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Metodes Meahta in Six Old English Poems

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INTRODUCTION

Although any analysis of literary works written in a language which appears to be "foreign" is certainly a challenge, the study of the Old English language and literature, a significant part of the heritage of English-speaking people, is a richly rewarding endeavor. Among the rewards are an appreciation for the skill of the poets and an understanding of the world view of a people of the distant past. Whatever conjectures concerning literary interpretation are made must necessarily be based on close scrutiny of the language, together with the social forces peculiar to the era. This study will utilize language analysis to demonstrate that although Christian influence pervades Old English poetry, pagan and worldly elements are by no means completely negated. Rather, the poetry represents a fusion of these life patterns, demonstrating a remarkable objectivity. In spite of the impression that the poems are personal reflections, sharing in the imaginative experience enables both poet and audience to discover unity through universal truths applicable to people of all times.

Limited to a partial analysis of six poems from John C. Pope's Seven Old English Poems, this study includes a fairly representative selection, although it resists the labels generally imposed on Old English poetry by the tendencies of Procrustean critics who attach such arbitrary designations as "Christian" and "secular" or "heroic epic" and "religious lyric." In one recent work George K. Anderson, whose own distinctions are not totally satisfactory, has suggested the fallacy of

rigid labels based either on the philosophy and intent of the poet or on attempts to designate genres. Such a fallacy exists mainly because it is difficult to ascertain an exact notion of poetic theory from an age whose language and literature survive in a comparatively small body of works. Labels are unimportant, however; the delicacy and refinement with which the blending of conflicting attitudes is accomplished is the supreme merit.

Of extant works, much praise and critical attention have justifiably been accorded to such major achievements as Beowulf. Partially neglected, however, are the equally revealing minor works. Even a brief perusal of any bibliographical listing on the Old English period will corroborate this assertion. The poems included here--Cædmon's Hymn, The Battle of Brunanburh, The Dream of the Rood, The Wanderer, The Seafarer, and Deor--offer some valuable insights into the attitudes and aspirations of Anglo-Saxon man in his more serious, contemplative moments. The six poems are appropriate for study because their length makes them accessible to the novice for whom the longer pieces would represent a more formidable task. Nevertheless, in these shorter poems, genuine poetic art is apparent both in the figurative, connotative language and in the unifying devices the poets chose.

The important place which poetry occupies, the nature of poetic language in the Old English period, and some of the problems of analysis comprise the subject of Chapter I. The principles of Chapter I are the basis on which a correlation of similar techniques in the six poems, not a separate critique for each, will be made. By their recurrence in the language of several works, certain themes would appear to reflect the paramount concerns of the people of the Old English period. Chapter II

will be devoted to a survey of such themes as exile and loyalty, already given much critical attention, and will concentrate on other abstractions, such as generosity and humility, previously neglected or inadequately explored. Methods of manipulating language to attain unity, through such devices as the unusual refrain in Deor, are the topic of Chapter III. Specifically, Chapter II and Chapter III will emphasize the blending of Christian and pagan elements. Also, fusion of a different sort is implied in Chapter III, in which it will be shown that fact and fancy are partly synthesized through speakers, real and imagined. Since the question of speakers' identities has been subject to speculation, an appraisal of this interesting aspect of Old English poetry will be made to determine the effectiveness of the technique in achieving objectivity. In the concluding chapter, some theories or influences that might explain the blending of diverse elements in the poetry of the Old English period will be discussed. Cultural and social influences, as well as zealous intentions of the Christian missionaries in conflict with well-established traditions, are among the significant factors that merit consideration.

Although inclusiveness is not the goal of the present study, each of the poems does reveal a blend of the Christian and pagan cultures, or of fact and imagination, by means of unique poetic language. Noticeably absent in this study, however, are such poems as the Riddles and Charms, which show the concerns of the people in their daily existence in which their implements are those of work, not of battle, and in which they respond to the adversities of nature that war against their physical survival. Nevertheless, in all Old English poetry the "power of the maker" (the meaning of the phrase from Cædmon's Hymn used in the title

of this thesis) is apparently directed to the activity of the mind and the imagination, to the creative ability of both poet and audience, toward the attainment of unity.

This thesis, then, will attempt to show that the achievement of unity was the primary concern of the Old English poets, who aimed to use the power of poetry to teach their people how their hope for immortality might be realized under Christianity. Their concern is evident from their poetic diction and themes that have an origin in common values of mankind, from their demonstration of unity within the poems by deliberately chosen connotative language and by forms which represent a progression of thought, and from their objective presentations in dramatic and imaginative settings. Therefore, the poetry is a fusion of Christian and pagan elements based on the Christian message of hope for immortality, a common hope of all mankind.

CHAPTER I

LEOÐCRÆFT: EALDORLANG TIR

The "skill of the poet" is indeed "eternal glory," as the title of this chapter indicates. That poets of the Old English period attained such timeless fame is evident from the fact that modern scholars continue to find the study of their poetry challenging and profitable. It is appropriate to begin this discussion with a review of some opinions and related information that have contributed to the understanding and interpretation of the "skill" and "glory" of this remarkable phase of literary history. This chapter will therefore present some of the findings of previous investigations of Old English poetry that are related to its historical background and importance (including the identity of the poet, his aim, and his audience, as well as his picture of the ideals of the age), to the characteristics of the poetic language of the period, and to problems that confront the student of Old English poetry.

Surviving Old English poems are unquestionably the product of a great many sources. As Stanley B. Greenfield asserts, it can be presumed that "Old English poems that have found their way into manuscript transcription and have been considered excellent by generations of critics . . . were not immediate and spontaneous outpourings of untutored or ungifted singers."[1] But the designation of poet must go, as Dorothy

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[1]Stanley B. Greenfield, The Interpretation of Old English Poems (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1972), p. 31.

Whitelock states, to "the Christian author who was responsible for giving the poem the general shape and tone in which it has survived."[2]

The poet was apparently quite conscientious in carrying out the function of poetry as he conceived it. According to C. L. Wrenn, Old English poetry was designed for "pleasure or entertainment," and citing Bede's story of Cædmon as his evidence, Wrenn also notes that although "only that of the aristocratic kind has survived, it must have also existed for the people generally."[3] Elsewhere, Wrenn explains that "clarity, and the conveying of facts and meanings in a style both natural and pleasing" remained the aim of later writers, as had also been the intent of St. Jerome.[4] Bede's story of Cædmon does, in fact, contain an explicit reference to the goal of poetry: "In eallum þæm he geornlice gemde þæt he men atuge from synna lufan ond mandæda, ond to lufan ond to geornfulnesse awehte godra dæda." [In all these (writings) he earnestly took care that he might draw men away from the love of sins and evil deeds and might incite them to an eagerness and love of good deeds.][5] It is therefore inaccurate to say that no statement of poetic theory survives. The citation from Bede, as well as the lines of poetry that introduce and conclude King Alfred's translation of St. Gregory's

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[2]Dorothy Whitelock, "The Audience of Beowulf," in Old English Literature: Twenty-two Analytical Essays, ed. by Martin Stevens and Jerome Mandel (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1968), p. 280.

[3]C. L. Wrenn, A Study of Old English Literature (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1967), pp. 52-3.

[4]Ibid., p. 72.

[5]The quotation from Bede's Ecclesiastical History is found in Bright's Old English Grammar and Reader, ed. by F. J. Cassidy and Richard Ringler (3rd ed.; New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1971), p. 132.

Pastoral Care, is a clear indication that some notion of poetic design did exist. These rare statements, together with the language within the poems themselves, and perhaps Bede's De Schematibus et Tropis, are the sources of poetic theory for the Old English period.

While there is evidence of the existence of poetic theory, knowledge about the Old English audience is lacking. It is probable, however, that the Old English audience could understand the messages of their poets. Contrary to the opinions of some critics, Whitelock observes that the audience of Beowulf (and it can be assumed that her statement applies to the audience of the poems in the present study as well) did indeed understand the symbolic language used by the poets.[6] Bernard F. Huppé corroborates Whitelock's judgment when he says that Christian poets "seem also to have expected their audience to make considerable effort to understand the underlying meaning of a poem."[7] The Old English poets demonstrated that it was possible to convey vivid impressions to the audience by using the fullest potential of the language, which often required the added dimension of the figurative, the symbolic, the metaphorical.

In addition to its importance as a source of Old English poetic aims and methods, the poetry of the early English nation is the most valid means of tracing its ideals. Poetry, as the earliest form of recorded English literature, is the most efficacious source for discovering values, especially during an age of conflicting ideals such as characterized the Old English era. Old English poets, like their

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[6]Whitelock, "Audience," p. 281.

[7]Bernard F. Huppé, Doctrine and Poetry (Albany: State University of New York, 1959), p. 94.

modern counterparts, expressed ideals which might have seemed impossible dreams, but they were undoubtedly motivated by the persistent need to reconcile the conflicting Christian and pagan elements. The Old English critic Gavin Bone notes the idealism of the Old English poets when he observes that their poetry gives "only glimpses of the daily life of the people. It does not show us what life in Anglo-Saxon times was like, so much as what the Anglo-Saxons would have liked it to have been like."[8] Consequently, the poets revealed Anglo-Saxon aspirations, as Edith Wardale also suggests in maintaining "it is to the poetry that we must look for the characteristics of the period."[9] Those characteristics are reflected in the language and in the content of the surviving Old English poetry, which presents an artistically colored view of the Anglo-Saxon world, a view that consistently reflects the poets' dream of unity of the race. Depicting the aspirations of their age demanded a careful choice of details. For the poet, according to Donald A. Stauffer, "the selection of details, the mere process of creative activity, inevitably reveals moral belief, some judgment on man's purpose and functions and duties and qualities."[10] Stauffer's opinion is complemented by Caroline Spurgeon, who says, "The poet unwittingly lays bare his own innermost likes and dislikes, observations and interests, associations of thoughts, attitudes of mind and beliefs."[11] Therefore, Old English poetry is a profitable

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[8]David Gavin Bone, Anglo-Saxon Poetry: An Essay with Specimen Translations in Verse (Freeport, N. Y.: Books for Libraries, 1970), p. 18.

[9]Edith Wardale, Chapters on Old English Literature (New York: Russell & Russell, Inc., 1965), p. 1.

[10]Donald A. Stauffer, The Nature of Poetry (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1946), p. 118.

[11]Caroline Spurgeon, Shakespeare's Imagery and What It Tells Us (Cambridge: University Press, 1935), p. 4.

study because of its insights into the life and ideals of the people, as well as the poetic skill it displays.

Besides the background information about poets and their theory in the Old English period, certain characteristics which scholars have recognized as peculiar to Old English poetry also deserve some attention here. Alliteration is foremost among those characteristics. The poet's challenge was to use the resources of his language by adapting the poetic devices at his command and embellishing his work with his own stamp of originality. Yet he was bound by the restrictions of alliterative verse, which had a limiting effect on his choice of words.[12] Because of their convenience in filling the poet's alliterative needs, some connotative words, such as "dryhten," frequently occurred alone or as part of a compound. Hence, Old English verse is characterized by repetitions of sounds and words, which sometimes make it appear to be hardly more than an assemblage of ready-made formulae to those who "study the works without discerning the art."

Too often the poetry produced in the age prior to the Norman Conquest is dismissed, because of its repetitious nature, as a collocation of cliches by an entertaining bard; nevertheless, it has endured not only because of the appeal it has for scholars interested in the language but also because it displays genuine poetic achievement--a supreme imaginative quality that is the quintessence of poetry of all times.

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[12]Alliteration was dependent on the stress patterns which united halflines into which poems were arranged. The initial sound of the first stressed syllable of the second halfline was the key to the alliterative scheme, and it could alliterate with one or both of the initial sounds of the stressed syllables in the first halfline. Alliteration occurred with the use of the same initial consonants, consonant clusters (st-, sp-, or sc-), or any combination of vowels. A more complete explanation of Old English versification is found in Bright's Old English Grammar and Reader, pp. 264-288.

Poets whose works consistently elicit praise possess an unusual intelligence that enables them to shape their medium, the language of their time, with such skill that the art survives the artist. Moreover, such poets ingeniously choose words whose connotations impel the audience to share in the creative experience. Besides the rather obvious power to arrange individual words into meaningful units, the imaginative ability that is peculiar to the poet ideally enables him to bring order to a chaotic mind or harmony to a people separated by conflicting tendencies or beliefs through an appeal to the emotional and intellectual forces unconsciously at work at all times in a rational being. The poet's special gift is therefore manifested in his unique choice of words associated with what William Butler Yeats referred to as the Great Mind or Great Memory, a common possession of both the poet and his audience in the communicative process. According to Yeats, "our memories are a part of one great memory, the memory of Nature herself," and this inner treasury "can be evoked by symbols."[13] That the faculties of memory, of mind, of imagination, are central to the poet's power to communicate is particularly evident in the techniques of the Old English poets. Hence, a number of devices often associated with the tradition were consciously used to activate the mind as a treasury of associations that would give meaning to the spoken or written word. In addition to the obvious usefulness of formulae to the poet, the repetition of formulae is associated with the imaginative activity of the audience. A person generally experiences a certain feeling of security and self-satisfaction from the knowledge or recognition of the familiar, or to paraphrase

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[13]William Butler Yeats, Essays and Introductions (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1961), p. 28.

Robert Frost's beautiful expression from "The Figure a Poem Makes," the initial delight is in the surprise of remembering something he did not know he knew.[14] Wrenn makes this same application to the Old English audience, which, in his words, "found aesthetic satisfaction in the repetition."[15] The audience shared the experience because the poet in his own fashion shaped his work by using words with universal connotations.

The mnemonic quality of the poetic devices, especially important in the time prior to the innovation of printing methods, resulted in the preservation of poetry through retention in the mind. There is repetition of words, phrases, and themes in Old English poetry--often the basis of adverse criticism. Such criticism seems unjustified, however, since every literary period is distinguished by its own poetic conventions, as even a cursory survey of the later English Renaissance or of such earlier Homeric epithets as "rosy-fingered Dawn" will quickly demonstrate. In fact, Hector Munro Chadwick, comparing Greek and English heroic poetry, remarks that "they contain many common features in regard to style. In both we find the same constant repetition of the same formulae, e.g. in the introduction of speeches . . . ," probably because "both were designed for preservation by oral tradition."[16] The poems have therefore survived; and it is undoubtedly, in the words of Maud Bodkin, "through the power of words, as poetically used, to gather and hold and

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[14]Robert Frost, "The Figure a Poem Makes," in Complete Poems of Robert Frost (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1949), p. vi.

[15]Wrenn, p. 13.

[16]Hector Munro Chadwick, The Heroic Age (Cambridge: University Press, 1912), p. 320.

release again infinite subtleties of emotional meaning that those survivals are possible."[17] The "power of words" thus offered the poet hope that he might succeed in uniting a divided people.

The Great Memory of Yeats's theory or the archetypes of Bodkin are but various terms for the source from which comes man's ability to communicate through the poetic medium of symbolic language. The poet possesses an immense power to change the world, as Yeats claims in his assertion that poets are "continually making and unmaking mankind."[18] Old English poets, no less than their successors, apparently recognized their power and indeed aimed to change their world by consciously recalling traditions and ultimately fusing the pagan value system with that of the Christian, by an artistic interweaving of Christian and pagan elements.

Techniques in the poems, though they are often regarded as spontaneous and repetitious, reflect subtlety and refinement, both desirable attributes of art. The conventional formulaic quality of Old English poetry has, in fact, been compared to another art--music. Robert D. Stevick proposes an interesting theory of improvisation in the process of oral formulaic composition. Stevick regards such composition as analogous to the performance of jazz musicians, who likewise depend on memory: "The performer of jazz will employ anticipations, larger as well as smaller structural patterns, contrapuntal movements--will, in short . . . , deliver a highly complex performance."[19] Musical impro-

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[17]Maud Bodkin, Archetypal Patterns in Poetry (London: Oxford University Press, 1968), p. 85.

[18]Yeats, p. 157.

[19]Robert D. Stevick, "The Oral-Formulaic Analyses of Old English Verse," in Old English Literature, ed. by Stevens and Mandel, pp. 67-8.

visation and composition are indeed formulaic; works of such composers as Beethoven or Ravel are proof of the fact. Hence, the use of formulae is not confined to the Old English writings but survives in the analogy of musical theory even to the present day. The use of formulae is therefore no basis for disparagement; rather, as Milton Gatch emphasizes, "formulaic systems gave the poets freedom to vary their expressions or, in the case of Old English, to fit them to their alliterative needs."[20] As in music, then, the formula was both convenient and effective.

