

Visual Language in the Old English *Cædmonian Genesis*

Thomas H. Ohlgren

Although considerable scholarly attention has been focused on the narrative as a literary form in medieval literature, literary scholars have generally ignored the extensive cycles of illuminations, or pictorial narratives, which accompany some of these texts. This paper considers the ways in which the artist of one biblical narrative, the Old English *Cædmonian Genesis* (Bodleian Library, *MS Junius 11*), successfully created a consecutive series of visual episodes which correspond to the narrative sequence of the poetic text. The artist and the poet formulated a progressive chain of incidents, organized to tell a story. The illustrations, furthermore, reveal the artist's awareness of the poem's content, theme, and style. The drawings not only approximate visually the iconography of the poem and highlight the poem's theme, but they simulate in a visual language the rhetorical structure and stylistic features of the poem itself. Emphasis will be placed on the artist's creation of visual type-scenes and a symbolic color code. The paper begins with a consideration of three types of literary criticism through art.

In the development of book arts in the Western world, we must remember that only one-third of the book has been typographic. From the Egyptian papyrus rolls to the late medieval illuminated manuscript, the book was a scribal product. The inspiration to illustrate written texts was almost as old as writing itself.¹ Illustrations in the form of diagrams and scenic illustrations were invented to improve the reader's understanding by helping him to remember important ideas and concepts in the text. The illustrations were not mere embellishments, but had a didactic purpose: to describe and explain through pictorial language the written text. The Latin verb *illustrare* means literally "to light up"; in one sense, then, to illustrate means to elucidate or to make clear by examples. The artist's task was to translate aspects of the verbal content into a visual language. By "visual language" is meant the pictorial approximation of verbal content and style. A visual translation of a verbal text, however, is only an approximation. It is imperative that differences in medium as

well as differences in historical and cultural development be taken into account. There are certain elements of written language—such as meter, rime, and syntax—that cannot be reduced to visual terms; just as line, color, and shadowing have no exact counterpart in literature.

Before attempting to assess the relationships between a specific medieval literary text (the early eleventh-century *Cædmonian Genesis* [Bodleian Library, *MS Junius 11*]) and its intercalated drawings, it must first be pointed out that the conditions under which texts were illustrated varied greatly, and consequently, the kinds of critical statements we can make vary according to the circumstances. I will show that the artist of the *Cædmonian Genesis* succeeded in translating the verbal content as well as certain structural and stylistic features of the poetic text into a visual language. The artist, as we will see, has formulated a visual rhetoric which reflects and intensifies the verbal rhetoric of the poetic text.

Relationships between Art and Literature

When authors—such as William Blake, William Thackeray, or Edward Lear—illustrated their own works, we might assume they attempted to achieve a liaison between words and pictures; that is, the illustrations were intended to be an extension and repetition of important thematic elements in the text. William Blake, in fact, did not make a distinction between his poetry, painting, and printing—they were fused in what he called “Illuminated Painting.” “Painting” for Blake was the result of the combination of “Painter and Poet.”² David Bland reinforces this idea when he says, “Not only do his designs match his text to perfection but the text itself was inscribed by him, so that physically it matches his designs.”³ René Wellek, by contrast, asserts that even when the author and artist are identical, a comparison of the poetry and painting will show that their character is “very different even divergent.”⁴ He specifically cites Blake’s “Tyger! Tyger! Burning Bright,” and concludes that the figure of the Tyger is simply grotesque and has no relation to the text of the poem. Although another critic, Geoffrey Keynes, admits that the Tyger of the poem appears in the illustration as a “mild and foolish-looking beast, more like a tame cat than the terror of the forests,” he attempts to resolve the discrepancy by explaining how Blake was attempting in his “Illuminated Painting” to pose the question “of how one God

could have created the Tyger of cruelty and materialism at the same time as the Lamb of love and imagination.” Keynes finds great relevance in that the illustration represents the defeated Tyrant who has finally been prepared to lie down with the Lamb.⁵ If we admit this interpretation, the illustration would seem to aid our reading of Blake’s enigmatic poem.

Another situation that governs the significance of the relationship between art and literature is one in which an art object, such as ornamented metalwork or a painting (which are not connected to a text), are used in the interpretation of a literary work. Behind this approach is the assumption that a common cultural and intellectual background mutually influences the arts. Such a *Zeitgeist* approach is employed by John Leyerle, who, in “The Interlace Structure of Beowulf,” demonstrates that the structure of the Old English poem, *Beowulf* “is a poetic analogue of the interlace designs common in Anglo-Saxon art of the seventh and eighth centuries.”⁶ Leyerle points out that there are thousands of interlace designs surviving in manuscript illuminations, in bone, ivory, and stone carvings, and in metal work for jewelry and weapons which provide a useful aid to the reassessment of early English literature because they are “an important reminder that the society was capable of artistic achievements of a high order which can be looked for in the poetry as well.”⁷ Using art not connected with a text in order to interpret a literary work, however, can have severe limitations. Helmet Hatzfeld, for instance, attempted to explicate Arthur Rimbaud’s poem “Mystique” by means of Paul Gauguin’s painting *Jacob Wrestling with the Angel*. Hatzfeld contends that the painting clarifies sections of the “absolutely dark, cryptic, and incomprehensible” poem.⁸ He concludes that “the literary text gets its final explanation, its essential, decisive, clarifying interpretation, through art and exclusively through art.”⁹ This study not only ignores essential differences in artistic media—each one possessing a separate and unique historical and cultural development—but, more importantly, it violates the artistic integrity of Rimbaud’s poem.

The third situation which governs the relationship between art and literature is also one in which the artist and author are different persons. A distinction can be made between an artist who illustrates a certain text under the direction of the author, as in the instance of

Dickens and Phiz, or an artist who illustrates an earlier text, such as *The Canterbury Tales*, *Paradise Lost*, or the Bible. If the literary work has been illustrated variously over a period of decades or centuries, a study of these illustrations reveals a range of opinions about the work. David Lenfest, in his dissertation on *Gulliver's Travels*, demonstrates that the series of plates etched over a period of about one hundred years provides a visual interpretation and criticism of the text of Swift's work.¹⁰ He notes that illustrators in different decades emphasized different aspects of the adventures of Gulliver. By comparing different sets of plates, Lenfest uncovers a number of attitudes toward the text. More importantly, he demonstrates that the illustrations help the reader to realize the importance of the comic background. A consideration of the etchings, in short, increased the literary significance of the literary work.

