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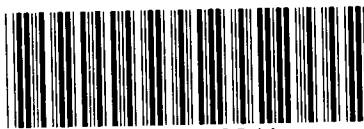
Quod Christus cum Hinieldo:
Readings in the Manuscript Context
of the Exeter Book

vedoucí práce: Doc. PhDr. Jan Čermák, CSc.

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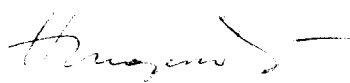Prohlašuji, že jsem disertační práci vykonala samostatně s využitím uvedených pramenů a literatury.

Děkuji doc. PhDr. Janu Čermákovi za metodické vedení mé práce, za jeho přátelské rady a zejména nevyčerpatelnou trpělivost.

Contents

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ASE	Anglo-Saxon England
ASNSL	Archiv für das Studium der neueren Sprachen und Literaturen
ASPR	Anglo-Saxon Poetic Records
Beo	*Beowulf*
Dream	*Dream of the Rood*
ES	English Studies
Fort	*The Fortunes of Men*
Gifts	*The Gifts of Men*
GRM	Germanisch-Romanische Monatsschrift
Guth	*Guthlac*
Husb	*The Husband's Message*
JEGP	Journal of English and Germanic Philology
Jul	*Juliana*
LSE	Leeds Studies in English
MÆ	Medium Ævum
Max I	*Maxims I* (The Exeter Book *Maxims*)
MLN	Modern Language Notes
MLR	Modern Language Review
MP	Modern Philology
MS	manuscript
N&Q	Notes and Queries
NM	Neuphilologische Mitteilungen
OE	Old English
Phoen	*The Phoenix*
PMLA	Publications of the Modern Language Association of America
PQ	Philological Quarterly
Prec	*Precepts*
RES	Review of English Studies
Sea	*The Seafarer*
SN	Studia Neophilologica
SP	Studies in Philology
TSLL	Texas Studies in Literature and Language
Vain	*Vainglory*
Wand	*The Wanderer*
Wid	*Widsið*
Wife	*The Wife's Lament*
Wulf	*Wulf and Eadwacer*

INTRODUCTION

THE problem I set out to tackle in this study is bound with what is perhaps the most intriguing paradox of Old English literary history. It is generally accepted that vernacular poetry depended for its preservation on the tolerance of the monastic environment that controlled the mechanisms of recording and transmission of texts. It is true that this monopoly was not absolute. Documents were also produced in centres associated with royal households, but these seem to have specialized in writings of administrative character and purpose: law-codes, charters, wills etc.; and even so, in many instances the task of recording such a text was likewise entrusted to monastic "professionals". Laymen could certainly own texts (as is clear from the anecdote narrated by Asser about young king Alfred and his love of vernacular poetry and the determined effort that had won him the book that belonged to his mother) and we know of rare cases when they composed them (again, we can name Alfred and in a later period, Ealdorman Æthelweard, founder of Cernel monastery and author of a Latin translation of *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*), though our knowledge does not extend to the manner in which these were written down. A document of substantial length, showing an indisputable degree of craftsmanship in the quality of script, use of decorative initials or even illuminations – which is the case of the poetic codices – can safely be identified as a product of a monastic scriptorium as an environment that cultivated such specialist skills and possessed the resources necessary for an enterprise of this kind.

Old English poetic codices: the paradoxes of recording

All extant major collections of Old English poetry were copied in the period from the second half of the 10th century to early 11th century and

their recording was thus contemporaneous with the progressive assertion in English monasteries of the ideology and practice of the Benedictine reform, a movement usually characterized by several concomitant traits. Firstly, the reformist ideas spread from continental centres and one of the ways in which the reformed monasteries in England showed allegiance to their sources of inspiration (such as Fleury or Ghent) was the preference for continental models over domestic, insular ones, visible, for example, in the adoption of Caroline script for documents in Latin. Secondly, the reform tended to foster an exclusive rather than inclusive outlook in relation to the rest of the society, which manifested itself in a definite distancing from secular concerns and values, encouraging an attitude of ascetic refusal of worldly joys. When the reformers addressed the lay society, this position was still evident in the precedence which they accorded, even in secular matters, to the authority of models afforded by Latinate and literary culture and the refusal of those found in the vernacular and oral tradition, as the former represented a virtually exclusive possession of clergy in general and the monastic community in particular.[1]

None of those attitudes seems very favourable to the idea that time and resources should be spent in recording vernacular poetry. Admittedly, the large bulk of such texts is perfectly orthodox in that they represent what could be termed, in Christian context, exemplary narratives: Codex Junius, written around the year 1000, contains the two versions of *Genesis, Exodus, Daniel* and *Christ and Satan*; the Vercelli Book, dated to the end of the 10th century, presents (apart from a prosaic *Life of St Guthlac* and a series of homilies) *Andreas, Fates of the Apostles, Soul and Body, The Dream of the Rood* and *Elene*. However, the two remaining collections can be seen as potentially problematic in this respect, as they

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[1] It has to be remembered, though, that the latter could be adopted as medium in instructing the laity, as shown by the extent to which the rhythmical prose of Ælfric's homilies draws on the formal features of native poetry.

comprise heterogeneous matter: the Nowell Codex, presumably written shortly before or after the year 1000, combines the prosaic *Passion of St Christopher, Wonders of the East* and *Letter of Alexander to Aristotle* with *Beowulf* and *Judith*, and the Exeter Book, the oldest of the four manuscripts, dated between 960 and 990, differs from the rest in that it contains, apart from longer religious poems such as *Christ I, II* and *III, Guthlac I* and *II*,[2] *Phoenix* and *Juliana*, an elsewhere unparalleled number of short texts of mixed character. *Beowulf* pursues a rather precarious course with the praise it accords to its brave and virtuous yet unquestionably pagan hero while clearly manifesting its allegiance to Christian world-view; *Wonders of the East* represent a catalogue of outlandish creatures and *Letter of Alexander to Aristotle* is concerned with the exploits and adventures of the famous (and likewise pagan) king and conqueror, the attention given to the exotic aspect of the matter linking the narrative with the previous item. In comparison with the volume of space that these pieces occupy in the Nowell Codex, the proportion of texts that give voice to perspectives and values that could be considered undesirable with regard to the aims of the monastic reform is rather small in the Exeter Book. This remains true whether that category is limited to items which are exclusively focused on lay matters (*Widsið* praising the generosity and martial prowess of legendary Germanic kings, the two women's love-laments, *Wulf and Eadwacer* and *The Wife's Lament*, the similarly oriented *Husband's Message* or the more down-to-earth or even erotic(!) riddles) or whether it is conceived in broader terms, as encompassing texts that merely incorporate secular values (e.g. *The Gifts of Men, The Fortunes of Men*, which make no distinction between spiritual gifts and skills appreciated in lay aristocratic society, or *Maxims I*, which devote a considerable space to qualities and patterns of behaviour appropriate in that environment). The majority of

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[2] This group also contains the mutilated remnant of *Azarias*, whose original length cannot be determined with assurance. It is likely, however, that it would not depart very far from the average in this section of the codex.

the shorter poems, on the other hand, conveys, in one way or another, important elements of Christian doctrine: *The Wanderer*, *The Seafarer*, the didactic *Precepts*, allegorical *Bestiary* poems or summary dramatizations of important events in salvation history (*The Descent into Hell*, *The Judgment Day*). The list is by no means exhaustive, as it is meant to illustrate the point rather than present a full account of the contents of the Exeter Book. However, in case of both the Nowell Codex and the Exeter Book the heterogeneity of perspective is but one aspect of the problem, the other being the heterogeneity of structure: why these texts and why in this – for a modern reader – surprising combination?

Existing readings of the "heterogeneous" codices

One common theme has long been recognized to connect the items assembled in the Nowell Codex: certain preoccupation with the monstrous, evident in the character of the gigantic (and in other – complete – Anglo-Saxon versions of the tale also dog-headed) St Christopher, the protagonist of the *Passion*, the inhabitants and fauna of the distant lands in the two following prosaic texts, the dragon and Grendelkin in *Beowulf* and, with some stretching of imagination, the savage, drunken Holofernes in *Judith*. Recently, Andy Orchard has revived this idea in his attempt to "harmonize" the contents of the collection – with regard both to the sequence of texts in the manuscript and to their acceptability in the context of a monastic scriptorium and library – by investigating the possibilities of a pronouncedly Christian reading of the "problematic pieces".[3] He first comments on various thematic affinities between individual texts[4] which he interprets as connected, in this

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[3] Orchard, Andy. *Pride and Prodigies: Studies in the Monsters of the Beowulf-Manuscript.* 2nd revised edition, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003.

[4] "Just as *Judith* and the *Passion of Saint Christopher* are connected by the theme of saintly forbearance overcoming regal arrogance, and the *Passion of Saint Christopher* and the *Wonders of the East* are connected by the figure of the half-human, half-monstrous *cynocephali*, so too the *Wonders of the East* and the *Letter of Alexander to Aristotle* are

manner, on the principle of apposition,[5] thus forming a loosely organized series. As a truly unifying, central subject, however, he sees the twin interest in "pride and prodigies" that characterizes all the items assembled in the manuscript. The particular combination of tales selected for the Nowell Codex provides the context for understanding Alexander and Beowulf as types of mighty pagan heroes who by their singular pursuit of glory (= pride) come dangerously close to becoming as monstrous as their inhuman (half-human) opponents, while on the other hand the original monstrosity of St Christopher is nullified, redeemed by his faith. Though he also supports his argument by the evidence of Anglo-Saxon exegetical tradition and other related material that could provide the background against which specific statements and passages from the ostensibly secular texts could be read, he views the manuscript context as in itself capable of reinforcing the elements in the Beowulf and Alexander tales that could suggest this interpretation, which would transform them into exemplary narratives fully compatible with the perspective of a Christian – and even reformist monastic – readership/audience. Although his effort to prove that the codex was built on principles that ensured both its coherence and acceptability in the monastic environment may be challenged on the grounds that such a reading unduly reduces the elements in *Beowulf* that appear hardly reconcilable with this negative view of its protagonist, it undoubtedly shows one possible direction in which the early 11th century recipients could proceed when construing the "meaning" of the poem.

No such investigation has been carried out for the Exeter Book as a whole, although the sequence of texts that it presents is equally

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linkedby the figure of Alexander the Great, a mighty pagan monster-slayer whose match is famously celebrated in *Beowulf*, which follows the *Letter* in the manuscript." Orchard 2003, 27.

[5] A term which Orchard borrows from Fred C. Robinson ('*Beowulf* and the Appositive Style. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1985) and applies somewhat freely to simple juxtaposition of texts sharing a common feature. Robinson's concept will be discussed at length in the section of this chapter devoted to the methodological background of my study.

heterogeneous both in structure and perspective. The various editions and commentaries usually display two approaches to this matter. One view leaves the problem unaddressed: the codex is perceived simply as an anthology of vernacular poems, mixing disparate items since the only principle that supposedly governed its organization was the coincidence of the immediate availability of individual texts or their groups;[6] and the reason why it was put together in the first place was the monks' respect for the poetry, which was presumably seen as worthy of recording for its own sake.[7] The second approach, which attempts to find a distinct logic in the ordering of the texts, regularly displaces the problem: either by limiting its efforts to the more "orthodox" parts of the collection and/or to some other sequences that promise a certain coherence, overlooking the places that cannot be so construed; or through resorting to a radically simplifying reading of individual poems which stresses their conformity with the proposed structuring principle. The former course may be exemplified by the observations on the subject of editorial arrangement or modification of the material assembled in the codex which Bernard J. Muir

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[6] Kenneth Sisam, who presupposes two stages in the production of the Exeter Book: gradual compilation and subsequent transcription of the exemplar thus prepared (Sisam, Kenneth. *Studies in the History of Old English Literature.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1953, 97). This notion explains the existence of smaller consistent units – the *Bestiary* poems, two groups of riddles – as well as the separation of poems that apparently fit together, such as *The Gifts of Men* and *The Fortunes of Men*). Modified versions of this opinion are given in Dunning and Bliss (anthology compiled and simultaneously copied during an extended period of time; cf. *The Wanderer*, eds. T. P. Dunning and Allan J. Bliss, London: Methuen, repr. 1975, 4) and Klinck (scribe working from material prepared by a compiler in smaller units as the material kept coming; Klinck, Anne. *The Old English Elegies: A Critical Edition and Genre Study.* London: McGill/Queen's University Press, 1992, 23)

[7] George Hardin Brown thus sees the paradoxical situation mentioned in the initial paragraph of this chapter as an indication that the English monastic reform pursued a course that differed from its continental model precisely in the attention that it devoted to vernacular literature, which it carefully preserved and cultivated (Brown, George H. "The Anglo-Saxon Monastic Revival" in *Renaissances Before Renaissance: Cultural Revivals of Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages.* Warren Treadgold, ed. Stanford: Stanford University Press 1984, 111-112). Klinck presumes that the poems recorded in the codex were regarded by the compiler as "edifying or instructive in the very broadest sense" (Klinck 1992, 25).

advanced in his 1994 edition of the Exeter Book (the latest to date).[8] He argues that the eight religious poems placed at the beginning of the collection form a thematically related unit, as they offer "different models for Christian living" – thus "explaining" a group that nobody has perceived as problematic;[9] likewise his proposals that the second riddle group was added to form, with the first, a full century,[10] or that the sequence of poems from *The Judgment Day I* to *The Homiletic Fragment II* is "concerned with the aspects of the Easter liturgical season"[11] tend to aim at the easier targets that present themselves in this context. The most ambitious representative of the latter course is Patrick W. Conner's reading that associates individual groups of poems with different "movements" in Anglo-Saxon literary history: the sequence from *Azarias* to *Partridge* and the more secular poems in the remaining part of the codex supposedly showing affinity with genres and forms practised at the court of Charlemagne, the rest being a product of the literary tastes cultivated by the monastic reform. His hypothesis will be treated at length in the first chapter of part III of this study; at the present moment, let it suffice to say that it can only be maintained by severely reducing the specificity of the poems thus classified.

Objectives of the present analysis

In its own manner – rather more cautious – this study tries to provide for the Exeter Book what Andy Orchard has provided for the Nowell Codex: a principle on which such an apparently rambling sequence of texts could be built and an interpretative strategy that could make the more "worldly-minded" poems acceptable for the monastic environment that produced the codex. However, I do not propose, as he does, to discover a single

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[8] Muir, Bernard J., ed. *The Exeter Anthology of Old English Vol.2 : Commentary.* Exeter: Exeter University Press, 1994.

[9] Muir 1994, 23-25.

[10] Muir 1994, 25.

[11] Muir 1994, 26.

governing theme in the collection; I believe that this is an impossible task in the case of the Exeter Book and I remain partly sceptical of his unifying view of the Nowell Codex as well. What I consider possible, however, is a situation in which mutual relationships among individual poems influence the reading of the problematic pieces in such a way as to diminish their disruptive potential.

Theoretical background I: the structuring of the collection

My consideration of the first aspect of the problem - the organization of the material assembled in the codex - has been informed by concepts introduced and elaborated in Anglo-Saxon studies over the past twenty years. These develop general strategies of reading which are derived from the analysis of the form of Old English poetry (as characterized, for example, by parataxis and variation) or its mode of being (textuality influenced by residues of practices associated with oral transmission). Such features are perceived as productive of a radical semantic openness of the poetic text.

The seminal work that posed a typical element of Old English poetic language as a compositional principle employed on all levels of the text was Fred C. Robinson's 1985 analysis of *Beowulf*, which introduced the concept of "**apposition**". It was motivated by an attempt to resolve a very specific issue: the poem's intermingling of Christian and - as has been claimed - pagan elements. Although there are endless controversies concerning the precise date of its composition, the 8th century and the period of the continental mission still manage to win a certain preference.[12] If that dating were correct, it is likely that the author of the

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[12] This is based partly on linguistic evidence (interpretable, however, as pointing either to 8th or 7th century as the date and Mercia or Northumbria as the place of the origin of the poem, respectively) and partly on the relatively prominent place assigned in the narrative to Offa the Angle, ancestor-founder of the Mercian royal family. His namesake, Offa II, ruled in 757-796.

poem would have had a more benevolent attitude towards his heroes than that which can be supposed to be held by the editors of the Nowell Codex. Still, he would not be able – and most probably not even willing – to avoid the imperatives of orthodoxy. The poem thus had to accomodate two conflicting attitudes in the somewhat risky job of presenting the pagan Germanic warriors as worthy of admiration while recognizing the inevitability of their damnation. It was this situation, as Robinson maintains, that led to the development of an appropriate "appositive" style. In coining this term, Robinson has expanded on the basic characteristic of the grammatical category of "appositive": the fact that it connects two elements (nouns, noun substitutes or clauses, representing different aspects of their common referent) exclusively on the basis of their syntactical correspondence and leaves the semantic implications of such an association indetermined.[13] On a higher level, this same principle may operate in the linking of larger narrative segments, establishing, for example, unexpressed comparison of scenes and characters (e.g. Beowulf and Sigemund as monster-slayers). Focusing on this quality of semantic openness, he then extends the term "apposition" to cover phenomena that could perhaps better be perceived as based on a simple juxtaposition: in compounds, it is the syntactical (and only consequently also logical) relationship of the two elements that is left unstated,[14] while syllepsis presents simultaneously two meanings (references) of a polysemous word. Using all the above mentioned techniques, the poem can place two views,

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[13] To illustrate his point, he "disambiguates" one such instance of apposition into a hypotactic construction: "'Nealles him on heape / handgesteallan // æðelinga bearn / ymbe gestodon' (2596-97) 'The comrades, the sons of noblemen, did not stand by him together at all.' Only so much is overtly stated about the cowardly retainers who abandoned Beowulf in his time of need. But implicit are the logical relationships amnong the apposed elements: 'Although sons of noblemen and thus especially obliged to stand firm at the hand of the leader, they did not stand together by him at all." (Robinson 1985, 4).

[14] Robinson 1985, 14-16. One of the examples he gives is "leodbealu" – "evil from / on the people" (Beo 1722a, 1946a), where he sees the "leod" as – respectively – a subjective-genitive and objective-genitive in relation to the "bealu".

two interpretations of a single word, scene, action or motif next to each other without making their relationship explicit. To illustrate this principle, we can quote the juxtaposition of the two versions of Grendel's pedigree (representing, in fact, two cultural perspectives) in *Beowulf*.[15] As Robinson shows, the appositive style that he proposes is really an extension of the technique of variation, one of the most prominent features of the native poetic style which is based precisely on the apposition of words and phrases. The potential for this specific development was therefore always present in Old English poetry and it is very likely that *Beowulf* was not the only work that made use of it.

Gillian R. Overing pursued a more broadly defined goal when she described Old English poetry as essentially based on the principle of **metonymy**. She used the term in the sense developed by Roman Jakobson,[16] referring to the mode in which individual elements in a text are related through contiguity – "association and proximity", in contrast to the metaphorical mode which prefers relations based on analogy and equivalence. Initially, Overing employed the concept to explain what struck her as a certain paradox in the impression that Old English poetry produced in reading: that despite its highly conventional language it could still be perceived as "evocative and immediate".[17] Strangely enough, though she concentrated essentially on the same aspect of the poetic language that had been noted by Robinson,[18] she ascribed to it a virtually opposite effect: in her opinion, the juxtaposition of self-contained units did

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[15] For the Danes, Grendel is a fatherless monster of unknown origin; the apellations used in this context, as Robinson notes, are "terms from pagan Germanic demonology" (p. 31) such as *þyrs* (giant), *scucca* (demon) or *scinna* (evil spirit). The narrator presents him as one of Cain's progeny.

[16] Jakobson, Roman. "The Metaphoric and Metonymic Poles" in *Selected Writings II*. The Hague: Mouton 1971, 254-259; Jakobson, Roman. "Two Aspects of Language and Two Types of Aphasic Disturbances" in *Fundamentals of Language*. Roman Jakobson, M. Halle, eds. The Hague: Mouton 1956, 55-82.

[17] Overing, Gillian R. "Some Aspects of Metonymy in Old English Poetry". *Concerning Poetry*, 19 (1986), 1-19.

[18] Visible, for instance, in variation and the construction of compounds.

not invite the reader to construe their semantic relationship, to interpret it, but, on the contrary, arrested this process, thus invoking a more spontaneous reaction unburdened by analytical thought. She commented on the relative frequency of cases when the half-line represents a condensed "information capsule" confronted with other similar units to present various distinct aspects of a single action or situation,[19] and saw it as analogous to Jakobson's idea of metonymic digression. As she understands it, this technique makes the text "realistic" in the sense that the contiguous series of images corresponds to the composite and disordered way in which reality itself is apprehended. In a later modification of this theory,[20] however, she becomes less concerned with the vividness produced by such ordering of the text and emphasizes instead its more fundamental effect – the semantic openness that defies interpretative closure, which she foregrounds as the most important characteristic of Old English poetry.

The formal features of Old English poetic language are likewise important for the approach which maintains that the vernacular poetry demands a mode of reading adjusted to its mode of existence: its presumed original functioning in a culture based on an oral transmission of information and tradition and its subsequent transplantation (but not complete assimilation) into a partly established and partly emergent culture relying

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[19] She illustrates her point, among other texts, on the famous passage in *Beowulf* 210-229 depicting the voyage of the hero and his companions from Geatland to Denmark, where the boat is consecutively referred to as *"flota"*, *"wudu bundenne"*, *"wundenstefna"* etc., representing, alternatively, its function, construction and appearance. More specifically, she analyses verses 217-218: *"Gewat ofer wægholm / winde gefysed // flota famigheals / fugle gelicost"*, using Kevin Crossley-Holland's literal gloss – "Went then over wave-sea by wind hastened floater foamy-necked to bird most like" – to show that each half-line represents a self-contained image, a discrete element in the evocation of the scene.

[20] Overing, Gillian R. *Language, Sign and Gender in 'Beowulf'*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1990.

primarily on written documents.[21] The various consequences of this position of the poetry in the transitional stage between full orality and full literacy have been investigated, among others, by A.N. Doane, Katherine O'Brien O'Keefe (the nature of the scribe's engagement with his or her material, the reception of the text) and Ursula Schaefer (introduction of a narrator persona and its limitations).[22] The most relevant for my study is the perspective adopted by Carol Braun Pasternack in her monograph published in 1995,[23] where she concentrates on two interrelated aspects of that situation: she examines the extent to which the tools developed for organizing the composition of a poem (or, strictly speaking, performance) in the conditions of orality were retained in the literary context and explores the ways in which this influences the construction of meaning of texts built in such a manner; she likewise questions the status of the text and its bearing on the interpretative process. Pasternack perceives the Old English poem as an open structure, consisting of discrete movements delimited by aural and semantic signals ("patterns of sound and sense" which she analyses in the individual chapters) that are integrated into a specific sequence understood and marked as a unit[24] while retaining a relatively high degree of independence within that whole. In the second chapter, designed to provide a complex illustration of her hypothesis, she recalls the history of interpretation of *The Wanderer*, claiming that the rifts

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[21] I use "established" to refer, in this context, to the importance of text in the religious environment; "emergent" should be taken as marking the difference between mediaeval and modern literacy, concerning such issues as the status of a text, the concept of an author etc.

[22] Doane, A. N. "Oral Texts, Intertexts, and Intratexts: Editing Old English" in *Influence and Intertextuality in Literary History*. Jay Clayton and Eric Rothestein, eds. Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 1991, 75-113; O'Keefe, Katherine O'Brien. *Visible Song: Transitional Literacy in Old English Verse*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990; Schaefer, Ursula. "Hearing from books: the rise of fictionality in old English poetry" in *Vox Intexta: Orality and Textuality in the Middle Ages*. A. N. Doane and Carol Braun Pasternack, eds. Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1991, 117-136.

[23] Pasternack, Carol B. *The Textuality of Old English Poetry*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995, 117-136.

[24] In the manuscript presentation, this usually means a large decorative initial at the beginning and a string of punctuation marks at the end.

which early scholars detected in the text and which they saw as evidence of editorial meddling with the genuine poem are, in fact, a general property of Old English poetry and integral to the text; she then proceeds to examine the distinct thematic, syntactical and rhetorical characteristics of individual passages within the poem which identify them as separate units – movements. She regards this manner of composition as a heritage of the oral tradition, since it could facilitate improvisation, and suggests that we could envisage the recorded text as representing one particular alternative among a number of possible arrangements. She recognizes both Robinson's apposition and Overing's metonymy as valid concepts reflecting, in a greater or lesser degree, the semantic openness of such a structure, in which the movements are linked only through their mutual combination and (in some cases) by verbal echoes. However, she prefers to describe it, in terms introduced by Mikhail Bakhtin and developed by Julia Kristeva,[25] as a "**dialogical**" or polyphonic composition, which builds on the principle of distance, relationship and analogy between individual elements, following the logic of "becoming", whereas a monological composition operates with the concepts of continuity, substance and causality (the logic of "being").[26] Not only does this reticence as regards the precise nature of the connection between the movements permit various interpretations of the unit formed by their combination;[27] their relative independence also makes it easier for them to enter into different intertextual as well as intratextual relations. Pasternack thus proposes a number of possible texts and contexts that could have been brought to bear on the reading of verses 80b-84 of *The Wanderer* which list the fates of

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[25] Kristeva, Julia. "Word, Dialogue and Novel" in *The Kristeva Reader*. Toril Moi, ed. Oxford: Blackwell, 1986, 34-62.

[26] Kristeva 1986, 42.

[27] This is amply attested by the range of readings suggested for *The Wanderer*: a dialogue between the personae identified as *"eardstapa"* (wanderer) and *"snottor on mode"* (man wise in spirit); a narrative of the spiritual progress of a single speaker from the former to the latter; the alternative possibilities being further complicated by the introduction of a narrator persona at various points of the poem.

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the bodies of slain retainers, ranging from battle scenes in narrative poems through similarly structured lists of disasters and, on the other hand, achievements in pieces such as *The Fortunes of Men* and *The Gifts of Men* to homiletic texts on the Resurrection.

Like the majority of the proponents of the view that Old English poetry existed in a space between orality and literacy, partaking of the features of both, Pasternack presumes that the status of the copies of vernacular poems differed substantially both from that of (contemporaneous) texts of "canonical" nature (biblical and patristic writings) and from that which a particular work assumed in modern literary culture (prior to the challenges posed by poststructuralist theory). She speaks in this respect of the "inscribed" character of the verse and claims that in dealing with Old English poems we must dispense with such notions as a single authoritative version of a text, faithfully preserved or irrevocably corrupted by the scribe who wrote it down.[28] Instead, we should understand each recording of a poem as a new performance[29] whose significance is defined, to a considerable extent, by its immediate context: the positioning of the item in the manuscript, its combination with other texts, both particular (relation to the poems placed in its proximity) and general (the overall thematic / generic make-up of the collection).[30] In a way, we could view the presentation of texts in a manuscript collection as following, on a higher level, the same principle which Pasternack sees at work within individual poems.

On the background provided by these theories, I will argue that the apparent lack of structuring in the Exeter Book is due to the absence of a "vertical", hierarchical organization (with the partial exception of the

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[28] An issue which is often at stake in the cases when a poem has been preserved in more than one version, e.g. *Daniel* in Codex Junius and *Azarias* in the Exeter Book or the Vercelli Book and the Exeter Book *Soul and Body*.

[29] Pasternack 1995, 14-18.

[30] Pasternack 1995, 175-177.

initial positioning of the longer religious texts discussed as evidence for editorial planning by Muir). Instead, a basis for an alternative "horizontal" organization of the collection could be supplied by precisely those principles of composition and reading which are reflected, in one way or another, in all the previously described concepts. Their firm grounding in the fundamental characteristics of Old English poetry makes it possible to assume that they could be applied for such a purpose in a compilation of vernacular poetic texts. At the same time, I propose that this dialogical structure could be subjected to an interpretative closure performed from the ideological positions predominant in the environment that produced the codex, a closure which would be inconceivable if individual texts recorded in the Exeter Book were read separately.

Theoretical background II: interpreting the dissonant voices

The second aspect of the problem treated in this study – the coexistence in the Exeter Book of texts that present differing and, in some cases, almost mutually exclusive values and perspectives – is related to questions concerning Old English poetry in general, with respect to the fact that it is characterized by the interaction of two distinct "streams", which could be identified, with an inevitable degree of simplification, as "heroic" and "religious" respectively. In this initial stage, it appears necessary to signal the provisionality of those categories by quotation marks and have recourse to such a deliberately neutral (and vague) term as "stream" in place of others that I will be using subsequently and whose application has now to be defined: order, tradition and discourse.

Order, or, more precisely, the order of the world as present in the heroic/religious poetry is the most comprehensive term. It comes close to the notion of cultural codes, the primary grids or matrices which govern the way in which the members of a given culture perceive, conceptualize and represent the world of empirical phenomena in which they live, as

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used by Foucault in the preface to *The Order of Things* (*Les Mots et les choses*). [31] The lived reality is seen as reflecting a universal order by which it is governed and as such it is also presented in literature (and, obviously, not only there). In this sense, the heroic or religious poetry is seen at once as conditioned by and perpetuating these codes.

The term tradition is more specific, since it is used to refer to the established practice of a literary formation (a provisional term designed to reflect a broader concept than the relatively limited genre) and its conventions, such as typical imagery etc. It is inseparably linked to order in the sense defined above in that it represents the actual, concrete realization of the principles used in describing the world.

Discourse, as a term advanced by Michel Foucault[32] and especially as adopted by New Historicism, is bound up with issues of power: the set of statements that is discourse is governed by a system of relations (setting up rules that are at once inherent to it and that form its limit) which determines what will qualify as an object about which one can speak, what can be said about it and by whom. It enters into a reciprocal relationship with specific social institutions (such as, in case of Anglo-Saxon England, the monastic library and scriptorium or the court and the aristocratic household); it informs their functioning and is, in turn, informed by them, as some statements are preferred over others shaped according to the same rules. Discourse will therefore be the term preferred in the situations in which I refer to the (heroic or religious) poetry as assuming a position of authority in a particular social and historical context.

Structure of the study

The order of the world as it is construed in Old English poetry and the series of dichotomic images into which it is condensed form the main

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[31] Foucault, Michel. *The Order of Things*. London: Tavistock, 1970, xx-xxi.

[32] Foucault, Michel. *The Archaeology of Knowledge*. A.M. Sheridan Smith, trans. New York: Pantheon, 1972.

themes of the first of the two preliminary queries presented in part I of my study, designed to provide the necessary basis for the subsequent argument and place the Exeter Book in its historical context. In this chapter (*Heroic poetic tradition and the influence of Christianity*) I also discuss the related problem of reconstructing the codes of the "heroic culture" from material that functioned in a different social situation and was processed by the environment that controlled the transmission of texts – primarily religious institutions whose concerns and interests cannot simply be deducted from the literature thus preserved. Finally, I outline the possibilities of interaction between the Christian perspective of the world and the heroic poetic tradition in the context of Old English literature as a whole.

The second chapter of part I (*The manuscript and its historical background*) first summarizes the recent theories concerning the origin of the codex based on palaeographical and codicological analysis and comparison with other manuscripts written in a similar script. My investigation into the ways in which the individual texts assembled in the collection could be related one to another and thus form a dialogically structured unit is conditioned, to a large extent, by a radical reassessment of the structure of the codex which, as the examination of the script suggests, represents a result of a particular arrangement of three original booklets, written in a different order than that in which they appear in the extant collection. The latter part of this chapter presents an outline of the general ideology and political ambitions and affiliances of the English monastic reform as well as its modifications which could emerge as a result both of the existence of internal divisions within the movement and of the cooperation of individual houses with secular benefactors. This serves to sketch the range of possible influences on the production of Exeter Book which, according to its dating established by the means

identified above, has to be read against the background of this complex historical situation.

Part II of my study is devoted to analysis of individual poems that do not agree with the predominantly religious orientation of the collection and that could be perceived as representing an alternative value system and perpective of the world which the monastic environment (given the relative radicalization of its views in the reform period) would not be likely to tolerate. I will demonstrate that in some cases such apparently subversive voices could be integrated into the religious "mainstream" within the Exeter Book, as they could be related to a precedent in the literary tradition which the reformers respected as uncontested authority (*Maxims I*, riddles). On the other hand, I will question the validity of existing proposals for allegorical or, in a more general sense, religious reading of such texts as *The Wife's Lament* and *The Husband's Message*, arguing for their irreducibility to such a pattern. Both these poems view the world in terms established in the heroic poetic tradition; however, there remains a group of texts which resist – through ambiguity of meaning or internal discrepancies – a unifying interpretation and whose position is complicated with respect to both major discourses. Such items are given special attention in the analysis. The conclusions that I reach in the second part of the present consideration confirm the existence of dissenting voices in the Exeter Book which cannot be subdued if the poems are read separately.

This fact represents the initial impulse for the investigation into the possibilities of interaction between individual texts in the collection – the theme of the third, most extensive part of my study. Nevertheless, its purpose is much broader than that of suggesting possible modulating influences on such problematic items, though these are duly registered; I propose to discuss the role of such an interaction in the structuring of the collection as a whole.

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In the first chapter of part III (*Existing propositions*) I examine in detail the previously advanced hypotheses concerning the editorial or scribal organization of material assembled in the codex: grouping of presumably related items signalled by the differences in graphic design employed in the presentation of individual poems or their sequences and the ordering of texts according to their literary-historical affiliations.

The second chapter (*Mapping the field*) outlines my theory of a linear structuring of the collection, proceeding gradually over a period of time, which accounts for the apparent disjoining of some generically related items (e.g. the natural allegories – *The Phoenix* and the *Bestiary* poems) yet presumes a relatively strict editorial control over the choice of texts eligible for augmenting the emerging collection as well as in the positioning of individual poems within a specific sequence. I argue that poems and their groups could be attached to the existing portion of the "work in progress" on the basis of intertextual links (thematic or generic affinity, shared use of a prominent motif etc.). The chief methodological problem connected with the analysis of such links arises from their necessarily retrospective reconstruction from the finished whole, whereas the editor or scribe would have to work at any given time with two sets of material: the exemplar and the finished part of the final collection. Thus it is extremely difficult to assess the degree of prominence required for the activation of such a link in the production of the Exeter Book.

In chapter 3 I therefore limit my analysis to the most conspicuous links functioning on thematic or formal basis. Various types of linking based on the sharing of motives and their influence on the reading of poems thus related are then examined in chapter 4 and 6 while chapter 5 concentrates on special cases of direct juxtaposition of two poems in the manuscript, apparently unrelated but interconnected through shared imagery and/or formal and structural parallels. The fourth chapter is devoted to the documentation and interpretation of instances in which a

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motif reappears in two or more texts; this can have the form of a simple repetition or variation, in which the motif is slightly modified in its several occurrences. The choice of examples is limited to motives that are, for various reasons, highly noticeable in the respective texts: they hold a prominent position by virtue of the space assigned to them in the poem or of their function in its structuring; their detailed development also often transcends the requirements of the general argument of which they are a part. The sixth chapter discusses the relations between texts based on their development or variation of one of the central images established in the heroic poetic tradition as identified in the first part of my study. In chapters 3 to 6 of part III I limit my investigation to links which can be detected within the respective booklets later combined to form the present Exeter Book.

However, many intertextual relations of the type treated in the fourth and sixth chapter operate accross the boundaries of these proposed booklets. In the seventh chapter (*Further samples*) I examine several instances of such binding and suggest an explanation that partly modifies the theory of the tripartite origin of the codex, presuming a greater degree of continuity between the individual parts of the collection.

The last chapter in part III of my study (*The Exeter Book: an open structure*) then considers the ways in which the presence of intertextual links may influence the reading of the Exeter Book. The most important effect is the transformation of the sequence of separate statements into a continuous polyphonic structure, in which the individual voices combine and comment on one another. The semantic openness of such an organization then permits, as one of the possibilities of interpretation, a reading that can partially downtone and control the disruptive potential of the poems identified in the second part of this study.

The chapter that concludes the study (*Exeter Book: the dialogue*) discusses the problem of acceptability of such a loose ordering in the

enviroment that produced the codex, which generally relied on much more explicit means of "bracketing" problematic information. Since this structuring principle is firmly founded in the character of Old English poetic language in general, it could presumably also be applied for the organization of a collection of vernacular poetry, especially as the reform movement tended to apply different standards on documents in Latin and in Old English. The final consideration attempts to identify the basic positions in the Exeter Book dialogue, distinguishing between monastic and secular perspective represented in the collection. Here I return back to the initial survey of the ways in which the religious poetry approached the precious yet also dangerous legacy of the heroic poetic tradition which it appropriated for its own purposes as I examine the strategies of distancing from that tradition which can be seen to operate in the collection. Such strategies could effectively ensure the dominance of the monastic position in the dialogue, even though they would not cancel the polyphonic character of the structure of the collection.

PART I.
PRELIMINARY QUERIES

1. HEROIC POETIC TRADITION AND THE INFLUENCE OF CHRISTIANITY

THE type of questions posed in this study requires a preliminary discussion of representations of the world in Old English poetry, that is, of the manner in which the action or utterance presented in individual poems is grounded in a common space – the world as organized according to a symbolic topography implied in the texts that belong to the "heroic" poetic tradition – a highly stylized, literary reflection of the *comitatus* culture. This symbolic ordering operates through a number of condensed, highly charged images which will be the primary focus of the present consideration. But before I can concentrate on that subject, it is necessary to tackle the complex matter of reconstructing the mainstays of *comitatus* culture from the material offered by Old English literature. Finally, with regard both to the original dependence of vernacular religious poetry on the formal and conceptual apparatus developed by the native pre-Christian poetic tradition in general and to the orientation of this study on the coexistence of religious and secular texts in the Exeter Book in particular, I will also examine the various ways of interaction of such powerful ordering images with notions brought in by the conversion of the Anglo-Saxons to Christianity.

Reconstructing the heroic culture

In fact, the latter two questions are bound intimately together due to the fragmentary character of the Old English poetic corpus. The number of purely secular texts or even texts with predominantly secular concerns which may be presumed to afford the closest insight into the interests and values of Anglo-Saxon society prior to the coming of Christianity is discouragingly small. Thus scholars attempting to relate the study of

individual poetic *topoi* to a single network of established images taken to represent an important constitutive element of the authentic native poetic tradition (which should, by extension, reflect the make-up of the society which produced it) have to support their argument with data gleaned from religious poetry.[33]

To some extent, this approach is undoubtedly right, as it reflects the fact that Old English religious poetry did establish its characteristic language principally by appropriating and transposing the motives, formulas and terms developed to deal with themes and narratives belonging to a "heroic" culture, bound intimately with its practices and value-systems. So, for example, *"lifes brytta"* (life-giver), a common epithet for God, is based formally on the model of *"sinces brytta"*, an established term for the lord of a retinue which refers to one specific action, that of dividing (literally "breaking into pieces") jewels as a reward for his followers; and that image remains inevitably active, however faintly, in the later term as well.

However, if most of the textual material is of this character, we have to take into account the possibility that the predominance of certain images may not have been caused only by the strength of their position in the pre-Christian tradition and the continuity of their appeal, but also by the fact that they were better fitted than others to express important doctrinal points which the religious poetry wished to convey. For example, it appears that among the great themes of heroic poetry available (and the brief references in *Deor* and *Widsið*, as well as some *Beowulf* digressions, suggest a wide range of tales variously focused that must have been current in Anglo-Saxon England), the relationship between lord

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[33] E.g. Hume, Kathryn. "The Concept of the Hall in Old English Poetry". *ASE*, 3 (1974), 63-74; Frey, Leonard H. "Exile and Elegy in Anglo-Saxon Christian Epic Poetry". *JEGP*, 62 (1963), 293-302. The presumption can be found also in articles whose primary aim is different, so Bjork, Robert E. "'*Sundor æt Rune*' : The Voluntary Exile of *The Wanderer*". *Neophilologus*, 73 (1989), 119-129.

and retainer receives the greatest emphasis in extant Old English literature; yet it is easy to see how its status might have been influenced by the fact that its constituent elements – loyalty rewarded and solicited by treasure-giving – could provide a potent metaphor for a Christian's devotion to God, demonstrated in refusal of worldly pleasures (or, in case of saints' lives, in feats of ascetism or perseverance in martyrdom) and rewarded by the gift of eternal life in the company of angels. Figures of mighty kings or chieftains fighting bravely for booty, land or tribute (like Offa in *Widsið* or Hygelac in *Beowulf*) would in this respect prove much less useful, although scenes in which Christ is presented in this role (*Dream of the Rood*, Harrowing of Hell in *Christ II*) do occur.

It also has to be borne in mind that, though the existence and popularity of *narrative* poetry concerning Germanic heroes of old is well attested not only by passing allusions in poetry and prose but also by documents of non-literary character,[34] very few texts of this type actually survive; only the incomplete *The Finnsburh Fragment* and *Waldere* can probably be taken as representative of the genre, while *The Battle of Brunanburh* and *The Battle of Maldon* may be considered as comparable in form but focused on contemporary events. *Beowulf*, the poem most frequently quoted in any treatise aiming to reconstruct the concepts that shaped heroic poetry, is largely a *reflective* text. It is not primarily concerned with action but with the meaning of that action, both in the limited world of its protagonists and the larger perspective of the Christian narrator. The presence of this double view[35] inevitably brings to the fore elements that elsewhere, in the shorter poems, form the

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[34] Alcuin's famous admonitory letter (*"Quod Hinieldus cum Christo"*) to the monks of an unspecified Mercian religious community suggests that such narratives found an eager audience even in monasteries. In: Dümmler, Ernst L., ed. *Monumenta Germaniae historica: Epistolae Karolini Aevi*. Berlin: Weidmannsche Buchhandlung, 1895. Further references to Old English accounts of the performance and standing of the native poetry can be found in Whitelock, Dorothy. *The Beginnings of English Society*, Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1952, 91.

[35] Thus Robinson 1985, 31-34.

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unreflected background of the narrative: the social structures and cultural presumptions that inform the behaviour of the protagonists and their understanding of the world that surrounds them. Their representation, however, obviously cannot be independent of the forces that shaped the outlook of the narrator. This need not mean that the picture of the heroic world drawn in *Beowulf* is "incorrect" or deliberately distorted; but whereas some of the elements forming that picture are placed, as it were, in spotlight, others remain only dimly lit, in accordance with the larger plan of the text. Thus again, there is no guarantee that the treatment of important images and themes of heroic poetry present in *Beowulf*, and especially the balance between them, is characteristic of the native poetic tradition as a whole.

The order of the world

With the awareness that the material from which we derive our notion of the concepts central to this poetic tradition already underwent various processing, I would now like to move on to the second task as outlined above and try to show how these concepts combine to form a system that orders the perception of the world in Anglo-Saxon poetry. To supply first an illustrative example of a specific reflection of that system, it appears especially convenient to start with a brief comparison of verses describing the blessed plain inhabited by Phoenix in the Old English poem of that name and in Lactantius' *Carmen de ave phoenice* which the Anglo-Saxon poet used as the chief source for the first, descriptive part of his text. Both poems agree in listing the characteristic features of the place alongside the points in which it contrasts with the rest of the world populated by humanity. This negative depiction recurs several times in the initial section of *Carmen* as well as *Phoenix*. The Old English adaptation follows its Latin model closely in most of these passages, with the exception of the very first, where it expands substantially on the succinct account given by

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the narrator of *Carmen*; the corresponding terms are marked by different types of underlining in the two extracts:

> *Est locus in primo felix oriente remotus,*
> *qua patet aeterni maxima porta poli,*
> *nec tamen aestivos hiemisve propinquus ad ortus,*
> *sed qua sol verno fundit ab axe diem.*
> *Illic planities tractus diffundit apertos,*
> *nec tumulus crescit nec cava vallis hiat,*
> *sed nostros montes, quorum iuga celsa putantur,*
> *per bis sex ulnas eminet ille locus.*[36]
>
> <div align="right">(Carmen 1-8)</div>

> ["There is a distant blessed place in the prime east,
> where the highest gate of heaven stands ever open,
> yet not close to the source of summer or winter,
> but where the sun shines in spring from the diurnal axis.
> Here the plain spreads into open lands,
> here grows no hill, here yawns no hollow of the valley,
> but those of our mountains considered most tall
> the place overreaches by twice six cubits."][37]

> *   [...] ne mæg þær ren ne snaw*
> *ne forstes fnæst   ne fyres blæst*
> *ne hægles hryre   ne hrimes dryre*
> *ne sunnan hætu   ne sincaldu*
> *ne wearm weder   ne winterscur*
> *wihte gewyrdan   ac se wong seomað*
> *eadig ond onsund   is þæt æþele lond*
> *blostmum geblowen   beorgas þær ne muntas*
> *steape ne stondað   ne stanclifu*
> *heah hlifiað   swa her mid us*
> *ne dene ne dalu   ne dunscrafu*
> *hlæwas ne hlincas   ne þær hleonað · oo ·*
> *unsmeþes wiht   ac se æþela feld*
> *wridað under wolcnum   wynnum geblowen*
> *is þæt torhte lond   twelfum herra*
> *folde fæðmrimes   swa us gefreogum gleawe*

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[36] Text from: Hubeaux, Jean and Maxime Leroy. *Le mythe du Phénix dans les littératures grecque et latine.* Paris: Université de Liège 1939.

[37] All translations are mine, with the exception of English version of Latin sources and analogues identified in Calder, Daniel G. and Michael J. Allen, eds. *Sources and Analogues of Old English Poetry: The Major Latin Texts in Translation.* Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1976. In those instances, where indicated, I use their translation.

witgan þurh wisdom   on gewritum cyþað ·
þonne ænig þara beorga   þe her beorhte mid us
hea hlifiað   under heofontunglum[38]

<div align="right">(Phoen 14b-27)</div>

["Neither rain nor snow,
nor the blast of frost, the flame of fire,
the hail falling, rime descending,
heat of the sun, lasting cold,
hot weather, nor winter storms
can mar anything there, but the plain lies
blessed and whole. The noble land
is covered in flowers. No hills or mountains
stand steep there, no stone cliffs
rise up high, as here with us,
no valleys or abysses or hill-caves,
no mounts or ridges, nothing rough
stands out there, but the noble field
grows under the clouds, blossoming with joys.
That glorious land overreaches
by twelve fathoms any of the mountains
that tower high and bright here among us
under the stars, as the prophets wise in learning
in their wisdom teach us in their writings."]

What is the reason of this imbalance? It may be noted that while the Latin text presents the plain simply as an ideally ordered space unmarked by climatic as well as spatial extremes, the Old English reworking introduces two significant modifications: apart from greatly augmenting the list of opposed elements in landscape and weather, it explicitly links

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[38] The presentation of Old English texts unfortunately depends on the resources that I had at my disposal and therefore is not entirely consistent. In the case of Exeter Book texts, which are in the focus of my study, I wanted to avoid, as far as possible, the interpretative decisions imposed by modern editorial punctuation and so I quote them with manuscript punctuation and sectional capitalization (reproduced according to the facsimile edition: Chambers, Raymond W., Max Förster, and Robin Flower, eds. *The Exeter Book of Old English Poetry*. London: Percy Lund, 1933.) For the sake of convenience, however, I have kept to the modern standard in preserving the line-division of the standard ASPR edition (Krapp, George P. and Elliott V. K. Dobbie, eds. *The Anglo-Saxon Poetic Records III: The Exeter Book*. New York, London: Columbia, 1936, reprint 1961) and capitalization of proper names (including God but not the various epithets). Other texts are cited according to Healey, Antonette diPaolo, Joan Holland, Ian McDougall, and Peter Mielke, eds. *The Dictionary of Old English Corpus in Electronic Form, TEI-P3 conformant version, 2000 Release*. Toronto: DOE Project 2000, on CD-ROM.

the former to the condition of the human world (*"swa her mid us"*[39]) – a contrast only implicit in Lactantius, where the comparison with real landscape features is not generalized in this way. In the latter case, the list of climatic phenomena preserves the basic opposition between heat (*aestivus*) and cold (*hiems*) but shifts the balance significantly in favour of *hiems* – seven terms against two referring to hot weather and one that apparently belongs to the same complex but actually disrupts the list, since it cannot be easily subsumed under the category of meteorological conditions (*"fyres blæst"*). No longer neatly symmetrical, the terms lose to some extent their rhetorical effectivity;[40] the condensed, metonymical reference of the Latin text is replaced by an insistent cumulation of items, whose sequence apparently follows no clearly identifiable pattern. The same tendency can also be perceived in the second, "spatial" series. In its brevity and abstraction, *Carmen* is, as it were, purely functional; it supplies only the information absolutely necessary to convey the image of Phoenix's plain. The details piled up at this point in the Old English adaptation are, strictly speaking, redundant in that respect, the more so as the Latin text introduces some of them only a few stanzas later, forcing the narrator of *Phoenix* to treat the same theme for the second time.

On the whole, it appears that in the passage in question, the Old English text is more concerned with presenting a picture of the space assigned to mankind than with the characteristics of the blessed plain itself. This space is envisaged as an inhospitable and inimical environment, a chaotic clashing of conflicting elements and forms. The predominance of the images of cold in the first series agrees well with the situation in Old English poetry in general; and the popularity of the theme

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[39] In *Carmen*, the reference to "our world" is reserved for the location of the plain, not its description (*"sed nostros montes, quorum iuga celsa putantur, per bis sex ulnas eminet ille locus"*).

[40] This loss is admittedly partly compensated for by the use of rhyme in l. 15 and 16 and homoioteleuton in l. 17, which restore at least the formal symmetry of the lines in question.

of wintry weather in the native poetic tradition[41] could, as the loose structuring of the two lists would suggest, account – at least partially – for the apparently disproportionate space devoted to the description of the world inhabited by men, since it could have led the author of *Phoenix* to expand the simple *"hiems"* of his Latin model almost automatically into a whole chain of associated images. Cold, frost and especially storm (*"winterscur"*) with its violence are often used as emblems representative of the general adversity of the natural environment. Sometimes that adversity is given features of open and purposeful hostility – the hailstorm in *Wanderer* comes *"hæleþum on andan"* ("in enmity to men"), in *Riddle 3*, the storm becomes personified as *"atol eoredþreat"* ("terrible troop") and it is called *"micel modþrea / monna cynne"* ("great terror to mankind"). No such established negative connotations can be found for the terms included in the second series, whose central motif seems to be the absence of order (*"ne þær hleonað · oo · // unsmeþes wiht"* – "nothing uneven stands out there"). Although mountainous landscape at times features as the setting for scenes of misery and danger in Old English poetry – cf. the *"denna dimme / duna uphea"* ("dark valleys, towering mountains", l. 30) of the place where the protagonist of *The Wife's Lament* spends her "exile", the weatherbeaten *"stanhleoþu"* ("cliffs") of the final section of *Wanderer* and *The Wife's Lament*, the terrain near Grendel's mere in *Beowulf* (*"wulf-hleoþu / windige næssas"* – "wolf-slopes, windy promontories", l. 1358) or Mermedonian landscape in *Andreas* (*"beorgas steape // hleoðu hlifodon"* – "steep mountains, slopes rose up high", l. 840b-841a) – it would be overbold to view this as a regular association. It is possible that the uneven terrain could have been read as a natural barrier closing in on the human protagonist, giving expression to a feeling of insecurity vis a vis the half-guessed dangers of the outside world, or that the unevenness itself, as an

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[41] Cf. Stanley, Eric G. "Old English Poetic Diction and the Interpretation of *The Wanderer, The Seafarer* and *The Penitent's Prayer*". *Anglia*, 73 (1956), 413-466.

embodiment of the chaotic element in nature, may have functioned as a suitable accompaniment for such narrative situations; all such interpretations, however, remain a mere conjecture. The precise motivation behind the use of this type of scenery in Old English poetry represents an issue that touches the purpose of this consideration only marginally in that it may correspond to the more basic scheme of "man in a hostile world".

Nevertheless, the primary aim of the present survey was to show, first, how the poet of *Phoenix* goes out of his way to give a picture of the world inhabited by human race, in which he significantly departs from his model; second, the contours of that picture; and third, its essential conformity with the view of the natural environment which forms an integral part of the ordering of the world as reflected in Old English poetic tradition. This last statement will be more fully documented throughout the following section, focused on the position which the human settlement occupies in the world in Old English literature.

It should not come as a surprise that – in the majority of cases – human habitation is envisaged as an enclosed enclave of peace and order, placed in opposition to the dangerous outside.[42] We can recognize this concept in the famous simile of the sparrow which Bede puts in the mouth of one of the counsellors in his account of the conversion of king Edwin.[43]

In his influential lecture "Beowulf: the Monsters and the Critics",[44] J. R. R. Tolkien relates the heroic imperative of relentless courage under hopeless circumstances (as voiced, for example, in *The Battle of Maldon* and other Old English, and indeed other Germanic poetic texts) to a

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[42] On this subject, see also Čermák, Jan. "Zápas o světlo. Poznámky k pojetí prostoru v epice Anglosasů" in Vladimír Svatoň, Anna Housková, eds. *Kultura a místo: studie z komparatistiky*. Praha: Univerzita Karlova, 2001, 187-207.

