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GONZALO DE BERCEO'S *DE LOS SIGNOS QUE
APARESCERÁN ANTE DEL JUICIO*

ANYONE who has looked into the pages of T. S. R. Boase's *Death in the Middle Ages* or R. Hughes' *Heaven and Hell in Western Art* knows with what horror and yet fascination medieval man contemplated the day of judgment.¹ "Quid est bonum et malum?" asks a ninth-century student, and the master answers: "Resurrectio, quando alii ad vitam alii ad poenam trahuntur."² It was the moment of decision, the separation of the sheep from the goats, of placement on the right or the left hand, of life with the angels or torment eternal:

Si cataren a suso, verán a Dios irado,
De yuso el infierno ardiente et avivado,
Derredor diablos sobra grant en fonsado,
Con visión tan brava ¿quien non será coytado?³

Even the good things about it were endowed by medieval artists with horror, as for example, in a twelfth-century mosaic on the west wall of the Torcello Cathedral, where lions, tigers, and griffons are forced to disgorge human members they have swallowed, since all bodies must be reconstituted at the Resurrection of the

¹ T. S. R. Boase, *Death in the Middle Ages* (London, 1972); R. Hughes, *Heaven and Hell in Western Art* (Oxford, 1952). I should like to thank my mentor in matters Old Spanish, Spurgeon Baldwin, for his help.

² W. Williams, "Ein Fragebüchlein aus dem neunten Jahrhundert," *ZDA*, 15 (1870), 167.

³ Gonzalo de Berceo, *De los signos que aparecerán ante del Juicio*, in *Poetas castellanos anteriores al siglo XV*, ed. F. Janer, BAE, Vol. 57 (Madrid, 1864), p. 103.

Dead.⁴ Émile Mâle has pointed out the omnipresence of the thought of the last judgment in the thirteenth century and the number of mystics and prophets who thought it was at hand.⁵ Following Delisle, he also indicated the intense interest of Spanish artists in the Apocalypse and the final judgment, illustrations of which are found in manuscripts from Silos, Gerona, Urgel, La Cogolla, etc.: "There was perhaps a certain harmony between the sombre poem and the Spanish temperament."⁶ One of the outstanding representatives of this "temperament" is the poem by Gonzalo de Berceo usually known as *De los signos que apareixerán ante del Juicio*.⁷ I say usually known by this title, since I cannot believe that Berceo so named it, for it is really a poem on all five "acts" of the judgment day, as Mâle called them, and not simply on the signs which appear before it. Berceo might have called it something like *Del Juicio Cabdal*.

To be sure, the twenty-two quatrains on the fifteen signs before doomsday are the most interesting ones in the poem from the point of view of literary history, for one of the most influential and common literary expressions of the dread of judgment day is the text known as "The Fifteen Signs Before Doomsday." In an incomplete survey, William W. Heist noted some 120 versions of this text, which he classified into seven types.⁸ One of these, the so

⁴ Boase, p. 37; this notion is at least as old as Ephraem Syrus, from whom many of the ideas of the last judgment come, cf. O. Gillen, *Ikono-graphische Studien zum Hortus Deliciarum der Herrad von Landsberg* (Berlin, 1931), p. 19; Y. Lefèvre, *L'Elucidarium et les lucidaires* (Paris, 1954), p. 457.

⁵ É. Mâle, *The Gothic Image* (New York, 1958; a reprint of the 1913 edition), pp. 355 ff.; F. J. E. Raby, *A History of Christian Latin Poetry*, 2d ed. (Oxford, 1953), pp. 445 ff., who points to the present-day *Responsorium* in the Mass for the Dead.

⁶ Mâle, p. 358. He points out that "the Spanish monks of Catalonia, Aragon or Navarre may have had the honour of being pioneers in the west of the illustration of the texts of the Apocalypse."

⁷ I cite according to Janer's edition. There are a number of other editions, by Alvarez de la Villa, Clemente Canales Toro, but these differ only in small matters from Janer. We are awaiting a new edition by Brian Dutton.