In a variation of this situation, an artist confronted himself not only with a previously-written text but with one that is a substantially rearranged version of a basic text with a rich tradition of illustration—the Book of Genesis. The Old English version of the first book of the Bible, the *Cædmonian Genesis*, is a poetic amplification, with profound modifications, of the story of the fall of the angels and of Adam and Eve. The major deviations from the biblical account include the spectacular rise of Lucifer, the titanic battle in heaven, the detailed accounts of the horrors of hell, the defiant speeches of Satan, and a different sequence of the temptation wherein Adam is tempted first. The text of this unusual poem was copied from another manuscript, now lost, about the year 1000 by a Benedictine scribe, who carefully left spaces for an extensive series of outline drawings. The artist, when confronted with the unusual portions of the poem, which had not been illustrated before, could not refer to the Genesis artistic tradition for models to emulate. He must have, in part, depended upon a personal reading of the text. Under these conditions, the critical statements we can make about the text and drawings are limited to statements about the artist's interpretation of the text through his illustrations. Since the actual date of composition (estimates range from A.D. 670 to 750) is much earlier than the date of transcription and illustration, the manuscript, in theory, cannot be considered unified in the same way that Blake's "Illuminated Paintings" were unified. The manuscript, however, may be unified in the sense that

the artist, perceiving the poet's intentions, attempted to furnish illustrations that whenever possible complemented the text. An artist, according to David Bland, when confronted with a text to illustrate, may approach his job in one of two ways: he may attempt to efface himself behind the author or he may assert himself at the author's expense. But if the artist asserts his individuality too far, he runs the risk of not illustrating the text at all: the drawings may not have any real connection with the text.¹¹ With very few exceptions, the artist of the *Cædmonian Genesis* succeeded in translating the verbal content of the poetic text into visual language.¹² The 54 drawings interpolated into the poem reveal the artist's nearly wholesale assimilation of the poem's content and style.

Correlations between the Text and Illustrations

On the level of content, there seem to be at least three categories of correlations between the text and drawings. In the first category, the illustration is a close visual approximation of the poetic text. Although minor differences may appear, the artist was able to illustrate the text closely because the poem at these points is quite faithful to the account in Genesis. The artist in these situations was not faced with treating unorthodox material, and he simply copied from accepted models in the Genesis artistic tradition. The drawing on page 49 (Fig. 1),¹³ which depicts five episodes in the story of Cain and Abel, for instance, is virtually a translation of Genesis IV 2–10.

In the second category, the poetic text and drawings correspond closely, but the artist had to deviate from the biblical account in order to accommodate the unusual portions of the text. The poem's very striking independence of outlook must have caused considerable problems for the artist. The illustration on page 20 (Fig. 2), for instance, is a typical example of the artist's attempt to illustrate a textual account that has little or no patristic or literary precedent. The lower half shows Satan, fettered hand and foot over the fires of hell, addressing a smaller fiend who holds his lord's hand. The drawing corresponds to lines 371–388 and 409–421 of the text, which describe in vivid detail not only the horrors of hell but Satan's plea for a volunteer to go to Eden in his place. Since he is incarcerated, he cannot personally defeat God, but he can seek vengeance by having his surrogate cause the downfall of Adam and Eve. The poet proceeds



Figure 1. Page 49 from *MS Junis 11*. Five consecutive scenes from the story of Cain and Abel, exemplifying the technique of progressive narration and the transitory effect. In the upper left, Adam and Cain labor with spades in the field; below, Abel tends his sheep; in the upper right, Cain and Abel make offerings to the Lord; in the lower right, Cain, holding a club over his head, strikes and kills Abel; in the lower left, the blood of Abel cries out to the Lord. Note (at top) that the scribe has made economical use of the vellum by writing the poetic lines 1032–1035 as prose, the poetic half-lines being separated from each other by dots.



Figure 2. Page 20 from *MS Junius 11*. In the lower level, Satan, bound hand and foot, touches the hands of another devil, who has received instructions from his master to cause the downfall of Adam and Eve. The emissary-devil, flying through the gates of hell, emerges in the upper level as a serpent in the Tree of Death, next to which Eve stands, restraining her arm. On the upper right, Adam and Eve reinforce God's prohibition by pointing to the forbidden tree. Two points are noteworthy: first, the drawing exhibits the symbolic color code—the upper level is drawn entirely in red ink, the lower in brown; second, the figure of the emissary-devil is repeated, contributing to the “transitory effect.”

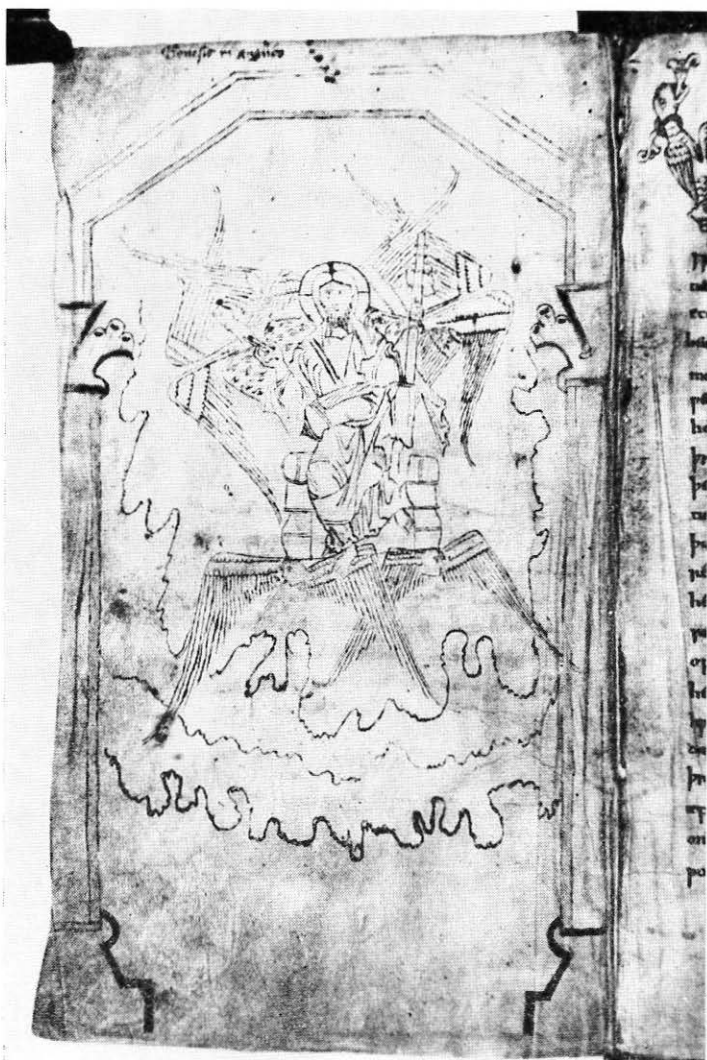


Figure 3. Frontispiece from *MS Junius 11*. Constitutes the first narremic unit of the Fall-of-the-Angels type-scene: the harmony in heaven before the rebellion. The drawing is a visualization of lines 1–18a of the poetic text. The outline drawing of the enthroned Christ-Logos, flanked by six-winged cherubim, also contains typological references to the Apocalypse, which widen the theological implications of the poem. Note the serpentine initial “U” which marks the beginning of the poem; these initials, as well as the small capitals, have a structural and rhetorical function.

