque Graeci Ἀϊδοϛ galeam dixerunt esse, non ut quidam inscientissime interpretantur eum Orci galea usum; quae res nemini docto potest probari.

Fertur etiam a Vulcano falcem accepisse ex adamante factam, qua Medusam Gorgona interfecit; quod factum nemo conscripsit.

(2.12.431-40)⁴²

[Perseus, having been sent by Polydectes, son of Magnes, to the Gorgons, received from Mercury — who is thought to have loved him — a "feather-coat" and *petasus* and also a helmet which, when worn, made him invisible to an enemy. Thus, the Greeks have said it is the helmet of Hades (lit., "the unseen one"), not that, as some unlearned people have suggested, he actually used the helmet of Orcus, which is a thing which could be believed by no one with any learning.

He is reported also to have received a hook made from adamant from Vulcan, with which he killed Medusa of the Gorgons, which act no one, however, has written about.]

Instead of a covering of cloud or a secret concealed place rendered by *latibulum*, we find here the simple term *galea* (helmet), and the addition of a *petasus*, which seems

42 Viré, ed., *Hygini de astronomia*. In the *Liber monstrorum*, Perseus's killing of Medusa is mentioned as part of the entry on the Gorgons. He is not explicitly said to have any of the items mentioned in Hyginus, but is "scuto uitreo defensus" (I.38: protected by a glassy shield); in Orchard, ed. and trans., *Pride and Prodigies*, 254-320.

to have been a kind of travelling hat.⁴³ The *galea*, however, is not just any helmet but evokes association with the helmet of Hades, the *Orci galea*.⁴⁴

Hyginus's *De astronomia* was an extremely popular commentary (Viré examines 37 manuscripts *ante saec. xiii*), though its manuscript tradition, as is not uncommon, begins only in the ninth century. The earliest extant manuscripts date from around the middle of the ninth century; Fleury seems to have been a particularly prominent centre for the dissemination of the text, though one early manuscript comes from Lobbes and Herford.⁴⁵ It seems reasonable to expect that the commentary would have been known in the centre where the Saxon Genesis was composed and, further, that the work may also have been known to the "transliterator" of *Genesis B*, for there are five manuscript witnesses (two complete and three fragmentary) known to have been in Anglo-Saxon England prior to 1100.

London, British Library, MS Royal 13.A.xi is the least interesting of the group. Gneuss suggests that the manuscript is late (*saec. xi/xii* or *xii in.*) and may not, therefore, have been in England by 1100.⁴⁶ The portions of Hyginus in this manuscript are excerpts made by Abbo of Fleury in a text known as the *Excerptio Abbonis ex Ignio de figuratione signorum* (or simply *De figuratione signorum*), which appears on ff. 105-13. The passage on Perseus (f. 107r) comes from elsewhere in *De astronomia* (3.11) and contains none of the information quoted above. The work is illustrated, however, and the image of Perseus shows large wings sprouting from the back of his head and from a pair of boots that rise to mid-calf. Aberystwyth, National Library of Wales, MS 735C, a collection mainly of Latin texts on astronomy, is a

43 In Apollodorus (*Library*, 2.4.2), the *petasus* is replaced by a *kibisis*, or wallet, a kind of food-bag, which is an interesting item to be associated with Mercury and the devil, given the "glof" of Grendel (also prepared "deofles cræftum" [by the devil's crafts]) and the "trog" of the *trollkona* in *Grettis saga*. The *kibisis* is the sack into which Perseus shoves the head of Medusa. For a different attempt to explain the "glof" through the Roman *culleus* and punishment for parricides, see Anderson, "Grendel's Glof?"

44 This particular helmet does not make many appearances. The "helmet of Hades" is worn by Athena in the *Iliad* (5.845, just a few lines after she is veiled in mist), by Perseus, in a vivid description of him as he flees from the Gorgons (in the Hesiodic *Shield [of Heracles]*, lines 220-30), and by Hermes in Apollodorus (*Library*, 1.6.2), and, also in Apollodorus, is obtained by Perseus from the hag daughters of Phorcus (*Library*, 2.4.2).

