

The Old English Words for the Concepts “Virgin” and “Virginity”

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Abstract

アングロ・サクソン時代の文献には, virginity について論じたもの, もしくはそれについて何らかの言及がなされているものが多数ある。それだけ, virginity はテーマとして好まれた。例えば, Aldhelm の散文に *De Virginitate* という論文がある。これは教科書として使われたくらいで, ラテン語の論文本体に書き込まれた行間注の多さからして, その様子が解る。ところが, 英語には, virgin とか, virginity というコンセプトを表す単語が本来あったわけではない。現在の英語の virgin と, virginity という単語は ME 期に入って使われ始めた。アングロ・サクソン期の文人たちは, 本来あった単語をそれらのコンセプトを表す用語として使っていた。代表的なものをあげると, *fæmne*, *mæden*, *hehstald*, *fæmnhad*, *mædenhad*, *hehstaldhad* である。*mæden* 以外は現在の英語に残っていない。それらの語は, 詩, 散文 (説教, 法律など), 行間注など, 様々なテキストに現れる。どの語を virgin 及び virginity に対する用語としてあてるかについては, 時代, 方言間のみならず, 著者, 訳者または注釈者間でさえ差異がみられる。

Introduction

Virginity was a favourite theme in Anglo-Saxon Literature. The statement can be confirmed by Aldhelm's prose *De Virginitate* as one of the literary testimonies; Aldhelm was “one of the principal authors on the English curriculum”, and heavy glosses (both in Latin and in English) in the manuscripts of his prose *De Virginitate* prove how attentively it was studied.¹⁾ The chief aim of the present article is to discuss the words employed by Anglo-Saxon authors or translators to express the concepts “virgin” and “virginity”, the discussion being preceded by a survey of the Hebrew, Greek and Latin attitudes toward the ideas “virgin” and “virginity”, and the terms established by them which reflect their social

1) Michael Lapidge & Michael Herren (trans.), *Aldhelm: the Prose Work* (Ipswich: D. S. Brewer Ltd. 1979), p. 2.

aspect.

1. *b'etūlāh* in the Jewish society

In the Jewish society *b'etūlāh*, the word expressing the concept of “virgin”, was often used as signifying merely “a maiden” or “a young unmarried girl”, and thus did not always emphasize the physical integrity of the woman.²⁾ It, however, does not mean that virginity is the concept irrelevant to the matrimonial institution in their society. The importance of virginity as an element attached to maidens, can be observed in the *Old Testament* (Gen 24, 16; 34, 1–7; Judg 19, 24). The priest (*sacerdos*) and the high priest (*pontifex*) were requested to take a virgin bride; the priest was also allowed to take a widow for his wife, only when she was a priest's widow, but it did not apply in the case of the high priest (Lev 21, 13–14; Ezk 44, 22). When a bride is falsely accused of being found not to be a virgin by her husband, her parents must prove her virginity by showing “evidence” (*signa virginitatis*), as in the following passage:

si duxerit vir uxorem et postea eam odio habuerit
 quaesieritque occasiones quibus dimittat eam
 obiciens ei nomen pessimum et dixerit
 uxorem hanc accepi et ingressus ad eam non inveni virginem
 tollent eam pater et mater eius
 et ferent secum signa virginitatis eius ad seniores urbis in porta sunt
 et dicet pater filiam meam dedi huic uxorem
 quam quia odit inponet ei nomen pessimum
 ut dicat non inveni filiam tuam virginem
 et ecce haec sunt signa virginitatis filiae meae
 expandent vestimentum coram senibus civitatis
 [If a man marry a wife, and afterwards hate her,
 and seek occasions to put her away,
 objecting unto her a very ill name, and say,
 I took this wife, and accompanying with her: I found her not a virgin.
 Her father and mother shall take her,
 and shall carry with them the signs of her virginity to the ancients of the city that are in the gate,
 and the father shall say: I gave my daughter unto this man to wife,
 whom because he hates, he layeth unto her a very ill name,
 so that he saith, I found not thy daughter a virgin,
 and behold these are the signs of my daughter's virginity.
 They shall spread the vesture before the ancients of the city.]³⁾

(Deut 22, 13–17; underlines mine)

2) John L. McKenzie, *Dictionary of the Bible* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company 1965), pp. 913–14; Gerhard Kittel & Gerhard Friedrich, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Michigan: WM. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company 1964–76; repr. 1978) Vol. V, p. 832.

3) The Latin Biblical quotations are hereafter cited, unless specified, from *Biblia Sacra Iuxta Vulgatam Versionem* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft 1969; repr. 1985). Translation is quoted, with the spelling and the punctuation modernised by the present writer, from *The Holie Bible, Doway 1609*, facsimile reproduction (kyoto: Rinsen Book Co. Ltd. 1990).

The evidence presented before the elders (*senes*) of the city is the cloth (*vestmentum*) of the nuptial bed.⁴⁾ If the charge made by the husband is proved false, he is to be punished; he must pay a fine of one hundred shekels of silver, which is ultimately given to the bride’s father, and he must take her to wife (Deut 22, 18–19). If the charge is true, the woman is to be stoned to death (Deut 22, 20–21). A woman, however, should not retain her virginity to the end of her life. Jephthah’s daughter, who is his only child and is to be sacrificed, bewails her virginity, because she is destined to meet her death, without reaching womanhood in marriage, childless (Judg 11, 37).