⁸ W. W. Heist, *The Fifteen Signs Before Doomsday* (East Lansing, Mich., 1952). Heist fails to note any of the Old Norse texts, for example, and does not mention the Spanish version cited by C. Canales Toro, *Gonzalo de Berceo, Signos del Juicio Final* (Biblioteca Hispana, Vol. 2 [Santiago de Chile, 1955]), pp. 82 ff.

called Voragine type, contains a sub-type exemplified in only five texts, one of which is that by Berceo. It is unfortunate that this work of Berceo's has received so little attention, for not only is it one of his better efforts from an artistic standpoint, it is also probably the first attested version of the Voragine sub-type.

The section on the fifteen signs is also of importance for studying Berceo's method of treating Latin sources, since most of his work consists of "translations," and we have here, as in the case of his hymns, at least in part, a known *Vorlage*, although a great deal of confusion still prevails as to the nature of that *Vorlage*.⁹ John E. Keller still believes, as did Lanchetas, that St. Jerome actually wrote a treatise on the fifteen signs before doomsday, although we have known for some time that the reference to him was fictional.¹⁰ Clemente Canales Toro, the author of the only large scale treatment of the *Signos*, quotes a version, half in Latin, half in Spanish, copied by Andrés Bello in the Biblioteca Real, which he obviously considers as a possible source of our text.¹¹ Rufino Lanchetas searched for this version, but was unable to find it in the Biblioteca Real.¹² In reality, this version belongs to the Damian group (Heist's Group 2), and cannot be the origin of Berceo's poem. It was early noted and has long been known that the portion on the fifteen signs is connected in some way with a Latin poem which appears in the *Hohes Lied* of the German poet Brun von Schönebeck, written in the year 1276—itsself a form of the so-called Voragine text-type.¹³ Although Heist maintains that Berceo's poem "most likely . . . was translated from some text of this," it is obvious that neither Voragine nor the Brun von Schönebeck text can be the source for the fifteen signs in the *Signos*, since Berceo antedates the composi-

⁹ On the thorny question of the Latin *Vorlage* of the *Milagros*, see Gonzalo de Berceo, *Obras completas*, II: *Milagros de Nuestra Señora*, estudio y edición crítica por B. Dutton (London, 1971). On the *Vorlage* of the hymns and Berceo's method of treating sources, see my "The Hymns of Gonzalo de Berceo and their Latin Sources," to be published in *Allegorica*.

¹⁰ J. E. Keller, *Gonzalo de Berceo* (New York, 1972), pp. 158 ff.; R. Lanchetas, *Gramática y vocabulario de Berceo* (Madrid, 1900), p. 323.

¹¹ Canales Toro, pp. 82 ff.

¹² Lanchetas, p. 323; cf. also his remarks on his search for the manuscript, p. 396.

¹³ On Brun and his dates, see *Die deutsche Literatur des Mittelalters: Verfasserlexikon*, ed. W. Stammer and K. Langosch, I (Berlin, 1933), 296-303; V (Berlin, 1955), 1146.

tion of both works.¹⁴ The recognition of this fact is important for the history of the "Fifteen Signs," since it shows that Brun von Schönebeck was not the author of the Voragine sub-type.¹⁵ Heist's argumentation borders on the frivolous; he feels "... that Berceo's metrical form also seems to have been imitated from the Latin poem: in both poems we have stanzas of four seven-stress lines on a single rhyme, and there is usually one sign to each stanza."¹⁶ It is obvious, particularly given the fact that Brun is lacking several of the Latin stanzas rendered by Berceo, that the poem as cited by him cannot be Berceo's *Vorlage*.¹⁷ Both his text and Berceo's must derive ultimately from the same source, older than both. A juxtaposition of the two texts¹⁸ shows this clearly:

1. Señores, si quisiéredes atender un poquiello,
 Querriavos contar un pocio de ratiello
 Un sermón que fué priso de un sancto libriello
 Que fizo Sant Iherónimo un precioso cabdiello.

¹⁴ On the dating of Voragine's *Legenda aurea*, see R. Benz, *Die Legenda aurea, aus dem Lateinischen übersetzt* (Cologne, 1955), p. xxi: "Die Legenda aurea ist in dem Jahrzehnt von 1263-1273 geschrieben worden." We cannot be sure as to when Berceo wrote the *Signos*, but it seems certain that it was before 1250. On the life of Berceo, see B. Dutton, "Gonzalo de Berceo: Unos datos biográficos," *Actas del Primer Congreso Internacional de Hispanistas* [1962], ed. F. Pierce and C. A. Jones (Oxford, 1964), pp. 249-54; B. Dutton, "A Chronology of the Works of Gonzalo de Berceo," *Medieval Hispanic Studies Presented to Rita Hamilton*, ed. A. D. Deyermond (London, 1974), pp. 67-76.