Among the Old English formulaic expressions, the kenning is the most conspicuous and apparently the most useful to the poet. Douglas C. Collins is probably correct in stating that the kenning was popular "because the Anglo-Saxon mind did not make the comparison in the usual way . . . ; the comparison was much closer: the Anglo-Saxon poet saw the comparison not as _like_ something else but _as_ something else--the idea was completely assimilated."[21] Collins regards kennings as a felicitous means of effecting "fusion of pagan vocabulary and Christian idea . . . by using pre-Christian kennings for rulers as kennings for the Deity."[22] Wrenn, moreover, calls the kenning "a condensed or implicit simile, usually in the form of a compound,"[23] and he believes that there is a likelihood that "its origin was in part connected with courtliness of language. The kenning may perhaps look back also to the

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[20]Milton Gatch, _Loyalties and Traditions: Man and His World in Old English Literature_ (New York: Pegasus, 1971), p. 41.

[21]Douglas C. Collins, "Kenning in Anglo-Saxon Poetry," _Essays and Studies_, N.S. 12 (1959), 1.

[22]_Ibid._, 10.

[23]Wrenn, p. 48.

kind of magico-religious matters and taboos expressed in early runes."[24] If Wrenn's explanation that the kenning is an "implicit simile" is correct, he has perhaps discovered a reason for the few similes, as traditionally conceived, in Old English poetry. To conclude that the explicit comparison which the simile allows was unnecessary for the clarification of ideas is a tribute to the Anglo-Saxon mentality in both poet and audience. It is also conclusive evidence of the high value placed upon the mind, the memory, the imagination. Exercise of the mind made possible "stylistic compression rather than expansiveness,"[25] which, in Wrenn's words, characterizes Old English poetry. This penchant for economy in Old English writers is revealed through close analysis of the poetry.

As a final consideration in this chapter, some basic problems of analysis which rise primarily from the conventional language and from the uncertain sources of influence will be reviewed. Discovering the meanings of the connotative poetic language, because of its recurrence, is a fundamental problem for the critic. In addition, it has been shown that meanings may be obscured by attempting to base an interpretation on a previously imposed classification by genre or by religious influence. Both problems, however, can be overcome by close analysis of the language within the poems.

The poetic conventions that are apparently verbal expansions—variations, compound words, synonyms—in reality often represent a progression in meaning that becomes evident with minute exploration of the

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[24] Wrenn, p. 49.

[25] Ibid., p. 51.

terms for possible semantic connections. Such progression occurs in the numerous epithets for the Creator in Cædmon's Hymn, for instance. The Old English poetic conventions present a difficulty because of the danger of assuming that the meanings are identical in each occurrence. However, as Greenfield emphatically warns, the critic must "beware of treating the ideas and phraseology in different texts as if they were identical, however contemporaneous or even lineally descendant they may be or seem to be."[26] Greenfield also justly concludes that the conventions are used "with precision, metaphoric aptness and aesthetic effectiveness in Old English poetry."[27] In his defense of variations, which he refers to in another work as "a double or multiple statement of the same idea, each restatement suggesting through its choice of words either a general or more specific quality or a different attribute of that concept,"[28] Greenfield asserts that it is not necessarily true that a variation always serves a thematic need. In oral poetry, according to Greenfield, "variation may be its own justification, even as rhyme may be in another mode. In interpreting variations, the critic must weigh the thematic probabilities against the purely stylistic need for pleasure per se afforded by the convention."[29] Wardale also notes the significance of the variation. Although she observes that it is "sometimes described as a use of synonyms, and called clumsy," nevertheless she claims that "each term was chosen to add something fresh, to define

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[26]Greenfield, Interpretation, p. 9.

[27]Ibid., p. 52.

[28]Stanley B. Greenfield, A Critical History of Old English Literature (New York: University Press, 1965), p. 77.

[29]Greenfield, Interpretation, p. 83.

the thought, or to represent it under a different aspect."[30] This statement will be corroborated later in this study by analysis of some of the occurrences of variations in the poems.

Analyzing the conventional poetic devices is, of course, not the only problem in the interpretation of Old English poetry. The problem which has probably attracted the greatest notice in recent years is that of attempting to analyze the somewhat uncertain Germanic influence on the Old English literary tradition. At best the extent of the influence can only be conjectural. It is true that much of the ancient tradition can be gleaned from the language of the poetry itself, as subsequent chapters in this thesis will illustrate. But because there is a blending of the Christian and pagan elements, as George K. Anderson rightly claims,[31] a critic who ignores the presence of either of the two will finally arrive at an erroneous interpretation. Albert C. Baugh makes an important observation about the felicitous union of the seemingly opposite pagan and Christian attitudes. He notes that the elements are "never quite distinct," and he adds that "the poetry of pagan origin is constantly overlaid with Christian sentiment, while even those poems which treat of purely Christian themes contain every now and again traces of an earlier philosophy not wholly forgotten."[32] Wardale reaches a similar conclusion when she says that "hardly a single work is exclusively heathen, even the charms, and the heathen element is slow to disappear

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[30]Wardale, p. 15.

[31]George K. Anderson, The Literature of the Anglo-Saxons (New York: Russell & Russell, Inc., 1962), p. 58.

[32]Albert C. Baugh, A History of the English Language (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1957), p. 78.

entirely from the early Christian works."[33] What is most remarkable about the fusion is not merely that it was accomplished but that it was effected with so much refinement and tact. In short, it is an attestation to the "power of the makers," particularly in their ability to adapt their language toward the achievement of their delicate task. However, even those writers who recognize the blending generally fail to elaborate on this interesting aspect of the poems with any degree of detail. Later, this essay will suggest some of the ways that the Christian writers, to whom succeeding generations are indebted for the preservation of the literature, achieved this outstanding feat through extremely subtle uses of language and traditional forms.

That the pagan or traditional literature is preserved in spite of almost insurmountable difficulties is itself remarkable. Wrenn's lucid reference to this frequently ignored fact seems appropriate here. Noting that the religious houses were the centers of culture, Wrenn believes that pagan literature

> had little chance of being written down unless it had appeared to have possibilities of edification. Nor even if written down, would it be likely to survive after it ceased to appeal to the clerics, the only educated people who wrote. Parchment, being scarce and valuable, was felt to be needed for more serious purposes. . . . Losses arising from such inevitable changes of interest centered in monasteries must account for the extreme paucity of the literary remains in Old English of the traditions of the ancient Germanic heroic ages.[34]

Wrenn thus posits a possible explanation for the disappearance of what was undoubtedly a significant portion of Germanic tradition and for the dominance of the Christian content in what has been preserved. Yet the dominance is in part only in appearance; close examination reveals an

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[33] Wardale, p. 7.

[34] Wrenn, p. 91.

intricate mingling of the two streams. Attempts at categorization on the basis of influence are consequently ineffectual. Alvin Lee points out another problem resulting from the Christian influence in his observation that "a whole new source of poetic metaphors was poured into the ancient word-hoard of the scops, with imaginative consequences for English poetry extending well beyond the Anglo-Saxon period of history."[35] Obviously, the fusion, accomplished so subtly and artistically, greatly complicates the problem of interpretation, particularly because of the wide use of connotative language.

Although Anderson notes the Christian and pagan blending, he nevertheless continues to apply the designations in his discussion of the poems. He recognizes that the priest was "the great preserver of Old English literature," and he explains the blending by saying that the priest "admired the pagan literature composed by the Anglo-Saxons in former days and saw to it that much of that pagan literature was kept somehow for the future," though it was "modified and softened by clerical scribes in the interests of their Christianity." The blending which is implied in Anderson's statement is apparently denied, however, when he adds that "one must reckon with a pagan Old English literature as well as a Christian Old English literature,"[36] a suggestion that the two are separate and distinct types. Anderson does admit, however, that "so tenacious is this pagan tradition that the poetry written by the clerics who undertook the education of the mind and the salvation of the soul of

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[35]Alvin A. Lee, The Guest-Hall of Eden: Four Essays on the Design of Old English Poetry (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1972), p. 7.

[36]Anderson, p. 44.

these pagan Anglo-Saxons was suffused with the light which the pagan bards had first set aglow."[37] Anderson's statements are typical of the confusion that results from attempts to separate the literature on the basis of influence. Since more valid interpretations have shown that the opposing attitudes of the Christian and pagan actually coexist, the more effectual approach is to consider the corpus of Old English poetry as a unity, which is the aim of Alvin Lee in his attempt "to demonstrate how the extant Old English poetic corpus has as its major function in Anglo-Saxon England the re-creation in poetic terms of the biblical vision of human life."[38] Lee's aim seems justified because unity was the goal of the writers who sought its creation under the banner of Christianity. The poets, particularly, demonstrated quite convincingly that it is neither feasible nor possible to blot out the old or attempt to legislate the new. Rather, the best of the old, as Old English poetry affirms, can be combined efficaciously with the new.

As it has been noted already, Greenfield warns that criticism must not be written about very early literature as if it belonged to the present day. Greenfield's caveat is emphatic:

> We must work from the poem outwards and submit our cultural knowledge to the text's rein; we must treat individual word meanings with respect and not ignore affixes, for example, as if they had no semantic significance; we must not treat different texts cavalierly as if they were one and the same; and we must be more alert to the possibility of metaphoric word play among the implications to be found in Old English verse.[39]

The implications suggested here are to be observed in the interpretation of poetry of any period.

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[37] Anderson, p. 45.

[38] Alvin Lee, p. 6.

[39] Greenfield, Interpretation, p. 100.

Attempts to categorize Old English poems into genres are almost as futile as classification by religious influence. Stauffer, comparing poetry and persons, admonishes critics by showing the fallacy of classifications, which he insists "do little to help us understand either personality or poetry."[40] Stauffer's conclusion is that "no law of poetry reveals all its secrets; and only open, comprehensive, tolerant minds will save us from clamping poetry in too narrow a cage."[41] Interpretation of Old English poetry can certainly be distorted by placing it in "too narrow a cage," as Greenfield convincingly verifies in his reference to such poems as The Wanderer, The Seafarer, and Deor. Greenfield insists that "predisposition to a particular genre can lead us to see realism where none is 'intended' . . . or it can equally cause us to concoct ingenious allegorical significationes."[42] The specific problem as it applies to Old English poetry, Greenfield adds later, is that "our analysis of Old English poetic genres is hampered by the limited number of poems . . . capable of being accurately categorized, and by an absence of contemporary discussions of them."[43] What Greenfield seems to suggest is that the works should be interpreted and appreciated as poetic art without any kind of classification.

Although it must be conceded that Old English poetic devices are conventional, Greenfield is right in observing that "Old English poetry, with its repetitions, its variations, its envelope patterns, is notoriously

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[40]Stauffer, p. 15.

[41]Ibid., p. 18.

[42]Greenfield, Interpretation, p. 134.

[43]Ibid., p. 135.

balanced and stately."[44] Since the use of the devices can be attributed only to the writers who finally recorded the poems rather than to their authors in earlier tradition, Gatch's comment that the particular Old English conventions, as well as the devices normally associated with poetic composition, resulted from the training writers received seems pertinent here. Gatch states:

> In terms of its effect on literature, the most obvious result of the teaching methods of textbooks like Bede's De Schematibus was highly conventional writing. . . . When the student himself wrote, he was expected to reproduce both these conventions and authoritative ideas; and he was judged not in terms of originality but in terms of his skill in employing the tried and true devices and themes.[45]

The so-called formulaic expressions, then, were more than the convenient, mechanical ready-made devices they are often judged to be; they were effectively communicative. Their familiarity served both poet and audience, and in each case they demanded exercise of the mind. Furthermore, they fused the values of the Christian and the pagan so that each discovered truths about life.

Old English poets, then, illustrate valuable truths for all people; theirs was a goal for which mankind still strives--unity. Their idea that certain values, whether "Christian" or "pagan," are common to all people is a truth that is basic to all who envision a unified and ideal world. The fact that language is a most powerful medium through which it is possible to attain that ideal unity is clearly demonstrated in the grace, the subtlety, and the skill which are apparent in such poems as Cædmon's Hymn, The Battle of Brunanburh, The Dream of the Rood, The Wanderer, The Seafarer, and Deor. Baugh, who refers to Old English literature as "the

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[44] Greenfield, Interpretation, p. 133.

[45] Gatch, p. 81.

richest and most significant of any preserved among the early Teutons," claims that in literature "a language displays its full power, its ability to convey in vivid and memorable form the thoughts and emotions of a people."[46] Baugh's statement is certainly true of these six poems.

In the chapter that follows, the poetic language in the six poems will be examined to determine how dominant images contribute to the development of themes that reflect the concerns of Anglo-Saxon man--themes that represent values, not Christian and not pagan but common to mankind. These themes make the poems an apt expression of the poet's skill, an ageless glory, and, most important, they reflect a unified aim to bring together the people through the power of poetry.

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[46]Baugh, pp. 77-8.

CHAPTER II

EARN ÆFTAN HWIT: HYHT ON HEOFONUM

"Hyht on heofonum" (hope in heaven), man's highest aspiration, is a basic concern expressed in the figurative language of the six poems in this investigation. The Old English poets, by concentrating on this common hope of mankind, found a basis upon which to strive for unity of feeling and thought. They persisted in their common goal of directing attention to the means by which immortality could be gained. On the basis of earlier studies--of the theme of exile, for example--the blending of Christian and pagan elements will be explored by specific reference to the language within the poems which reflects not only the hope for immortality but also some concepts related to the achievement of man's eternal happiness. Beginning with a brief review of less common treatments of the exile theme, this chapter will trace the theme of home as a representation of man's ultimate hope, as well as the themes of generosity and of humility as codes of conduct that would aid man in the attainment of his goal. Finally, the theme of "beasts of battle" will be shown to have a symbolic relationship also to man's earthly struggle.

Henry C. Wyld points out three qualities of Old English poetry which not only confirm its "kinship with that of later times" but also would seem to explain its synthesis of Christian and pagan attitudes through brilliantly conceived imagery connected semantically to some aspect of the two attitudes. Wyld notes that "a feeling for the mysterious in the loveliness of nature, a sense of the solemn and sublime,

[and] sympathy of the human heart" pervade Old English poetry.[1] Wyld also rightly claims that Old English poetry has "arresting qualities of elevation of thought, and a sustained intensity of poetic emotion, together with a great delicacy and tenderness of feeling," but his contention that "the form in which it is couched is often wrought to the last pitch of elaboration, with a wealth of ornament in the shape of metaphor and pictorial phrase"[2] is debatable. There is certainly some argument against the notion that Old English poetic "ornament" was merely verbal dexterity for its own sake. Conversely, the discussion here will show that the Christian poet consciously used language to achieve the all-important goal of unity. The "pictorial phrase" to which Wyld refers, however, may be designated as metaphor, symbol, image, or simply all figurative and connotative language. As the medium through which Old English poets develop themes that reflect the aspirations of their time, imagery will be studied here in the sense suggested in Spurgeon's explanation that it is

> any and every imaginative picture or other experience, drawn in every kind of way, which may have come to the poet, not only through any of his senses, but through his mind and emotions as well, and which he uses, in the forms of simile and metaphor in their widest sense, for purposes of analogy.[3]

This will be an extension of Wyld's study, which is primarily concerned with a classification of images. The themes which are developed from images also seem to suggest differing meanings among Old English critics, who often connect the term theme with oral-formulaic theories of Old

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[1]Henry C. Wyld, "Diction and Imagery in Anglo-Saxon Poetry," Essays and Studies, O.S. 11 (1925), 52.

[2]Ibid., 50.

[3]Spurgeon, p. 5.

English poetry. For example, Francis P. Magoun's designation of theme,[4] used as a basis for his study of "beasts of battle" discussed later in this chapter, is closely allied with formula and its frequency of occurrence in Old English poems. The term will be used here to apply to concepts or abstractions developed by means of concrete imagery, and not simply to an enumeration of recurrent formulae.

Recurrence of a theme in several poems would seem to be sufficient indication that it represents a preoccupation of the people of an era. Such is the case of the Old English exile theme, most often connected either with the binding comitatus system or with the Christian concept of man as an exile during his life on earth. The Christian poet apparently recognized its importance as a common bond existing between the Christian and the pagan, though their notions of its connotations differed.

The themes of exile and loyalty, or comitatus, have been treated rather exhaustively already, particularly in studies of The Wanderer and The Seafarer. The two themes were quite closely related, according to Whitelock, who notes that "a layman who refused to go into exile with his lord would be an object of scorn and ridicule."[5] Hence, it seems impossible to separate the concepts of exile and loyalty, because the ideal comitatus apparently followed a code which was binding to both lord and servant. As a number of studies have convincingly demonstrated, the images of storm, suffering, fetters, and ruin, and the prominent ubi sunt

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[4]Francis P. Magoun, Jr., "The Theme of Beasts of Battle in Anglo-Saxon Poetry," Neuphilologische Mitteilungen, 56 (1955), 82.