2. Greek *παρθένος, παρθένια, παρθενία* ; Latin *virgo, virginitas*

In the verses mentioned above, the Greek *παρθένος* (*f.* or *m.*) and *παρθένια* (*neut. pl.*) are the terms employed to express the concepts “virgin” and “signs of virginity” in the Septuagint: for example, *παρθένος ἦν, ἀνὴρ οὐκ ἔγνω αὐτήν* “a virgin, neither had any man known her” (Gen 24,16),⁵⁾ *τὰ παρθένια τῆς παιδος* “the signs of the girl’s virginity” (Deut 22,15). Originally in the ancient Greek society *παρθένος* seems to have meant a maiden, or an unmarried girl beyond puberty,⁶⁾ as in Homer Il. 22, 126–8;⁷⁾ virginity is not an element indispensable to this word and it is also employed for a young unmarried woman who is not a virgin (Homer Il. 2, 512–15).⁸⁾ At Is 7, 14 it is used even for a young married woman, rendering Hebrew *hā’almā*;⁹⁾ *ἰδοὺ ἡ παρθένος ἐν γαστρὶ ἔξει καὶ τέξεται υἱόν, καὶ καλέσει τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ Ἐμμανουήλ* “Behold, a virgin (?) shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel” (parenthesised question mark mine). With its nuance of “being not married” intensified, it appears to have developed the sense of “virgin”; thus *Παρθένος* is the title of Athena, the Virgin Goddess.¹⁰⁾ In the New Testament there are passages in which virginity is ascetically idealized (1 Co 7, 1; 8; 32–35); it is recommended by St Paul himself, not by command of the Lord (1 Co 7, 25).

4) McKenzie (1965, p. 914) interprets this as “the blood-stained garments of the nuptial couch, retained by the parents as proof of the rupture of the hymen.”

5) The readings of the Authorized Version are applied to the Greek quotations from the Septuagint.

6) The etymology of this word is uncertain. Cf. Henry George Liddell & Robert Scott, *A Greek-English Lexicon* (Oxford: Clarendon Press 1940; repr. 1958); Friedrich (1964–76), Vol. V.; Ernest Klein, *A Comprehensive Etymological Dictionary of the English Language* (Amsterdam: Elsevier Publishing Company 1967). However, Friedrich (p. 827) mentions that a connection with *-θεν-* “to swell”, “to bloom” is pointed out by Herzog-Hauser, 1910, and Boisacq, 747.

7) *οὐ μὲν πως νῦν ἔστιν ἀπὸ δρυὸς οὐδ’ ἀπὸ πέτρης τῷ ἀριζήμεναι, ἃ τε παρθένος ἠΐθεός τε, παρθένος ἠΐθεός τ’ ἀριζέτον ἀλλήλοιν.* (In no wise may I now from oak-tree or from rock hold dalliance with him, even as youth and maiden—youth and maiden!—hold dalliance one with the other.) Trans. Loeb.

8) *υἱὲς Ἄρηος, οὓς τέκεν Ἄστυόχη δόμῳ Ἄκτορος Ἀζεΐδαο, παρθένος αἰδοίη, ὑπερώϊον εἰσαναβᾶσα, Ἄρηϊ κρατερῷ· ὁ δέ οἱ παρελέξατο λάθρη.* (Sons of Ares, whom, in the palace of Actor, son of Azeus, Astyoche, the honoured maiden, conceived of mighty Ares, when she had entered into her upper chamber; for he lay with her in secret.) Trans. Loeb.

9) Gerhard Kittel, and Gerhard Friedrich (1964–76), vol. V, p. 831; Raymond E. Brown, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, and Roland E. Murphy, *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary* (London: Geoffrey Chapman 1989; repr. 1991), p. 235, which says “*Hā’almā* is not the technical term for a virgin (*bētūlā*). This is best understood as a wife of Ahaz”.

10) *Παρθενών* (*m.*), derived from *παρθένος*, when in plural, signifies “maidens’ apartments in a house”, and “the western cella of the Parthenon or temple of Athena at Athens”; see H. G. Liddell & R. Scott (1940), *A Greek-English Lexicon*, p. 1339.

In Rev 14, 4 virginity in men is praised “as creating a special bond of union with Jesus”,¹¹⁾ and here *παρθένοι* (*m. pl.*) is used in the sense “men who have never had sexual relations with women”.

The Latin terms *virgo* and *virginitas*, from which the English words *virgin* and *virginity* are derived, are employed in the Vulgate to describe those concepts. The word *virgo*, perhaps etymologically connected with *virga* “a shoot, sprout, twig”,¹²⁾ meant “a young woman of marriageable age” in general, as well as “a virgin”, in which sense inviolate chastity of a maiden or a woman is emphasized, and which is also applied to a man without sexual experience. Concerning its derivative *virginitas*, what seems to be interesting is the phraseology to express the idea of “the signs of virginity” in Deut 22, 13–17; as mentioned above, in the Septuagint is employed the neuter plural *τὰ παρθένια*, which can be regarded as a substantivised adjective with an article preceding, whereas in the Latin version it is expressed in the two words *signa virginitatis*, the neuter plural noun *signa* being added.

In the Gospels the words meaning “virgin” and “virginity” appear with reference to the Virgin Mary (Mt 1, 23; Lk 1, 27), to the ten wise and foolish virgins (Mt 25, 1–13), and to a widow who had lived with her husband seven years from her virginity (Lk 2, 36).¹³⁾ Here also the Greek word used for “virgin” is *παρθένος*, and *παρθενία* (*f.*) is employed to express “virginity”; in the Vulgate the Latin *virgo* and *virginitas* render those Greek words. A brief mention should be made of Mt 1, 23, which reads in Greek as follows:

Ἴδού ἡ παρθένος ἐν γαστρὶ ἔξει καὶ τέξεται υἱόν,
καὶ καλέσουσιν τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ Ἐμμανουήλ,
ὃ ἐστὶν μεθερμηνεύμενον Μεθ' ἡμῶν ὁ θεός.

The Latin translation in the Vulgate is:

ecce virgo in utero habebit et pariet filium et vocabunt nomen eius Emmanuhel
quod est interpretatum Nobiscum Deus.