¹⁵ A number of German authorities have wondered if Brun might not be the author of the piece. See G. Nölle, "Die Legende von den fünfzehn Zeichen vor dem Jüngsten Gericht," *PBB*, 6 (1879), 428: "Ob Brun von Schönebeck der Verfasser unseres lateinischen Gedichtes ist oder dieses schon vor ihm gedichtet wurde, wage ich nicht zu entscheiden."

¹⁶ Heist, p. 166. I need not tell the readers of this journal that this is a misunderstanding of the *cuaderna vía*, on which see now: S. Baldwin, "Irregular Versification in the *Libro de Alexandre* and the Possibility of a *cursus* in Old Spanish Verse," *RF*, 85 (1973), 298-313.

¹⁷ Brun's poem begins, for example, with the sign of the first day, omitting the material in Berceo's first four quatrains. See *Brun von Schönebeck*, ed. Arwed Fischer (Bibliothek des Litterarischen Vereins in Stuttgart, Vol. 198 [Tübingen, 1893]), pp. 325 ff.

¹⁸ The Spanish text is from Janer's edition; for the Latin I have used, *mutatis mutandis*, the edition by R. Peiper, "Zur Geschichte der mittellateinischen Dichtung, IV: Quindecim signa ante iudicium," *Archiv für Literaturgeschichte*, 9 (1880), 117-37.

1. Antequam iudicii dies metuenda
Veniât, sunt omnia mundi commouenda;
Nam per dies quindecim mundo sunt uidentia
Signa nimis aspera nimis et horrenda.
2. Nuestro padre Iherónimo pastor de nos entienda
Leyendo en ebreo en esa su leyenda
Trovó cosas estrañas de estraña façienda:
Qui las oyr quisiere, tenga que bien merienda.
 2. Relegens Ieronimus libros Hebreorum
Ista signa reperit et ad posterorum
Scripsit in memoriam, ut suppliciorum
Conuertantur impii metu futurorum.
3. Trovó el omne bueno contra todo lo ál,
Que ante del juigio, del juigio cabdal,
Vernán muy grandes signos, un fiero temporal,
Que se verá el mundo en presura mortal.
 3. Nam in mundi uespere uenient portenta,
Quae hic possunt equidem dare documenta,
Prauis quam crudelia uenient tormenta,
Semper qui dilexerant mundi blandimenta.
4. Por eso lo escribió el varón acordado,
Que se tema el pueblo que anda desviado,
Mejore en costumbres, faga a Dios pagado,
Que non sea de Xpo estonce deseparado.
5. Esti será el uno de los signos dubdados:
Subirá á las nubes el mar, muchos estados,
Mas alto que las sierras e mas que los collados,
Tanto que en sequero fincarán los pescados.
 4. Prima dies seculo tale signum dabit:
Mare surgens turgidum undas eleuabit,
Quadraginta cubitis montes superabit
Terram nec operiet, sed ut murus stabit.
6. Pero en su derecha será el muy quedado,
Non podrá entenderse, será como elado,
Como parés enfiesta ó muro bien labrado,
Quiquiera que lo vea, será mal espantado.
7. En el segundo día paresçerá afondado,
Más baxo que la tierra, bien tanto como fué puyado,
De catarlo nul omne so l'non será pensado;
Pero será ayna en su virtut tornado.