to describe the arming of the emissary-tempter, who places a helmet upon his head. The fiend's main weapon, however, is his knowledge of craft and wicked deeds. His avowed purpose is to deceive, mislead, and pervert. The success of his temptation, as I have shown elsewhere, lies in his intellectual and "phantasmic" deception of Adam and Eve.¹⁴ The artist has attempted to approximate this deceitfulness by showing the fiend ascend through the doors of hell as a beautiful angel. The beauty of the emissary-devil is reinforced by the drawings on pages 24 and 28, which also depict the disguised devil as a tall, graceful figure dressed in angelic robes. On page 31 (Fig. 9), after the temptation has been successfully completed, the deceitful angel is shown in partial transformation back to a naked, grizzly-haired demon. These examples demonstrate that the artist succeeded in translating an unusual and unorthodox textual account into visual language. It is apparent that he did not simply copy from models in the Genesis artistic tradition; he either had to adapt them from other sources or to invent them.

In the third category, the illustrations correspond to the poetic text, but significant details have been added to the drawing that help to increase or widen the reader's appreciation of the poem. The drawings may function as visual glosses on the poetic text, and like the patristic commentaries, they may reveal the artist's close reading of the text as well as his knowledge of extrinsic but closely related matters, such as textual parallels in the Bible and special meanings of a typological nature, which might be useful to the reader. In addition to reinforcing the opening fourteen-line section of the *Cædmonian Genesis*, the frontispiece (Fig. 3), which depicts the enthroned Deity surrounded by four angels, functions as a visual gloss by introducing certain details that widen the theological implications of the poem. The most apparent biblical parallels are found in Isaiah VI 1–3 and Revelations IV 2 and V 1. The account of the enthroned Deity is part of Isaiah's prophetic vision of God's plan, a plan that extends from creation to the redemption. The allusions to Revelations (the throne motif, the eyes in the wings of the Cherubim, the scroll containing the fixed purposes of God), in addition, are significant because they remind the reader that the entire biblical message of redemption, beginning in Genesis, is focused towards the Apocalypse.

Pictorial and Verbal Narrative

Christian art, according to Otto Pächt, should have been deeply interested in the genre of pictorial story-telling, considering that the basic text of Christianity—the Gospel story of Christ’s life—was an intrinsically narrative one. But, as Pächt points out, “it was not in the treatment of the epic of Christ that the more potent and genuine forms of medieval narrative were evolved, but in Old Testament illustrations.”¹⁵ Vast cycles of Old Testament illustrations, Pächt continues, developed in Judaeo-Christian societies of Oriental rather than Classical character, and they were “conceived as simple and even naive illustrations of biblical stories and apocryphal Jewish legends, designed in the spirit of popular picture chronicles.”¹⁶ These cycles provided, in part, the models for the later epitomized cycles of illustrations as found in the vernacular versions of Old Testament literature in England in the tenth and eleventh centuries. And as the relation between pictorial representation and works of literature became closer, pictorial representation adopted from literature “a fundamental principle which in the earlier centuries apparently had been contradictory to those of the fine arts, namely that of progressive narration.”¹⁷ The technique of progressive narration in art, Weitzmann continues, can develop only at a time when there is a literary production of high rank and a demand for close pictorial accompaniment. Such a time is to be found in England in the tenth and eleventh centuries, especially in the artistic centers at Winchester and Canterbury. “We have here,” Pächt concludes, “the unique phenomenon of an artistic imagination developing a so-to-speak national style of narration in verbal and visual form simultaneously.”¹⁸

The principle of progressive narration is clearly seen in the cyclic illustrations of the *Cædmonian Genesis*; the artist attempted to conceive each changing situation of the text as an independent picture, “repeating the actors in each and so observing at the same time the rules of the unity of time and place.”¹⁹ The advantages of this method are two-fold: first, there is a substantial increase in iconographic subject matter as every action in the literary text is now adaptable for visualization; second, the drawings become still more intimately connected with the text by adopting the “transitory element.” Kurt Weitzmann continues by drawing an apt analogy between the reading and viewing experiences:

As the eye in reading a text moves from one writing column to another, so it moves now from one picture to the next, reading them, so to speak, and the beholder visualizes in his mind the changes which took place between the consecutive scenes. In other words, the single scene in a sequence contains elements which stimulate in the beholder a certain creativeness in imagining those actions which lie between the painted scenes, since these never follow each other as closely as the shots of a motion picture camera. But as the number of scenes increases there is a clearly recognizable tendency to treat each single one in a more economical way and to confine it to the most essential figures in order to counter-balance to some extent the numerical expansion of iconographic units.²⁰

Cyclic illustrations, which constitute the progressive narration, expand a textual episode into a number of iconographic units, which represent consecutively the various actions of the story. These illustrations must have iconographic coherence and should be dependent upon a uniform textual source. The cycle of pictures, in sum, can be read as a narrative, like the poem from which they were derived.

In the *Cædmonian Genesis* there are 54 pages of drawings, totalling some 96 separate iconographic units. The drawings reveal a density of consecutive moments: there is approximately one iconographic unit for every 23 lines of text. Lines 965 to 1054, for instance, narrate the major events in the story of Cain and Abel: their birth, their occupations, their offerings to God, Cain's murder of Abel, and the banishment of Cain by God. The drawings on pages 47, 49, and 51, which constitute eight iconographic units, narrate visually this 89-line portion of the poem. The drawing on page 49 (Fig. 1) contains five of these episodes: in the upper left, Adam and Cain labor with spades in the field; below, Abel tends his sheep; in the upper right, Cain and Abel make offerings to the Lord; in the lower right, Cain, holding a club over his head, strikes and kills Abel; in the lower left, the blood of Abel cries out to the Lord. In this five-part illustration and in the ones on pages 47 and 51, the figure of Abel is repeated six times, that of Cain five times. Although there are gaps in the visual narrative, the impression is one of movement from one major scene to the next. The lack of frames for the scenes and the economy of line also contribute to this "transitory effect." This sequence of drawings reveals that the artist succeeded in approximating not only the consecutive iconographic units of the poetic text but the transitory element itself. Due to

the density of visual units, the illustrations can be "read" like the poem.