The first two lines in the above Greek verse, i.e. Ἴδού ἡ παρθένος ἐν γαστρὶ ἔξει καὶ τέξεται υἱόν, καὶ καλέσουσιν τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ Ἐμμανουήλ, are quoted from Is 7, 14, where Hebrew *hā'almā* “a young woman of marriageable age” is translated into *παρθένος* in the Septuagint, as pointed out before, and into *virgo* in the Vulgate. Since the *παρθένος* in Is 7, 14 cannot be regarded as signifying “a virgin”, the verse cannot be taken as the starting point for the virgin birth.¹⁴⁾ Concerning the choice of the word *παρθένος* in Mt 1, 23, it is suggested that Matthew, who very likely knew both of the Hebrew and the Greek readings, “consciously chose the latter here”,¹⁵⁾ and also that he “seized upon the LXX rendering of it to confirm the virgin birth story which was already established in the Christian tradition.”¹⁶⁾

11) McKenzie (1965), p. 914.

12) Charlton T. Lewis and Charles Short, *Oxford Latin Dictionary* (1968).

13) In the Lindisfame Gospels there are Latin texts with Nothumbrian glosses added before each Gospel, and some of them have sentences which contain *virgo* or *virginitas*. They must be discussed on another occasion.

14) Bauer, *Bauer Encyclopedia of Biblical Theology*, 3 vols (London and Sydney: Sheed and Ward Ltd 1970) vol. 2, p. 943; Bauer (1970), at the same page, also points out “the fact that in the later Greek translations of the Old Testament (second century: Aquila, Theodotian, Symmachus), which emerged in the time of the anti-christian polemic, the neutral word *neanis* (=young woman) was adopted in place of *parthenos* in Is 7:14.”

15) Raymond E. Brown, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, and Roland E. Murphy (1989), p. 635.

16) A. W. Argyle, *The Cambridge Bible Commentary on the New English Bible: The Gospel According to Matthew* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1963; repr. 1987), p. 28. Bauer (1970, vol. 2, p. 943) comments: “He

3. The Old English words meaning “*virgin*” and “*virginity*”

The English words *virgin* and *virginity* came to be used in the course of the Middle English period; the earliest quotation citation of the word *virgin* in the *OED* is from *Trin. Coll. Hom.* 185 (c 1200) and that of the word *virginity* from *Cursor M.* 24681 (a 1300). Therefore, in both of the early and the later versions of Wycliffe’s Bible (c 1385 and c 1395), the term *virgin* occurs as the term for the Latin *virgo*; thus the Virgin Mary is referred to as *virgin* at Mt 1.3, and the ten wise and foolish virgins as *virgins* at Mt 25.1, Mt 25.7, Mt 25.11. However, the older term *maiden* was still employed in both versions to refer to the Virgin Mary at Lk 1.27, where furthermore terminological discrepancy is observed among the readings of the MSS; one MS of the early version adopts the word *virgin*, and several MSS of the later version employ the word *maid*. The term for *virginitas* at Lk 2.36 is not *virginity*; in both versions it is *maidenhood* (*maydenhed* in the early version; *maydynhode* in the later version), which refers to the virginity of Anna, a widow prophetess. Later versions of the Bible, such as Tyndale (1534), Rhemes (1582), the Authorized Version (1611), are consistent in employing the terms *virgin* and *virginity* in those Gospel passages except at Mt 1.23 in Tyndale’s edition, where the word *maid* is used to refer to the Virgin Mary.

Before borrowing the words *virgin* and *virginity*, the OE words used seemingly to express those concepts were: 1) **fæmne, hægsteald, ides, mæg, mægden, mægdenmann, mæg(e)þ, mægþmann, meowle**; 2) **fæmnhad, hægstealdhad, hægstealdnis, mægdenhad, mæg(e)þhad**; 3) **fæmnhades mann**.¹⁷⁾ The words classified under 1) are simplex and compounds seemingly, or already interpreted by scholars as, signifying “virgin”, all of which, except the hapax legomenon *mægþmann*, have adjacent senses such as “girl, maiden”, “daughter”, “(generically) woman”, “female servant”; those under 2) are compounds meaning “state or condition of a virgin, virginity”, which are comprised of words under 1) and the suffix *-had* (=ModE *-hood*) or *-nis* (=ModE *-ness*); *fæmnhades mann* under 3) is regarded as two words in BTS, but by Hall as one word meaning “virgin”.¹⁸⁾ The idea of virginity, as is mentioned by Bäck with regard to the frequent occurrence of the compound *mægeþhad* “virginity” (p. 219), was

(=*Matthew*) often inserts quotations of this kind by way of commentary in order to establish a connection between the fact which he has received and is handing down (and which are initially quite independent of the Old Testament records) and the salvific history recorded in the Old Testament.” (Italicized insertion mine)

17) Excluded are the words which seem to have adjacent meanings only, such as **dohtor** rendering *puella* at Li Mk 5, 41; **eadmæg** (*Jul* 352), a controversial word, which Bäck (pp. 224–25) regards as a compound, thus a hapax legomenon, meaning “blessed maiden”, Gollancz (1895) reads *ead-mæg*, but BTS takes as two words, *ead* (adj.) and *mæg*; Woolf (1955) reads *eadmægden*; **geomeowle** (*Beo* 2931, 3150) rendered as “aged wife?” by Hall, whom Bäck (p.228) follows; **geong wifmann** (*WW* 310, 9), given as a synonym of *mæden*, rendering Latin *puella* “girl, maiden”; **giewmeden** (Ps. Supl. T. 67, 27) “a glee-maiden, female musician” rendering Latin *tympanistria*; **healsmægeþ**, a hapax legomenon occurring at *Gen* 2155, “a virgin embraced and beloved” in BT, but “beloved maid” in Hall, Bäck (p. 217) taking as “(dear) women” or “(dear) wives” by comparison with another hapax legomenon *healsgebedda* (*Beo* 63) and also by taking it as a parallel to *leoda idesa*; **læring-mæden** (Th. Ap. 20, 13) “a girl who receiving instruction, a female pupil”, rendering Latin *discipula* (Bäck, p. 210); **mægden-cild** “a female child, girl”; **scilcen** “female servant or slave, a woman of bad character” in BT, BTS commenting that “the word has not necessarily a bad meaning” (Bäck suggests “girl, maiden” at p. 229); **wifcild** “a female child” in BT; **wynnæg** (*Guth* 1319) “a beloved kinswoman” in BT, “winsome maiden” in Hall, “joyous maiden” in Roberts (1979, p. 228) (Bäck proposes “excellent virgin”, p. 225).