[43] Miller, Thomas, ed. The Old English Version of Bede's Ecclesiastical History of the English People. London: Early English Text Society, 1897, vol. I, 134-137.

[44] Tolkien, John R. R.: "The Monsters and the Critics" in Lewis E. Nicholson, ed. *An Anthology of Beowulf Criticism*. Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1967, 51-103. Originally a 1936 lecture.

perspective of the world grounded in Old Norse mythology: men (and gods) live in a space surrounded by forces of darkness and chaos; the two sides are in a state of perpetual enmity, though not always open war; and in the end, gods and men will unite in a last stand against the final onslaught of those forces that will sweep away the world.[45] Although one cannot but agree with Tolkien's own word of warning as regards the practicability of applying Old Norse data to explain the conceptual background of Old English literature, it is true that some of its texts are constructed in a way that shows signs of a similar "siege mentality".

Thus in *The Wanderer*, the scene alternates between the cheerful and ordered life in the hall, which finds its appropriate expression in the allusive description of the highly formalized ceremony of homage and treasure-giving, and the cold solitude of exile in a forbidding, frozen wilderness, as if there existed no middle ground between these extremes. The repeated and sometimes radically condensed confrontation of the two "territories" actually forms the structuring principle of the first, "autobiographical" part of the poem.[46] In the latter, meditative half, the same scheme reappears in the image of the desolated hall open to winds

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[45] Undoubtedly, corrections of that picture could be made: Miðgarðr – men's world – is really enclosed by a great rampart against the giants who inhabit the outer regions of the earth and Ásgarðr – the seat of the gods – is similarly protected; on the other hand, the relationship of the gods to the forces of chaos is rather more complex than it appears from the preceding account and their last battle is not altogether without hope (though ending in defeat), since it is followed by a restoration of the world in new splendour and innocence. Admittedly, the theme of the final renewal of the world could be introduced into the narrative as a result of at least partial integration of Christian concepts into Northern mythology during the period of contact between the two religious systems preceding the recording of the myths (a process that is held responsible, for example, for some elements in the character of the god Baldur). Nevertheless, the first objection – that of the gods' equivocal attitude towards their professed enemies – still remains valid.

[46] This confrontation is, as a rule, presented in a rhetorically highly effective manner, whether we find the respective terms arranged in a summarizing isocolon (*"wara*ð *hine wræclast / nales wunden gold // ferðloca freorig / nalæs foldan blæd"* – "he is occupied with paths of exile, not with twisted gold, with his frozen body, not with the wealth of the earth", l. 32-33) or whether the parallelism consists in emphasizing an identical aspect of the action in the corresponding scenes – movement and gesture in l. 41-48, speech in l. 50b-55a.

which provides a simile for the ultimate ruin of all worldly prosperity.[47]
Finally, all signs of human presence become obliterated as the chaotic
forces of nature resume their full sway:

> ... *ond þas stanhleoþu   stormas cnyssað*
> *hrið hreosende   hrusan bindeð*
> *wintres woma   þonne won cymeð*
> *nipeð nihtscua   norþan onsendeð*
> *hreo hæglfare   hæleþum on andan ·*
>
> (Wand 101-105)

> ["...and tempests beat these rocky cliffs,
> driving snowstorm binds the earth;
> when darkness comes, the shadow of night deepens,
> winter tumult sends from the north
> terrible hailstorm in enmity to men."]

The representation of the forces that stand against the enclosed
human world condensed into the central image of the storm even
intervenes – independently of its identified sources[48] or any directly
relevant biblical models – in the account of the end of the present world
given in *Christ III*[49], where it is introduced as a new element alongside the

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[47] *Ongietan sceal gleaw hæle   hu gæstlic bið ·*   ["Wise man understands what terror it is
þonne ealle þisse worulde wela   weste stondeð ·   when all worldly prosperity lies waste,
swa nu missenlice   geond þisne middangeard   just as now at places on this earth
winde biwaune   weallas stondaþ   walls stand, swept by wind,
hrime bihrorene   hryðge þa ederas   dwellings stormbeaten, covered by frost;
woriað þa winsalo   waldend licgað   winehalls fall apart, their masters
dreame bidrorene   duguþ eal gecrong   lie joyless; the company fell
wlonc bi wealle.   proud by the wall."]

(Wand 73-80a)

[48] See Muir 1994, 426-428, and Calder and Allen 1976, 84-107.

[49] The series of religious texts which opens the codex, centered on sacred history from the
Incarnation to the Second Coming and on the life of St Guthlac, has been divided in a
number of ways and various names have been appointed to the resulting units. Krapp
and Dobbie 1936 provide a list of titles proposed by some of their predecessors (xxvii-
xxix). In their edition they resorted to a simple numerical distinction of the above
mentioned parts, but numbered verse lines continuously. Thus they present *Christ* as
one poem containing three divisions (and similarly with *Guthlac*) though it is in a
marked disagreement with their own introduction where they – quite rightly – view
the individual sections as separate poems. Recently Muir 1994 revived the idea of
descriptive titles, proposing the following series: *The Advent Lyrics, The Ascension, Christ
in Judgment*. With *Guthlac*, however, he adhered to the tradition of more neutral

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more orthodox scene of final conflagration based on 2 Pet 3:5-13 and supplemented by details inspired by Mat 24:29-31 and related passages from the Revelation (the eclipse of heavenly bodies, the signal of trumpets): as a prelude to the end of all things, the stars fall from the sky *"þurh ða strongan lyft / stormum abeatne ·"* (74b) – "in the mighty wind, struck down by tempests" and at the sound of heavenly trumpets *"on seofon healfa / swogað windas // blawað brecende / bearhtma mæste // weccað ond woniað / woruld mid storme ·"* (83-85) – "on seven sides winds start to howl, they blow, shattering, with a great noise, rouse and bewail the world with a storm".[50] In the moment of final destruction, flame and storm combine to annihilate all the barriers that formerly kept the world in order, in a movement that clearly proceeds from the centre (human settlement) to the periphery:

> *SWA se gifra gæst   grund geonseceð*
> *hiþende leg   heahgetimbro*
> *fylleð on fodwong   fyres egsan*
> *widmære blæst   woruld mid ealle*
> *hat heorogifre   hreosað geneahhe*
> *tobrocene burgweallas   beorgas gemeltað*
> *ond heahcleofu   þa wið holme ær*
> *fæste wið flodum foldan sceldun*
> *stið ond stæðfæst   staþelas wið wæge*

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labelling in *The Life of Saint Guthlac A* and *B*. I have decided to use the titles *Christ I, II* and *III* and *Guthlac I* and *II* which I treat as discrete units, each with its own line numbering.

[50] The first "intrusion" of the motif of the tempest finds a certain precedent in Rev 6:13 – "And the stars of heaven fell unto the earth, even as a fig tree casteth her untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind." The Old English text nevertheless disregards completely the figurative nature of the statement. For the second passage, no close biblical parallel can be found. The combination of the sound of trumpets and the ensuing destruction coming from seven directions seems to point to Rev 8 and 9 (where seven angels blow their trumpets to announce various calamities – storm excluding – descending on mankind) as a distant inspiration for the Old English account. Muir 1994, 426 proposes a relation to Jer 30:23 – "Behold, the whirlwind of the Lord goeth forth with fury, a continuing whirlwind: it shall fall with pain upon the head of the wicked." However, in view of the fact that the description of the Day of Judgment in *Christ III* relies primarily on New Testament sources and that there is no precedent in the passage quoted by Muir for the details mentioned above, the link he suggests appears rather strenuous.

wætre windendum [...]   Þær bið wundra ma
þonne hit ænig on mode   mæge aþencan
hu þæt gestun ond se storm   ond seo stronge lyft
brecað brade gesceaft

(Christ III 106-125)

["Thus the greedy spirit sweeps the ground,
the plundering flame strikes down to the earth
the lofty buildings in the terror of fire,
the world and all with it, the glorious blast,
hot and bloodthirsty. On all sides
the broken city walls fall down. The mountains
and high cliffs melt that used to shield firmly
the land against the sea, against the floods,
strong and stable, barriers against the wave,
the whirling water...   That will be a greater wonder
than anybody can think of in his mind
how the storm and the tempest and the mighty wind
will destroy the wide creation."]

Two of the three storm riddles that open the first section devoted to this genre in the Exeter Book develop a similar opposition as their central image: again, the "tempest" (whether it assumes the form of a normal storm or an earthquake) directs its force explicitly against the dwellings of men, referred to – apart from the fairly neutral *"wicstede"* ("settlement") – by terms of more elevated connotations: *"folcsalo bærne // ræced reafige"* – "I burn the halls of the people, despoil the palace" (Rid 1, l. 5b-6a), *"hornsalu wagiað"* – "the gabled halls tremble" (Rid 3, l. 8b).

This choice of vocabulary – i.e. the prominent position assigned to the image of the hall – is obviously not incidental. If we consider the major themes of heroic poetry, which are more or less connected with various imperatives of the heroic code of behaviour, it is evident that the kingly or lordly hall represents an ideal scene for the affirmation of these values and thus also of the order that the culture respects.[51]

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[51] For the succeeding account of the place which the image of the hall occupies in Old English poetry, cf. Hume 1974, 64-66.

So, if one of the most important goals for the members of the society governed by this code – whether kings or warriors – is to gain (by unflinching courage, liberal generosity etc.) fame (*"lof"*) and good reputation (*"dom"*) that will outlast them, it is in the hall that their achievement will be commemorated in the verses of the *scop* which will win them this recognition. We have an indirect evidence for the existence of such occasional songs of praise in *The Battle of Brunanburh* and *The Battle of Maldon*, though with the development of Anglo-Saxon society the mode of their production and transmission undoubtedly underwent considerable changes. *Widsið*, too, alludes to this practice: *scops* are employed by those that *"...fore duguþe wile / dom aræran // eorlscipe efnan"* – "wish to raise their glory among men, make good their courage" (l. 140-141a), and their desire is granted: *"lof se gewyrceð // hafað under heofonum / heahfæstne dom"* – "such a person gains praise and lasting reputation under heavens". But beside this immediate function of glorifying a specific action or a specific individual, such songs would also have a systemic function: they would confirm the validity of that goal itself and in this way participate in establishing and maintaining the order which the society respects. Poems of legendary heroes, such as *The Fight at Finnsburh*, would also fulfil this role, supplying exemplary models as well as entertainment.

Another ubiquitous theme of heroic poetry, often presented as constituting the basic structure of the society, is the bond between lord and retainer which secures the power (military, political) of the former and affords protection to the latter. Though it is ultimately tested – and therefore consummated – on the battlefield, all the acts that constitute this "contract" take place in the hall: the feasts that the lord provides for his companions (the remark on l. 37-40 of *The Fight at Finnsburh* – *"Ne gefrægn ic [...] // nefre swanas hwitne medo / sel forgyldan // þonne Hnæfe guldan / his hægstealdas"* – "I have never heard of men that would repay the white mead better than Hnæf's retainers repaid him" – suggests that this was

understood as part of the compact); the distribution of treasure – weapons, armour, horses, jewels and land – as a "prepayment" or reward for the retainer's service; on his part, the act of homage as an expression of allegiance (cf. *The Wanderer*) and the formal pledge (*"beot"*, announced *"æt meodo"*, *"on bence"* – "over the mead", "on the bench") to perform a specific deed of bravery or generally to prove one's loyalty in a fight, a practice referred to repeatedly in *Beowulf* or in *The Battle of Maldon*.

In the light of these observations, the hall appears as the centre in which the principles ordering the functioning of society (that is, its section relevant for heroic poetry) are established. Two causes, then, would seem to lie behind the widespread use of expressions denoting hall in Old English poetry. One is purely technical: as the heroic tradition is radically limited in its focus on aristocracy, it does not really register any other type of dwelling, but the numerous synonyms it produced can be and are employed to signify any building of similar dimensions or purpose in all types of texts. The other is conceptual: as the seat of order, hall becomes a prototype of human habitation as opposed to its wild, chaotic natural environment. In this sense, the two *Riddles* choose such terms for "building" as can best express the antagonism between the storm and the human world.

It lies beyond the scope and purpose of this brief analysis to fully investigate and document all the various functions associated with the concept of the hall; to those two basic aspects already mentioned – hall as a space enclosed against the outside world and as a scene for acts formally binding the individuals in a society, which it metonymically embodies – I would like to add just one more: the display of items of craftsmanship through which man asserts his control of nature, on however limited scale.[52] To conclude the consideration, it appears that the characteristics and values which this culture associated with the familiar world of human

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[52] Robinson 1985, 71-72.

settlement and its natural environment were concentrated most effectively in the opposed images of hall and storm (and related climatic phenomena[53]).

We may see these concrete images (reflecting a specific ordering of the world) as dominant in their respective spheres which otherwise encompass a whole range of (more abstract) concepts. In this regard, it is symptomatic that the world is consistently viewed from an "insider's perspective". There exist numerous terms belonging to the "human sphere" that share the positive symbolic value of the hall; they usually develop one of its qualities outlined above – its protective function (*"burh"*, *"fæsten"*, *"fæstnung"*) or its role as the space of the supremely familiar (*"ham"* – "home", *"eðel"* – "native, hereditary land, homeland", related to *"æðelu"* – "[noble] origin, descent", *"cyþþu"* – "native land", from *"cuð"* – "known"). Through this conceptual chain, the scope of human control extends beyond the limited core represented by the hall image. On the other hand, the "outside world" comes into focus almost exclusively in situations when the order embodied in the rituals of the hall fails or becomes inaccessible; it appears most often as the space of exile and then it is – predictably – described in terms of absence and lack. It may be the specific aspects of *comitatus* life that are denied – protection of one's lord, company of friends, treasure-giving;[54] *The Wanderer* and *The Seafarer* have the cries and movements of sea-birds mirror and replace the ceremonies and conviviality of the hall, *The Exeter Maxims* (ASPR *Maxims*

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[53] It is interesting to compare how the same theme – the dilapidation of a city following the disintegration of the society that it housed – is treated in Old English and Welsh poetry. While *The Wanderer* and *The Ruin* confront the remaining structures almost exclusively with the forces of weather (typically frost and storm), the *Diffaith Aelwyd Rheged* (The Desolate Hearth of Rheged) assigns the same role to vegetation, spreading over the hearth – the centre of the hall. Cf. Calder, Daniel G. et al., eds. *Sources and Analogues of Old English Poetry: The Major Germanic and Celtic Texts in Translation.* Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1983, 54.

[54] See Greenfield, Stanley. B. "The Formulaic Expression of the Theme of 'Exile' in Anglo-Saxon Poetry". *Speculum*, 30 (1955), 201-203.

l) substitute the company of wolves for the friendship of men;[55] the general terms appearing in this context – *"uncuð","uncyððu"* – "foreign/strange land", *"elþeod"* – "strange people/nation" (often used, in scenes of confrontation, in the sense of "enemies") – stress the aspect of unfamiliarity and therefore unpredictability, insecurity.

The expression last quoted also suggests that the opposition between "human/cultural" and "natural" represents only one element operative in the mapping of the world; the other could best be labelled as a division into the categories of "inside" and "outside", "appropriated" and "alien". These two perspectives (cultural/natural and appropriated/alien) may interact, as in cases when a text, as it were, dehumanizes the enemy forces through terms such as *"heoruwulfas"* ("wolves of battle") in *Exodus*, l. 181 or *"wælwulfas"* ("wolves of slaughter") in *Andreas*, l. 149 and *The Battle of Maldon*, l. 96. It may be objected that the view of the world thus reconstructed – especially its self-centered aspect – is shared by many cultures, including, to some extent, our own; and that the space devoted to this task is wholly disproportionate, considering the relative triviality of the findings. The reason why I dwelt so long on the subject was to display clearly the curiously monochrome vision that is present as the stable point of departure in so many Old English poems.

This is evident in the way in which the poetic tradition treats the figure of the exile. In the majority of the relevant passages, such person appears to be in an impasse, trapped in the outside world without any perspective of reintegration into the society. For illustration, we may look at the two summary accounts from *The Fortunes of Men* and *Maxims I* (*The Exeter Maxims*):

> *Sum sceal on feþe   on feorwegas*

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[55] Wand 41-48, Sea 19b-22, Max 146-147.

nyde gongan   ond his nest beran,
tredan uriglast   elþeodigra
frecne foldan   ah he feormendra
lyt lifgendra   lað biþ æghwær
fore his wonsceaftum   wineleas hæle ·

<div align="right">(Fort 27-32)</div>

["Someone must walk the distant lands,
pressed by need, and carry all his living,
tread the wet paths, dangerous ground
among strangers; he has no one to entertain him
among the living; the friendless man
is everywhere hated for his misfortunes. "]

wineleas wonsælig mon   genimeð him wulfas to geferan
felafæcne deor   ful oft him se gefera sliteð ·

<div align="right">(Max 146-147a)</div>

["Unhappy, friendless man takes wolves for companions,
most treacherous of animals; often that companion tears him to
    pieces."]

This complete dissociation is a logical note in the voice of a society
that recognizes exile as a punishment for breach of loyalty; such a position
therefore seems appropriate for the cowardly retainers of Beowulf or for
Satan, rebelling against God.[56] In that sense, exile functions as yet another
instrument of order and the finality of the expulsion contributes to its
effectivity. However, several points complicating this picture should be
considered.

Firstly, Old English poetry recognizes the fact that exile, or, to be
more precise, the loss of a stable foothold in the society (described in the
same terms), could have been brought about by a variety of causes:
incidental death of one's lord, calumny, political upheaval – to name but a
few. Exile thus ceases to be perceived solely as a smoothly running social
mechanism which helps to protect the existing system.

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[56] Beo 2884-2891; the relevant passages from *Christ and Satan* are quoted in Frey 1963, 293-
302. To tell the whole story, it has to be mentioned that Beowulf expressly forbade his
retainers to help him in his fight with the dragon.

Secondly, in reality, the exile probably did often find a *"feormend"* – someone to harbour and entertain him. We know of English exiles at the court of Charles the Great, whose presence there occasioned some diplomatic activity.[57] While pursued by his rival, king Ethelfrith, prince Edwin of Northumbria managed to avoid for a considerable time his attacks, finally taking refuge at the court of king Rædwald of East Anglia; the formulation used by Bede in his account of these events[58] (*"per diversa occultus loca vel regna multo annorum tempore profugus vagaretur"* – "he wandered, fleeing/as an exile and in obscurity, for many years through various places and kingdoms") may also mean that Rædwald was not the first to do Edwin this favour.

Thirdly, what is perhaps more important, even in poetry we find rare allusions to famous exiles of Germanic legend that were able to win status and recognition: *"wræccan þær weoldan / wundnan golde // werum ond wifum · / Wudga ond Hama"* – "the exiles, Widia and Hama, ruled there over men and women, over/through twisted gold", claims *Widsið* (l. 129-130). To Widia and Hama, one could add Ecgþeow, the father of Beowulf, who – having left his kin and country to avert the blood-feud that he had provoked – enjoyed the protection of king Hroþgar;[59] or the anonymous protagonist of *The Husband's Message*, who, in a slightly paradoxical phrase, *"[... mi]d elþeode / eþel healde"* – "possessed homeland among strangers" (l. 37) together with prominent position, though he, too, had to flee his country under similar circumstances. In other words, Germanic poetic tradition certainly knew stories of heroes that had to endure the lot of an exile for some period in their life, to emerge later as powerful lords and warriors.

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[57] Whitelock 1952, 31.
[58] Colgrave, Bertram and R.A.B. Mynors, eds. *Bede's Ecclesiastical History of the English People* . Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969, ii. 12, 176.
[59] Beo 459-472.

Yet all those facts produced hardly any adjustment in the prevailing image of exile described above. In this case, it seems that the impulse for an imaginary ordering of the world into the two opposed "territories" overruled the data of both history and legend. There may be, however, also other reasons involved in the matter, connected with the use and development of that motif in the more explicitly religious poems.

The Christian perspective

This brings us to the last aspect that has to be considered in an overview of the representations of world-order in Old English poetry – the interaction of the traditional imagery with ideas brought in by Christianity. Rather than the handling of specific motives, though, I propose primarily to examine the principial directions in which the Christian influence on the native poetic tradition could proceed; the individual modifications will be employed only to illustrate the larger movements. Perhaps the first thing to be noted here is the rather startling fact that the Christian vision of the world appears to be less limited and rigorous, more capable of accommodating alternative evaluations of particular phenomena than that which emerged from the preceding reconstruction as characteristic for the native tradition. Some concepts introduced in the religious poems – outside the category of the fudamental articles of faith – must have felt strange and almost revolutionary when confronted with the notions previously established in poetry. Among those, we must name the new appreciation of nature which is present, for example, in *Azarias*; there, those same elemental forces that so often embody the bleakness and spitefulness of the natural world are recognized as God's creation, part of the providential plan:

> *Ond þec Crist cyning   ceolas weorðian*
> *fæder forst ond snaw   folca waldend*
> *winterbitera weder   ond wolcna genipu*
> *ond þec liexende   ligetta hergen*

blace breahtumhwate   brytenrices weard
dyrne dryhten   a þin dom sy
god ond genge   þu þæs geornlice
wyrcest wuldorcyning

<div align="right">(Aza 103-110)</div>

["And the cold winds praise you, King Christ,
father, ruler of the nations, as well as frost and snow,
the bitter winter weather and the dark clouds;
and the flashing lightnings, shiny and quickfire
praise you, guardian of the great kingdom,
mysterious lord; your judgment is ever
good and proper; you dispose of it
carefully, O king of glory"]

In *The Order of the* World, we find a reappraisal of the notion of the world as a place characterized by irreconcilable contrasts; God put together *"dæg wiþ nihte / deop wið hean // lyft wið lagustream / lond wiþ wæge"* – "day against night, depth against height, air against ocean, land against wave" (l. 83-84) and this perfect balance of counterparts – no longer oppositions – is a powerful sign of his might and wisdom: a complete reversal in comparison with the initial passage from *Phoenix* quoted above. There, the Anglo-Saxon view of the natural environment converges with another Christian concept – that of the "corrupted" earth, that is, the earth made inhospitable after the Fall. Nature reveals the glory of creation but at the same time it is envisaged as the space where mankind undergoes its punishment for the sin of disobedience commited by the first pair; and which of these aspects will be stressed depends on the objectives of the individual text. The comparison of *Azarias* and *Phoenix* shows that while some of the ideas and views brought by Christianity had to be planted, as it were, into an uncultivated soil, others – much more numerous – could be grafted onto an existing concept, which made them more easily comprehensible.

The highly positive images of the native "hall" complex (*"sele"*, *"reced"*, *"burh"*, *"ceaster"*, *"eðel"*, plus the fundamental acts associated with

<div align="center">45</div>

this space, treasure-giving and feasting[60]) retain their status and prove very productive, as they can be used to refer to New Jerusalem and thus provide a functional cultural translation of the idea of *civitas Dei*. Similarly, the parable of the houses built on sand and on rock would resonate well with the established imaginary opposition between "hall" and "storm".[61] The situation of an exile, alienated from his community and exposed to the harshness of the outside world, could illustrate vividly the plight of man expelled from Paradise.[62]

However, such a symbiosis of the two traditions obviously had its pitfalls, since in certain important aspects it stressed the similitudes rather than the difference between the earthly and the divine. This need not have been a problem if the objective was to integrate smoothly the demands of the new religion into the existing social structures, to reconcile the two worlds. The radical view that bids not to accept gratefully both *"lif ond lænne willan"* – "life and passing joys" (Max I 6a) as God's gift, but to choose between *"eorðwela"* and *"ece lif"* – "worldly prosperity" and "eternal life" (Guth 62) nevertheless had to reject the culture from which it borrowed the imagery through which it depicted the heavenly kingdom. This rejection can assume various forms: the appeal of the institutions of the "real" world of heroic poetry may be recognized – they are not perceived as problematic – but their value is questioned because, like everything *"under heofonum"*, they do not last. Such an approach may be seen in that passage in *The Seafarer* which refers to the lords and kings of old and their glorious deeds (l. 80b-85). Some texts – like *Juliana* –

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[60] In *The Dream of the Rood*, the Christians in heaven are *"geseted to symle"* – "gathered to feast" (l. 141); *Christ II* calls God's place in heaven *"gæsta giefstol"* – "the gift-throne of souls" (l. 572). *Phoenix* uses the words *"beag"* and *"cynegold"* – "jewel" and "kingly gold" to refer, with all probability, to saints' halos (l. 602, 605). Many more examples could be cited, but these should suffice to illustrate the point.

[61] Cf. Jul 647-657a.

[62] Christ III 539-551.

condemn the heroic culture by staging the villain as a typical lord of a *comitatus*, endowing him with qualities appreciated by that culture.

However, some Old English poems – and not just the explicitly religious ones – actually succeed in deconstructing the entire structure of the heroic world; it is the existence of an alternative point of view that permits them to "step aside" and reflect on its operation. In that distancing we may see the last aspect of the influence of Christianity on the native poetic tradition and its representation of the order of the world. The critique places in the foreground such constitutive elements in the culture and social system that, in effect, subvert its protective function and destroy the order which they are designed to maintain. In *The Wanderer*, the exile which is meant to secure the bond between lord and retainer falls with full force on the ostensibly innocent protagonist, and it could be said that part of the appeal of the poem lies in its displaying the paradox of the blind spot that does not permit the speaker to perceive the cause of his hardships at the heart of the society for which he yearns.

Within that scheme, the finality of exile serves to underscore the drama of the situation. *Beowulf*, though it celebrates unreservedly the individual achievement of its protagonist, even situating him in the position of the champion of his culture and humanity in general, nevertheless repeatedly unfolds a view of the future in which precisely those enclaves of order that Beowulf fought to defend against the inhuman forces of darkness are everywhere threatened and obliterated by acts which were meant to preserve that order. The obligation to avenge the killing of one's associates (lord, retainer, kinsman…) was to ensure that the individual would not remain unprotected; it formed a part of the mutual bond within the respective group, familial or social.[63] As such, it is recognized as a positive mechanism and it is thus valued by the characters

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[63] Compensation by wergild may or need not have been accepted and therefore it will be disregarded in this consideration.

in the poem as well, including Beowulf: *"selre bið æghwæm // þæt he his freond wrece / þonne he fela murne"* – "it is better for everyone to avenge his friend than to mourn much" (l. 1384b-1385). But Heorot, the *"heal-ærna mæst"* – "greatest of halls" (l. 78), saved from the depredations of the monstrous Grendel, will not survive the feud between Heathobards and Danes; the Geats, liberated from the attacks of the dragon, can only expect a grim future once the Franks and Frisians decide to carry out their vengeance for the disastrous raid made by Hygelac.

In other words, what becomes apparent in *Beowulf* is the self-destructiveness of the system: if the imperatives of the heroic culture were pursued with complete consistency, the society would fall back into chaos. The gesture that combines the account of the building of Heorot – a supreme act of asserting order – with the reference to its final ruin in the fires of the feud (all that before Grendel enters the scene) seems to suggest that this development is not a result of an incidental failure of the system but that it is inscribed in its very structure. *Beowulf* also radically questions the effectivity of additional protective strategies that should balance the negative potential of the basic social mechanisms of the heroic world, such as that of establishing a bond between enemy groups to counteract the imperative of vengeance. The marriage of Hroþgar's daughter Freawaru to Ingeld the Heathobard aims to check another round of vendetta; it not only fails, but is described as the immediate impulse for its renewal. The effect is parallel to that observed in the case of the passage treating the construction of Heorot.

Establishing the range of responses of Old English religious poetry to the potentially problematic heritage of the native poetic tradition will prove especially relevant for the final chapter of the present study (*Exeter Book: the dialogue*), which attempts – as part of its analysis of the polyphonic structure of the Exeter Book – to identify possible general strategies of "bracketing" the more worldly oriented texts that draw on

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that tradition with the result of reinforcing the position of authority for the poems that profess a more or less radical distancing from the matters of the world. Throughout part III (*Intertextual links and the structure of the Exeter Book*) I will refer extensively to the present delineation of the complex of central images ordering the world in heroic poetry.

2. THE MANUSCRIPT AND ITS HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

UNTIL fairly recently, the single comprehensive account of the Exeter Book MS was that of the 1933 facsimile edition by Chambers, Förster and Flower.[64] It listed the losses and lacunae in the manuscript, established the history of its preservation as it identified the codex with the *"mycel englisc boc be gehwilcum þingum on leoðwisan geworht"* ("large English book on various matters, composed in the form of verse") in the list of the texts which bishop Leofric donated to the Exeter Chapter in between 1050 and 1072,[65] and finally, on the basis of examination of the script and its comparison with other manuscripts,[66] supplied substantial information on its dating (970-990) and original cultural milieu (the Benedictine monastic reform of the second half of the 10th century). Since its publication, several works have appeared which discovered additional damages in the manuscript – so, for example, John C. Pope detected a break in the text of *Riddle 70*[67] and Alan Bliss and Allen J. Frantzen showed *Resignation* to be in fact the beginning and end of two separate poems;[68] in both cases the

[64] Chambers, Förster and Flower 1933.

[65] Among all Leofric's contributions – mainly Latin liturgical texts used in the various services (missals, psalters, antiphonaries etc.) and theological treatises but also works of Christian Latin poets, an Old English Evangeliary, penitential and a translation of Boethius' *De Consolatione* – the Exeter Book is the only one fitting this description.

[66] The one most relevant – and properly examined in the facsimile edition (pp.85-90) – is Lambeth Palace MS. 149: Bede' s treatise *In Apocalypsin* and Augustine's *De adulterinis coniugiis*, also on Leofric's list. As it nearly matches the hand of the Exeter Book and, moreover, contains an inscription recording the previous donation by one Ealdorman Æthelweard of this and at least *one other* book to a monastery of Our Lady (presumably somewhere in the southwest of England; the name has been blotted), it continues to tempt scholars into trying to pin down the exact location of the recipient house and the identity and family connections of the donor in the hope that it may shed some light on the way Leofric built his collection and, perhaps more importantly, on the origins of Exeter Book itself.

[67] Pope, John. C. "An Unsuspected Lacuna in the Exeter Book". *Speculum*, 49 (1974), 113-122.

[68] Bliss, Alan J. and Allen J. Frantzen. "The Integrity of *Resignation*". *RES*, 27 ns (1976), 385-402. It has to be noted that theirs is not a universally recognized interpretation;

textual discontinuity is so minimal that the loss of a leaf went unnoticed. However, despite such minor corrections, the picture of this puzzlingly heterogeneous collection drawn by the editors of the facsimile remained essentially unchanged (with one important exception: while they attributed the occasional variation in quality and character of the script to the participation of several scribes, the majority of scholars who have subsequently examined the manuscript agree on the codex being the work of one hand only). The first impulse to re-adjust the accepted view came in 1986, when Patrick W. Conner published an article challenging the original unity of the Exeter Book.[69] He then elaborated his theory in *Anglo-Saxon Exeter: A 10th Century Cultural History*,[70] an extremely thorough study of the palaeographical and codicological features and links of the manuscript, related to the history of Exeter's religious foundation, and this time he questioned also the so far undisputed dating of the collection.

The manuscript: make-up and dating

The Exeter Book[71] is made up of seventeen gatherings – thin booklets originally consisting of eight leaves each.[72] This number was reached either by folding and sewing together of four sheets of parchment or by distributing two half-sheets (singletons) in between three folded sheets (i. e. as second and sixth or third and seventh leaf). When examining the physical appearance of the codex, Conner noticed a certain regularity in the varying quality of the parchment used. One type of vellum -

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other scholars read the fragments as the beginning and end of *one* poem with matter lost in the middle.

[69] Conner, Patrick W. "The Structure of the Exeter Book Codex". *Scriptorium*, 40 (1986), 233-242

[70] Conner, Patrick W. "Anglo-Saxon Exeter: A 10th Century Cultural History". Woodbridge, Suff.: Boydel and Brewer, 1993.

[71] All following remarks concern the Exeter Book "proper", without the first eight leaves of textually unrelated matter appended some time before the 16th century.

[72] Except for the last gathering, where no reliable reconstruction of its original structure can be made.

characteristic for insular manuscripts - appears throughout the book, interspersed by three less common types prepared in a different way. The first of these occurs in gatherings 2 to 5; the second is limited to gathering 11; and the third is restricted to gatherings 13 and 15. He further identified a slight variation in the procedures used to supply additional ruling when the primary ruling was not sufficient to guide the scribe on the page, which coincides with the previously mentioned evidence. This divides the present codex into three units: gatherings 1 to 6 (*Christ I-III, Guthlac*), 7 to 12 (*Azarias, Phoenix, Juliana* and shorter pieces from *Wanderer* to *Partridge* 1-2a) and 13 to 17 (*Partridge* 3ff.[73] to *Riddle 95* – two collections of riddles and short poems of homiletic, didactic and "elegiac" character[74]). However, the characteristics related to the preparation of the vellum for writing could be considered insufficient for drawing any conclusions about the unity of a collection, as scriptoria might well be supposed to store some amount of blank gatherings for subsequent use.[75]

More important in this respect is Conner's analysis of progressive evolution of several script forms within the codex: the use of s-ligatures, the distribution of the y-letter variants and the execution of the initials in general and the large Đ specifically. In all instances, he posits the second unit as the starting point of the respective tendency, the first as its culmination. In the first case, the linking of the long form of the letter s to the following t, p and runic w is the strictly observed norm in the second unit of the codex; the third shows occasional breaking of this rule; and the present first unit has both ligatured and non-ligatured forms used at will.

[73] Poems are here titled according to Krapp and Dobbie 1936.

[74] This description (except for the presence of the pronouncedly homiletic style) can of course be applied also to the shorter texts of the second unit.

[75] This is the *caveat* expressed by Bernard J. Muir in his article "Watching the Exeter Book Scribe Copy Old English and Latin Texts". *Manuscripta*, 35 (1991), 3-15 – a survey of scribal habits (including corrections) manifested in Exeter Book and the two Latin MSs considered to be by the same hand. He also remains reserved about Conner's argument based on the quality of parchment, as he claims that its variety is too great to allow of such categorical division without exact measurings.

Again, a useful qualification has been voiced by Muir, who pointed out the fact that the scribe freely employs both long and short form of s in these letter groups (and that even in immediately following words), so that it seems rash to ascribe much weight to this criterion.[76] Whatever value we wish to assign to it, the distinct division runs here between the second and third unit on the one hand and the first on the other. The distribution of the three available forms of y produces an opposite boundary: while the third and first units display almost identical preferences in the choice of the respective forms, in the second unit the proportion differs markedly. Unlike the previous characteristics, the treatment of initials is a feature which can be hardly assessed with any precision. Conner claims, again, that the degree of assurance in the drawing of the ornamental large capitals, especially the evenness and quality of the line, progressively increases from second through third to the first unit, thus confirming the previous findings. The greatest significance he attaches to one specific form, the insular initial Đ, as it is there that some readily visible development can be detected. The appearance of the letter throughout the proposed second unit of the codex is marked by various deviations from its ideal shape (general tilting, asymmetrical position of the horizontal stroke on the vertical axis, unbalanced ornamentation) and gives the impression of gradual approximation to the desired form – which was apparently achieved in the initials of the first unit.[77] This could mean that the scribe of the Exeter

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[76] An opposite interpretation of this phenomenon, however, immediately presents itself: as the scribe exhibits no conscious restriction of the respective s-forms to certain letter groups, it could be argued that once he started with a long s (at random), the ligature followed from force of habit (which could then gradually change during his career). Alternatively, it could happen that the scribe was simply copying his model exactly, though this in all probability was not the case with the Exeter Book.

[77] The third unit cannot be considered in this respect, since it does not contain the "fullfledged" form of Đ at all, only the smaller type of initial generally used for the headings of riddles.

book approached this task without much previous training in copying Old English texts – however competent a craftsman he proves to be otherwise.

The concurrence of all the factors listed above – which could be considered ambiguous or insignificant in themselves – leads Conner to the following hypothesis: the Exeter Book originated as three separate booklets; the second unit of the present collection, offering the greatest variety of genres and attitudes, was written first; later on, the now third unit was compiled; the copy of *Christ* and *Guthlac* was the last to be made. Further support to his theory of separate existence of these three supposed booklets is lent by the fact that the first page (*recto*) of *Azarias* is more soiled and darkened than the opposite *verso* which now holds the last page of *Guthlac*; such soiling would indicate that the page in question served for some time as the exposed outer cover of a text unprotected by proper binding.[78] No such verification is available for the boundary between the second and third unit, as the corresponding leaves are missing.

Indirect evidence suggests that the codex must have existed more or less in its present shape (subsequent losses of single leaves or – less likely –whole gatherings discounting) before 1072 at the latest, since neither of Conner's presumed booklets could be described as a "*mycel boc*". At the same time, the individual components combined in the extant volume had probably suffered some damage even before they were first bound together: thus the section of the second *recto* of *Azarias* exposed by the cutting away of a strip of parchment from the top of the first leaf shows the same amount of soiling as the *recto* of this first leaf. All this greatly complicates the issues for those who wish to study the poems of the Exeter Book in their manuscript context, as the potential for meaning of individual texts and their interaction has to be judged both in terms of the original compilations and their later arrangement; it is necessary to ask

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[78] Similar effect, as Conner remarks, can be caused by a long-time display of the book opened in one place; in that case, however, both the left (verso) and right (recto) page are equally affected.

what text the compiler(s) "wrote" and how the different adjustments affected the way in which readers construed this text.

Obviously, such a task presupposes as close an estimation as possible of the period and environment to which the document belongs. Here, unfortunately, the ground becomes rather shifty. In an attempt to identify the origins of the Exeter Book, Conner tries to disentangle the diverse strands of implicit evidence and weave them together in a consistent picture. He starts with an analysis of the list of documents associable with Exeter as the establishment where they were once housed and takes as his clue the conspicuous position there of manuscripts datable to the second half of 10th and 11th centuries respectively.[79] The latter group is easily explained: it is a product of the processes associated with Exeter's new role as the bishop's see. It has been traditionally believed that this was also the event responsible for the older part of the Exeter collection, assembled by Leofric in the effort to provide the new institution with books necessary for its functioning. However, Conner argues that the sum of documents gathered at random from various religious foundations – either as a gift or purchase – would in all probability copy the proportions found in the entire corpus and explains the wealth of later 10th century manuscripts as the preserved remnant of Exeter's earlier resources (partly achieved by endowment, possibly through links established by king Athelstan,[80] partly coming from indigenous production) which Leofric subsequently integrated into his "donation".

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[79] The unusual proportion becomes the more marked in statistical comparison with the situation in the whole of the Anglo-Saxon corpus, which is why Conner refuses to interpret these data as the result of mere chance of preservation. He also points out the relative homogeneity of the former group of documents with its high percentage of MSs imported from Northern France.

[80] According to tradition, the founder (or re-founder) of the monastery in Exeter. This link would account especially for the presence of continental MSs.

A more detailed palaeographical examination of these Exeter-related manuscripts yielded further results: the emergence of two interconnected groups – each of them supposedly the work of a single scribe – written in similar style of Insular Square minuscule. The first set comprises the Exeter Book, its notorious companion, Lambeth Palace MS. 149, and another item on Leofric's list, *Liber Isidori de miraculis Christi*, identified, with some uncertainty, as MS. Bodley 319.[81] The link between these groups is provided, Conner claims, by the fact that the scribe responsible for the execution of the texts of the second set[82] participated largely in the corrections made in Lambeth Palace MS. 149. He considers the style of these documents sufficiently singular to warrant their ascription to a so-far unidentified scriptorium – that, he believes, of the Exeter monastery.

The final step in determining the historical background which produced the Exeter Book is the comparison of individual letter forms used there to those appearing in a select body of more important manuscripts providing the samples of 10th century English hands. The evidence shows a certain disparity, as the archaic tendencies evident in some letters are countered by progressive forms of others; in its entirety, though, the script can best be placed to the period between 950 and 970. The ensuing temporal distribution within this period of the individual units constituting the present collection is largely arbitrary,[83] based on Conner's assessment of the contents and consequently also the role of the three booklets: the middle unit he dates before the transformation of Exeter into a reformed Benedictine monastery by Abbot Sidemann (an associate of St. Dunstan) in 968, the rest of the codex within the reform

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[81] There are two "pretendents" to this title: MS. Bodley 319 and MS. Bodley 394 (both Isidore: *De fide catholica*)

[82] This group contains Exeter Cathedral Library MS. 3507 (Hrabanus Maurus: *De computo* and Isidore: *De natura rerum*, plus additional material), Bodley MS. 718 (Penitentials) and Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, lat. 943 (the Sherborne Pontifical).

[83] That is, in terms of palaeographical development.

period. His reasons for this interpretation and the generic affiliations he construes for the various poems of the Exeter Book will be treated in full in part III of the present study (pp. 133-136).

Conner's hypothesis, however, met with criticism (or adjustment) almost on all points. Thus Richard Gameson[84] rightly questions his distrust of Leofric's statement that he had to build the library at Exeter virtually from a scratch, since it had been destroyed in Swegn's raid in 1003. Gameson points out that Leofric's contributions are apparently targeted to meet the very basic needs of a community of canons (or practically any religious community); he might have reassembled some of the texts which had been dispersed among religious houses in the area after the raid, but a continuous existence in Exeter of a substantial book collection, surviving, despite all calamities, up to Leofric's time, is hardly probable. Moreover, the case of Exeter Chapter library is unique in that its holdings are still identifiable, as it preserved its funds intact while other libraries possessing Old English texts were scattered in the Dissolution of monasteries. Thus other collections might have showed similar peculiarities in their make-up (e. g. the prevalence of texts from a specific period). Yet while these reservations merely weaken Conner's argument and do not present any substantial challenge to its premises, it is Gameson's observations concerning the two putative sets of "Exeter manuscripts" which put it in a more serious doubt. His investigation of Lambeth Palace MS. 149 questions Conner's assertion of the identity of its principal corrector with the scribe who copied the second group; he acknowledges the near identity of the letter forms but notices the difference in proportions, recognizable even in analogous samples of interlinear gloss (and therefore unaffected by demands of space). Gameson likewise broadens the scope of documents for comparison,

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[84] Gameson, Richard. "The Origin of the Exeter Book of Old English Poetry". *ASE*, 25 (1996), 135-185.

including also minor texts such as charters etc. This allows him to find different affinities and links than those detected by Conner, which further dissociate the two "Exeter groups". In particular, as he claims, the manuscripts of the second set use initial capitals and display scripts (smaller capitals such as often mark the first line of a separate text-unit in the Exeter Book) of the type characteristic of Canterbury-based documents. Thus the Exeter Book and related manuscripts are left without a definable location, their style of script being the "common property" of many southwestern houses. Finally, the script samples gathered by Gameson enable him to move Conner's dating of the Exeter Book one decade later, between years 960 and 980, and as its place of origin remains unknown, he thinks best to view the whole codex (all three parts postulated by Conner) as belonging to the reformist environment.

What, then, are we to make of these conflicting interpretations of the manuscript evidence? Whether we accept Conner's precise localization and dating of the Exeter Book or remain cautious with Gameson, the carefully weighed outcome would still point to the reformist circle as the most plausible historical background for its gradual tripartite growth, despite Conner's arguments to the contrary. He is unwilling to associate the booklets forming the present collection with the mainstream of this movement; partly because of the heterogeneity of contents but mainly – again – on the basis of their script and especially its application in Lambeth Palace MS. 149 and MS. Bodley 319, because the generally preferred style (at least for Latin texts) in these circles was the Caroline minuscule of their continental models (which afterwards became the standard script in English documents). However, as his own research shows, the earlier indigenous Square minuscule could still be used during this period for the central texts of the movement (the *Benedictine Rule* in Cambridge, Corpus Christi College MS. 197 or the Bosworth Psalter) and was apparently considered sufficiently prestigious for luxurious,

representative manuscripts (the Sherborne Pontifical, Pontifical of St. Dunstan).

That the text or purpose of the Exeter Book must have been valued by those who prompted its compilation can be seen from the care the scribe took in correcting the mistakes he had made – often he considers it necessary not only to indicate the proper reading (by adding the right form above or under the place in question) but to preserve the desirable overall appearance as well (by erasure and careful rewriting).[85] It is interesting that from the three manuscript written by this scribe, all the three units of the Exeter Book seem to be copied with the greatest amount of attention, although the texts contained both in Lambeth Palace MS. 149 and MS. Bodley 319 can be considered more relevant by far to the concerns of the monastic reform movement.[86]

This much can be inferred about the position of the codex in the historical situation at the time of its copying; but it is necessary also to ask about its subsequent role and perception. There is ample evidence that a period came when the book appeared useless as a text: knife-cuts, stains etc. Yet between its compilation, when it justified the employment of a script far from utilitarian, and this latter moment there is a history of transmission which left its signs suggesting that the manuscript continued to be read – and even valued. The mere fact that the three separate booklets were bound together means that they were considered worth the effort. In Leofric's donation list, the item identified with the Exeter Book closes the second part which generally comprises the texts indispensable for the running of any religious foundation (the first division contains books which could – thanks to their rich appearance – count as a part of the church treasury, the third enumerates Leofric's acquisitions in Latin

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85 Muir 1991, 5 and 12.
86 Conner 1993, 81-4.

and represents a "selection of standard reading texts"[87]). But most important in this respect are the marks – incised, impressed or presumably drawn by a lead or silver point – complementing the punctuation in several parts of the codex, namely *Christ II* and *III*, *Guthlac I* and select passages from *Juliana* and *Phoenix*, discovered by D. S. McGovern.[88] Those marks appear in various shapes; yet all of these are used throughout the sections in question, so that it seems that by the time they were added to the manuscript, it must have existed more or less in the form known to us. Their precise purpose remains unclear; they never contradict the metrical rules of the verse (inserted as they are in the caesura or at the end of a line) and occur more frequently in hypermetric lines, which would imply that they were meant to facilitate the scanning of the more difficult portions in recitation. Their greater concentration in some passages then suggests that their author might have intended first to make a selection of suitable reading which would then be thus punctuated – yet whether primarily to signal a rhetorical point, a syntactical difficulty or the metrical regularities of the verse cannot be decided. Sometimes, the various kinds of this extra marking duplicate each other, indicating the presence of several stages in this process, several independent readings. At the same time, they make it clear which parts of the Exeter Book continued to attract interest maybe well into the 12th century:[89] the longer, pronouncedly religious poems concentrated at its beginning.[90]

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[87] Gameson 1996, 143. It has to be noted that the donation contains only two Old English non-liturgical texts, the Exeter Book and the OE version of Boethius' *De consolatione Philosophiae*; this fact, too, might have influenced their position in the list.

[88] McGovern, D. S. "Unnoticed Punctuation in the Exeter Book". *MÆ*, 52 (1983), 90-99.

[89] This dating would be valid if indeed the darker scratches are the effect of the application of a lead point, which came into use just before the turn of the 11th century (McGovern 1983, 95).

[90] The question remains whether this interest was just doctrinally motivated or whether some of the other texts did not become simply unintelligible or irrelevant as the society moved further and further away from forms and relationships reflected in the more "secular" poems.

Historical background: English monastic reform

Let us now return to the broader cultural milieu (regardless of a specific place) within which the scribe sat down to his task. Throughout the Anglo-Saxon era, it was the Church who controlled the preservation and transmission of texts, and the (conscious) degree of its tolerance towards the products of a different tradition and the reflections of an earlier – "heroic" - value-system, however distant or blurred, varied considerably from period to period. The 8th century missions to continental Germanic tribes brought with them a more sympathetic view of the culture of these people – which was of course also the native culture of the Anglo-Saxons - in the attempt to gain the necessary political support for this enterprise; and some studies argue that it could have been precisely this period that created *Beowulf*.[91] Close to the turn of that same century, however, Alcuin - who saw the first raid of the Vikings - expresses his condemnation of the undue interest certain Mercian monks demonstrate when heroic tales are concerned. And around the middle of the 10th century and later, the spirit of the times certainly did not encourage any unproblematic acceptance of alternative or rival behaviour models by the Church. The great monastic reform movement[92] was struggling hard to free monastic life from the network of personal and proprietary relationships which in effect made the community hostage of powerful local families and more or less destroyed the original Benedictine idea of the monastery as an institution standing apart from the tumults of the outside world. For while it seems that in Ireland the firm association of monasteries with a particular (royal) house did affect neither the stern discipline nor the spirit of a strictly secluded brotherhood, in England, judging not by the reformists' criticism

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[91] For example Benson, Larry D. "The Pagan Colouring of *Beowulf*" in *Old English Poetry: Fifteen Essays*. Robert P. Creed, ed. Providence, R. I.: Brown University Press, 1967, 193-213.

[92] For a comprehensive summary of the history and ideology of the monastic reform, cf. John, Eric. "The Age of Edgar" in *The Anglo-Saxons*. James Campbell, ed. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1982, 181-189 and 201-207.

(whose evidence is bound to be discounted as prejudiced) but by legal documents such as wills etc., the monks could apparently lead a life not much different from that of lay persons. They could dispose of property belonging *de iure* to the Church; they probably often lived outside the monastery, being monks more by name than by conduct. Most significantly, the leaders of monastic communities were dependent on their family connections. Voices expressing concern about this degradation of the monastic ideal and demanding correction could be heard throughout the Anglo-Saxon period;[93] but the Benedictine revival represented a truly concerted and forceful attempt at changing the situation for good.

There were, obviously, two interweaving aspects in this effort: ideological and political, and two, though rather fluid, stages: internal, focused on the monasteries themselves, and outward-bound, attempting to re-define the foundations of the whole society according to the reformers' norms. The internally oriented doctrine drew ultimately upon Carolingian models,[94] presumably mediated through the more conservative reformed continental houses such as Fleury or Ghent.[95] While the requirements of all-embracing uniformity in the observation of the Rule and a strict ordering of the daily routine (ideally accompanied by an incessant private rumination of the Psalms) would direct the monk inward to a detached, self-sufficient community of brethren, the injunction of chastity would strengthen effectively the barrier between him and the outside world. At the same time, there existed another powerful motivation: the reformers envisaged for themselves a high position indeed

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[93] Cf. Bede's letter to Ecgberht, bishop of York, in *Councils and Ecclesiastical Documents Relating to Great Britain and Ireland*, vol. III. Arthur West Haddan, William Stubbs, eds. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1869, 314-326.

[94] I. e. the standards propagated by Benedict of Aniane and sanctioned and endorsed in 817 by Louis the Pious.

[95] Cubitt, Catherine. "The 10th Century Benedictine Reform in England" (review article). *Early Medieval Europe*, 6 (1997), 79-80.

- that of the privileged sole keepers of superior knowledge, based on Latinity and the tradition of patristic writings which opened the way to the difficult exegetical interpretation of Scripture. But if the reform was to succeed, it was necessary to communicate this view to the outside world as well, and that is precisely what happened. Wilhelm G. Busse examines the vernacular writings of perhaps the most prolific author of the second generation of reformers – Abbot Ælfric – and finds there numerous, insistent assertions of this role of the new monks.[96] Here, in a way, the reform started on the path of counterattack, because its proponents felt entitled, and indeed commanded, to impose their standards on the functioning of secular institutions as well. Thus Busse[97] lists several works by Ælfric in which he attempts to introduce a model of kingship/leadership based on Biblical and in general literary tradition, standing it against the native model propagated in the heroic poetry (one could cite the somewhat unexpected transformation of the *comitatus* ethics in his *Life of St. Edmund*, where the king, not wishing to survive his thegns, dies – not as a warrior, but as a martyr). The Bible – and especially the New Testament – remained the highest guarantee of authority, but it is doubtful whether the reformers can be accused of "cultural myopia",[98] of restricting themselves to the Scripture and a relatively narrow selection of patristic texts; as the example of Ælfric shows, they did not hesitate to back up an argument by the wisdom of the "pagan" literary culture of Classical antiquity.[99] It therefore seems that they relied rather on a

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[96] Busse, Wilhelm G. "'Sua gað ða lareowas beforan ðæm folce, & ðæt folc æfter': the Self-understanding of the Reformers as Teachers in Late 10th Century England" in *Schriftlichkeit im frühen Mittelalter*. Ursula Schaefer, ed. Tübingen: Gunter Narr Verlag, 1993, 58-106.

[97] Busse, W. G., "Boceras: Written and Oral Traditions in the Late 10th Century" in *Mündlichkeit und Schriftlichkeit im englischen Mittelalter*. Willi Erzgräber, Sabine Volk, eds. Tübingen: Gunter Narr Verlag, 1988, 27-37.

[98] Conner 1993, 150.

[99] So Ælfric in his homily *De falsis diis* takes pains to relate Germanic myths both to the Christian world view and to the Classical literary tradition, condemning them as mistaken in both respects: not only do the Danes, deceived by the machinations of the

presumed absolute, as it were self-evident precedence of Latin tradition over the native one.