[5]Dorothy Whitelock, The Beginnings of English Society (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1952), p. 32.

passages combine to develop the theme of exile.[6] Such images are especially common in The Wanderer,[7] where storm is suggested in "hrim-cealde sæ" (frost-cold sea, 4b), "winde bewawne" (beaten by wind, 76a), and "hreo hægl-fæ̆re" (rough hail-storm, 105a); suffering is described as "hreo hyge" (troubled spirit, 16a), "mod-cearig" (troubled in spirit, 2b), "dreorigne oft" (dejected often, 17b), and "werig-mod" (weary in spirit, 15a); fetters appear in "feterum sælan" (to bind by fetters, 21b) and "bindaþ fæste" (bind fast, 18b); and ruin is clear in "eall þisse weorolde wela weste standeþ" (all this world's wealth stands waste, 74) and in "Woriaþ þa win-salu wealdend licgaþ" (The wine-halls go to ruin; rulers lie dead, 78). Similar images occur in The Seafarer and Deor, though less explicitly and less frequently in the latter. The images were generally chosen to emphasize man's unhappiness in earthly life, as the examples from The Wanderer clearly indicate.

The exile theme was related to both Christian and pagan traditions through its development by images of journeying. The journey, as Juan Eduardo Cirlot explains it, would seem to be appropriate as a basis of interpretation of exile. From the spiritual point of view, Cirlot explains, the journey is an "expression of the urgent desire for discovery and change that underlies the actual movement and experience of

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[6]Among perceptive studies related to the theme of exile are those by B. J. Timmer, "The Elegiac Mood in Old English Poetry," English Studies, 24 (1942), 33-44; I. L. Gordon, "Traditional Themes in The Wanderer and The Seafarer," Review of English Studies, N.S. 5 (1954), 1-13; Stanley B. Greenfield, "The Formulaic Expression of the Theme of 'Exile' in Anglo-Saxon Poetry," Speculum, 30 (1955), 200-206; G. V. Smithers, "The Meaning of The Seafarer and The Wanderer," Medium Ævum, 26 (1957), 137-53, 28 (1959), 1-22, 99-104.

[7]This and other poems cited in this thesis are from John C. Pope, Seven Old English Poems (Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., 1966). Line numbers are cited according to Pope's edition.

travelling," and he adds that "to study, to inquire, to seek or to live with new intensity through new and profound experiences are all modes of travelling or, to put it another way, spiritual and symbolic equivalents of the journey." Cirlot also refers to Jung's observation that travelling is "an image of aspiration, of an unsatisfied longing that never finds its goal" and that "dreaming, day-dreaming and imagining" are also related to travelling.[8] Symbolic journeying would seem probable as a key to interpretation of The Wanderer, The Seafarer, and Deor, if the speaker in Deor, as generally believed, refers to one about to begin a period of exile. The speakers in each of these poems are imagining, seeking, studying, and ultimately arriving at a haven of wisdom. The symbolic journey may also represent, as often proposed, the life of man as he encounters numerous vicissitudes on his way to his final home.

The haven which the exiles seek has both Christian and pagan connotations, as Wrenn suggests in his claim that "the grief of exile, whether from native land or for the earthly pilgrim for the heavenly home, is a recurrent theme." Wrenn points out further the frequent recurrence of "the remembering of past joys and glories and the feeling of present desolation made endurable for the Christian poet only by thoughts of celestial happiness."[9] Happiness in the pagan mind was probably a past ideal age when the world was young, the "golden age," or perhaps the time before leaving ancestral homes. Tales of the "good old days" in those ancestral homes undoubtedly aroused a nostalgia in

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[8]Juan Eduardo Cirlot, A Dictionary of Symbols, trans. by Jack Sage (New York: Philosophical Library, 1962), p. 157.

[9]Wrenn, p. 140.

the minds of hearers for a better and happier life. The missionaries, too, shared the nostalgia, for they were also separated from home and family.

Patrick Leo Henry suggests still another interpretation in his attempt to prove that the poems in which exile is the dominant theme belong to "an Old English genre of penitential poetry . . . , flanked by the corresponding genres in Early Irish and Welsh," or a part of "a wider context or framework of outcast poetry . . . symbolized by the homeless wandering figures."[10] Henry also finds basis for his argument in Old English law, in which "the peregrinatio is a sub-type of exile," and in the cognates wræcsið, wræcnian, and wrecca. A definite Christian association is implicit in Henry's statement that the outlaw (wrecca) "is often automatically excommunicated."[11] Excommunication, of course, would be the most serious punishment for the Christian and would parallel the pagan's dismissal by his lord from the comitatus. Thus, the exile theme suggests an undesirable condition for either Christian or pagan, because in the "Great Memory" of each it represents rejection. Each becomes fearful lest exile, in whatever sense he recalls it, become his own fate.

Besides the fear of exile, man's yearning for the stability and permanence of a home also represented a hope which evoked a common response in Christian and pagan alike. Man's restless nature, his discontent with earthly life, his longing for a former ideal existence, or his hope for a haven of eternal bliss led him to a constant search for permanence; for this reason images of home and feasting were often

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[10]Patrick Leo Henry, The Early English and Celtic Lyric (London: Allen & Unwin, Ltd., 1966), p. 21.

[11]Ibid., p. 22.

associated with the exile theme. The ideal of a permanent home gave hope where none seemed to exist and a sense of purpose to the traveller who was beset by trials and sufferings. Even though the earthly home offered some pleasure, it was transitory. The joyful expectation (hyht) or promise of eternal bliss in the heavenly home became the Christian poet's most convincing argument to induce the pagan to join the Christian family and partake of its celebrative feasting, which undoubtedly had symbolic meaning for both Christian and pagan. Robert H. Hodgkin explains a probable connection of the concept of heaven in the minds of the two diverse attitudes. In Old English poetry, according to Hodgkin, heaven is "a glorious city, filled with light. At times it is a Teutonic heaven: a home with spreading fields and roses; or a hall of the Prince of Victory, where his followers may feast." The new religion offered a way to gain such a state.[12] To the Christian, of course, feasting represented the commemoration of the Eucharist, and in the "Great Memory" of the pagan, the feast suggested banqueting in celebration of victories in battle or simply some pagan ritual. In either case, the association symbolized joyful "seasons of celebration." Above all, home suggested permanence, man's eternal quest.

"Middan-geard," the earthly home, is celebrated in Cædmon's Hymn as a place with "heofon to hrofe" (heaven as a roof, 6a), and in the context of the poem the "middan-geard" is praised by the Christian Cædmon because it is among the "weorc Wuldor-Fæder" (works of the Glorious Father, 3a). There is an appeal to both Christian and pagan attitudes in the phrase "heofon to hrofe;" as a symbol of divine pro-

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[12]Robert H. Hodgkin, A History of the Anglo-Saxons (London: Oxford University Press, 1967), 2, 471.

tection, heaven is a Christian concept, but roof undoubtedly signified the protection of a man-made fortification to the pagan. Alvin Lee, who declares that symbols of "the ideal fortress or hall are common," believes that "the image of the middangeard as a hall or fæsten has major metaphorical significance in Old English poetry and appears to have a distinctly Germanic character."[13] Although the associations are somewhat different in the minds of Christian and pagan, in each case the image of home represents permanence or security.

"Love of home and zeal for its defence," according to Chadwick, are mentioned frequently in Old English poetry.[14] It is probably reasonable to conclude that the concept of home was somehow related to the ideal of loyalty in the Anglo-Saxon system of values. The possibility is evident in the sort of nationalism implied in The Battle of Brunanburh. The Anglo-Saxons had often defended "land, hord and hamas" (land, treasures, and homes), according to the poet-historian of Brunanburh. At the conclusion of the battle, the brothers "cyþþe sohton/ West-Seaxna land" (sought their homeland Wessex, 58b-59a) after having been victorious. Neil D. Isaacs alludes to this passage, saying that the poet is "effectively summing up the philosophical concept he began with--that the West Saxons and their rulers have won lifelong glory by defending their homeland." Isaacs also comments that "what is first won by the invading triumph must be retained or reaffirmed by successful defense of that homeland and that glory."[15] In a broader connotation,

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[13]Alvin Lee, p. 24.

[14]Chadwick, p. 120.

[15]Neil D. Isaacs, Structural Principles in Old English Poetry (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1968), p. 125.

the ultimate heavenly home must, in a sense, also be earned by struggle against temptation, as a warrior's home is defended from invaders.

The home in heaven also symbolized man's destination and the destination of Christ in The Dream of the Rood, as he returned triumphantly to His Father's Kingdom. The "heofonlic ham," is described as a traveller's shining destination. The perception of the dreamer is effectively catalogued in a series of parallel expressions following the familiar recurrence, "on þissum læ̆nan life . . ." (from this fleeting life, 138); the dreamer hopes for a home "þær is bliss micel,/ dream on heofonum, þær is Dryhtnes folc/geseted to symble, þær is singal bliss" (where there is much bliss and joy in heaven, where the Lord's people are seated at a feast, where bliss is eternal, 139b-141). Finally the Son returns from his expedition (siþ-fæ̆te), the harrowing of Hell, to heaven, "þær his eðel wæs" (where his home was, 156b).

The Wanderer's fleeting dream of a former home depicts a similar happy occasion but in a worldly context as he imagines "þæt he his mann-dryhten/ clyppe and cysse" (that he embraces and kisses his lord, 41b-42a). Since this worldly life is impermanent, the Wanderer concludes that he will finally receive permanent "frofre to Fæ̆der on heofonum þær us eall seo fæ̆stnung standeþ" (comfort from the Father in heaven where permanence or strength exists for us all, 115). For the Seafarer also, more desirable are "Dryhtnes dreamas þonne þis deade lif/ læ̆ne on lande" (the Lord's joys than this dead life on earth, 65-66a). Like the Wanderer, the Seafarer also enjoins his audience: "Wuton we hycgan hwæ̆r we ham agen/ and þonne geþencan hu we þider cumen" (Let us consider where we might have a home and then think how we might make our way there, 117-118). "Hyht on heofonum" again represents the optimistic

note on which the Seafarer concludes as he looks forward to "þa ecan eadignesse/ þær lif is gelang on lufan Dryhtnes" (eternal happiness where life is long in the love of the Lord, 120-121).

The long service in the home of his lord is among the memories which increase Deor's feeling of rejection. Yet he shares with other victims of rejection a hope for a better home and ruler. "Witig Dryhten" (the Wise Lord) gives portions of troubles and joy, but Deor's repeated message of hope, "Þæs ofereode; þisses swa mæg" (That passed over; so will this), implies optimism, not, as P. J. Frankis concludes, "merely stoical acceptance."[16] Like the Wanderer and the Seafarer, Deor has gained wisdom from experience; in his case, however, it is partly from the experiences of numerous historical figures. His historical exempla strike a note of familiarity in the pagan mind, but his Christian message of hope becomes itself exemplary: rejection from the earthly hall does not matter because that condition, too, will pass. Like all life, it is transitory.

Because man's life on earth is always mutable and leaves him often in various conditions of restlessness, dejection, or adversity, he is constantly seeking, journeying toward, or hoping for home and happiness—a stable kingdom ruled by an unchanging lord, a destiny not possible in an unstable world. The Christian message therefore offered hope that such a destination was possible to attain. The wisdom of the Seafarer is probably the climax of the joyful expectation of the promise of life since he advises man to join him after discovering "hu we þider cumen," to strive "þæt we moten/ on þa ecan eadignesse" (so that we might be

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[16] P. J. Frankis, "Deor and Wulf and Eadwacer: Some Conjectures," Medium Ævum, 31 (1962), 171.

permitted to enter that place of eternal happiness, 119b-120). Indirectly, the means of attaining eternal joy have been suggested by exempla and by subtle hints at qualities that would assure admission to the most desirable of homes.

Life after death for the pagan is embodied in the Seafarer's "lof libbendra" (praise of the living, 73a), which has been earned by "fremum on foldan" (good deeds on earth, 75a) and will earn for him "dream mid duguðum" (joy with the heavenly hosts, 80a). Both Christian and pagan therefore yearned for permanence; home was simply a symbol for a kind of permanence to a weary traveller, to a missionary or warrior in the service of God or country, or to a settler from a foreign land. As I. L. Gordon observes, "since men wish to have posthumous fame, the best kind is that obtained by deeds which also earn for them the bliss of Heaven."[17] Moreover, Cirlot notes that house has a symbolic association with the "repository of all wisdom, that is, tradition itself."[18] Memories with both Christian and pagan attachments are recalled; the Christian might associate heaven with the home of Divine Wisdom, while the pagan honor of tradition, of ultimately tracing genealogies to the all-wise gods, is implied.

The symbolic associations suggested here are consequently universal and not confined to a people or to an era in the history of man; they can therefore be assumed to have been within the imaginative range or memory of the Anglo-Saxons. Themes of rejection, loyalty, and desire for permanence evoke similar responses in all people, although the themes

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[17] I. L. Gordon, "Traditional Themes in The Wanderer and The Seafarer," Review of English Studies, N.S. 5 (1954), 9.

[18] Cirlot, p. 146.

discussed here reflect a decidedly Christian viewpoint. They represent man's fears, his ideals, his values, his deepest emotions. It remains for the poet to give expression to these universals, because in him is vested the "power of the maker" to exercise his skill, to create works of "eternal glory."

Man's good deeds on earth are connected in no small way with modes of conduct, routes by which permanence either in the memory of the living or in the heavenly home might be attained. Among the modes of conduct which can be traced through the language of the six poems are the attributes of generosity and humility. These were common qualities of both Christian and pagan; consequently, they were bases on which differences between the two might be resolved. Chadwick lists generosity among "the characteristics . . . for which heroes are distinguished."[19] Whitelock, too, alludes to generosity but extends her discussion of the act of giving to include the relationship that resulted between giver and receiver. Whitelock's statement that the bond "went deeper than material benefits on either side" affirms the notion that the concept of a generous God could be associated in the pagan mind with a ring-giving king or lord.[20]

Significant phrases in Cædmon's Hymn, "ielda bearnum" and "firum foldan," imply the generosity of the Creator, who provided an earthly home for "children of men" and for "men," his lesser creatures. Moreover, the home was protected, as previously noted, by having "heofon to hrofe." All creation is therefore a manifestation of the generous spirit of the "Wuldor-Fæder," ostensibly a Christian concept.

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[19]Chadwick, p. 333.

[20]Whitelock, Beginnings, p. 30.

The process of transferring the Christian concept to the pagan was not difficult, however, because the lord or king who generously provided fatherly protection could easily be equated with the King of Heaven, whose earthly gifts, though transitory, could be perceived as symbolic of far richer ones in the heavenly home, the "mysterious" nature of which, as Wyld's statement quoted elsewhere implies, would have an appeal to the pagan. The choice of "Weard" (guardian) with its military connotations would also strike a familiar chord in the pagan memory. In the kennings, "heofon-rices Weard" and "mann-cynnes Weard," "Weard," as guardian of both heaven and mankind, implies immense power and strength, as well as generosity in willingly undertaking such awesome responsibility. For this generous spirit, Cædmon begins, "nu sculon herian" (now we should give praise). Cædmon himself is an exemplum of a recipient of generosity; as Shepherd points out, the Hymn is "the best-known account in early English history of a heavenly gift of song."[21]

It is an earthly king and leader of warriors, "Æthelstan cyning" (King Athelstan), who is designated early in The Battle of Brunanburh as "beorna beag-giefa" (ring-giver of warriors, 2a). Isaacs observes in a kind of spatial interpretation of the poem that the phrase may mean either "that he is the one among the warriors who gives rings," or it may mean "that he is the one who gives rings to warriors--a king. The picture of a warrior-king outstanding among warrior-kings is re-emphasized in the description of Æthelstan as a generous king who distributes gifts to his retainers."[22] Generosity is a noble virtue in the earthly

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[21]G. Shepherd, "The Prophetic Cædmon," Review of English Studies, N.S. 5 (1954), 113.

[22]Isaacs, p. 119.

king as it is also in "heofon-rices Weard." The two poems are thus complementary in affirming the ideal of generosity.

The concept of generosity permeates The Dream of the Rood, and it is also frequent but more direct in both The Wanderer and The Seafarer. In The Dream of the Rood, the "Hælendes treo" (Savior's tree, 25b) itself performs generous actions by restraint, "Ealle ic meahte/ feondas gefiellan" (I might destroy the enemies entirely, 37b-38a), and by willingly assuming its responsibility, "Ac ic scolde fæste standan" (But I should stand fast, 43b). Willingness as a form of generosity is treated by Carol Jean Wolf, who draws some parallels between Christ and a warrior-lord in her discussion of "Christ as hero." "The heroic figure," Wolf claims, "willingly ascends the cross, exhibiting as He does so the traditional heroic qualities of strength, resolution, and boldness." The image of journeying, with implications of generosity, is also suggested by Wolf, who states that in His ultimate act of generosity, Christ made His journey to the cross to redeem mankind and that He gained "eternal life for man at the price of His own life."[23] Nor does the mercy and generosity of the Hero allow Him to forget "þam-þe þær bryne þolodon" (those who had endured the fire, 149b), but "þa he mid menige com" (then He brought many, 151b) into God's Kingdom to enjoy the home promised to them. In a sort of legendary setting, the Hero is thus pictured as a lord who is unchanging and who fulfills the promise of immortality to those whose faith is steadfast.