18) BT(S): Bosworth, Joseph, and T. Northcote Toller (1882–98), *An Anglo-Saxon Dictionary* (Oxford: Oxford

obviously “a favourite theme in the literature of the time”,¹⁹⁾ and enhanced interest in the theme seems to have caused the variety of the words in which the sense “virgin” or “virginity” developed in the course of the OE period.

4. *fæmne* and *hægsteald*: the terms in the Anglo-Saxon Gospels

The words used in the Anglo-Saxon Gospels to render Latin *virgo* and *virginitas* are *fæmne*, *hehstald* (a variant of *hægsteald*), *fæmnhad*, *hehstaldhad* (a variant of *hægstealdhad*), and *hehstaltniss*. What is meant by “the Anglo-Saxon Gospels” is the three versions of the Gospels printed by Skeat in his collated edition (1871–87).²⁰⁾ The three versions are the Lindisfarne Gospels, the Rushworth Gospels, and the West-Saxon Gospels. The former two contain the Latin Gospels with interlinear glosses dated to the second half of the tenth century, and the last one is the Old English translation of the Gospels (c 1000).

The word *hehstald* (or *hægsteald*) is a compound of *haga* “a place fenced in, enclosure” and *-steald* “possessor”, the proper meaning of the word being “a person who owns an enclosure”, from which developed the senses “(young) warrior”, “unmarried man”, “virgin”, and “youth”.²¹⁾ The word occurs 65 times in all the Old English texts recorded in *A Microfiche Concordance to Old English* (abbreviated to *MCOE* hereafter).²²⁾ It is employed in the Lindisfarne Gospels as a term for “virgin” glossed over *virgo* (14 times):²³⁾

heonu hehstald in hrif scealhabba ð hæfis 7 ge-cennes
 ecce uirgo in utero habebit et pariet
 sunu 7 hia geceiges noma his ðæt is
 filium et uocabunt nomen eius emmanuhel quod est

University Press, 1st ed. 1898, repr. 1973); *Supplement* by T. N. Toller (Oxford: Oxford University Press 1921, repr. 1973), with *Enlarged Addenda and Corrigenda* by Alistair Campbell (Oxford: Clarendon Press 1972, repr. 1973). Hall: Hall, John R. Clark (1960), *A Concise Anglo-Saxon Dictionary*, fourth edition (Toronto: University of Toronto Press 1960; repr. 1991; first ed. 1894). The word is recorded in the plural, *fæmnhades men*, for the Latin *virginum*, in BTS. The quotation in BTS is from R. Ben. (Die Angelsächsische Prosabearbeitung der Benedictinerregel, herausgegeben von A. Schröder, Kassel, 1885) 136, 24.

19) Bäck, Hildung (1934), *The Synonyms for “Child”, “Boy”, “Girl” in Old English: An Etymological-Semasiological Investigation*, Lund diss. Lund Studies in English II (Lund: C.W.K. Gleerups Förlag 1934).

20) Skeat, Walter W. (1871–87), *The Holy Gospels in Anglo-Saxon, Northumbrian, and Old Mercian Versions, synoptically arranged, with collations exhibiting all the readings of all the MSS.; together with the early Latin version as contained in the Lindisfarne MS., collated with the Latin version in the Rushworth MS.* (Cambridge: University Press 1871–87). This edition appeared in four volumes: *The Gospel according to Saint Mark* was published in 1871, *The Gospel according to Saint Luke* in 1874, *The Gospel according to Saint John* in 1878, and *The Gospel according to Saint Matthew* in 1887.

21) Bäck, pp. 171–74. For further information about the sense development, see Tamoto (1997), ‘“Hexham Road” in the City of Reading—Hexham Derived from Anglo-Saxon *Hagustaldesham*’, *Literary Symposium* (Bungaku Ronso) Vol. CXV (Toyohashi: the Literary Association of Aichi University 1997), pp. 6–8.

22) Healey, Antonette Dipaolo, and Richard L. Venezky, *A Microfiche Concordance to Old English* (Toronto: University of Toronto 1980). In the 65 instances of the word *hægsteald* are included 7 instances of a place name and the controversial 2 instances from *Iudicium Dei*, *Rituale IV & V*, appropriateness of which needs further discussion on another occasion.