5. Signum die postera tale subsequetur :
 Mare petet infima et sic abscondetur,
 Quod uix illud oculis hominum cernetur.
 Et ad statum pristinum post hec reuertetur.
8. En el terçero signo nos conviene fablar,
 Que será grant espanto e un fiero pesar :
 Andarán los pescados todos sobre la mar
 Metiendo grandes voçes non pudiendo quedar.
6. Pisces die tertia super aquas stabunt
 Et rugitus maximos uersus celum dabunt ;
 Congregate uolucres plangent et clamabunt
 Nec non omnes bestie planetu resonabunt.
9. Las aves eso mesmo menudas e granadas
 Andarán dando gritos todas mal espantadas :
 Así farán las bestias por domar e domadas,
 Non podrán a la noche tornar a sus posadas.
10. El signo empués esti es mucho de temer,
 Los mares e los rios andarán a grant poder,
 Desarrarán los omnes, iránse a perder,
 Querríanse, si podiesen, so la tierra meter.
7. Quarta lux horrible signum exhibebit :
 Mare cum fluminibus omnibus ardebit ;
 Omne genus hominum uidens hoc pauebit
 Atque metu nimio per se quisque flebit.
11. El quinto de los signos será de grant pavura,
 De yerbas e de árboles et de toda verdura,
 Como dice Sant Iherónimo, manará sangre pura :
 Los que non lo vieren serán de grant ventura.
8. Non his minus horrida quinta lux monstrabit :
 Totam terram sanguinis sudor occupabit ;
 Omnis herbe species sanguinem rorabit,
 Omne genus arborum pariter sudabit.
12. Será el día sexto negro e carboniento,
 Non fincará ninguna labor sobre çimiento,
 Nin castiellos nin torres nin otro çerramiento
 Que non sea destruido e todo [a] fundamento.
9. Sexta die moenia cuncta diruentur,
 Domus, turres, oppida simul destruentur :
 Instrumentis bellicis non hec sic labentur,
 Immo propter proximum finem confundentur.

13. En el día septeno verná priesa mortal,
Avrán todas las piedras entre sí lit campal,
Lidiarán como omnes que se quieren fer mal,
Todas se farán piezas menudas como sal.
10. Die uero septima lapides pugnabunt
Et alternis uiribus inuicem crepabunt:
In cauernis homines metu latitabunt
Et, ut illos obruant, montibus clamabunt.
14. Los omnes con la cuyta e con esta presura,
Con estos tales signos de tan fiera figura
Buscarán do se metan en alguna angostura;
Dirán: "¡montes, cubritnos, ca somos en ardura!"
15. En el octavo día verná otra miseria,
Tremará todo el mundo mucho de grant manera,
Non se terná en pies ninguna calavera,
Que en tierra non caya, non será tan ligera.
11. Totam terram tremere lux octaua dabit,
[Qui sic erit ualidus quod cuncta turbabit]
Supra pedes animal nullum suos stabit.
[Cuncta simul stantia ad solum prostrabit.]
16. En el noveno día vernán otros porteros,
Aplanarse an las sierras e todos los oteros,
Serán de los collados los valles compañeros,
Todos serán iguales carreras e senderos.
- 11a. Montes colles lapides in terram uertentur
Die nona pariter cuncta ut aquentur;
In unam planitiem cuncta redigentur
Nullaque superflua sub celo linguentur.
17. El día que viniere, el novena pasado,
Saldrán todos los omnes cada uno de su forado,
Andarán estordidos, pueblo mal desarrado,
Mas de hablar ninguno sólo non será pensado.
12. In cauernis homines prius delitentes
Ibunt die decima per campos patentes
Et errabunt undique ueluti dementes,
Pre timore nimio loqui nescientes.
18. El del oncenno día si saber lo queredes,
Será tan bravo signo que vos espantaredes:
Abrirse an las fuezas que çerradas vedes,
Saldrán fuera los huesos de entre las paredes.