The attention which the reformers devoted to the working out of a new model of kingship suggests where they looked for political endorsement. It was a mutually supportive affair. As early as the 930's, shortly after king Athelstan's conquest of Northumbria, charters appear – witnessed by abbots (a feature far from usual) – which give the king a truly imperial air and which are composed in a Latin style associated with the continental reform centres.[100] After a certain time-gap, the same pattern was to be repeated during the reign of king Edgar. Eric John even interprets the spectacular coronation of Edgar in 973 at Bath as a deliberately staged parallel with Christ's entering his public ministry at the age of twenty-nine.[101] This gesture could in effect exempt the king from any dependence upon secular power-structures (and at the same time, it worked as an insurance: if the ruler was truly to follow Christ, he would have to conform to certain models of behaviour). The 973's *Regulariis Concordia*, a document formulating the regime and liturgical practice to be observed by reformed houses throughout England, required the monks to finish practically all of the Hours with a prayer for the king and the queen (plus the benefactor of the respective establishment).[102] Reciprocally, only the king could – and Edgar certainly did – endow the reformed monasteries with the liberties that would make them positively independent and secured against any attempt by the local lord to meddle with their affairs. Moreover, as the monarch would also appoint the

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Devil, worship mere people instead of their Creator, but they even got their names and family relationships wrong. (Pope, John. C., ed. *Homilies of Ælfric: A Supplementary Collection*. London: Early English Text Society, 1968).

[100] It seems that something of the reformist spirit reached England precisely at that time (John 1982, 182, notes the contacts of Oda, bishop of Ramsey, with Fleury), but that the kingdom was not stabilized enough to permit its coming into practice.

[101] John 1982, 188.

[102] Gretsch, Mechthild. *The Intellectual Foundations of the English Benedictine Reform*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999, 15.

bishops, he could very much promote or hinder the spreading and influence of the reformist ideas.

Such would be the rough outlines of the official ideological and political bias of the reform. But to achieve their goals, the reformers were quick occasionally to compromise the principles. The monasteries were to hold their own, unsubjected to the vicissitudes which their position as an *Eigenkloster* of a powerful family would bring, yet the same ties of kinship could be used to obtain a reverse effect: the strengthening of the monastic party. All three protagonists of the first rapid onset of the reform, St. Dunstan, St. Æthelwold and St. Oswald, profited from their association with influential nobility. However, the reformist ideology apparently managed to bring an important change in the attitude of the prospective benefactors – the salutary and, no doubt, also prestigious course was now to support, no longer to own, a monastery; the monks' prayers and intercessions now appeared more important than their land.[103] Similarly, Busse may envisage this period as a time of bitter struggle between the monastic literary culture and the mainly orally transmitted secular tradition preserving the traces of an earlier "heroic" order[104] (in effect, a struggle for control over the society's memory and important shaping force), and principially, he may be right. The insistence with which the claims to a superior position of the monastic learning recur in Ælfric's and Wulfstan's sermons undoubtedly betrays a certain uneasiness. However, it seems short-sighted to read poems such as *The Battle of Maldon* as the representatives of the "other party" – they should rather be interpreted as telling witnesses of the monks' ideological flexibility when the situation required it. *The Battle of Maldon* gives an account of a desperate and lost battle which the English fought against the Viking invaders in 991; and

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[103] An exhaustive account of this aspect of the English Benedictine reform can be found in Pope, Janet M. "Monks and Nobles in the Anglo-Saxon Monastic Reform". *Anglo-Norman Studies*, 17 (1995), 165-179.

[104] Busse 1988, 35-37.

although it is organized aroung the central event of the very Christian dying moments of the English leader, ealdorman Byrhtnoth, the latter portion of the poem following this scene presents such an extreme version of the principles of loyalty binding the retainers to their lord (a major constituent of the so-called "heroic ethics") that it far surpasses the standards set in *Beowulf* or any other Old English text.[105] Yet the poem was recorded and preserved, maybe even written, either in Ely or Ramsey – both reformed institutions and both, too, generously supported by Byrhtnoth and subsequently his heirs.[106]

The last important part of the picture are the differences between the protagonists of the reform themselves. St. Oswald appears to fade slightly into the background in the comparison with the more singular figures of St. Æthelwold and St. Dunstan. While the former shows a strict adherence to the customs of Fleury, an uncompromising character and a marked preference for continental models in all aspects of monastic life, St. Dunstan seems from the beginning to hold his own, independent and slightly more tolerant, course. His abbey in Glastonbury was the first to be reformed, but whether this original reform (realized before Dunstan's stay in St. Peter, Ghent) conformed to the established Benedictine Rule or whether it followed other, presumably older insular models, remains to be proved.[107] Latin documents produced by his circle, too, use a form of the Caroline minuscule which incorporates some native forms, and his own pontifical, while decorated by line-drawings of the continental type, is written in Anglo-Saxon Square minuscule. On the other hand, Æthelwold's circle used a distinct style of script which avoided the use of

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[105] Thus, while in *Beowulf* the retainers' main obligation in a corresponding situation is to avenge the death of their lord and compromises can occasionally be made to ensure this goal (such as postponing the decisive action until more favourable circumstances occur – as in the Finnsburh epizode), *The Battle of Maldon* insists on the extreme course: to accomplish the revenge *on the spot* or to die in the attempt.

[106] Pope 1995, 177-78.

[107] Brown 1984, 105.

any indigenous forms, and the same can be said about the illuminations as well.[108]

This survey of the complex historical background of the Exeter Book was necessary to outline the fields of influence which could shape the event of its gradual editing. With a heterogeneous collection such as this, where texts which could be described as conforming perfectly to the tenets of the new monasticism are placed side by side with poems perhaps no less Christian, but showing a different pedigree, different sources of inspiration, all conceivable circumstances accounting for such a situation should be examined. While it is possible that at least some of the original booklets were written at the instigation of a lay benefactor, thus reflecting his (or her) tastes and requirements, or that they were the product of the more tolerant reformist wing, I still think it useful to try to find a reading which would justify the heterogeneity of the Exeter Book even in the case it had been compiled in an environment least disposed to any sympathetic gestures towards texts stemming from a tradition which the reformers expressly attempted to replace.

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[108] Cubitt 1997, 88-89.

PART II.

DISSENTING VOICES
IN THE EXETER BOOK

THERE are many levels of heterogeneity in the Exeter Book, some still relatively easily subsumable into a unified perspective, some very prominent, defying all such efforts. The individual poems of the collection seem to offer and propagate two varying concepts of Christian life, one characterized by an ascetic refusal of worldly benefits as vain and transient (found in the major texts, *Christ* and *Guthlac*, but also in numerous shorter pieces, for example *The Seafarer*), the other by their grateful acceptance as God's gifts to mankind (*Fortunes of Men*, *The Husband's Message*). Several texts, however, either lack any Christian framing altogether (*The Wife's Lament*, *Wulf and Eadwacer*, some riddles) or uphold, with perhaps a passing reference to such a frame, attitudes and values associated with the older "heroic" culture (*Widsið* assigning a central role to the primal, unassimilated conception of *lof* and *dom* = "reputation, fame"[109]). Inevitably, attempts have been made to efface some of these differences. For instance, the *Wife's Lament* has been read – sometimes separately, sometimes together with the *Husband's Message* - as a specifically "Germanic" transposition of the imagery found in the *Song of Solomon*;[110] thus the text could be integrated both in terms of genre (allegory) and theme into the contemporary cultural mainstream. On the other hand, the texts which did not admit of such an explanation were interpreted as heirs to earlier oral genres and motives (e. g. *Wulf and Eadwacer* – the *Frauenlied*[111]) and seen as indication of a continued interest in "Germanic antiquities" which even the ideology of the reformed monastic circles had not suppressed. The following analysis aims to look

[109] In Christian context the former term was used prevailingly as an attribute of God, referring either to His splendour or to the praise which the creation renders Him. The latter term often referred to God's judgement. Cf. Robinson 1985, 37-59.

[110] So Swanton, Michael J. "*The Wife's Lament* and *The Husband's Message*: A Reconsideration". *Anglia*, 82 (1964), 269-290; and Bolton, Whitney F. "*The Wife's Lament* and *The Husband's Message*: A Reconsideration Reconsidered". *ASNSL*, 205 (1969), 337-351.

[111] Malone, Kemp. "Two English *Frauenlieder*". *Comparative Literature*, 14 (1962), 106-117. Further as Malone 1962(a).

at selected "problematic" poems mainly with the purpose of confronting these unifying readings with elements in the text which appear - on various levels - distinctly incompatible with them. In some cases, these elements can be identified as "sites of resistance" precluding any single interpretative closure through invalidating the proposed surface meaning without offering a definite alternative. On the other hand, such a revision may also restore some poems to a relatively "mainstream" position within the codex.

1. *WIDSIÐ*

THE first poem in the Exeter Book that poses a serious challenge to the perspective previously established in the codex is *Widsið*; and it would seem that one could hardly wish for a more eminent instance of "incompatibility" with the monastic ideal and, simultaneously, for a weightier indication that Germanic legends and traditions continued to be valued as a matter worth preserving alongside biblical narratives, saints' lives and learned allegories of Christian living. The existence of this composite text, in which three separate catalogues of a) rulers and their peoples, b) tribes, subtribes or regional populations and c) notable figures of the Germanic legendary world have been integrated into a speech of a fictitious "ideal *scop*" which returns, again and again, to the theme of good kingship and the qualities expected of a leader (observance of custom – *"þeawum lifgan"*, l. 11; martial prowess, evident in the passage devoted to Offa, 36-44; and generosity as the most prominent characteristic, noted throughout 65-78 and mentioned again in the lengthy passage on Eormanric, 88-102), has been perceived as proof of a special respect for the "heroic age" subject-matter lasting throughout the Anglo-Saxon period, observable in the aspects of the poem's composition, transmission and reception.

It is generally assumed that the metrical catalogues, for which parallels can be found in Old Norse literature, had existed as poems in their own right before the *Widsið* poet adapted them for his new design; indeed, Kemp Malone argues, on the basis of the geographical area (and, less univocally, the historical period) covered in those passages, that they pre-date the Anglo-Saxon migration from the continental seats.[112] It is difficult to judge what was the precise objective of such pieces, whether

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[112] Malone, Kemp. *Widsith*. Copenhagen: Rosenkilde and Bagger, revised 2nd edition 1962, 80-105. Further as Malone 1962(b).

they were simple mnemonic tools or whether they had any symbolic value like, for example, the lists of real and legendary rulers in royal genealogies of various Anglo-Saxon kingdoms, which located the founder of the house in the mythical time of origins; it would seem, however, that they acquired such a role in *Widsið* by virtue of their relation (at least in the case of the first and third catalogue) to its observations on the issues of kingship, a matter of undoubted importance. Apparently, the information contained in the lists was considered valuable at the time when the poem was composed and this value was further enhanced by the purpose to which it was employed.

Malone also claims that the text of the poem displays spelling forms that can only be explained as dialectal (Anglian, Kentish) and/or archaic, the latter beyond the level of deliberate conservatism occasionally found in late poetic records which can be classified as a mere marker of specific "poetic style" as opposed to the language of prose. He interprets this phenomenon as suggestive of a long history of *textual* transmission of *Widsið* preceding the recording of its single extant copy in the Exeter Book: as successive scribes worked with their respective exemplars, they left unmodified the forms that were no longer clearly intelligible for them due to the development of pronunciation during the Anglo-Saxon period.[113] The presence of such residues would thus attest to the continuous popularity of the poem.

Finally, the allusions to legendary matter in the text are usually interpreted as capturing the earliest stage of its development. If we are to suppose that *Widsið* is adjusted, in general if not in all the particulars,[114] to

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[113] Malone 1962(b), 112-117. It has to be noted that the most remarkable archaisms all occur within the catalogues, which is to say, in view of their presumed original independence, that it may have been those lists only and not the whole text of *Widsið* that the scribes repeatedly copied.

[114] That is, it is not necessary that the recipients be familiar with even the most marginal of the tribes listed, but the more extended references to the achievements and qualities of famous heroes of old should tally with their expectations.

the level of knowledge of the subject common among its prospective audience/readership – otherwise it would presumably be discarded as hopelessly dated – then we must characterize the Anglo-Saxons as showing an almost "antiquarian" reverence of the old tales, an attitude truly unique in their time and place. Not that ancient heirlooms – whether customs, songs or things – would not be respected; but they were used, not kept intact for pious admiration.

This perspective of the poem for a long time determined the primary tasks which scholars set themselves in analysing the text. The greatest part of Malone's 1962 edition, by far the most authoritative and widely used to date, is devoted to reconstructing the original form of *Widsið*, as well as deciphering the proper names used in the poem, not only to enlighten the modern reader but also to reveal the extent to which the Anglo-Saxon tradition preserved an awareness of the events of the migration period. The explanation of the nature of the composition then follows this lead. When he has rid the text of elements that appear irreconcilable with its chief focus on the Germanic world (such as the rather unexpected listing of Israelites, Indians and so on) by marking them as interpolations or scribal errors,[115] Malone is able to draw an imaginary portrait of the author and his approach in creating *Widsið*:

> All the rulers named in the poet's part of the First and Second Fits [...] belong to history and what the poet says of them is true,

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[115] Malone 1962(b), 20-22, 45-47. To do justice to his argument, when he introduces the emendations, his chief criterion is expressly not the discrepancy in subject-matter but the metrical deficiency of the lines and the hardly explicable shift in the geography in one verse (l. 84, placing side by side Medes, Persians and Myrgings), taken as a semantic unit which should be governed by certain logic. On the other hand, the argument of general thematic inconsistency is sounded again when Malone, in a further extension of the principle outlined above, embarks on the "archaeological expedition" of determining the original form of the individual catalogues, especially but not exclusively in places where they were modified to make place for the extended passages introduced by the *Widsið* poet. He concludes that without the problematic lines each of the lists gives a coherent picture of the world as it was known to a person living in the region of the Baltic coast and Cimbric peninsula in the migration period.

so far as we can tell; certainly he avoids tales with a rigor that the modern reader must needs regret [...] His interest in the Germanic heroic age was that of an antiquary and a historian, not that of a professional scop. He thought highly of the scop's calling because he looked upon poetry as the vehicle of history.[116]

From this statement we may infer that in Malone's opinion the poet considered the information presented in the catalogues the hard core of his new text and his objective was to augment and re-organize it so as to enhance its appeal; to this end he fashioned the persona of the *scop* which bound the individual elements into a coherent whole.

Elsewhere in his study, however, Malone places the emphasis rather differently. While he admits that the figure of the virtually omnipresent *scop* as a convenient "mouthpiece" was implicit in the third catalogue (in the *"sohte ic"* – perhaps best rendered as "I went to see" – introductory phrase[117]), thus providing an example of the principle that was subsequently employed in the entire poem, he nevertheless sees a difference in the way in which the figure is developed:

> [the *Widsið* poet] wished above all to create an ideal figure, to make a scop who would tower above all other scops. But the perfect scop, like Chaucer's perfect knight, must have seen the world and wherever he went he must have won praise in high quarters.[118]

Does it mean, then, that we are to read *Widsið* as, primarily, an "Anglo-Saxon Defense of Poetry" (to borrow the title of D. A. Rollman's article[119]), to see all elements in the poem orchestrated so as to give maximum credibility and prestige to the eponymous *scop* as the perfect

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[116] Malone 1962(b), 112.

[117] It is difficult to see why Malone never once entertains the possibility that the poet might have adapted an existing catalogue to his overall design by inserting that phrase and changing the verses accordingly.

[118] Malone 1962(b), 79.

[119] Rollman, David A. "*Widsið* as an Anglo-Saxon Defense of Poetry". *Neophilologus*, 66 (1982), 431-439.

representative of his class, whose members only could provide what the aristocratic culture of which they were a part supposedly valued most – enduring fame that outlasts death? Or, another possibility still, are the references to Widsið's supreme skill and the adequate rewards he got for it designed to establish him as an authority, not so much to put him in the spotlight as to give proper weight to his "well-considered reflections on royal rule",[120] in other words, to make him the ideal person for delivering an Anglo-Saxon "Gouvernail of Princes"? I believe that Malone's instincts were right when he sensed this rift, this "indecision" as to the character and purpose of the persona of Widsið, although generally he makes every effort to present the poem as a masterpiece of careful yet perfectly inobtrusive structuring. It appears that even that scholarly construct, the "original" *Widsið* divested of its more apparent "incongruities", still lacks any stable centre which would govern the meaningful mutual positioning of its elements; it can be said, rather, that the various elements (the "historical" data, the authority of the *scop*, the kingship theme) alternately move into focus, momentarily assuming, as it were, the role of the centre without being distinguished enough to sustain it throughout, to win absolute primacy.

Quite apart from problems concerning the unity of the poem, there also arises the question of the reliability of Widsið as Malone's ideal *scop*. For a recipient unacquainted with the layered character of the text it must come as a surprise and a puzzle that the speaker leaves Ermanaric's model court not only to travel, within the frame of the third catalogue, aroung the Gothic subdominions but, simultaneously, to travel back in time to actually visit the king's remote predecessors – that is, if we ascribe to the Anglo-Saxon audience the same extent of knowledge of these figures as

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[120] Malone 1962(b), 79.

Malone apparently does.[121] It is equally perplexing to find Widsið claim that he was, among many other peoples, also *"mid Myrgingum"* (l.84) when he is introduced in the prologue as a Myrging himself and that information is repeated immediately following the list of tribes (Eadgils, *"frea Myrginga"* [lord of the Myrgings], handed to him his *"fæder eþel"* [inherited land] upon return from Ermanaric, 93-96); surely it goes without saying that he must have stayed with his own people? In this case the disparity is evident even if one does not possess any extra knowledge either of the make-up of the text or of the various tribes of the Cimbric peninsula.[122] Widsith, despite his stylization as the exemplary *scop*, thus appears as a rather fallible narrator.

Of the two qualifications concerning the coherence of the text, the fact that it is extremely difficult to construe a single unified reading for *Widsið* does not challenge the initial premise that its survival can be interpreted as an indication that the Anglo-Saxons who copied the poem, who read or listened to it, were primarily interested in narratives of the Germanic "heroic age"; after all, the three themes mentioned above are all highly appropriate for such a context. The presence of the unreliable narrator, however, poses important questions regarding the reception of the poem. The fact that Widsið is allowed to travel back in time may merely suggest that those involved in the production and transmission of

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[121] This issue is unrelated to the problem of the *scop*'s recognized supernatural longevity which is functional in the poem; moving against time is not. More instances of such merging of temporal levels could be named (such as the enumeration of several Danish kings from various dynasties in the list of peoples and their rulers and in the narrative passage which forms its extension, where logic would require that each tribe be named only once, ideally coupled with a figure of a special significance, i.e the founder of the house or the most distinguished leader); but although these may go against our idea of what is reasonable, none of them actually goes against the idea of what is possible, which is the case here.

[122] A similar problem arises in the confrontation of Widsið's statements concerning Ælfwine: if the *scop* stayed with the king in person, why does he report that he has *heard* of Ælfwine's unbounded generosity? Whichever way we construe it, the passage undermines some of the speaker's claims: either to a superior skill in poetry (he is unable to make his narrative consistent) or to the special favours that were everywhere his due (the king, though liberal enough, did not reward Widsið himself).

the text were not such connoiseurs as to be aware of the historical context of the legendary personages, that what they appreciated in the poem was rather its general association with the "heroic times" – a minor adjustment only of the basic presumption concerning the nature of the poem's appeal. The latter instance of the *scop*'s fallibility may have a more far-reaching impact, as it emerges independently of any external data: if the chief authority in the poem appears as inconsistent in one respect, what is the value of the other information which he presents? Having lost the *ideal scop*, we also lose the *expert* view of both the Germanic world of old and its principles of kingship. The frame of reference remains essentially the same, what is affected is the status of the text: instead of a self-assured manifesto of the "heroic age" culture *Widsið* acquires a more humble position – the poem certainly offers its reflection, but without the claim to achieve its validation. Even the "purified" text, then, does not represent a wholly confident, uncomplicated assertion of "heroic values" and common Germanic legacy.

However, as this work primarily focuses not on individual poems but on the Exeter Book as a whole and its position in relation to the monastic culture responsible for its production, it is high time to part with the *Widsið* of traditional scholarship and to look instead – as Joyce Hill suggested as early as 1984[123] – at *Widsið* as it was recorded in that manuscript, the only real *Widsið* that we have. What was it that the editor or the scribe – if no one else – read? At this point, that is not to ask what meaning they construed for the text, but what they recognized in its names and allusions to legend, though the former apparently follows from the latter.

For one, they almost certainly thought that the *scop* had stayed with the classical *Persum* (Persians), no matter what Scandinavian region the

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[123] Hill, Joyce. "*Widsith* and the Tenth Century". *NM*, 85 (1984), 305-315.

verse might have originally named;[124] it may be assumed, with equal degree of assurance, that they interpreted the immediately preceding *Moidum* as Medes, associated with Persians both by geographical proximity and Classical tradition, despite the fact that the form is unique in the Anglo-Saxon corpus and the phonetic development that would produce it allegedly impossible.[125] Whether it was the Exeter Book scribe who, perhaps prompted by the presence of the previously mentioned items in l. 84, prefixed the verses listing the Israelites (*Israhelum, Ebreum*), Assyrians (*Exsyringum*), Indians (*Indeum*[126]) and Egyptians (*Egyptum*) or whether they had already featured in his exemplar is impossible to decide and, at any rate, of no consequence in this discussion; what is important is that they figure in the manuscript text at all. Other names may have evoked biblical or "oriental" setting rather than be readily identified with a specific tribe of the Germanic world: Gösta Langenfelt suggests the potential association of *Mofdingum* (l. 85[127]) with Moabites, *Amothingum* with Ammonites, *Eastþyringum* with Tyrians (both l. 86), *Eolum* with Elamites, *Istum* with the Philistines and *Idumingum* with Idumeans (all l. 87).[128] Admittedly, some of these proposed links appear rather strained, but the same objection may be raised regarding Malone's reconstructions; and if we ask whether a person living in an environment heavily stressing the importance of biblical tradition and Latin learning would be more likely to see in the *Idumingas* a rather marginal Livonian tribe than to

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[124] Malone 1962(b), 46. As one of the possible explanations for the occurence of the word in the text Malone proposes a scribal error that substituted an initial "p" for the similarly shaped letter "wynn" of the original version, which supposedly referred here to the Norwegian *Versir* (OE *mid Wersum*).

[125] Malone 1962(b), 46-47. He associates the name with the "Møn-dwellers of the Danish archipelago".

[126] Sometimes emended to *Iudeum*, presumably to avoid the inconvenient geographical leap which emerges with the manuscript reading. Langenfelt, Gösta. "Studies on *Widsith*". *Namn och Bygd*, 47 (1959), 70-111.

[127] The line numbers are cited according to Krapp and Dobbie 1936. Malone assumes that the present form of this passage resulted from an extensive scribal confusion and subsequent re-ordering of the text to restore alliteration and emends accordingly.

[128] Langenfelt 1959, 70-111.

recognize a name which was made familiar by the above sources, we may be inclined to accept Langenfelt's point. The reference to Alexander the Great (*Alexandreas*) placed at the head of the catalogue of rulers extends the focus in a similar direction – towards the space covered in classical/scriptural writings. This shift may be interpreted in various ways: as a merger of two dominant traditions (native and Latinate) that may have strengthened the authority of the speaker[129] or as a reinforcement of one of the main themes in the text (the "encyclopaedic" aspect[130]) which, during the poem's history, perhaps overshadowed the other two (the "defense of poetry", the issues of kingship).

Alongside this largely unequivocal development concerning the presumed connotations of individual names as perceived in the environment that produced the Exeter Book, there may have existed another, much more difficult to characterize as to its effect on the understanding of the poem. Most scholars studying *Widsið* have commented on the presence in the lists of items that can be read both as proper names and as common nouns. Strictly speaking, these can be divided into two categories: expressions that refer to a quality appropriate for or remarkable in their bearer (e.g. *"hringweald"* (l. 34) – "ring-ruler", *"breoca"* (l. 25) – "(ring-/shield-?)breaker", *"holen"* (l. 33) or *"helm"* (l. 29) – "protector" for a prince; *"brondingas"* (l. 25) – "sword men", *"rondingas"* (l. 24) – "shield men" for a people) and words that are in fact terms or that have a common reference (*"wald"* (l. 30) – "ruler", *"henden"* (l. 21) – "prince"; *"wicingas"* (l. 60) – "warriors", *"hæleþ"* (l. 81) – "heroes, men", *"hæðnan"* (l. 81) – "pagans").[131] Many of them produce, at best, only a

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[129] To do justice to the complexity of the matter, it should be noted that for a learned audience, at least, this extension may have had a precisely opposite effect, as the double reference to the Israelites would certainly not add to the speaker's credit (unless, which I deem improbable, they would construe it as referring to Israel and Judah, respectively – a possibility suggested in Malone 1962(b), 143).

[130] Hill 1984, 309.

[131] Hill 1984, 309-310, 312-314 and Malone 1962(b), *passim*.

doubtful association with figures and tribes known from history and legend and some editors therefore preferred not to capitalize the most outstanding instances from the latter group.[132] The first category yields names evocative enough to be taken for legitimate components of the catalogues even if their bearers had been forgotten or, as Joyce Hill argues, may indeed never have existed. They could thus be viewed as an extension of the "encyclopaedic" principle mentioned above, with one significant modification: an important part of *Widsið*'s appeal would then consist in presenting, alongside the familiar, also the unheard-of, the former lending credit to the latter. That the late Anglo-Saxon period found pleasure in the exotic is attested by texts such as the *Wonders of the East* and *Alexander's Letter to Aristotle*, and *Widsið* may have been perceived as sounding a similar note, though it only "discovered" new lands in the Germanic world. The situation is rather different with the items falling into the second category, especially in case of the tribal names. It is at least questionable whether they would be taken for a plausible "epic fiction"[133] or whether, as seems likely, their frequency as common nouns would stand in the way of such an association. Then they would represent a visible rupture in the established catalogue pattern, adding another problematic element to the *scop*'s account of his travellings.

Just as the evocative power of individual names could have changed in the time that passed between the composition of the catalogues and the recording of the text in the Exeter Book, so may have changed the character of allusions to some legends as the tales developed, augmented by new epizodes and motives. One of the more remarkable discrepancies perceived in *Widsið* is the difference between the role ascribed to Ermanaric in the body of the poem, where he is presented as a ruler that

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[132] So Krapp and Dobbie 1936 in case of *"wicingas"*, *"hæleþ"* and *"hæðnan"*.

[133] A phrase used by Joyce Hill to describe the mechanism involved in the interpretation of another of such problematic names, the *"Sweordwere"* (swordsmen) of l. 62, which Malone traces to Tacitean Suardones.

deserves a foremost position for his fame and royal qualities (he is the only person mentioned in all the three thematic divisions focusing on kings, peoples and heroes respectively, everywhere assuming a place of importance[134]), and the picture of this king sketched in the prologue which uses the derogatory expressions *"wraþ"* – "angry, hostile, cruel" – and *"wærloga"* – "oathbreaker". Such a disparity raises serious questions concerning the speaker's stance in relation to the following narrative. If the speaker introduces Widsið as a person of experience (he *"mæst... folca geondferde"* – "has travelled among the greatest number of nations", 2-3), successful in his vocation (*"oft he on flette geþah / mynelicne maþþum"* – "he often (always?) received desirable gifts in the hall"), and concludes the poem by pointing out that it is men like this *scop* who are able to secure lasting fame for those who wish to preserve a memory of their achievements, is it not saying the very opposite to let Widsið's account of his benefactor be directly confronted with a contrary tale in what is, from a structural perspective, a superordinate unit? This situation was early perceived as a major problem in interpreting the poem. Its apparent untenability led Kemp Malone to suspect that it may be merely an effect of modern interpretation of the introductory passage; he therefore embarked upon a painstaking analysis of the occurences of the problematic expressions in the Anglo-Saxon corpus as well as the evolution of the legend in England and on the continent. He concluded that the application of the phrase *"wraþ wærloga"* (the line reads *"wraþes wærlogan"* (gen.) in concord with the *"Eormanrices"* of the preceding verse) to a sovereign would have contradicted the established usage which reserved it for subordinates who had broken the bond of loyalty to their lord (retainers in

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[134] Together with Attila, he begins the list of rulers proper. He is given precedence, though indirectly, over the mighty and generous kings referred to in the list of tribes: the *scop* stayed longest with him and his report on Ermanaric's munificence is the most detailed. Finally, the list of heroes begins with identifying the best men (*"gesiþa þa selestan"*, l. 110) with Ermanaric's people (*"innweorud Eormanrices"*, l. 111).

relation to their leader, sinners and rebellious angels in relation to God); that its appearance in the text was due to a "trick of the light" which disguised the actual syntactical construction of the phrase that should read *"wraþ wærlogum"*, i.e. "hostile <u>to</u> oathbreakers"; and finally, that it was a very oblique, almost vindicatory reference to the king's merciless dispatch of Sunilda, the wife of such a traitor in the earliest version of the tale.[135]

This may well be true of the hypothetical original *Widsið*, but as for the *Widsið* of the Exeter Book, the association that was most readily available at that time was with all probability much less favourable. By the tenth century, Ermanaric had developed into a wicked tyrant, as the allusions in *Deor* make clear: he is portrayed as a *"grim cyning"* (l. 23) who oppressed his subjects, so that many wished for the fall of his dominion. Even if the phrase in *Widsið* had been interpreted along the lines proposed by Malone, *"wraþ"* would have acquired the more sinister overtones of "cruelty" rather than "stern justice". But despite the reservations that he expressed, we should not even dismiss entirely the possibility that those who came into contact with the poem at the time when the collection came into being may also have misconstrued the syntax of the phrase, reaching the same conclusion as many modern scholars. From the admittedly fragmented evidence of the Anglo-Saxon corpus several observations may be inferred: in poetry, *"wærloga"* is used – with the single exception of the present text – in religious contexts, to refer to demons and heavy sinners, especially the persecutors of the faithful; it also appears in two Wufstan's homilies[136] in what is clearly one of his characteristic synonymical set phrases – *"wedlogan ond wærlogan"*, as part of a similarly ordered list of sins and/or crimes to be persecuted or avoided. This range suggests two directions in which the meaning of the expression may have developed: a

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[135] Malone 1962(b), 29-35 and 147-149.
[136] No. 50: 'Larspell' and no. 60: 'Be hæðendome' in Napier, Arthur S. *Wulfstan: Sammlung der ihm zugeschriebenen Homilien nebst Untersuchungen über ihre Echtheit I. Text und Varianten*. Weidmann: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1883.

shift towards a less specific reference, which could extend its applicability to persons who have offended God by their behaviour, and, on the other hand, an opposite tendency to reduce it to the literal sense of "one who belies, betrays (*"loga"* from *"leogan"*) a compact (*"wær"*)", thus producing an almost legal term unconcerned with the power-relationship among the people involved. Either of the variants raises at least a remote possibility that the phrase in *Widsið* could have been reconciled with Ermanaric's reputation in the version of his tale current in 10th century England. When Malone argues that the only sources in which Ermanaric is portrayed as not only ruthless but also treacherous or guileful are the Quedlinburg and Würzburg annals, both relatively late, he seems to overlook the indications, however scarce and marginal, that this aspect of the king's personality may not have been unknown in England either. *Deor* speaks of his *"wylfenne geþoht"* ("wolvish mind", l. 22); and the wolf, apart from being renowned for its savagery and bloodthirstiness, was likewise, though not primarily, associated with treachery for its habit to turn against its own kind – it was the *"felafæcne deor"* ["very deceitful animal"], as *Maxims I* put it (l. 147). In the passage from *Beowulf* which likens the precious collar that the hero received from Hroþgar to the famous necklace Brisingamen (OE *"Brosinga mene"*), briefly sketching the history of the latter (Beo 1197-1201), Hama is said to have fled *"searoniðas //* *Eormenrices"* – "Ermanaric's treacherous hostility" (1200b-1201a). The fact is that the unfavourable view of Ermanaric presented in the prologue of *Widsið* agrees with all the other references to this king in the whole Anglo-Saxon corpus and that his positive portrayal is unique to that part of the poem spoken by the persona of the eponymous *scop*. The apparent disparity thus remains an element that any reading of the text must tackle.

As the previous consideration has shown, though *Widsið* may have originated as a text fully steeped in the poetic tradition associated with the *comitatus* culture, focused on themes that may be recognized as central

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in that context (the securing of lasting reputation, its preconditions and the role of poets as the guardians of the tradition in which it is perpetuated), it contained, from the very start, elements that were in conflict with this "mission", and these became more evident and numerous with the progress of time, as the poem was modified in transmission and as the legends to which it alluded were themselves changing. At the time when it was recorded in the Exeter Book, the values that it represented were on the decline – at least in the monastic community responsible for the production of texts – as the reform movement promoted the more radical Christian stance of detachment from the world and tended to turn to Latin literary culture rather than to indigenous sources; in that respect, *Widsið* was destined to hold at best a marginal position. Simultaneously, the changes referred to above influenced negatively also its position within the other established discourse – the "heroic" poetic tradition, since its allegiance to that system remained undisputed while its authority became subject to question.

2. *Maxims I*

THE next poem that seems to introduce a certain problematic element into the make-up of the Exeter Book is *Maxims I*. The text remains puzzling to a large extent because of the apparently casual way in which it combines religious and decidedly secular matter, producing a jarring sound in the ear of a modern reader. The observations that it makes on the "ways of the world" alternate between two modes: what is (fact) and what is proper (advice); as for their thematic range, this is best described by the position of a specific statement in a field defined by two axes: spiritual/material sphere and communal/personal one, when the statement refers to human world; there is also a less numerous group of observations concerning the natural world, which, however, can usually be construed as accompanying a comment on human affairs.

To relate this scheme to the reality of the text, I would like to consider several examples. The religious element in the poem is quite strong: direct references to God dispersed throughout the text portray Him as the unchanging Creator who appoints the rules which the course of events follows, who governs the world and endows mankind with *"lif ond lænne willan"* – "life and passing joys", with everything that is to be had on earth; these are statements of fact that involve the whole community. Men's relationship to God is reduced to two basic obligations – to acknowledge Him and to show their gratitude, which may be expressed as injuctions (*"God sceal mon ærest hergan"* – "Man must first of all praise God", l. 4) or obliquely, as statements (*"dol biþ se þe his dryhten nat / to þæs oft cymeð deað unþinged // snotre men sawlum beorgað, / healdað hyra soð mid ryhte ·"* – "Foolish is he who does not know God, to such a one death often comes unexpected; wise men guard their soul, they rightly keep their truth", 35-36). In this way *Maxims I* define the position of

humanity in the world and the relationship of God to both, thus establishing the "coordinates" of the space that the poem describes, which is primarily human community. Even here, though, spiritual advice finds its place: self-control, to give but one instance, is undoubtedly both a personal and a public virtue ("· *styran sceal mon strongum mode* ·" – "Man must govern a bold mind", l. 50). Further down on the spiritual/material scale may be placed observations concerning the proper functioning of the society, from very general remarks (wise men should converse together, settle disputes and restore peace, 18-21) through statements on the appropriate conduct of respective estates and the division of roles in a community (the royal pair must prove themselves by magnanimity, a nobleman should practice the art of war while his wife must support him with good counsel, be generous to his retinue and know and keep to the rules of etiquette; 81-92) to specific comments on the attributes of different professions, situations and even important objects ("*scyld sceal cempan / sceaft reafere // sceal bryde beag / bec leornere // husl halgum men / hæþnum synne*" – "shield belongs to the warrior, spear to the plunderer, jewel to the bride, book to the scholar; the Host to the saints and sins to the pagans", 129-131; "*gearo sceal guðbord / gar on sceafte // ecg on sweorde / ond ord spere*" – "shield must be ready, spear must be on shaft, sword must be sharp and lance pointed", 201-202). It is in this category that we find most often concepts and images associated with the *comitatus* culture, be it the heavy focus on the theme of warfare or the picture of the society that the verses communicate. In this respect, *Maxims I* resemble the immediately preceding *Fortunes of Men*, which likewise present God as presiding over a world perfectly devoid of all religious concerns, where the only detail that reveals the development of the society from pre-Christian times is the important position of the "*bocere*" – "scholar, scribe". Finally, on the lowest end of the scale outlined above stand statements referring to the facts and necessities of everyday life ("*lef mon læces behofað*" – "an infirm man needs

a doctor", l. 45; *"muþa gehwylc mete þearf / mæl sceolon tidum gongan"* – "every mouth needs food, meals should come at appointed time", l. 124). The fact is that the poem seems to lack any clearly definable structure, moving at random among the categories outlined above and skipping from theme to theme, which makes it difficult even to imagine that it could have ever been interpreted as a unit.

However, the community that produced the Exeter Book could find such a heterogeneous composition perfectly acceptable, since the text could be referred to a universally recognized model. A certain parallel for both the genre and the loose structure of *Maxims I* may be found in the text that commanded the highest authority in the monastic environment (and outside it) – the Bible. The book of *Proverbs* does not only comprise two collections of the so-called *Proverbs of Salomon*, which are mostly concerned with the rules of moral conduct and which organize their argument rather strictly either on thematic basis (first collection – a likely model for the Exeter Book *Precepts*) or in a series of antithetical statements (the greater part of the second collection), but also several minor compilations which, though generally placing greater stress on spiritual matters than the Old English poem, show a similar fluctuation among themes and occasionally also a deal of interest in the more practical aspects of life, including observations on the functioning of society. Prov. 28:15-16 is thus concerned with principles of royal rule ("As a roaring lion, and a ranging bear; so is a wicked ruler over the poor people. The prince that wanteth understanding is also a great oppressor: but he that hateth covetousness shall prolong his days."); Prov. 23:1-3 present another aspect of the relationship between a prince and a commoner ("When thou sittest to eat with a ruler, consider diligently what is before thee: And put a knife to thy throat, if thou be a man given to appetite. Be not desirous of his dainties: for they are deceitful meat."). Prov. 27:23-26 commends good husbandry:

Be thou diligent to know the state of thy flocks, and look well to thy herds. For riches are not for ever: and doth the crown endure to every generation? The hay appeareth, and the tender grass sheweth itself, and herbs of the mountains are gathered. The lambs are for thy clothing, and the goats are the price of the field. And thou shalt have goats' milk enough for thy food, for the food of thy household, and for the maintenance for thy maidens.

The latter section of the second book of the *Proverbs of Salomon* likewise contains passages of this character. To illustrate my argument in full, it would be necessary to reproduce the lengthy sequence of comments on disparate topics as it appears in the text; for reasons of space, however, let a brief quote suffice:

Children's children are the crown of old men; and the glory of children are their fathers. Excellent speech becometh not a fool: much less do lying lips a prince. A gift is as a precious stone in the eyes of him that hath it: whithersoever it turneth, it prospereth. He that covereth a transgression seeketh love; but he that repeateth a matter separateth very friends.

Prov. 17:6-9

Evidently, the *Proverbs* range from the spiritual to the material sphere, from the personal to the public with the same ease as their vernacular counterpart; other instances of such a mix could be found in Prov. 18:13-24, 20:13-30 or the whole of Prov. 25. A precedent whose authority and orthodoxy could not be disputed therefore existed for the type of text represented by *Maxims I*: a mixed collection of proverbial wisdom concerning all aspects of human life.

This is not to say that the Old English poem was in any way directly modelled on the scriptural text. Though it would be definitely misleading to see it as a repository of native wisdom assembled over the ages and overlaid by a thin veneer of Christianity, the type of verse employed in some passages, tentatively interpreted as a specific Old

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English development of a common Germanic form used for gnomic verse, suggests that some layers of the composition may indeed be very old.[137] The point is that the biblical example provided a reading context which integrated *Maxims I* smoothly into the mainstream of the Exeter Book. In contrast to the previously examined *Widsið*, then, the marginal position of the poem is more seeming than real.

But before I proceed to the next item on the list of potentially problematic texts, I would like to add a brief comment on the ostensible lack of ordering in *Maxims I*. Having determined an interpretative strategy that could justify it, I am compelled to admit that in this respect the poem may need less support than it appears at a cursory reading. Of the three sections to which the text is divided in the manuscript, the third shows the greatest degree of fluctuation among topics, thus representing perhaps the closest analogy to the passages from the *Proverbs* mentioned above. The first two sections, on the other hand, seem to follow a pattern that could best be likened to a meandering river with numerous branches and billabongs: it is usually possible to detect a dominant theme which the section elaborates and to which it returns after digressions that develop a minor topic introduced, as it were, in passing as an aspect of the major theme.

A summary reproduction of the argument of the first section should provide some support for this proposition. The introductory verses merely define the genre of the poem as wisdom literature, yet they also outline the primary motif of the section or, more precisely, one of its aspects: *"gleawe men sceolon gieddum wrixlan"* ("wise men must interchange words

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[137] See Bliss, Alan J. "Single Half-lines in Old English Poetry". *N&Q*, 18 (1971), 442-449 and "The Origin and Structure of Old English Hypermetric Line". *N&Q*, 19 (1972), 242-248. Noting certain affinities between the Old Norse *ljóðaháttr* and a) Old English verse printed in modern editions as a more or less regular normal line followed by a short line or b) verse printed as hypermetric lines, he argues that with all probability they represent two different developments of an ancestor form reserved, as the *ljóðaháttr*, for wisdom poetry.

of matter", l. 4). The poem then properly turns to the beginning of all things – to God; He endowed men with life and every good thing that it brings and will remind them of these gifts (4b-6) – a statement that may be echoed in the last sentence of the section, which insists on the necessity of repaying favours to the one who gave them (l. 70). The following passage returns to the theme announced in the introduction, the individual steps presenting, as it were, various facets of one phenomenon: God provided men with different spirits, different languages, established a multitude of nations with separate customs (12b-18a); wise men must reconcile differences among people (18a-23a). The subsequent reference to the bond between man and woman, which may be seen as a specific extension of the previously developed principle, produces the first digression on the theme of birth and death as its inevitable counterpart through which God maintains balance in the world (24-34). The link to the following series of comments on the roots of wisdom and folly and the sources of happiness and misfortune (35-39a) is smooth enough – death is said to surprise the man who does not recognize God – although the rest of that subsection is markedly heterogeneous. More puzzling still is the passage describing the miseries and despair of a blind man, claiming that God may change his fate if his heart is pure (39b-44), unless we dare to interpret it rather violently as a truly surprising elaboration of the preceding declaration that innocent heart ensures happiness. The sentence *"lef mon læces behofað"* – "An infirm/weak man needs a doctor" (l. 45) may be construed as a kind of semantic *apo koinou* which looks simultaneously back to the reference to the miraculous healing of the blind (43-44) and forward to the observation concerning the proper upbringing of children (45b-49), for which it may provide a loose analogy. The text then returns again to the initial theme of agreement among men and settling of differences, "illustrating" the topic with natural analogies (50-58a). The rest of the section (58b-70), however, abandons even this free associative principle that so far supplied the text

with a minimum coherence; the matter that it brings together shows no relation to any of the themes previously treated, with the exception of the last sentence that, as has been noted already, may represent an appropriate finale as it returns to the concept voiced at the beginning. The same pattern may also be detected in the second section, which shows a similar "disintegration" towards the end with a final return to the introductory theme.

It is important to state clearly that this analysis which attempted to trace a certain logic operative in the text by no means aims to establish a unified reading of the poem; the tensions and inconsequences must be recognized even as we admit that the genre as exemplified in the biblical *Proverbs* did not require coherence as a universal rule and so its absence would not be so disquieting for readers approaching *Maxims I* through that code. The objective was to show that the poem could well have occupied a middle ground on the scale defined on one side by the strictly ordered first collection of *Salomon's proverbs* and the relatively unorganized lesser collections on the other.

3. *WULF AND EADWACER, THE WIFE'S LAMENT, THE HUSBAND'S MESSAGE*

In contrast with the previously established practice, when each chapter was devoted to the examination of one poem only, the following analysis will deal with three poems – *Wulf and Eadwacer, The Wife's Lament* and *The Husband's Message*. This approach is partly necessitated by the avowed purpose of the present part of my study to reconsider the earlier proposals for the reintegration of some of these "problematic" texts into the predominantly religious context of the Exeter Book: as such attempts often depend on reading the poems in conjunction, it seems convenient to deal with them in like manner, to avoid unwelcome repetition of arguments. It also reflects the fact that in case of the two women's monologues one text immediately invokes the other as the closest frame of reference, there being no other poems of this "genre" either in the Exeter Book or outside it.

In comparison with the texts examined so far, *Wulf and Eadwacer* and *The Wife's Lament* represent a problem of a different order and magnitude altogether. With their theme of frustrated love-relationship they seem doubly out of place in a document produced in a reformist monastic environment (unless they were understood as vivid illustrations of the anxieties of married life as opposed to secluded celibacy along the line developed much later in the Middle English *Hali Meidenhad*[138]). It is

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[138] The following extract from *Hali Meidenhad* provides an apt summary of the theme of both poems: "Þu seist þat muche confort haueð wif of hire were, þat beoð wel iGedered, & eiðer is alles weis ipaied of oðer. Gea. Ah hit is selt sene on eorðe. Beo nu þah swuch: hare confort & hare delit, hwerin is hit al meast, bute i flesches fulðe oðer in weorldes uanite, þat wurðeð al to sorhe & to care on ende? nawt ane on ende, ah eauer umbehwile; for moni þing schal ham wraððen & gremen, & makie to carien, & for hore oðres uuel sorhen & siken. Moni þing ham schal twinnen & tweinen, þat lað es leouie men; & deaðes dunt on ende, eiðer fram oðer. Swa þat ne beð hit nanes weis þat tat elne ne schal enden in earmðe; & eauer se hare murhðe wes mare toGederes, se þe sorhe is sarre at te twinninge. wa is him forþi, as seint Austin seið, þat is wið to muche luue to eni eorðliche þing iteiet, for eauer beð þat swete aboht wið twa dale of bittre, & a

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thus almost inevitable that some scholars should have tried to reinterpret them in conformity with what is accepted as the established thematic range of Old English poetry in general;[139] thus Marijane Osborn read *Wulf and Eadwacer* as a mother's lament over the bleak fate of her son[140] and *Wife's Lament* was repeatedly construed – less inappropriately than it may seem – as a retainer's account of his separation from his lord[141] (of that more below). The present study does not propose to furnish yet another interpretation of the texts in question; it aims to determine their position in relation to the two dominant traditions within Old English poetry

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fals winne wið moni sar tene. Ah wel is hire þat luueð godd; for him ne mai ha nanes weis,--bute gif ha lihe him, & his luue leaue--neauer mare leosen. Ah schal ifinden him ai swettere & sauurure, fram worlde in-to worlde, a on ecnesse." ["You say that a wife derives much comfort from her husband, when they are well matched, and that each profits from the other. Yes. But this is seldom seen on earth. But even though such be their comfort and delight, where does it lie most if not in the filth of the flesh and worldly vanity, that comes all to sorrow and care in the end? And not in the end only, but every now and then: for many things will anger and harm them, and bring care, and make them sorrow and sigh for their mate. Many things which are hateful to those that love will part and divide them; and in the end, the stroke of death will separate one from the other. So it is impossible that the comfort should not end in misery; and the greater their happiness together, the worse the sorrow in parting. Therefore, as St Augustine says, those are miserable that are attached through too much love to any worldly thing, for the sweetness is ever bought with twice as much bitterness and every false joy with many a grievous torment. But well it is for the woman that loves God; for she can never lose Him, unless she lies to Him and leaves His love. She will find Him ever more the sweeter and more savoury, from this world to the next, for all eternity."] *Hali Meidenhad: an Alliterative Homily of the Thirteenth Century*. F.J. Furnivall, ed. London: Early English Text Society, 1922, 38-39. Celibacy and chaste life as means of detachment from the outer world were important points in the ideology of the Benedictine reform; cf. p. 62 in the second chapter of part I of this study. At the same time, the fact that *Hali Meidenhad* is a didactic treatise, not an imaginative reconstruction of such a situation, and that it is expressly addressed to a female reader makes its position hardly comparable to that of *Wulf and Eadwacer* and *The Wife's Lament*. Such a reading of the two poems must then remain at best a very remote possibility.

[139] The basic presumption (not altogether mistaken, as I will show later on) being that when Old English poetry treats of the relationship between man and woman, it is regularly from its "institutional" rather than personal aspect; this is to some extent true also of the third "love-poem" to be treated in this chapter, *The Husband's Message*.

[140] Osborn, Marijane. "The Text and Context of *Wulf and Eadwacer*" in *The Old English Elegies: New Essays in Criticism and Research*. Martin Green, ed. Rutherford, Madison and Teaneck, N.J.: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press 1983, 174-189.

[141] So Bambas, Rudolf C. "Another View of the Old English *The Wife's Lament*". *JEGP*, 62 (1963), 303-309, and Stevens, Martin. "The Narrator of *The Wife's Lament*". *NM*, 69 (1968), 72-90.

(secular-heroic and religious) and the interpretative context that they provide.

It will be immediately noticed that, unlike most of the other "worldly-minded" poems recorded in the Exeter Book (e.g. *Widsið*, *The Husband's Message*), the two texts contain no direct reference to the Deity; the only other exception being *The Ruin* and the riddles. In other respects, they occupy a truly unique position in the Old English poetic corpus, as far as its inevitably fragmentary nature of permits us to judge: first, as "love-poems" (*The Husband's Message* providing but a partial analogy here, cf. footnote 139 on the previous page), and second, as women's elegies. The autonomous "autobiographical" statements by male speakers with analogical presence of an elegiac element are, in comparison, quite numerous (we may name *The Wanderer*, *The Seafarer*, *The Riming Poem*, *Resignation* and *Deor*, all in the Exeter Book), closer in form to each other and, moreover, they are backed by the presence of similarly construed elegiac passages in the longer narrative poems, such as *Beowulf*, *Guthlac*, *Christ and Satan* or (in a less comprehensive manner) *Andreas*; all these qualities combine in conferring upon them the status of a more or less regular development within the tradition of Old English poetry.[142] This imbalance appears all the more conspicuous for the fact that *Beowulf*, for example, contains at least two narrative situations which could have easily been developed into a lament by a female speaker (they even include a

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[142] The elegiac passages in the pronouncedly Christian narrative poems are listed and analysed in Frey 1963, 293-302. Frey points out the relatively low degree of contextual integration characteristic for these "condensed" laments; in other words, the immediate motivation for their inclusion is appropriate (a moment of misery) but the facts of the narrative often do not correspond with the specific development of the motives typically attending the "genre" (thus in *Andreas*, the only occasion for the saint's self-presentation as an exile in his complaint is his financial problem which does not permit him to embark on a voyage to Mermedonia). The relevant passages in *Beowulf*, traditionally called The Lament of the Last Survivor (l. 2247-66) and Old Man's Lament for His Son (2444-62) have been related to the so-called Exeter Book elegies by Ida L. Gordon in her edition of *The Seafarer*, (Gordon, Ida L., ed. *The Seafarer*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1979, 15). She, too, notes the comparative independence of these passages on the given narrative situation.

reference to an actual speech act taking place) and which are directly comparable in standing to the scenes introducing the previously mentioned elegiac passages ascribed to men.[143]

The absence of the female voice appears especially striking in comparison with the role of women in Old English poetry in general; in the extant texts women figure largely and they are certainly not assigned to marginal or subordinate positions. Christian epic literature especially has a predilection for strong female characters, who are made the protagonists of *Elene*, *Judith* and *Juliana*, thus more than balancing the list of male heroes, celebrated in *Guthlac* or *Andreas*. The secular poetry, too, shows a substantial degree of interest in a woman's situation in the world of the *comitatus* and her perspective of it – and the picture it conveys is remarkably varied. *Maxims I* devote more space to the description of the exemplary noblewoman's qualities and duties than to that of her husband's (Max I 84b-91); Ealhhild, the wife of Ermanaric, merits a note alongside the famous hero-kings in *Widsið* precisely for her excellence in

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[143] The "Lament of the Last Survivor" can be viewed as an extra extension of the account relating the discovery and origin of the treasure which the dragon, the last of Beowulf's opponents, guards in an abandoned barrow. The "Old Man's Lament for His Son" is not a monologue but a detailed evocation in 3rd person of the thoughts of a parent stricken by the execution of his son; in narrative technique, though not in function, it can be compared to the 3rd person passages in the first half of *The Wanderer* (l. 29b-57). It is introduced, ostensibly by Beowulf himself as he recalls his youth, as a parallel to Hreðel's situation after the accidental killing of his firstborn by a younger son, though in several details the correspondence falters. The scenes which could be seen as potentially giving occasion to a lament by a woman – or a more extensive description of her sorrow – are Hildeburh's burying of her son and brother, l. 1071-1080a and 1114-1118a (this is a part of one of the many *Beowulf* "digressions", the tale of Hroþgar's scop of the feud between Frisians and "Half-Danes"; the whole narrative is framed by referrences to Hildeburh's sad fate, so her role in this passage is quite important) and the account of Beowulf's funeral, l. 3150-3155a; there an unnamed woman of the Geats is reported to sing a lament and to express her fears of future invasions upon the now unprotected people – the latter information is given in form of an indirect speech which, nevertheless, never departs from a simple stating of facts. However, a disinterested study of this subject has to take into account the possibility that the lost final section of *Guthlac* – following after the scene in which Guthlac's companion and relative brings the news of the saint's death to his sister, which prompts him to utter his elegiac speech referred to above – might have contained a relation of a similar reaction on her part.

that field (Wid 99-102); Hildegund embodies the voice of the code of heroic ethic in *Waldere* (WaldA 1-27). The Finnsburh episode in *Beowulf* pays as much attention to the questions of honour entailed in the uneasy truce between Finn and the lordless "Half-Danes" as to the predicament of Hildeburh, deprived in two fights of brother, son and husband (Beo 1063-1159a); and if that is perhaps the most notable example of a less affirmative female view of the imperatives of the code of honour, another is afforded by the presumed future misery of Freawaru, caught up in a similar situation in her marriage to Ingeld (Beo 2024a-2069a). In the character of Queen Wealhþeow the image of the recognized lady of the royal household is combined with that of the innocently suffering woman developed in the references to her nephew's treacherous treatment of her sons (cf. Beo 612b-624 and 1017b-1019). Alain Renoir reduced the variety illustrated in the above examples to a single pattern; looking beyond the moment related in the extant poems and pursuing the development of the characters in other versions of their tales,[144] he claims that misfortune, not happiness is the established lot of female figures in Old English secular poetry and ventures to speak in this respect of a tradition of suffering women that, in his opinion, supplies the reading context for *The Wife's Lament* and *Wulf and Eadwacer*.[145] It is the more remarkable, then, that this theme, so strongly present in the literature even if we do not accept Renoir's sweeping view, should only have produced such a scant record of texts where women are actually given voice to speak of their experience. Yet, despite the apparent fertility of the ground and the

[144] Ealhhild is tentatively identified with Sunilda, in later reworkings of Jordanes' account the wife of Ermanaric, torn by horses for her supposed infidelity. Hildegund shares in Waldere's ultimate success, but their life together, Renoir argues, must have been affected by the fact that during his campaign, Waldere had been maimed for life. The overview shows that in the majority of cases, the heroine's misery is connected at least partly with the failure of her love-relationship.