23) Seven of them occur in the Introductory passages preceding each Gospel.

getrahtet miðus god
interpretatum nobiscum deus

(Li Mt 1, 23)

Here the Latin *virgo* refers to the Virgin Mary, and it is glossed with *hehstald*, which was originally a word for a male person. This word occurs as a gloss for *virgo* also in the Rushworth Gospels, Lk 1.27, but only once. Its compound *hehstaldhad* is employed as a gloss rendering *virginitas* at Lk 2.36 both in the Lindisfarne Gospels and in the Rushworth Gospels. The compound *hehstaltnis* is also employed once for *virginitas* by the glossator of the Lindisfarne Gospels at J11.3, which is page 1, line 3 of an introductory passage to St John's Gospel. Those are the terms employed as glosses to *virgo* and *virginitas* in the Lindisfarne Gospels and the Rushworth Gospels. Other compounds also occur in the other Old English texts; they are *hehstallc* "virginal" (once), *hægstealdman* "young warrior, youth, unmarried man" (4 times), *hagustaldesham* (once), *hagustealddumbe* (once), and *hagustaldesee* (4 times), the last three being place names.²⁴⁾

The MCOE records 540 instances of the simplex *fæmne*; its derivatives and compounds are *fæmnhad* (10 times), *fæmnhadlic* (8 times), *fæmnelic* or *fæmnenlic* (5 times), *fæmnhadesmann* (once), *nunfæmne* (8 times), *halifemne* (once), and *mynsterfæmne* (once). The OE *fæmne* is cognate with OSax. *fēmea*, *fēhmia*; Frs. *fæm*; OFr. *famne*, *fomne*, *femne*, *fove*, *fone*; OIc. *feima*; Lat. *fēmīna*, "a female, woman".²⁵⁾ After introducing and explaining various past theories as to the etymology of the OE *fæmne*, including comparative researches on the change in the sound of the stem vowel of the equivalent in other languages, Bäck (pp. 184–86) reaches the conclusion that from the assumed meaning "protectress" (which he deduces from "to protect, take care of", the generalized meaning of IE root **pā(i)* "to tend cattle") developed the sense "mistress of the house, consort, wife", and then "woman", which he describes as the meaning in the oldest English texts, and from which are derived the other senses, "(young) marriageable but unmarried woman", "girl, maiden", "virgin", and "nun".

With regard to the terminology in the Anglo-Saxon Gospels, *fæmne* and *fæmnhad* are the terms employed for *virgo* and *virginitas* in two of the three versions. The glossator of the Lindisfarne Gospels did not employ those terms; the two glossators of the Rushworth Gospels and the translator of the West-Saxon Gospels used them. Farman, one of the glossators of the Rushworth Gospels, took charge of Matthew, Mark 1–2.15, and John 18.1–3; the rest was done by Owun, the other glossator.²⁶⁾ Farman, who is independent of the Lindisfarne glosses, is consistent in employing *fæmne* as the term for *virgo*. Owun, who is believed to have copied the Lindisfarne glosses, expectedly employs *hehstald* for the latter *virgo* at Lk 1.27 and *hehstaldhad* at Lk 2.36. He, however, uses *fæfne* (a variant of *fæmne*) for the first *virgo* at Lk 1.27.

to fæfne giweddad ⁊ gifæstnad were ðæs noma
ad uirginem disponsatam uiro cui nomen
was of huse dauīðes 7 noma ðare hehstalde maria
erat ioseph de domu dauid & nomen uirginis maria

(Ru Lk 1, 27)

24) See Tamoto (1997), pp. 2–6.

25) BT, q.v. *fæmne*. Holthausen (1934, q.v. *fæmne*) adds Avestan *paēman* "Milch", Lat. *opīmus*, Gk *πίον* "fett", etc.

26) Robert J. M Jenner, 'Farman Vindicatus: The Linguistic Value of Rushworth I', *Anglia* 58 (1934), p. 5.

It follows that Owun employed two kinds of terms for *virgo* at Lk 1.27, *fæfne* and *hehstald*, and that he became independent of the Lindisfarne gloss when he employed *fæfne*. This is the only instance of the form *fæfne* in the whole Old English literature. The translator of the West-Saxon Gospels consistently employed *fæmne* as the term for *virgo* and *fæmnhad* for *virginitas*. One verse from the Gospel of St Luke will suffice to illustrate the terminology in the West-Saxon Gospels:²⁷⁾

to beweddudre fæmnan anum were. þæs nama wæs iosep. of dauides huse. and þære fæmnan nama wæs maria.
(Lk 1.27)

5. *ides*

The *MCOE* records 72 instances of this word. The etymology of the word *ides* is uncertain.²⁸⁾ BT's signification is "woman"; Hall's is "virgin: (†) woman, wife, lady, queen". It is a poetic word; the following quotation from OE poem *Genesis* may be interpreted as illustrating the sense "virgin" of this word:

"Her syndon inne unwemme twa
dohtor mine. Doð, swa ic eow bidde
(ne can þara idesa owðer gieta
þurh gebedscape beorna neawest)
and geswicað þære synne. Ic eow sylle þa,
ær ge sceonde wið gesceapu fremmen,
ungifre yfel ylða bearnum.
Onfoð þæm fæmnum, lætað frið agon
gistas mine, þa ic for gode wille
gemundbyrdan, gif ic mot, for eow."²⁹⁾

(*Gen A* 2466–75; underline mine)

The word *idesa* refers to Lot's daughters. It is learned from the context that the daughters are *unwemme* "spotless", and that they do not know intercourse yet by sleeping with a man. The context, therefore, may incline lexicographers or translators to take the word *idesa* as used in the sense "virgin". However, it may be that it is not the word *idesa* but the adjective *unwemme* and the context that gives an information that Lot's daughters are "virgins". *Ides* here, as Bäck (p. 236) classifies, may be regarded as conveying the information "maiden" or "girl". Bäck registers no instance of the word used in the sense "virgin". On the other hand, it must also be noted that the word *ides* occurs as a gloss to *virgo* at CollGl 13 (Zupitza) 15. It is the only one instance of the word used as a gloss to *virgo*; it occurs as a

27) Cited from Roy. M. Liuzza, *The Old English Version of the Gospels*, EETS O.S. 304 (Oxford: Oxford University Press 1994).

28) Bäck, p. 234. BT says, "it is supposed by Grimm to have been applied, in the earliest times, like the Greek *ὑμῶν*, to superhuman beings, occupying a position between goddesses and mere women, v.D.M. 372".