13. Post horrorem si quidem talium signorum
 Die sub undecima claustris sepulcrorum
 Fractis foris salient ossa defunctorum
 Et terrorem facient oculis uiuorum.
19. Non será el doçeno quien lo ose catar,
 Ca verán por el cielo grandes flamas volar,
 Ca verán a las estrellas caer de su logar,
 Como caen las fojas quando caen del figar.
14. De supernis partibus postea pressure
 Die duodecima mundo sunt uenture;
 Fixe celo firmiter stelle sunt casure
 Et per partes aeris flamme uolature.
20. Del treçeno fablemos, los otros terminados,
 Morrán todos los omnes menudos e granados,
 Mas á poco de término serán resucitados,
 Por venir a juyçio justos e condenados.
15. Die terna decima cuncti morientur,
 Qui uiuentes seculo tunc reperientur,
 Cum defunctis aliis ut resuscitentur
 Et secundum merita suo iudicentur.
21. El día quarto déçimo será fiera barata,
 Ardrá todo el mundo, el oro e la plata,
 Balanquines e purpuras, xamit e excarlata,
 Non finará conejo en [coba] nin en mata.
16. Mundus quarta decima die succendetur,
 Et, quod homo polluit, ignibus purgetur.
 Tota superficies celi comburetur,
 Atque terre facies idem patietur.
22. El día postrimero como diçe el Propheta,
 El ángel pregonero sonará la corneta,
 Oyrlo an los muertos cada uno en su capseta,
 Correrán al juiçio quisque con su maleta.
17. Dies quinta decima celum renouabit
 Atque terre pariter nouam formam dabit.
 Et post hec angelica tuba resonabit
 Et defunctos insimul omnes suscitabit.

It will be seen that Berceo follows here the same technique familiar from his treatment of medieval hymns: Where possible, he renders one stanza of the Latin by one *cuadernavía*; where this is difficult, he adds an extra quatrain, but does not try to preserve the order of the original. It is as if he read the Latin, absorbed

the meaning, and then composed the Spanish to contain all the information in the Latin. In this manner eighteen Latin stanzas are rendered by twenty-two *cuadernavías*, each of which is somewhat longer than its Latin counterpart. This means that Berceo can make use of the *amplificatio* so dear to the medieval rhetorician.¹⁹ Two lines of the Latin, for example, become a *cuadernavía* of the Spanish in the rendering of 2cd :

Scripsit in memoriam, ut suppliciorum
Conuertantur impii metu futurorum.

This becomes quatrain 4 :

Por eso lo escribió el varón acordado,
Que se tema el pueblo que anda desviado
Mejore en costumbres, faga a Dios pagado,
Que non sea de Xpo estonce desemparado.

Here the third person singular becomes "el varón acordado," *posterorum* becomes "el pueblo que anda desviado," one of his favorite metaphors,²⁰ and *conuertantur* is rendered as "que se tema mejore en costumbres." This technique allows him to add information not in the Latin, to make the poem more vivid and occasionally more human. The signs are not just signs, but "signos dubdados," when the sea recedes, fish are left on the mountaintops as witness of this (5d) : "Tanto que en sequero fincarán los pescados." The sea will not stand simply like a wall (*ut murus stabit*), it will be "como parés enfiesta ó muro bien labrado." The *congregate uolucres* of the Latin becomes "las aves eso mesmo menudas e granadas," and Berceo quite aptly changes the *montibus clamabunt* of the Latin (10d) to the more vivid exclamation "¡montes, cubritnos, ca somos en ardura!" He adds an occasional folksy touch, in keeping with his guise of the rustic priest (which he most certainly was not) : When the world burns up, no rabbit will re-

¹⁹ On *amplificatio* and its use in medieval rhetoric, see E. Faral, *Les Arts poétiques du XII^e et du XIII^e siècle* (Paris, 1924), pp. 61-85. Although it is occasionally maintained that Berceo was not schooled in rhetoric (C. Faulhaber, *Latin Rhetorical Theory in Thirteenth and Fourteenth Century Castile* [Berkeley, 1972], pp. 5-8), I find that hard to believe in view of the traditional way in which he employs the figures.

²⁰ In the *Milagros*, where the entire conceit of the prologue is based on this notion of *romería*, Berceo cites I Peter 2.11 as his source (*Milagros*, 17d).

main, either in cove or thicket (21d), and when the final trumpet sounds, all the dead will come running (22d), "quisque con su maleta." All of this turns a traditional text, which was probably familiar to his listeners in its outlines, into a vivid and moving picture. Anyone familiar with the depictions of the last judgment in medieval cathedrals, "the books of the unlearned," would immediately recognize the reference to "los muertos cada uno en su capseta," and have called to mind the pictures of the dead pushing off their coffin covers (e.g., plates 11, 25, 92 in Boase), and the picture of the rabbit must have called to the mind of the peasant the frightened rabbit hovering in his cove or thicket during the yearly brush burning. This is artistry of the highest order, and one must not allow himself to be misled by Berceo's posture as a rustic and fail to recognize this fact. After all, St. Augustine and Wolfram von Eschenbach adopted the same posture.