Generosity is a concept which is also reflected in the Wanderer's memories. The Wanderer recalls "gold-wine" (bountiful friend) and

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[23]Carol Jean Wolf, "Christ as Hero in The Dream of the Rood," Neuphilologische Mitteilungen, 71 (1970), 205-209.

"sinces bryttan" (giver of treasures), "sinc-þege" (receiving of treasure), "gief-stoles" (the ceremony of gift-giving), and among the ubi sunt passages, "Hwær com maðum-giefa?" (Where is the giver of treasures?). Recognizing the transience of all these in lines 108-109, however, the Wanderer concludes that "Wel bið þam-þe him are seceþ/ frofre to Fæder on heofonum" (Happy will be he who seeks mercy and comfort for himself from the Heavenly Father, 114b-115a). The experiences which the Wanderer related as a lonely, solitary one make the gifts of comfort and mercy seem highly desirable rewards from the generous Father of all mankind. Earthly gifts are merely useless treasures to him.

"Hring-þege" (ring-receiving, 44b), is equally repugnant to the Seafarer, because the practice does nothing to assuage his restless spirit. The "gold-giefan" (gold-givers, 83a), as well as the gifts, disappear, and the gold is worthless "to geoce" (as a help, 101a), "þære sawle þe bið synna full" (to the soul submerged in sin, 100). The Creator, in the Seafarer's conclusion, has already manifested His generosity when He "gestaðolode stiðe grundas/ eorthan sceatas and upprodor" (established firm lands, earth's surfaces, and high heaven, 104-105), an enumeration of the orders of creation similar to that of Cædmon, referred to elsewhere in this chapter. Like Cædmon, the Seafarer also includes a summons, "Þæs sie þam Halgan þanc" (that the Holy One be thanked, 122a).

Finally, generosity is implied by negation in one of Deor's exempla. Ermanaric, about whom, as Pope explains, stories[24] of "tyrannical behavior" have been recounted, was "grimm cyning" (a fierce king), who had "wylfenne" (wolfish) inclinations, metaphorically, in the opinion

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[24]Pope, p. 95.

of Alvin Lee, "a beast of prey feasting on his carrion subjects, not a wise, charitable ruler."[25] Ermanaric was therefore an exemplum not worthy of emulation, for "excessive greed," the opposite of a generous nature, was "the most heinous of all accusations" in the Germanic tradition, according to the findings of Donald Ward.[26] Deor, like the Wanderer, later praises the "holdne hlaford" (kind lord, 39a), under whom he had served. Thus, by indirection Deor commends a generous spirit. And the confidence suggested in his refrain is a final reminder of his belief in mercy and justice as extensions of generosity. That Deor confidently expects "hyht on heofonum," where he will not be supplanted by a "leoþ-cræftig mann" (a man skilled in song, 40a), can be inferred from his faith that the "Witig Dryhten" (Wise Lord, 32a) deals justly with all men. Deor obviously believed that if Heormenda had won his position by devious means, he would in time be placed among those who are meted "weana dæl" (a share of woes, 34b). To Deor, then, mercy and justice exemplify the generous spirit of the Wise Lord.

Having been extolled as a virtue worthy of man's emulation by each of the six poets, generosity was always finally equated with the grace, mercy, and kindness bestowed by the King of Heaven. Instances of generosity by earthly kings, though they brought transitory happiness, were but diminutives compared to the permanent, immortal gift of joyous life in heaven. Similarly, the mode of conduct that would assure consideration as a worthy recipient of the generosity from either "Wuldor-Fæder" or a "god cyning" (good king) was best exemplified by an attitude of

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[25]Alvin Lee, p. 165.

[26]Donald Ward, "On the Poets and Poetry of the Indo-Europeans," The Journal of Indo-European Studies, 1 (1973), 136.

humility. As Hodgkin implies, humility is associated with the obedient attitude expected in the comitatus arrangement, in which lord and retainers shared mutually binding legal obligations. Their complete acceptance was demanded, and infractions resulted in severe punishment.[27] Hence, the Christian and pagan attitudes of humble obedience converged to represent another unity in diversity.

The story of Cædmon's receiving the "gift of song" is a supreme example of humility. The humble cowherd became a divine instrument, according to Bede's account,[28] in a manner that recalls the Annunciation. Cædmon's "Hwæt sceal ic singan?" echoes Mary's words, "Be it done to me . . . ." Both accept their roles as human instruments of divine will. Alvin Lee, in fact, implies that the birth of English religious poetry symbolizes the Incarnation when he states that "the nativity of Christian poetry in the English language took place at night in a cow shed."[29] Not only Cædmon's obedient attitude but also the form of the Hymn denotes humility. The act of giving praise is itself an implicit recognition of a higher being by one who considers himself of lesser stature. Within the poem significant language is used to convey an attitude of humility in such phrases as "ielda bearnum," but there is also the suggestion that all earth is subservient to heaven in the heirarchical order of the Hymn, a scheme of highest to lowest degrees. A transference of the concept to pagan thought was easily accomplished because the Anglo-Saxon society was basically patriarchal with a well-defined system of

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[27]Hodgkin, p. 462.

[28]Bright's Grammar and Reader, pp. 125-130.

[29]Alvin Lee, p. 2.

classes. Such references to humility are of course not surprising in the predominantly Christian context of the Hymn.

Perhaps more unusual is the discovery of an implication of humility in the so-called heroic poem, The Battle of Brunanburh. It seems probable that the warrior-leaders were affected by the slaughter and destruction on the battlefield to the extent that they were humbled by the realization that their own lives were spared and that their men had fought so valiantly for them. The poet makes it clear that the field is a scene of the horror of bloodshed on both sides. The poet, Isaacs believes, intends the central portion of the poem as a projection "to the defeated warriors' homelands,"[30] a scene which would undoubtedly have a humbling effect on warriors accustomed to victory. Defeat thus became a foil to the kind of pride common to the victor. In another suggestion of humility, Isaacs calls attention to one of the most vivid descriptive passages in Old English poetry:

> siþþan sunne upp
> on morgen-tid, mære tungol,
> glad ofer grundas, Godes candel beorht,
> eces Dryhtnes, oþ seo æðele gesceaft
> sag to setle.
>
> (after sunrise at morning the glorious
> star glided over the land, the bright
> candle of God, the eternal Lord, until
> that noble creation sank to its seat, 13b-17a).

Isaacs interprets the passage as "a submerged metaphor in which the sun and God are likened to a loyal retainer and his lord." "Setl" is used, Isaacs asserts, "to denote a seat in the hall of a ruler," and it commonly refers to a seat "taken after the performance of a conventional or cour-

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[30]Isaacs, p. 123.

teous service . . . usually at the behest of the lord."[31] The sun, then, is viewed as acting in acquiescence to the divine order of things, in humble obedience to the Supreme King of Heaven--an attitude similar to that of Cædmon.

Like Cædmon's Hymn, The Dream of the Rood has a predominantly religious tone, and it is also striking as an expression of humility. Isaacs' important point that the cross-speaker equates itself with Mary complements a similar analogy earlier in this chapter between the words of Cædmon and Mary. The cross, like Mary and Cædmon, also submitted to divine will, and as the cross recalls, "me þa geweorðode wuldres Ealdor" (the Lord of glory honored me then, 90), "swelce swa he his modor eac, Marian selfe" (just as He also had honored his mother, Mary herself, 92). Isaacs believes that "the analogy is excellent: both endured the agony of bearing the Lord."[32] Isaacs might have added that both Mary and the cross also experience great suffering as a result of their humble acquiescence. In contrast to the wounds of the cross, Mary's wounds are invisible, though no less piercing. The cross recalls: "Þurhdrifon hie me mid deorcum næglum: on me sindon þa dolg gesiene" (They pierced me with dark nails: on me the wounds are visible, 46). Alvin Lee views the submissive attitude of the cross as paradoxical, however. Lee remarks: "Its personal tragedy and triumph are depicted in terms of submission and obedience, of bowing to the necessity of being the shameful but, paradoxically, willing instrument on which its beloved Dryhten dies, because the Lord wills it."[33] In any case, the

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[31]Isaacs, p. 121.

[32]Ibid., p. 13.

[33]Alvin Lee, p. 60.

concept of humility prevails, and it does so because it has been exemplified by an important symbolic speaker to be discussed later. Probably no exhortation from a human speaker would have moved a pagan audience to espouse an attitude of humility with such force as that of the eminent tree speaking in "mysterious, solemn, and sublime" language.

It is human speakers, recounting their own experiences, who exemplify humility in The Wanderer, The Seafarer, and Deor. Humility is reflected in each by a common recognition of an all-powerful God. As in the case of generosity, figurative references to humility are also prominent in The Wanderer and The Seafarer. In the Wanderer's words, "anhaga are gebideþ,/ Metodes mildse" (a solitary man obtains honor and God's mercy by patience, 1-2a), an implication that God looks approvingly upon humble acceptance of divine intervention. Patience, moreover, might suggest a form of strength which a pugnacious people would regard highly. It is also a quality which the Wanderer had learned from experiencing adversity, somewhat like training for battle. The Wanderer recognizes man's dependent condition in his assertion that "Wyrd biþ full aræd" (Destiny will be fully determined, 5b), a statement that also has pagan connotations. In his homiletic passage on the attainment of wisdom, the Wanderer speaks out about humility by connotation when he advises that "Wita sceal geþyldig" (A wise man shall be patient, 65b), a reassertion of his opening lines. Admission of the Wanderer's humble condition is suggested in his final statement, already referred to in the discussion of generosity. The Wanderer must seek mercy and comfort from a higher being, who, unlike man, is able to dispense such gifts.

The Seafarer must also humbly submit to the adversities of earthly existence. Either elemental storms at sea or struggles against tempta-

tion on earth leave man no stability. A phrase connoting humility, "ielda bearn," in the Hymn, is repeated in The Seafarer, but even more explicit is his statement that "blæd is gehnæged" (earth's glory is humbled, 88b) according to the plan of the seasons, of growth and decay. Hence, man and all nature are subject to a Deity, who guides and controls the processes of earthly life; "se Metodes egesa, forþon hie seo molde oncierreþ" (the Creator's great power turns the earth, 103). From this recognition that man is lesser than such a powerful ruler, the Seafarer utters a most climactic and direct pronouncement on the humble life: "Eadig biþ se-þe eaþ-mod leofaþ; cymeþ him seo ar of heofonum" (Blessed will be he who lives humbly; the honor of heaven comes to him, 107), and the reward comes, says the Seafarer, "forþon he on his meahte geliefeþ" (because he believes in His power, 108b). Here the Seafarer unquestionably reasserts the belief of St. Augustine, who taught that "it is necessary that we be turned by the fear of God toward a recognition of his will" and that "we become meek through piety so that we do not contradict Divine Scripture."[34]

The virtue of humility exemplified in Deor is readily apparent in his submissive acceptance of whatever triumph or tragedy "witig Dryhten" chooses to dispense, as Deor repeatedly affirms in his refrain. If Frederick Norman's conclusion that the poet "intended to give examples of people who had ultimately triumphed in spite of initial calamity"[35] is correct, then it can be assumed that Deor, like The Seafarer, is a very direct teaching of humble obedience to divine will as a means of

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[34]St. Augustine, On Christian Doctrine, trans. by D. W. Robertson, Jr. (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., 1958), p. 38.

[35]Frederick Norman, "'Deor': A Criticism and an Interpretation," Modern Language Review, 32 (1937), 379.

attaining "hyht on heofonum." In Deor's inference that man's lot is foreordained, that some receive "are" (grace) and some "weana dæl" (a share of woes, 34b), is a recognition of the pre-eminence of a Supreme Ruler and of man's own helpless condition in the mutable world. Like the Wanderer and the Seafarer, Deor realizes that the rewards of earthly life have no real value, and he is contented in the joyous expectation of heaven, which humility will hopefully gain for him, as well as for all who follow his example.

The connotative language of the poems, then, was apparently a subtle effort by the Christian poets to unite the pagan and Christian elements. Although the language recalled different associations in the memories of each, there was ultimately a bond which united the two. The poets were careful to choose such images as hall, feasting, ring-givers, and obedient retainers to convey the Christian concepts of heaven and of conduct necessary for salvation. Thus, there was a constant appeal to the pagan sensibility.

What Magoun calls the "theme of beasts of battle," to which reference was made earlier, was probably such an appeal to the pagan ability to find meaning in external nature. If the assumption that the frequent use of an image acts as a mirror of man's concerns through its broader connotations is valid, then the repetition of the combination of "beasts" might also have been intended to have symbolic significance, to be more than an association with "scenes of carnage." Although Gordon thinks it is improbable "that symbolism would be used at so early a stage of literary development with no explicit exposition of its meaning,"[36] psychological studies, such as those reflected in Cirlot's interpretations,

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[36]Gordon, 12.

show that symbols generally have quite ancient origins. On that basis Magoun's "beasts of battle," as well as the other images discussed in this chapter, can be presumed to have been chosen quite deliberately by the Old English poets.

Magoun's central argument is that "the wolf, eagle, and/or raven as beasts attendant on a scene of carnage" appear as ornaments "in nine poems on twelve occasions." One of those occasions, of course, is in The Battle of Brunanburh, where the poet describes the departure from the battlefield:

> Leton him behindan hræw bryttian
> sealwig-padan, þone sweartan hræfn
> hyrned-nebban, and þone hasu-padan,
> earn æftan hwit, æses brucan,--
> grædigne guþ-hafoc, and þæt græge deor,
> wulf on wealda.
>
> (They left behind them to devour the corpses,
> the dark-colored and horny-beaked one, the dark
> raven, and the dusky-coated one, the eagle white
> from behind, the greedy war-hawk, and that gray
> animal, the wolf from the forest, to partake of
> the carrion, 60-65a).

Magoun asserts of the beasts that "their presence serves to embellish a battle scene or as a reference to warfare" and that the theme is ornamental, not essential.[37] Quite the contrary, the beasts can be interpreted as symbolic with some degree of certainty. Again from Cirlot's study of symbols, it is clear that there is a close relationship between the meanings of the symbols and the Anglo-Saxon world view. Cirlot explains that the wolf was "symbolic of valour among the Romans and the Egyptians." Hence, it would seem to be an "essential" symbol for a battlefield scene. In Nordic mythology, moreover, "the wolf appears as

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[37]Magoun, 83.

a symbol of the principle of evil."[38] On the other hand, among its various references, the eagle is a symbol of "the spiritual principle in general," it also "symbolizes the father," and it is associated with "the gods of power and war." It often signified "the struggle between the spiritual and celestial principle and the lower world," and "according to St. Jerome, the eagle is the emblem of the Ascension and of prayer." Finally, it has been regarded as "the most apt expression of divine majesty."[39] Both the wolf and the raven are associated with Odin, the supreme deity in Norse mythology. According to Peter Munch,[40] Odin's ravens had Norse names meaning Thought and Memory. The ravens supposedly perched on each of Odin's shoulders, and his wisdom, for the most part, came from their reports of daily flights throughout the universe. Odin's wolves, in contrast, had names meaning Greed. Ravens are generally believed to predict death or ill omen from a tradition as early as Cicero and Alexander, as Edwin and Mona Radford[41] explain. Hence, the collocation of beasts is ostensibly related to both Christian and pagan tradition. The juxtaposition of the beasts seems particularly important. Christian and pagan elements can be viewed as struggling symbolically for control of the soul and mind of the warrior on the battlefield. Consequently, the theme cannot be dismissed as merely ornamental; the symbolic suggestions are too clear to have been accidental groupings. For example, the three-fold nature of man--physical,

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[38] Cirlot, p. 355.

[39] Ibid., p. 87.

[40] Peter Munch, Norse Mythology: Legends of Gods and Heroes (New York: The American-Scandanavian Foundation, 1926), p. 8.

[41] Edwin and Mona A. Radford, Encyclopedia of Superstitions (New York: The Philosophical Library, 1948), p. 197.

spiritual, and mental--is suggested by the wolf, the eagle, and the raven respectively. Between a symbol of bodily strength and one of foreboding death is the aspiring spiritual emblem. The spiritual aspect, capable of soaring to great heights, is beset on all sides by principles of evil and destruction. Hence, the beasts add greatly to the poetic purpose.

Adrien Bonjour is right in her conclusion that the origin of the theme of beasts is "lost in the abyss of time," but the associations proposed here, because they antedate the period of Old English writing, would seem reasonable. Perhaps Bonjour is also correct in concluding that the beasts were probably used "to add a harsh and realistic note to the descriptions of battles and their sequels."[42] It seems more likely, however, that they are intended as "signs" in the Augustinian sense. According to the teaching of St. Augustine, a "sign" is defined as "a thing which causes us to think of something beyond the impression the thing itself makes upon the senses."[43] The group of beasts as "signs" seem to be clearly intended as devices through which, in Milton's words, "more is meant than meets the ear." In fact, this same basis is used for the interpretations throughout this chapter.