[145] Renoir, Alain. "A Reading Context for *The Wife's Lament*" in *Anglo-Saxon Poetry: Essays in Appreciation for John C. McGalliard*. Lewis E. Nicholson, Dolores Warwick Frese, eds. Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1975, 224-241.

precedent of the male "autobiographical" monologues, the two women's laments remain an isolated phenomenon.

This is not, however, the case of all Germanic literatures. Women's songs similarly concentrated on the unbearable pain of separation from one's beloved constitute an integral and substantial part of Old Norse Eddic poetry and this fact has been interpreted as indicating the existence in Germanic tradition of a basic form of the genre from which both the Old English and the Old Norse texts evolved.[146] In support of the hypothesis, Clifford Davidson notes the prohibition against the composition of love-songs – *"winileodas"* by nuns in the Carolingian dominion, issued in 789.[147] What is important about this report is not so much the fact of the ban itself but the use of the vernacular term instead of a Latin paraphrase, suggesting that the genre had a recognized name and some standing, exceeding that of a mere occasional improvisation, and that it was a native rather than Latinate form. Such poems are then seen as related to a popular *Frauenlied* type current in widely differing cultures and environments, from ancient Egypt to mediaeval Scandinavia,[148] representing a specific poetic tradition running apart from and parallel to the discourses prevailing in contemporary peotry into which, nevertheless, such marginal forms could be occasionally integrated.

This theory of a separate development from a common origin has the advantage of explaining the differences distinguishing the Old English poems from their often quoted Old Norse "parallels". *Guðrúnarqviða in fyrsta, Guðrúnarqviða ønnor, Helreið Brynhildar* or *Guðrúnarhvøt* are, in essence, narrative poems firmly rooted in the context of a particular legendary tale, giving names and concrete details, whereas the Old

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[146] It is interesting to note, at the same time, the complete absence in this literature of elegiac monologues by a male speaker; this represents virtually a total reversal of the situation in the Old English poetry.

[147] Davidson, Clifford. "Erotic 'Women's Songs' in Anglo-Saxon England". *Neophilologus*, 59 (1975), 451-462; 452.

[148] Davidson 1975, 453.

English texts present rather typical situations without a specific reference, the presence of what appear to be personal names in *Wulf and Eadwacer* notwithstanding.[149] Although it has been claimed that the narrative background to *Wulf and Eadwacer* and *The Wife' Lament* could have been a matter of common knowledge and therefore the audience/readership to which they were addressed had no problems in supplying the details of the story, the shift in the characteristics of the genre is still important; moreover, that argument finds hardly any support in Old English poetic practice, which everywhere seems to show a directly opposite tendency (cf. footnote on p. 94). The strong epic element in the Old Norse texts could then be interpreted as the effect of the process by which the genre was integrated in the dominant discourse, adopting its characteristic features. Within the frame established by such a reading we could view *Wulf and Eadwacer*, maximally economic in the handling of its theme and fairly exceptional in its formal irregularity which finds a parallel in other poems presumably belonging to the popular tradition (such as the *Charms*), as a text that shows a relatively low degree of assimilation to the prevailing modes of Old English poetry, while *The Wife's Lament*, which relies heavily on the established images of heroic poetry (such as the relationship between lord and retainer and the motif of exile), would be directly comparable to the Old Norse poems in the manner in which it assumes its place within the mainstream literary tradition.

Attractive as such a hypothesis may seem, we must nevertheless recognize the possibility of precisely the reverse development: that in Old Norse as well as Old English context women's elegies evolved as a specific extension of accepted literary forms, the narrative poems in the former case, the well atested monologues by male speakers in the latter. Admittedly, this perspective is less helpful in explaining the

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[149] This problem will be treated more fully below, cf. pp. 105 and 108-110.

idiosyncrasies of *Wulf and Eadwacer*, but that should not constitute the reason for its complete rejection.

Lois Bragg explored yet another interpretative alternative[150] when she drew attention to a certain stereotype in the critical reception of the Old English love-poems: despite clear affinities, especially in the case of *The Wife's Lament*, with texts such as *The Wanderer*, they are regularly read as less stylized, less conventionalized, in short, less "literary" than these their counterparts, in keeping with their presumed popular *Frauenlied* pedigree. She detects a similar misconception attaching to later mediaeval love-poetry composed by women troubadours or using a female persona. In a subsequent analysis, she examines the differences between such compositions and the men's lyrics and concludes that both relate to an equally developed yet fairly distinct set of conventions (though some women's lyrics borrow themes and situations from the male set). She argues, therefore, that there is no difference in status between lyrics produced or ostensibly uttered by women and by men, both being equally "literary"; and, since they make use of a number of established conventions that she identified in the later poetry,[151] prefers to view *Wulf and Eadwacer* and *The Wife's Lament* not as rare occasions of a marginal, because not socially recognized, form finding its way into official records but rather as early examples of another mainstream tradition that culminated in the songs of troubadours and troubairitz, a tradition whose existence may be eclipsed but not disproved by its poor representation in the extant Old English poetic corpus.

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[150] Bragg, Lois. "*Wulf and Eadwacer, The Wife's Lament* and Women's Love Lyrics of the Middle Ages". *GRM*, 39.3 (1989), 257-268.

[151] Namely the open expression of sexual desire, the themes of the separation of partners and their mutual love, from the "female set"; and the concepts of love-sickness and alienation caused by an envious third party (the *lauzengiers* of later tradition), from the "male set". Evidently, the identification depends on a specific interpretation of the two poems which may be disputed.

Her argument, though useful in that it points out the elements and motives that the Old English poems share with their later counterparts, nevertheless relies on a presumption that cannot be substantiated: namely, that a rich repertoire of conventional themes and expressions can only be a product of a distinctly "literary" (as opposed to oral) tradition and that it can be used as an indicator of the status of a poem ("socially recognized"/"popular"); after all, it is precisely the formulaic character of Old English poetic diction that used to be cited as proof of its original oral mode of existence, exercising its influence even on texts positively indebted to Latin literary culture. The distinction between popular and "socially recognized" compositions does not consist in the spontaneity of the former as opposed to a high degree of stylization in the latter, but rather in different formal and thematic conventions that each mode develops in accordance with the context in which it operates.

Once this proposition is accepted, it will appear that Bragg's postulate of continuity between *Wulf and Eadwacer*, *The Wife's Lament* and the High mediaeval love-lyrics need not be at variance with the theory of the ultimate popular pedigree of the Old English poems. There is no reason to think that the status of a poetic form is set once and for all, that a genre that evolved as marginal with respect to the established literary tradition may not in time become a part of this mainstream. If, however, we consider the exceptional position of the two women's love-laments within the Old English records, as well as the ostensible fluidity of the "genre" thus represented, and compare it with the space that poems of this type occupy in the literature of the High Middle Ages and the relative coherence of that group, we will be led to conclude that this process of "recognition" must at best have been in its initial stages in Anglo-Saxon England before and in the 10th century.[152]

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[152] In this respect, the situation may have developed quite rapidly; as early as the middle of the following century, three Latin songs on a similar theme of love and (frustrated)

As has already been indicated, *Wulf and Eadwacer* and *The Wife's Lament*, though apparently equally problematic with respect to the prevailing religious orientation of the Exeter Book, are not entirely parallel as regards their relation to the similarly established "heroic" poetic tradition. To explore these differences, I will now treat the poems separately.

In her polemics with the hypothesis of the popular origin of *Wulf and Eadwacer* (and *The Wife's Lament*) Lois Bragg comments that the evidence is scarce "beyond some irregular metrics (which are endemic to Old English poetry in general)".[153] Correct though her observation may be, a world of difference lies between an occasional lapse and an irregularity that is inbuilt into the very structure of a poem, which is the case with *Wulf and Eadwacer*. I do not propose to engage in the question of origins beyond noting the affinities with other poetic genres where such may arise; I merely wish to describe the more conspicuous departures from the regular Old English verse form in the poem.[154] The most immediately visible instances are undoubtedly the use of half-lines (3, 8, 17, 19) and the presence of what appears to be a refrain (2-3, 7-8). None of these phenomena is absolutely unique to the poem, but a comparison with analogical occurrences elsewhere may show that they are still specific in the precise form and function that they acquire in *Wulf and Eadwacer*.

In the Exeter Book itself, half-lines appear, for example, in Sea 16 and Max I 65, 102 and 167; but their status is different. The first instance stands as an isolated item in a continuous narrative flow and its existence can be ascribed with all probability to a scribal lapse. In the latter case, the incomplete verses always take up the alliteration of the preceding line and

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desire were copied from a continental original into what is now Cambridge University Library MS. Gg. v. 35. See Davidson 1975, 451.

[153] Bragg 1989, 258.

[154] For a comprehensive study of this subject, see Lehmann, Ruth P. M.: "The Metrics and Structure of *Wulf and Eadwacer*". *PQ*, 48 (1969), 151-165.

join with it into a coherent semantic unit; some scholars interpret the resulting sequence as a modification of the hypermetric line.[155] This alliterative pattern also applies to *The Seafarer*; the short line, as a rule, has a single alliteration. None of these instances is readily comparable to the usage in *Wulf and Eadwacer*: there, the half-line is fully functional in the structuring of the text, since it regularly rounds off a separate movement within the poem (twice as a separate sentence – l. 3, 8; twice representing an "enjambement" from the preceding verse – l. 17, 19) and it has double alliteration (e.g. *"bireð Wulf to wuda"*) which further enhances its independence as a unit.

For the use of a refrain we may find a parallel in the immediately preceding *Deor*, but again, on closer examination that analogy appears only partially valid. What the two texts share is the device of repetition, which Morton W. Bloomfield sees, in the case of *Deor*, as a deliberate borrowing from the conventions of the genre of the charm, where it occurs with some regularity; [156] what divides them is the function of that device in the text and the effect that it produces. On the whole, the repetition in *Deor* is much more systematic: in all cases, the line " · *þæs ofereode / þisses swa mæg ·7*" – ["that has passed away, so can/may/will this"] represents a reaction to the previously narrated example of human misfortune; it is clearly divided from the "stanzas" which it separates and represents the leitmotif of the entire poem, whether as an incantatory phrase, as Bloomfield suggests (all these people have pulled through; so will I), or as a death-toll (everything on earth passes away in the end). The repetition in *Wulf and Eadwacer* is not so all-pervasive, as it appears only in the first half

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[155] On the other hand, Bliss 1971, 443-444 argues for the rearrangement of some ostensibly hypermetric lines into the pattern normal line + short line. The samples he cites are chiefly from *Maxims I*, and the alliteration that described above. However, even if the parallel is imperfect, the fact that the use of half-lines is more frequent in a poem of the gnomic genre could be interpreted as offering some support for the theory of the "popular" origin of the love-lament. In this context, it should be also noted that such half-lines can also be found in the Old English charms.

[156] See Bloomfield, Morton W. "The Form of *Deor*". *PMLA*, 79 (1964), 534-541.

of the text. It is also internally divided: while the half-line *"ungelic(e) is us"* ["It is different with us"] seems to correspond in its function to the verse reiterated in *Deor* (reaction to a preceding statement), the preceding line *"willað hy hine apecgan / gif he on þreat cymeð"* – "they will take him if he comes among/with a troop") forms an integral part of that statement without which its meaning must remain unresolved (the fact that it may not be resolved without ambiguity is a different matter). Lacking the systematic character that it has in *Deor*, the effect that it produces seems to be that of an insistently returning idea, rather than a gesture that controls the narrative.

Less conspicuous irregularities may also be found on the level of the metrical and alliterative form of individual verses. Admittedly, to draw any reliable conclusions in this matter seems well-nigh impossible, since the sheer number of apparently acceptable (?) variations of the five basic verse types makes determining the limits of the established norm rather difficult.[157] Thus we may decide to attach relatively little importance to Lehmann's observation that as many as seven verses represent a somewhat loose variant of a regular line, as they contain an unusually high number of unstressed syllables.[158] What cannot be so lightly dismissed, however, is the apparent deviation in l. 18, the gnomic statement which forms the semantic climax of the poem – *"þæt mon eaþe tosliteð / þætte næfre gesomnad wæs"*. In this verse, alliteration links the two central lexical units, *"tosliteþ"* and *"gesomnad"* (further highlighted by antithesis), but its distribution in relation to the position of stresses is altogether non-standard; alliteration is present there as a rhetorical figure

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[157] Using the data assembled by Alan J. Bliss in *The Metre of Beowulf* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1962), Bruce Mitchell notes 149 types of half-lines to be found in *Beowulf* only, 48 of those occuring just once. From these, Bliss classifies 29 as acceptable, 11 as "remainders" and 8 as "defective". Mitchell rightly questions the justification of this division (Mitchell, Bruce. "Linguistic Facts and the Interpretation of Old English Poetry". *ASE*, 4 (1975), 11-28).

[158] Lehmann 1969, 152.

but not as the medium which, in cooperation with the metre, systematically organizes the verse. In other words, by Old English criteria, this line does not "alliterate" at all.[159] The line could be scanned as regular combination of verse type A and B – "*þæt mon eaþe toslite∂ / þætte næfre gesomnad wæs*", but this reading involves some strained stressing; both the established usage and the logic of the passage speak for the accentuation of "*eaþe*" and "*næfre*". The first half of the verse would then fall under type A with anacrusis, the second half would be irregular both in terms of the sequence of stressed and unstressed syllables and the placing of alliteration on the second stress in the b-verse.

It should be stressed – in reaction to Bragg's downplaying of the weight of such phenomena – that they are invariably located at crucial points in the poem. In other words, there is method in this deviation from the regular form of Old English verse, which, in my opinion, can be explained either as a result of a daring formal experiment (such as *The Riming Poem*) or as an indication that the text is a product of a tradition whose conventions only partly coincide with those of the mainstream of Old English poetry. In that case, we could look to gnomic poems or the charms, displaying similar modifications of form, as the other surviving representatives of that branch. A third possibility would be that suggested by Bloomfield for *Deor*: an experiment with elements of such a tradition. Admittedly, each of the above alternatives might have a different bearing on the status of the poem as a text worth recording; but as that must remain a matter of speculation, it seems best to conclude this consideration by simply noting the functional character and the consequent irreducibility of the formal irregularities which make *Wulf and Eadwacer* an exceptional poem in the Old English corpus.

Before I proceed to an examination of the attempts at locating the story of the poem in the Germanic legendary world, motivated by its use

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[159] Krapp and Dobbie 1936, 321.

of what appear to be recognizable personal names associative of such a background, it is necessary to tackle its several interpretative cruces in order to determine what that story may possibly be; and the variety of scholarly opinion on that matter testifies to the difficulty of the task. My ambition is not to explain all the dark places in the text; I will merely suggest the range of likely *general* situations that can be read into the poem, without committing myself to any of those possibilities. Up to line 17, the text reveals nothing more than that a woman is separated from her lover/husband, that she is spent with longing for him and that his position in relation to her people is uncertain, potentially (probably) dangerous. Lines 11-12 (*"þonne mec se beaducafa / bogum bilegde // wæs me wyn to þon / wæs me hwæþre eac lað ·"* – "when the one bold in battle embraced me, it was a joy to a point but it was also hateful") admittedly introduce a somewhat sinister aspect into the relationship of the two people, but that does not preclude their reading as referring still to the one man in the text so far – Wulf. Line 16, with its apostrophe of one Eadwacer/eadwacer, comes as a shock, challenging the previous assumptions; as one of the two central statements in the text on which the interpretation of the poem hinges, verses 16-17 require a careful analysis. The key terms there are *"eadwacer"* (Odoacer/"wealth-watcher"), *"hwelp"* (pup/cub) and *"wulf"* (Wulf/wolf). Whether the expressions used in the direct addresses (*"wulf min wulf"*, l. 13; *"gehyrest þu eadwacer"* – "Do you hear, Eadwacer?") are taken as proper names pure and simple or whether their semantic implications are realized, there arise the same possibilities of interpreting the situation and the mutual relations of the three beings and the woman speaker; only in the latter case they are much better motivated. First, it should be said that the transfer of the reference of *"wulf"* from the man to an animal is highly improbable though not entirely impossible.[160] After so many repetitions (l. 4, 9 and 13 – twice) have

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[160] Cf. the change of reference of *"dryhten"* in Sea 41 (retainer's lord) and 43 (the Lord).

positively established the personal association it would be extremely difficult to erase it completely. This rules out the alternative that *"eadwacer"* would be Wulf's real name or his ironical epithet ("wealth-watcher" for an outlaw or a wanderer) and we are thus left with two men and a *"hwelp"*, carried away ("to the wood" in keeping with the "wolfish" connotations) by one of them. The speaker is somehow bound to both men; that she is more attached to Wulf than to Eadwacer is certain, but the nature of their social claims on her is by no means clear: the connotations of the names mark the former as one dispossessed and the latter as possessor, yet this does not really render the situation less equivocal – the difference may be that between a lover and a rightful partner or a banished husband and a forceful usurper. In retrospective *"beaducafa"* of l. 11 also gains an ambiguous reference (Wulf/Eadwacer?). The *"hwelp"* belongs to the woman and either of the men (as both names appear in its close proximity, the dual possessive pronoun *"uncer"* – "our" can be construed both ways); as a term for a young animal it applies better to their child than, figuratively, to any abstract notion, such as their love. Wulf then abducts or will abduct (*"bireð"*) his own or Eadwacer's offspring. In this context we could perhaps give what is his due to Sedgefield, who became a byword in *Wulf and Eadwacer* scholarship with his reading of the poem as a romantic dream of a lady dog;[161] his interpretation of *"eadwacer"* as an eminently suitable epithet for a dog – as the guardian of property – may not actually be that very wide of the mark. Understood in this way, Eadwacer would be staged as the exact opposite of Wulf and the bitter pun in verses 16-17 would gain yet another dimension, with *"hwelp"* further developing this image. Evidently, the use of such a term would underline the ambiguity of reference in *"uncer"*, *"hwelp"* being equally applicable to the puppy of a dog as to a wolf-cub. Now if the analysis of verses 18-19 leaves us with a range of similarly

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[161] Sedgefield, Walter, J. "Old English Notes". *MLR*, 26 (1931), 74-75.

viable possibilities, it may be that the finale of the poem, the second key statement, contains some clue for the solution of the question. It has been observed that line 18 – "*þæt mon eaþe toslited / þætte næfre gesomnad wæs*" – represents a negative echo of the injunction in Matt. 19:6, "What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder".[162] Logic prompts us somehow to connect the event narrated in lines 16-17 with this concluding statement, as the final step precipitating the realization of the precarious nature of a relationship. From this, three variants of the situation may be inferred: a) Wulf takes away Eadwacer's child, thus breaking the only bond between the man and the speaker. The statement concerns Eadwacer, claiming something like "we have never really been a pair and now there is nothing to hold us together". The tone would thus suddenly change from a lament to a jubilation, and though no "hard facts" stand against such an interpretation, the prevailing mood of the poem makes it difficult to subscribe to such a solution. B) Wulf comes for his own, obliterating all traces of their former relationship and so completing the separation that the speaker bemourns from the very start. C) Wulf steals Eadwacer's innocent offspring, which effectively estranges him from the speaker. In both cases, the tone of the final statement would be consonant with that of the poem as a whole, the only difference between the two alternatives lying in the nature of the separation, largely physical in the former case, emotional in the latter. This plurality of readings can only be reduced by an arbitrary decision of the recipient.

Now if the persons named in the text could be identified with characters from the Germanic legendary world and its "factual

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[162] Thus, for example, Keough, Terrence. "The Tension of Seaparation in *Wulf and Eadwacer*". NM, 77 (1976), 552-560. This argues against the notion, so far unmentioned in the analysis, that Wulf is not the speaker's lover but her son who comes for his younger brother (*"hwelp"*), as advanced in Osborn 1983, 186; it could not be understood as concerning mother's separation from her children and it is difficult to see how such an act could anull her ties to the only other man in the poem and thus presumably the children's father – Eadwacer.

background" in any of the variants outlined above proved consonant with the tales in which they figured, it would make *Wulf and Eadwacer* a much more relevant poem in terms of the discourse of heroic poetry; besides, it would provide additional support for the theory of the common origin of the Old English and the Old Norse women's laments. At first sight, such an attempt seems promising: Old English *"eadwacer"* corresponds to Odoacer; *"wulf"* can also be used as a personal name (witness the Geatish warrior who fought with the Swedish king Ongenþeow, cf. *Beowulf* 2964b-2976), and though we know of no Gothic Wulf associated in any way with the famous king, it is possible that the name could be understood in a generic sense, as an epithet of an exile (via the established association between the figures of "wolf" and "outlaw"). With the conformity of the events alluded to in *Wulf and Eadwacer* to traditions attached to the Gothic king, the prospects are much less hopeful: the story in which he is a protagonist concerns chiefly his rivalry with Theodoric the Great, who, it has to be said, spent a considerable time in exile and thus could merit the appellation "Wulf", but nowhere is there found an indication that their enmity involved an attachment to the same woman; in fact, the female element is notably missing in this case. This, apart from the rather strange notion that the speaker would refer to her beloved by such a derogatory expression, seems to settle the matter.

However, Ruth Lehmann, in what is in the context of such interpretations[163] almost a timid proposal, tried to explain *Wulf and Eadwacer* as a reflection of a tale in which the story of Odoacer and Theodoric the Great was conflated with a tradition that developed around the other, Frankish, Theodoric or "Hugdietrich" of the continental

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[163] The most radical was that of Rudolf Imelmann, who interpreted not only *Wulf and Eadwacer*, but also *The Wife's Lament, The Husband's Message* and even *The Wanderer* and *The Seafarer* as fragments of a lost Odoacer cycle (Imelmann, Rudolf. *Die altenglische Odoaker-Dichtung*. Berlin: Springer, 1907).

sources.[164] There, he visits a lady secluded by her husband or father and a son is born of their union, later carried away by wolves, which earns him the name "Wulfdietrich". Because the son was also known as an exile, he could be easily confused with the Ostrogoth Theoderic. Such a conflation could clearly arise only from a massive mix-up of all the legends involved; the only name in the Frankish cycle which could have given rise to the "Wulf" of the Old English poem belongs to the son (Wulfdietrich), a figure that, as the above summary shows, would correspond rather to the *"hwelp"* in *Wulf and Eadwacer*. Hugdietrich, though a secret lover of the lady, is nowhere identified as an exile. This means that the father would have to be first confused with the son in one legend to allow the story to be transferred to the Gothic cycle, and we would moreover have to reintroduce a real wolf into the Old English poem, which, as the preceding analysis has shown, is a problematic enterprise; we would also have to see the text as a prime example of dramatic irony, as Theoderic ultimately kills Odoacer. To establish this parallel then clearly involves a substantial interpretative violence on both *Wulf and Eadwacer* and the legendary matter.

A slightly less problematic suggestion was made in this respect by Joseph Harris, who connected *Wulf and Eadwacer* with *Hildebrandslied*,[165] which shows not only Theodoric, but also the eponymous hero as fleeing from the enmity of Odoacer (*"floh her Otachres nid / hina miti Theotrihhe"*, 18-19), leaving at home a wife and a little son. When the son grows up, he encounters the father in battle and is killed by him. The initial stages of the two stories then can be seen to correspond rather closely: a woman is left with a child, separated from her exiled husband. Odoacer is implicated as

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[164] Lehmann 1969, 154-156.
[165] Harris, Joseph. "Hadubrand's Lament: On the Origin and Age of Elegy in Germanic" in *Heldensage Und Heldendichtung Im Germanischen*. Heinrich Beck, ed. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1988, 81-114.

the cause of this separation. The rest, again, requires too many inferences from the Old English text that cannot be properly substantiated. Wulf should be the name used for Hildebrand because of his exile and of his position as the head of the Wolfing house; this is a slightly better explanation than in the case of Theodoric, but the chief objection remains with respect to the intimate rather than formal tone of the poem – why should the speaker refer to her lover so obliquely? *Hildebrandslied* knows nothing of the woman's relationship to Odoacer. To interpret, as Harris has done, the statement *"uncerne ear<m/g>ne hwelp // bireð wulf to wuda"* – "Wulf carries/will carry our hapless/cowardly pup to the wood" as alluding to Hildebrand's killing of the grown-up Hadubrand in a single combat entails a major problem in the clear inapropriateness of the expression *"earmne/eargne hwelp"* in the context, which would in any circumstances hinder rather than facilitate the identification of the story. It could be read as the speaker's premonition of the event while Hadubrand is still a child, but that makes, in turn, the address to Eadwacer poorly motivated: why should the tyrant, even if he laid claims on the speaker, care if the child be killed by the father? – unless, indeed, Eadwacer made his appearance only as a token that the poem is to be associated with the legend of Hildebrand, which the other names and terms tend rather to obscure. This hypothesis has the advantage of being, in comparison with Lehmann's reading, internally consistent; apart from the weaknesses noted above, however, it also has to contend with the fact that Eadwacer occurs only once in the Old English corpus and the other characters are missing entirely.

It can therefore be concluded that the attempts to anchor the poem in the Germanic legendary world are at best tenuous. On the whole, the text works best if *"Wulf"* and *"Eadwacer"* are read as speaking names. On its own the poem thus retains a marginal position in relation to the

mainstream "heroic" tradition, confirmed by its unusual irregular form described above.

The situation is different with the other representative of the genre of women's elegy concerned with the themes of desire and separation, *The Wife's Lament*. The poem is rich in the motivic network based on the *comitatus* ethics typically found in Old English heroic poetry. We find here the same basic positioning of the speaker as in the first section of *The Wanderer* and *The Seafarer*; the narrator of *The Wife's Lament*, too, assumes the well-established role of a lordless exile: she refers to herself as "*wineleas wrecca*" – "friendless exile" (l. 10a)[166] and twice she speaks of her "*wræcsiþas*" – "exile ways" (5b and 38b).[167] The terms in which she refers to her husband are a part of the same picture; as Roy F. Leslie observes,[168] apart from "*wine*", "*freond*" or "*felaleofa*" – "friend", "well-beloved" (which describe the personal aspect of their relationship) she uses the formal, almost technical "*hlaford*" or "*frea*" – "lord". The slightly dubious word "*folgað*" – "service" in the line "*Ða ic me feran gewat / folgað secan // wineleas wræcca / for minre weaþearfe ·*" ("A friendless exile, I went to search for my place with my lord because of my miseries", 9-10) also seems to belong to the same context, as it originally denotes the duty of a retainer.[169] Leslie

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[166] The term "*wineleas*" referring to an exile is used also in *The Wanderer* 45b, *The Fortunes of Men* 32b and *Maxims I* 146a; as the gnomic poetry of the *Maxims* presents, to some extent, a highly formalized expression of the recognized "way of the world", its evidence is perhaps the most important.

[167] As an aside, it is worth noting that this motif is even doubled in the text, since in the final section the woman envisages her far-off husband in the same situation; the way, too, in which she refers to his leaving points rather to an enforced departure than to a planned expedition; cf. "*hæfde ic uhtceare // hwær min leodfruma / londes wære ·*" (7b-8) – "I worried with each dawn where in the world my lord may be.".

[168] Leslie R. F., ed. *Three Old English Elegies*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1961, 4-5, 7.

[169] It has to be said that some interpretations read this sentence as referring to the destitute speaker's taking service elsewhere to earn a living, while others trace the word "*folgað*" to the verb "*folgian*" in the sense of "going into exile" which appears in the Old English translation of Bede's *Historia Ecclesiastica* (thus Greenfield, S. B. "*The Wife's Lament* Reconsidered". *PMLA*, 68 (1953), 907-912); Mitchell and Robinson (*Guide to Old English*. 5th ed. Oxford: Blackwell, 1992; 265) interpret the sentence as "I went to

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adduces the evidence of Anglo-Saxon laws to prove that such expressions are the natural reflection of the fact that in reality, the position of a wife in relation to her husband was parallel to that of a retainer to his lord. However, the preference for the terms associated with the *comitatus* culture seems to be dependent rather on poetics than on legislation, possibly representing a deliberate superimposing of the conventions of heroic poetry on those of a less "socially recognized" love-lament genre, integrating the text into the mainstream tradition. The fact that *The Wife's Lament* reads as a woman's version of *The Wanderer*, only without the Christian resolution, explains how it could be happily interpreted as the complaint of a retainer who had lost his beloved lord even in spite of the umistakably feminine endings in the opening statement (which were then ascribed to a scribal error or neutralized by ingenious theories concerning the syntactical construction of the verse[170]).

It remains now to examine the attempts at integrating the poem into the predominantly religious context of the Exeter Book. Perhaps the most ambitious and comprehensive among such interpretations, first advanced by Michael J. Swanton and elaborated by Whitney F. Bolton,[171] relies on the connection of *The Wife's Lament* and *The Husband's Message*, based on the apparent similarity of theme (*The Husband's Message* being, as it were, almost a reply to *The Wife's Lament* in which the lord asks his wife to join him over the sea) and certain correspondence in diction[172] and incident (e.g. the allusions to the husband's implication in a feud or the invocation of earlier vows). Swanton, working on the presumption that the two poems are in fact companion pieces, argues that they represent a paraphrase of the *Song of Songs*, or, more precisely, a cultural translation

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seek [the] retinue (of my husband)." However, all the variants, except the first, support the *comitatus* context in one way or another.

[170] See Bambas 1963, 307 and Stevens 1968, 73-83.

[171] Swanton 1964; Bolton 1969.

[172] By far the most exhaustive study in this field is Howlett, David R. "*The Wife's Lament* and *The Husband's Message*". NM, 79 (1978), 7-10.

into Old English context of its Christian allegorical reading that sees in the two lovers the figures of Christ and the Church or, alternatively, human soul. Thus the speaker of *The Wife's Lament* would be the Church exiled and persecuted in the world, yearning for reunion with her Lord, and *The Husband's Message* would supply Christ's response with the promise of that reunion among all the joys of heaven. The context of early mediaeval exegesis is also invoked to explain a number of specific details in the poems, such as the southward sea-journey in *The Husband's Message* or the description of the speaker's habitation in *The Wife's Lament*. Bolton goes one step further, supposing that the two texts are in fact two parts of a single poem, a strophe and an antistrophe. He bolsters Swanton's hypothesis with evidence of verbal resemblance between the *Song of Songs* and its proposed Old English equivalent[173] and turns to specifically Anglo-Saxon exegetical tradition as represented by the texts of the Venerable Bede for proof that the main concept was well established in English religious thought and that it was developed in a way that corresponds to the manner in which the basic statement of *The Wife's Lament* and *The Husband's Message* is furnished with a specific setting and details of incident. He also looks to this background for the justification of such a handling of the biblical material by the Old English poet and finds it in the theory of scriptural allegory of Gregory the Great, which insists on the necessity of using familiar terms as well as maintaining a certain obscurity for allegory to achieve its aim.

There are two points that impair the validity of the attempts to Christianize *The Wife's Lament* in this manner. One is the distance between the two poems in the manuscript, whatever precise relationship is proposed for them. To maintain the proposition would mean to presuppose a history of transmission and interpretation that appears very

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[173] It has to be noted that he does not consider the context in which the phrases and expressions appear in the biblical and the Old English texts, which makes his argument open to criticism.

unlikely in its complexity. First, we have to refuse Bolton's idea of the original unity of the two texts. It is true that the abrupt opening of *The Husband's Message* ("*Nu ic onsundran þe / secgan wille*" – "Now I wish to tell you especially / in private"), starting, as it were, *in medias res*, truly does not conform to the manner in which Old English poems usually begin;[174] on the other hand, *The Wife's Message*'s gnomic finale appears eminently appropriate as a concluding statement. If the two poems were joined, the ensuing caesura would be too marked for the entire composition to parallel the texts that Bolton adduces as analogues for such bipartite structure, e.g. *The Seafarer* or *The Dream of the Rood*.[175] But even Swanton's more humble proposal presents definite problems. The two companion pieces would have had to be misplaced, separated before they reached the scriptorium in which the Exeter Book was produced. If they arrived as part of a single group of materials, though already disjoined, it is difficult to see how they could remain so if the editor or the scribe had realized their allegorical potential. If, however, they could not be so confronted because each was part of a different consignment, the allegory could start to work only after *The Husband's Message* assumed its place in the manuscript and thus could not have motivated the inclusion of *The Wife's Lament*.

The second objection concerns the use of allegory in Old English poetry and its established features. For one, the straightforwardly allegorical poems of the Exeter Book (*The Phoenix*, *The Panther*, *The Whale* and *The Partridge*) are all reworkings of a Latin original. Moreover, despite Gregory's appeal that the figure should operate with a certain element of obscurity to harness the reader's intellect so that the divine truths should

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[174] This is one of the aspects considered in theories that make the immediately preceding *Riddle 60* a prologue to *The Husband's Message*; cf. Pope, John C. "Paleography and Poetry: some solved and unsolved problems of the Exeter Book" in Malcolm B. Parkes and Andrew G. Watson, eds. *Medieval Scribes, Manuscripts and Libraries: Essays Presented to N.R. Ker*. London: Scolar Press 1978, 25-65.

[175] Bolton 1969, 350.

be the more appreciated for the difficulty with which their understanding was attained, the Old English poets apparently did not trust their audience's intellectual potential so far as to leave them unguided; and that guidance, as a rule, has the form of a very detailed exposition that leaves no place for conjecture. This is not only true of poems entirely based on allegory, but also of the cases when the figure is employed within longer narrative texts (e.g. the image of sea-journey as man's life in this world in Christ II 850-863). In this respect, the use of a very complex allegory – combining several concepts – without a simultaneous explanation, which Swanton and Bolton presuppose for *The Wife's Lament* and *The Husband's Message*, would be exceptional indeed.

Having dealt with the general reasons for refusing Swanton's and Bolton's hypothesis, I propose now to look at specific elements in each of the texts that militate against this allegorical reading. There appear two major problematic points in *The Wife's Lament*'s account of the separation of the couple and the speaker's meditation on her situation that cannot easily be reconciled with the interpretation summarized above.

The first is a notable crux that has troubled a number of scholars who attempted to restore the "factual background" of the poem from its rather enigmatic allusions, i.e. the precise nature of the relationship between the speaker and her "lord", the cause of her seclusion, the temporal sequence of events and so on. This is the statement in verses 18-21a,

> *Đa ic me ful gemæcne   monnan funde*
> *heardsæligne   hygegeomorne*
> *mod miþendne   morþor <hycgendne>*
> *bliþe gebæro*

> ["I found a man full suited to me
> ill-fated, sad in his heart,
> concealing his thoughts, thinking of crime,
> with a cheerful appearance.]

To explain my stance, I have to refer briefly to the previously suggested solutions. To dispense with the antithesis introduced into the passage by the expression *"bliþe gebæro"*, some scholars construed it as beginning a new sentence (the couple exchanged vows "with cheerful demeanour"). [176] Syntactical aspects aside, such a reading is rendered unnecesary by the fact that the same antithesis is repeated in the closing passage of the poem (*"a scyle geong mon..."*). Others pointed out, quite rightly, that such a description reflects the injunction of "keeping one's thoughts to oneself" especially in adverse circumstances, voiced, for example, in *The Wanderer* 11-14.[177] But it is the phrase *"morþor hycgendne"* that was felt to present the greatest problem, as it places the speaker's beloved in an unfavourable light. Some preferred to introduce another man at this moment with whom the speaker consorted in the long absence of her rightful partner;[178] some neutralized the sinister implications of the expression by presuming an objective instead of a subjective construction: the husband would not be planning an evil deed directed at someone else but thinking on an injury done to him.[179] This is the version that has to be accepted if the man is to be identified with Christ: the sequence would show Him as contemplating His imminent sacrifice, mournfully as a man, cheerfully as God. "Only in the figure of Christ can these paradoxical qualities be suitably resolved," asserts Swanton confidently.[180] Unfortunately, the evidence of the Old English corpus testifies against this construction. *"Hycgan"* in the sense of "think of" or "be mindful of" appears mostly with a prepositional object, with *"ymb"* (cf. *"hy þu ymb modlufan / mines frean [...] hycge"* – "how you should think about the love of my lord", Husb 10-11) or *"on"* (*"ic on þe geare hycge"* – "I think of you eagerly", PPs 90:2);

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[176] E.g. Krapp and Dobbie 1936.

[177] So Rissanen, Matti. "The Theme of 'Exile' in *The Wife's Lament*". NM, 70 (1969), 90-104.

[178] Short, Douglas D. "The Old English *Wife's Lament*: An Interpretation". NM, 71 (1970), 585-603.

[179] Ward, J. A. "*The Wife's Lament*: An Interpretation". JEGP, 59 (1960), 26-33.

[180] Swanton 1964, 282.

once it takes a genitive *("<Gemune> us, drihten, on modsefan forð hycgende folces þines"* – "Remember us, O Lord, thinking in your mind of your people", PPs 105:4). If it combines with an accusative, it refers to what can best be perceived as plans or premeditations, and they are regularly *evil* designs: *"inwit and facen hycgeað on heortan"* (PPs 139:2) translates Vulgate *"cogitaverunt malitias"*; *"þa wiðerwearde me wraðe hycgeað"* (PPs 139:8) reproduces loosely the *"scelera"* (crimes) of evil men. Such a condensed form seems to correspond to the cases where the object is expressed by a clause: this, too, regularly presents a plan or a desirable course of action (here without the negative connotation). It follows that we have to put up with the view of the speaker's partner as, to some extent, a morally ambiguous character and this, of course, prevents us from identifying him with Christ.

The second problem lies in the final passage of the poem. Because the advocates of the allegorical reading view the husband's *"fæhðu"* as a reference to the "feud" between Christ and those that are of this world (in Husb 19b made responsible for the lord's departure), they cannot, for obvious reasons, accept the notion that the man would have to go into exile as a result or that the speaker should, for one moment, imagine him so (Christ of course returns to His heavenly home and the Church, as well as the soul, knows this full well). However, the closing lines, starting with the generalized statement *"a scyle geong mon / wesan geomormod"* – "a/the young man must always be sad in spirit" and finishing with the equally gnomic *"wa bið þam þe sceal // of langoþe / leofes abidan"* – "woe to them who must await their beloved in longing" (42-53), invoke the picture of a person *"ful wide fah // feorres folclondes"* ("banished to a far land"), subjected to conditions resembling in their harshness those of the unfortunate woman. To solve this problem, Swanton interprets these verses as referring to any Christian, who, just like the speaker, has to

endure the exile *in woruldrice*.[181] This might appear as a plausible solution, were it not for the fact that the she speaks expressly of *"min freond"* in l. 47 and again of *"se min wine"* ("my friend") in l. 50 – terms that can hardly be related to anyone else except her absent husband, who, on the grounds of what has been said above, then cannot be identified with Christ.

Before proceeding with the examination of the obstacles that *The Husband's Message* – as the antistrophe of the proposed poetic dialogue – presents for the allegorical reading suggested by Swanton and Bolton, I would like to comment briefly on its relation to *The Wife's Lament*. If the two texts are compared, it will be found that *The Husband's Message* lacks entirely the personal, intimate dimension of the former poem, while sharing its "formal" view of the relationship. The emotion, the expression of love undergoes, as it were, a double processing: first, by being put in the mouth of a proxy (a human messenger or a prosopopaeic piece of wood with carved runes), and second, by being reduced to its "institutional" aspect; the two phenomena being obviously connected. If the speaker in *The Wife's Lament* is able to refer to her beloved both as *"freond"* and as *"hlaford"*, confess frankly that she is *"eal oflongad"* ("spent with longing", l. 29) and invoke such intimate scenes as that of *"frynd"* that *"leofe lifgende / leger weardiað"* ("friend/lovers [...] live pleasantly, occupy their bed", 33-34), *The Husband's Message* presents as the summit of happiness for the reunited pair (or for the lord anyway) a picture that corresponds to the description of the proper behaviour of a royal couple in *Maxims I* (81-83):

> *ne mæg him worulde   willa <gelimpan>*
> *mara on gemyndum   þæs þe he me sægde*
> *þonne inc geunne   alwaldend god*
> *<æ>tsomne   siþþan motan*
> *secgum ond gesiþum   <s>*

[181] Swanton 1964, 284.

næglede beagas[182]

(Husb 30-35)

["In his mind, nothing better can happen to him
in the world, as he told me,
than that God grant you two
that you may together afterwards
<distribute> studded jewels
to men and companions."]

In other words, *The Husband's Message* conforms even more fully to the conventions of heroic poetry; at the same time, though apparently professing entirely secular values, it expressly acknowledges that happiness in this world is dependent on God's will alone, thus including the element that is missing in *The Wife's Lament*, where no such reference can be found.

Paradoxically enough, it is precisely this appeal to God that causes the greatest problems in reading the poem as Christ's answer to the complaint voiced by the Church/the soul: it seems theologically devious for the risen Christ to present their reunion as subject to decision by *"alwaldend God"*, and this anomaly can hardly be sufficiently neutralized by the observation that the individual persons of the Trinity were distinguished in the Gospels as well as in patristic writings. The second major stumbling block comes with the passage that describes the happiness and plenty that the lord enjoys, which is to be crowned by the lady's arrival:

nis him wilna gad
ne meara ne maðma   ne meododreama
ænges ofer eorþan   eorlgestreona

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[182] The text is heavily damaged here by a hole in the page. John C. Pope (Pope 1978, 59) tentatively reconstructs as follows: *"ne mæg him in [on] worulde / willa [gelimpan] / mara in gemyndum / þæs þe he me sægde // þonne inc geunne / alwaldend go<d // þæt git æ>tsomne / siþþan motan // secgum ond gesiþum / <sinc bryttian // næg>lede beagas"*. The square brackets mark words supplied on reasons of sense and metre where the MS. shows no corruption; "<>" indicates text supplied in the gaps.

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þeodnes dohtor   gif he þin beneah

(Husb 44b-47)

["He lacks/desires no joys,
horses, jewels, happiness over mead
– no lordly possession on earth,
prince's daughter, if he has you.

If the place where the lord now stays is to be identified with heaven, then
we could – on the authority of other references to the joys of God's
kingdom in Old English poetry – put up with *maðma* and *eorlgestreona*,
perhaps, if we saw it as a highly unusual variation of the more common
"*symbel*" ("feast"; so Dream 141 or Christ II 111), even with *meododreama*;
but the horses are a detail that hardly fits into the picture. Admittedly, the
passage could be interpreted to mean that the lord prefers the presence of
his spouse to anything that the world could offer (that is, that he does not
care for all these pleasures), in which case we could dispense with the
factual presence of the ennumerated objects. This, however, does not
appear likely, as the verses seem to represent a variation on the statement
in lines 30-35 quoted above, complemented with the immediately
following assurance that the lord "*genoh hafað // fædan goldes*" (has plenty
of burnished gold). As Earl R. Anderson rightly pointed out, in both cases
the frame of reference is *this world* ("<on> worulde", "ofer eorþan"), which
sounds rather strange from God's messenger inviting the soul/the Church
to join her lord and maker in heaven.[183] These objections do not only stand
in the way of accepting the proposal for the allegorical reading of *The
Wife's Lament* and *The Husband's Message* as one unit, they also disqualify
any such interpretation focused on the latter text alone.

It is possible, though, to proceed with greater caution with regard
both to the link between the two poems and their relation to Christian
doctrine. It cannot be denied that their affinity could be realized

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[183] Anderson, Earl R. "Voices in *The Husband's Message*". NM, 74 (1973), 238-246.

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retrospectively when the collection was finished; then *The Husband's Message* could be perceived simply to supply the Christian reference where it is missing in *The Wife's Lament*. The hope and consolation which the former provides in reply to the desolation of the latter is, after all, clearly dependent on God's will and the position so formulated would resemble very much the stance expressed, for example, in *The Fortunes of Men* or *The Gifts of Men*, similarly focused on worldly miseries and achievements and professing the less "radical" version of Christianity that can appreciate the good things to be had on earth. Nevertheless, that is about as far as this strategy for the Christianization of the two poems can go, and even so, it is highly dubious with respect of *The Wife's Lament* which, interpreted on its own, remains as problematic as ever. To exhaust all possibilities, finally, it is necessary to mention the much more unpretending attempt of Alain Renoir, who suggested that the poem may have been perceived as containing an edifying morale in the progress of the narrator's husband from activity to passivity, from the position of *"leodfruma"* – the "leader of men" to that of a destitute exile,[184] thus representing an Old English version of the motif of the "fall of famous men". This concept has one indisputable advantage in that it does not stand in conflict with the text – a fact that disqualified the allegorical readings; on the other hand, such reading could only have worked by more or less disregarding the major theme of the poem in favour of a relatively marginal, subservient motif. Although we cannot deny that this may have happened, it does not seem a very reliable option. All sides of the argument weighed, it appears that to integrate *The Wife's Lament* in the predominantly religious context of the Exeter Book is a task that requires a substantial stretching of imagination – beyond the limits, I would say, of what the text warrants.

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[184] Renoir, Alain. "The Christian Inversion in *The Wife's Lament*". *SN*, 49 (1977), 19-24.

4. *THE RUIN*, RIDDLES

In the introduction to the previous chapter I have commented on the absence of any explicitly Christian reference in *The Ruin* and a large portion of the riddles. Unlike the similarly "handicapped" *Wulf and Eadwacer* and *The Wife's Lament*, however, *The Ruin*, with its vivid evocation of the destruction of a once thriving city, could be much more consonant with the perspective of the world voiced in poems such as *The Wanderer*, *The Seafarer* or the longer religious poems opening the collection. Without doing violence to the text, it is easy to read it as a statement of *"sic transit gloria mundi"*; and the undoubtable tone of admiration for the skill and mastery of the builders of old, which could be compared to the compliments paid to the glory of ancient kings and emperors in *Seafarer* 80-90, emphasizes rather than subverts the lesson of universal transience of all human achievement.

The riddles would doubtless reserve a more thorough treatment than the scope and purpose of this consideration allows. They represent a highly heterogeneous set, ranging as they do from enigmata touching on theological questions in their presentation of objects such as "chalice" or "cross" to a rather bold *double entendre*, if we are to believe our interpretative instincts and the suggestions of earlier commentators. As a set, and as a set *only*, they could have benefited from the fact that the genre had been practiced before by such indisputable authorities as Symphosius, Aldhelm, Bede or Boniface; some of the Exeter Book riddles are in fact adaptations of Latin originals by these authors.[185] In that sense, the case of the riddles in a way parallels that of *Maxims I* discussed at length above; there existed, in both cases, a literary tradition of the genre that could have

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[185] Williamson, Craig, ed. *The Old English Riddles of the 'Exeter Book'*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1977, 20, 24.

sanctified the more problematic elements within the set recorded in the codex.

PART III.

INTERTEXTUAL LINKS
AND THE STRUCTURE OF EXETER BOOK

In the previous part of this study I tried to determine the problematic elements in the makeup of the Exeter Book; and although in some cases the presumed presence of the radically secular – "heroic" alternative has been disputed, it should be clear by now that the collection does contain texts which – taken in isolation – are indeed either indifferent or even contrary to the attitudes prevalent in the wider environment which produced the codex. If there exists a gesture or strategy which would undermine or transform the inevitably incompatible tenor of these pieces, it must therefore be sought outside the boundary of the text, on the level of its interaction with its immediate or more general manuscript context. However, I do not wish to focus just on the available contextual relations of the individual "problem poems". Instead, this part of the study aims to examine the various possible means that could have been used to establish such intertextual links within the Exeter Book (or its constituent booklets) as a whole and to provide in this way a loose ordering principle binding together its sometimes disparate components. Special attention will be devoted to the patterns of textual recurrences which seem to pervade – with various intensity – the manuscript and which appear eminently suited for such a purpose. Within this frame, the study of the interaction of the texts identified above with their environment (plus the potential of that interaction to generate for them a reading more sympathetic to the predominant tone of the collection) will be used principally to exemplify this larger "binding" principle.

1. EXISTING PROPOSITIONS

THE manuscript appearance provides but ambiguous clues as to the original structure envisaged by the scribe or the editor(s) of the three booklets (with the possible exception of the latest volume containing the tripartite *Christ* and the two *Guthlac* narratives); besides, these are further complicated by widely varying theoretical formulations of the scribe's position and authority and consequently also by the different interpretations of the significance of visual means which could be used to organize the manuscript – both textual and sectional punctuation, capitalization, initials. One conception invests the scribe with a virtually authorial role, though there are disagreements as to his competence as a composer and a connoisseur of the standards of the Old English verse system; another views him as merely reproducing mechanically – and often erringly - his exemplar.

The first tendency derives ultimately from an appraisal of the differences in standard scribal handling of the Old English as opposed to Latin poetic texts in the period in question (broadly, 10th and 11th century), as well as from the existence of variant yet equally acceptable readings in poems preserved in more than one copy (*Soul and Body, Azarias – Daniel*). While the Old English manuscripts are written continuously and they generally show a minimal punctuation, frequently just pointing out rhetorical figures or the boundaries of an important thematic movement, the Latin texts preserve the verse-lines and are presented with a complete set of signals to guide the reader through the syntactical structure of a sentence. Considering the medieval practice of reading aloud, such a disparity would suggest that the readers – and copyists - of the Old English poetic manuscripts were sufficiently familiar with the native verse-system to virtually "hear" the poems even without the aid of

conventional visual clues. Instead, they could rely on traditional oral strategies for marking the important structural and thematic units: established lexical signals, rhetorical schemes, alliterative clusters etc.[186] The difference in status as well as in the presumed primary mode of existence of Latin and Old English poetic texts (predominantly canonical[187] vs. "supplementary", textual vs. oral) would account for the clashing of two modes of transmission in the latter category: the standard scribal task of copying could be partially modified by factors resulting from the scribe's greater freedom with the vernacular and his awareness of its continuous poetic tradition – such as the anticipation of a term which is permissible as the completion of a given line, yet does not agree with the reading of the exemplar. In this sense, each version of a text achieves the status of a new performance of the poem. The extent to which this process is perceived as accidental or as a conscious re-forming of the text according to the immediate context and purpose of the manuscript in production varies widely; and even the proponents of the latter conception can disagree significantly in the consequences they draw from this situation. Thus while for A. N. Doane or Carol Braun Pasternack[188] it presents an argument to assign full authority to the manuscript reading, Douglas Moffat adopts a more reserved approach, preserving the old idea of interpolation: the extra-textual motives of the scribe – for example the clarification of meaning for homiletic purposes in the Vercelli version of *Soul and Body* – irrevocably obscure the original poetic creation.[189]

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[186] Pasternack 1995, 9-11.

[187] With such texts (e. g. the Psalms), the preservation of the exact wording would naturally be required.