45 For the manuscript tradition, see Le Bœuffe, ed., *Hygin: L'Astronomie*, xlvi-lxix, and Viré, ed., *Hygini de astronomia*, x-xxvii. The edition of Viré is much to be preferred in its treatment of the manuscripts.

46 Gneuss, *Handlist*, no. 483.

two-part manuscript which may have come from Limoges, where the first part was copied c.1000, to England or Wales, where the second part (Hyginus's *De astronomia*) was added later in the eleventh century.⁴⁷ *De astronomia* appears on ff. 27-47, and the passage on Perseus occurs on f. 31v. While the text is unremarkable in itself, the manuscript is regularly glossed and corrected. In the portion of the entry on Perseus quoted above, for example, *petasum* is glossed *caduceum* (staff). This is a significant change from the *petasus* of Hyginus, and the gloss may well come from Servius's commentary on the *Aeneid* 4.242 ("VIRGAM CAPIT, id est caduceum," etc.),⁴⁸ which, as we have seen, is precisely the passage in which *talaria* is glossed *fether haman*. Cambridge, Trinity College, MS R.15.32 (945) and London, Bodleian Library, MS Harley 2506 both contain the relevant passage from *De astronomia* and are closely related textually.⁴⁹ The Trinity College manuscript dates from the beginning of the eleventh century, and contains a range of astronomical texts, including Abbo's *De figuratione signorum*, but only books 1 and 2 of *De astronomia* (pp. 39-91).⁵⁰ Harley 2506, again a compilation of astronomical texts, is the earlier of the two manuscripts, dated *saec. x/xi* (Fleury), in England in the first half of the eleventh century, and contains the complete *De astronomia* (ff. 1-30). The fifth and final manuscript is London, British Library, MS Harley 647, which dates from the second quarter of the ninth century and may be even more specifically dated to c.830.⁵¹ Bischoff and Gneuss suggest it is a Lotharingian manuscript, perhaps with later connections to Fleury before it came to England *saec. x/xi*. Harley 647 is one of the earliest witnesses to Hyginus's *De astronomia*, and it is also one of the most fascinating, for the text of Hyginus is incorporated into another hugely popular astronomical text, Cicero's *Aratea*. That is, illustrations accompanying the *Aratea* are filled in with

47 See Gneuss, *Handlist*, no. 1.5. In contrast, the online description at the National Library of Wales website <<http://www.llgc.org.uk/index.php?id=medievalastronomy>> locates the Hyginus portion of the manuscript also in the region of Limoges and dates it as late as c.1150. The manuscript may be viewed online via the LLGC link above.

48 See McDonough, Prior, and Stansbury, eds. and trans., *Servius' Commentary*, 56. The Corpus Glossary also has "caduceum uirga Mercuri"; see Hessels, ed., *An Eighth-Century Latin-Anglo-Saxon Glossary*, 3:168.

49 Gneuss, *Handlist*, nos. 186 and 428.4.

50 See Trinity College, Cambridge, *Catalogue of Medieval Manuscripts* at <<http://www.trin.cam.ac.uk/james/show.php?index=1178>>.

51 Bischoff, *Kat.*, II.2440; Gneuss, *Handlist*, no. 423.

the text from Hyginus (see *Fig. 1*). The image of Perseus on f. 4r clearly shows the *talaria* (at his feet) and the *uirga* or *caduceum*, and it would seem that the *galea* was imagined as a supplemental flying aid, for, as in the image in Royal 13.A.xi, Perseus has only wings on his head (though the size and positioning are much different here). Of course, this apparent discrepancy between text and image may indicate a prior or alternate source for the illustration, rather than a different understanding of what the *petatus* and *galea* were.