The linking of the known and the unknown, the visible with the invisible, or the outer and the inner world by analogy is quite simply the most fundamental concept of teaching. And clearly teaching, as well as pleasure, was the intention of the Old English poets, as this brief survey has shown. It is also conceivable that Anglo-Saxon man's unified sensibility, his sense of oneness with all creation, increased his aware-

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[42]Adrien Bonjour, "'Beowulf' and the Beasts of Battle," Publications of the Modern Language Association, 72 (1957), 565.

[43]St. Augustine, p. 34.

ness of the relationships that exist between man and his world. The Old English poets did not hesitate to use such awareness as a basis on which to direct attention to man's condition in a transitory existence and to enjoin him to strive for a happier life "on heofonum." The poets were unified in their messages of hope and in their recognition that such virtues as loyalty, humility, and generosity would lead to happiness under an unchanging ruler. The language, deliberately chosen to achieve unity, accommodated the divergent Christian and pagan elements because it implied values that represent mankind's basic aspirations and codes of conduct. Although the six poems could be studied in much greater detail, it is clear that there is a continuity of focus on the Christian message of hope, the optimistic note which the poems leave with the audience.

The "makers" therefore developed themes that reflect universal concerns by skillful use of connotative language. In the next chapter the study of the poems will be extended to include other methods of achieving unity--of thought and structure--through manipulation of language. The same subtlety and refinement demonstrated in the development of themes will be evident in that phase as well.

CHAPTER III

SAMOD ÆTGÆDERE

Besides their unified purpose in teaching Christian concepts by reawakening ancient associations in their audience, the Old English poets exhibited unity within their work--unity of thought and structure. There is also a semblance of unity with other artistic modes--musical and pictorial--discernible in the structure of the poems. Although the poems are sometimes regarded as pagan creations emended by Christian writers, the language of those included here reveals that there is a progression of ideas, that repetitions and variations, when they do occur, serve quite distinct functions toward the expansion of meaning, often for emphasis or as tactful suggestions chosen to compromise the conflicting tendencies of the Christian and pagan traditions. They are not mere interpolations or afterthoughts. Rather, the ideas implied in these stylistic devices are presented in unified structures. The language of the poems, representing both Christian and pagan elements flowing "samod ætgædere" (jointly together), contributes to the unity of purpose discussed in the previous chapter.

Old English stylistic devices, often considered as trite expressions employed somewhat mechanically by a bard who is momentarily groping for a convenient word to fit his alliterative needs, are replete with connotations, as the analyses that follow will indicate. It is certainly true, as Greenfield has noted, that such devices as variations contribute

to the bringing together of disparate elements.[1] Christian and pagan traditions, artistic forms, and time are ingeniously blended within the structure of Old English poetic art.

In addition to the unity achieved by means of progression of thought in such stylistic devices as kennings or variations, the unity of the poems is dependent to a great extent on the speakers' identities in such works as The Wanderer and The Seafarer. The determination of the persona rests upon the various conventional expressions of "ic secgan wille," tenses of verbs, contrasting ideas, or whether indeed various epithets, as in The Wanderer, have the same referent, whether "eardstapa" is also "snottor on mode." Because of the imaginative abilities of both poet and audience, it is entirely possible that the speakers assumed the roles of the persons to whom various portions of the works referred. The speakers within the poems seem to be an early illustration of what T. S. Eliot referred to as "the three voices of poetry," the voice of the poet talking to himself, the voice of the poet addressing an audience, and the voice of the poet when he attempts to create a dramatic character speaking in verse, saying only what he can say within the limits of one imaginary character addressing another imaginary character.[2] The latter is somewhat related to the technique of ethopoeia, an imaginary monologue by a fictitious character, which several writers have proposed. However, it seems highly unlikely that there are separate speakers in The Wanderer and The Seafarer, as Pope has suggested.

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[1]Greenfield, Interpretation, p. 71.

[2]T. S. Eliot, "Three Voices of Poetry," in On Poetry and Poets (New York: Farrar, Straus and Cudahy, 1957), p. 96.

Cædmon's Hymn, a basic work in any approach to Old English poetic analysis, is outstanding as a synthesis of differing traditions in both thought and structure. Disparate elements, according to a discovery of Robert J. Kispert, are brought together even in the name of the Christian messenger, Cædmon. Kispert found that the etymology of the name is "a Keltic word meaning 'soldier' or 'warrior.'"[3] The military connotation of the name of the poet, then, probably did much to activate the pagan audience to a feeling of receptiveness of the Christian story of creation and of the exhortation to praise from the very beginning. Epithets for the Creator, of which seven occur in eight lines, also significantly represent both Christian and pagan traditions. The center of the poem is reserved for the center of Creation, where God was placed in the medieval world view. Thus, "he" was probably tactfully used by the poet to refer to God. Enough mystery remained, however, to enable the pagan to see the center of the poem as a representation of the pagan World Tree, the center of all life and the symbol of universality.[4] The impression of "expansiveness" created by repetition in the epithets elsewhere in the poem is often misleading. Rather than being mere devices for alliterative needs or for ornament, the epithets definitely show a progression or a "deliberate dwelling on different aspects of an important subject by partially synonymous repetition," as Pope calls it.[5] Analysis of the devices reveals a most interesting blending, as well as progression.

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[3]Robert J. Kispert, Old English: An Introduction (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1971), p. 54.

[4]Hilda Roderick Davidson, Gods and Myths of Northern Europe (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1969), p. 191.

[5]Pope, Poems, p. 51.

It was pointed out earlier that power, or authority, suggested in "heofon-rices Weard" and "mann-cynnes Weard" appealed to the pagan mind. "Metodes meahta" (power of the Maker, 2a) also effected a similar compromise, because "metod" might mean "fate" or "creator."[6] The pattern of epithets, in fact, appears to alternate from a predominantly Christian to a predominantly pagan significance throughout the Hymn. The first, "heofon-rices Weard," combines the concepts of Christian heaven with the pagan guardian, and the second, "Metodes meahta," has a strikingly pagan connotation. "Weorc Wuldor-Fæder," and "halig Scieppend" (Holy Creator, 6b) have strongly Christian connotations, while the name-word in "ece Dryhten" (eternal Lord) is definitely related to the pagan comitatus. The final line contains the most interesting of the epithets, particularly in its etymology. Because of its mythological associations, "Frea ælmihtig" was undoubtedly a powerful connotative conclusion, appropriately given a climactic position in a call to praise and worship. Although "Frea ælmihtig" is interpreted by Huppé as "Almighty Joy or Almighty Lord,"[7] it is also more than likely a cognate of the Old Germanic Frîa or Frîja, which, Munch explains, is connected with the verb frjá, "to love." Another possibility is the feminine divinity, Hœrn, supposedly a variant name for Freyja, who was worshipped as a goddess of earth or fertility. Freyja is also regarded as a counterpart of the Roman goddess of love, Venus.[8] Both associations of the word would recall a pagan worship which could easily be transferred to a Christian

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[6]John Richard Clark Hall, A Concise Anglo-Saxon Dictionary (4th ed.; Cambridge: University Press, 1962), is the authority for this and other word meanings in this thesis.

[7]Huppé, p. 117.

[8]Munch, pp. 298-300.

ritual. It is important, too, that Cædmon chose to end the Hymn on such a note of compromise and hope for unity through the various connotations of "Frea." Besides "Frea" in the final line, another word has been interpreted by Huppé as having pagan connotations. Huppé's interpretation of "ord," however, is based on a different manuscript version and is an illustration of problems which arise because of manuscript irregularities. Using a Northumbrian manuscript, Huppé explains that "ord" means a point (perhaps of a weapon) or a beginning.[9] "Or," as it appears in West Saxon dialect, means only a beginning, perhaps a more accurate interpretation since West Saxon is the standard Old English dialect.[10] In making an analysis, all such possibilities must be explored, however.

The form of the Hymn is also unusual. The Hymn has been compared to various Psalms, to a passage from the prophet Isaiah, and, by Huppé, to the Preface of the Mass.[11] Indeed, each of these sources appears to have been influential in its composition. Because it is a hymn of praise, both the Psalms and the Preface, which is the portion of the Mass devoted to praise and thanksgiving in anticipation of the commemoration of the Eucharist, are appropriate analogies. Both also contain an enumeration of the powers of God. The Hymn can also appropriately be compared to that passage from Isaiah in which there appear various names for the Child--Wonderful, Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.[12]

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[9]Huppé, p. 118.

[10]Helmut Gneuss, "The Origin of Standard Old English and Æthelwold's School at Winchester," in Anglo-Saxon England 1, ed. by Peter Clemoes (Cambridge: University Press, 1972), 63-83.

[11]Huppé, p. 108.

[12]Pope, Poems, p. 53.

Like Cædmon's Hymn, Isaiah's appellations, particularly as they are immortalized in Handel's magnificent oratorio, The Messiah, also suggest a crescendo effect, a movement to a climactic finale in order to leave a profound meaning with the audience. Both Cædmon and Isaiah progress in their arrangement of titles toward a hope of unity, harmony, and peace--a note on which the Preface also ends.

In addition to their close relationship to Biblical sources and Christian ritual, the epithets, Pope believes, may be related to royal panegyrics or to the praise of the pagan gods. Pope, who also regards the Hymn as having a tendency toward stanzaic structure, accurately bases his theory of stanzas on the fact that "ece Dryhten" can be called a refrain because of its repetition in lines 4 and 8, but he thinks the symmetrical arrangement is lost by the addition of line 9.[13] What Pope fails to note is that there is also perhaps a kind of end rhyme in the two lines in which "ece Dryhten" appears. Line 4 ends with "astealde," and line 8 concludes with "teode." These are the only lines in the Hymn in which such similarities occur. The two verbs are connected semantically as well. The first, which probably refers to the creation of time and of heaven, occurs in the line which has been called a paraphrase of the beginning of the Book of Genesis, and the second apparently speaks of the later creation of earth. "Ece" (eternal) is undoubtedly repeated to add emphasis to the timeless nature of God. Pope's belief that the epithet in the final line "harks back to the magnificence of God as he is described in the first section"[14] is plausible, but the entire line is a variation of ideas already presented. Specifically, it is a vari-

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[13]Pope, Poems, p. 52.

[14]Ibid.

ation of line 5: "ielda bearnum" becomes "firum," which was undoubtedly the poet's choice because of the alliterative demand stemming from his wish to use "Frea," a word already shown to be basic for his harmonious ending. In a musical analogy, the final line would seem to be a choral "Amen," parallel to the conclusion of the Preface of the Mass. In this interpretation the Hymn would certainly correspond to the Preface, which begins: "Let us give thanks to the Lord our God," a variation of which is "Nu sculon herian." Still another musical analogy can be considered appropriate because the Hymn is often regarded as the genesis of English poetry. The Hymn might be regarded as a toccata or overture in which the performer displays the full power and range of his ability.

Cædmon's Hymn is therefore a unified structure. It is also a supreme example of compression of thought, for within the nine short lines is contained the story of creation, a story which appears in other versions but never in such condensed and artistic form. The identity of the speaker is, of course, made clear in Bede's account of the Cædmon story. That the unified structure is the work of an inspired speaker is the general opinion of most writers, although Shepherd perhaps goes farther in seeing Cædmon passively speaking as a prophetic voice of God delivering a message which is "a communication between the external power and his fellow men in which he is the instrument of transmission. The message is peculiarly detached from his ordinary consciousness."[15] Shepherd's thesis possibly accounts for the miraculous nature of the composition. The focus throughout the Hymn is on the Creator, whose praise Cædmon sings in seven epithets, quite possibly related to the seven days during which the glorious work of creation was accomplished

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[15]Shepherd, 119.

or to the seven steps to restoration and perfection outlined by St. Augustine that culminated in the enjoyment of peace and tranquility following the seventh step, presumably Judgment Day.[16] It is even conceivable that Cædmon was inspired to add the asymmetrical ninth line to correspond to the nine-world concept in the Norse story of creation.[17] In any case, the Hymn is a joyous song of creation which is based on many sources through the words of the "prophetic Cædmon."

Vivid descriptive passages can be said to characterize both The Battle of Brunanburh and The Dream of the Rood. Certainly among the six poems considered here, these two poems are outstanding for their sensory perceptions, especially the visual and the auditory. Such impressions contribute to an understanding of the structural unity, as well as the progression of ideas within the works. Conscious efforts to compromise Christian and pagan ideals are less than apparent, however, in Brunanburh, which ostensibly concentrates on a significant, historically identifiable event and a universal attitude of love for a homeland.

The thought and structure in The Battle of Brunanburh, can be compared to a form of art, as Cædmon's Hymn was. Brunanburh, however, is not particularly like music; rather, it is more reminiscent of a pictorial representation of the battle events. Brunanburh might justly be regarded as having as its source a kind of Anglo-Saxon equivalent to "Washington Crossing the Delaware," in which an historical moment is captured by an artist intending to contribute to the building of patriotic fervor. Pope notes that in Bede's treatment of the conflict in the poem, he "maintains

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[16]St. Augustine, pp. 38-40.

[17]Davidson, p. 192.

a distant view, surveying the scene as from a height."[18] And more recently, Isaacs proposed that the focus of attention should rightly be on "her" (in this place) and that the poet is using "the pointing finger of the tour-guide . . . to explain what should be seen at this historic site."[19] There is undoubtedly some sort of simultaneous, kaleidoscopic view, or "panoramic sweep," as Greenfield calls it,[20] from which the battle is perceived. Without elaborating on the idea, Greenfield justifiably suggests a viewing of "the progress of the battle as in a tapestry."[21] The most probable analogue for such a theory is a portion of Vergil's Aeneid. Vergil describes a frieze depicting the Trojan War, as seen through the eyes of Aeneas in the temple of Juno at Carthage,[22] and the literary tradition survives later in the "battles" of Cupid on the tapestries viewed by Britomart in Edmund Spenser's The Faerie Queene and somewhat similarly in the pictorial universe of Hero's garments in Christopher Marlowe's Hero and Leander. Like Vergil, the Brunanburh poet includes the principals of the battle--King Athelstan, Prince Edmund, Constantine, and Anlaf—and the poem progresses by moving through the most gruesome recollections of the battle in detailed descriptions. Vergil also stresses nationalism by fusing Greek and Roman ideals, as the Brunanburh poet intermingles Christian and pagan common values. Finally, King Athelstan, like Aeneas, has a leading role in fulfilling the dream of assuring a peaceful homeland for his people. The establish-

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[18] Pope, Poems, p. 56.

[19] Isaacs, p. 119.

[20] Greenfield, Critical History, p. 98.

[21] Greenfield, Interpretation, p. 69.

[22] Vergil Aeneid l. 475-510.

ment of a peaceful homeland is suggested in the somewhat mysterious "tir" (glory, 3b), which Henry explains is related to "the ecclesiastical term tir tairngiri, a translation of terra repromissionis, which was applied both to the promised land of Canaan and to the heavenly kingdom."[23] The word is also, according to Wrenn, the name of the Germanic rune and is "clearly a confused descendant of some form of the great Germanic ancestral deity's name which is represented in normal Anglo-Saxon as Tiw." It is significant, too, that it was regarded as "auspicious and helpful in warfare, with its shape like the head of an arrow or javelin . . . ; the name of the ancestral Germanic deity passed from a personal being to that glory in war which his memory could still provide."[24] Perhaps this curious blending also accounts for the strange appearance of the Latin name Constantinus in the poem as well.

Reference was made in a previous chapter to Wyld's comment on elaboration of language in Old English poetry, "of ornament in the shape of metaphor and pictorial phrase." Brunanburh is replete with such elaboration, although it is used quite effectively to enhance the visual and auditory images of the battlefield slaughter. Many of the images ingeniously combine sound and sight perceptions, as in the early lines in which the poet explains the actions of the warriors led by the King and the Prince: "Bord-weall clufon,/ heowon heaðu-linda hamora lafum" (with remnants of hammers--that is, with swords--they split the shield wall and struck the linden battle-shields, 5b-6). Particularly elaborate and effective is the descriptive phrase for swords, by which the imagination is activated to both sound and sight associations connected with the

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[23]Henry, p. 49.