[188] Doane, A. N. "The Etnography of Scribal Writing and Anglo-Saxon Poetry: Scribe as Performer". *Oral tradition*, 9 (1994), 420-439; Pasternack 1995, 14-17.

[189] Moffat, Douglas. "Anglo-Saxon Scribes and Old English Verse". *Speculum*, 67 (1992), 805-827. Moffat also notes the instances where the variants produce a line with an irregular alliteration or metre, the substitutions of more usual prosaic word for "difficult" compounds, as well as examples of suspect lines occuring in a single copy; he concludes that the requirements of the poetic form could have been less binding or perhaps less familiar than Doane suggests.

In any case, this stance must inevitably ascribe the greatest importance to the visual organization of the manuscript, since it could indicate the scribe's positioning of individual poems into larger subgroups and sequences and in this way furnish important extra clues as to their significance for the compilers of the respective collection. In the Exeter Book, there appear to be several such signals, sometimes opposing our better instincts as to the generic grouping of the individual texts: *The Husband's Message*, for example, is divided into three sections headed by initials used in the layout of the immediately preceding and following group of riddles and the same kind of initial also opens *The Ruin*. Another problem can be found in the ordering of the *Deor*, *Wulf and Eadwacer* and riddles' cluster. *Deor* begins with a large initial, its "stanzas" (in each case terminating in a refrain) marked by a smaller capital which is also employed for the opening of *Wulf and Eadwacer* and of the riddles placed after it; on the graphic level, there is virtually nothing to distinguish the beginning of a new poem. Such a situation would lead those who believe in the scribe's sovereign control over his text and his discretion to explain this phenomenon as a conscious gesture stressing certain "riddlic qualities" of both *Wulf and Eadwacer* and *The Ruin*.[190] In case of *The Husband's Message*, the lack of a distinctive opening provides another reason (besides the thematic affinities) to pose the preceding *Riddle 60* as an integral part of this poem; yet the division of the piece into three (or four, see above) independent units remains a problem. Here we can credit the scribe with a sensitivity towards the verbal division-markers

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[190] This obviously does not mean that these pieces approach the *form* of a riddle; the reference would be, in the case of *Wulf and Eadwacer*, to its general "mysterious" quality, in the case of *The Ruin*, to the element of wonder ("*wrætlic*", "*wundrum*"), often stressed in the riddles. These aspects are acknowledged by Anne L. Klinck (Klinck 1992, 25-26), though she interprets the type of initials and punctuation not as an acknowledgment and deliberate signalling of any underlying affinity between *Wulf and Eadwacer*, *The Ruin* and the riddles, but as an error produced by a cursory reading of the exemplar which had noted just the "riddlic" elements without paying attention to the generic character of those poems.

employed frequently in the Old English poetry – the introductory *hwæt* or the pairing of a verb such as *onginnan* – "to begin" with the inception of a new movement in the text, but simultaneously we are forced to acknowledge his inability to recognize the essential continuity of the text at these points of (sub)division. Moreover, it has to be noted that the *Soul and Body* and *Deor* – the first two complete poems of the proposed third booklet – are the only texts there to use the two previously established models of poem-heading (large initial plus a full line of smaller capitals / large initial plus a capitalization of the first word or, if this word is longer, of the maximum of two letters following the initial); the rest of the poems – irrespective of their length and genre – simply starts with an initial comparable in size and usually also decoration with these first-line capitals. This fact significantly weakens any theory of deliberate scribal organization in this part of the Exeter Book.

As for the second booklet, Pasternack suggests a vaguely separatory force – announcing a series of related texts – for the fuller heading employed for the *Gifts of Men* and a similar function, this time indicating a place apart from the series of "wisdom texts", for the identical mode of heading in *Widsið*.[191] Here, too, the significance of this phenomenon remains highly dubious: the thematic and formal affinities make *The Wanderer* (preceding *Gifts of Men*) and *Fortunes of Men* (following *Widsið*) as much a part of the postulated group as any of the texts found between the poems thus singled out.

Finally, the visual subdivision of the major religious poems (*Christ I, II* and *III, Guthlac I* and *II* and *Juliana*), too, shows a variety of motivations which seems to preclude the possibility of a consistent effort on the part of the scribe to use this method for signalling the transitions between the larger narrative units. In *Christ I*, composed of movements answering to antiphons sung mainly during the Advent, the highlighted

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[191] Pasternack 1995, 178-79.

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sections are those directly addressing (or, in one case, spoken by) the Virgin Mary, with the single exception of an invocation of the Trinity which may or may not have been added to this pattern as a result of an error.[192] *Christ II* seems predominantly to concentrate the highlighting on points of partial summary of a preceding passage (God's gifts to mankind, defence against the "missiles of the Devil") instead of indicating a new theme in the narrative which in some cases immediately follows. *Juliana* has some of its larger narrative units pointed out (e. g. two distinct stages in the saint's questioning of the demon), others, which appear equally indispensable, are left unmarked (paradoxically, the first appearance of the demon itself). It may be that the scribe thus aimed to stress an important motif – in some cases reiterated elsewhere in the collection[193] – rather than to organize the present narrative; the possibility has to be recognized, too, that he may have simply copied the divisions present in his exemplar and that these signals are therefore completely irrelevant to the ordering of the contents of the Exeter Book.

Indeed, there are aspects of the scribe's work supporting the conclusion that his dependence on his model was rather greater than those who assert the scribe's standard role as the re-composer of his poetic material wish to think. Anne L. Klinck[194] has noted – among other features – the suspicious concentration of certain types of error in specific parts of

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[192] The misunderstanding would be quite understandable, as the address uses initially only very general terms, equally applicable to the Virgin: "*Eala seo wlitige   weorðmynda full / heah ond halig [heofoncund þrynes].* (Christ I 378-79)" – ["Lo, the (= demonstrative pronoun in nom. sg. f.) radiant (or "beautiful"), full of honour, / exalted and sacred divine Trinity"]. The continuous line would naturally reinforce the possibility of such an error.

[193] For example, the theme of the "Devil's missiles" appears, apart from *Christ II*, also in *Guthlac* (within the same section of the manuscript; its position there, it has to be admitted, is much less prominent and it constitutes but one element in the description of the saint's struggle against the attacks of the group of demons that come to tempt him), *Juliana* and *Vainglory* (in the second booklet); similarly, in the third of Juliana's questionings the demon names the ways in which he can harm (and eventually kill) people and many of these items are repeated in *The Fortunes of Men*. These motivic correspondences will be treated in full in a later part of this study.

[194] Klinck 1992, 21-26.

the final collection, too outstanding to be imputed to a mere chance (e. g. the so-called *n*-errors clustered in *Wanderer* and, to a lesser extent, in *Juliana*;[195] "*fer-*" written for the correct "*for-*" in *Riddles 48, 49* and *50*); she argues that the scribe must have taken them over unwittingly from his exemplar. She also points out the fact that while the textual punctuation seems generally consistently distributed within a single poem, the frequency with which it is used varies significantly from item to item. All this would point to the scribe's mechanical reproduction of his material with all its peculiarities and omissions.[196] On the whole, the dubious reliability of the visual means of manuscript structuring[197] and the extremely problematic tracking of their source and precise significance make any attempt to base the interpretation of the relations between the individual texts of the collection on these features a matter of nearly complete conjecture. The rest of this part of my study will therefore concentrate on other phenomena which may help to establish or support such relations – motivic affinities, various developments and re-formulations of a single theme etc. Only the cases in which the specific visual aspect seems to corroborate the textual link will be noted.

It seems almost certain that the sequence of texts assembled first in the two composite booklets (i. e. the 2nd and 3rd) and finally in the Exeter Book as a whole was not dictated by any overall plan – either in terms of a single unifying perspective or in terms of a generically organized "anthology". Considering this latter alternative, we have to rule out not only the most obvious arrangement into successive generic groups (e. g.

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[195] The comparison of absolute as well as relative numbers is revealing: *Juliana* 11/731; *Wanderer* 7/115; *The Gifts of Men* 1/113; *The Precepts* 1/94; *Seafarer* 1/124. Only the poems of the proposed second booklet (the earliest) are considered here.

[196] This fact need not be in contradiction with the general care taken by the scribe in correcting the errors in the manuscript (cf. p. 59); some mistakes could have escaped recognition or the scribe might have felt obliged to correct his own lapses only.

[197] As in the case of *The Husband's Message*.

allegories of the Bestiary type or riddles, both disjointed in the collection) but also the more complex structuring variants such as envelope patterns etc.; while clusters of related texts do occur, their positioning in relation to other items does not follow any recognizable overriding design. Obviously, concessions can and should be made in this respect, as we cannot presume the existence of present-day generic expectations in 10th century England. Thus in the central section of the second booklet, the general "didactic" character of the various poems could have outweighed completely their formal differences and in this way motivated the interspersion of ethopoetic narratives (*Wanderer*, *Seafarer*, *The Riming Poem*) among the poetic catalogues (*The Gifts of Men*, *The Fortunes of Men* – forming, by modern standards, two perfect companion pieces, yet found separately in the manuscript – together with other realizations of the catalogue-scheme, *The Precepts* and *Widsið*). Yet even if rather extreme allowances are made for the differences between the criteria of modern critics and those of the compilers of the Exeter Book concerning formal characteristics of their material, the division of the comparatively strictly defined riddles into two groups plus several separate pieces provides a weighty argument against the theory of the deliberate generic formatting of the collection.[198] This lack of one structuring principle can best be

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[198] It has to be noted that the case of the riddles is complicated by aspects of content; approximately one half of the fragmented second group presents a variant "encoding" of objects already treated in the first set of riddles. This fact could be interpreted as the reason to keep the two clusters separate. However, such repetition (on a smaller scale) occurs also within the respective sets (1-59: "storm" 3 times in a series, "bull" 2 times, "chalice" 2? times; 61-95: "creation" 2? times, "antler ink-horn" 2 times), which means – if we wished to propose the alternative of the scribe's (or compiler's) distribution of the previously assembled complete material – either a very careless work or at least a clash of two ways of treating the same phenomenon. The instance of the two isolated riddles points in the same direction: in both cases they are joined to their immediate environment quite smoothly through related subject-matter (the "cross" riddle to the preceding religious poems, the "reed" text to *The Husband's Message* which immediately follows), yet the first of these items is a nearly exact double of *Riddle 30* included earlier in the manuscript. It seems thus best to suppose that the scribe either wished to preserve two readily obtained riddle collections or that he simply did not have the two series at his disposal simultaneously.

ascribed to the gradual growth of the Exeter Book as suitable individual items or groups of texts arrived into the scriptorium.

A tempting attempt has been made by Conner[199] to accomodate this situation and yet to provide a consistent framing for each of the booklets both in terms of prevalent concepts and generic affiliations. Supporting his argument by the dating of the individual booklets based on their palaeographical analysis,[200] he sees the second section as characterized by a more tolerant, open attitude towards the traditional values of secular society (accounting for the "heroic" overtones present in many of the poems included here) and at the same time, by formal experiments ultimately traceable to the continental precedents of the Carolingian court. The first booklet, on the other hand, is the pure and refined product of the reformed monastic spirit and environment; the intermediate third section a conflation of two mixed collections, in each case containing two layers of texts – "early monastic" (such as *The Judgment Day* or *Soul and Body*[201]) and pre-reform, "clerical"[202] (e. g. *Deor* or *The Wife's Lament*), respectively – built around the core group of riddles.

To a considerable extent, this theory – and especially the part focused on the present middle section of the Exeter Book – hinges on a double presumption concerning the origin of the collection: the dating and particularly the Exeter location. The exceptionally large proportion of late 9th and early 10th century manuscripts of Frankish origin[203] among the

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[199] Conner 1993, 148-164.

[200] See p. 56 of the present study.

[201] Differing, in Conner's view, from the poems of the 1st booklet by a relative lack of artistry.

[202] The term reflects the "educated" character of some of the poems placed within this category (looking to Latin models or adapting Latin exemplars), as well as their "courtly" associations.

[203] Localizable more specifically to Northern France. While Conner uses the presence of this group of documents merely to argue the existence of a developed library collection in Exeter long before Leofric's massive donation and does not cite that evidence to further his hypothesis of Exeter's communication (via king Athelstan's endowment)

documents associated with Exeter (in comparison with the Anglo-Saxon corpus) could be interpreted as a factual testimony for the supposed links of the local scriptorium with the Carolingian mainstream, initiated and mediated by king Athelstan in the first half of the 10th century. This situation would explain not only the primary source of inspiration for the poems of the second booklet (attributable to the general contemporary cultural background), but also the compilers' interest in their preservation.

The literary aspect of Conner's argument is built on the assessment of form and – much more questionably – "spirit" of the texts grouped together in the present second booklet in contrast especially with the initial long narrative poems. The uniqueness of some of the shorter items (e. g. the catalogue poems) within the complex of Old English literature, the complications brought about by a problematic introduction of formal experiments into the traditional verse form (as exemplified by the perplexing *Riming Poem*) and lastly, but perhaps most importantly, the existence of apparently related forms and genres – catalogues, natural allegories, encomia, elegies – in Latin continental poetry of the period; all this leads Conner to view the texts contained in the middle section of the Exeter Book as representing a difficult attempt to translate the then leading poetic models into Anglo-Saxon culture. In his opinion, it was precisely the lack of native English tradition of such poetry (derived from classical sources) and subsequently also of a suitably attuned audience that is responsible for the differences divorcing the Old English poems from their continental exempla, such as the lack of specific and topical references in satire (the genre postulated for *Vainglory*) and royal encomium (*Widsið*). This manoeuvre enables Conner to subsume the disparities apparent in the compared items.

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with the continental court culture, this extra step seems obvious, given his line of reasoning.

Nevertheless, certain doubtful points remain in this hypothesis. In some cases, the generic classification suggested for a text can only be maintained through a substantial reduction of its specificity and an undue stressing of elements reducible to the desired scheme: thus the sections of *Widsið* justifying – though with the above-mentioned reservations – its ranking with the "royal encomium" type (the praise of a monarch and a presentation of the narrator as the person ideally capable of the task[204]) form just about a fourth of the whole text.[205] With other genres, an alternative native pedigree can be proposed: the elegy as an independent form might have evolved from similarly structured passages in longer narratives.[206]

But Conner's reasoning becomes most problematic when it assumes to detect a great dividing line between the "spirit" of the texts assembled in the second booklet plus the inner "layers" of the third on the one hand and the "monastic" poems in the third and first booklets on the other. That such a line indeed exists is readily evident; it runs, however, throughout the latter two sections of the codex, which is what makes the motivation of the compilers so enigmatic. As Conner himself is willing to subordinate his own concept of genre as a temporally limited category produced by a specific cultural milieu and its poetic vogue (and abandoned or eclipsed, it seems to follow, when this background changes) to the more vague issues of differing sensibilities,[207] we should rather focus on the comparison of the poems' statements regardless of their generic framing. Once this

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[204] Moreover, the balance between these components seems to fall rather heavily on the side of the self-praise of the poet's persona.

[205] For further aspects problematizing any straightforward interpretation of this poem, see pp. 75-77 of the present study.

[206] The most often cited instances in this respect are the so-called "Elegy of the last survivor" and "Father's lament for his son" in *Beowulf* (Beo 2247-2266 and 2444-2459 respectively).

[207] Thus in his discussion of *Resignation B*. Despite its elegiac format, which links the text to *Wanderer*, *Seafarer* and *The Riming Poem* of the second booklet, Conner mentions this poem as an example of the narrowing of focus and change of interest brought about by the Benedictine reform.

approach is adopted, it becomes clear that the motives and attitudes ascribed by Conner to the "self-centered" monastic poetry are reiterated throughout the collection. The salvation history and its culmination in Christ's second coming plays an equally important role (though occupying lesser space) in the "clerical" *Phoenix* and *Whale* and the elegiac *Seafarer* as in the "monastic" *Judgment Day* and *Christ III*; similarly, the motif of the fellowship of angels (and saints) as the exemplary *comitatus* appears in *Christ I* and *II*, but also in *Phoenix*, *Seafarer* and *The Order of the World*. *Guthlac* and *Juliana* share the strategy which presents the protagonist as opposing and/or re-inventing the secular social structures envisaged in terms of the "heroic" idiom: Juliana's would-be husband and eventual torturer and slayer is characterized by his warrior qualities and his position of a leader among his retinue, mercilessly dismissed and ironized in the scene of his death at sea; Guthlac's earlier career as the head of a pillaging war-band is transformed into the role of "God's warrior". Both texts (together with a negative reference in *Vainglory*) present the exemplary life as a continuous warfare against the attacks of the devil. All in all, there seems to be no difference in the "spirit" of the more pronouncedly Christian pieces of the second booklet and the major poems placed at the beginning of the codex.

2. Mapping the field

ONCE again, one has to accept the fact that the heterogeneity of material forming the Exeter Book defies any attempt to identify a pre-existent "ground plan" ordering, first, the choice of individual items to be assembled in the original booklets, and subsequently, their distribution within these units. While the resulting sequence of texts could be assigned to mere chance of the immediate availability of their exemplars, I would like to propose an alternative, non-hierarchical structure which could have motivated the selection of items for the respective series; moreover, I hope to show that at least some of the combinations of poems found in the codex may be, within this structure, far from random.

The Exeter Book seems to be built on a linear, associative principle; it need not be the "statement of allegiance" to any perspective, monastic or otherwise, that enables the acceptation of a text into the booklet "under construction", but the various elements which permit its being tagged on to the existing portion of the manuscript, transforming the new item into a comment (supplementing, affirming or adjusting) on what has been said so far (e.g. the presence of a motif already used in the collection, a thematic affinity, a generic affiliation).

Now the identification and analysis of the diverse aspects and realizations of this principle traceable in the Exeter Book, to which the rest of this part of the present study is devoted, will proceed in two stages, the first concentrating on the highly conspicuous affinities of theme and form (discussed in the following chapter), the second focusing on more complex links based chiefly on motivic correspondences (treated in the subsequent four chapters).

This division is dictated primarily by the methodological problems implicated in the task of determining differences in the potential of the

linking elements in the process of producing – "writing" – the collection as opposed to the associations which they can generate within the already finished text. It is true that if we presume, with Carol Braun Pasternack, that the existence and status of Old English poetic texts was still at least partly determined by practices characteristic for oral transmission (most importantly by the absence of the notion of a final "established" text), we may see both the editor(s) and the subsequent readers of the Exeter Book as engaging in an essentially identical procedure – in an "active" reading of a poem which simultaneously constitutes its new performance.[208] However, while the editor's version[209] of this given poem would have been modulated both by its original context (i.e. its functioning in another manuscript or, conversely, its existence as a separate, unique piece) and by its interaction with the newly evolving collection, the reader would have to work more or less exclusively with the context generated by the editor's choice. Considering this double demand on the editor's attention, it is likely, though evidently beyond proof, that in referring any new unit(s) to the sum of the texts already copied (whether this would involve a more or less careful comparison or just a brief recollection of the contents of the booklet and the general character of the individual components), he or she would have paid heed rather to the more readily noticeable correspondences and variations, whereas the reader may choose to be guided in his or her interpretation by a different set of clues (perhaps comparatively minor) which the text, nevertheless, offers as a result of the original editor's decision. This difference can be illustrated by the example of *The Whale*, whose primary "linking potential" lies most probably in its generic affinity with other texts (*The Phoenix*, *The Order of the World* or the directly preceding *Panther*) which use a natural – or supposedly natural –

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[208] Pasternack 1995, pp. 14-27.

[209] The choice of the term "editor", rather than "scribe", follows from the results of the analysis of some aspects of manuscript appearance presented in the previous chapter, see p. 131.

phenomenon to refer figuratively to vital elements of Christian faith; simultaneously, however, it can be associated with *The Seafarer* in its specific use of the motif of the sea and its evaluation.[210] Naturally, I tried to avoid mistaking effect for cause and to limit my analysis throughout only to correspondences prominent enough to be potentially active in the editing of the collection; but there I faced the major methodological problem lying in the fact that the differentiation between "productive" and "produced" links has to be made retrospectively from the perspective of the final recipient of the text, which makes drawing a reliable dividing line between them extremely difficult. To some extent, I have accepted the risk in the second stage of the analysis, while the first stage aims to counter this uncertainty by presenting only easily identifiable links based on affinities of theme and form.

The second reason for such a division lies in the orientation of the present study. It aims to follow but one potential reading of the Exeter Book collection, one which tries to "reconcile" its cultural background with the less conforming parts of its content and therefore presumes some deliberate manipulation at least in the choice of the texts, possibly in their mutual positioning as well.[211] Accordingly, particular attention will be paid to such intertextual associations and linking strategies that may be illustrative of this process – such as, for example, could furnish a poem

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[210] This link will be treated in full in a later part of this study.

[211] It could seem that this claim is at variance with the previous assertion that the codex was not built according to any given plan. However, whereas editing such a pre-planned collection would require a "positive" delimitation of material (i.e. what should the codex contain and in what arrangement), building a compilation on the proposed associative principle may still have entailed a procedure which could be labelled as "negative" delimitation (what should rather not be included). This might also have involved an "impromptu" ordering of material at hand. To suggest one possible aspect of such an editing, it may be noted that the texts belonging to a greater or lesser extent to the "heroic" tradition mostly look back into the past; there is no "contemporary" heroic poem, comparable, for example, to *The Battle of Maldon*, nor even an "ahistorical" text (such as *The Wanderer*) which would voice similar sentiments, located in the present. The inclusion of such a text would make it more difficult to maintain the "monastic" perspective prevailing in the codex as the truly dominant one, without any current rival cultural model.

ostensibly upholding the more secular, "heroic" values with a counterpart which questions its views or conclusions. Nevertheless, the goal is to show the possibility of such an interpretation, not to claim its inevitability. The proposed principle of "associative linking" could equally well be employed as a structuring device in building a collection of vernacular poetry unrestricted by any demands of "political correctness" (if such a situation could arise in the time and place in which the codex came into being). In the following chapter, representing the first stage in the analysis of intertextual links detectable in the Exeter Book, I would therefore like to cite only those ideologically "neutral" correspondences that could have served such a purpose.

To sum up, the material considered in the next chapter (*Thematic and formal links*) will be selected according to the double criterion of ideological neutrality and a high degree of prominence of the associative link.

The second stage of the analysis aims to fulfill a double purpose: firstly, to propose a provisional typology of the whole range of linking strategies traceable in the Exeter Book (with the exception of those already examined in the first stage), and secondly, to show their potential to tone down the impact of texts less compatible with the attitudes prevalent in the environment which produced the codex. The typology combines two criteria: the first concerns the basis on which the link is established – formal and structural parallels, in cases of correspondences in imagery, the nature and status of the image; the second notes the manner in which the link achieves a sufficient degree of prominence or strength as to be considered likely to be operative in the compilation process. Thus the first suggested category comprises cases where two or more texts are bound by a simple reiteration or variation of a single motif, which has to be adequately noticeable in the respective texts to ensure that the recipient will be aware of the emerging link. The choice of examples is therefore

limited to motives distinguished by virtue of the space assigned to them in the poem or of their function in its structuring; their detailed development also often transcends the requirements of the general argument of which they are a part (chapter *Linking subsidiary motives*). The second category includes links whose prominence arises from the direct juxtaposition of the poems thus connected; the bond between otherwise apparently unrelated neighbouring texts is established through similarities of structure, form and/or shared imagery (chapter *Immediate linking*). The third category (treated in chapter 6 – *Linking central images*) concerns relations between texts based on their development or variation of one of the core images which the heroic poetic tradition uses in representing the order of the world, as they were identified in the first chapter of part I of my study (*Heroic poetic tradition and the influence of Christianity*).

3. THEMATIC AND FORMAL LINKS

We can trace at least two principles which the editor(s) could follow in relating a text to one or more preceding poems. The criterion of **formal** affinity (in the sense of generic grouping but also, more loosely, of correspondences in the organization – structural, rhetorical – of material in the text[212]) has been mentioned already in the case of *The Whale* and its relation to *The Phoenix* (it applies, however, to the whole group of natural allegories found at the end of the second booklet); similarly, the so-called catalogue poems of the second booklet (primarily, *The Fortunes of Men* and, with certain reservations that will be treated presently, also *Precepts* and *Widsið*) could have been added one at a time once there was a precedent in *The Gifts of Men*.

In attempting to account for the presence of that poem in its place in the collection, though, one has to turn to other possible affinities it may bear to its predecessors in the booklet. Its enumeration of talents and skills that God distributes among mankind, together with the word of adoration closing the poem, can be seen to expand on or rather to complement the matter found in the Song of the Three Children in *Azarias*, although the correspondence is not altogether straightforward. Both texts have the form of a list whose items are invariably announced by an established phrase or word ("*Sum [bið]*" in *The Gifts of Men*, "*bletsige[n] þec*" + apellation / "*ond þec - apellation - hergen*" in *Azarias*) but which otherwise do not appear to follow any given structure, differing in length as well as the depth of detail supplied. The song in *Azarias* presents the individual categories of creation as obliged to render their praise to God; at the same time, their

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[212] The difference between the two alternatives can best be illustrated on the case of *Widsið*: though it can hardly be classified as belonging to the same genre as *The Gifts of Men*, it nevertheless uses extensively the form of a list, a structure on which the latter poem is built.

existence is expressly and repeatedly viewed as a provision – gift – for mankind.[213] *The Gifts of Men* seem to take up this theme of God taking care of the well-being of humanity and elaborate on it, concentrating on the individual, rather than collective, aspect. Such complex relationship, including similarities as well as variations, is characteristic for texts linked on this **thematic** basis.

Moreover, the linking need not concern just entire poems, as in the example given above, but also individual passages – textual paragraphs. So the injunctions in the latter part of the *Precepts* contain several reformulations of qualities listed in *The Wanderer* as the attributes of the "wise man": there are parallel warnings against rashness, talkativeness, lack of caution, excessive joyfulness.[214] As the paragraph in *The Wanderer* represents the offset of the contemplative second half of the text, interrupting rather conspicuously the more or less consistent flow of "autobiographical" narrative by the ethopoetic speaker, it appears remarkable enough to be noted in the presumed process of assembling the booklet. The affinity is further strengthened by formal parallels: the final

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[213] The list in *Azarias* has ten distinguishable units (plus two additional ones without the proper established heading); there are five instances in which the humanity is explicitly named as the recipient and prime user of the inanimate and animate products of creation and two which refer to this fact in passing.

[214] Whereas *The Wanderer* sums up the quality in one word, *Precepts* use more extensive description. *"Hatheort"* (Wand 66a) thus corresponds to *"yrre ne læt þe / æfre gewealdan // heah in hreþre / heoroworda grund // wylme bismitan / ac him warnað þæt // on geheortum hyge"* (Prec 83-86a) ["Never let anger control you, surging in your heart, never let (its) ground be soiled by the swelling of hostile words; but his mind full of spirit warns him against that"]. Similarly, *"hrædwyrde"* (Wand 66b) ["quick of speech"] – expanded and modified in the final maxim *"ne sceal næfre his torn to rycene // beorn of his breostum acyþan / nemþe he ær þa bote cunne"* (Wand 112b-113) ["Man must never reveal the pain of his heart too quickly, if he does not know the remedy"] – has its counterpart in *"wærwyrde sceal / wisfæst hæle // breostum hycgan / nales breahtme hlud ·"* (Prec 57-58) ["The wise man must be cautious of speech, think in his mind, not speak aloud"]. The final two characteristics – *"wonhydig"* and *"fægen"* (Wand 67b and 68a) appear neatly summed up in the following observation: *"seldan snottor guma / sorgleas blissað // swylce dol seldon / drymeð sorgful · // ymb his forðgesceaft / nefne he fæhþe wite ·"* (Prec 54-56) ["The wise man seldom rejoices without care, just as the fool is often happy, careless of his future fate unless he knows about some enmity"]. This correspondence has been first noticed by T. P. Dunning and Allan J. Bliss in their masterly introduction to *The Wanderer* (Dunning and Bliss 1975, 88).

sequence of the *Precepts* (covering, maybe significantly, a different set of characteristics than those included in *The Wanderer*) uses the same syntactical and rhetorical structures, most importantly the meiosis of *"ne to"* ["...not too (impulsive etc.)"] standing for the absolute dismissal of a quality; furthermore, both paragraphs in question share the initial "X *sceal* + adj." phrase (*"wita sceal geþyldig ·"*, Wand 65b ["Wise man must be patient"] / *"hæle sceal wisfæst // ond gemetlice..."*, Prec 86b-87a ["Man must be wise and moderate..."]).[215] This double link, formal and thematic, and the absence of coincidence between the two, invokes an intriguing possibility: perhaps not just those items in the *Precepts* directly echoing the attributes of wisdom set out in *The Wanderer*, but the entire text could have been perceived as representing, in a way, a completion of the earlier statement on this theme. This link seems in any case more substantial than the comparatively loose formal resemblance to *The Gifts of Men* (i.e. the catalogue structure common to both texts).

Similarly, though with rather greater deal of caution, one may see *Widsið* as referring back to the reflections on the deteriorating state of the world in the closing "homiletic" part of *The Seafarer*. This paragraph, an important unit in the succession of arguments[216] leading to the final exhortation, envisages the contrast between past and present in the following terms:

> *dagas sind gewitene*
> *ealle onmedlan   eorþan rices*

[215] In this context, we may also note the identical position of the two phrases in the b-verse.

[216] This sequence, containing the following elements: i) the inevitable transitoriness of worldly glory (or pomp) (Sea 80b-81); ii) the allusion to famous earthly rulers of the past (Sea 82-86); iii) the present decline of the world connected metaphorically with man's old age (Sea 87-93); iv) the warning that at the time when his soul separates from the body, each man will stand alone before his God and none of his friends will be able to help him, has been traced by G. V. Smithers, who has also recognized its dependence on a concept present in several Old English homilies. See Smithers, George V. "The Meaning of *The Seafarer* and *The Wanderer*". MÆ, 26 (1957), 137-153; 28 (1959), 1-22, 99-105.

nearon nu cyningas   ne caseras
ne goldgiefan   swylce iu wæron
þonne hi mæst mid him   mærþa gefremedon ·
ond on dryhtlicestum   dome lifdon ·
gedroren is þeos duguð eal   dreamas sind gewitene
wuniað þa wacran   ond þas woruld healdaþ
brucað þurh bisgo   blæd is gehnæged...

(Sea 80b-88b)

["The days
of all the earthly glory are gone,
such kings and caesars and givers of gold
are no longer as there were in times past
when they performed deeds of glory
and lived in most noble splendour;
that host has fallen, and the joys are gone,
weaker men survive and hold this world,
enjoy it in toil; dignity is brought low..."]

The relationship of *Widsið* to this passage would be one of illustration or exemplification. It duly treats all the elements mentioned there: outside the simple lists of nations/tribes and their leaders (*"cyningas ond caseras"* – Sea 82), the more detailed narrative sequences concern themselves very insistently precisely with the famous (battle) deeds of past rulers (*"mæst mærþa fremedon"* - Sea 84b), their generosity (*"goldgiefan"*,*"on dryhtlicestum dome lifdon"* - Sea 83a, 85) and – less importantly – the qualities of their retinue (*"gedroren is þeos duguð eal"* - Sea 86a). As the passage in *The Seafarer* presents the contemporary Christian commonplace of *"ubi sunt"* in terms at least partly reminiscent of the *comitatus* culture (the only aspect of rule explicitly listed is the duty of the leader to ensure the loyalty of his followers by generosity in dispensing gifts[217]), it would make this association quite consistent as regards the frame of reference; on the other hand, since *Widsið* at times transcends its predominant focus on the

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[217] For an exhaustive account of this aspect of Old English literature, see O'Brien O'Keeffe, Katherine. "Heroic Values and Christian Ethics" in *The Cambridge Companion to OE Literature*. Malcolm Godden, Michael Lapidge, eds. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985, 107-125.

Germanic world, naming the nations of the Middle East, India and alluding to the caesar in Byzantium, it is sufficiently broad in its outlook to evoke the idea of past splendour "worldwide", which seems to be the tenor of the respective paragraph in *The Seafarer*.[218]

To conclude this chapter and to illustrate the relative instability and ambiguity of such links, we may finally mention the rather obvious thematic connection between the stories of suffering women in *Deor*, the immediately following *Wulf and Eadwacer* and *The Wife's Lament* in the third booklet, noting also the countercurrent produced by the inclusion of *The Husband's Message* which, by supplying a potentially "positive", hopeful sequel to the latter poem, disrupts the previously established series.

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[218] In both examples just cited, the proposed link connects poems placed in near proximity in the MS., with one text (*The Gifts of Men*; *Vainglory*) interposed in each case.

4. LINKING SUBSIDIARY MOTIVES

IN contrast to the preceding survey, the following consideration should cover the whole range of textual links - sometimes more disputable and quite often ideologically charged – that the reader may discern within the finished booklets. Some of those recurrences have already been mentioned as part of the critique of Conner's hypothesis; they followed, however, his choice of themes and so their list had to disregard completely the rich scale of significance (understood both in terms of their role and relative importance within a given text and the generation of meaning at the interface of texts thus connected) which they display. As these are precisely the aspects on which I intend to concentrate, the proposed typology of linking strategies will be based on the assessment of the complex functioning of these elements in the manuscript, not on the classification of their formal realization.

Definitions: "burning sorrow, burning love"

It should start with various forms of relatively basic "**echoes**" – the repetitions of motives which can range in their "ranking" from individual elements in an array of images used in a poem to major building blocks constituting its core theme (and in their length, from single phrases and expressions to whole passages), but which nevertheless cannot be identified as belonging among the central images establishing the prevailing perspective (in the sense established earlier in this study) of a given text.

In its **simple** form, the reiteration preserves the context and general attuning established by the first occurrence of the motif. Thus the key statement introducing the religious re-interpretation of the initial "exile's narrative" in *The Seafarer* –

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...forþon me hatran sind
dryhtnes dreamas   þonne þis deade lif
læne on londe...

(Sea 64b-66a)

["...since the joys of the Lord
are more pressing[219] to me than the dead life
lent to us on earth..."]

recalls, in the idea of the relationship to God being "hot" or "burning", as well as in the coupling of this motif with the theme of choice between heavenly and earthly values,[220] the earlier passage from *Phoenix*, referring to the reward that the faithful will obtain in heaven and likening their merits to the precious spices and flowers of the Phoenix's nest:

...beoð him of þam wyrtum   wic gestaþelad
in wuldres byrig   weorca to leane
þæs þe hi geheoldan   halge lare
hate æt heortan   hige weallende
dæges ond nihtes   dryhten lufiað
leohte geleafan   leofne ceosað
ofer woruldwelan   ne biþ him wynne hyht
þæt hy þis læne lif   long gewunien
þus eadig eorl   ecan dreames
heofona hames   mid heahcyning
earnað on elne...

(Phoen 474-480a)

["Of those spices, a dwelling is established for them
in the glorious city, as a reward for their labours,
for they hold the holy teaching
burning in their heart, with a surging mind
love the Lord both day and night,
prefer the precious, radiant faith

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[219] This translation sacrifices the literal sense of "*hat*" – "hot" to preserve both the intensity of emotion present and the ambiguity concerning the positive/negative connotations of the word which will be treated in full later; also, I have decided in all cases to use the "etymological" paraphrase of "*læne*" (usually rendered as "transient") to keep the original idea of life as a temporary "loan".

[220] The relevant expressions are marked in the extracts by a continuous and a dotted line respectively, a distinction used throughout to distinguish the realization of the main motif and (where appropriate) accompanying or subordinate images.

to worldly goods, they do not hope for joy
in remaining long in this life, lent to them.
Thus the blessed man earns eternal happiness,
heavenly home with the Highest king,
through his zeal/courage..."]

In this pair, the *Seafarer* passage represents an extremely condensed version of the motif, reduced to the term "*hat*"; if we extended the scope of comparison to the whole of the Exeter Book, it would become clear that the *Phoenix* variant, with the combined (or interchangeable) ideas of heat and agitation, is the more common.

However, the way in which the above cited texts combine the "burning quality" with a supremely positive agent presents in itself a radical re-interpretation of another and, I believe, primary[221] form of the motif, visible (again, in a most succint expression) in an earlier section of *The Seafarer* – "...*þær þa ceare seofedun // hat' ymb heortan*..." (Sea 10b-11a) ["...there the sorrows sighed burning round my heart..."]; it is usually an undesirable, worrying emotion which is felt to be "hot" or "surging".

Identical fluctuation occurs also within the first booklet, where these characteristics are applied, respectively, to the disciples' feeling of sorrow and loss after Christ's ascension,[222]

> ...*him wæs geomor sefa*
> *hat æt heortan · hyge murnende ·*
> *þæs þe hi swa leofne · leng ne mostun ·*
> *geseon under swegle ·*
>
> (Christ II 60b-63a)

["...their spirit was sorrowful,
burning in their heart, their mind mourning,

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[221] Mainly on the evidence of the relative frequency of the two forms within the Anglo-Saxon corpus.

[222] An interesting and ambiguous version of this motif can be found in *Christ II*, where the verbal expression of the situation seems to mix both positive and negative aspects: "*þær wæs wopes hring · // torne bitolden (·) / wæs seo treowlufu // hat æt heortan · / hreðer innan weoll // beorn breostsefa ·*" (Christ II 98b-101a) ["[Their] weeping resounded, hard to describe; the true love stayed hot in their heart, the heart surged within, the spirit was burning."]

because they might not see again
one so dear to them in this world."]

to Guthlac's attacks of illness – *"hreþer innan born // afysed on forðsið ·"*
(Guth II 120b-121a) ["His heart burned within, urged on the way"], *"hreþer*
innan weoll // born banloca" (Guth II 161b-162a) ["His heart surged, the
body was burning"][223] – and to introduce, first, the feeling of anxiety and
confusion which Guthlac's companion experiences as he witnesses the
saint's communication with an angel and, finally, his lamentation of
Guthlac's death:

> *Oft mec geomor sefa   gehþa gemanode*
> *hat æt heortan ·   hyge gnornende*
> *nihtes nearwe   ond ic næfre þe*
> *fæder frofor min   frignan dorste*
>
> <div align="right">(Guth II 390-393)</div>

["The sorrowful spirit often brought me anxiety
burning in the heart, a mourning spirit
in the oppressive night, and yet I never
dared to ask you, my father and comfort."];

> <div align="center">*gnornsorge wæg*</div>
> *hate æt heortan   hyge geomurne*
> *meðne modsefan   se þe his mondryhten*
> *life bilidenne   last weardian ·*
> *wiste wine leofne...*
>
> <div align="right">(Guth II 517b-521a)</div>

["He bore his grief
hot within the heart, a mourning mind,
a dejected spirit, the one who knew
that he must remain behind his lord,
his dear friend, deprived of life..."]

At the same time, however, the relevant section of *Guthlac* subordinates
the scorching pain caused by the illness both expressly and – more

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[223] Admittedly, these two instances may belong to a different concept, since it is not clear
whether they refer to a mental condition (as the other samples) or to a physical state.

importantly for our present analysis – by an implicit comparison through the echo to the flame of love to God burning in the saint's heart (we may also note the presence in background of the contrast between "God" and "world" bound to this motif in the previously cited *Phoenix* and *The Seafarer*):

> *næs he forht sepeah*
> *ne seo adlþracu   egle on mode*
> *ne deaðgedal   ac him dryhtnes lof*
> *born in breostum   brondhat lufu*
> *sigorfæst in sefan   seo him sara gehwylc*
> *simle forswiðde   næs him sorgcearu*
> *on þas lænan tid...*
>
> (Guth II 143b-149a)

> ["Nevertheless, he was not afraid,
> nor did the attack of the disease or death
> terrify his spirit; but the glory of God
> burned in his breast, fire-hot love
> victorious in mind, which overcame
> all troubles; he felt no sorrow
> for the time lent to him..."]

In both these cases[224], the echo transposes the basic motif into a new context where it assumes a different value, different reading. The complex operation of this process is to some extent analogical to that of the key technique of Old English poetry – the **variation** – in which an object is successively presented in its various aspects or functions (sometimes virtually identical, sometimes more or less distinct[225]) whose reciprocal relation is, however, left unexpressed. In the examples given above, two distinct, almost (it would seem) mutually exclusive "versions" of the motif are silently juxtaposed; this is rather an extreme form of redisposition

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[224] I. e. the instances of this strategy found in the second and first booklets respectively.

[225] Using the previously cited passages, the near identity in variation can be exemplified in the phrases *"hyge geomurne // meðne modsefan"* [a mourning mind, a dejected spirit], whereas in the expressions *"ecan dreames // heofona hames / mid heahcyning"* ["eternal joy, heavenly home with the Highest king"], a certain redisposition in the aspect stressed can be detected.

which in other instances of this mode of echoing can be much less pronounced. But whatever the precise quality and degree of the semantic shift, such a juxtaposition inevitably activates an interaction between its elements which, however, remains implicit and semantically open. The tension between the immediate context of the motif or expression in question and its previous "history" (its other uses) generates new readings that inform significantly the final interpretation of the relevant passage. If we return to our samples (to *The Seafarer* specifically), the trace of negative connotations of the *"hat æt heortan"* and *"hige weallende"* complex may add a new dimension to the speaker's claim that the joys of the Lord are "dearer" (*"hatran"*) to him than life in the world: the consequences of this stance are not only positive but also troubling and disconcerting. Such a reading accords well with the gradually developing perspective of the poem, but with other texts, the effect of the interplay can be much more ambiguous and harder to reduce to one definite statement. Thus in *Guthlac*, the contrast of the protagonist's "burning love to God" and his companion's "burning grief" may and may not be charged with a discriminatory force, stressing the exceptionality of Guthlac's uncompromising, unworldly sainthood.[226]

It remains beyond the scope and purpose of this study to supply an exhaustive survey of such recurring motives appearing in the collection; I will therefore only examine several illustrative examples which cover the whole range of relationships outlined in the foregoing discussion – from echo to variation, including the combination of both.

Echo: "battlefield of the soul"

Starting with the first subtype that has so far been established – the **simple echo** – we may note an affinity in handling of the motif of the

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226 A similar hypothesis is voiced in Pope 1978, 38-39.

assaults of the devil and the defence of the soul, in two passages from *Juliana* and *Vainglory*. In both texts are the temptations and sinful thoughts prompted by the demonic forces (in the former case unspecified and aimed chiefly at the "warriors of the Lord", in the latter explicitly focused on the origin of human pride and involving all men[227]) envisaged in terms of missiles – javelins, darts – dispatched by the devil; on the other side of the battlefield stands the soul as a fortress.[228] In contrast to the previously cited motif, where the correspondences extended to both the lexical and the conceptual level, here the reader finds the common basic idea variously realized.

In *Juliana*, the image of the spiritual battle is much more elaborated, visualised in terms of contemporary warfare; these individual metaphors, however, are never trusted – they are constantly being "explained", de-metaphorized, as it were, in their persistent coupling with their proper referents:[229]

> gif ic ænigne   ellenrofne
> gemete modigne   metodes cempan
> wið flanþræce   nele feor þonan
> bugan from beaduwe   ac he bord ongean
> hefeð hygesnottor   haligne scyld
> gæstlic guðreaf   nele gode swican
> ac he beald in gebede   bidsteal gifeð
> fæste on feðan   ic sceal feor heonan
> heanmod hweorfan[...]   ac ic geomor sceal
> secan oþerne   ellenleasran
> under cumbolhagan   cempan sænran

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[227] This difference arises in all probability from the specificities of narrative situation in the two texts: whereas in *Juliana*, the objects of the devil's attacks are the members of the as yet limited community of Christians in the pagan world of the Roman Empire, in *Vainglory*, a poem that turns to the Anglo-Saxon present, the target group is duly widened.

[228] The motif can be traced to Eph 6:10-20; both the analysed poems, however, modify it in a specific direction: they develop a dynamic battle scene on this foundation, in other words, they "actualize" the static image of the biblical model.

[229] E. g. the defence – *"bidsteal"* – is immediately identified with prayer – *"gebed"*; similarly, the other martial expressions are modified by appropriate adjectives (*"gæstlic"*, *"halig"*).

þe ic onbryrdan mæge   beorman mine
agælan æt guþe[...]   *ic beo gearo sona ·*
þæt ic ingehygd   eal geondwlite
hu gefæstnad sy   ferð innanweard
wiðsteall geworht   ic þæs wealles geat
ontyne þurh teonan   bið se torr þyrel
ingong geopenad   þonne ic ærest him
þurh eargfare   in onsende
in breostsefan   bitre geþoncas...

<div align="right">(Jul 382-405)</div>

["If I oppose any courageous and valiant
warrior of the Lord with my onrush of shots
and he does not want to evade the battle,
but, wise in spirit, raises the shield in opposition,
the holy aegis, his spiritual battle garment,
does not want to betray his God,
but, in prayer, keeps his stand
firmly in the troop, I must go away from there
far, humiliated...   but I, grieving,
will seek another, lacking in courage,
a weaker soldier, under the standards,
whom I may stir up with my suggestions,
hinder him in fight...   I am ready
to scan his inner thoughts to see
how fast is the spirit fortified within him,
how well is the defence prepared. The gate in the wall
I open with malice. The tower is broken,
the way in is free, when I first
launch in a volley of arrows
the bitter thoughts to his heart..."]

In comparison, the version of the motif found in *Vainglory* appears more condensed; it also shows greater reliance on the expressiveness of the metaphors employed. Its specificity lies in the subtle turn which makes the human protagonist, the vainglorious, contentious man, an accomplice in the demonic subversive attempts. Thus in the first phrase that employs the "missile" motif – "*bið þæt æfþonca / eal gefylled // feondes flgepilum / facensearwum...*" (Vain 26-27) ["His anger, then, is full of inimical/devil's flying darts, full of treachery..."] – the established sylleptic potential of the term "*feond*" (indicated in the translation) and the possibility to read the

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"*fligepil*" both as the origin of the anger and as its proper "charge" label the man simultaneously as the victim of demonic assault and as a member of the "devil's party". Later in the poem his verbal insults, too, assume the form of arrows or javelins: he "*hygegar leteð // scurum sceoteð*" (Vain 34b-35a), literally "launches a mental dart, shoots in volleys". In other respects, however, the motif preserves its basic contours found also in *Juliana*:

> *he þa scylde ne wat*
> *fæhþe gefremede   feoþ his betran*
> *eorl fore æfstum   læteð inwitflan*
> *brecan þone burgweal   þe him bebead meotud ·*
> *þæt he þæt wigsteall   wergan sceolde...*
>   (Vain 35b-39)

> ["He does not know
> that his hostility has brought about sin; he hates
> his betters out of envy, allows the treacherous shot
> to break that city-/fortress-wall, that defence
> which the Lord ordered him to protect..."]

A further important parallel in the deployment of this motif in *Juliana* and *Vainglory* can be found in the association of the static "fortress" image with the moment of human failure in the spiritual fight; this is especially conspicuous in *Juliana*, where the contrast with the succesful resistance to temptation referred to in terms of comparatively dynamic battle-scenes is present.

In both texts, the motif occupies an important position; in *Juliana*, it represents one of the rare additions to the narrative as it appears in the Latin exemplar and takes up approximately a half of the second unit in the series of the saint's questionings of her demon tempter[230] (while the poem

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[230] In the present state of the manuscript, the series comprises three items; the devil is first forced to reveal his allegiance to Satan, second, the methods he uses in tempting the faithful and finally, the various – mainly physical – torments which he causes them to suffer. However, a considerable portion of text (corresponding to one folio) has been lost between the description of the circumstances of the devil's appearance and defeat and the first of Juliana's questions; the remaining fragment contains a list of the enemies of Christianity whom the demon allegedly prompted to their hostile actions

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is rather extensive – 731 lines as we have it – the account of Juliana's vanquishing of the devil forms the very core element of her legend and as such is correspondingly prominent), in *Vainglory*, it represents the substance of the description of the central "godless" figure. It is therefore quite probable that this link could have been noticeable enough to function actively in the assembling of the booklet.

Echo/variation: "dangerous sea"

The following sample represents, in a way, a border case between **echo** and **variation**. *The Seafarer*, *The Panther* and *The Whale* all make use of an image of the sea that shows certain common traits: it is placed in antithesis to land which is seen as the realm of the pleasant (=ordered) and the predictable;[231] in the case of *The Seafarer* and *The Whale* it is also related to universal human condition. However, two important features distinguish the operation of this image from the previously examined instances of motivic echo. Firstly, its constituent aspects identified above cannot be fully localized in a specific, independent (self-explanatory) phrase or even passage – they often become evident only in the context of the whole poem, in other words, they are activated only through interpretation. Secondly, while the motif appears as stable in its characteristics, it can assume various functions in the individual texts.

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and the saint begins her query with the words "*þu sceal furþor gen / feond moncynnes // siþfæt secgan...*" (Jul 317-318a) ["You must tell me more, enemy of mankind, about your journey/experience"]. The evidence of the Latin legend identified as the probable source for the Old English poem suggests that the series originally contained one more unit in which the demon revealed his identity and proceeded to enumerate his acts designed to lead mankind into sin and prevent the victory of true faith, beginning with the Fall of Man. Considering, however, the central role of this section in the plot of *Juliana*, such minor adjustment should not weaken the position of our extract in the text as a whole.

[231] At the same time, it has to be noted that this impression of the land can be assigned the status of an "uninformed" view and subsequently subverted or revealed as false. Both *The Seafarer* and *The Whale* make this step, though it is realized in a different way in each poem.

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Thus both *The Seafarer* and *The Panther* share the vision of the sea as the continuous, mostly violent, commotion of waves,[232] using traditional expressions such as *"atol yþa gewealc"* ["the terrible rolling of waves], *"sealtyþa gelac"* ["the play/strife of salt waves"], *"yða gewealc"* (Sea 6a, 35a, 46b), *"brim grymetende"* ["the raging ocean"], *"sealtyþa geswing"* ["the surging of salt waves"] (Pant 7b, 8a). In *The Panther*, this wild fluid mass circumscribes the sphere assigned to human existence – *"þisne beorhtan bosm"* – "this bright/beautiful lap" of the earth. Superficially the juxtaposition seems inconspicuous enough: while the sea is labelled as a space of "disorder", in the terms used for the earth or land we find no matching contrary characteristics. We should bear in mind, however, that in Old English literature, *"beorht"* is a powerful word, belonging to a chain of positive qualities which associates it with joy, good and – order;[233] implicitly and, as it were, at a second remove, the spheres of sea and land thus appear not as mere neighbouring realms but really as opposed principles. In *The Seafarer*, the same manoeuvre is present – much more prominently – in the insistent comparison of the speaker's seafaring experience with the life of men *"on foldan"* – "on land" and *"in burgum"* – "in the cities":

> ...*þæt se mon ne wat*
> *þe him* <u>*on foldan*</u> *fægrost limpeð*
> *hu ic earmcearig* <u>*iscealdne sæ*</u>
> *winter wunade wræccan lastum*
>
> (Sea 12b-15)

["...the man for whom

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[232] In *The Seafarer*, this is one of the two directly expressed prominent aspects of the image; the other concentrates around the motif of road or journey, hence phrases such as *"brimlad"* ["sea-path"], *"flodwegas"* ["water-ways"], *"hwælweg"* ["road of the whales"] (Sea 30a, 52a, 63a). That aspect is further strengthened in the text through the speaker's association of the sea with the term *"wræclast"* ["path of exile"] and – less explicitly but more importantly – through the symbolic role that the image of the sea assumes in the poem.

[233] On the connotations of light and darkness see Barley, Nigel F. "Old English Colour Classification: Where Do Matters Stand?". *ASE*, 3 (1974), 15-28.

everything goes well on land
cannot know how I, desolate,
dwelt as an exile on the wintry ice-cold sea"]

for þon him gelyfeð lyt   se þe ah lifes wyn
gebiden in burgum   bealosiþa hwon
wlonc ond wingal   hu ic werig oft
in brimlade   bidan sceolde...

<div align="center">(Sea 27-30)</div>

["...therefore the man, proud and flushed with wine,
who has experienced life's joys in the cities
and few evil journeys/turns, will hardly believe
how I, weary, often had to dwell on the sea-paths"].

Especially the latter passage formulates the basic division in terms of the images of "city" and "wilderness", identified in the survey presented in the first chapter of part I as central items in the symbolic topography of the world as it is represented in the native poetic tradition. *Burg* functions as an extension of the core image of the hall, a place of protection against the forces of the unpredictable and often hostile environment. In this respect, the most concrete reference to this conceptual scheme which *The Seafarer* makes can be found in the passage that presents the cries of the seabirds as distorted substitutions of several features of the hall-life:[234]

dyde ic me to gomene   ganetes hleoþor
ond huilpan sweg   fore hleahtor wera
mæw singende   fore medodrince

<div align="center">(Sea 20-22)</div>

["I had only the cry of the gannet for sport,
the call of the curlew for the laughter of men,
the singing gull for a drink of mead"].