Another framework for discussing pictorial narrative is provided by Eugene Dorfman's functional analysis of literary narrative structure. In his book, *The Narreme in the Medieval Romance Epic*, Dorfman isolates the two main units of narrative structure: central or core incidents and marginal incidents. Core incidents, or "narremes," are important episodes, "whose function is to serve as the central focus or core of a larger episode." The organically-linked narremes, which leap over the marginal episodes to form a series of internally related units, constitute the "substructure" of the narrative. Marginal episodes, by contrast, form a chain of undifferentiated story incidents in absolute linear progression.²¹ The application of Dorfman's functional analysis to the *Cædmonian Genesis* reveals not only the existence of core and marginal textual incidents, but, more significantly, the presence of corresponding core pictorial episodes, which, to continue Dorfman's linguistic analogy, could be called "iconographemes." Thus, in pictorial narrative, each illustration, like a single textual unit, has a place in the linear progression of the story. And as in literary narrative, each pictorial unit forms a structural unit in the progressive narration; depending upon its functional importance, the iconographic unit may either be central or marginal.

Of all the episodes in the *Cædmonian Genesis*, the account of the rebellion in heaven and the subsequent fall of the rebel angels, developed initially in lines 12b to 69b, stands out as a structurally and thematically important episode. This episode fulfills Dorfman's criteria for a functionally significant narreme: its omission would undoubtedly disrupt the continuity of the poem. The fall-of-the-angels episode (or type-scene) is the organic consequence of a preceding narreme (Lucifer's disobedience) and the effective cause of two following narremes (God's creation of Adam and Eve, and Satan's revenge). The incidents surrounding the fall of the angels are as follows: (1) God and the blessed angels live harmoniously in heaven (11. 1-18a); until (2) Lucifer, through his pride, establishes a rival throne in heaven (11. 22a-34). God, upon hearing of the rebellion, (3) becomes angry and wrathful (11. 34b-36a), (4) creates hell (11. 36b-46b), and (5) drives the rebel host into hell (11. 47a-76b). These five core narrative units, or narremes, are visually approxi-

mated by the artist on the frontispiece, page 2, and page 3. The full-page frontispiece (Fig. 3) corresponds to the first narrative unit—the harmony in heaven before the revolt of Lucifer. The Deity is depicted sitting on the throne of heaven, surrounded by four angels. He holds in his left hand a scepter and His right hand is raised with the palm outward. He is bearded and cross-nimbed, and the cloudy arc of heaven is indicated beneath His feet by wavy lines. The drawing seems to reinforce the opening lines of the poem by symbolic significance rather than by explicit parallelism. The visual counterpart of lines 7–12 is the heavenly throne:

ac he bið a rice
ofer heofenstolas. Heagum þrymmum
soðfæst and swiðfeorm sweglbosmas heold,
þa wæron gesette wide and side
þurh geweald godes wuldres bearnum,
gasta weardum.²²

(but He is always powerful
over thrones of heaven. With exalted majesty,
just and most vigorous, He ruled the heavens,
which were placed far and wide
through God's power for the children of glory,
the protectors of spirits.)

The textual emphasis on the Deity's might, 11. 3–5, is signified in the frontispiece by the scroll, which is emblematic of the Deity's authority and fixed purposes. Furthermore, the account of the angels' adoration of God, in lines 12b–18, corresponds to the visual representation of the four angels surrounding and supporting the throne of heaven. The balanced placement of the four angels around the throne may have been intended to represent the harmony of the blessed angels in heaven before the rebellion.

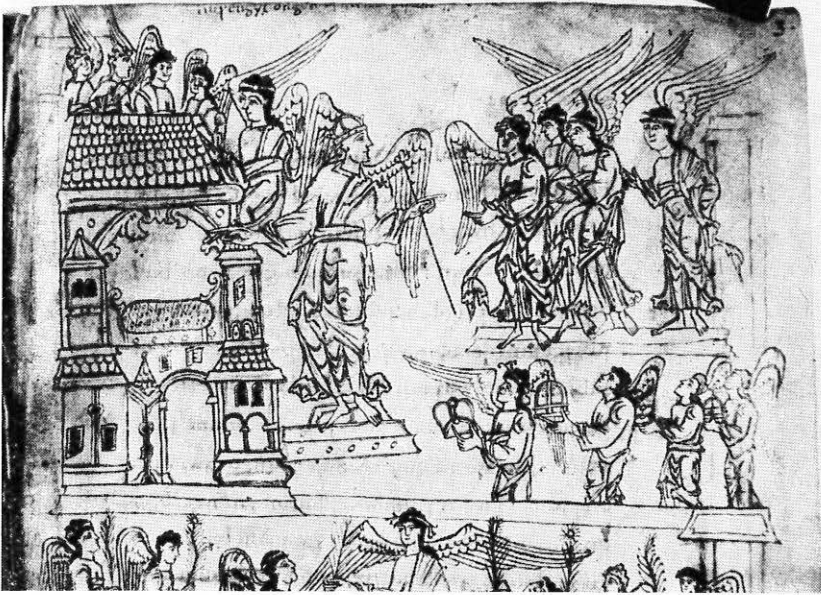
The drawing on page 2 (Fig. 4) and the upper two units on page 3 (Fig. 5a) constitute the artist's visualization of the second narrative unit, the pride of Lucifer, which is recounted in lines 22a–34 of the poem. The drawing on page 2 (Fig. 4) depicts an interview scene between Lucifer, who presumably has just announced his plans to establish a rival throne in heaven, and the Deity, who appears to have an astonished look on His face. The upper two levels of the full-page, four level drawing on page 3 (Fig. 5a) complete the visualization

Figure 4 (below). Page 2 from *MS Junius 11*. Constitutes the second narremic unit of the Fall-of-the-Angels type-scene: the pride of Lucifer. Christ-Logos sits upon cushioned throne, flanked by cherubim. Small angel standing on groundline is probably Lucifer, who is announcing his rebellion against God. The scribe has written “hælendes hehseld” (the throne of Christ) in the margin—an instruction the artist apparently did not follow.

Figure 5a (opposite). Upper levels of page 3 from *MS Junius 11*. Completion of the second narremic unit: the pride of Lucifer. The rebel angel, crowned and holding a scepter, points to the palace containing his throne. On the left, two tiers of angels praise him and offer crowns. In the second level, Lucifer receives palms of glory from six vassal angels. In both scenes, Lucifer is drawn in red ink.