[24]Wrenn, p. 16.

hammers making the swords. The image is extended to include the action of the sword when it was being used to strike in battle. The battle-scene is described in language varied and suggestive of the horror of slaughter: "Feld dennode/ secga swate" (The field became wet, or dark, with warriors' blood, 12b-13a). It is also pointed out by several writers that "dennode," admittedly an unusual word, may be a cognate of a word meaning resounded or streamed, both of which suggest sound. The extent of the slaughter is evident in each interpretation. In a series of turns, the poet follows the progress of the battle in extremely graphic descriptions. Descriptive phrases for the activity of the battle vary: "heardes hand-plegan" (hard hand-to-hand fighting, 25a), "meca gemanan" (meeting of swords, 40a), "cumbol-gehnastes" (conflict of banners, 49a), "gar-mittunge" (spear encounter, 50a), "gumena gemotes" (meeting of warriors, 50b), and "wæpen-gewrixles" (weapon exchange, 51a). Action is implied in such phrases by using compound words, nouns where verbs would normally be used to express action. Such phrases proclaim the remarkable resourcefulness of the language as the poet used it. The poet seemed determined to point out each implement of war, to omit no detail. Similarly, he describes the sea in varying terms that emphasize sensory perceptions: "ear-gebland" (sea-surge, 26b), "fealone flod" (yellow sea, 36a), "deop wæter (deep water, 55a), and "brad brimu" (broad seas, 71a). Vivid descriptions in the "beasts of battle" portion conclude the battlefield picture simultaneously with the departure of the brothers for their home. Obviously to emphasize the horror of the scene, the poet describes the actions of the beasts in the phrases "hræw bryttian" (to devour the corpses, 60b) and "æses brucan" (to partake of the carrion, 63b), and the beasts are also given accurate descriptions: "sweartan hræfn" is

"hyrned-nebban" and "sealwig-padan" (the dark raven is horny-beaked and dark-colored); "earn æftan hwit" is "hasu-padan" (the eagle white from behind is dusky-coated) and is also "græedigne guþ-hafoc" (a greedy war-hawk); and "wulf on wealda" is "græge deor" (the wolf in the forest is a gray animal). Besides these vivid lines, another passage is superb in its vividness and progression. The sun images, referred to in the previous chapter, suggest somewhat antithetical and prophetic meanings. The progression from "mære tungol" (glorious star, 14b) to "Godes candel beorht" (God's bright candle, 15b) at first appears to represent a weakening in the intensity of light, thus a kind of defeat or dying with the day. In contrast, the image of the sun's taking its seat in a place of honor worthy of the "æðele gesceaft" (noble creation, 16b), seems to signify a victory, perhaps foretelling the West Saxons' victory or man's ultimate achievement of his place in heaven. The sun passage is therefore one of the most outstanding instances of the Christian and pagan blending in the poem. The "ne þorfte" passages seem to parallel the weakening of the sun. "Hreman" (to exult), "gielpan" (to boast), and "hliehhan" (to laugh) can be regarded as a gradual lessening of response. In addition, "eces Dryhten" is used in the sun passage probably as a contrast to earthly time represented by the sun's passing, as an opportunity to stress the "eternal" nature of God.

As in Cædmon's Hymn, the speaker of The Battle of Brunanburh is not identified, but, as in the Aeneid, the speaker is probably one who had an active role in the events he describes. Both the form and language of the poem give support to such a theory. Like the Aeneid, the poem can be said to begin in medias res. Without preliminaries or any hint of framework, as in several of the poems, the poet begins with the

leaders and the location. Then, as Isaacs suggests, he proceeds to point out the events in a sequence. At least one indication that the speaker was deeply moved by the events might be construed from the numerous variations for battle or battlefield. Variations are apparent in such phrases as "æt campe" (in battle, 8b), "to gefeohte" (in the fight, 28a), "on þam camp-stede" (on the battlefield, 29a), "on folc-stede" (on the battlefield, 41b), "æt sæcce" (in battle, 42a), "on wæl-stowe" (on the battlefield or place of slaughter, 43a), "æt guðe" (in battle, 44a), "on wæl-felda" (on the battlefield, 51b). While some of the choices are undoubtedly based on the alliterative pattern, at least a few, "on wæl-stowe" and "on wæl-felda," could have been repeated in the alliterative scheme. Conceivably, the speaker, feeling deeply the sense of tragedy on the battlefield, is one to whom warfare is hateful business, an idea hinted in at least one phrase, "werig, wiges sæd" (weary, sated of war, 20a). He therefore uses variations because of the painful recollections that the mention of battle arouses in him. Unlike Aeneas, whose memories caused him to weep, the Brunanburh speaker, by restraining his deep feelings, acts in accordance with the Wanderer's counsel that those who have troubles "on hira breost-cofan bindaþ fæste" (should hold them fast in their hearts, 18). Apparently, he avoids the repetition of battle to escape the unpleasant possibility of revealing his feeling.

The parallel "ne þorfte" phrases, sometimes analyzed as understatement, might also support the theory of a participant-speaker. In his reference to the defeat of the enemy, the poet recalls:

> har hilde-rinc. Hreman ne þorfte
> meca gemanan; he wæs his maga sceard,
> freonda gefielled on folc-stede,
> beslægen æt sæcce, and his sunu forlet
> on wæl-stowe wundum forgrunden,
> geongne æt guðe. Gielpan ne þorfte

beorn blanden-feax bill-gesliehtes,
eald inwitta, ne Anlaf þy ma;
mid hira here-lafum hliehhan ne þorfton
þæt hie beadu-weorca beteran wurdon.

(For the old warrior, deprived of kinsmen and friends by the swords on the battlefield, there was no need to exult; he left his son, a youth slain in battle, destroyed by wounds. For the old deceitful, grizzled one, there was no need to boast about the sword-slaughter, nor was there for Anlaf any more need. With their small group of survivors, there was no need for them to laugh because they were better in deeds of war, 39-48).

It is possible that the distress of the speaker goes beyond his ability to describe the scene impersonally; therefore, he resorts to understatement. If war is indeed unpleasant to him, then he will also inwardly suffer at the enemy's losses, to which the passage refers, because of his own memories of earlier defeats and perhaps also because of the destruction of youthful warriors whose elders were the survivors. The pattern of general to particular is used in reference to those "fæge to gefeohte" (fated to die in the fight, 28a). The unnamed dead include five "geonge cyningas" (young kings, 29b) and seven "eorlas Anlafes" (noblemen of Anlaf, 31a). The elder survivors of youthful warriors also have an affinity with the passage from Vergil in which Aeneas sees Priam, the survivor of the fallen Hector. Such respect for the elderly enhances the speaker's position at the conclusion when he implicitly justifies warfare carried on in defense of the homeland won by his ancestors when "eorlas ar-hwæte eard begeaton" (noblemen abounding in glory took possession of the land, 73). This justification is not incompatible with the Christian view, according to Whitelock, for the Church "added its sanctity to the oath of allegiance."[25] Patriotism also denotes the unity for

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[25]Whitelock, Beginnings, p. 37.

which the poets consistently strive. Love for the homeland could be made commensurate with religious loyalty; such values complement rather than oppose each other.

The Battle of Brunanburh is therefore another attempt to achieve unity. The connotations of "tir" suggested by Henry imply the reward, the glory achieved in defense of the homeland which will finally become the "promised land" of the Christian. The poem has internal unity as well. Pope, who notes that The Battle of Brunanburh has "remarkable originality in design and vision," concludes that the poem is "much more than a panegyric by reason of its strong national feeling."[26] The concluding section of the poem would seem to confirm Pope's view. The poet points out the historical importance of the event he has described in a rare reference to learning in Old English poetry. "þæs-þe us secgaþ bec" (according to what the books tell us, 68b). And the poet returns, as Isaacs observes, to the point from which he began: "eard" (homeland), in Isaacs' view, gives meaning to "her." The lines are, concludes Isaacs, "tightly organized into a richly meaningful but singleminded poem,"[27] the aim of which is obviously to inspire patriotism. A poem with a companion painting would increase the likelihood of such a response. Therefore, the theory of a description of a pictorial inspiration similar to that in the passage from Vergil's Aeneid is justified, and it seems more probable than Isaacs' idea of a "tour-guide" giving a description of the actual battlefield. Because art was not unknown to the Anglo-Saxons, it seems more probable that there could have been an artistic commemoration of a battle as historically significant as

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[26]Pope, Poems, p. 61.

[27]Isaacs, p. 126.

Brunanburh admittedly was. Moreover, features of different forms of art, pictorial and the poetic, can demonstratively be fused, as Robert Browning later blended the same art forms in such dramatic monologues as "My Last Duchess" and as music and poetry became one in Cædmon's Hymn. Again, the poet succeeds in teaching unity in the guise of national pride and exemplifying it in artistic form.

The Dream of the Rood, like The Battle of Brunanburh, has a definite source of inspiration and, like Cædmon's Hymn, survives in a fairly standard form in which manuscript differences are relatively minor. Moreover, if The Battle of Brunanburh was inspired by a work of art as well as an historical event, then the two poems share another affinity. Much of The Dream of the Rood is also connected with a work of art, the runic inscription on the monumental cross at Ruthwell in Dumfriesshire, southwestern Scotland, according to Pope.[28] In addition, the fact that the poem is set in the imaginative framework of the dream-vision is by extension an artistic reproduction in which the mind and imagination, as well as the senses, are actively following events as they are recalled. The dream-vision framework has the added effect of giving unity to the poem by its very structure, and what might be regarded as fantasy in the use of the tree-speaker becomes acceptable to the doubting realist as a reflection of the irrational subconscious. Most important of all, the poem represents another curious but significant blending of the Christian and pagan traditions.

The dreamer-poet might be said to unify his audience through his conscious demands for active participation of their creative and imaginative abilities. Such vivid sensory perceptions as the dreamer recalls

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[28]Pope, Poems, p. 61.

deliberately activate the mind and perhaps the emotions. By frequent references to his own perceptions, the poet leads the audience to see and feel as well. Ostensibly, the dreamer wishes to activate his audience because he, like Cædmon (who was ordered to sing of creation), received the command:

> . . . þas gesihþe secge mannum;
> onwreoh wordum þæt hit is wuldres beam
> se-þe ælmihtig God on þrowode
> for mann-cynnes manigum synnum
> and Adames eald-gewyrhtum.
>
> (tell men of this vision; disclose by
> words that it is the cross of glory on which
> almighty God suffered for mankind's many sins
> and for Adam's deeds of old, 96-100).

In addition, the event the dreamer describes affected the whole world; "weop eall gesceaft" (all creation wept, 55b). The poet pictures both the cross and Christ as active participants in the passage which Rosemary Woolf calls a departure from the Scriptural account:[29] "ongierede hine þa geong Hæleþ" (the young Hero stripped himself, 39a); then "gestag he on gealgan heanne" (he mounted the high cross, 41b). The cross recalls its role: "ahof ic ricne Cyning,/ heofona Hlaford; hieldan me ne dorste" (I lifted up a powerful King, the Lord of heaven; I dared not bend down, 44b-45b). The account of the event, the poet seems to feel, also demands active response; he therefore manifests a kind of missionary zeal ostensibly to elicit a similar response in the minds of the audience. Passivity, he seems to say, is not exemplary conduct. That the emotions are the target of the poet is clear in the frequency of references to emotional responses which were ordinarily restrained, as shown in the discussion of The Battle of Brunanburh. Such references occur sporadi-

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[29]Rosemary Woolf, "Doctrinal Influences on The Dream of the Rood," Medium Ævum, 27 (1958), 145.

cally, but their frequency is noteworthy in the portion immediately before the cross-speaker begins its story. The poet contrasts the brilliance of the gold and jewels quite suddenly with the memory "þæt hit ærest ongann/ swætan on þa swiðran healfe" (that it first began to bleed from the right side, 19b-20a), and immediately the poet reacts: "Eall ic wæs mid sorgum gedrefed" (I was deeply troubled with sorrows, 20b), "forht ic wæs for þære fægeran gesihþe" (I was afraid because of the fair vision, 21a), and "beheold hreow-cearig" (beheld sorrowfully, 25a) the series of transformations as blood and jewels become one and as the suffering cross-speaker and Christ and the natural and supernatural are united. Similarly, the cross-speaker recalls: "Bifode ic þa me se Beorn ymbclypte" (I trembled when the Warrior embraced me, 42a) and "Sare ic wæs mid sorgum gedrefed" (Sorely I was troubled with sorrow, 59a) following the climactic moment of the Crucifixion. No attempt at restraint is evident in the unified reaction: "Hwæðre we þær greotende gode hwile/ stodon on staðole" (Nevertheless for a while we stood in position weeping, 70-71a) and "Stefn upp gewat/ hilde-rinca" (The cry of the warriors rose, 71b-72a). Greenfield notes an unusual feature which he believes contributes to the poem's "emotional pitch." Many of the verses of the poem, Greenfield observes, begin with active verbs;[30] the lines beginning with "weop" and "bifode" corroborate Greenfield's assertion and the theory that the poet aims to stir the audience to action.

The change in temperament reflected in the dreamer-poet's openly displaying emotions, in contrast to customary Old English restraint, represents a deliberate choice on the part of the poet to relate his heroic Christ to a pagan deity. Several incidents in The Dream of the

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[30]Greenfield, Critical History, p. 137.

Rood parallel events surrounding the life and death of Balder, the Norse god of innocence and piety. It is interesting to compare, for example, Munch's description of Balder to Christ. Balder, according to Munch, is "so bright and fair that light shines from his features; he is so wise, eloquent, gentle, and lenient, and righteous to such a degree that his judgments stand always unshaken."[31] Balder's home, Breidablik (meaning "which gleams far and wide") is perhaps subtly suggested in "wide and side" (far and wide, 81b). Also striking in similarity are the events following the death of Balder as the Dream poet ingeniously weaves them into his poem. "Weop eall gesceaft,/ cwiðdon Cyninges fiell" (All creation wept, lamented the King's fall, 55b-56a) recalls Hel's command, which stated, according to Munch, that "if all things on earth, be they quick or dead, will weep for him, then he shall return to the Æsir; but if there is one thing that will not weep, he shall remain with me."[32] The poet uses "stefn" (voice, 71b) probably to indicate the voices of all creation in unison, and later he proclaims: "and eall þeos mære gesceaft,/ gebiddaþ him to þissum beacne" (and all this glorious creation pray to him by this sign, 82b-83a), again implying a unity of response. Christ emerges more triumphant than Balder in the harrowing of Hell passage, however; Balder, because the perpetrator of his death (disguised as a giantess) refused to weep, was not permitted to return to his home.[33] In contrast, "se Sunu wæs sigor-fæst on þam siþ-fæte" (the Son was victorious in the expedition, 150). Here, the poet asserts the supremacy

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[31] Munch, p. 12.

[32] Ibid., p. 85.

[33] Ibid., p. 86.

of Christ, who not only returned but also "he mid menige com" (he came with many, 151b), who would share the joy of heaven with him.

Besides the references to emotional responses, there are a great many descriptive phrases, as in several examples of the contrasts of light and dark. For example, the vision came to the dreamer "to midre nihte" (at midnight, 2b) and was "leohte bewunden" (encircled by light, 5b). "Gold" and "gimmas," the most precious objects of creation, appear first in the seventh line and are repeated nine lines later, vaguely but theoretically connected with the Christian and pagan stories of creation discussed elsewhere in this chapter in the analysis of Cædmon's Hymn. Such objects of brilliance contrast with the sorrowful mood aroused in the speaker in subsequent lines and in the story of the cross itself. Such visual perceptions arise quite logically from the poet's variations that emphasize events as seen. Variations of "I saw" appear first in line 4 as "ic gesawe," and later "geseah ic" in lines 14 and 21 is repeated by the cross in line 33. "Ongietan meahte" (might be able to perceive, 18b) indicates a depth of vision, because "þurh þæt gold" (through the gold, 18a) the poet saw "earmra ær-gewinn" (the terrible former struggle, 19a). The speaker gives authenticity to his experience when he recalls "Dryhtnes rod/ þe ic her on eorðan ær sceawode" (the Lord's cross which I beheld here on earth before, 136b-137).

Variations are also numerous in the poet's epithets for Christ; "Dryhten," the most common, is repeated nine times, perhaps, again, for the nine-world theory of creation. "Frean" and "heofon-rices Weard," used in Cædmon's Hymn, are also repeated in Dream. In addition to the name Christ, which does not occur until the climactic and explicit statement, "Crist wæs on rode" (Christ was on the cross, 56b), and which is

used once more in line 116, there are three epithets that are predominantly Christian: "weoroda God" (God of hosts, 51b), "Bearn Godes" (Son of God, 83b) and "ælmihtig God" (almighty God), which occurs repeatedly. Several other epithets are used, and in each case, the epithet has a pagan connotation. A most significant blending is apparent in one line in which the poet makes clear that "þa geong Hæleþ--þæt wæs God ælmihtig" (the young Hero—that was almighty God, 39). It is possible that the Incarnation, the duality of God and man, is suggested in "of þæs Guman sidan" (from this Man's side, 49a). "Cyning" (King) is also used in three lines, and five lines refer to "Wealdend" (Ruler). Christ is also "Æðelinge" (Prince, 58a) "se Beorn" (the Warrior, 42a), "heofona Hlaford" (heaven's Lord, 45a), "mæran þeodne" (glorious prince, 69a), "wuldres Ealdor" (Lord of glory, 90b), and "Anwealda ælmihtig" (almighty Ruler, 153a). In his choice of epithets, the poet is obviously determined to emphasize the heroism, strength, and power of the leader in whose behalf he speaks, and his symbol of unity is the cross, which is itself acclaimed as a tree in seven epithets, representing a steady progression of meanings and perhaps describing the steps to perfection propounded by St. Augustine, before it becomes the "rod" (cross). Beginning "seldlicre treo" (a wonderful tree, 4b) and "beama beorhtost" (brightest of trees, 6a), the poet then elevates the tree to "wuldres treo" (tree of glory, 14b), "Wealdendes treo" (Ruler's tree, 17b), "Hælendes treo" (Saviour's tree, 25b), and finally to "wudu selesta" (the best of wood, 27b), honored "ofer holtwudu" (above the trees of the forest, 91a) as a symbol of unity.