Having set the stage by the description of the signs, Berceo continues through the next 34 *cuadernavías* with a traditional description of the last judgment and the torments of hell and joys of heaven. Here we need only note a few of the motifs and their connections with other parts of Berceo's works. Everyone will be reconstituted at the last judgment (23), so long as he has received a soul,²¹ even if birds have eaten him and his bones are scattered (see above, n. 4), and he will be as he would have been at age thirty, another medieval commonplace,²² which he mentions also in the *Loores* (170a): "Allí vernemos todos en complida edat." Christ will come in majesty, with His host, including the apostles and evangelists (*Loores*, 162 ff.), and the good will be placed on the right hand, the bad to the left. Here Berceo inserts the information that Judas will be there, perhaps in order to make one of the paronomasias he likes so much (26a): "Allí sera traydo Judas el traydor." He does not repeat the traditional picture of the cross, the *arma Christi*, and the wounds of Christ, found in his *Loores* (170-74), nor the *Quid sum miser tunc dicturus* "Mezquino

²¹ According to good medieval practice, the child in the womb did not receive a soul until the fifth month, after which it was a person and could even inherit *en ventre sa mère*. Cf., *Alfræði Islensk*, ed. Kr. Kålund (Samfund til Udgivelse af Gammel Nordisk Litteratur [Copenhagen, 1908], p. 56): "A 5-ta manadi kviknar infans at til komandi anime."

²² St. Augustine, *City of God*, Book 22, Chs. 15 and 16. Honorius, in Lefèvre, p. 456.

pecador ¿qui fará aquel día?" of *Loores* (176–80), the self reproaches of the sinful soul, perhaps an indication that the *Loores* were written before the *Signos*. He turns immediately to the blessings of Christ to the just and from these to the *improperia* or reproaches of Christ to the damned. Both of these are a fairly close translation of Matth. 25.31–43.²³

The section which follows (36–47) tells in picturesque terms about the seizure of the damned by the devils and their torture. In fact, the whole passage reminds one forcibly of the sculptures in medieval cathedrals, just as do other passages of Berceo, who excels in plastic imagination.²⁴ The devils, provided with burning brands, ropes and whips, are ready to take those who are condemned to eternal fire.²⁵ Anyone who has seen the Judgment tympanum of Rheims (Boase, figure 20) or that at Bourges (Boase, figure 23), or any number of other depictions of devils seizing the damned, will recognize the description, even that of devils and damned who have "los rostros fasta los corazones."²⁶ After having outlined the tortures of the damned, Berceo, like any good story-teller, wishes to change the subject to something more pleasant (48 ab): "Cambiamos la materia, en otro son tornemos, / En razón desabrida mucho non detardemos." He then recounts the five joys of the blessed in heaven, based on the more common "Seven Gifts of the Body."²⁷ He blends these in so well that it

²³ This was already noticed by Lanchetas, cf. Canales Toro, pp. 90 ff.

²⁴ An example: Berceo's description of the Deposition from the Cross in the *Duelo de la Virgen* (150–51) is a perfect description of the same scene on the *estaciones* of the Monastery of Santo Domingo de Silos; cf. A. Vegue y Goldoni, *Temas de Arte y de Literatura* (Madrid, 1928), pp. 7–12. We can be fairly sure that Berceo saw it there, cf. Brian Dutton, "¿Ha estado Berceo en Silos?", *Berceo*, 16 (1961), 111–14.

²⁵ The *fuertes dogales* of 36b, for example, doubtless are connected with II Peter 2.4: "drawn down by infernal ropes to the lower hell, unto torments . . .," a passage which is reflected almost invariably in cathedral depictions of the last judgment, cf. the tympanum at Rheims (Boase, figure 20). The entire passage is woven together from the Bible and traditional lore.

²⁶ Mâle, pp. 378–79: "What can this signify but that they have displaced the seat of intelligence, and put their souls at the service of their lower appetites . . ."