Figure 5b (opposite). Lower levels of page 3 from *MS Junius 11*. Constitute the third, fourth, and fifth narremic units of the Fall-of-the-Angels type-scene: the wrath of God, the creation of hell, and the fall of the angels. The upper level represents the wrathful deity thrusting three javelins at Lucifer and the rebel angels, who are shown falling, with the pieces of the rival throne, into hell. The gaping mouth of the Leviathan, in which Satan lies bound, is a generalized vision of hell. The hell scene is drawn in brown ink, and provides a visual contrast to the scenes in heaven, which are drawn in red.





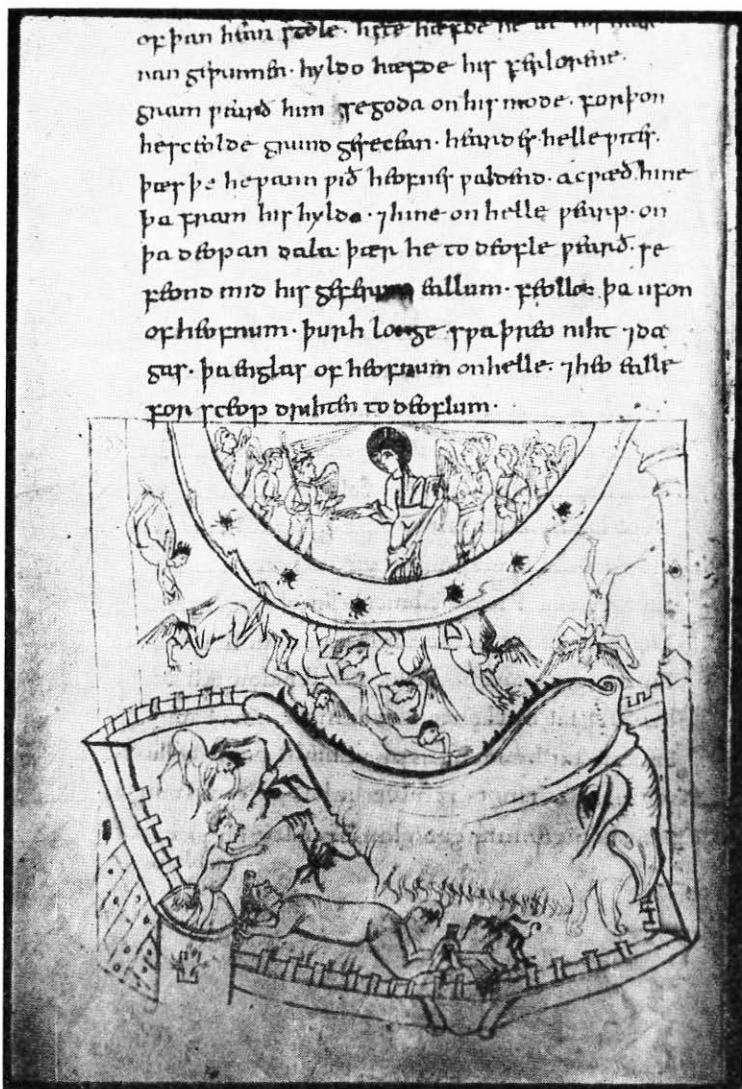


Figure 6. Page 16 from *MS Junius 11*. Constitutes with page 17 the second visualization of the Fall-of-the-Angels type-scene. In the upper half, the deity addresses the rebel angels, the first of whom wears a crown and bears a palm. In the lower half, the rebel angels fall into hell, depicted as the huge mouth of the Leviathan surrounded by crenelated walls and towers. The photograph clearly shows how the illustrations were interpolated into the poetic text. Both text and drawings, it should be noted, employ a delicate calligraphic line. As in the drawing on page 3, the upper scene in heaven is drawn in red ink, the lower scene in brown.

of Lucifer's rise to power. The rebel angel, in the upper level, is shown crowned and carrying a scepter, with his adherents, and pointing to a citadel containing the rival throne of heaven. Four angels on the lower right offer Lucifer crowns, while on the second level, he is shown in a triumphal frontal pose, surrounded by his admirers, who offer him palms of glory. The third narrative unit, God's wrath, which is described in lines 34b–36a, is suggested in the third level (Fig. 5b) by the figure of the Deity, shown hurling spears at the rebel angels. The fourth and fifth narrative units, the fall of the angels and the creation of hell, appear in the lower level. Lucifer, his throne now in pieces, and the rebel angels fall into the fires of hell. The loss of heavenly bliss and beauty, described in lines 69b–77, is clearly suggested by the grotesque, hunched-over, figures of the angels-turned-devils, and the once beautiful form of Lucifer is now a dark, clawed figure enfettered in the gaping mouth of the Leviathan. In this initial treatment of the fall-of-the-angels type-scene, the poet and the artist have created an exciting and dramatic verbal and visual contrast between two states of spiritual life, one blessed and the other damned.

That the fall-of-the-angels type-scene is structurally and thematically important is reinforced by the fact that the poet and the artist repeat it twice more in the *Cædmonian Genesis*. The first repetition of the episode occurs in lines 246 to 441 and in the drawings on pages 13, 16, 17, and 20. As in the first rendition, the five narremic units are developed poetically, but with each iteration certain details are varied, expanded, or omitted in a manner that emphasizes different aspects of the same situation. The third, fourth, and fifth narrative units, beginning with God's wrath and ending with the casting of the rebel angels into hell, for instance, were strongly stressed by the poet in the first repetition. These elements are, in fact, repeated in variation eight times in 42 lines. The poet employed in this short section very effective use of one of the most important rhetorical figures of Old English—variation. The use of poetic variation tends to restrain the pace of the narrative as well as to raise into high relief the theme of the fall of the angels. The repetition of the same idea eight times in 42 lines would probably be redundant in the hands of an inferior poet, but the poet of the *Cædmonian Genesis* never repeats himself in exactly the same manner; each iteration emphasizes new details or different aspects of the same scene.