It is highly significant that within the framework of The Dream of the Rood, the central portion of the poem is spoken by the tree, or cross, apparently a concession to the Norse concept of the center of the world.

The poet displays compromise in allotting the central part to the fundamental pagan notion and achieves remarkable balance in the design of the poem. The dreamer-poet's primarily expository introduction occupies twenty-seven lines, the central section comprising the cross-speaker's story and exhortation occupies more than ninety lines, and the conclusion, in which the dreamer-poet resumes the narration in thirty-four lines, concentrates on the Resurrection and the hope it offers for mankind. In an exemplary role, the poet resumes with the act of praying, to which the cross-speaker has motivated him: he would seem to indicate that he hopes for the same kind of immediate response which would impel his audience to go and do likewise. The image of the tree speaking undoubtedly exerted a most profound influence on the pagan, to whom, according to Cirlot, trees were "the most essential of traditional symbols" and "equivalent to a symbol of immortality." It also represents, in Cirlot's interpretation of Norse mythology, "the world-axis symbolism," or "the central point in the cosmos."[34] Having an inanimate object as speaker is also related to the riddle, a pagan poetic form, or to the rhetorical prosopopoeia, as Margaret Schlauch has proposed,[35] and its construction recalls such Homeric analogues as the fashioning of Achilles' shield or Ulysses' bed. To the Christian, the tree also has an important symbolism, as Cirlot explains, as the "Cross of Redemption" or "the Tree of Life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil."[36] In short, the poem synthesizes

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[34]Cirlot, p. 328.

[35]Margaret Schlauch, "The Dream of the Rood as Prosopopoeia," in Essential Articles for the Study of Old English Poetry, ed. by Jess B. Bessinger, Jr., and Stanley J. Kahrl (Hamden, Conn.: Archon Books, 1968), pp. 428-441.

[36]Cirlot, pp. 329-30.

numerous diverse elements in a beautifully structured recollection of a vision which has, as Pope accurately concludes, a remarkable depth and subtlety of understanding; Pope also acclaims "the art and imagination with which the speeches of dreamer and cross are invented, complexities of meaning and emotion are conveyed, order is maintained, and a significant progression is unfolded from beginning to end."[37] Pope, of course, voices the sentiments of numerous critics, who generally hail The Dream of the Rood as a significant poetic achievement. The delicate blending of Christian and pagan elements is an extraordinary display of tact by a Christian poet zealous for his cause but willing to compromise form and substance in order to convey his message in a work of great richness and beauty. Admittedly, much more detail could be included in an analysis of a poem having the depth and profundity of The Dream of the Rood. But enough has been said perhaps to indicate that the poem is genuine timeless art patently designed to proclaim the Christian message of a poet who, according to Eliot's theory, speaks only what he can say through imaginary characters and, it might be added, in a form largely borrowed from those whom he seeks to convert. It is homily without seeming homiletic, and its balance and dream-vision form exemplify the unity the poet aims to achieve.

Like The Dream of the Rood, The Wanderer, The Seafarer, and Deor are also homiletic, but the theory of their unity of structure has at times been challenged. Specifically, Pope's theory that there are "dramatic voices" in The Wanderer and The Seafarer, rather than the poet's imagined speakers suggested in Eliot's "three voices" or the device of ethopoeia, tends to segment the poems into definite parts, thus implying

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[37] Pope, Poems, p. 61.

a kind of disunity. In either case, the problem of structural unity in the poems is primarily dependent on the identities of the speakers.

The Wanderer, The Seafarer, and Deor can be appropriately studied as a group united by subject matter, because each deals with the exile theme, in which the speaker's contemplation of earthly hardships leads to wisdom and acceptance of divine order. Moreover, the three poems might be said to anticipate artistic and imaginative literary forms which were later to appear in English literature. Patterns of particular to general or general to particular contribute to the progression of thought in each poem, and, most important, the poems call for activity of the mind and imagination of the audience in a somewhat different way from that same demand in The Dream of the Rood. The most probable solutions to discovering unity in the poems are to regard both The Wanderer and The Seafarer as early forms of the interior monologue, in which the unifying framework is the human mind--whether wanderer or seafarer--and to conceive of Deor as anticipating the medieval morality plays, in which Deor is a sort of Everyman, who is also equally adept at portraying the personages representing the vices and virtues in his historical pageantry, a theory that is related to that of Norman E. Eliason, who views Deor in a role of beggar or court jester.[38] A very probable unifying technique, which Pope admits as a possibility but attempts to deny in his proposal of separate speakers in The Wanderer and The Seafarer,[39] is an explanation preceding the scop's recitation, as a modern poetry reader might make brief prefatory remarks before beginning his reading. Like the speaker

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[38]Norman E. Eliason, "Two Old English Scop Poems," Publications of the Modern Language Association, 81 (1966), 185-92.

[39]John C. Pope, "Dramatic Voices in The Wanderer and The Seafarer," in Old English Literature, ed. by Stevens and Mandel, p. 196.

in the prologue to Act I of William Shakespeare's Henry V, the Old English Wanderer or Seafarer might well have invited his audience to share in the creative presentation in which "imaginary forces work." The opening sections of the two poems perhaps resemble what Pope has identified as introductory prose remarks preceding the Edda.[40] Similarly, the audience of Deor, like that of Shakespeare, could have been reminded:

> For 'tis your thoughts that now must deck our kings,
> Carry them here and there; jumping o'er times,
> Turning the accomplishment of many years
> Into an hour-glass . . . .[41]

Deor's exempla do indeed jump over times because he draws from the historical past for his "grimm" or "god cyning," according to his dramatic needs.

The theory of a framework for the poems is confirmed in The Dream of the Rood, and both The Wanderer and The Seafarer also begin with what is generally recognized as an introductory segment. Both speakers use a conventional opening: "Swa cwæþ eard-stapa earfoða gemyndig" (So said the land-treader, mindful of his troubles, 6) is the Wanderer's identification of his role, and the Seafarer begins, "Mæg ic be me selfum soþ-giedd wrecan,/ siðas secgan" (May I recite a true song about myself, tell my experiences). To account for the changes within the poem, it seems reasonable that even before the conventional openings some prefatory explanation would have preceded both The Wanderer and The Seafarer. Both are developed by means of contrast; youth is contrasted with age, transience with permanence. Both are reflections of older persons who are the products of their multifarious experiences, and both achieve wisdom from these experiences. It is appropriate, therefore, to discuss the two

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[40] Pope, "Dramatic Voices," p. 196.

[41] Shakespeare Henry V Prologue I. 29-31.

poems by comparison of the introspective journeying of the minds of the speakers.[42] Because The Wanderer and The Seafarer have received much study already, as noted in the discussion of the exile theme,[43] this commentary will be limited to support for the theory that the poems are unified by means of the thoughts and sensory perceptions of one speaker, rather than of separate "dramatic voices," according to Pope's revival of an earlier interpretation,[44] and that what is termed an epilogue in each poem is merely a culmination of the speaker's moral truth derived from his experiences in a progression from particular to general, an objective and impersonal conclusion. That the mind of the speaker is clearly intended as a unifying focus is evident in the numerous references to the cares and activities of the minds of the Seafarer. In The Wanderer, for example, the "eard-stapa" (land-treader) is "earfoðа gemyndig" (mindful of troubles, 6b), but he must keep his

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[42]That the activity of the mind through fragments or reveries, such as those that characterize The Wanderer and The Seafarer, can create a sense of logic and order is the claim of Thomas C. Rumble, "From Eardstapa to Snottor on Mode: The Structural Principle of 'The Wanderer,'" Modern Language Quarterly, 19 (1958), 230. His theory is supported by James L. Rosier, "The Literal-Figurative Identity of The Wanderer," Publications of the Modern Language Association, 79 (1964), 366-69.

[43]Studies of The Wanderer and The Seafarer include those by Bernard F. Huppé, "The Wanderer: Theme and Structure," Journal of English and Germanic Philology, 42 (1943), 516-38; Stanley B. Greenfield, "The Wanderer: A Reconsideration of Theme and Structure," Journal of English and Germanic Philology, 50 (1951), 451-65; Stanley B. Greenfield, "Attitudes and Values in The Seafarer," Studies in Philology, 51 (1954), 15-20; Ralph W. V. Elliott, "The Wanderer's Conscience," English Studies, 39 (1958), 193-200; James E. Cross, "On the Allegory in The Seafarer--Illustrative Notes," Medium Ævum, 28 (1959), 104-106; Michael D. Cherniss, "The Meaning of The Seafarer, Lines 97-102," Modern Philology, 66 (1968), 146-49; and Stanley B. Greenfield, "Min, Sylf, and 'Dramatic Voices in The Wanderer and The Seafarer,'" Journal of English and Germanic Philology, 68 (1969), 212-20.

[44]Pope, Poems, p. 85.

"mod-sefan" (inmost thoughts, 10a) hidden, an idea emphasized in the variations "ferþ-locan" (spirit-enclosure, 13a) and "breost-cofan" (recesses of the breast, 18a). Concealing his thoughts makes him "werig-mod" (weary in spirit, 15a) and "dreorigne oft" (often dejected, 17b). The Wanderer also remarks on the depths of his thoughts or contemplations in "þynceþ him on mode" (it seems to him in his heart, 41a), "eall geondþence" (comtemplate all, 60b), and "deope geondþenceþ" (deeply contemplates, 89b), as he progresses to become a man "wise geþohte" (with wise thought, 88b) and finally "snottor on mode" (wise in his heart, 111a). Similarly, the Seafarer experiences "breost-ceare" (breast care or sorrow of heart, 4a) that lay "hat' ymb heortan" (hot near the heart, 11a) making him "earm-cearig" (miserably sad, 14a). As a youth "heortan geþohtas" (thoughts of the heart, 34a) urge him. For the Seafarer, too, sorrow is "bitre on breost-hord" (bitter in his breast-treasures, 55b), but he also is led to view the earthly life philosophically, to realize that "Dryhtnes dreamas" (the Lord's joys) are preferable. Therefore, if The Wanderer and The Seafarer seem disorganized because of disconnected thoughts that move from one experience to another, the explanation is that the poets are realistically portraying the disunity with which thoughts and memories journey through the mind without immediately perceptible order. The Wanderer, in fact, describes thoughts, which he says, "swimmaþ eft onweg," (afterward swim away, 53b), and the Seafarer illustrates how memories recall associations that lead to other associations and experiences: "Bearwas blostmum nimaþ, byrig fægriaþ,/ wangas wlitigiaþ; weorold onetteþ" (Groves burst into blossom, manors are made beautiful, meadows brighten; the world hastens on, 48-49). The mind, however, is finally able to create order and harmony through

wisdom that evolves from the experiences and observations. Gnomic lines, therefore, cannot be regarded as interpolations, because the moral of the remembered experience accompanies the experience itself. Wisdom is a result of the perceptions that have been connected with particular experiences, which both the Wanderer and the Seafarer can effectively apply to all mankind. This is also the conclusion of Alvin Lee, whose comment about the Wanderer is applicable to the Seafarer as well. He believes that the speaker's experiences lead him "through a kind of intellectual progress to the point where he sees his individual miseries and the disappearance of the dryht to which he once belonged as part of a wider, universal tragedy of all life in middle-earth."[45] In order to view the Seafarer's story as that of one speaker, it might be said that the "child is father of the man," and his thoughts as a man of wisdom must include those of the youthful seafarer as well.

The major discernible difference in the pattern of thoughts in The Wanderer and The Seafarer is the sustained elegiac mood throughout most of The Wanderer, a mood which contributes to the unity of the poem. Unlike the Seafarer, the speaker here does not have a restless spirit, but rather he seems to be an older man saddened by thoughts of approaching death. A reference to the Wanderer's age is implied in "frod on ferhþe feorr oft geman" (old in spirit often remembers long ago, 90) and also in "wintra dæl" (a share of winters, 65a). The Wanderer's euphemistic references to death would suggest that he is trying to avoid the reality of death as in the memory of his friend "hrusan heolstre bewrah" (covered by the darkness of earth, 23a) and in his contemplation of earls who "flett ofgeafon" (relinquished the floor, 61b). Perhaps

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[45]Alvin Lee, p. 138.

he is, as Christopher Dean theorizes, viewing a memorial to fallen warriors,[46] "weal wundrum heah, wyrmlicum fah" (a wondrously high wall decorated with likenesses of serpents, 98). However, it seems unlikely that he regards himself as guilt-ridden and without hope of salvation, as Alvin Lee[47] and others have concluded. Undoubtedly, the Wanderer does have regrets, but "ar" (mercy) at the beginning and at the end of his thoughts seems too optimistic to be the hope of a lost soul, and his references to patience, as in "Wita sceal geþyldig" (A wise man shall be patient, 65b), would seem to confirm his sense of acceptance of his condition.

Another contrast between the two poems is in the sensory perceptions experienced by the two exiles. The Wanderer's feelings of loneliness are intensified by cold and storm, as a previous chapter indicated. The Seafarer is also beset by the violence of storms, but natural images have the added effect of increasing his restlessness as the blossoms and meadows remind him of the mutability of earthly life. Such visual imagery is also complemented by that of sound, a characteristic scarcely noticeable in The Wanderer but similar to that in The Battle of Brunanburh. For example, sound imagery dominates this passage:

> þær ic ne gehierde butan hlimman sæ,
> is-cealdne wæg. Hwilum ielfete sang
> dyde ic me to gamene, ganotes hleoðor
> and hwilpan sweg fore hleahtor wera,
> mæw singende fore medu-drince.
> Stormas þær stan-clifu beoton, þær him stearn oncwæþ,
> isig-feðra; full oft þæt earn begeall . . . .
>
> (There I heard nothing except the sea roar, the ice-cold
> wave, sometimes the song of a swan, took for my

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[46] Christopher Dean, "Weal Wundrum Heah, Wyrmlicum Fah, and the Narrative Background of The Wanderer," Modern Philology, 63 (1965), 141-43.

[47] Alvin Lee, p. 140.

> entertainment the cry of the gannet and the sound of the curlew for the laughter of men, the singing gull for the drink of mead. There storms beat the rocky cliffs; there the tern, the icy-feathered one, answered them; very often the eagle screamed around, 18-24).

These recollections, along with the storm and cold, are particularly poignant memories of the youthful days of the Seafarer, memories which occupy only a minor portion of the poem. The older and wiser Seafarer retains the restlessness of youth in his wish that he "libbe mid englum/ awa to ealdre" (might live with the angels always in eternity, 78b-79a) or the restlessness of the soul of man for "hyht on heofonum."

The contrast between the eternity of heaven and the transitory earthly life is not only a basic scheme of unity but also the essence of the Christian teaching of the two poems. Even though the speakers' experiences differ, they do achieve wisdom, perhaps close to the state of perfection which St. Augustine taught in his seven steps to peace and tranquility. Their wisdom consists of a recognition that earthly life has both joy and sorrow and a resignation that leads them, like Deor, to accept divine will and strive for the eternal joy of heaven. The Wanderer's thoughts have subtly interspersed his wisdom throughout the poem. He refers to the controlling power of the universe as "Wyrd" or "Dryhten" as his epithets for the Supreme Being, to whom he gives the name "Fæder" only at the end of the poem. The Seafarer likewise uses "Dryhten" most often, but his use of such epithets begins late in the poem, line 43. Like the Wanderer, the Seafarer also uses more directly Christian epithets near the end: "Godes egesan" (awe of God, 101b) and "Halgan" (Holy one, 122b). Moreover, the Wanderer's dream fragment is most likely a reference to heaven where:

> þynceþ him on mode þæt he his mann-dryhten
> clyppe and cysse and on cneo lecge
> handa and heafod, swa he hwilum ær
> on gear-dagum gief-stoles breac.
>
> (it seems to him in his heart that he embraces
> and kisses his lord and lays his hands and head
> on his knee as he had in times before in former
> days enjoyed the ceremony of gift-giving, 41-44).

The Wanderer's dream is perhaps comparable to the Seafarer's hope that he "el-þeodigra eard gesece" (might seek a foreign country, 38), generally interpreted as meaning heaven.