²⁷ Mâle, p. 385. We should not be surprised at the replacement of seven by five, for Mary is often said to have five, or seven, or fifteen joys, and five is extremely common in such texts, cf. W. Stammler, *Spätlesse des Mittelalters*, II: *Religiöses Schrifttum* (Berlin, 1965), pp. 91 ff.

is difficult to tell exactly which joys he is speaking of, although it is clear that longevity, beauty, agility and health are among them. In the traditional form, these are: *pulchritudo, velocitas, libertas, sanitas, voluptas, diuturnitas vitae*.²⁸ He follows tradition in pointing out that the blessed will be seven times brighter than the sun (54d): "Non podrían siete soles tan fuerte-mente lucir."²⁹

Having delineated the joys of heaven, Berceo returns to the judgment day, with a long prayer to Christ to save us on that day, filled with the topoi of the genre: If the heavenly powers are afraid on that day, how can I refrain from fear (63)?³⁰ I shall try to hide, but will not be able to do so; there will be no one to speak for the poor soul; everything one has done will be revealed in the open market place;³¹ even if one closes one's eyes, so as not to see the torments of the damned, the worm of conscience will be gnawing at one's vitals (74).³² He ends with the usual recommendation that one pray to the Virgin Mary and say the *paternoster*. Is it significant that there are exactly seventy-seven *cuadernavías*?³³

²⁸ Lefèvre, pp. 186 ff.

²⁹ Lefèvre, pp. 104, 185.

³⁰ On the trembling of the powers, cf. Ephraem Syrus, *Opera Omnia* V (Rome, 1743), 504: "Contremiscet omnis creatura, ipsaque sanctorum angelorum agmina ob majestatem illam et gloriam adventus ejus expavescent." This idea, based on Matth. 24.29, is found in innumerable hymns in the middle ages and in the present day *Responsorium* in the Mass for the Dead: "vix iustus salvabitur; et ego, miser, ubi parebo, quando caeli movendi sunt et terra?"

³¹ A part of a sequence by Radewin, quoted by Raby, p. 447, strikes the same note as Berceo, *unum e pluribus*:

Ante Dei potero consistere quomodo vultum,
cum nihil occultum, cum nil remanebit inultum?
quid faciam, iudex cum venerit ille timendus,
ad cuius nutum tremit orbs discutiendus?
quis tunc (me miserum!) pro me miserendo loquetur,
cum quivis proprii facti ratione tenetur?

³² On the worm of conscience, see Pseudo-Hrabanus, *Allegoriae in Sacram Scripturam* (PL, 112, p. 1075: "Vermis, conscientia damnatorum; reproborum conscientia in aeternum eos corrodet." Thomas Aquinas, Suppl. to III, q. 97, art. 2: ". . . vermis qui in damnatis ponitur, non debet intelligi esse materialis, sed spiritualis, qui est conscientiae remorsus.")

³³ According to Lauretus' *Sylva allegoriarum* (reprint of the 1681 edition [Munich, 1971]), p. 1090, seventy-seven expresses the number of sins and also the abundance of divine remission of sin. Composing works according to such

I hope to have made three important points: 1) It is indeed to the sub-group of the Voragine type that Berceo's treatment of the signs belongs. It and Brun von Schönebeck's poem go back to the same source, and Berceo's treatment is the first extant example of that type. 2) The rest of Berceo's *Signos* represents a weaving together of well-known topoi of medieval religious literature. We cannot be sure whether this is of Berceo's own making or taken from his source, but, given the way he treated known sources, we may be sure that Berceo gave his own individual touch to the work. 3) Berceo has woven uncommon well. In spite of an occasional humorous touch in deference to his audience, the supreme artistry of this, Spain's first named author, comes through. This is a majestic poem, full of grandeur and feeling, a worthy companion of the cathedral sculptures of the day, and it would be a pity if we should allow nineteenth-century aesthetics to obscure this fact. One will have to go far to find a better treatment of the "Fifteen Signs Before Doomsday."

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number schemes was extremely common in the middle ages. See the bibliography by Michael Batts in *Formal Aspects of Medieval German Poetry*, ed. S. N. Werbow (Austin, 1969). Berceo was very fond of the number seven (*Loores*, 143):

El cuento septenario, el de grant santidad,
Ovo sus mejorías siempre de antiguedat,
Diol' por significanza Dios tal auctoridat,
Ca es cuento complido de grant entegredat.