Like the poet, the artist on pages 16 (Fig. 6) and 17 (Fig. 7) repeats the episode of the fall of the angels. This second pictorial account restates essentially the same details of the initial pictorial development in the frontispiece, and pages two and three, but does it in a manner that emphasizes the punishment of Lucifer rather than his spectacular rise to power. The drawings on pages 16 and 17 employ variation, contrast, and ironic juxtaposition in order to dramatize the consequences of Lucifer's act of disobedience. In the drawing on page 16 (Fig. 6), the angels are shown falling from heaven into the grotesque mouth of the Leviathan. In hell itself, Satan, tied hand and foot to stakes, is being harrassed by a devil with a flail. The most impressive aspect of this drawing is the vivid contrast between the blessed and the damned angels. Above in heaven, the loyal angels are depicted as beautiful creatures with wavy hair, majestic robes, and full wings; below in hell, the damned angels are small, dark, ugly creatures with unkempt hair, squat bodies and exposed genitalia. An even more striking visual contrast is seen in the drawing on page 17 (Fig. 7). The illustration depicts two monarchs, both enthroned and surrounded by their faithful retainers, but with significant differences. The monarch of heaven sits upon His cushioned throne, flanked by majestic Cherubim, while the monarch of hell, sits upon hard ground, flanked by ugly fiends who hold symbols of sovereignty over his crowned head. The artist, by employing ironic juxtaposition of the two monarchs, intensifies the theme set forth by the poet in lines 320b and 329a:

Heoldon englas forð
 heofonrices hehðe, þe ær godes hyldo gelæston.
 Lagon þa oðre fynd on ðam fyre, þe ær swa feala hæfdon
 gewinnes wið heora waldend. Wite þoliað,
 hatne heaðowelm helle tomiddes,
 brand and brade ligas, swilce eac þa biteran recas,
 prosm and bystro, forþon hie þegnscipe
 godes forgymdon. Hie hyra gal beswac,
 engles oferhygd, noldon alwaldan
 word weorþian.

(The angels continued to hold
the summit of heaven's kingdom, those who formerly God's
pleasure performed. The others lay fiends in the fire,
who before had had so much strive with their Lord.
Torment they suffer, burning heat intense, in midst of hell,
fire and broad flames, so also the bitter reeks
smoke and darkness, for that they the duty
of God neglected. Them their folly deceived
the angel's pride, they would not the All-powerful's
word revere.)

The account of the fall of the angels is repeated a second time in lines 733b and 763a, but now it is told from the viewpoint of the emissary-devil, who has just caused the downfall of Adam and Eve. His triumphant speech, according to J. M. Evans, is important because it "both relieves the almost unbearable tension of the situation and prepares the way for the contrast, already sharpened by the juxtaposition of Satan's rebellion and Adam's disobedience, between angelic and human falls upon which the structure of the poem rests."²³ Each of the five narremic units is succinctly recounted by the emissary-devil in lines 740a–750a. Through this account and the matter of lines 726a–740a, wherein the fiend boasts that Adam and Eve will go to hell, the fiend intends to console Satan, who, lying enchained in hell, awaits the arrival of the fallen couple. By readily admitting their guilt and seeking God's pardon, however, Adam and Eve have taken important steps towards salvation, thus robbing Satan of his victory over God. In the illustration on page 36 (Fig. 8), the artist ironically juxtaposes the return of the fiend to hell with the immediate repentance of Adam and Eve. Below in hell, the faithful retainer stands gesturing before the immobilized Devil; he is recounting his victory. Above in Eden, Adam and Eve stand in a pose of contrition: they cover their pudenda and their faces with their hands. The two-level drawing, then, depicts two fallen spiritual states, one human and the other demonic. Eventual salvation is suggested for man, however, as Adam and Eve repent immediately after their transgression. The juxtaposition of these two scenes reinforces the partial vitiation of the victory of Satan, whose envy is set against man's repentance.

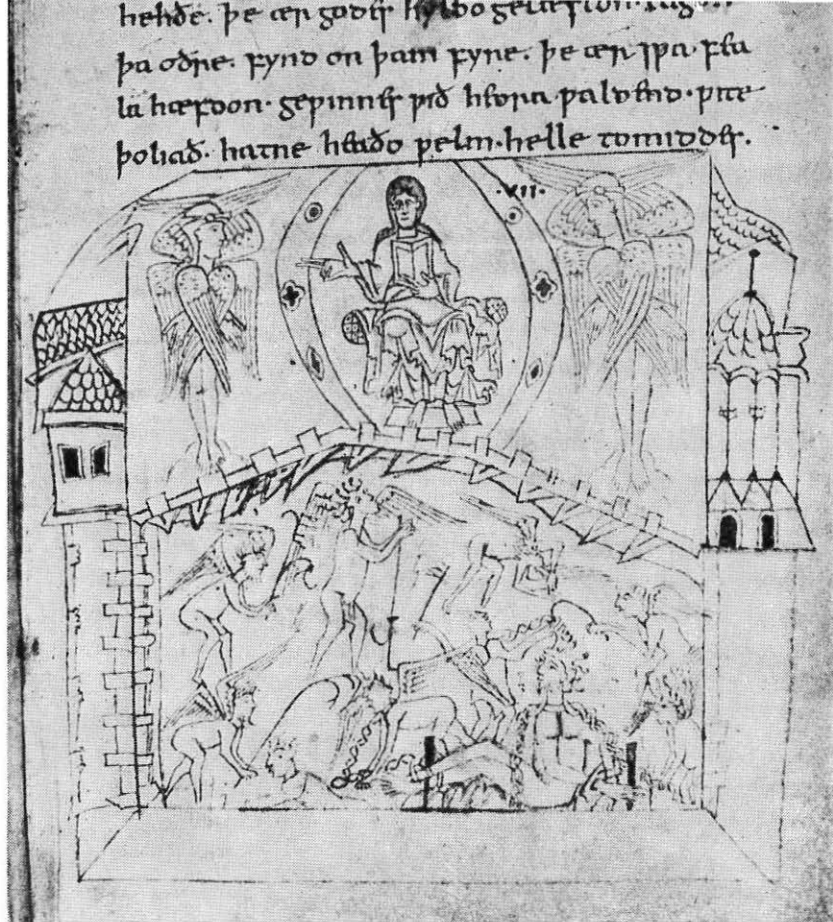
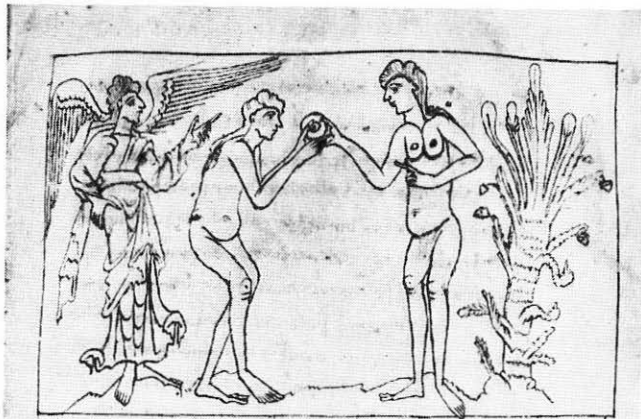


Figure 7 (above). Page 17 from *MS Junius 11*. A visual juxtaposition of the monarchs of heaven and hell, both enthroned and surrounded by faithful retainers. The pervasive poetic contrast between the obedient and the disobedient is yet again intensified by the artist's symbolic color code: red ink for salvation, brown for damnation.