A final feature of the structure of both poems rests in their hypermetric conclusions, which many critics interpret as somewhat disconnected epilogues or as Christian emendations. It seems more probable that each poet simply used the extremely practical rhetorical method of modifying his form in order to capture the undivided attention of the audience for his final profound message. Both the Wanderer and the Seafarer displayed such technique elsewhere in the poems. For example, common rhetorical structure is seen in the Wanderer's parallel constructions, such as "Her biþ feoh læne, her biþ freond læne,/ her biþ mann læne, her biþ mæg læne" (Here wealth will be transitory, here friends will be transitory, here man will be transitory, here maiden will be transitory, 108-109). And the Seafarer likewise comments solemnly that after death the body can "ne swete forswelgan ne sar gefelan/ ne hand onhreran ne mid hyge þencan" (neither taste sweetness, nor feel pain, nor stir a hand, nor contemplate by the mind, 95-96). Having shown their rhetorical expertise within the poems, the poets effectively varied their style for their moralistic endings by using the more prosaic hypermetric lines in accordance with the homiletic nature of their concluding thoughts. The speakers' minds ordered and unified their experiences and gave them meaning for all men.

The final consideration of this study of unity of structure and thought is perhaps the most interesting. Deor differs from the other poems discussed here because of its distinct unifying device, the refrain, and because of its stanzaic design. Deor is generally regarded as having features that place it in a class by itself. It is true that much mystery about its structure remains, but there is no doubt about its having a basic design in the use of exempla and an unusual blending of Christian and pagan forms.

Each of the divisions of Deor ends with the refrain: "Þæs ofereode; Þisses swa mæg" (That passed over; so may this). The refrain, according to Morton W. Bloomfield, can be likened to the pagan charm.[48] Yet the consolatory tone of the refrain gives it a relationship to an antiphon, or responsive reading. Perhaps the poet deliberately wished to suggest both, to unite two forms representing the diverse Christian and pagan elements. The pagan mind would recall the incantation of magic or pagan ritual, and the Christian would immediately associate the refrain with the responsorial antiphon. In the antiphonal context, the poet's choice of "mæg" is important; here it would likely be a supplication. Because the word is also used to mean "will," the poet further unifies by his choice of one word with two possible meanings. Moreover, it is possible that the poet hoped to unify his audience by making the refrain ritualistic and inviting them to join him at a given signal in the recitation after first uttering it with great solemnity. The poet would thus unify disparate elements in the predominantly Christian teaching of confidence in God's justice.

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[48]Morton W. Bloomfield, "The Form of Deor," in Old English Literature, ed. by Stevens and Mandel, p. 215.

Deor's constant focus is on misfortunes suffered by various legendary figures, whom he probably presents as a single performer who could change his role, according to Pope's admission, "by shifting his position or by change of tone after a pause."[49] From each misfortune Deor seems to ask his audience to relate such an occurrence to their own "weana dæl" (share of woes, 34b). Perhaps his intention is to make the audience realize that their own woes were less serious than they felt them to be. In his plausible theory about the poet's arrangement, Eliason asserts that the exempla are based on "the degree of misfortune and its remoteness." Analyzing the first two as grievous, the third as personal, and the fourth and fifth as less grievous, Eliason then concludes that the sixth could be expected to be neither grievous nor remote at all.[50] He sees Deor as displaying his talent either in a "beggar ruse" or as "a court jester."[51] Eliason is possibly right in concluding that Deor is dramatizing, but because Deor's refrain is so generalized, it seems unlikely that there is really any personal gain expected. The meaning of the refrain is objectified in a sense by the poet's use of the impersonal verb requiring the genitive, "þæs" and "þisses," to which no exact referent can be connected.

It might be said also that Deor is a contrast to the Wanderer and the Seafarer, who focus on personal experiences, though probably imaginary ones, while Deor draws from experience remote from him and his time. Even his seemingly personal experience prefaced by the conventional "ic be me selfum secgan wille" (I will tell about myself, 35) is probably not auto-

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[49] Pope, "Dramatic Voices," p. 196.

[50] Eliason, 187.

[51] Ibid., 188-190.

biographical, but more likely a fictitious characterization based on an ancient legend about a talented minstrel named Horant and changed to Heorrenda, as Pope explains.[52] Deor is undoubtedly a victim of misfortune, as he suggests everyone is, but he objectifies his woe by using a hypothetical situation as if he means, "Let us suppose that I am Deor." Since he has "jumped over times" and portrayed Weland and Ermanaric, as well as other sufferers, then his assuming the role of a displaced scop will come as no surprise to his audience. Consequently, the poem can be regarded as purely impersonal. Furthermore, Deor's variety of misfortunes is broad enough to touch the experiences of virtually everyone by implication. As Eliason has said, misfortunes in Deor are indeed general experiences, and Deor's consolation encompasses all.

Because misfortune is a general experience of all mankind, it should not be a cause for self-pity, as Deor pictures the basic human weakness:

> Siteþ sorg-cearig, sælum bedæled,
> on sefan sweorceþ, selfum þynceþ
> þæt sie ende-leas earfoða dæl . . .
>
> (The sorrowful one sits, deprived of joy,
> becomes gloomy in spirit, thinks to himself
> that his share of trouble may be endless, 28-30).

However, such self-pity is unwarranted, Deor continues, because

> witig Dryhten wendeþ geneahhe,
> eorle manigum are gesceawaþ,
> wislicne blæd, sumum weana dæl.
>
> (the wise Lord goes about frequently,
> to many a nobleman shows grace,
> a certain glory, to some a share of woe, 32-34).

The passage is not merely an interpolation, therefore, because it clearly links great figures of the past with a general human weakness of all time. Deor thus demonstrates a quality by which mankind is unified, and he

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[52] Pope, Poems, p. 96.

delineates the source of mankind's unity, "witig Dryhten," to whom all creation is subject and who finally exacts a balance of joy and woe. The consolation that Deor offers is that all will pass, that the world is transitory. Thus, Deor draws from each particular misfortune the general truth of the refrain, and, in doing so, he also unites past and present by showing that great figures of the past suffered as surely as those living in his time. He then quite naturally leads to his own condition, objectively drawn but showing effectively that he believes what he teaches. Both he and his audience might therefore share in a catharsis, as well as in the consolation.

Besides the unity achieved by the exempla and the refrain, Deor has another interesting feature, a sort of stanzaic arrangement, most often designated as strophic forms. As strophes, the divisions correspond to the irregular ode with its varying stanza and line length. Perhaps it is the Deor poet who deserves credit for initiating such a poetic form. Because of the varying stanza length, the puzzle about the divisions of the poem, particularly the sixth division, has been the source of much speculation. Some writers conclude that a portion of the sixth section is an interpolation, as discussed earlier, and that the section should begin with the personal reference in line 35. It seems quite likely, however, that the poet had in mind the steps to perfection of St. Augustine. In the Augustinian doctrine, the seventh step restored man to his original state of innocence and perfectibility. Since neither Deor nor his audience had attained the joy of such restoration, he would undoubtedly be careful to avoid such an implication. In fact, Deor would seem to imply that restoration comes only after ending the earthly transitory life; therefore, he apparently intends to illustrate man's condition

in the design of his poem. The medieval concern for the significance of numbers makes such an interpretation of Deor's intent defensible. There is probably a similar significance also in the numbers of lines in each of the divisions of the poem. Even with the uncertainty about the stanza lengths, there is clearly a continuity of meaning which emphasizes a basic unity of all people of all time, and unity achieved by the use of the refrain makes Deor a unique poem.

In Deor, then, the poet's use of actual historical persons creates a continuity with the past, an unusual kind of unity of time. Because its structural features--refrain and antiphonal form--most nearly resemble similar features in Cædmon's Hymn, it is appropriate to correlate the two poems as a conclusion to a study of structure and thought. The near refrain of the Hymn, "ece Dryhten," and the antiphonal response in Deor combine to teach the audience about the justice of the Eternal Lord, the whole object toward which the Old English poets apparently aimed.

The Old English poetic conventions were most often pagan borrowings fused with Christian ideas in such a way that they acquired deeper meanings representing unity in diversity. In many instances, it is clear that the poet willingly put aside his Christian vocabulary and readily absorbed the pagan terminology in his effort to create and demonstrate unity. The use of traditional poetic forms and legendary events reflects a similar spirit of compromise, and the poets' presentations in dramatic and imaginative situations were apparently designed to teach an awareness of the basic similarities among all people.

CONCLUSION

The present investigation has shown that there is a perceptible but not altogether obvious blending of Christian and pagan attitudes in both the content and forms of Old English poetry and that the works represent a compromise on the part of the Old English poets, whose constant aim was to achieve unity. Such compromise would seem to derive from a very practical kind of reasoning based on the realization that established practices and institutions simply cannot be destroyed and immediately replaced by radical innovations. Having generally abandoned their doctrinaire approach, the poets adopted a conciliatory attitude shown here in the development of themes common to the "Great Memory" of both Christian and pagan and in the use of forms associated with ancient beliefs and rituals. These themes and forms were assimilated into poetic works with great delicacy and ingenuity, especially in the poetic language.

The poets' skill, the language, and the ideals of the Old English period were illustrated in the development of the themes of home (closely related to the themes of exile and loyalty), of generosity and humility, and of the "beasts of battle" as symbolic of the three-fold nature of man--physical, mental, and spiritual. The theme of home throughout the six poems reflected the universal hope of mankind for permanence or immortality, while generosity and humility were presented as common codes of conduct to be emulated by both Christian and pagan. Apparently deliberate choices of the poets, these themes were universal and there-

fore had an appeal to Christian and pagan alike. Complementing the theme of exile as a basis upon which they could teach the Christian concept of eternal happiness under an unchanging Ruler, such themes gave the poets an opportunity to demonstrate that the hope offered by Christianity was superior to such pagan traditions as the comitatus, in which the ruling lord was changeable. As a final emphasis in each of the poems, the Christian message of hope serves as a resounding denial of the frequent allegation that Old English poetry is gloomy and pessimistic. Adamant in their efforts to teach the attainment of immortality, the poets challenged their audience by using connotative language requiring associations between their ancient traditions and the new way of life the poets espoused.

The subtleties of Old English poetic language and the poets' objectivity in their use of imaginary speakers to convey their messages demonstrated that the poets were indeed not "untutored or ungifted singers" uttering "immediate and spontaneous outpourings" to incapable audiences. Besides giving pleasure through the recognition of familiar-sounding words and phrases, poetic devices, though repetitious, were used consciously as effective means of emphasizing and extending meaning. Furthermore, the Old English poets, in accordance with Eliot's "three voices of poetry," apparently used speakers "saying something appropriate to the character, but something which the author could say for himself also."[1] The poet and speaker were speaking in unison, but the audience, captivated by the speaker's imaginative portrayal, was unaware of hear-

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[1]Eliot, p. 109.

ing the poet's view. The poet thus spoke with an impersonal and objective voice by means of which the audience could be led to espouse his teaching.

Certain formative influences—cultural, social, and religious—seem to have been instrumental in shaping the direction the poets took in consolidating their efforts toward the accomplishment of unity under Christianity. In addition to their primary motivation as missionaries, the discovery of likenesses among differences between Christian values and pagan cultural traditions, their religious training in Augustinian principles, and the recognition of the traditional power attributed to the poet apparently gave the Christian poets their sense of direction. In a period of turmoil and dissension, the need for solidarity undoubtedly increased the zeal of the poets, who could theoretically unite the people under Christianity and perhaps also promote a national spirit.

As has been noted earlier, the poets found it advantageous to transfer the concepts of social structure, of kings and subjects, lords and retainers, or kings as religious leaders to the Church's teaching of God as the Supreme Ruler and, by contrast, to emphasize the superiority of the eternal Lord. The expectation of material rewards for heroic action, as Hodgkin notes,[2] could also be transferred to the Christian teaching of spiritual rewards, culminating in perpetual joy in heaven. Thus the unknown was communicated by means of the known. Further aided by Augustinian teaching, the poets could also apply the theoretical "City of God" to the social structure. St. Augustine, as Etienne Gilson explains, saw a society or city as "a group of men united

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[2]Hodgkin, p. 461.

in the pursuit and love of common good."[3] Similarly, the Church as a society or city had the aim of leading the people to eternal happiness.

In their writing the poets faced the task of modifying their language to amalgamate the beauty and value to be found in pagan tradition with Christian doctrine. Since, as N. A. Lee writes, the monastic life "had a great shaping effect on literary production" because "it was impossible to live beneath the shadow of its yearly cycle and not be affected by it,"[4] the works would be expected to be didactic, or moralizing. But it is also important to realize that, as Wrenn points out, the Anglo-Saxon culture is characterized by a "strong ethical consciousness,"[5] another basis upon which to join common tendencies. It was thereby possible to moralize without offending the pagan sensibility when the poet was able to discover common values and a means of expressing them—through pagan kennings, for example.

Because traditional rhetorical theory propounded the aims of teaching, delighting, and persuading, the poet was permitted to use whatever method he found effective to entreat his audience to accept Christianity. According to St. Augustine's teaching, the Christian poet was justified in his use of pagan values because "every good and true Christian should understand that wherever he may find truth, it is his Lord's."[6] To exercise the mind by using deliberately obscure figurative "signs" was another of St. Augustine's teachings which the poet could

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[3]Etienne Henry Gilson, History of Christian Philosophy in the Middle Ages (New York: Random House, 1955), p. 79.

[4]N. A. Lee, "The Unity of 'The Dream of the Rood,'" Neophilologus 56 (1972), 472.

[5]Wrenn, p. 12.

[6]St. Augustine, p. 54.

assimilate with the pagan love of the mysterious exhibited most prominently in the riddle form, as it appears in the poet's use of the tree-speaker in The Dream of the Rood, for example. Poets who followed Augustine's doctrines consciously used metaphorical language and pagan forms even within the structure of such ostensibly religious poems as The Dream of the Rood, because these techniques supposedly elevated the mind toward God, causing it to experience a certain kind of pleasure through such elevation.

At various times there were obviously efforts on the part of religious leaders to ignore or to resist pagan traditional literature. Wrenn (and several other Old English critics as well) mentions Alcuin's rebuke to the monks at Lindisfarne for "listening to heroic lays such as that about Ingeld, accompanied by a harp, when they ought to be hearing in their refectory a reader declaiming sermons of the Fathers."[7] On an earlier occasion, however, Pope Gregory reflected a spirit of tolerance toward the literary tradition of the pagans in his assertion, according to Wardale, that "it is impossible to cut off everything at once from their rude natures."[8] Pope Gregory's wisdom, together with St. Augustine's liberal beliefs, seems to have prevailed eventually, though probably not without a great deal of trepidation among monastic leaders, who were doubtlessly disturbed by the traditional concept of the poet's power. Prior to the time of the pronouncements by Gregory and by Alcuin, St. Columba, as Ward writes, had recognized the "unusual power wielded by the poets" and had felt compelled to give warning about their capabilities to King Aed, who later sought to eliminate the entire profession of

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[7]Wrenn, p. 68.

[8]Wardale, p. 5.

poet-singers in Ireland.[9] Later English history, incidentally, has recorded similar condemnations of literary types—satire and drama, for example. Tracing the tradition of poet-singers in India as parallel to that of early Greek and Old Irish among the Indo-European cultures, Ward notes that "the poet-singer was treated with near divine reverence."[10] Elsewhere Ward claims that "since the songs were considered to be magical in their effect, it follows that the singer-poets were believed to be endowed with magical powers."[11] Monastic leaders, apparently cognizant and fearful that pagan literature might also become powerful enough to infiltrate and overwhelm the religiosity of monastery life, were understandably reluctant to concede that pagan literary forms might be incorporated into poetry designed for teaching Christian dogma.

The recognition that such a blending of the differing existing attitudes was the most efficacious means of attaining unity obviously resulted from the zeal and determination of the Christian writers to carry out their mission of converting the pagans, whose culture was also, according to Wrenn, related to religion.[12] Added to the desire for Christian unity was the need for an end to the strife and dissension among warring tribes during that time. A clear indication that national unity was also a dream of the age is evident in the writing of Bede, whose title, Historia Ecclesiastica Gentis Anglorum, according to Wrenn, "implies that he thought of the English (Angli) as one nation (gens)."[13]

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[9] Ward, 132.

[10] Ibid., p. 130.

[11] Ibid., p. 140.

[12] Wrenn, p. 10.

[13] Ibid., p. 64.

Unity was to come later to the English nation, and conceivably it could have resulted partly from the unrelenting efforts and persistent goal of the writers whose cause eventually elicited the support and leadership of rulers sympathetic to their aim.

The fact that unity is central in the design and purpose of the minor Old English poems is beyond question. Assimilation of Christian and pagan traditions is perfected to such a degree by the skilled makers that labels—"Christian," "heroic," or "a-Christian"[14]—are totally inaccurate. This study, then, has intended to present evidence of the beauty and value of these literary achievements, "not for an age but for all time." Not only do these works reveal poetic power, thematic depth, and technical skill, but also in their unified and hopeful message of immortality, they are themselves destined for immortality.

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[14]This designation is given by Morton W. Bloomfield in "Patristics and Old English Literature: Notes on Some Poems," Comparative Literature, 14 (1962), 36.

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