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[234] In this context, the scope of comparison should include also the similarly structured passage in *The Wanderer* (ll. 37-48), where the dream vision – first, of the ceremonies of the hall and second, of the joyful company of former comrades – is immediately confronted with the waking reality of bleak seascape enlivened only by meaningless cries of the birds.

In various ways, therefore, *The Seafarer* and *The Panther* construe a virtually identical image of the sea which stresses the aspects of wildness and irregularity; the sea is a force located outside or apart of the familiar bounds of *þisne* earth – "this" (by implication perhaps "our"?) world.

The two poems, however, differ quite radically in the further use they make of this motif; *The Seafarer* makes an implicit equation between the insecurity of the sea-journey and the incomprehensibility of God's intentions in respect to man,[235] preserving the rather sinister note inherent in the image:

> *... for þon nis þæs modwlonc   mon ofer eorþan*
> *ne his gifena þæs god   ne in geoguþe to þæs hwæt*
> *ne in his dædum to þæs deor   ne him his dryhten to þæs hold ·*
> *þæt he a his <u>sæfore</u>   sorge næbbe*
> *to hwon hine drihten   <u>gedon wille</u>...*
>
> (Sea 39-43)

> ["... since there is not a man on earth so proud in spirit,
> so lucky in gifts or so bold in his youth,
> so brave of actions, with so loyal a lord,
> that he would not feel anxiety when going to sea
> as to what the Lord will ordain for him..."]

In *The Panther*, a completely different structure emerges, though built on the same basis: it juxtaposes the image of the boundless sea with an account of the sheer immensity and incomprehensibility of God's creation:

> *þæs wide sind   geond world innan*
> *fugla ond deora   foldhrerendra*
> *wornas widsceope   swa wæter bibugeð ·*
> *þisne beorhtan bosm   brim grymetende*
> *sealtyþa geswing ·*
>
> (Pant 4-8a)

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[235] The translation of this passage traditionally assumes a change of reference in the double use of the term *"dryhten"*; but while this figure undoubtedly makes the human feeling of powerlessness and insecurity in face of the unpredictable God's will the more dramatic, it does not present the *sine qua non* of this reading.

The passage allows for two possible readings, depending on how we construe the grammatical category of *"wide"* in line 4: the one universally accepted understands it as an adverb modifying – and reiterating the meaning of – the adjective *"widsceope"* ["widely distributed"] in line 6, in which case the *þæs* – *swa* correlation simply defines the spatial extent of created life:

> ["So widely throughout the world
> is the multitude of birds and animals, creatures moving on earth,
> distributed extensively, as (= to where) the water embraces
> this bright lap, the raging ocean,
> the surging of waves"]

In this case, the juxtaposition itself could be read as only a very implicit comparison of its elements. If, however, *"wide"* is read as an adjective modifying *"wornas"* ["multitudes"] – a solution that would eliminate the rather clumsy repetition produced by the construction *"wide widsceope"*, then the juxtaposition referred to above really functions as a simile:

> ["As great a multitude of birds and animals,
> creatures moving on earth, is distributed wide
> throughout the world, as the water (that) embraces
> this bright lap, the raging ocean,
> the surging of waves"]

The image would thus be "reclaimed" – the "other" which both texts associate with the sea-motif remains ever the source of wonder, but whereas *The Seafarer* (at least in its initial section) focuses on the element of danger, *The Panther* stresses the miraculous.

Now, if we attempt to trace the operation of this image in *The Whale*, we have to tackle its complete "dislocation", exceeding even that found in the two previously examined poems: while the sea with its insecurity forms the necessary stage for all the events narrated in the first

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part of the text (indeed, it could be claimed, their prerequisite),[236] it is nowhere explicitly characterized and, moreover, it hardly gets mentioned at all. One of the rare – and indirect – exceptions, however, can be related profitably to the role assigned to the sea in *The Seafarer*; just as the *"sæfor"* – "sea-journey" there provides a metaphor for the essential insecurity of human life in general (in its role of the ultimate test rendering ineffectual all established means of success and protection, as well as in its relevance to *every* man, see the quotation above), here the appelation *"fareðlacende"* – literally "moving on the sea" (Wh 5b) – is expressly applied not just to sailors, but to all humanity: the whale is said to be

> *oft gemeted*
> *frecne ond ferðgrim* _fareðlacendum_
> _niþþa gehwylcum_

> (Wh 4b-6a)

> ["met often,
> dangerous and savage, by sailors,
> by all men"].

Obviously, this universal reference is to a large extent dictated by the demands of the allegory which makes the whale into the figure of the devil, but the gesture found in *The Seafarer* has similar motivation; moreover, in both cases the allegorization is retrospective, so at this stage the sudden shift from individual to general appears almost gratuitous in both poems. But is this all we have to piece together the poem's image of the sea? On the level of direct statement, yes; and yet, in a very subdued manner, the motif does emerge from the text in its by now familiar contours, contained and implied, as it were, in its twin image of the land. We have seen that the two spheres often combine in an antithetical relationship and inevitably, any change in the status or value of one element results in a corresponding adjustment in the other. If, therefore,

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[236] I. e. the whale's deceitful posing as an island and the subsequent destruction of the beguiled sailors when it dives to the bottom of the ocean.

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the analysis now proposes to pay more attention to the opposite pole of the sea-land conceptual complex than it has done so far, it merely follows the development present in the two texts compared – *The Seafarer* as well as *The Whale*.

The initial balance between the images of land and sea in the former text as well as the general direction of its gradual re-interpretation has already been traced in the passages quoted above: while the sea remains largely the unpredictable, hostile other,[237] its counterpart is progressively divested of its original security. This process culminates in the explicit identification of the speaker's intended sea-journey with the decision to prefer *"dryhtnes dreamas"* – "joys of the Lord" to any earthly pleasure, since that life is recognized as *"læne"* and *"deade"* – "transitory" and "dead". The final exhortatory section then but supplies this statement of inadequacy of human order (associated with the land sphere) with details and elaborations of apparent homiletic ring.[238] The situation in *The Whale* is largely parallel, but far more complex – at least for the purposes of the present interpretation, if not absolutely. The whole development present in *The Seafarer* in the repeated confrontations of actual sea- and land-scenes, where the original polarity of the images is first subtly undermined and finally bluntly reversed in the religious symbolic restatement, is here condensed into the single core image of the whale – the false *"ealond"/"unlond"* ["island"/"non-land"] – and into the confrontation of its apparent qualities perceived by the trusting sailors with its real nature revealed by the narrator (further emphasized by the subsequent allegorical exposition). The *"wægliþende"* – "wave-travellers" are characterized by terms exploiting the states of being habitually

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[237] The adjustment mentioned above concerns here primarily the speaker's attitude to this quality which shifts abruptly from rejection (or, at most, passive endurance) to willing acceptance.

[238] Cf. my reading of *The Seafarer* in Znojemská, Helena. "Where Ingeld and Christ Meet: the Exeter Book Elegies". *Litteraria Pragensia*, 18 (1999), 27-61.

associated with sea/land: they are alternately described as *"werigferðe"* or *"reonigmode"*- "weary of spirit", "sad of mind" (we may recall here the similar expressions found in *The Seafarer* - *"merewerig"*, *"werig"*, *"earmcearig"*, *"sorg // bitter in breosthord"* or *The Wanderer* - *"modcearig"*[239]) and as *"on wynnum"* or *"collenferþe"* ["joyful", "bold"] when they find the hoped-for refuge on the "island" (here, too, rough parallels may be traced in *The Seafarer* in the description on the man living *"on foldan"* and *"in burgum"*, cf. the quotations on pp. 157-158). These mental states implicitly reflect the expected, "established" qualities of the two spheres - the land is again supposed to offer a respite from the dangers and uncertainties of the ocean. And, as before in *The Seafarer*, this security proves to be a lethal illusion. The final statement, announced partly in the strange universal reference of the term *"fareðlacende"*, identifies the whale's deceitful habit with the ruses of the devil, robbing men of eternal life.

All this, however, forms a barely traceable subtext of the respective passage of the poem which functions perfectly well even when read quite straightforwardly as the traditional allegorical interpretation of an equally traditional piece of animal lore (included, for example, also in the Irish *Voyage of St Brendan*[240] - where, obviously, the saint and his companions do not drown). It is only through the intertextual link with other poems considered here that this network of concepts surrounding the sea/land motif can emerge, producing additional overtones of meaning which enrich the relatively simple allegory. While the once established motif does not change in any significant way, its integration into various contexts differs; that is why its operation seems to stand on the border

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[239] Only the terms occuring in direct association with the sea-journey (as opposed to, for example, exile in general) are quoted here.

[240] See Webb, J. S., transl. "The Voyage of St Brendan" in *The Age of Bede*. David H. Farmer, ed. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1988, 219. The whale epizode appears there as one of the events of the voyage, without any allegorical signification.

between the two previously appointed types of linking, as the latter quality brings it close to the principle of **variation**.

Variation: "bitter ends"

A model example of this subtype of echo can be found in the way in which the first movement of *The Fortunes of Men* (ennumerating various calamities that can befall human beings) recalls a similar, though less comprehensive, list in *Juliana*. Even if the direct verbal correspondences (apart from the method of heading each item with the initial *"sume"* /*"sum"*) are very slight, both catalogues agree in including blindness, lameness, death at sea, hanging, incineration and finally violent death imputable to drunkenness and consequent lack of control over one's tongue; the repetition is indeed difficult to miss in the booklet. What makes it a highly unsettling and ambiguous matter is the fact that while *Juliana* identifies these lamentable events as the result of the operation of demonic forces (in the relevant passage, the saint makes the failed tempter to reveal all his hostile deeds against humankind), in *The Fortunes of Men*, they are presented as distributed by fate subordinate to God himself – *"god ana wat // hwæt him weaxendum / winter bringað ·"* (Fort 8b-9) ["God only knows what the years will bring him when he grows up."]. The problem does not lie in any absolute theological incompatibility of the two statements – even the devil must respect, though unknowingly, God's purpose, otherwise we would have to presume that the Anglo-Saxons were at least occasional manicheists.

Inevitably, however, the confrontation of the two contexts of this motif casts a certain shadow over the latter poem. The final item in the *Juliana* list has the demon announce:

> sume þa ic funde
> butan godes tacne · gymelease
> ungebletsade þa ic bealdlice

þurh mislic cwealm   minum hondum
searoþoncum slog

<div align="center">(Jul 490b-494a)</div>

["Some that I found
without the sign of God/good, careless,
unblessed, those I struck down
boldly with my hands, with cunning,
through various death-blows/torments."]

The status of this assertion is difficult to determine: the by now standard initial *"sume"* seems to classify it as yet another entry in the preceding catalogue; on the other hand, its vagueness contrasting with the specific calamities named before as well as the reference to a *variety* of manners of death or torment would pose it rather as the final summary or reformulation of the demon's previous speech. The impact of this passage on the reading of *The Fortunes of Men* will be obviously greater if the reader decides to incline towards the latter solution – but even in its more restricted variant it presents a problematizing element. What may be challenged by this echo is the easy acceptance of the conclusion appended to that first movement of *The Fortunes of Men* (itself finished by a single example of a finally succesful, though initially hard, life[241]) –

Swa missenlice   meahtig dryhten
geond eorþan sceat   eallum dæleð

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[241] This reads: *"Sum sceal on geoguþe / mid godes meahtum // his earfoðsiþ / ealne forspildan // ond on yldo eft / eadig weorþan // wunian wyndagum / ond welan þicgan // maþmas ond meoduful / mægburge on // þæs þe ænig fira mæge / forð gehealdan* (Fort 58-63) ["Someone, with God's help, will exhaust the sum of his miseries in youth and in his later life will be prosperous, live in happiness and enjoy his wealth, his treasure and cup of mead among his people, such as ever a man may possess"]. We may note that the general terms in which this hypothetical person's success is envisaged resurface in an identical role in *The Husband's Message*; the protagonist of that text, too, has *"wean oferwunnen / nis him wilna gad // ne meara ne maðma / ne meododreama // ænges ofer eorþan / eorlgestreona"* (Husb 44-46) [... "overcome his miseries; he has no lack of precious things, horses, treasures, joys over (a cup of) mead, of anything a noble man may possess"]. Both poems also share a similar outlook: neither of them sees worldly prosperity, or, more specifically, its version which the tradition of "heroic" poetry presents, as incompatible with Christian faith or – perhaps more importantly – the chances to salvation. In fact, this question never even arises, in contrast to the more "monastically" aligned texts.

scyreþ ond scrifeð   ond gesceapo healdeð ·
Sumum eadwelan ·   Sumum earfeþa dæl ·

(Fort 64-67)

["Thus variously the mighty Lord
shares out to all throughout the space of the world,
preordains and determines and maintains the creation:
to some he gives happiness, to others a portion of misery."]

Certainly, it expresses a proper Christian sentiment of humility before the Allmighty; at the same time, however, it disclaims all responsibility on the part of humanity. One may of course consciously choose to dismiss the devil's view of the matter, but his claim that he touches with misfortune the godless remains in the background. In this light the unquestioning resignation acquires unpleasant tones of glib self-complacency: it is easier to impute one's miseries to the unfathomable working of God's will than to look introspectively into one's heart and perhaps to find oneself *"butan godes tacne / gymeleasne"*.

The echo thus supplies the ideological frame of *The Fortunes of Men* with significant though perhaps subsumable modifications. Here again the position of the motif in the two texts is sufficiently distinguished to justify its potential deployment in the process of editing the collection: the relevant first movement in *The Fortunes of Men* occupies almost two thirds of the poem and the respective passage in *Juliana* exceeds in prominence the one built around the motif of "devil's missiles" (cf. p. 155), as it represents the exclusive content of one unit in the series of the saint's inquiries of the demon. Moreover, the interaction of the two contexts could have been used to redirect the ultimate reading of *The Fortunes of Men* in such a way as to conform better to the prevailing "monastic" perspective, labelling, as it were, the text with its appreciation and even justification of the pleasant aspects of secular life as a shallow and hazardous compromising with the imperatives of true faith.

5. Immediate linking

The second major type of associative linking to be considered in the present survey concerns a situation in which a poem can be related to an immediately neighbouring text in the manuscript which may either be seen to motivate to some extent the simple fact of its inclusion into the booklet or which may significantly modify its interpretation (while in the former case, the first item in the pair is obviously the superordinate one, in the latter, retrospective modulation is also possible). The interaction of the two paired poems then produces a secondary semantic unit, a new text, as it were, in which the individual constituents can play various roles: proposition – resolution, general statement – exemplification etc.

Additive linking: *Deor* and *Wulf and Eadwacer*

One such case of this "**immediate linking**" – or, more specifically, of its first, **additive** subtype as outlined above - has been referred to already in the note on the thematic affinity connecting *Deor, Wulf and Eadwacer* and *The Wife's Lament* (p. 146) – there, the link has been perceived to subsist exclusively in the fact that all three poems present accounts of suffering women. However, the relationships constituting this chain are probably much more complex. As has been argued in part II (*Dissenting voices in the Exeter Book*) of this study, the latter two poems occupy a unique position in the Anglo-Saxon corpus. Inevitably, allowances must be made for the fragmentary nature of the evidence, but it appears that if there existed a tradition of *Frauenlieder* to which these texts would relate, it must have held a marginal position with regard to the two established discourses in Old English poetry (heroic-secular and monastic-religious respectively, if we adopt for the moment the rival categories advocated by Busse[242]). In

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[242] Busse 1988.

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this respect, the status of both poems as texts worthy of recording might have been relatively weaker.

The Wife's Lament is partly reintegrated into the "heroic" mainstream through the choice of terms in which its speaker describes her experience; the concrete details of her present situation and its causes repeatedly alternate with set phrases and formulations referring to the familiar concepts of exile and lord-retainer relationship[243] which supply the particular story with an appropriate frame of reference. No such gesture, though, can be detected in *Wulf and Eadwacer*. In the context of the Exeter Book, it ostensibly stands out as an isolated phenomenon. The narrative element in the text is set out in such ambiguous terms that it is virtually impossible to infer the nature of the related events – or even the speaker's attitude – with any degree of certainty; this indefiniteness is further enhanced by the fluid syntax and the dubious character of the appelations used in the poem (proper names / descriptive epithets). The verse-structure of the poem, with an apparently deliberate use of half-lines, irregular metrics (whether one notes the unusual distribution of headstaves within the line or the presence of extra syllables in otherwise "standard" verses) and finally, the refrain is also unparalleled on a comparable scale.[244]

But it is precisely some of these "idiosyncratic" features that link the poem to the immediately preceding *Deor*. It can be argued that in a number of ways this text constitutes a precedent, that apparently missing frame of reference to which *Wulf and Eadwacer* can relate. It introduces the refrain, which in both poems represents the most striking departure from

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[243] Cf. p. 111 in the 3rd chapter of part II of the present study (*Dissenting voices in the Exeter Book*).

[244] The formal idiosyncrasies of *Wulf and Eadwacer* are discussed in full on pp. 101-104 in part II, devoted to the analysis of individual problematic poems.

the usual form of Old English verse.[245] In *Deor*, the refrain is employed to round off the individual movements containing the summary references to legendary examples of human suffering. The text is thus divided into individual stanzas, which is another major innovation in the context of Old English poetry. In *Wulf and Eadwacer*, a similar division, though less systematically marked, may be detected: the successive stages in the progress of the narrative – from the description of the symbolic and factual situation of the speaker and her mysterious mate through her reflections on their relationship to the conclusive gnomic statement – are punctuated by the use of a half-line instead of a complete verse.

The last – and highly tentative – consideration upon the subject of formal parallels between *Deor* and *Wulf and Eadwacer* concerns the ellusive question of the realization of metrical and alliterative form in individual verses. As the discussion of the limits of permissible variation of the basic norm of the verse is fraught with controversy,[246] I will concentrate on listing just the evident deviations from or modifications of the received rules of Old English poetry. Moreover, the following observations are meant merely to complete the list of formal affinities and common tendencies that may be detected in the two texts, not to claim that the phenomena in question necessarily participate in their linking.

The metrical anomaly which is most readily visible in *Wulf and Eadwacer* is its use of half-lines, exceptional in Old English poetry in that such verses represent here, semantically and formally, a device functional in the structuring of the text and not, as elsewhere, a mere extension of a preceding regular line. Another indisputable irregularity marks off the gnomic statement which represents the semantic climax of the poem – *"þæt mon eaþe tosliteð / þætte næfre gesomnad wæs"*, where alliteration is

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[245] Frankis, P. J. "*Deor* and *Wulf and Eadwacer*: Some Conjectures". *MÆ*, 31 (1962), 161-175; 172.

[246] Cf. p. 103 , part II, chapter 3.

present as a rhetorical figure but not – as is the rule in Old English poetry – as one of the organizing principles of the verse.

In comparison to these major "deviations", *Deor* respects the regular alliterative and metrical pattern throughout – with one exception: in several verses,[247] and most conspicuously in the refrain, the stress and alliteration fall on grammatical words, more specifically demonstrative pronouns. Such lines are not technically incorrect, even if they rarely occur.[248] It is true that in the Old English poetic system, alliteration preferably links lexical words, most often nouns and verbs; that could be labelled as one of the formal imperatives of the technique. Nevertheless, the technique itself is designed to underpin the semantic highlights of a statement. In case where a grammatical word is given precedence in contradiction to the prevalent, established usage, it may be said that the semantic demands stretch the alliterative form to its limits. This motivation seems to stand behind all the anomalies quoted above; in this respect it is significant that such modifications of form coincide with the segments of text most exposed to attention both by their position and – in the majority of cases – their role as conclusive statements, expressing, as it were, the most important aspect of the narrative or supplying it with a generalizing / moralizing comment.

To conclude this argument, the two poems show a common tendency to disrupt the established coordination between semantic and formal requirements generally respected by Old English poetic texts and to redefine slightly the contours of this relationship: the formal means can

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[247] These are l. 11b-12 "*æfre ne meahte // þriste geþencan / hu ymb þæt sceolde ·*" – ["(she) could not think with any spirit how that should be sorted"], 31-2 "*mæg þonne geþencan / þæt geond þas woruld // witig dryhten / wendeþ geneahhe*" – ["(he) can keep in mind that throughout this world the wise Lord makes changes"]. The refrain is "*þæs ofereode / þisses swa mæg*" – ["that has passed away, so can/may/will this"].

[248] Similar type of verse may be found in *Beowulf*, cf. l. 196-7 "*se wæs moncynnes / mægenes strengest // on þæm dæge / þysses lifes*" ["He/Who was strongest of men at that time of this (=earthly?) life"] and 1761b-1763 "*nu is þines mægnes blæd // ane hwile / eft sona bið // þæt þec adl oððe ecg / eafoþes getwæfeð*" ["Now the glory of your strength lasts for one brief moment, but then at once ilness or sword will deprive you of power"].

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change in accordance with the intention to accentuate certain parts of the text. It is perhaps significant that in the pair *Deor - Wulf and Eadwacer*, the first poem is the more "conservative" in that the modifications of the alliterative line it introduces are more easily subsumable under the accepted norm; thus it may be seen to "herald", as it were, the even bolder variations present in *Wulf and Eadwacer* and – by supplying a certain precedent in this matter – partly to diminish their "scandalousness".

The links connecting *Wulf and Eadwacer* to *Deor*, even transforming it, in a sense, into a peculiar, self-contained supplement to that poem, are not, however, limited to purely formal features. Apart from *Widsið*, these texts are the only ones in the Exeter Book to contain names which either refer explicitly to the fund of Germanic legendary matter or which may have evoked such a connotation. Though the "love-lament" makes excellent sense when *"wulf"* and *"eadwacer"* are construed as speaking names particular to the poem and, on the contrary, requires a substantial interpretative violence if it is to be read as a woman's version of an event from an Odoacer tale,[249] this does not disqualify the possibility that *"eadwacer"* might have been interpreted as a proper noun, and therefore as a reference to Odoacer, by the scribe or the editor(s) of the booklet; either by way of mechanical association, without much taking into account the details of the story, or, as it were, in good faith, reading the poem as supplying an additional epizode (perhaps an innovation?) to the legend. Admittedly, such a hypothesis has to face the fact that no other Old English text lists the name and so it remains uncertain whether there existed any Odoacer legends in Anglo-Saxon England to be added to or whether the name would have been automatically connected with this specific person. Some support for this presumption may perhaps be sought in the fact that the Anglo-Saxons knew at least two figures whom the Germanic tradition placed beside Odoacer in the same circle of

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[249] This problem is treated in the 3rd chapter of part II of this study, pp. 108-110.

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legendary tales: Theodoric the Ostrogoth, who appears as a famous tyrant in Alfred's translation of Boethius' *De Consolatione Philosophiae* and in Gregory's *Dialogues* (also available in vernacular version)[250] and Ermanaric, who plays a significant part in *Widsið* (l. 8b-9a, 88-92, 111) and *Deor* (l. 21-26) and who gets a passing mention in *Beowulf* (l. 1200b-1201a). The question remains, however, what was the substance of the tales associated with these persons in England. The summary accounts we have focus on their qualities – mainly on their cruelty as rulers – rather than on any events in their life or their mutual relationship.[251] This fact could be interpreted in two ways: either that information was all the Anglo-Saxons had at their disposal, or, conversely, the relatively brief remarks were sufficient because they related to a body of common knowledge of the narrative part of the legends. It is true that if one presupposes, with Kemp Malone, an extreme conservatism[252] on the part of the English (which would result in their adherence to the basic form of the legend), the indirect support for the existence of an Anglo-Saxon tradition concerning Odoacer becomes reduced to the figure of Theodoric, since Ermanaric makes his appearance in the tale in later continental sources only. Even in such a case, a sort of minimal narrative kernel current in England may perhaps be proposed which would include not only Theoderic's execution of Pope John, Boethius and his father-in-law Symmachus (known from the more religiously oriented sources), but also his enmity with Odoacer and/or its climax in Theodoric's treacherous murdering of his rival. This at least is the account given by Notker Labeo of St Gallen in his translation of *De Consolatione Philosophiae*, more or less contemporary with the compilation of the Exeter Book.[253] In view of these – admittedly extremely

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[250] Frankis 1962, 162.

[251] With the exception of *Widsið*, which supplies the name of Ermanaric's wife – Ealhhild (l. 5b-9a and 97-102), and the even more important reference to Theodoric's murdering of Pope John in both texts cited (cf. Frankis 1962, 162-164).

[252] Malone 1962, 155.

[253] Frankis 1962, 163 (footnote).

tentative – considerations, the possibility arises that the reasons for pairing *Deor* and *Wulf and Eadwacer* might have exceeded the general level of shared presence of Germanic legendary names and that the link could have been perceived as more specific, namely as connecting an account concerning Theodoric the Great with a text which contains a reference to an "Odoacer", his rival in legend and history. It does not really matter in this context whether the *"Þeodric"* of *Deor* is to be properly identified as the Frank or the Ostrogoth; the passage in which the name appears is so allusive that it can be made to fit both these characters, as the many rival and equally convincing treatments of this problem show.[254] It is reasonable to suppose that the literary authority of the Latin records concerning Theodoric the Great would, in the monastic environment, make this the more "natural" interpretation of the stanza for the editor(s) of the Exeter Book.

However, I do not want to push this hypothesis too far, as it cannot be substantiated by decisive evidence; its minimal version, which seems to be tenable under any circumstances, would see this "nominal" aspect of the link between the two texts in question as based, very simply, on the fact that in the third booklet they are the only ones referring by name to specific characters and that these names are "native", Germanic in origin.

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[254] The preference for one or the other solution ensues primarily from the role ascribed to the stanza in the overall structure of *Deor*. Those who see it as another element in the list of unfortunate figures interpret the sentence *"Þeodric ahte / þritig wintra // Mæringa burg"* (Deor 18-19a) ["Theodoric held for thirty years the stronghold of the Mærings"] as referring to the exile of the Frankish Theodoric (Wulfdietrich) among the Visigoths; the name "Mærings" is then related to *"mære"* – "border"; the exile takes place – as is only proper – in the "city of borderers". So for example Malone, K., ed.: *Deor*, London 1933, rev. Exeter 1977, 1979. Proponents of the view that this stanza begins a new theme, that of cruel rulers and the suffering they inflict on their subjects, of course read the sentence in question as alluding to the rule of Theodoric the Great in Ravenna, which lasted for 33 years. Accordingly, they take the phrase *"mæringa burg"* either in the sense mentioned above, applying it to Ostrogoths (pointing out their "liminality" as Arian heretics), or as denoting "the city of fame" (from *"mære"* – "famous"). Thus Kiernan, Kevin S. *"Deor*: The Consolations of an Anglo-Saxon Boethius". *NM*, 79 (1978), 333-340.

The last, and probably most important – thematic – affinity connecting the two poems has been mentioned already: *Wulf and Eadwacer* continues the series of brief narratives of *"sorglufu"* – "sorrowful/worrying love" introduced in *Deor* in the stanzas about Beadohild and Mæðhild. The combination of all the "linking features" identified and examined above – the modifications of verse form, the reference by name to specific figures and the common (sub)theme of women trapped in a destructive sexual relationship – has a sort of double effect on the position and status of *Wulf and Eadwacer*: the thematic aspect brings it close to a supplement to the exemplary narratives presented by the speaker of *Deor*, whereas the formal aspect (the 1st person narrative, stanzaic form and the use of refrain) supports the reading of the text as a parallel to the last "autobiographical" section of the preceding poem.

In all respects, *Deor* appears as the more "orthodox" of the two texts. Its diction often relies on a range of formulaic expressions developed around the theme of exile, typically stressing the aspects of an "appropriate" state of mind (*"sorgcearig"*) and deprivation attending the exilic status (*"sælum bidæled"* – "deprived of joys"), accompanied by the subsidiary motives of cold (*"wintercealde wræce"* – "exile/misery cold as winter"*) and binding (*"sæt secg monig / sorgum gebunden"* – "many a man sat bound in sorrows");[255] apart from these traditional phrases, further verbal resonances can be found between *Deor*, *The Wanderer* and *The Fortunes of Men*.[256] The poem thus remains firmly rooted in the native

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[255] See Greenfield 1955, 200-206.

[256] The following passages may be compared: *"...hæfde him to gesiþþe / sorge ond longaþ"* (Deor 3) ["As his companion he had sorrow/care and longing"] with *"wat se þe cunnað // hu sliþen bið / sorg to geferan"* (Wand 29b-30) ["He who has the experience knows how cruel a companion sorrow is"]; several phrases in the two statements – *"siteð sorgcearig / sælum bidæled // on sefan sweorceð / sylfum þinceð // þæt sy endeleas earfoða dæl"* (Deor 28-30) ["Full of sorrow, a man sits, deprived of joys, his mind darkens, he thinks that the portion of misery has no end"] and *"mæg þone geþencan / þæt geond þas woruld // witig dryhten / wendeþ geneahhe // eorle monegum / are gesceawað // wislicne blæd / sumum weana dæl"* (Deor 31-34) ["He can consider that throughout this world the wise Lord effects many changes, to many men He shows mercy, a true prosperity, to some a portion of

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poetic tradition, whose formulaic diction enables it to express various concrete narrative situations (Welund's maiming, the discontent of Ermanaric's subjects, the speaker's loss of distinguished position) in terms of one recognized pattern ultimately based on the values of the *comitatus*. On the contrary, *Wulf and Eadwacer* lacks any such supportive frame.

The same conclusions apply to the explicit or implicit religious attuning of the two texts. The reference to God's control of the course of events in *Deor* is not decisive in this matter (that can be found even in poems profoundly secular in their outlook); much more important in that respect is the speaker's commentary set out in the refrain and the various ways in which it can be read. The key lies in the precise reference of the two demonstrative pronouns, *"þæs"* and *"þisses"*. If the temporal division established in the first five stanzas (*"þæs"* pointing to the past, *"þisses"* to the present) is to be preserved, then in the last stanza, the former must refer not to a period of misfortune – which the speaker endures now – but to the time when he held the recognized position of the "official" *scop*. What is thus implicit in the refrain is not the "partial" consolation along the lines "bad times are bound to come to an end" but the much more radical observation "nothing lasts in this world, whether good or bad".[257] Alternatively, the refrain may be taken as referring not to the passing of things, but to the passing of stories themselves, of their cultural relevance – a reading especially appealing to modern scholars desperately trying to reconstruct the lost legends behind *Deor*'s allusions. Again, I do not wish

woes"] evoke similar expressions and notions used in *The Wanderer* and *The Fortunes of Men*: *"forþon ic geþencan ne mæg / geond þas woruld // forhwan modsefa / min ne gesweorce"* (Wand 58-59) ["Therefore I cannot think of any reason in this world why my mind should not/does not grow dark"] *"eall is earfoðlic / eorþan rice // onwendeð wyrda gesceaft / weoruld under heofonum ·"* (Wand 106-107) ["The kingdom of earth is full of misery; the decree of fate changes the world under heavens"] *"Swa missenlice / meahtig dryhten // geond eorþan sceat / eallum dæleð [...] // Sumum eadwelan · / Sumum earfeþa dæl ·"* (Fort 64-67) ["Thus variously the mighty Lord shares out to all throughout the plain of the earth... gives prosperity to some and a portion of misery to others"]. Other verbal correspondences can be found between *Deor*, *Maxims* and *Guthlac*.

[257] So Kiernan 1978.

to argue that these are the only possible or the most likely interpretations of the text; on the other hand, it seems reasonable to suppose that the editor(s) of the booklet would have more easily followed a reading consonant with their reformist perspective. Construed in this way, the refrain, moreover, gives additional overtones of universal transcience to the finale of the otherwise wholly secular *Wulf and Eadwacer*: *"þæt mon eaþe toslíteð / þætte næfre gesomnad wæs // uncer giedd geador"* – "That is lightly rent apart what was never united – our song/tale together". The pairing of these two pieces could thus help to integrate *Wulf and Eadwacer* – by itself an "impossible" poem – into the context of the third booklet and the Exeter Book as a whole and, within this context, to make it not only acceptable but also fully functional. Finally, it should be added that by virtue of the thematic link and partial formal affinity ("autobiographical" monologue), its presence then may have in turn reinforced the position of *The Wife's Lament* in the collection and set up a model for its reading.

Contrastive linking: *Vainglory* and *Widsið*

While this instance of the **additive** subtype of "**immediate linking**" demanded – thanks to its complexity – a thorough examination of the formal features as well as the thematic affinities of the poems in question, in the following two examples illustrative of the second – **contrastive** - subtype the resonance between the two neighbouring texts will be seen to depend in both cases chiefly on variances in context and implicit "evaluation" of an important image or complex of images present in both poems. As was the case with *Wulf and Eadwacer*, so here, too, one poem in each of the pairs considered in this chapter can be classified as belonging among the pieces whose outlook does not agree well with the more pronouncedly religious, ascetic perspective characteristic of the greater part of texts assembled in the Exeter Book.

Widsið – the first of the texts whose relation to one of their neighbours in the manuscript will be examined – is commonly viewed as a poem with a decidedly "heroic" drift.[258] Unlike the more reserved, sceptical *Deor*, with which it shares the references to the tales and figures from Germanic past, it vigorously affirms all the mainstays of *comitatus* culture or, more precisely, of its literary image as it can be pieced together from various Old English documents:[259] generosity and martial prowess in a leader, loyalty and courage in his retainers,[260] and the common goal of both – to achieve lasting fame (*"lof"*, *"dom"*) among posterity. This is only appropriate, since its protagonist, introduced in lines 1-9, speaks in his function of a *scop*,[261] by definition a guardian and propagator of that culture. While other Exeter Book poems working most intensively with the central images of the heroic tradition (e.g. *The Wanderer*, *Deor*) bring to the fore its more problematic aspects and inbuilt fragility,[262] the picture drawn by *Widsið* is uncommonly positive and uncomplicated: the various imperatives of the heroic code do not result in fatal dilemmas for the people involved, but only in perfectly functional, mutually beneficial relationships (the one most stressed in *Widsið* – that between the ruler and the *scop*, in fact a social contract – becomes thoroughly "naturalized"; Widsið can admit openly that he is being paid for his songs of praise, since for both parties it is the proper course of action – rewarding the *scop* is just

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[258] Mitchell and Robinson 1992, 141. *Widsið* is listed here among "Poems treating Heroic Subjects", together with *Beowulf, Deor, The Battle of Finnsburh* and *Waldere*. The book is a widely respected introductory text for students of Old English and as such it can be said to both present and produce accepted views of the literature.

[259] Cf. O'Brien O'Keeffe 1985.

[260] Admittedly, this aspect is missing in *Widsið*, since it concentrates primarily on the characters of rulers.

[261] This is another difference from *Deor*, where the position from which the speaker communicates is personal rather than "official". It should also be borne in mind that *Deor* presents a monologue of a "failed" *scop*, whereas the protagonist of *Widsið* acts as a super-authority in this respect.

[262] For a more detailed treatment of this subject, see Znojemská, Helena. *Forþon me hatran sind dryhtnes dreamas þonne þis deade lif læne on londe: A Reading of 'The Seafarer', 'The Wanderer' and 'The Ruin'*. Charles University: unpublished diploma thesis, 1998, 69-72. Futher as Znojemská 1998(a).

one manifestation of the leader's generosity which, in turn, is in itself "naturally" worthy of acclamation).

It is true that the position of extraordinary authority which the main speaker claims for himself as he displays the full range of his experience and knowledge is partly weakened by the presence of dubious items in his lists as well as by certain tension between the data stated in the introductory paragraph and those given by Widsið in his speech proper (specifically, the double view of Eormanric; for a full analysis of these questions, cf. part II, chapter 3 of the present study, 80-83). Yet even though such discrepancies stand in the way of interpreting the text as a consistent and self-confident celebration of the heroic culture, they do not seem weighty enough in themselves to found an alternative, reverse reading which would better correspond with the overall disposition of the codex (e.g. challenging the value of the rival cultural model by putting its praise in the mouth of a fraud; the authenticity of Widsið's position – though not necessarily that of his statements – is confirmed in the impersonal introduction[263]).

However, such modulating influences emerge when the poem is related to other texts placed in its proximity in the manuscript. One such possible connection, which has been suggested in the 3rd chapter of the present part of my study (*Thematic and formal links*), is with the initial thematic sequence in the homiletic finale of *The Seafarer*. This would help to shift the tone of *Widsið* from a jubilant record of memorable personages and their heroic achievements closer to a testimony of the inevitable fragility of all earthly glory; correspondingly, in the final paragraph of

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[263] As the sentence stands in the manuscript, "*WIDSIÐ MAÐOLADe / wordhord onleac // se þe mæst mærþa // ofer eorþan folca / geondferde...*". This line-division is provisional; the text is in all probability corrupted and most interpreters emend it to read "*Widsið maðolade / wordhord onleac // se þe monna mæst / mægþa ofer eorþan // folca geondferde...*" Thus either: "Widsið spoke, unlocked the treasure of words, he who has travelled most (widely) through the glories and peoples of the earth..." or: "Widsið spoke, unlocked the treasure of words, he who among men has travelled most (widely) through the nations and peoples of the earth".

Widsið[264] the focus would lie on terms stressing the limited range of the fame offered by the *scop*'s art (which can only last in the transitory world *"under heofenum"*). At the same time, this passage, whose chief concern is the secular, "heroic" concept of *"lof"* ["fame, praise"], represents a certain counterpart to verses 72-80a of *The Seafarer*[265] (directly preceding the sequence referring to the kings and leaders of old) which introduce the Christian reworking of this notion; and this contrast may further enrich the link between the two texts. In this manner *Widsið* could have been reinterpreted to afford an indirect support to the argument of the more openly religious poems of the second booklet.

But the reading of *Widsið* might have been influenced much more radically by its immediate predecessor in the manuscript – *Vainglory*. It should be noted first that the two texts, though thematically very far apart, are built on the same pattern: the initial paragraph introduces the speech of a person possessing certain authority in regard to the information he is about to give; this then occupies the main body of the text (in case of *Vainglory*, with another speech embedded); and finally, the last paragraph rounds off the argument of the poem with a general statement – a

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[264] *Swa scriþende   gesceapum hweorfað*
gleomen gumena   geond grunda fela
þearfe secgað   þoncword sprecaþ
simle suð oþþe norð   sumne gemetað
gydda gleawne   geofum unhneawne
se þe fore duguðe wile   dom aræran
eorlscipe æfnan   oþþæt eal scæceð
leoht ond lif somod   lof se gewyrceð
hafað under heofenum   heahfæstne dom.
(Wid 135-143)

["So the singers of men, travelling,
journey through the created world,
through many lands; they speak their need,
say their thanks, and always meet,
south or north, someone expert in songs
and generous, who wishes to raise his fame
among (his) men and perform noble deeds
until all is done, light and life together;
such a one earns glory and possesses
lasting fame (in world) under the heavens."]

[265] *forþon bið eorla gehwam   æftercweþendra*
lof lifgendra   lastworda betst
þæt he gewyrce   ær he on weg scyle
fremum on foldan   wið feonda niþ
deorum dædum   deofle togeanes
þæt hine ælda bearn   æfter hergen
ond his lof siþþan   lifge mid englum
awa to ealdre   ecan lifes blæd ·
dream mid dugeþum
(Sea 72-80a)

["For every man it is therefore the best
glory and reputation among the living
if he earns, before the last journey,
by his deeds against the enemy's malice,
by brave actions against the devil,
that the sons of men should praise him
and his glory should be alive among angels,
the happiness of eternal life
and joy among the hosts, forever."]

religious exhortation in *Vainglory*, a reflection on the role of a *scop* in *Widsið*. In both poems it remains unclear whether that closing paragraph is to be attributed to the main speaker or rather to the "introductory" voice. This structural similarity operates in several directions: it builds a subtle link between the two texts and at the same time, it constitutes a background against which their differences stand out the more clearly, since the poems can thus be interpreted not as simply disparate – because wholly unrelated – pieces but as contrasting statements whose status within their given discourse is nevertheless comparable.

The initial sequences of both texts afford perhaps the best illustration of this principle. The first clause of *Vainglory* – "*Hwæt me frod wita / on fyrndagum // sægde snottor ar · / sundorwundra fela*" ["Lo, an old wise man, prudent messenger, told me of many strange wonders in the days gone by"] could, as regards its content, open both texts equally well; the two poems also envisage the speech to follow in related terms – "*wordhord onwreah*" (Vain 3a; MS "*onwearh*") / "*wordhord onleac*" (Wid 1b), which, by itself, may not be significant (the expression is formulaic, though the variant with "*onwreah*", probably motivated though not required by alliteration, occurs only once[266]) but it might help to call attention to the structural parallels linking the texts. The contrast is established once the reasons are named on which the authority of each of the speakers is based. The speaker of *Vainglory* derives his knowledge from literary, and more specifically, canonical sources: "*...wordhord onwreah / witgan larum // beorn boca gleaw / bodan ærcwide*" (Vain 2-4) ["the man versed in books disclosed the treasure of words with the teachings of wise men, the discourse of prophets"]. This claim is confirmed by the presence of biblical echoes in the "embedded speech" ascribed to the prophet ("*witga*") himself; the sentence –

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[266] The regular position of this phrase is in the b-verse; thus the usage found in *Vainglory* is doubly exceptional.

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se þe hine sylfne   in þa sliþnan tid ·
þurh oferhygda   up ahlæneð
ahefeð heahmodne   se sceal hean wesan
æfter neosiþum   niþer gebiged...

(Vain 52-55)

["Who sets himself up in this precarious time,
exalts himself out of pride,
will be humiliated
and brought low after death..."]

can best be identified as a conflation and slight reworking of the following statements: "For whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted" (Luke 14:11; with a minor difference in wording, it appears also in Luke 18:14 and Matthew 23:12) and "For the day of the Lord of hosts shall be upon everyone that is proud and lofty, and upon every one that is lifted up; and he shall be brought low" (Isaiah 2:12). The reference to the words of the prophet in the sentence introducing this speech, as well as the absence of the second part of the proposition would point to Isaiah as the primary model for this passage. Widsið's sources, on the contrary, are identified as personal experience – referred to both in the prologue (*"se þe monna mæst / mægþa ofer eorþan // folca geondferde..."* – "he who among men has travelled most (widely) through the nations and peoples of the earth") and throughout the speech proper (in the sequences *"ic wæs mid"* – "I stayed with" and *"sohte ic"* – "I sought out/visited", as well as in the narrative passages) – and orally transmitted lore (*"ic gefrægn", "mine gefræge"* – "[as] I heard" or, literally, "[as] I learnt by asking").[267] In view of the fact that at the time of the

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[267] It is interesting to note that the two sources become mixed at one point; thus Widsið says, *"swylce ic wæs on Eatule / mid Ælfwine // se hæfde moncynnes / mine gefræge // leohteste hond / lofes to wyrcenne // heortan unhneaweste / hringa gedales // beorhtra beaga / bearn Eadwines"* (Wid 70-74) ["Also I stayed with Alboin in Italy; of all men he had, as I have heard, a hand most open to ensure praise for him, a heart most generous in dealing out rings, bright jewels – the son of Audoin."]. Although this curious doubling might be explained in many ways (for example by the logic of the narrative which clearly gives precedence to Ermanaric and which therefore would not permit the direct factual

compilation of the Exeter Book the monastic culture begins vigorously to assert the superiority of literary tradition over alternative sources of knowledge and forms of its transmission, it seems reasonable to presume that from the two texts thus juxtaposed, *Vainglory* would be – almost automatically – perceived as presenting the more reliable and valuable information.[268]

From what has been said so far, it would appear that the proximity of *Vainglory* moves *Widsið* even further down on the imaginary scale of acceptability, highlighting its distance from the concerns and attitudes current in the environment which produced the codex. Such a strategy could have worked under one condition: that it should result not in simply heightening the disparity of the two poems but in the marginalization of the text which displays so vigorously the values of the *comitatus* culture. In my opinion, the way in which *Vainglory* uses terms evocative of the traditional poetic reflections of this culture to construe the setting for its anatomy of the proud, contentious man might produce precisely this effect. In the following passage – the opening scene of the narrative part of the poem – several expressions can be taken to refer to the familiar scene of warriors – retainers – feasting in the hall, an

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comparison of the generosity of the two leaders), it could have been read as another discrepancy in Widsið's account.

[268] It should be stressed that the explicit reference to literary tradition as a guarantee of authenticity is not overly frequent in Old English poetry and appears mainly in the larger epic narratives (*Genesis, Christ, Guthlac, Fates of the Apostles, Elene*) and in the Alfredian translations (*Meters of Boethius, Pastoral Care*). The "inertia" of the poetic tradition with its well-established formulas for the reference to the oral "pedigree" of a given narrative seems responsible for such paradoxical usages as the "*Hæbbe ic gefrugnen*" opening of *Phoenix*, whose substantial part is a poetic translation of Lactantius' *De ave Phoenice*, or the Cynewulfian phrase "*we þæt gehyrdon þurh halige bec*" ["we have heard from holy books"] – unless we wish to read such expressions as referring, quite realistically, to the common mode of text-reception in the period, i.e. listening to somebody else reading.

environment which also forms the background to the "(auto)biographical"

passages in *Widsið*:[269]

> *þonne monige beoð   mæþel he(r)gendra*
> *wlonce wigsmiþas   winburgum in ·*
> *sittaþ æt symble   soðgied wrecað*
> *wordum wrixlað   witan fundiaþ*
> *hwylc æscstede   inne inræcede*
> *mid werum wunige   þonne win hweteð*
> *beornes breostsefan ·   [...] swa beoð modsefan*
> *dalum gedæled   sindon dryhtguman*
> *ungelice...*

<div align="right">(Vain 13-23a)</div>

["... (when)[270] there are many disputers,

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[269] Apart from the direct localization of the action *"on flette"*, *"in meoduhealle"* ["in the (mead)hall"], the references to the presence of a retinue (*"fore mengo"*, *"fore duguðe"*), too, point to this context.

[270] The syntax of the passage presents some problems. The clause *"þonne monige beoð / mæþelhe(r)gendra..."* follows the statement *"þæt mæg æghwylc mon / eaþe geþencan // se þe hine (ne) læteð / on þas lænan tid // amyrran his gemyndum / modes gælsan // ond on his dægrime / druncen to rice"* (Vain 9-12) ["Any man can easily consider that, who in this time lent to us does not let his mind be hindered by pride of spirit and does not let drunkenness take hold of him while his days last"]. The three resulting clauses can be construed in several ways: 1. "Any man may consider that [...], [that] when there are many disputers [...], wise men contend who will hold the battlefield in the hall among men, (then) wine sharpens the spirit." This reading seems rather anticlimactic. 2. "Any man may consider that [...], [that] there are many disputers [...], wise men contend who will hold the battlefield in the hall among men, when wine sharpens the spirit." For the ellipsis of the relative pronoun introducing the second clause, a parallel may be found in Wand 37-48. 3. The two *þonnes* may not be correlative. The first (*"þonne monige beoð..."*) may be read as subordinate to the immediately following series of clauses (*"sittaþ æt symble / soðgied wrecað // wordum wrixlað / witan fundiaþ..."*) while the second (*"þonne win hweteð"*) would be a part of the ensuing description of the argument. Thus: "Any man may consider that [...], [that] when there are many disputers, [...] wise men contend who will hold the battlefield in the hall among men. When wine sharpens the spirit, the noise and uproar among the troop gets louder..." 4. The matter is further complicated by the punctuation of the passage which places a break after the clause *"þonne monige beoð / mæþelhe(r)gendra // wlonce wigsmiþas / winburgum in"* and thus suggests that it should be read as a temporal clause subordinate to the preceding relative clause: "Any man can easily consider that, who in this time lent to us does not let his mind be hindered by pride of spirit and does not let drunkenness take hold of him [...] when there are many disputers...". The problem of this reading lies in the fact that in the following sentence (*"sittaþ æt symble..."*) the subject (*"witan"*) would be postponed till the fourth half-line, which is very unusual. Moreover, there seems to be no shift in sense to motivate the punctuation. This difficulty could perhaps be solved if the clause *"þonne monige beoð / mæþelhe(r)gendra // wlonce wigsmiþas / winburgum in"* were read *apo koinou* with what precedes and follows.

proud warriors, in cities,
(they) sit feasting, speak the truth,
exchange words; the wise men contend
who will/would hold the battlefield
in the hall among men,
when wine sharpens the spirit.
So the minds are divided,
the men far apart..."]

Of course, not all of these terms are equally explicit in that respect; the ones with relatively strongest "heroic" connotations are *"dryhtguman"*, originally a technical term denoting the member of a *comitatus* (thus in *Beowulf* or *Judith*), though gradually acquiring a more general sense; *"wlonce wigsmiþas"* and *"æscstede"*, evoking a martial context (*"wlonce wigsmiþas"* is a term used to refer to the victorious Anglo-Saxon settlers in *The Battle of Brunanburh*). Some have a double connotation, "heroic" and "civilian": *"reced"*, for example, is one of the synonymical terms for "hall" (Heorot) in *Beowulf*, whereas in *Genesis* it is used to denote a large building in general. The rest of the expressions marked in the quotation is neutral by itself, but they help to piece together the image of the scene referred to above.

It is noteworthy that the terms employed in the sequence in question are strictly unbiased, even positive as concerns the evaluation of the action described: the participants are *"witan"* - "wise men" and their speech is characterized as *"soðgied"* – "true account"; even the phrase *"þonne win hweteð / beornes breostsefan"* ["...when the wine incites/sharpens men's spirit"] does not appear as really deprecating, in comparison with phrases such as *"wine gewæged"* – "disturbed by wine" (which occurs later in the text), *"wingal"* – "excited by wine" or *"winsæd"* – "filled with wine". However, there seems to be a sylleptic potential in some of the expressions which may establish a double perspective of the scene. Thus the term

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"*wlonce wigsmiþas*" (literally "battle-smiths"[271]) in its "absolute" reference defines the status or character of the participants; but when it is related to the immediate narrative situation, it may point to their function in the scene described: they are, at the same time, warriors / brave men and troublemakers – instigators of quarrel. This ambiguity is further enhanced by the semantic range of the word "*wlonc*" that permits both positive (proud = majestic) and negative (proud = arrogant) readings. Similar split between the general and the specific, situational reference may operate in the clause "*witan fundiaþ // hwylc æscstede / inne in ræcede // mid werum wunige*": it may refer to the subject of the argument, i.e. the position of supremacy within the company (whether the phrase "*æscstede wunian*" – "to hold the battlefield" is to be taken figuratively or whether it hints obliquely at the practice of "*beot*" ["boasting"] – recalled, for example, in *The Battle of Maldon*, l. 198-201, 212-215 and 246-248, or in *Beowulf*, l. 480-483, 523b-524, 632-638, 2510-2528 and 2633-2638a – in which retainers publicly express their commitment to perform heroic deeds in a fight) and simultaneously, to the argument itself, i.e. to the effort of each participant to have the last word in the ongoing debate. The presence of this double perspective may be variously interpreted; the situational references of the phrases treated above may function as an ironic comment on the pretensions of the people depicted in the scene in question or on the poetic self-representation of the "heroic" culture as a whole (in that case, the "positive" expressions referred to above could be read as a part of this self-representation).

It is also important to note, first, that the "protagonist" of the poem, the vainglorious man, is introduced as a part of this scene, and second, that he is not presented as an exceptional phenomenon: "*sum on oferhygdo // þrymme þringeð / þrinteð him in innan // ungemedemad mod / sindon to*

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[271] "*Smiþ*" in compounds may acquire the sense of "maker", cf. "*hleahtorsmið*" ["entertainer, singer"], "*larsmiþ*" ["scholar"].

monige þæt ·" (Vain 23b-25) ["Some one, out of arrogance, presses forward through force, unchecked pride swells in him; too many are like that."]. This seems to suggest that the environment depicted towards the beginning of the narrative part of the poem in fact encourages or directly produces such behaviour and the syllepsis examined above could support that interpretation. The condemnation of vainglory is thus inseparably connected with a subtle, indirect critique of the lifestyle and values of the _comitatus_ culture. This gesture can establish an interpretative stance that may affect unfavourably the reading of the immediately following _Widsið_.

If this oblique devaluation of the environment which shaped the speaker and protagonist of _Widsið_ casts a certain shadow over his claims, then the comparison of his speech with the description of the prideful man in _Vainglory_[272] may have an even more shattering effect. The whole middle sequence of the text, built on the pattern _"ic wæs mid X"_ and interspersed with brief "autobiographical" reminiscences revolves around one theme: Widsið's competence and fame as _scop_ and the favours the mighty showed him: Burgundian Guðhere (Gundaharius), Langobardian Ælfwine (Alboin), Ostrogothic Eormanric (Ermanaric) and his queen(?) Ealhhild. This is in sharp contrast to the first and third movements (built on the pattern _"X weold Y"_ and _"X sohte ic"_), where the extra information added to the basic list concerns the martial feats of the individual rulers. The bearings of the passage are established in its introductory paragraph:

> _forþon ic mæg singan   ond secgan spell_
> _mænan fore mengo   in meoduhealle_
> _hu me cynegode   cystum dohten ·_
>
> (Wid 54-56)

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[272] _breodað* he ond bælceð*   boð his sylfes_   ["He cries out and behaves arrogantly,
swiþor micle   þonne se sella mon   boasts that he is much mightier
þenceð þæt his wise   welhwam þince   than the better man, he thinks his manners
eal unforcuð   seem excellent to everyone."]
(Vain 28-31a)

The asterisks mark the _hapax legomena_ whose translation is therefore provisional; the verb _"bælcan"_ could nevertheless be related to the noun _"bælc"_ = "pride, arrogance".