29) 'Here are within two spotless [maidens], my daughters: neither of these damsels knows intercourse as yet through sleeping with a man: do then as I bid you, and cease from this sin. I give them both to you, before you commit this vileness against nature, heinous evil against the sons of men. Receive these maidens and let my guests go free, since I will defend them against you as well as I can, before God!' The OE passage is cited from ASPR I; translation is cited from Mason, Lawrence (1990), *An Anglo-Saxon Genesis*: Genesis A translated by Lawrence Mason, illustrations from the manuscript (Felinfach: Llanerc Enterprises 1990; first published in 1915)

gloss for *virguncula* 7 times. All the other 64 instances of the word occur in verse only.

6. *mæg*, *mægden*, *mæg(e)þ*, *meowle*

The OE words *mæg*, *mægden*, *mæg(e)þ*, and *meowle* occur in the senses “girl”, “maiden”, “woman”, etc. as well as “virgin”, and it seems that those OE words are all etymologically connected. The primitive form of the OE *mæg* and *mæg(e)þ* is PG **mazaþ-* “girl, maiden”, which goes back to IE **magʰót-* (a feminine formation to IE **makʰú-* “boy, young man”); the diminutive of the IE feminine form gives PG **mazað-īn-*, and OE *mægden*, the original sense being “little girl”; the IE masculine **makʰú-* gives PG **maz-u-* “boy, young man”, and further PG **mazuī* with the feminine suffix *-ī*, becomes ultimately OE *meowle* with a diminutive suffix *-l-*, its etymological meaning being “little girl”.³⁰⁾

Almost all instances of the words *mæg*, *mæg(e)þ* and *meowle* are found in poetry.³¹⁾ The following quotations from *Crist A* and *B* illustrate *mæg*, *mæg(e)þ* and *meowle* referring to the Virgin Mary:

Cwæð sio eadge mæg
 symle sigores full, Sancta Maria:³²⁾
 (Christ A 87–88, underline line)
 siþþan he Marian, mægða weolman,
 mærru meowlan, mundheals geceas,³³⁾
 (Christ B 445–46, underlines mine)

It seems that the words *mæg*, *mæg(e)þ* and *meowle* in the above sentences are used in the sense “virgin”.

The OE word *mægð* is found in the following law text also, and it is the only one instance of the word in prose:

Gif mon mægþ gebiged, ceapi geceapod sy, gif hit unfacne is.³⁴⁾

(LawAbt 77, underline mine)

Here BT translates *mægþ* by “a woman”.³⁵⁾ However, *mægþ* here cannot be a woman in general: in this law, especially LawAbt 73–83, the word is used in contrast to *friwif* “free woman” and *widuwe*

30) Bäck, pp. 199–200 (*mægden*), 213–17 (*mæg(e)þ*), 221–24 (*mæg*), 226–28 (*meowle*), 239–40; Holthausen (1934), Hall, q.v. *mæg*, *mæg(e)ð*, *mægden*, *meowle*; OED, q.v. *maiden*, *may sb*¹. Concerning the etymology and senses of *mæg*, the present paper follows Bäck, Hall, Holthausen, OED; BT’s definition is “a woman, kinswoman”, BTS adding “v. *N.E.D* may a maiden”.

31) Bäck, pp. 214, 223, 226. Exceptions are found in a law text (LawAbt 77; *mægþ*) and glosses (AldV 1 (Goossens) 2076, *meowle* for *iuvencula*; AldV 13.1 (Nap) 2112, *meowle* for *iuvencula l virguncula*). The *MCOE* records only 14 instances of the word *meowle*.

32) Quoted from ASPR, III. ‘The blessed Virgin spoke, holy Mary, forever abounding in triumph.’ Translation by Bradley (1982); Gordon (1954) renders the word by ‘Virgin’, Gollancz (1892) by ‘maiden’, and BT by ‘woman’.

33) Quoted from ASPR, III. ‘After he had chosen the sanctuary of Mary, the flower of maidens, the illustrious Virgin.’ BT gives “best of maidens” to *mægða weolman*.

34) Liebermann (1898–1916), p. 7. Concerning the Anglo-Saxon law texts, unless indicated, the quotation and the translation are from Liebermann (1898–1916). ‘Wenn jemand eine Jungfrau [zur Ehe] kauft, sei sie durch [Braut] kaufgeld [giltig] erkauf, falls das [Rechtsgeschäft] untrügerisch ist.’

35) ‘If a man make terms for his marriage with (lit. buys with a price, cf. Icel. *kona mundi keypt*) a woman, let the bargain stand, if it be without fraud.’

“widow”, and therefore, as shown above, Liebermann narrows its meaning to “Jungfrau”, Bäck (p. 214) classifying it under “(young) marriageable but unmarried woman”. The same can be said about its compounds *mægþmann* “maiden” or “virgin” and *mægþbot* “the fine for violating a maid, virgin”; both of them are hapax legomena, occurring in the above law text, and their first element *mægþ-* is contrasted with *friwif* and *widuwe*:

Gif man mægþmon nede genimeþ: ðam agende L scillinga 7 eft æt þam agende sinne willan ætgebicge.³⁶⁾
(LawAbt 82.1, underline mine)

Gif friwif locbore leswæs hwæt gedep, XXX scil' gebete.