Figure 8 (opposite above). Page 36 from *MS Junius 11*. In the upper level, Adam and Eve, conscious of their nakedness, stand in a pose of contrition. On their lower left, the emissary-devil begins to descend through the gate of hell. In hell, he is gesturing before the still-enchained Devil. The repetition of the figure of the emissary-devil contributes to the "transitory effect."

Figure 9 (opposite below). Page 31 from *MS Junius 11*. Above, Adam receives the forbidden fruit from Eve (right). Behind Adam stands the disguised devil, dressed in red-colored angelic robes. Below, the fallen couple repents. The fiend, drawn now in brown ink, sheds his disguise.



The Symbolic Color Code

A final example of the artist's creation of a visual language is seen in his deliberate manipulation of color. The drawings of the *Cædmonian Genesis* display the colored outline technique. Instead of filling an outline with pale washes of color, as in the *Benedictional of Æthelwold* (London: British Museum, MS Add. 49598, A.D. 984), the artist drew the lines in different colored inks. Although the artist restricted himself to two colors, red and brown, he nevertheless created a symbolic code whereby these two colors were juxtaposed for emphasis and contrast.

The symbolic use of coloration in medieval manuscripts has also been noted by W. O. Hassall, who, in a discussion of the coloration of the Holkham Bible, notes that the color red should have recalled to a priest the blood of Christ; that the color red becomes the emotional keynote of the manuscript.²⁴ Hassall also notes a symbolic use of coloration in the illustrations of the *Divina Commedia* (Holkham Library: MS 514). The artist employed red and black as the dominant colors in the *Inferno* whereas brown characterizes the *Purgatorio*.²⁵

The first artist of the *Cædmonian Genesis*, who illustrated the poem up to page 73, has also created a symbolic color code. The color red is consistently reserved for depictions of the Deity, the obedient angels, and the structure of heaven. In the drawings on pages 3 (Fig. 5), 9, 10, 11, 16 (Fig. 6), 17 (Fig. 7), and 44, the Deity's nimbus, garments, hair, hands, and codex and drawn in red ink. By contrast, the depictions of Satan, the rebel angels, and the structure of hell on pages 3 (Fig. 5), 16 (Fig. 6), 17 (Fig. 7), 20 (Fig. 2), and 36 (Fig. 8), are always drawn in brown ink. The colors red and brown are employed by the artist to reinforce the thematic contrast between the blessed and the damned, the faithful and the faithless, the obedient and the disobedient. The fact that the artist was consciously aware of symbolic coloration is seen in his depiction of the fall of the angels on pages 3, 16, and 17 (Figs. 5, 6, 7). Before the rebellion in heaven, Lucifer and his followers are outlined in red ink, but after the fall, they are drawn in brown ink. The change in color visually reinforces their loss of heavenly bliss. We have already seen how the artist juxtaposes the two modes of spiritual existence on pages 16 and 17 (Figs. 6 and 7). The upper portions of both drawings, which depict scenes in heaven, are outlined predominantly in red. In dramatic

contrast, the lower scenes in hell are drawn entirely in brown. Thus, the ironic juxtaposition of the two spiritual states is intensified visually by coloration; red denotes salvation; brown, damnation.

An even subtler use of symbolic coloration is seen in the temptation-of-Eve scenes. As noted earlier, the success of the emissary-devil in tempting Eve depended largely upon his employment of an intellectual and "phantasmic" deception, a trick, rather than a moral enticement. An essential part of the fiend's manipulation of Eve is his disguise as an angelic messenger. The disguise motif is clearly emphasized by coloration in the drawings on pages 24, 28, and the upper portion of page 31 (Fig. 9). While in hell, the messenger is outlined in brown ink (Fig. 2), but when he assumes his disguise as an angel he dons a red garment and crown (Fig. 2). Once the temptation of Adam and Eve has been completed, the fiend's sartorial disguise is discarded, and, on the bottom of page 31 (Fig. 9), he is again drawn in brown ink.

The artist of the *Cædmonian Genesis*, in conclusion, has successfully approximated certain structural and stylistic techniques in visual form. He has created, to enumerate briefly, a consecutive series of visual panels corresponding to the narrative sequence of the poetic text. By the repetition of the same figure in consecutive scenes, he has simulated in pictorial form the transitory element. He deliberately employed position and grouping to suggest harmony and disorder. Other techniques, such as the repetition of type-scenes, variation, and juxtaposition, he used to reinforce certain pervasive textual contrasts. And finally, the artist created a symbolic color code which intensifies the verbal rhetoric inherent in the illustrations of the *Cædmonian Genesis*.

1. Kurt Weitzmann, *Ancient Book Illumination* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1959), p. 1.
2. Geoffrey Keynes, *A Study of the Illuminated Books of William Blake: Poet, Printer, Prophet* (New York: Orion Press, 1964), p. 7.
3. David Bland, *The Illustration of Books* (New York: Pantheon, 1952), p. 16.
4. René Wellek, "The Parallelism between Literature and the Arts," *English Institute Annual*, 1942, p. 53.
5. Keynes, *William Blake*, pp. 24-25.

6. John Leyerle, "The Interlace Structure of Beowulf," *University of Toronto Quarterly*, XXXVII (October, 1967), p. 1.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 4.
8. Helmut A. Hatzfeld, "Literary Criticism Through Art and Art Criticism Through Literature," *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, VI (September 1947), p. 3.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 1.
10. David Lenfest, "The Illustrations of *Gulliver's Travels*, 1727-1838, Considered as an Index of Interpretation," (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Michigan, 1967).
11. David Bland, *The Illustration of Books*, p. 14.
12. Actually three artists composed the drawings in the manuscript, but in this study I focus on the work of the first artist, who illustrated the poem up to page 73.
13. I am grateful to the authorities in the Department of Western Manuscripts, Bodleian Library, for permission to publish the photographs of pages 2, 3, 16, 17, 20, 31, 36, 49, and the frontispiece from *MS Junius 11*. Color reproductions of these pages are available from the Bodleian Library in filmstrip format (rolls 172 D, E, and 228.6).
14. "The Illustrations of the *Cædmonian Genesis*: Literary Criticism Through Art," *Medievalia et Humanistica*, No. 3, 1972.
15. Otto Pächt, *The Rise of Pictorial Narrative in Twelfth-Century England* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1962), p. 3.
16. *Ibid.*, p. 4.
17. Kurt Weitzmann, *Illustrations in Roll and Codex* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1947 rep. 1970), p. 12.
18. Pächt, *Pictorial Narrative*, p. 6.
19. Weitzmann, *Illustrations in Roll and Codex*, p. 17.
20. *Ibid.*, p. 18.
21. Eugene Dorfman, *The Narreme in Medieval Romance Epic* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1969), pp. 5-7.
22. All line citations from *The Junius Manuscript* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1931), ed. by George P. Krapp.
23. J. M. Evans, *Paradise Lost and the Genesis Tradition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1968), p. 162.
24. W. O. Hassall, *The Holkham Bible Picture Book* (London: The Dropmore Press, 1954), pp. 12-13.
25. Hassall, *The Holkham Library Illuminations and Illustrations in the Manuscript Library of the Earl of Leicester* (The Roxburghe Club, 1970), p. 26.