The relevance of this passage from Hyginus to our understanding of *Genesis B* is difficult to ascertain. Certainly, an Anglo-Saxon reading the passage and seeing the association of the *talaria*, *petatus*, and *galea* with Mercury would be quite likely to make the leap to the devil. Mercury is known by the epithet “se gigant” in *Adrian and Ritheus*, for example, and Ælfric’s *De falsis diis* has quite a bit of detail on Mercury, including his penchant for treachery and deceit and his identification with Odin. (Substantially the same comment appears also in Wulfstan’s *De falsis dies*, with the source of both in Martin of Braga’s *De correctione rusticorum*.⁵²) Further, the devil at times could even appear in the form of Mercury/Odin, as happens to Martin in Ælfric’s *Lives of Saints*. Overall, although Doane, the most recent editor of *Genesis B*, would suggest that the *feðerhama* is probably nothing more than “a means of propulsion natural to Satan’s cohorts” and that the main feature of the *hæleðhelm* and related objects in Old English and Old Saxon is “true and false seeing,”⁵³ I think the situation is far more complex than has been recognized to date. The *DOE* entry for *feðerhama* gives a good range of examples in Old English and provides the important clue that the Latin equivalent is *talaria*. This aspect of the entry is vital to further investigation. The association of the *feðerhama* with shape-changing and with both Germanic and classical mythology is not noted in the *DOE*, though the argument could

52 “Sum man wæs gehaten Mercurius on life, / se wæs swiðe facenfull and swicol on dædum, / and lufode eac stala and leasbregdnysa. / Pone macodan þa hæþenan him to mæran gode, / and æt wega gelæatum him lac offrodan, / and to heagum beorgum him brohtan onsæg[ed]nysse. / Ðes god wæs [a]rwyrðe betwux eallum hæþenum, / and he is Ódon geháten oðrum naman on Denisc” (Ælfric, *De falsis diis*, XXI.133-40: A certain man was called Mercury in life; he was very crafty and deceitful in his actions, and also loved stealing and deception. Heathens made him into a famous god, made offerings to him at the junctions of roads, and brought sacrifices for him to high mountains. This god was honoured among all heathens, and he is called Odin by another name in Danish); text from Pope, ed., *Homilies of Ælfric: A Supplementary Collection*. See also Wulfstan, *De falsis dies*, in Bethurum, ed., *The Homilies of Wulfstan*, XII.65-72.

53 Doane, ed., *The Saxon Genesis*, 276 and 278.



Figure 1. Perseus. Illustration accompanying Cicero's *Aratea*. British Library, MS Harley 647, f. 4r. © The British Library Board. All Rights Reserved.

be made that we will never know precisely what connotations *feðerhama* might have evoked for an Anglo-Saxon audience. *Hæleðhelm* seems to have caused problems even in the Old English period, for the word is exceedingly rare, and the first element of the compound is rendered quite differently in its two (assumed) appearances. Further, the Old High German glosses point away from classical mythology towards a biblical origin for a method of advancing unseen under cover of cloud, a use of the term which is paralleled in Old Norse examples, though the fact that ON *huliðshjálmr* usually appears in instances of travel to and from otherworldly places is at least suggestive.⁵⁴ The glossing of Servius and the existence and popularity of a text such as Hyginus's *De astronomia* offer an explanation for the combination of the *feðerhama* and *hæleðhelm* in *Genesis B*: the devil's agent is not to be identified with Loki, or with Weland as previous commentators have suggested, but rather with Mercury, whose *kibisis*, absent here, might also make an appearance in Old English in the hands of Grendel. What must be kept in mind, however, is that what *feðerhama* and *hæleðhelm* might denote and connote cannot be known precisely and may well be a mix of the possibilities sketched here. It seems certain, at least, that Satan and his devils are associated with the crafty and dubious characters of Germanic legend and classical mythology. Perhaps it is enough to be sure that these items of power are "giganta geweorc," another glimpse of days long gone, like the "ealdsweord eotenisc" which Beowulf discovers in the mere, and faintly remembered treasure like the "Brosinga mene."⁵⁵

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54 One might also consider the influence of magic items of folklore which bestow invisibility upon the wearer. Though such analogues are generally from much later sources, a full study of the mythological aspect of the "helmet of invisibility" would address such items. The *Tarnkappe* which Siegfried wins from the dwarf Alberich in the *Nibelungenlied* (III.97) is probably the most famous example. See the classification D1361 "Magic object renders invisible" in the various major motif indices: Thompson, *Motif-Index*; Boberg, *Motif-Index*; and Cross, *Motif-Index*.

55 *Beowulf*, 1562b, 1558a, and 1199b.

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