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["Therefore I can sing and narrate a tale,
relate before the company in a meadhall
how I gained by generosity of the noble ones."]

But Widsið does not boast of his rewards only; he also claims the sovereign position of a personified "Fama Bona" in the paragraph concerning Ealhhild:

> *hyre lof lengde   geond londa fela*
> *þonne ic be songe   secgan sceolde*
> *hwær ic under swegle   selast wisse*
> *goldhrofene cwen ·   giefe bryttian ·*
>
> (Wid 99-102)

["Her fame lasted throughout many lands
when I should tell in song
where, under the sun, did I know
of the best, gold-adorned queen dealing out gifts."]

And, of course, due mention is made of the superiority of Widsið's art as well – "*...monige men / modum wlonce // wordum sprecan / þa þe well cuþan // þæt hi næfre song / sellan ne hyrdon ·*" (Wid 106-108) ["...many men, proud of spirit, who were expert in that, said expressly that they had never heard a better song"]. If *Widsið* stood on its own, this account, however self-centered it may sound, would have to be interpreted simply as another "chapter" in the development of the theme that keeps returning in all the narrative passages – the definition and praise of the qualities that make a good ruler, with the paragraphs concerning Widsið's successes designed to strengthen his authority as narrator (after all, they only expand on the data given in the introduction – *"oft he on flette geþah // mynelicne maþþum"* – "he often received desirable treasures in the hall"). In the close proximity of *Vainglory* with its deprecatory remarks on self-praise, however, the statements that the passage contains acquire a much more questionable status. If the integrity of Widsið's character and motives is challenged –

albeit indirectly – then also the veracity of his claims and, by extension, the values he professes become open to some doubt.

Such a reading, prompted by the comparison of the two neigbouring texts, would gain further support from the presence of dubious items in Widsið's list of rulers and peoples. It is true that it might seem impossible to reconcile the impersonal introduction giving Widsið's "credentials" and confirming his position of authority with this unfavourable interpretation of the speech itself; but this apparent disparity could be read in such a way as to contribute to the belittling of the position of the main narrator in *Widsið* – if the introduction ascribes substantial experience and knowledge to this character, his own speech reveals that he lacks the wisdom that should stem from it. In this way, Widsið's celebration of the values of the *comitatus* culture could have been marginalized, "neutralized", as it were, by the juxtaposition with *Vainglory*. Yet it is important to keep in mind the plurality of the combinations and links between the individual texts which may emerge in the manuscript; as the comparison of *Widsið* with *The Seafarer* suggests, there might have been more than one possibility of integrating some of the "problematic" texts into the mainstream of the Exeter Book.

Retrospective contrast: *The Husband's Message* and *The Ruin*

In contrast to the previously proposed pairs where the first text could be read as a sort of key signature transposing, as it were, the second item into a new tonality, the last sample of "immediate linking" to be considered here can serve to illustrate the opposite principle of retrospective modification.

It has been mentioned already (see footnote on p. 139 of this study) that throughout the Exeter Book, the poems that refer in positive terms to the heroic culture, its values and social "institutions" associated with it, regularly present them as fully operative only in the past – whether

"personal" (e.g. *The Wanderer, Riming Poem*) or legendary/historical (*Widsið*).[273] Certain anomaly in this respect may be found in some passages from the *Maxims* and in several of the *Riddles*, which (by virtue of the gnomic "*sceal*" in the former case and the generic character of the description in the latter) are located in virtually atemporal space. But the only text where such a reference may be said to be really "present" seems to be *The Husband's Message*. The happiness of reunion of the as yet separated pair is envisaged in terms of their joint performing the central obligation of a lord to his *comitatus* and this act is presented as sanctified by God – "*þonne inc geunne / alwaldend god // [...] ætsomne / siþþan motan // secgum ond gesiþum / s[...] // næglede beagas*" (Husb 32-35a) ["...when the almighty God grants you two to be able to distribute together studded jewels to men and retainers"]; the mysterious lord himself is furnished with status markers and possessions of a clearly "heroic" ring – "*he genoh hafað // fædan gold[e]s*" / ... "*[hold]ra hæleþa*" (Husb 35b-36a, 39a) ["he has enough plated gold... loyal followers"], "*nis him wilna gad // ne meara ne maðma / ne meododreama // ænges ofer eorþan / eorlgestreona*" (Husb 44b-46) ["he lacks no joys – horses, jewels, happiness over mead – no lordly possession on earth"]. In this respect, the text appears potentially more dangerous for the maintaining of the "monastic" perspective prevailing in the codex as the truly dominant one, without any current rival cultural model. Consequently, it seems reasonable to presume the existence of some modifying gesture which would make the poem less problematic.

To do full justice to the complexity of the issue of integrating *The Husband's Message* – to some extent at least – into the mainstream of the Exeter Book, however, it is necessary to list here the various attempts to find a basis for such a reinterpretation in the text itself; for a detailed treatment of these proposals, I have to refer the reader to chapter 3 of part

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[273] Cf. Renoir, Alain. "The Least Elegiac of the Elegies: A Contextual Glance at *The Husband's Message*". *SN*, 53 (1981), 69-76.

II of this study. There, I have also indicated those elements in the text which render the otherwise promising radical solution of this problem – the interpretation of *The Husband's Message* (whether alone or together with *The Wife's Lament*) as a cultural "translation" of the *Song of Solomon* (in its allegorical reference to Christ and Church / soul) into native, Germanic terms[274] highly disputable. Despite its weaknesses, though, it would be overbold to maintain that such a thought could not have occurred to the compilers of the Exeter collection, considering the stress the monastic environment placed on the exegesis of biblical texts. Reading the poem as a religious allegory would admittedly make it fit eminently into the larger context of the third booklet and the codex as a whole, yet it requires considerable interpretative violence and therefore it does not seem expedient to rely too much on this possibility.

Alternatively, the reader may keep to the more literal interpretation and look for such factors in the poem as would question its apparent optimistic tone by revealing the hope of resolution of the initial narrative situation (separation of the couple) described there as precarious. This would result in a corresponding weakening in the positive appeal of the heroic setting, a minor step towards its "neutralization". Alain Renoir ostensibly found such a modifying influence through reconstructing the unstated implications of the narrative:[275] firstly, the hints at previous emotional misunderstanding between the two partners (*"...nu cunnan scealt // hu þu ymb modlufan / mines frean // on hyge hycge"* – "now you will know how to think of my lord's love") and the repeated appeal to old promises (*"... þec þonne biddan het [...] þæt þu [...] sylf gemunde // [...] wordbeotunga // þe git on ærdagum oft gespræcon"* – "[he] commanded [me] to ask you to remember those wows that you two often uttered in the days gone by"), suggesting that the lady may not be willing to join her absent

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[274] So, in quite a reticent manner, Swanton 1964; and in a rather more enterprising way, Bolton 1969.

[275] Renoir 1981, 74-76.

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consort; secondly, the necessity to employ a third person to convey the message – in secret *("nu ic onsundran þe / secgan wille..."* – "now I will tell you in private...") – indicating that it may be dangerous or impossible for her to do so. Nevertheless, this reading may rightly be challenged as being only loosely grounded in the text itself; the reconstruction can be psychologically plausible but it can hardly be claimed that the passages mentioned by Renoir point clearly in that direction.

It appears more profitable to consider again the sections which describe the state of prosperity that the lord enjoys and the lady is invited to share in terms taken from the repertoire of important images of the heroic poetic tradition. Two moments can be detected there which may produce an effect similar to that achieved in other poems through the displacement of this cultural model into the past: while the man possesses the status markers of the heroic order (loyal followers, treasure), the full consummation of the ritual of dispensing gifts to the retinue – the confirmation of that order – is deferred till the coming of the lady, expected in the future *("þonne")* but later seen as conditional *("gif")*; potentially, the institution is functional – actually, there is an important element wanting. The other displacement is spatial: the happiness and good fortune which this culture offers is or will be realized elsewhere – among strangers *("elþeode")*. In this way, the positive evaluation which the poem makes of the heroic culture could be slightly regulated. However, the modification thus effected is still rather marginal, comparable perhaps to the presence of problematic items in the lists given by the speaker of *Widsið*; it certainly cannot annul the fact that the hope of the protagonists' living together as the lord and lady of a loyal band of warriors, enjoying all the pleasures of this position, is nowhere in the text marked as mistaken or futile and that this goal appears throughout as desirable and legitimate. In the context of the codex, the poem still appears largely

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problematic, though this character may be partially reduced by the qualifications expressed above.

But this lesson of the essential insecurity of any human order, missing in *The Husband's Message*, is supplied by the immediately following *Ruin*. Although the feelings of wonder and admiration at the ingenuity of the builders of the now dilapidated city undoubtedly occupy a prominent position in the poem (thus prompting some scholars to read it as a rare Old English specimen of the encomiastic genre[276]), the description of the place strikes several successive notes whose complex interaction cannot be reduced to a simple statement of praise.[277] Obviously, any interpretation of this text has to recognize its insufficiency face to face with the badly burned eight(?) lines which formed the conclusion of the poem.[278]

With this necessary reservation in mind, I now propose to look for elements that link *The Ruin* to *The Husband's Message*. Despite the fact that the ruins in question are commonly identified with the remnants of the Roman city of Bath (as the only location within the Anglo-Saxon territory where any *"hate streamas"* may be found[279]) and that the initial section represents them as structures virtually removed from the sphere of human

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[276] Howlett, David R. "Two Old English Encomia". *ES*, 57 (1976), 289-293.

[277] For a detailed interpretation of the poem, see Znojemská, Helena. "*The Ruin*: A Reading of the Old English Poem", *Litteraria Pragensia*, 15 (1998), 15-33. Further as Znojemská 1998(b).

[278] It may be noted that the legible fragments ("*Þonne is*", "*þæt is cynelic þing [//] huse*" [or possibly "*hu se*"] , "*burg*") offer two conflicting clues for reading when compared with the rest of the poem: on the one hand, "*cynelic*" ("kingly/convenient") echoes the terms which evoke the past magnificence of the city (cf. the reference to the builders as "*waldend wyrhtan*"- "master makers" – and the phrase "*Þæt wæs hyðelic*" – ""that was convenient") and therefore can be presumed to complement the previous passage which focuses on the "technological achievements" of the baths; on the other, the present tense is otherwise exclusively used in the passages which depict the place in its current state of decay (i.e. l. 1-9b, 12, 29b-31a) and it does not seem likely that this pattern would so suddenly be disrupted.

[279] Another feature cited to support this localization is the circular pool ("*hringmere*"); the reference to tiling or brickwork ("*tigel*") and the method of strengthening the foundations of buildings with metal rods ("*hygerof gebond // weallwalan wirum / wundrum togædre*") would point more generally towards the Roman origin of the edifices mentioned. Cf. Leslie 1961.

experience ("*enta geweorc*" – the "work of giants" half absorbed by nature), the two scenes which reconstruct the past splendour of the city life use imagery which revolves around several themes typically stressed in the poetic accounts of "heroic" society and which is thus directly comparable with that employed in *The Husband's Message*. The city resounds with joyful noises of the feasting company of warriors –

> ...*beorht wæron burgreced   burnsele monige*
> *heah horngestreon   heresweg micel*
> *meodoheall monig ·   · M · dreama ful*
> *oþþæt þæt onwende   wyrd seo swiþe ·*
>
> (Ruin 21-24)

> ["Splendid were the city buildings, baths numerous,
> with abundance of high gables; great was the martial clamour,
> many a mead-hall with plenty a man may enjoy
> until the mighty fate changed all that."]

Even the architectonic description, which elsewhere captures the various "peculiarities" of Roman mode of construction, is here "domesticated": the lofty gables are mentioned as features worthy of special attention in the description of Heorot ("*sele... / heah ond horn-geap*" "hall... high, with wide gables"), that model hall of Old English poetry. The second of these scenes then envisages the inhabitants – again, properly warlike – proudly surveying the opulence that surrounds them:

> ...*hryre · wong gecrong*
> *gebrocen to beorgum ·   þær iu beorn monig*
> *glædmod ond goldbeorht   gleoma gefrætwed*
> *wlonc ond wingal   wighyrstum scan*
> *seah on sinc on sylfor   on searogimmas*
> *on ead on æht   on eorcanstan ·*
> *on þas beorhtan burg   bradan rices ·*
>
> (Ruin 30b-37)

> ["the place collapsed in ruin,
> shattered into barrows, where before many a man
> happy and sparkling with gold, dressed in splendour,

> proud and wine-flushed, shone in his armour;
> surveyed the jewels, the silver, precious stones,
> riches, possessions, jewellery –
> the bright city of the great kingdom."]

They, too, like the lord in *The Husband's Message*, can boast of lacking nothing of the *"…maðma / ne meododreama // ænges ofer eorþan / eorlgestreona"* (Husb 45-46) – *"…*treasures, happiness over mead – no princely possession on earth".

However, the passages just quoted are significant also in the way in which the images of supreme prosperity are there inextricably coupled into *one complex sentence* with the account of its subsequent ruin. A similar situation may be found in *Beowulf*, where the building of Heorot and its future destruction are likewise reported simultaneously.[280] In *The Ruin*, this gesture is further supported by the pattern of swift alternate glances into the glorious past and the bleak present which structure the text. Together, these phenomena seem almost to materialize the inherent fragility of any human order in general and – which is perhaps more important for the present study – the *comitatus* culture in particular. Such a verdict may then well produce a retrospective revaluation of the immediately preceding poem, whose tone of hopeful optimism is thus substantially weakened, even negated; and with it, also the positive appeal of its heroic setting.

To conclude this chapter, it may be observed that a substantial number of those poems identified in part II (*Dissenting voices in the Exeter Book*) as the least compatible either with the tenor of the greater part of the texts assembled in the Exeter Book or with the environment which produced it gains some foothold there by their interaction with poems placed in their immediate vicinity.

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[280] Beo 67b-85.

6. LINKING CENTRAL IMAGES

THE last major type of intertextual linking to be examined here operates with recurrences and revaluations of images which hold a position of special importance in Anglo-Saxon poetry because of their function in representing a certain order of the world. This conceptual complex, established in the native pre-Christian poetic tradition, has been described and analysed in detail in the first chapter of part I of the present study, where I have also outlined the ways in which it could be accommodated by later religious poetry. For the sake of clarity, however, I will now briefly recapitulate the points of the survey that appear most relevant for the following consideration. Generally, the space in which the protagonists of heroic poetry operate is seen in sharp contrasts. In the centre of the human world stands the hall as a place where the social order of the *comitatus* is constituted in the ceremonies of treasure-giving, feasting and *beot* – a public commitment to a deed of bravery in moments of danger and confrontation – and where its validity is confirmed in the *scops'* exemplary narratives and songs of praise. From this kernel the sphere of human control extends through a group of related images which expand on the primary function of the hall as a space that affords security – both in the sense of protection, physical and social, and that of familiarity, "belonging". Terms such as *"burh"* – "town" (from *"beorgan"* – to protect), *"fæsten"* and *"fæstnung"* refer to the first aspect, whereas *"ham"* – "home", *"eðel"* – "native, hereditary land, homeland", *"cyþþu"* – "native land" stress the second. The outside world, on the other hand, has a rather shadowy, "derivative" existence: it is either characterized by images of cold and storm or, more significantly, it is presented as a negative copy of the hall-complex, as the denial of its functions and qualities. In this category we may include such terms as *"uncyððu"* –

"foreign/strange land", *"elþeod"* – "strange people/nation" and, generally, all the formulas of deprivation connected with the motif of exile, as well as the situation of exile itself.

Each of such images necessarily carries the weight of the whole system of values of the culture that produced it and therefore the relations in which it is placed in a particular text become extremely important, as this immediately identifies the ideological stance of that text, or, to use a less controversial expression, its perspective of the world and human life. Inevitably, it is only when the poetry in vernacular is recognized as a suitable medium for Christian instruction that the plurality of contexts in which such images may function comes into being, since the religious poems communicated through channels established by the pre-Christian poetic tradition. Thus, to give a truly ubiquitous example, the terms used to describe the ideal prototype of earthly life in the perspective of the *comitatus* culture (companionship of men in the hall) are applied to convey the idea of the joys which the just experience in heaven. This specific case may also serve as an illustration of the complexity of the problem of determining the attitude of the text towards the earlier cultural model that such a usage indicates. It is readily apparent that it could be interpreted in two ways: as a gesture that recognizes the established status and positive value of the image in a "utilitarian" sense but, by reserving it for the sphere of the divine, devalues its original context and its role in the description of this world; or, if the validity of the image remains the same in both worlds, as a motion that in fact enhances the legitimity of the social and conceptual structures which that image reflects. One also has to take into account instances where the presence of an element seemingly belonging to the "heroic" register simply copies the situation in the Latin (biblical, patristic etc.) material adapted in the Old English poem and distinguish them from cases where the source indeed contains an impulse that can prompt in its vernacular reworking the use of a corresponding

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motif established in the native poetic tradition – but does not explain the extent of its subsequent elaboration which seems to be due entirely to its special position in Anglo-Saxon poetry. Therefore it is essential to study the precise functioning of such central motives in a given text in detail and with due caution. All the problems outlined above will resurface in the following study of the intertextual links based on the use of the type of imagery defined in the first chapter of part I of this study and presented summarily in the introductory paragraph to the present chapter.

Incidentally, the links proposed and analysed below establish relationships between two or among a series of neighbouring poems; and while the fact of their proximity is of little consequence in the first two instances illustrating this type of linking, in the last one it represents an important factor in interpreting the effects of the mutual interaction of the texts in question on their reading and role in the codex. And as some of the links considered in the previous chapter (*Immediate linking*), which focused precisely on situations in which the interpretation of a poem is significantly modified through its confrontation with a neighbouring text, also included the reiteration of images associated with the *comitatus* culture, it appears necessary to justify their division from the apparently similar cases treated here. I have decided to differentiate between affinities based on the sharing of images evocative of this setting in a general sense and those that emerge when the texts involved use a specific, clearly defined central motif from the conceptual complex referred to above, preferring – perhaps arbitrarily – the criterion of the quality of the link to that of proximity and including instances of the latter type in the present chapter. As with the previously examined forms of linking, here, too, we may observe the existence of two basic principles, **additive** and **contrastive**; with reference to the preceding observation concerning the radical changes in the operation of such motives determined by their placing in different ideological contexts it can be said that the former type

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works with a reiteration of an image or a set of images within a single context whereas the latter juxtaposes two different orientations of the same image.

Additive linking: "the heavenly hall"

The following analysis of the first, **additive** type will focus on the intertextual links that can be found in the initial, most homogeneous part of the Exeter Book – the last of the three booklets proposed by Conner, containing the rather lengthy religious poems known under various names but best labelled (in a most neutral manner) as *Christ I, II* and *III* and *Guthlac I* and *II*. This may seem redundant in view of the fact that – unlike the greater part of the codex – the section in question holds together well enough by much more traditional and universally recognized means. The three *Christ* poems present the crucial moments of salvation history in a thoroughly logical chronological sequence. Moreover, they are further interconnected by thematic links that bind the opening of the middle text to its predecessor (the reminiscence of the Nativity in Christ II 4-14 recalls the dominant theme of *Christ I* in general and the reference to Christ's birth of Virgin Mary in the last of the twelve lyrics in particular) and its finale (with its fearful vision of the Second Coming) to the following account of the Last Judgment in *Christ III*. The two texts concerning St Guthlac, too, form a larger unit fully in keeping with the logic of the genre of a saint's life: though they remain, beyond any doubt, two separate and to a large extent independent poems, it is only through the detailed record of the protagonist's death in *Guthlac II* that the generic expectations for this type of text are fulfilled, since the manner of death is as important in the making of a saint, and as extensively treated, as his or her pious life. Finally, on the boundary between the two larger thematic units (the *Christ* poems on the one hand and those of St Guthlac on the other) we find a passage of approximately 30 lines whose function may be productively

compared to that of the above-mentioned "retrospective" and "anticipatory" sections in *Christ II*. It forms a prelude to the ensuing narrative of an exemplary life of one of Britain's *soðfæstra* ("righteous"), describing the reward that awaits true Christians in heaven, and together with a parallel passage which closes the poem provides the individual history with a generalizing framing. However, at the same time it represents – in a thematic sense – merely an extension of the scene of heavenly joys assigned for Christ's chosen which appears at the very end of *Christ III*; so much so that several earlier scholars[281] – despite the fact that the scribe clearly marked the first line of this passage as the beginning of a new poem – construed it as belonging with the preceding text or at least as a separate "epilogue". In short, though in other parts of the Exeter Book the fact that some poems share a single motif is all that provides the collection with a minimum of coherence, in case of the first booklet this phenomenon represents at best an additional "embellishment" whose binding force is relatively insignificant.

Nevertheless, the task of identifying those more subtle links even here does not appear altogether fruitless, not the least because they can, apart from acting in accord with the more conventional linking methods, produce alternative combinations and juxtapositions within the given group of texts and thus enrich their reading. Another reason why I have chosen these specific poems for the analysis of their use of the central images of the native poetic tradition is closely connected with the problem discussed in the introduction of determining the status of such an image in a text in relation to the measure in which it is dependent on external models. The *Christ* and *Guthlac* poems represent a rich spectrum of various degrees of derivation from a known source – from *Guthlac II* and *Christ I* which follow the identified original (chapter 50 of Felix of Crowland's *Vita Sancti Guthlaci* and the Antiphons for Advent, respectively) rather closely,

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[281] See Krapp and Dobbie 1936, xxvii-xxx.

through *Christ II* and *III* which organize the material of their models into a new unity (*Christ III* being incomparably more "adventurous" in the way it fuses the statements of numerous homiletic texts into a new whole with a clearly identifiable, though loose, structure), to *Guthlac I* which, by all signs, appears to be an original, independent creation of the Old English poet, a free retelling of the story of the saint's struggle against diabolical temptations.[282] As the analysis of the opening lines of *Phoenix* in the first chapter of part I of this study[283] has shown, the comparison of Old English poetic adaptations with their Latin originals may reveal with special clarity – in the minor but significant departures – the influence of established modes of thought of a poet working within the tradition shaped by the preferences and values of the "heroic" genres. If the findings obtained in this manner are then further supported by the prevalence of corresponding concepts in a text of a comparable type and purpose that is manifestly independent of any Latin models and that can thus be presumed to rely more extensively on the conventions of indigenous poetic tradition, it may be claimed with a degree of assurance that the motives thus singled out indeed belong to the category of peculiar Anglo-Saxon *topoi*.

So the following consideration is in fact motivated by a double aim: to describe the recurrences of selected important images (as outlined in the introduction) in the five poems and outline the alternative links and regroupings in that complex that they produce; and, as a precondition to that final goal, to show, on the basis of the position which those selected images occupy in the texts, that they really represent an independent contribution of the Old English poet applied with a certain insistence and

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[282] Muir 1994, vol. II, 46-65, 395-400, 411-414, 426-428, 439-440 and 450-451 identifies both the principal sources and subsidiary models for individual verses and shorter passages of the poems in question. Full texts in translation are given in Allen and Calder 1976, 70-112.

[283] Cf. pp. 28-31.

that they can therefore reasonably lay claim to the status of a major building blocks of the native poetic tradition.

At first sight, the "heroic" register asserts itself most conspicuously in *Christ II*,[284] or, to be more precise, in its first, narrative part whose major portion (recounting the Harrowing of Hell and Christ's subsequent ascension to heaven with the liberated souls of the righteous who died before His coming) was ostensibly inspired by Bede's Latin hymn *De Ascensione Domini*.[285]

The genesis of the peculiar treatment of this event by Cynewulf which presents Christ in the role of a victorious warrior is complex and includes several distinct stages. The dogma of Christ's descent into hell in fact finds but weak direct support in the canonical books of the Bible, yet it became a part of both the Apostles' and the Athanasian Creed. Only two direct references can be found in 1 Pet. 3:18-20 and 4:6 which speak of resurrected Christ preaching the gospel to souls in prison, i.e. the dead. The development that leads to Bede's narrative and then to Cynewulf's begins with the practice of looking for prefigurations of Christ's mission in the texts of the Old Testament. Thus Eph. 4:8-9 quotes Ps. 68:18 – "When you ascended on high, you led captives in your train", explaining it as evidence for Christ's entering hell: "What does 'he ascended' mean except

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[284] With the exception of specific scenes of the dialogues between the saint and his companion in *Guthlac II*, where the hero is referred to in terms traditionally used of a lord of a retinue (e.g. *"winedryhten"* ("friend and lord"), *"freodryhten"* ("lord and master"), *"duguþa/eorla hleo"* ("protector of men")) both by his partner and (less frequently) by the narrator. This perspective is most prominent in the passage that closes the extant fragment of the poem, where the young monk announces the death of the saint to Guthlac's sister, simultaneously delivering a "lament of a retainer who survived his lord" in which he uses such apparently inapropriate epithets as *"sincgiefa "* ("treasure-giver"),*"beorna bealdor"* ("lord of men"), *"winiga hleo"* ("protector of friends") and *"sigedryhten"* ("victorious lord"). The motives for such a usage may only be speculated about: a strong possibility is that it was bound with situations that at least imperfectly resembled the lord–retinue pattern, a more complex reading would presume that the terms may have been purposefully re-interpreted in a spiritual sense, referring, for example, to the gifts of divine teaching (*"sincgiefa"*), the victory over temptations (*"sigedryhten"*) or Guthlac's role as a healer and comforter mentioned earlier in the poem (*"eorla/duguþa/winiga hleo"*).

[285] Allen and Calder 1976, 78, 81-83.

that he also descended to the lower, earthly regions?"[286] In his account of the event, Bede stressed the aspect of Christ's victory over the powers of hell and his triumphant return to heaven, finding a model in Ps. 24:7-10, which he paraphrases in the *Hymn*:

> Lift up your head, O ye gates; and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in.
> Who is this King of glory? The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle.
> Lift up your heads, O ye gates; even lift them up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in.
> Who is this King of glory? The Lord of hosts, he is the King of glory. Selah.

Here we should perhaps look for the initial impulse for introducing the warlike tone and military motives into the narrative. Bede combines the biblical echo, which he stages as a dialogue between the herald of Christ's army and the voice, first, of the sentry on the battlements of the celestial city and, later, the "court of citizens", with imagery borrowed from classical antiquity. He looks to Greece, referring to the seat of God as to "Olympus", but most importantly, presents the scene in terms suggestive of Roman imperial triumph.[287] Cynewulf's material, then, already contained the basic figure of Christ as warrior; it was suggested in the Old Testament type and further elaborated by Bede in the *Hymn*. In the vernacular retelling the last transformation of this image – the one most

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[286] Unlike the other biblical quotations in this study which are given according to the Authorized Version, these two passages are cited from the New International Version, as it makes much better sense in the context of what is said in the epistle (the Authorized Version has "led captivity captive", a statement much less directly descriptive of the event as it was understood in the Middle Ages). On the other hand, the reading given in the Authorized Version of Eph. 4:8-9 makes it much clearer why the passage provided support for the dogma in question, as it says "descended first into the lower parts of the earth" – as it stands in the New International Version, the sentence seems primarily to refer to the Incarnation.

[287] This was not an altogether new idea; Ambrose employs the same figure for the Crucifixion in his *Exposition of the Gospel according to Luke*, cf. Allen and Calder 1976, 57-58. It has to be said that while Ambrose exploits for his exegesis all the respective paraphernalia of the ceremony, Bede's allusions are much more general.

important for our consideration – took place: it was expanded considerably, as the martial aspect of the action received an even greater emphasis, and, more significantly still, it was translated from the classical context to one indivisibly bound with the poetic medium – that of the *comitatus* culture.

So, while the psalm makes a single reference to battle and Bede states, without specifying, that Christ "bound death's prince by his power" (§ 3) and "overthrew the world's black prince in battle" (§ 22), the Old English poem presents a dynamic and comparatively detailed description of the conflict – the *"guðplega"* ("battle-play"! – l. 134):

> *hafað nu se halga   helle bireafod*
> *ealles þæs gafoles   þe hi geardagum*
> *in þæt orlege   unryhte swealg ·*
> *Nu sind forcumene   ond in cwicsusle*
> *gehynde ond gehæfte   in hellegrund*
> *duguþum bidæled   deofla cempan*
> *ne meahtan wiþerbrogan   wige spowan*
> *wæpna wyrpum   siþþan wuldres cyning*
> *heofonrices helm   hilde gefremede*
> *wiþ his ealdfeondum   anes meahtum*
> *þær he of hæfte ahlod   huþa mæste ·*
> *of feonda byrig   folces unrim*
> *þisne ilcan þreat   þe ge her on stariað*
>
> (Christ II 119-131)

["Now the Holy one has robbed hell
of all the tribute that they in the old days
swallowed against right in that war.
Now the devil warriors are vanquished,
humbled and bound in torment
in the abyss of hell, deprived of power.
The adversaries could not succeed in fight
by casting their weapons when the King of glory,
Guardian of heavenly kingdom, managed in battle
against his ancient enemies, single-handedly,
to draw forth from captivity the greatest booty –
a countless number of people from the citadel of the devils,
this same host on which you are looking."]

In this passage we get the picture of Christ the hero, which is reinforced through epithets such as *"sigehremig"* – "exulting in victory", l. 92, *"sigebearn"* – "victorious child", l. 81 or *"sigores agend"* – "master of victory", l. 74.

The scene of his final moments with the disciples (without a parallel in any of the sources but drawing loosely on a combination of several passages from the Gospels and the Acts of Apostles) activates another aspect, that of Christ as a (war)lord among his retinue. On quite a literal level, the apostles are presented as his *"þegna gedryht"* ("company of followers", l. 18), *"leof weorud"* ("dear company", l. 19) or *"leofe gesiþas"* ("dear companions", l. 35); Christ is their *"brega"* ("protector", l. 17) and *"sincgiefa"* ("treasure-giver", l. 21) and, less typically, *"wilgiefa"* ("gracious giver"). The same concept also appears when the narrative moves from the sphere of the human to the sphere of the divine (cf. terms such as *"engla gedryht"* and *"bliðan gedryht"* – "the retinue of angels/of the blessed", l. 76, 80), although here it is rather the case of the indigenous poetic terminology imparting this specific colouring to the widespread and well established idea of the heavenly host (found in Bede's *Hymn* as well). The epithets referring to Christ's universal lordship (e.g. *"folca fruma"* – "leader of people", l. 77, *"eorla eadgiefa"* – "giver of prosperity to men", l. 107, and *"folca feorhgiefa"* – "people's life-giver", l. 117) represent perhaps a spiritual reinterpretation of the established functions of a leader as they appear in "heroic" poetry, yet primarily they work as condensed references to Christ's redemptory mission.[288] We may argue about the extent to which such expressions activate the traditional image of the closely-knit *comitatus* but in no way can they be viewed as any strictly

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[288] The term *"fruma"* has, apart from the specialized poetic sense of "leader, prince", also a stylistically neutral meaning of "beginning, origin". Thus the epithet may refer not only to the fact that a) Christ led mankind to salvation and b) as God, he rules over men, but also to Son's role (as the Word) in the creation of the world.

independent development in the Old English adaptation. It is the scene of Christ's arrival in heaven that evokes this setting most clearly.

In the *Hymnus*, Bede presents the two aspects of the action – as it is witnessed by the apostles left behind and as it develops on the plains of heaven – in a single continuous narrative: Christ comes back from hell with the procession of the liberated souls and is joined by the armies of heaven who accompany him in a triumphal march to the celestial city, some of the angels staying a while to explain the meaning of what is happening to Christ's disciples and to announce the Second Coming before returning to the heavenly ranks. The Old English text in fact recounts the event twice. In the first telling it focuses on the apostles' experience – what they see and how they feel about it – and on the doctrinal points that represent a completion of the salvation history and will become basic articles of the faith: that Christ "sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead". Although this message is delivered by an angel – as in Bede – the narrative thus consistently expresses the human perspective of the action. The second account (beginning, just like the first one, with the scene of the troops of angels, dressed in white, descending to meet Christ on the way up) concentrates on what is happening beyond the limits of the human "middle" world: the "battle" in hell, the arrival of the victorious Christ in heaven and the consequences of his deed in terms of the ordering of the universe – new relationships between men and God, men and angels.

It is here that we find the Roman triumphal procession of the *Hymn* transformed – through a series of allusions – into a scene that would be wholly appropriate in a narrative of a Germanic king returning home from a succesful raid against his enemies. Christ comes back from a "battle-play" (*"guðplega"*, l. 134), bringing large spoils (*"huþa mæste"*, l. 129) – a strangely material expression, referring as it does to the souls of the

righteous; the established figure in this context is that of liberated prisoners. The address to the gates of the heavenly city is preserved in the Old English text, but here the king enters a *"ceaster"* (a word with multiple connotations, applicable to towns but also to forts and castles). In an earlier passage (the narrative does not follow the temporal sequence of events, inserting the account of the Harrowing of Hell between two descriptions of Christ's entrance in heaven) we find the following portrayal of the Ascension:

> *þa wæs symbla mæst ·*
> *geworden in wuldre · wel þæt gedafenað ·*
> *þæt to þære blisse · beorhte gewerede ·*
> *in þæs þeodnes burg · þegnas cwoman ·*
> *weorud wlitescyne · gesegon wilcuman ·*
> *on heahsetle · heofones waldend ·*
> *folca feorhgiefan · frætwum ealles waldend*
> *middangeardes ond mægenþrymmes*
>
> (Christ II 111b-118)

> ["Then the greatest of feasts
> took place in heaven. It is fitting
> that there should come to that merriment
> in the city of the Lord thanes brightly dressed,
> a radiant host. The welcome guests saw
> the ruler of heaven on the high throne,
> people's life-giver, the ruler over treasures[289]
> of all the earth and heaven."]

Later on, the *"heahsetl"* is defined as *"giefstol"* ("gift-seat", l. 133): *"wile nu gesecan / sawla nergend // gæsta gifstol / godes agen bearn // æfter guðplegan"* (132-134a) ["The saviour, God's own son, will now, after the battle-play, approach the gift-seat of souls"]. Although the semantic range of *"symbel"*

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[289] The syntax of the last sentence admits of two interpretations. *"Wealdan"* – "to rule" (the verb from which *"waldend"*, as substantivized present active participle, is derived) can combine with object in genitive, dative and accusative. Therefore we can construe the sentence as above, with *"frætwum"* ("treasures, adornments") an object in dative; or we can read it as dative (=instrumental) expressing circumstance ("in splendour"), the objects being *"middangeardes"* and *"mægenþrymmes"*: "The welcome guests saw the ruler of heaven on the high throne, people's life-giver, ruling in splendour all the earth and heaven."

does include the fairly abstract sense of "celebration" or "feast = saint's day", it is tempting to rank its usage in the passage quoted with the overwhelming majority of its occurences within the *poetic* corpus, where it has the much more physical meaning of "feast = banquet".[290] If this reading is accepted, then the reference combines with the much less ambiguous allusions to the gathering of retainers and the throne from which the ruler dispenses gifts to his followers, together constructing the image of heaven as the kingly hall. Even though the term itself never appears in the account, this setting is invoked plainly enough through references to several of the central functions of the hall as established in the poetic tradition which voices the assumptions of the *comitatus* culture. The core concept of the symbolic topography of the world in native Old English poetry translates Bede's "bountiful city" (§ 20) and the classical "bright Olympus", the palace of the gods (§ 10,18).

It has to be admitted that the use of the motif in *Christ II* may merely represent an effect of the general strategy dominating the first part of the poem of transposing the whole narrative, which already contains a strong element of military action, into a more familiar context provided by the conventional apparatus of heroic poetry. In this perspective, it could be classified as a secondary development which follows logically from the main point of the transformation – the portrayal of Christ as a powerful warrior and war-lord surrounded by a retinue of apostles or angels rather than a victorious general of the orderly armies of heaven. In *Christ III*, similarly but even more elusively, the picture of heaven as a space that is envisaged as the perfect hall only comes through, rather infrequently, in references to the *comitatus* of angels and saints which are interspersed in the text: Christ coming to judgment is accompanied by *"engla gedryht"*

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[290] A parallel may be adduced from *The Dream of the Rood*, where it is said (in a formulaic phrase that – as it speaks of the actual taking of seats – rules out any possibility of the more abstract interpretation) that in heaven *"... is dryhtnes folc // geseted to symle"* (140b-141a) – "... the Lord's people sit down at a feast".

("retinue of angels", l. 75), *"þegna hreþeadig heap"* ("victorious troop of retainers/followers", 77b-78a), later on by *"æþelduguð betast"* ("the best noble retinue", l.145), *"hea duguð"* ("great retinue", l. 196) and *"engla gedryht"* once more (l. 147). The closing statement of the poem, which summarizes the immediately preceding list of heavenly joys, also uses this familiar image, reminiscent of one of the most important hall rituals: *"þær cyninges giefe // awo brucað / eadigra gedryht"* – "there the retinue of the blessed forever enjoys the king's gifts" (805b-806).[291] As in *Christ II*, therefore, the image of the hall is only present implicitly in the text as the setting associated in Anglo-Saxon poetry with the culture to which the terms quoted above refer.

This is no longer the case in *Christ I*, where the thematic preferences of the native tradition which designate the hall (and, less frequently, also the surrounding enclosed space, the *burh* or *ceaster*) as the all-important centre of its world sometimes overrule the authority of the source, even if it uses terms that can be viewed as more appropriate within the context of a religious lyric.

The first extant poem of the series, the now fragmentary adaptation of the *O rex gentium* antiphon, expands substantially on its model by exploiting more extensively the biblical passages to which the Latin text only briefly alludes and even looking beyond them to others that work with a related motif.[292] Our concern here is with the middle part of the antiphon: *"lapisque angularis qui facis utraque unum"* – "and cornerstone

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[291] There, as elsewhere in the text, however, such phrases alternate with expressions that recall the more "orthodox" concept of the "heavenly host", e.g. *"heofonengla þreat"* ("host of angels of heaven", l. 61), *"hergas haligra"* ("armies of saints", l. 63), *"halge herefeðan"* ("holy foot-troops", l. 146) or *"weoruda wlitescynast"* ("brightest of hosts", l. 807).

[292] This is not a method that would be employed consistently throughout the series; often the expansion is due rather to variation upon the single theme presented by the Latin model.

The biblical sources for the respective passages of the Old English text, as well as the identification of important theological concepts explicitly or implicitly developed there, may be found in Muir 1994, vol. II, 396.

who makes both into one". The Old English poem speaks of *"se weallstan /*
þe ða wyrhtan iu // wiðwurpon to weorce" (2-3a) – "the wallstone that the
builders rejected from the work", paraphrasing Jesus' and later Peter's
exposition of Ps. 118:22 – "The stone which the builders refused is become
the head stone of the corner". In the statement which follows, however,
this image is replaced by that of a *"heafod"*, which would correspond not
to the stone that is placed in the foundations of a building but to the
voussoir that holds together the vault; as the architectonical terminology
appears extremely vague, it may even be that the initial analogy has been
abandoned altogether and that the *heafod* should be taken to refer to a
roof-frame instead. Whatever the precise meaning of the expression may
be, it was undoubtedly introduced to extend the range of traditional
theological concepts underlying the text to include that of the Mystical
Body of Christ. The latter portion of this part of the antiphon – *"qui facis*
utraque unum" – has also been elaborated upon, so that it develops the
building analogy in a much more specific and graphic way than the Latin
exemplar: it is fitting, the Old English text claims, that Christ should
"gesomnige / side weallas // fæste gefoge / flint unbræcne" (5-7) – "unite
together the large walls, the indestructible stone, by a firm joint". Both the
Latin and the Old English text refer here to a passage in the letter to
Ephesians concerning the fellowship of Jews and Gentiles in the new
Church (for better orientation, the corresponding sections are underlined):

> "For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken
> down the middle wall of partition between us;
> [...] Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but
> fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God;
> And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets,
> Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone;
> In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an
> holy temple in the Lord:
> In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God
> through the Spirit."
>
> (Eph. 2:14-22)

Again, it is as if the need was felt in the adaptation to clarify the summary allusion of the original by turning directly to the biblical text. But it is in lines 9-14a that the Old English reworking departs most significantly from its exemplar when it introduces the motif of a building in need of restoration:

> *gesweotula nu þurh searocræft   þin sylfes weorc*
> *soðfæst sigorbeorht   ond sona <forlæt>*
> *weall wið wealle   nu is þam weorce þearf*
> *þæt se <cræftga> cume   ond se cyning sylfa*
> *ond þonne gebete   nu gebrosnad is*
> *hus under hrofe*

> ["Reveal now, O just and triumphant, your own work
> through art and soon let wall
> stand against wall. Now the work needs
> that the skilfull come, the king himself,
> and repair what is now broken,
> the house under the roof."]

Yet this ostensibly unmotivated addition simply develops further the underlying concept of the inclusion of the Gentiles in the salvation plan, present already – in an extremely condensed form – in the *"facis utraque unum"* of the Latin antiphon. It only becomes apparent, however, if the Old English verses are confronted with their presumed biblical model:

> Simeon hath declared how God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name.
> And to this agree the words of the prophets;[293] as it is written, <u>After this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up</u>:
> That the residue of men might seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles, upon whom my name is called, saith the Lord, who doeth all these things.
>
> (Acts 15:14-17)

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[293] The Old Testament text paraphrased here is that of Amos 9:11-12.

The strategy of the Old English poem to follow the biblical text rather closely as concerns the various aspects of the building analogy but simultaneously to dispense with its direct application to the relationships between the Jews and the Gentiles, whose validity was restricted to a specific time and place anyway, makes it possible to de-focus the metaphor of the ruined temple so that it can also indicate the state of the whole Christian community or even that of human soul; an opportunity which – as the text indicates – was evidently welcome.

In view of the relative fidelity of the Old English lyric to its biblical sources (as documented above) and, perhaps more importantly still, of the prominent role that the image of the *temple*, which appears in both exemplars, plays in biblical and theological writings in general,[294] it comes as a surprise that the first Advent lyric makes no mention of it whatsoever, replacing it with the neutral *"hus under hrofe"* (l. 14) and – the highly symbolic hall: *"wel þe geriseð // þæt þu heafod sie / healle mære"* – "it is fitting that you should become the head of the great hall" (3b-4). In Old English texts of this type the authority of the native poetic tradition combines and sometimes clashes with the discourse of religious instruction; and it is significant that in this specific case the one overrules the other, that within this genre the temple of the Lord as an image of the highest value in the religious tradition may still give way to the hall that holds the same position in the earlier conceptual system.

A similar, though less distinct, transformation appears also in the ninth text of the series, the reworking of the *O mundi domina* antiphon. Here the poet augments the original statement, *"ex tuo jam Christus processit alvo"* – "Christ has now come forth from your womb", disregarding the immediately following simile *"tanquam sponsus de thalamo"* – "like the groom from the bridal chamber" and using instead an

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[294] Cf. the idea of the human body as the temple of the Holy Ghost (originally from 1 Cor. 6:19) or the community of believers as the temple of God filled with the Spirit (1 Cor. 3:16).

image taken from Ezechiel's vision of the New Jerusalem, which he mistakenly ascribes to Isaiah.[295] The vision originally describes God's restoration of Israel *in this world* and consequently contains specific geographical data (e.g. in the division of land among the individual tribes); the Old English text – in keeping with the common method of reading of the Old Testament prophetic books – applies it to Christ's redemption of the whole mankind and accordingly transfers the scene into the heavenly kingdom, the *"ecan ham"* ["eternal home"]. The prophet is shown a gate fast shut and promptly informed of the meaning thereof by an angel (in the Old English lyric) or by the Lord Himself (in the Bible). In both cases, the gate is made impenetrable to men, because it is reserved for the passage of God:

> "Then he brought me back the way of the gate of the outward sanctuary which looketh toward the east; and it was shut. Then said the Lord unto me; This gate shall be shut, it shall not be opened, and no man shall enter in by it; because the Lord, the God of Israel, hath entered in by it, therefore it shall be shut."
> (Ez. 44:1-2)

The Old English text remains faithful to its source as concerns the latter part of that statement: *"hio þonne æfter him / ece stondeð // simle singales / swa beclysed // þæt nænig oþer / nymðe nergend god // hy æfre ma / eft onluceð"* – "it remains ever always so closed after Him for eternity that no other except the Saviour God may unlock it again" (322-325). However, as the gate provides the metaphor for Mary's unbroken virginity, the vision had to be modified accordingly. What Ezechiel sees is the new temple of God into which the glory of the Lord has entered by the east gate and therefore no man is allowed to pass through it so that it may not be profaned; other gates are set aside for normal use. There is only one gate in the Old English lyric, through which Christ will in time come *out*, *"foldan neosan"* –

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[295] For the sources for this lyric, see Muir 1994, vol. II, 398.

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"to approach the earth" (l. 321).[296] Details are supplied that the Bible does not know, like the decorations made of gold and jewels or the massive bolts; some of them were probably introduced on the model of other Latin antiphons,[297] although the approach that dwells on the particulars of construction and ornamentation seems to be the contribution of the Anglo-Saxon poet.

But if the emphasis on strong bars and locks (*"fæstlice forescyttelsas"*, l. 312; *"þa fæstan locu"*, l. 321) and wondrous bonds (*"wundurclomm"*, l. 310) may have been motivated by the wish to convey, with special force, the significance of Mary's inviolate virginity (with perhaps a slightly surprising focus on the physical aspect), another departure from the biblical account appears largely gratuitous: that of substituting the temple or sanctuary of the model with the *"ceaster"* of the Old English lyric.[298] It is true that one of the Latin antiphons mentioned above as possible influences on the Old English text refers to Christ visiting the *"palatio uteri"* – "palace of the womb"; but as the poem expressly identifies its source (albeit inaccurately) as the Old Testament prophecy – looking perhaps to the Latin antiphons for additional detail but not for corrections of this primary material – it seems unlikely that it could be the only impulse for this modification. After all, the sanctuary as an expressly sacred space would provide a metaphor perfectly suited to convey the point that God had chosen to reside in the womb of Virgin Mary, which was thus hallowed. At the same time, the substitution appears much less "logical" than in the case of the first lyric, where one central image

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[296] If the chronological sequence is to be preserved, then the event indeed has to be situated in the future for Ezechiel; later on, when the meaning of the vision is explained, it assumes its proper place in the past from the point of view of the speaker and the implied audience.

[297] Muir 1994, 398 quotes two antiphons from the *Liber Responsalis* of Gregory I, identified as analogues for the use of the "golden gate" image in the Old English Advent lyrics VIII and IX in Cook, Albert S. *The Christ of Cynewulf: A Poem in Three Parts, the Advent, the Ascension, and the Last Judgment*, Boston: Ginn & Co., 1900. In both Christ comes forth *"per auream (Virginis) portam"*.

[298] Cf. the term *"ceasterhlid"* used for the gate in l. 314.

replaced another; in that respect, the *"ceaster"*, although it can be classified as belonging to the same motif-complex as the hall, has a definitely more limited symbolic potential.

The implications of this fact could be interpreted in two ways. Either the poet decided further to stress the idea of impenetrability in relation to Mary's virginity (a theme reiterated again and again in the references to bars, locks and the rather odd *"lioþucæg"* – the "limb-key", l. 334), for which purpose the image of the *"ceaster"* might have been deemed more fitting, because more straightforward, than that of the sanctuary; the *"palatio uteri"* found in the antiphon that supposedly inspired the verses depicting the golden ornaments adorning the gate might have supplied an additional background impulse towards such a change. This explanation is undoubtedly attractive in its simplicity. The other alternative is more complex and correspondigly less easy to argue. The apparant casualness with which the Old English lyric disposes of one of the core images of biblical tradition, present in its recognized source and eminently suitable in the context, seems to suggest that the Anglo-Saxon poet, writing in a different or at least mixed code (as a result of the translation of the lyric into the native poetic language and a more familiar cultural context), need not have acknowledged the prestigious position of that motif and thus it could be replaced even with a less important, yet better established, expression. Perhaps the two reasons indicated above combined in the making of the passage in question.

To follow the logic of the "symbolic topography" of the world of Anglo-Saxon poetry as outlined in the introduction to this chapter, it seemed best to start our investigation at the central point of the space inhabited and appropriated by mankind – the hall. Indeed, a link emerges interconnecting the *Christ* poems – supplementing the more prominent thematic links discussed earlier – based on the manner in which the three texts sketch their ideal spaces, even if lightly and indirectly, in terms

suggestive of this setting. The affinity is greater between the two longer narrative poems than between any of them and the series of shorter lyrics that forms *Christ I*. In neither of the three cases does such usage seem to draw a dividing line, to produce a conflict between the old "heroic" world and the new "Christian" one. Nevertheless, it has to be admitted that the connection may indeed appear rather too subtle, as the image on whose recurrences it is founded can only be discovered to loom in the background through the process of inference and interpretation. The situation changes if we move "outward" within that map of the human world, from the limited core to the more comprehensive concept of *"eðel"* – the space where one is at home, one's native land, and to its negative counterpart, *"uncyððu"*, the space of exile.

Additive/contrastive linking: "homeland and exile"

If the poems of the presumed first (and supposedly also the latest) booklet are examined, it becomes apparent that, despite the differences in subject-matter, the three latter texts, *Christ III* and *Guthlac I* and *II*, come close to forming a loosely bound group by virtue of sharing one common element – the manner in which they develop the view of the world presented by Christian doctrine, with a special focus on the position of humanity within the system. This involves the degree of attention devoted to the subject as well as the choice of imagery; in both aspects, the Old English poems depart from their Latin sources, where these can be identified. Two interrelated concepts in particular are reiterated within the three texts: that of man as an exile in the strange land of this world, expelled for breach of loyalty from the homeland of paradise/heaven; and that of heaven and the world as two territories with mutually exclusive citizenship (to use an anachronistic but illustrative expression): those who belong to the one are aliens in the other.

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Not that these concepts would be peculiar to the poems in question or even to Old English religious poetry as a whole. Both can be traced ultimately to a passage from the epistle to Hebrews, adducing as examples of firm faith the Old Testament patriarchs:

> By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went.
> By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise [...]
> These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.
> For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country.
> And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned.
> But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city.
>
> <div align="center">(Heb. 11:8-16)</div>

It may be observed that the biblical text provides the basic building blocks but not yet the full structure of the argument outlined above. Important elements are yet missing: the status of one dispossessed in the world is more of a statement of faith than the universal condition of humanity brought about by the disobedience of the first pair; the opposition between the Kingdom of Heaven and this world formulated in terms of two inimical territories where one is the reversed reflection of the other as far as values, principles and allegiances are concerned will only have been articulated comprehensively in Augustine's theory of the *civitas Dei* and *civitas terrena*. Whatever the precise details of transmission and development of these ideas may be, however, it is clear that they belonged

to the established repertoire of Christian thought and as such they have also entered Old English religious poetry.[299]

Having admitted this, why do I then propose to look at their application in *Christ III* and *Guthlac I* and *II* from the perspective of their relation to the view of the world characteristic of the indigenous poetic tradition? There still appears to be a difference between a citizen of Augustine's Roman *civitas* who loses status under a different jurisdiction and an Anglo-Saxon exile wandering in a cold and hostile wilderness – the difference between two civilizations. Furthermore, if a comparison is made of the Latin models and their vernacular adaptation, and the examination is further extended to include the presumably original *Guthlac I*, it will be seen that the Old English texts return to the concept even in places where the examplar uses a different image, or that they sometimes introduce a whole new passage on the theme, unparalleled in the source; the one poem without an identifiable model uses it as a recurring motif in its account of St Guthlac's spiritual battle against demonic temptations. This seems to suggest that the conceptual complex did indeed acquire a position of special importance within the Anglo-Saxon poetry of the Christian period, probably – as I would argue – because the twin contrary images of homeland and exile around which it was built had already functioned in the poetic tradition as powerful terms through which the world could be symbolically ordered.

The following analysis of the individual texts should provide a more tangible support for the views outlined above. Isolated references to heaven as *"eðel"* are scattered throughout *Christ III*, but their use is governed by a strict logic: the term is only applied in places where heaven opens to people, either *in potentia*, through Christ's redemptory mission (the sinners could *"tires blæd ecne agan"* – "own glory eternal" when Jesus died to release mankind, but *"hy þæs eðles þonc [...] ne cuþon"* – "they knew

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[299] Cf. Smithers 1957, 1959, 145-149.