On the Cover: A Rubbing of a Claudian Bronze Tablet

Reproduced on the cover is a rubbing by Edward M. Catich of one of a set of bronze tablets of an oration that Emperor Claudius (A.D. 41–54) delivered in the Senate House of Rome in the year 48. Father Catich spent a year traveling over the Mediterranean littoral searching out Roman inscriptions of the Republican and Imperial eras for the third volume of his trilogy, *The Imperial Alphabet*, in which he hopes to “show, among many things, the broad band of letter-acceptance during the Imperial Age.” Father Catich’s comments follow:

The official text of Claudius’ oration was incised in large bronze plates discovered in Lyons in 1528 and now installed in the Lyons Municipal Museum. Tacitus has preserved the text (*Ann.*, xi, 23–25), but after the discovery of the bronze epigraph it would appear as though the great historian had redone the oration in such a way as to transform a modest speech into one of the most solemn discourses of antiquity.

In old Rome bronze workers (*caelator*, *aerarius*) were numerous, and their craft products ranged from cooking utensils to weapons and armor. Copper was one of the first and easiest metals to fabricate, often being found in raw lumps—unlike iron which had to be smelted from ore. Some of the earliest copper came from the island of Cyprus (*Cuprum*), hence the name.

My recent research investigation has been concerned with brush writing and its end-product: the stone inscriptions in ancient Rome. However, all writing and lettering techniques interest me, and in many contacts with palaeographers and epigraphists in Rome, Athens, and elsewhere I have not been able to extract exact information on the process by which ancient letters were incised in bronze. Mommsen, Egbert, Sandys, *et al.*, describe Roman bronze tablets as being engraved. Ordinarily one thinks of engraving as a method of gouging into metal by means of a hardened metal burin—a slow, tedious and exacting skill. I hesitate to accept this. Indeed I prefer to think that the writing on Republican and Imperial bronze tablets most often was a direct and quick technique very much like the writing one fashions with a square-edged reed on paper. It had to be a

quick and easy process in order to explain the enormous quantity of bronze tablets produced throughout the Republic and Empire. There are many reasons for this conclusion, chief of which is that the "bronze writing" (e.g., on the Claudian tablets) shows all the internal dynamics peculiar to the chisel-edged reed, such as: crispness of strokes, cant modulation, constancy of stem-widths, thick-and-thin variations of letter parts, repeated tool handlings, an almost-total exclusion of "built-up" and "filled-in" letter parts, the *rugae* of letter depressions, and the absence of burin marks (the two latter facts could be ascribed to bronze aging).

As indirect evidence, one cites the coexistence in Etruria of bronze crafting and wax-tablet writing. In fact, the linear quality of gods, figures, animals, etc., for example, on the backs of Etruscan mirrors closely resembles the monolined Etruscan writing; one could hazard the guess that both mirror graphics and alphabetic writing were fashioned by the same stylus-drawing-writing tool.

In Rome the writing on bronze tablets generally varied little from wax-tablet writing. The difference usually was one of degree in that the writing for bronze ordinarily was formal, carefully made, and intended for permanence; whereas the writing on wax tablets was mostly ephemeral, informal, and hurriedly cursive. The recessed ground receiving the wax in scribal tablets generally was made of wood, bone, or ivory; whereas the ground for bronze tablets was the bronze itself with the wax layer much thinner than the layer of wax on scribal tablets.

The process of making bronze inscriptions, I contend, was similar to our present-day plate-etching technique in which the plate is first thinly coated with wax-asphaltum, pitch, varnish, or some acid-resistant layer in which the drawing is scratched with a needle or hard stylus exposing the bare metal underneath which then is immersed in acid (the most common being nitric, hydrochloric, potassium chlorate, and iron perchloride), corroding and eating away exposed metal. After the acid-etch, the plate is cleaned of its acid-protective layer. The acid-bitten, depressed areas in ancient Roman bronzes were then filled with white lead to effect a contrast between writing and field—not unlike the Roman practice of painting the V-cut stone inscription with red lead.

The Lyons Tablets are quite possibly the finest palaeographic bronzes extant. The letters (about 4,500) on these Claudian Tablets in the Lyons Museum are examples of the very best formal, written majuscules of the Imperium. Their average height is 1.9 centimeters ($\frac{3}{4}$ "). A small sampling of the letters is shown in Huebner's *Exempla*, no. 709; a more detailed treatment is to be found in C.I.L., xiii, 1668; and Boissieu, *Inscr. ant. de Lyon*, p. 133 ff.



* One of an assortment of pages reserved in future issues of *Visible Language* for graphic designers to present their ideas on letter-forms in practice or research. See overleaf for some general instructions.

Experimental Design Pages

One of this journal's primary aims is to encourage an exchange of creative ideas among designers. We propose, therefore, to publish in future numbers of *Visible Language* special articles from practicing designers as well as from academic design programs.

In essence, we're saying to designers: take this 6 × 9 page (or eight or ten of them) and run with it! Develop any creative idea—in any technique you want to use.

1. Each article should relate to man's continuing problems in getting *verbal* language down in *visible* form. (This does not include, for example, the "language" of photography—but could include symbol systems.) In other words, the major emphasis of your article should in some way be concerned with letterforms or their visual corollaries.
2. Layout of the article should be completed by the designer, since you can best organize and present your own ideas visually.
3. Creative, unusual presentation of ideas is strongly encouraged, through the use of sketches, lettering, collage; any medium may be used that can be reproduced in one color. Sketch out and letter the entire piece, or we'll set type to accompany your art work.
4. Copy, illustrations, and layout may be submitted in any form that would be acceptable to a printer. Any copy to be set in type must be typewritten, double-spaced.
5. Please keep in mind the proportions of this page: 6 × 9 inches.
6. If you use more than one page, begin with a right-hand page. Do not begin with a double-page spread.
7. Normal journal margins are not inviolate, but should be observed where appropriate.

SPECIAL NOTE: Designers are encouraged to submit to the editor a preliminary sketch and/or draft of their ideas before undertaking final rendering.