Mægþbot sy swa friges mannes.³⁷⁾

(LawAbt 73–74, underlines mine)

Concerning the use of *mægþ* and its compounds found in the above-mentioned laws, Bäck’s following remark deserves quotation:

... the text is Æthelberht’s laws, which is originally Kentish, from c. 601–604, but extant in late MSS only (c. 1120); the use is apparently a relic from the time when the word was used in common prose, the compounds *mægþmann* and *mægþbot* also found in this text pointing to a more frequent use earlier.³⁸⁾

7. *mæden*

The word *mægden* is treated by Bäck (p. xii) as one of the two most central words in OE for the concept “girl”; the other is *fæmne*. The *MCOE* records as many as 751 instances of the word *mægden*. Its original signification “little girl” developed, in the course of the OE period, into “girl, maiden”, “(young) marriageable but unmarried woman”, “virgin”, “female servant”, etc. As the earliest quotation of the sense “girl, maiden”, which is the nearest sense to the original one, the *OED* cites from the West-Saxon Gospels (Mt 9,24), where *mæden* is used to render *puella*. Bäck (p. 200), however, proposes the following quotation from *Juliana* 607–8 as the oldest example of this sense, and therefore of this word:

Ða wearð þære halgan hyht geniwad
and þæs mægdnes mod miclum geblissad.³⁹⁾

(Jul 607–8, underline mine)

According to Bäck’s research, this word is found almost exclusively in prose texts, the example cited above being one of the two instances recorded in OE poetry.⁴⁰⁾ Bäck then (p. 201) proceeds to discuss the use of the word in the legends of saints, pointing out that “from c. 1000 the female saints are generally called *mægden* (the number of *fæmne* being small)”, and concludes that “on the whole

36) ‘Wenn jemand eine Jungfrau gewaltsam entführt, [büsse er] dem Eigenthümer [der Vermundschaft über sie] 50 Schillinge und erkaufe nachher von diesem Eigenthümer dessen Einwilligung [zur Ehe].’

37) ‘Wenn eine Freie, eine Lockenträgerin, etwas Unzüchtiges thut, büsse [ihr Schänder ihrem Vormunde] 30 Scil. [Die für Verletzung einer] Jungfrau [zu entrichtende] Busse sei so [hoch] wie [für die Verletzung] eines freien Mannes.’ BT translates the latter part, “let the fine be paid by an unmarried woman be the same as that by a free man (for the same offence)”.

38) Bäck, p. 214.

39) Cited from Gollancz (1895). ‘Then was the holy damsel’s hope renewed, the maiden’s mind was greatly cheered.’ Translation by Gollancz.

40) The instance of *mægden* in *Juliana* is controversial, as Bäck points out at p. 201.

mægden before c. 1000 meant only ‘girl, maiden’, not ‘virgin’”. In the following quotation concerning Is 7, 14, Ælfric, in his treatise *On the Old and New Testament*, dated 1005–6,⁴¹⁾ comments:

Isaias wæs gehaten sum halig witega on ðæra kininga timan, swa swa us kyð seo boc. Se witegode be Criste swiðe gewislice, swilce he godspellere wære, swiðe gewyrðelice, 7 cwæð on his gesetnysse swa swa we secgað her: *Ecce uirgo concipiet & pariet filium & uocabitur nomen eius Emmanuel, & reliqua*. Efine mæden [fol. 129^R] sceal geeacnian 7 oncennan sunu 7 his nama bið geciged “God sylf ys mid us.”⁴²⁾

(ÆLet 4 (SigewardZ) 570–82, underline mine)

Here the prophetic verse in the Old Testament is associated with the birth of Christ; the word *mæden* used to render *uirgo* indicates the Virgin, as in the following remark in the same treatise, which concerns John the Baptist and Christ:

ac Crist næs na geteald to þissere wiðmetenysse, se þe acenned wæs of ðam clænan mædene.⁴³⁾

(ÆLet 4 (SigewardZ) 856–57)

The implication of the pureness in virginity of the word *mæden* is further intensified by modification of the adjective *halgan* in the following passage from Ælfric’s Second Series of *Catholic Homilies* (dated 995):

MINE GEBROÐRU ða leofostan on þisum dæge we wurðiað ures hælendes acennednysse æfter þære menniscnysse; Hé wæs todæg acenned of ðam halgan mædene MARIAN mid lichaman. and mid sawle. se ðe wæs æfre mid ðam fæder wunigende on þære godcundnysse;⁴⁴⁾

(ÆCHom II, 1, 1–5, underlines mine)

With regard to the development of the sense “virgin” in *mægden*, Bäck (p. 203), pointing out the fact that the bulk of instances are furnished by Ælfric, makes the following remark in comparison with the sense “virgin” in *fæmne*, which was the usual word meaning “virgin” before c. 1000: “after that date *mægden* is found in great numbers, being the regular WS word for ‘virgin’”. In the Anglo-Saxon Gospels, the word *mægden* occurs 20 times in *Li* and 16 times in *Ru*, *WSCp* and *WSH*, but it is used to render Latin *puella* “girl”, not for *virgo*.⁴⁵⁾

41) Godden, Malcolm R. (1980), ‘Ælfric’s Changing Vocabulary’, *English Studies* 61, pp. 208, 216. Clemons, Peter (1959), ‘The Chronology of Ælfric’s Works’, *The Anglo-Saxons* (London 1959), p. 245.

42) Crawford (1922), pp. 40–41. ‘A holy prophet there was, in time of the Kings, named *Isaias*, as the booke sheweth vs, who prophesied of Christ so euident and assuredly, as if hee were an Euangelist; and speaketh in his booke euen as we say here, *Ecce uirgo concipiet & pariet filium, & uocabitur nomen eius Emmanuel, & reliqua*: Behold a Virgin shall conceiue and bring forth a sonne, and his name shall be called *God Selfe is with us*.’

43) *Ibid.*, p. 52. ‘Yet in this comparison Christ is not reckoned, who was borne of a pure Virgin.’

44) Godden (1979), p. 3. As for the date, see Godden (1979, p. xciii) and Godden (1980, p. 207). ‘My dearest brethren, on this day we celebrate our Saviour’s birth according to humanity. He was to-day born of the holy maiden Mary, with body and with soul, who was ever existing with the Father in the Godhead.’ Translation by Thorpe (1846).

45) *Li* is for the Lindisfarne Gospels, *Ru* for the Rushworth Gospels, *WSCp* for MS 140 of the Library of Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, and *WSH* for MS Hatton 38 of the Bodleian Library. The difference in occurrence of this word among the MSS arises in Mt 14, 11, where *Li* has no expressed subject for the verb *tulit* “brought”, while *Ru1*, *WSCp* and *WSH* have *mægden* as the subject for the verb—*Ru1* inserts *puella* before *dedit* (for *tulit* in *Li*); in Lk 8, 52, where *WSCp* and *WSH* expresses *mæden* as the subject for the verb *nis* rendering *non est* “is not”; in Mk 5, 41, where *WSCp* and *WSH* have *hire* for *puellae*; in Mk 5, 41, where *Ru2* seems to have followed the first gloss of *Li* and has *dohter*, *Li* having *mægden* as the second gloss also; in Mk 5, 42, where *WSCp* and *WSH* have *heo* and *hyo* for *puella*. Moreover, in *Li* each Gospel has introductory passages, in which also appears *puella* glossed with *mægden* 3 times (Mt I 18, 10; Mk I 3, 8; Lk I 6, 1).

8. *mædenmann*

The word *mæden* was used also as the first element of the compound *mægdenmann*, which became extinct about the middle of the ME period (the last quotation citation in the *OED* dates a 1310). The *MCOE* records 10 examples of the compound, all of them occurring in prose (an instance at *ÆGl* 2.68, *mædenmann*, occurs as a gloss for *uirgo*); Bäck (pp. 231–32) remarks that it occurs in all dialects, but the sense “virgin” is found in WS texts from c 1000. The word is used to signify “girl, maiden”, “(young) marriageable but unmarried woman”, “female servant”, as well as “virgin”. The following quotation from *Ælfric* illustrates the use of *mædenmann* for the Virgin Mary:

Ure hælend Crist cydde, þæt he lufode
þa halȝan clænnysse on his þeowum swutelice,
þa þa he mædenmann him to meder zeceas.⁴⁶⁾

(*ÆLet* 5 (Sygefurth) 13–15, underline mine)

This word in the following law is regarded as signifying “female servant” with a connotation of “virgin”:⁴⁷⁾

Gif man wið cyninges mægdenman geligeþ, L scillinga gebete.

(*LawAbt* 10, underline mine)

In the same law text occurs, as discussed previously, a parallel formation *mægþmann*, which is used in contrast to *widuwe* and means “young marriageable but unmarried woman”. A final remark will be made on an interesting compound with *mægden*. This word is also combined with *æw*, the OE word for “marriage”, and forms the compound *mægdenæw*, a hapax legomenon, which occurs in the 11th century Law text, meaning “marriage with a virgin”:

Ðæt bið rihtlic lif, þæt cniht þurhwunige on hys cnihtthade, oððæt he on rihtre mædenæwe gewifige, and habbe þa siððan and nænige odre, þa hwile seo libbe.⁴⁸⁾

(*WPol* 2.1.2, 88; *WPol* 2.1.1, 188; underline mine)

It is stated here that a young man should retain his bachelorhood, or virginity?, until he lawfully marries a virgin.

Summary

Various words were employed in Anglo-Saxon literature as the terms to express the concepts “virgin” and “virginity”. *Fæmne* and *hagustald*, once important words as terms for “virgin” in the OE period, did not survive well into the ME period. Another term *mæden* prevalent and important in the OE period still survives in modern English, but its use for “virgin” has become archaic or literary. Those OE words and

46) Quoted from Assmann (1889), pp. 13–14. ‘Our Saviour Christ said that he loved the holy purity of his servants clearly, since he chose a virgin to his mother’. Translation by the present writer.

47) Liebermann (III, p. 7), “Eine unverheiratete Sklavin höchsten Ranges, wahrscheinlich eine Jungfrau (*s.d. Gl* 3. 4), vielleicht eine Schenkin; *s. Gl* Mundschenk 1”; also see Bäck p. 232. ‘Wenn jemand bei einem Mädchen des Königs liegt, büsse er [letzterem] 50 Schillinge.’

48) Quoted from Jost (1959, p. 130). BT translates: “that is right life, that a young man remain a bachelor until in lawful matrimony he take a maiden to wife, and let him have her afterwards and no other while she lives”.

their compounds were not originally used for the concepts “virgin” and “virginitv”. They were later chosen as terms for those concepts by Anglo-Saxon authors or translators.

Bäck’s research (1934) is a pioneer work and thus very important in the history of the semasiological research into the words for “girl/maiden”. However, because of further advances in MS or textual studies, and because of advances in lexical studies, such as the publication of *A Microfiche Concordance to Old English*, it seems that his research needs to be reexamined. Some instances of the words discussed in the present article can be regarded as used in the sense “virgin”, as Bäck aptly interpreted, but others cannot be regarded so. In some cases discrepancy in interpretation can be observed among lexicographers or translators.

Further semasiological research should be carried on concerning the major OE words employed for the concept “virgin” or “virginitv”, such as *fæmne*, *hehstald*, *mæden*, their derivatives and compounds, as well as *mægþhad*. As discussed in the present article, they occur in various texts. Even by the glimpses at the glosses at Lk 1.27 in the Lindisfarne Gospels and the Rushworth Gospels can be recognised not only an interesting terminological difference between the two texts, but also interesting terminological confusion of *hehstald* and *fæfne* by Owun, one of the two glossators of the Rushworth Gospels. Furthermore, it is also learned that the form *fæfne*, which is a variant of *fæmne*, is unique to Owun. The comprehensive and exhaustive research into the use of those words in connection with the discussion of the Anglo-Saxon literary world, and especially with the background of the Anglo-Saxon texts, will cast further illumination upon the semasiological development of the terms for the concepts “virgin” and “virginitv”.