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not to give thanks for that homeland", 345-347; similarly, if people perceived their sins clearly, they would do penance in time so that they might *"eðles [...] brucan bysmerleas"* – "enjoy the homeland unstained"); or in fact, to those found worthy (the faithful are invited to receive *"beorht eðles wlite"* – "bright splendour of the homeland", l. 480). As a certain counterpart to this usage we may quote the term *"elþeod"* – "strange people/nation" referring collectively to mankind at the Last Judgment; such status ascribed to humanity seems apparently to recall the previously discussed concept of heaven and the world as two opposed territories. All such allusions, however, are too condensed to permit the reconstruction of the conceptual complex to which they distantly relate.

In this respect, their evocative power is only activated by the fact that the idea finds a clearly formulated expression elsewhere in the poem. At one point in Christ's extensive address to the wicked we find the account of man's estrangement from his original home and its revocation by the transaction during which Christ shared in the woes which had been humanity's lot so that men could share in the eternal bliss. As I have already stated, *Christ III* is a mosaic composed of themes and motives taken from the Bible and from several Latin homiletic texts, variously applied and adapted;[300] and this narrative of the salvation history contracted into the two key points of Fall and Redemption (plus the demand for compensation which does not enter our consideration here) follows rather closely *Sermo LVII* (*Admonitio de die Iudicii cum grandi metu et sollicitudine iugiter cogitando*) by Caesarius of Arles. There, the story is told briefly and succinctly: man was made from clay in God's likeness and placed in paradise; but then "spurned [God's] life-giving commands and preferred to follow the deceiver rather than the Lord". In one sentence we then get from the loss of Paradise to the Incarnation:

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[300] The texts that can be identified as direct sources as well as those that can be seen as possible models in a more general sense are given in Allen and Calder 1976, 84-107. The quotations follow this edition.

After you were thrown out of paradise according to the law and were bound by the chains of sin and death, moved by mercy, I entered a Virgin's womb to be born.

(Sermo LVII, 4; 17-19)

The Old English counterpart slows the pace down by numerous variations and adds, in reminiscence of Gen. 3:5-6, the motif of man's desire to equal God as the true cause of the disobedience of the first pair. The punishment, significantly, is presented in terms that entirely disregard the imagery of bondage (as prisoner or slave) present in the exemplar[301] and return instead again and again to the idea of alienation and exile. The full line marks the explicit references, the dotted one the supplementary motives traditionally attached to the theme:

> *Ða þu of þan gefean   fremde wurde*
> *feondum to willan   feor aworpen*
> *neorxnawonges wlite   nyde sceoldes*
> *agiefan geomormod   gæsta eþel ·*
> *earg ond unrot   eallum bidæled*
> *dugeþum ond dreamum   ond þa bidrifen wurde*
> *on þas þeostran weoruld   þær þu þolades siþþan*
> *mægenearfeþu   micle stunde*
> *sar ond swar gewin   ond sweartne deað*
> *ond æfter <hingonge>   hreosan sceoldes*
> *hean in helle   helpendra leas*
> *Ða mec ongon hreowan   þæt min hondgeweorc*
> *on feonda geweald   feran sceolde*
> *moncynnes tuddor   mancwealm seon*
> *sceolde uncuðne   eard cunnian*
> *sare siþas   þa ic sylf gestag*
> *maga in modor*

(Christ III 537-553)

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[301] The concept of men as prisoners in this world released by Jesus is well established in religious writings; it probably owes at least part of its authority to a typological reading of Iz. 42:7 in which God bids his "elect servant" "to open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the prison, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison house" (cf. Muir 1993, 396). The motif appears, for example, in the *O clavis David* antiphon that served as a model for the second lyric in *Christ I.* Interestingly enough, it is there complemented by an allusion to humanity's state as an exile from homeland ("... *on þis enge lond eðle biscyrede*" – "on this narrow place, deprived of homeland", l. 32), which makes the passage an interesting parallel to our present text.

["then, estranged, you were rejected far
from that joy to the devils' pleasure;
of necessity you had to give up, sorrowing,
the splendour of paradise, the homeland of souls.
Wretched and dejected, deprived of all
gifts and joys you were then driven
into the dark world in which you since
for long have suffered great hardships,
suffering and heavy toil and dark death;
and when you depart, you must fall
abject to hell without anyone to help you.
Then I started to regret that the work of my hands,
the race of men, should fare
under the rule of devils, experience death,
wander in an unknown country,
on miserable ways; and I descended
a son into (my) mother."]

This one-sidedness remains apparent even when we look beyond the immediate source to another authority possibly influencing the passage, the biblical narrative in Gen. 3:16-24; there, the attention is divided evenly between the expulsion of man from the garden of Eden and the curse of mortality and life spent in labour, with perhaps a slight emphasis on the latter. While it is then obvious that the vernacular text does not introduce the motif arbitrarily but does so fully in keeping with both the "facts" of the event as described in the Bible and its re-telling in the Latin exemplar, it is equally apparent that it parts company with either source when it dwells insistently on this aspect, disregarding or relatively demoting other important symbolic portrayals of the punishment for the original sin. It would seem that the Old English poet preferred fully to rely on the exilic imagery because in the context of Anglo-Saxon poetic tradition it provided the most powerful figure for man's position in the world.

Later on in the same speech Christ accuses the sinners of monstrous ingratitude by pointing out the circumstances of his suffering and

contrasting them, in a series of antithetical statements, with the good that it brought to mankind:

> To give you my glory, I sustained your griefs. So you might live eternally, I endured your death. So you might reign in heaven, I lay buried in the tomb.
>
> (Sermo LVII, 4; 29-31)

The Old English text dispenses with the parison of the latter two sentences but, as if in recompense, makes the antithesis even more pointed, juxtaposing precise opposites: *"sar"* ["sorrow"] against *"gesælig"* ["happy"], *"deað"* against *"lif"* (emphasizing the correspondence by using, unlike the source, two substantives), *"niþre gehyded [...] in byrgenne"* ["buried down in a grave"] against *"uppe on roderum wesan"* ["dwell up in heaven"]. Significantly, in place of the second series of sentences marked by a similar distinct rhetorical patterning, this time contrasting the attributes of Christ's divine nature with their intentional suspension in the Incarnation ("Although I was immutable, I was made man for you; although I was invulnerable, I deigned to suffer for you", 43-44), *Christ III* returns once more to the previously established theme in what functions as the central statement of the Redemption:

> · Ic wæs on worulde wædla þæt ðu wurde welig in heofonum
> earm ic wæs on eðle þinum þæt þu worde eadig on minum ·
>
> (Christ III 329-630)

["I was destitute in the world so that you would be rich in heaven, I was miserable in your homeland so that you would be blessed in mine."]

In fact, it is extremely difficult to determine the status of that passage in relation to the Latin source(s). Up to this point the Old English poem has reproduced the argument of Caesarius' *Sermo LVII* with considerable accuracy; afterwards, it turns to Bede's hymn *De die iudicii* (whose middle part itself follows very closely Matt. 25:31-46), although the

modifications it makes there are rather more extensive than in the former case. The statement in question plus the ensuing observation on humanity's ingratitude cannot be traced to any of the Latin exemplars suggested by Allen and Calder. Therefore it can either be read as a completely independent contribution of the Anglo-Saxon poet or, as suggested, as an equally independent *variation* on the figure already present in Caesarius – namely, the exchange in which Christ's humiliation pays for the elevation of mankind, reintroduced at this moment to provide a powerful finale for the preceding argument. Whatever the precise source of inspiration for these verses or the degree of their indebtedness to external material, they clearly occupy a special position within the Old English text. They are set apart by a number or formal features: their hypermetric nature and elaborate rhetoric which combines distinct yet carefully varied parallelism – avoiding the impression of monotony – with antithesis and finally homoioteleuton in the second line; it is the concurrence of these characteristics which, taken separately, may find their match elsewhere in the poem, that establishes the central position of the statement in question within Christ's speech to the sinful. As with the previous example concerning the figure of exile, it appears that the present substitution or superaddition of the concept of the two *eðels*, a translation into the Anglo-Saxon cultural context of the Augustinian idea of the two *civitates*, provided the most potent summary of the thesis adopted from Caesarius, since it could summon the wealth of associations attached to the image in the native poetic tradition.

The theme of man's exile from paradise appears once again in the opening of *Guthlac II*, a passage whose make-up and position within the poem requires a substantial comment. It presents a survey of the story of mankind from Creation to Fall, starting with the fashioning of Adam in paradise, defined negatively as a space lacking all the problematic aspects of human life in this world; after a period of time spent there, the text

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claims in a peculiar and, it would seem, theologically rather innovative anticipatory statement, the first pair might have been transferred, living, straight to heaven – if it was not for their disobedience. In this connection, the "homeland" motif is first introduced: *"gif hy halges word / healdan woldun //[...] ond his bebodu læstan // æfnan on eðle"* – "if they wanted to keep the word of the Holy One and observe his commands, fulfil [them] in the homeland" (24-26). With the reference to the forbidden fruit, another concept, to be repeated later in the poem,[302] enters the scene to bring home its sinister significance: that of *poculum mortis*, the Drink of death, employed in Gregory' s *Homilia XXV*;[303] the text uses expressions such as *"deaðberende gyfl"* ["death-bearing morsel"] or, with the allusion more pronounced, *"bitran drync"* ["bitter drink"]. The loss of paradise is described in the by now familiar terms of "exile from homeland", though with an uncommon twist: it is not Adam and Eve who leave the garden of Eden, but the homeland itself which since becomes "alien" to them and their progeny:

> · siþþan se _eþel_   _uð·genge_ wearð
> Adame ond Euan   eardwica cyst
> beorht oðbroden   ond hyra bearnum swa
> eaferum æfter   þa hy on _uncyððu_ ·
> scomum scudende   scofene wurdon
> on _gewinworuld_ [304]

(Guth II 34-39)

["Then the homeland became alien
to Adam and Eve, the choicest of dwellings,

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[302] In lines 163-181 it serves to mark the transition from the initial general description of Guthlac's illness to the more detailed account of its terminal stage and the last eight days of the saint's life.

[303] Muir 1994, 450.

[304] The expression offers interesting possibilities of reading. The first part of the compound, *"gewinn"*, can be interpreted as "toil" or "hardship", referring to the verdict that made the earth deny its fruits to man, to be only gained by incessant labour; but also as "conflict" or "strife", corresponding to the view of the "outside" world as a hostile environment characterized by lack of order, which was already present in the Anglo-Saxon poetic tradition and in the present context could further enhance the negative connotations of *"uncyððu"*.

splendid, removed, and likewise to their sons,
their offspring thereafter, when they were thrust,
hurrying in shame, in an unknown land,
a world of trouble."]

This event started the universal rule of death over mankind in our world
and the survey serves primarily to explain how it came to happen. It is
only in view of such a purpose that that strange digression on the passing
of Adam and Eve from paradise to heaven while still alive starts to make
sense: the emphasis throughout the description of their pre-lapsarian
existence is on the absence of death and so its all-pervasive presence later
becomes further stressed by the contrast.[305]

The fact that the whole introductory narrative is directed towards
that focal point represents the first instance where the vernacular poem
actually agrees with its chief source, Chapter 50 of Felix's *Vita Sancti
Guthlaci*, which starts with a brief meditation on the inevitability of death
as a proper introduction to the ensuing account of Guthlac's final illness
and dying moments accompanied by miraculous events and portents from
heaven. The correspondence only becomes fairly direct towards the close
of this opening movement of *Guthlac II* when the text finally gets to the
point voiced by Felix – that "although our merits, punishments and
rewards may be different, still the same death awaits us all. For as death
was given to rule over Adam, so it will rule over all men." The vernacular
expresses not an identical, but a very similar, thought in a more figurative
manner:

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[305] While this intricate juxtaposition seems to indicate that the passage was carefully
composed to achieve the desired effect, there are also surprising lapses, like the
unexpected shift in the middle of a sentence from the singular (Adam) to the plural
(Adam and Eve) in a situation when only the man has been mentioned so far: in
paradise, "*he no þorfte // lifes ne lissa / in þam leohtan ham // [...] ende gebidan // ac æfter
fyrste to þam færestan // heofonrices gefean / hweorfan mostan*" ("he need not experience the
end of life and joys in the bright home, but they could, after a while, move to the fairest
pleasures of the kingdom of heaven", 15-19). In the following sequence, the shift is,
equally curiously, from "hy" to "his wif", instead of, for example, an equally acceptable
but more logical "þæt wif". It is difficult to reconcile such curious instances of oversight
with the previously cited tendencies to a subtle patterning of the narrative.

> *nænig monna wæs*
> *of þam sigetudre   siþþan æfre*
> *godes willan þæs georn   ne <gynnwised>*
> *þæt he bibugan mæge   þone bitran drync ·*
> *þone Eue fyrn   Adame geaf*
> *byrelade bryd geong   þæt him bam gescod*
> *in þam deoran ham*

<div align="right">(Guth II 47-53)</div>

["No man
of that victorious race was ever since then
so eager to do God's will, or so very wise
to be able to avoid that bitter drink
that of old Eve, the young bride,
had given and served to Adam; that harmed them both
in the dear home."]

Even here, though, we find allusions to the previously established concepts of *poculum mortis* and of human life as an exile from the homeland of paradise/heaven which can be classified as independent additions by the Old English poet.

While the logic of the Latin text is crystal clear, establishing through the initial general observation on human mortality the one exclusive theme of its narrative, the position of the introductory passage in the Old English adaptation, heading in the same direction, is complicated by the insertion of some fifty-odd lines recapitulating in short Guthlac's saintly career as healer, comforter and demon-fighter. Paradoxically enough, these two sequences whose juxtaposition appears seriously to affect the smooth flow of the narrative – which thus suddenly turns from the theme of mankind's universal subjection to death to the tale of an exemplary life – represent the most substantial supplements to the tale as presented in the 50th chapter of *Vita*. The problem may be summarized as follows: the Old English poem twice deliberately checks the progress of the narrative supplied by Felix, first by looking back to the time when mankind did not yet know death (and tracing the history of man's fall under its dominion)

and then again by presenting a retrospective of the saint's life, all this in a situation when the resulting composition seems less fortunate than the simple argument of the original. For example, the transition between the two sequences appears abrupt and insufficiently motivated:

> *deað ricsade*
> *ofer foldbuend   þeah þe fela wære*
> *gæsthaligra   þær hi godes willan*
> *on mislicum monna gebihþum*
> *æfter stedewonga   <stowum> fremedon*
> *sume ær sume sið   sume in urra*
> *æfter tælmearce   tida gemyndum*
> *sigorlean sohtun   us secgað bec ·*
> *Hu guðlac wearð   þurh godes willan*
> *eadig on engle*

<div align="right">(Guth II 53-62)</div>

> ["Death reigned
> over those living on earth, although there were many
> (people) holy in spirit; there they performed
> God's will in many dwellings of men,
> in places over the plains,
> some earlier, some later, some in the memory
> of our time sought out, after a given time,
> the reward of victory; the books tell us;[306]
> how Guthlac, through God's will,
> became blessed among the English"].

At first sight, it looks merely as a rather clumsy attempt to introduce, with maximum efficiency and minimum ado, the new subject: death held sway despite the existence of many saints; some lived quite recently and among them, Guthlac. However, if the perspective is but slightly adjusted, the lines may be read to say something completely different: yes, death prevailed, although (on the other hand) there were many who, for their obedience of God's will, received "the reward of

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[306] The non-standard punctuation in the translation tries to capture the tension between the expected syntax "books tell us how Guthlac..." (which could be a way of referring to the fact that the Old English poem is the reworking of an existing source) and the punctuation of the manuscript which associates the "textual evidence" with the preceding information on the existence of various godly personages.

victory" – which refers, we may presume, to everlasting life in heaven. When the focus finally shifts to Guthlac himself, this supposition seems to be borne out by the statement directly following on the passage quoted above: *"he him ece geceas // meaht ond mundbyrd"* – "he chose eternal power and protection" (62-63). The passage would then appear to have an important purpose in the composition of the text in providing the clue for the interpretation of the whole narrative, whose subject would thus be identified not as the death of a famous Anglo-Saxon saint, but as his ultimate *victory* over death in which his passing away represents just the necessary transitional stage. This hypothesis receives additional support in the argument advanced by Lucas[307] that, in comparison with the Latin model, the Old English adaptation is much more explicit in building a parallel between Guthlac's death and the Passion through allusions to Paschal liturgy; such a strategy could not only serve to elevate the saint by the comparison, but would also establish an implicit reference to the event in which the Passion is consummated – the Resurrection. By dying on cross for the sins of mankind, Jesus secured for everybody the possibility of eternal life; by his sanctity, Guthlac proved worthy and that possibility became reality for him.

It should also be noted that in its other superadditions to the chief source the vernacular often emphasizes the theme of merited reward *("edlean", "meord", "lean")* that Guthlac confidently expects to await in heaven, thus returning to the *"sigorlean"* of l. 60. The scope and orientation of the present study does not permit a detailed analysis of all such expansions, many of which develop subjects which do not pertain to this consideration.[308] I would like to concentrate on one passage which

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[307] Lucas, Peter J. "Easter, The Death of St Guthlac and the Liturgy for Holy Saturday in Felix's *Vita* and the Old English *Guthlac B*". *MÆ*, 61 (1991), 1-16.

[308] Among those, one should cite the careful building up of a principial contrast between the attitudes towards death expressed by Guthlac (as a model saint) and his companion (as an ordinary human being), noticed in Pope 1978, 35-41.

elaborates extensively on Guthlac's speech concerning his imminent departure from this world with which he tries to comfort his young companion, brother Beccel, as it is reported by Felix: "My son, don't be sad; it is no hardship for me to go to the Lord whom I have served, and enter everlasting peace." This statement may be found repeated almost word for word, with only slight modifications, in the corresponding section of the Old English text: *"ne beo þu unrot"* – "do not be sad", the saint addresses the young monk on line 246 and in lines 263-268 he assures him:

> *nis me wracu ne gewin   þæt ic wuldres god*
> *sece swegelcyning   þær is sib ond blis*
> *domfæstra dream,   dryhten ondweard*
> *þam ic georne   gæstgerynum*
> *in þas dreorgan tid   dædum cwemde*
> *mode ond mægne*

> ["It is neither distress nor hardship for me to seek out
> God of glory, the King of heaven, where there is peace and joy,
> rejoicing for the righteous and the presence of the Lord
> whom I have served eagerly in thought
> and deed in that sad time,
> by mind and might."]

Within the intervening fifteen lines, however, the vernacular text introduces new motives, some of which have no parallel anywhere in the Latin exemplar. It has Guthlac claim that he fears neither death nor the devil – as he cannot be accused of any sin – and express his eagerness (one is almost tempted to say impatience) to receive his preordained/deserved (*"ærgewyrhtum"*) reward in heaven. Interestingly enough, though, this simple statement is developed into a contrasting image of two "dwellings" and modes of being; one prepared for the saint and the other assigned to the devils. While Guthlac is *"siþes fus // upeard niman [...]// in þam ecan gefean"* – "ready for the way to settle in heaven in eternal joy" (259-261; elsewhere in the poem, in another inserted passage, he refers to *"ecne*

geard" – "eternal court" and *"sellan gesetu"* – "better dwellings", l. 449 and 450), his opponents must

> *sorgwylmum soden   sar wanian ·*
> *wræcsið wepan   wilna biscirede*
> *in þam deaðsele   duguða gehwylcre*
> *lufena ond lissa*

<div align="right">(Guth II 255-258)</div>

> ["boiled by waves of sorrow, bewail their misery;
> lament their exile, deprived of pleasures
> in death's hall, of all powers/gifts,
> favours and joys."]

Even if the precise Old English equivalent for its first term is missing here, the picture seems to exploit, once again, the dichotomy of "homeland" and "exile", with its second element being supplemented by a negative hall-image (*"deaðsele"*).

In a way, then, we are referred back to the beginning of the poem, where the same opposition was used to describe humanity's pre- and post-lapsarian state. Retrospectively, the expansion of Felix's initial observation on the universality of death in the Old English adaptation by a prolonged account of man's existence in paradise may not serve merely to emphasize the former theme by way of a sharp contrast; it also presents, in the story of man's movement outward from the homeland of paradise to the exile of this world, the counterpart to Guthlac's progress in the opposite direction. The passage discussed above would function as a reverse reflection of the opening of the poem and the homeland-exile conceptual complex would provide a continuous submerged metaphor for the story of the saint's ultimate victory over death and the realization, in his case, of the revocation of the death penalty imposed on mankind, effected by Christ's crucifixion.[309] It is only to be regretted that this

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[309] A motif which *Christ II*, 179-187 adopts from Gregory's *Homilia XXIX*, § 10, from *Homiliae XL in Evangelia*, translated in Allen and Calder 1976, 79-81.

hypothesis, however firm a ground it may find in the extant portion of the text, cannot be definitively accepted or refused in the absence of the latter part of the poem.[310]

It has been stated at the beginning of the present chapter that the latter three poems of the first booklet express the position of humanity in the universe through the interrelated concepts of heaven/paradise as the original homeland and this world as a space of exile and heaven and the world as two opposed territories perceived as the homeland of the righteous and the sinful respectively. The symbolic value of *eðel* and *uncyððu*, constituted in the native poetic tradition and the order that it represents, is there appropriated for Christian discourse in a gesture of spiritual reinterpretation. Both *Christ III* and *Guthlac II* let only sound this later note. *Guthlac I*, a text independent, as far as we know, of any identifiable source, is in this respect the most complex of the three poems, because in the negotiation of the status of the *"westen"* ["wilderness"] which the saint attempts to wrest from the possession of demons it also activates the original, "secular" or, historically, "heroic", connotations of the two terms and places them against the Christian usage. And it is through this confrontation that the poem formulates, in a most effective manner, its stance towards the *comitatus* culture which is, after all, the element that shaped Guthlac's early manhood.

Initially, though, the text establishes the traditional binary opposition between heaven and this world; indeed, the whole general introductory section as well as the description of the saint's life prior to his decision to settle in the wilderness are dominated by the imperative to

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[310] Pope 1978, 40-41, concludes that the vernacular reworking could not have possibly skipped the account of the saint's burial, as it was essential to the perspective developed in the present text; he also discusses the possibility that the poem might have gone on to include an adaptation of chapter 51, containing the narrative of the miraculous preservation of Guthlac's body. He suggests that some 300 lines (i.e. a full third) may be missing from the original poem and presumes the existence of an extra gathering containing the rest of *Guthlac II* and the beginning of *Azarias*.

choose between the two. Yet if heaven is referred to by a range of terms stressing the aspect of familiarity (*"ham"*, l. 10 and 69; *"eðel"*, l. 67) and sometimes reminiscent of the more specific and central hall-image (*"þær se hyhsta ealra cyninga cyning ceastrum wealdeð"* – "where the highest king of kings holds his court", 16-17), the key word that characterizes the position of this world is not, as in the poems previously analysed, *"uncyððu"* but *"læne"* – "transitory" (cf. *"lænan dreamas"* – "transitory joys", a variation on *"eorþan wynne"* – "earthly pleasures", 2-3). It is this quality that is elaborated upon in the passage describing the daily deterioration of the world that takes up lines 37 to 54 and that underlies the statement that *"eorðwela [...] gehwylcum sceal // foldbuendra fremde geweorþan"* (62-64) ["[worldly] wealth will become alien to all those dwelling on this earth"] which would otherwise seem to recall the homeland-exile dichotomy mentioned above. An appropriate contrast to the instability of this world is built up in the expression *"þa getimbru / þe no tydriað"* ["the buildings that do not decay", l.18) employed to describe heaven, although one may also sense here another subdued hall-image. That familiar dichotomy could nevertheless be contained implicitly in phrases that portray heaven as a space characterized by the absence, erasure of exile or, to use a more cautious expression, of homelessness; this aspect, I believe, may be present in the remark that *"þær næfre hreow cymeð // edergong fore yrmþum"* – "sorrow never comes there, [or] going round houses/boundaries for misery"[311] (10-11). Admittedly, the evidence of that last statement is highly disputable. However, the closing section of the poem (which mirrors the extensive initial passage discussed above both in containing a brief account of the consummation of Guthlac's saintly life followed by a final generalizing epilogue and in returning to the image of heaven as established in the introduction) may provide a better sample in the claim

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[311] This is a literal reading of the compound *"eder-"* or *"eodorgong"*. Hall, J.R. Clark. *A Concise Anglo-Saxon Dictionary*. Fourth edition Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1960, reprint 2000, gives the meaning as "begging".

that *"him [=Guthlac] wæs lean geseald // setl on swegle / þær he symle mot // awo to ealdre / eardfæst wesan"* – "he was given his reward, a residence in heaven where he may remain settled forever" (784-786). Otherwise the passage in question repeats many terms already employed in the opening section (*"ham"* and *"eðel"*, 1.796, 801) or introduces new ones, preserving the same drift (*"ece geard"* corresponding in its connotations most closely to *"ceaster"*, l. 791). The only new element is the reference to the heavenly Jerusalem in 812-813.

Within the space circumscribed by that framing, the situation complicates as the poem approaches its main theme – the saint's spiritual battle with the demons that come to tempt him – and its setting, the barrow in the deserted landscape. Both aspects are first introduced at a point where the generalizing introduction, having compared Christians "in word" and "in deed", prepares a transition to the individual tale of St Guthlac: some true Christians, the text states, live in wilderness, where they are often harassed by the enemy but on the other hand enjoy the protection of angels. Here we also find hints of the ambiguous associations of *westen* whose interplay will later serve to explain the saint's position in and attitude to the world:

> · *sume þa wuniað   on westennum*
> *secað ond gesittað   sylfra willum*
> *hamas on heolstrum   hy ðæs heofoncundan*
> *boldes bidað*
>
> <div align="right">(Guth I 81-84)</div>

["Some dwell in wilderness,
seek out and occupy of their own will
dwellings in darkness. They wait for
the heavenly residence."]

To occupy *"hamas in heolstrum"* means, through a long established connotation, to settle in a dangerous and evil "territory" rightly feared and avoided, a space thoroughly negative; simultaneously, the way in which

this phrase is juxtaposed with the reference to the future abode in heaven seems to suggest a connection, a causality, retrospectively assigning a positive status to the place, as – in one respect – an outpost of heaven.

It is obviously the saint's presence, his or her appropriation of the place that effects such a transformation; but before I look closer at this aspect, I would like to comment first on the negative characteristic of the wilderness as it is developed in the poem. To begin with, it is a space apart, on or outside the limits of human world – *"mearclond"* ("borderland",[312] l. 175), *"bimiþen fore monnum"* ("hidden from men", l. 147), a *"digle stow"* ("secret place", l. 159 and again 215). Initially, at least, the wilderness occupies this position not in relation to the human world only but, as it were, universally; although God reveals it to Guthlac (*"meotud onwrah // beorg on bearwe"* – "God revealed the barrow in the grove", 147-148), it nevertheless lies *"dryhtne in gemyndym // idel ond æmen / eðelriehte feor"* – "unoccupied and bare/worthless, removed from hereditary right in the mind of the Lord" (215-216); in other words, it is a no man's land *par excellence*. This latter statement is apparently connected with the fact that, prior to the saint's arrival, the bleak landscape served as a refuge for demons; what is not so clear, however, is the causal relationship between the two facts. In God's eyes the place may be *"idel"* (in this case, "worthless" or "desolate" rather than simply "void") precisely because of its (intermittent) occupation by infernal forces – or vice versa: since no one claims it, it is only appropriate that the devils – as oathbreakers (*"wærlogan"*, l. 623) and outlaws (*"wræcmæcgas"*, l. 231, 263, 558) – should tend to that territory. It is not absolutely certain, even though it is very likely, that Guthlac refers just to demons when, challenging his tempters to bring reinforcements and do their worst, he

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[312] To realize the negative implications of such a term we only have to remember *"mearcstapa"* – "walker in borderland", the epithet given to Grendel in Beo 103.

says, *"wid is þes westen / wrǣcsetla fela // eardas onhǣle / earmra gǣsta[313] // sindon wǣrlogan / þe þa wic bugað"* (296-298) ["this wilderness is large, there are many places where exiles live, [many] hidden dwellings of miserable souls; traitors occupy those homes"]; the formulation is sufficiently vague to evoke the less specifically Christian image, existing in the poetic tradition, of a space beyond the scope of the human world inhabited by creatures hostile to or rejected by that world. What the saint enters is thus also an established space of exile.

So far, the picture of the wilderness has remained perfectly homogeneous: in human as well as divine terms it represents the "other side". When Gutlac ventures to settle there, the situation changes. He appropriates the space and brings it, as it were, within the limits of the ordered world: *"wǣs seo londes stow // bimiþen fore monnum · / Oþþǣt meotud onwrah // beorg on bearwe / þa se bytla cwom // se þǣr haligne / ham arǣrde ·* (146b-149) ["The place was hidden from men, until God had revealed the barrow in the grove when the builder came who erected there his holy home"]. This need not, however, mean the human world: *"Nales þy he giemde / þurh gitsunga // lǣnes lifwelan / ac þǣt lond gode // fǣgre gefreoþode"* (150-152a) ["He did not do it because he would care, through covetousness, for transitory wealth, but he kept the land well for God"]. Later on, Guthlac speaks explicitly of offering the territory that he means to win from the devils to the Lord:

> no ic eow sweord ongean
> mid gebolgne hond   oðberan þence,
> worulde wǣpen   ne sceal þes wong gode
> þurh blodgyte   gebuen weorðan ·
> Ac ic minum Criste   cweman þence

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[313] This expression would indeed suggest that the allusion is to devils that have not yet joined their companions in harassing the saint: *"earme gǣstas"* is the term consistently used of demons in the poem (on lines 339, 405, 437, 519 and 686). At the same time, the phrase is used here for the first time, so the connection has not yet been established and consequently the possibilities of interpretation are still relatively open.

leofran lace   nu ic þis lond gestag ·

(Guth I 302b-307)

["I do not intend
to hold out against you a sword in an angry hand,
a worldly weapon; this plain will not
be cultivated for God through a bloodshed.
I intend to please Christ
by a more pleasant gift, now I have reached this land."]

Admittedly, these are but very mild hints at the split between the human and the divine which has been, it is true, introduced at the very beginning of the poem with the theme of the inevitable choice between *"eorðwela"* ["[worldly] wealth"] and *"ece lif"* ["eternal life"] but which develops fully only in the scenes of Guthlac's temptations. There, the demons "speak reason", appealing to the sense of belonging to human community in the saint, of sharing its views and values. They start on very general terms, labelling Guthlac's eremitism as a manifestation of enmity to fellow men and warning him

þæt his earfeþu   eal gelumpe
modcearu mægum   gif he monna dream ·
of þam orlege   eft ne wolde
sylfa gesecan   ond his sibbe ryht
mid moncynne ·   maran cræfte
willum bewitigan   lætan wræce stille ·

(Guth I 194-199)

["that his hardships will happen
to the sorrow of his relatives if he does not
leave battle to seek again himself
the pleasures of men and make his peace
with mankind willingly,
with better effort, let enmity lie still."]

The extent to which Guthlac is cut off from all contact with humanity is an element absent from all other narratives of his life, *Guthlac II*, immediately following in the manuscript, including. The text which is the object of the present analysis permits him merely an intercessional prayer to express

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his concern – no brother Beccel, no crowds seeking comfort that never leave unsatisfied; the word that keeps returning in this account is *"ana"* – alone. The tale seems to be deliberately refashioned in this respect to allow the play on different variants of the intertwined concepts of exile and homeland. The demons operate with the traditional "poetic" image which, in a sense, is already implicit in the terms used to describe the saint's solitary dwelling, while he refuses to acknowledge this perspective. When he becomes the *"weard on wonge"* ("guardian of the plain", l. 231), he not only takes the territory in his possession (*"mæg ic þis setl on eow // butan earfeðum / ana geðringan ·"* – "I, alone, can win this place from you [=the demons] without any trouble", 244b-245), he also plans to construct a house there (*"Ic me anum her / eaðe getimbre // hus ond hleonað"* – "I can easily build for/by myself a house and shelter here", 250-251a). This act, apart from the very prosaic function of providing the saint with a roof under which to hide from the weather, also has a symbolic aspect – it reorganizes the space and establishes a new "centre" as well as new boundaries: *"her sceal min wesan // eorðlic eðel / nales eower leng:7"* (261b-262) ["here will be my earthly homeland, not yours any longer"]. Despite the fact that Guthlac only claims an *"eorðlic"* home in the wild, there are elements that make it evoke the *"eþellond // fæger ond gefealic / in fæder wuldre ·"* – "homeland fair and joyful in the glory of the Father" (656b-657). I have already mentioned the consecration of the place to God, now it is time to note the divine intervention which confirms Guthlac's possession (*"· he sceal þy wonge wealdan / ne magon ge him þa wic forstondan ·"* – "he will hold this plain, you may not keep the house against him", l. 702) and, finally, the rare and surprising transformation of the bleak wilderness in which the individual tale culminates:

> Smolt wæs se sigewong   ond sele niwe
> fæger fugla reord   folde geblowen
> geacas gear budon   Guþlac moste

eadig ond onmod   eardes brucan ·
stod se grena wong   in godes wære

<div align="center">(Guth I 742-746)</div>

["The plain of victory was peaceful, the house new,
birds sang pleasantly, the earth covered in flowers,
cuckoos announced summer; Guthlac,
blessed and resolute, could enjoy his dwelling.
The green plain lay under God's protection..."]

Whatever the details, the wilderness becomes the new *"eðel"* for Guthlac
and exile (*"wræcsið"*) is the term used to refer to his involuntary departure
thence when he is carried away by his tempters to the gates of hell. The
devils, as could be expected, are excluded from this newly established
realm of order; what is more, the saint pronounces a new sentence of
banishment, addressing them in a manner not unlike that of Christ in
judgment:[314] *"· gewitað nu awyrgde / werigmode // from þissum earde / þe ge her
on stondað // fleoð on feorweg"* (255-257a) ["Depart now, ye cursed, weary in
spirit, from this place where you stand, flee on remote ways"]. Later on, in
passages in which Guthlac refuses their temptations, accusations and
threats, he hardly misses an opportunity to remind them of their exile, this
time not (or not only) the recent expulsion from their refuge in the fens
but, above all, the original one from the kingdom of heaven: cf. lines 508-
509, *"gefeoð in firenum / frofre ne wenað // þæt ge wræcsiða / wyrpe gebiden"*
["rejoice in sins, do not hope in comfort, that you will live to see an end to
your exile/misery "] or 623-627, with a more specific reference to their
punishment in hell,

Sindon ge wærlogan   swa ge in wræcsiðe
longe lifdon   lege biscencte
swearte beswicene   swegle benumene
dreame bidrorene   deaðe bifolene
firenum bifongne   feores orwenan

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[314] Cf. *Christ III,* 653: *"Farað nu awyrgde / willum biscyrede..."* ["Depart now, ye cursed,
deprived of joys..."]. This paralel may be seen as one of the elements that place
Guthlac's hermitage in relation to the sphere of the heavenly "homeland"

["You are oathbreakers and so you have lived
long in exile, with flames for drink,
dark, frustrated, deprived of heaven,
bereft of joys, delivered to death,
entangled in crimes, despairing of life."]

Against that re-oriented, reinterpreted image of the wilderness the tempters place the view accepted in the "human world" – the perspective developed in the poetic tradition, operative already in the initial description. In that context, the saint ventures from the space appropriated by men – the homeland, *"eðel"* – into a dangerous "outside" territory where he may lose his life and, what is perhaps more important, his humanity:

> · ðu þæt gehatest   þæt ðu ham on <us>
> gegan wille   <ðe> <eart> godes yrming ·
> bi hwon scealt þu lifgan   þeah þu lond age
> ne þec mon hider   mose fedeð ·
> beoð þe hungor ond þurst   hearde gewinnan
> gif þu gewitest   swa wilde deor
> ana from eþele

<div align="right">(Guth I 271-277a)</div>

["You swear that you will gain
your home from us, who are God's miserable wretch.
How will you make your living, even if you have land?
Nobody will give you food here,
hunger and thirst will be your grim enemies
if you depart, as a wild beast,
alone from your homeland."]

They try to persuade Guthlac to play the role "prescribed" in such a situation; although the term itself never appears in the account, he is to feel the emotions proper for an exile – *"woldun þæt him to mode / fore monlufan // sorg gesohte / þæt he siþ tuge // eft to eþle"* (353-355a) ["They wanted sorrow to enter his heart for the love of men, so that he would take a journey back to his homeland"]. The saint seems to understand their

strategy when he protests that "...*mec longeþas lyt gegretað // sorge sealdun / nu mec sawelcund // hyrde bihealdeð*" (316-318a) ["...longings rarely take hold of me, and sorrows seldom, now that a spiritual guardian protects me"]; he refuses to accept the customary perspective that the devils press on him. If *Christ III* and *Guthlac II* employed images resulting from a complete spiritual reinterpretation of the native homeland-exile conceptual complex, relying on the strength of its positive/negative associations, *Guthlac I*, as it were, stages the very process of that reinterpretation: what is, in the eyes of this world, of the *civitas terrena*, a situation of utmost deprivation, becomes the statement of allegiance to the *civitas Dei*, an enterprise that transforms *westen* into *sele niwe*.

So, although all the three poems agree in the end in expressing the same specific doctrinal points through the use of the same imagery, affording, in this sense, an example of **additive linking** as defined in the introduction to the present chapter, the fact that in *Guthlac I* this particular interpretation of that imagery is confronted with the way in which it functions in a different ideological context also introduces the principle of **contrast** into the link.

Contrastive linking: "hall and storm"

As a sample of **contrastive linking** I would like to adduce the use of the image of a human habitation subjected to the attacks of storm[315] in two neighbouring texts from the second booklet – *Juliana* and *The Wanderer*; though I should make it clear from the start that, just as in the case of *Christ III* and *Guthlac I* and *II*, it does not represent a pure type, combining, too, the principles of contrast and correspondence, but this time in a reversed order of importance. Since the contrast is here much more prominent, I thought it better to treat the link under a separate category.

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[315] See pp. 34-39 for the discussion of the role of the opposed concept of "hall" and "storm" in the native poetic tradition.

The two poems differ widely in scope, genre, dependence on sources as well as, most importantly, the cultural context to which they primarily relate. *Juliana*, with its 731 extant lines, is the last of the group of longer, explicitly religious poems which form the first half[316] of the Exeter Book. Generally, these can be classified as Old English reflections of literary types established in the Christian Latin tradition. Despite the controversies concerning the possibility of tracing its exemplar among the suitable surviving Latin versions of the life of St Juliana,[317] the extent to which the vernacular reworking departs from the text found in the *Acta auctore anonymo ex xi veteribus MSS* edited by Bolland and Henschen and published 1658 in Antwerp (thought to represent more or less accurately the version adapted by Cynewulf) is relatively insignificant. The changes are comparable to or rather less extensive than those found, for example, in *Christ II* – relatively minor additions on the one hand,[318] on the other a

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[316] This is only an approximate division: in Krapp and Dobbie 1936 the section (which includes the three *Christ* poems, the two on St Guthlac, *Azarias*, *Phoenix* and *Juliana*) takes up 130 pages, with the rest of the poems occupying the remaining hundred. In the present state of the codex, *Azarias* represents the only exception within the series, having just 191 lines; in length, it is thus closest to *Maxims* with 204 lines, the majority of the poems (the riddles excluding) comprising each about a hundred lines. If we accept the hypothesis arguing for the loss of a whole gathering between lines 561 of *Guthlac II* and the present beginning of *Azarias*, we may, with John C. Pope, presume the existence of a eight-hundred-line long original *Guthlac II* and five-hundred-line *Azarias*, which goes together well with the average length of the other poems in this section of the manuscript (cf. Pope 1978, 41). Conner's theory of three separate booklets later united into the present collection offers yet another resolution of the problem of the original scope of the two fragmented poems: as *Guthlac II* belongs to the first section, it could either be the last poem that it contained, finished within a space afforded by a complete or abbreviated gathering (consisting of eight folia or less), or it could be followed by other texts now lost of which no conjecture can be made. The lost opening of *Azarias*, it is more or less accepted, must have required a greater space than that offered by the excised strip at the top of folio 53, so it is likely that a whole quire (or more) disappeared from the beginning of the second booklet. The darkened surface of this folio would suggest that the booklets were bound together in their present imperfect form, after the substantial losses had occurred (cf. Conner 1993, 100-101, 125, 129). The hypothesis supports Pope's estimate of the original length of the two poems but opens the possibility of an even greater space assigned to them.

[317] Cf. Allen and Calder 1976, 121.

[318] Among those, the most prominent is the introduction into the demon's account of the temptations with which he approaches Christians of the motif of spiritual battle in which the missiles of the devil beleaguer the fortress of the soul; cf. p. 155 of the present study.

generalizing tendency that drops all references to specific pagan gods, sometimes also to exemplary biblical figures and, above all, to the elements that locate the narrative in the political realities of the late Roman Empire,[319] a setting that plays its role, albeit a slight one, in the original tale. Even if we interpret this erasure as an attempt to make the story more relevant for an audience with a different cultural background, there are almost no signs of the tendency – evident in many other Old English religious poems – to "translate" it into the context of the *comitatus* culture or, at least, to reinforce the "heroic" element in the narrative. *The Wanderer* opens the series of shorter texts preceding the first group of riddles, meditative or didactic in a general sense. Some of them can also be traced to Latin literary models (the *Physiologus* poems), some find inspiration in the Bible (*Precepts*[320]), yet others seem to rely fully or at least predominantly on the indigenous poetic tradition (*Widsið*, *Deor*). Although Bernard Muir would read *The Wanderer* as an Old English reflection of biblical exilic poetry, specifically chapters 3 and 4 of the *Lamentations*,[321] on closer examination of the context in which the presumably corresponding themes appear his hypothesis seems rather strenuous, as the parallels only come to light when both texts are shorn of all their unique features.[322] A

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[319] For the translation of the Latin text cited above as well as a brief introduction into the problem of determining the precise source of the Old English *Juliana* see Allen and Calder 1976, 121-132.

[320] So McEntire, Sandra. "The Monastic Context of Old English *Precepts*", NM, 91 (1990), 243-249.

[321] Cf. Muir 1994, vol. II, 488.

[322] Thus Muir compares the specifically oriented destruction of Sion by God's wrath to the scene in *The Wanderer* which reads the anonymous ruins (in whose desolation, it is true, there is also perceived the agency of God, yet they still remain only one of the many that *"missenlice / geond þisne middangeard // ... stondaþ"* ["stand in various places throughout this earth"]) as an emblem of the general instability of all worldly matters. The only analogy that seems to hold without reservation is between *The Wanderer*'s final lesson that *"wel bið þam þe him are seceð // frofre to fæder on heofonum"* – "Well for the one who seeks mercy, comfort from the Father in heaven", 114-115a – and Lamentations 3: 25, "The Lord is good unto them that wait for him, to the soul that seeketh him." This correspondence can perhaps be extended to the preceding observation on the expedience of keeping's one's faith accompanied by reticence and Lamentations 3:26, "It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord"; but there the parallels really end. They are thus limited to the

similar objection can also be raised against other presumed analogues, whether Latin, Celtic or Old Norse:[323] the differences (the emphasis placed on Christian instruction, the presence of a definite and readily identifiable narrative background to which the monologue relates etc.) outweigh the resemblances. In this situation it seems best to view *The Wanderer* as a literary form with chiefly (though not exclusively) a native pedigree and predecessors in similarly generalized lyrical passages incorporated in epic texts, e.g. *Beowulf* (the so-called Lament of the Last Survivor and Old Man's Lament for His Son); more instances are referred to on p. 94 of the present study. Finally, although the tendencies to read the text as an authentic product of a distinctly "heroic", secular strand of Old English poetry subsequently capped with a summary Christian conclusion have long been relegated to the world of dreams and wishful thinking just like the wanderer's ideal hall in the poem,[324] there is no denying that the speaker's quest for wisdom is set in the context of a *comitatus* world and that this world is portrayed as inevitably flawed and fragile like all human institutions but attractive nevertheless. *The Wanderer*, then, strikes a new note after the string of poems that may invoke motives and images belonging to that same context and even recognize their positive value, but if they do so, it is to refer to matters beyond human experience.

Thus it appears that *The Wanderer*, despite its final resolute parting with all fleeting worldly joys and declaration of faith in the only "*fæstnung*" ["shelter/protection"] that lasts – the heavenly – which leave no doubt about its orthodoxy, yet stands at a certain distance from the texts that precede it in the manuscript, a distance that may be perceived as

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closing section whose formal affinity with the homiletic genre was recognized from the very beginning and where such a source of inspiration can be reasonably expected.

[323] See Allen and Calder 1976, 133-153 and Calder et al. 1983, 23-69.

[324] The wanderer can only relive the constitutive rituals of the "heroic" society (homage, gift-giving, feasting, all taking place in the hall) in the imaginary space of a dream or recollection; in reality, they remain inaccessible. Cf. my interpretation of the poem in Znojemská 1998(a), 56-82.

undesirable. From a certain perspective the fact that the ideals and fundamental institutions of the *comitatus* culture (as, in a way, a construct of the native Old English poetry) retain such a powerful hold over the speaker's thoughts represents a strictly logical element in the argument of the poem: there is no merit, no spiritual progress in preferring God to an alternative evidently worthless, possessing no appeal whatsoever; the attractions of this world have to be recognized as capable of diverting the soul from the right way.[325] But this is precisely the aspect totally absent from the preceding religious poems (chiefly due to their orientation on other themes and problems), with the exception of *Guthlac I* of the first booklet where, nevertheless, the potential positive appeal of the values professed by the lay society is radically diminished when their apology is placed in the mouths of the demon tempters. It is my opinion that the way in which *Juliana* uses the motif of a dwelling exposed to tempests – dominating the whole latter half of *The Wanderer* – produces, with the support of the manner in which it works with the heroic register, an effect similar to that present in *Guthlac I*; that is, a certain preliminary downtoning of the nostalgic view of the *comitatus* world in *The Wanderer* and, simultaneously, an anticipation of its religious conclusion activated when the poems are read in the order in which they appear in the manuscript.

In the first, "autobiographical" section of *The Wanderer* we already find both parts of the image-complex, at this stage yet divided. Cold and storm characterize the "outside" space of exile which has no access to, no communication with the human world: not only the wanderer "... *lyt hafað / leofra geholena*" ("has few dear friends", l. 31) – a traditional understatement signifying an absolute lack; the poem denies him *any* interaction with his fellow men, helpful or otherwise, and the only creatures that he meets in his solitude are the sea-birds on the shore. The

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[325] Cf. Hume 1974, 73.

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central item towards which the speaker's desires turn is, unsurprisingly, the *"meoduheall"* ["mead-hall"] as the stage for ritualized acts establishing and demonstrating the bond which integrates the individual into a specific, hierarchically ordered, community; a space which he associates with all things imaginable that can make one happy, and with those only:[326] the company of friends (*"winedryhten"* – "lord and friend", *"selesecgas"* – "retainers"), prosperity (*"wunden gold"* – "twisted gold", *"foldan blæd"* – "wealth of the land") and status (*"... gemon he [...] sincþege // hu hine on geoguðe / his goldwine // wenede to wiste"* – "he remembers [...] receiving of gifts, and how in youth his generous friend/lord entertained him to feast"). The two "territories" are mutually exclusive, neither influences or encroaches upon the other. The text here regularly alternates between the two, as in the following scene which shows in miniature the concerns and attitudes of this part of the poem as well as the above mentioned opposition of the hall and storm images:

> *þinceð him on mode   þæt he his mondryhten*
> *clyppe ond cysse   ond on cneo lecge*
> *honda ond heafod   swa he hwilum ær*
> *in geardagum   giefstolas breac ·*
> *Ðonne onwæcneð eft   wineleas guma*
> *gesihð him biforan   fealwe wegas*
> *baþian brimfuglas   brædan feþra*
> *hreosan hrim ond snaw   hagle gemenged ·*
>
> <div align="right">(Wand 41-48)</div>

> ["It seems to him that he embraces and kisses
> his lord and on his knees he lays
> both head and hands, as he had sometimes,
> in days long gone, made use of the gift-seat.
> Then the friendless man wakes up again
> and sees the dark waves in front of him,

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[326] Death in battle is perceived, significantly, as an element that disrupts the order which bound the community of warrior-companions, as an external force, not the inevitable result of the ethos which represents an integral part of that order; nothing is allowed, on the level of explicit statement, to cast shade on the idyllic imaginary reconstruction of the space to which the speaker once belonged.

sea-birds bathing, spreading their feathers
and the falling rime and snow, mingled with hail."][327]

The second, meditative part of *The Wanderer* effaces this division –
though not the opposition itself – as it voids the centre of the human
world, leaving only the physical structure (*"ederas"* –
"houses/enclosures") and a memory of its function (*"winsæl"* – "wine-
hall"). Human presence is too fleeting for men to be able to hold what they
consider their own and the image of the depopulated hall gradually
succumbing to forces of storm becomes the epitome of the essential
fragility of human order:

> *Ongietan sceal gleaw hæle   hu gæstlic bið ·*
> *þonne <ealre> þisse worulde wela   weste stondeð ·*
> *swa nu missenlice   geond þisne middangeard*
> *winde biwaune   weallas stondaþ*
> *hrime bihrorene   hryðge þa ederas*
> *woriað þa winsalo   waldend licgað*
> *dreame bidrorene   duguþ eal gecrong*
> *wlonc bi wealle*
>
> <div align="right">(Wand 73-80a)</div>

["A wise man must understand how terrible it will be
when all the wealth of this world lies waste
just as now, at various places on this earth
walls stand swept by winds,
the buildings storm-beaten/ruined, covered with frost;
the wine-halls crumble, lords lie
deprived of joy, the retinue fell,
proud, by the wall."]

The image of a dwelling (*"winsæl"*, *"eodor"*) recedes into
background, replaced by that of a wall, whose significance undergoes an
interesting development in the course of this part of the text. Its first
occurrence in the passage quoted above can be understood as an

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[327] I quote here just one part of a longer passage, one that is relevant for the present
discussion, and this purpose leads me to construe the syntax of the translation in such a
way as to be readily intelligible. In reality the syntax of the passage appears to be much
more complex, as I attempted to show in Znojemská 1998(a), 75-80.

introduction of the motif, the variation with *"ederas"* announcing, as it were, the ensuing substitution of "wall" for "hall". The context in which it appears for the second time (*"duguþ eall gecrong // wlonc bi wealle"*) recalls, in one dynamic scene, the proper function of the wall as a protective rampart which defends the inner space and the moment in which it lost this function. From then on it is perceived as an isolated trace of former human presence (envisaged still in terms belonging to the "heroic" register), an object that can either be "read" in this way (*"Se þonne þisne wealsteal / wise geþohte [...] þas word acwið · hwær cwom mearg · hwær cwom mago · / hwær cwom maþþumgyfa ·"* – "He who wisely ponders this foundation [...] will say: 'where has the horse gone? Where the man? Where the treasure-giver?' ", 88-92)[328] or that represents both an imprint and a silent memorial (*"Stondeð nu on laste / leofre duguþe // weal wundrum heah "* – "a wall wondrously high now remains behind[329] the beloved

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[328] The rest of this list contains items belonging to the same conceptual sphere: *"symbla gesetu"* ["seats at feast"], *"seledreamas"* ["joys of the hall"], *"beorht bune"* ["bright cup"], *"byrnwiga"* ["warrior"], *"þeodnes þrym"* ["glory of the lord"].

[329] The term *"last"* in itself means "footprint" or "track". The expression *"on laste"* used in the sentence in question, however, is a set phrase which in the majority of contexts retains no shade of this original sense, signifying simply that someone or something followed "after" or "behind" someone or something else. This is undoubtedly true of sentences like *"Malalehel wæs æfter Iarede yrfes hyrde / fæder on laste, oðþæt he forð gewat"* ("After [begetting] Jared, Mahalaleel became the guardian of inheritance after his father until he passed away", Gen 1066-1067) or *"Him on laste setl, // wuldorspedum welig, / wide stodan // gifum growende / on godes rice"* ("After them remained numerous seats, rich in glorious wealth, growing in gifts in God's kingdom", Gen 86b-88 – referring to fallen angels). Other occurrences of the phrase in the Anglo-Saxon corpus nevertheless seem to suggest that this might have been just the final stage of a process in which the phrase gradually ceased to allude to the concrete act of following in someone's footsteps – a meaning that may be at least partially active in scenes of pursuit, such as *"Flugon ða ðe <lyfdon>, // laðra <lindwerod>, / him on laste for // sweot Ebrea / sigore geweorðod"* ("Those that were alive fled away, the enemy army, and in their tracks marched the Hebrew troops, exalted by victory", Jud 296-298), or, more generally, in phrases describing a movement through which one person follows another, e.g. *"Ða to dura eodon / drihtlice cempan, // Sigeferð and Eaha, / hyra sword getugon, // and æt oþrum durum / Ordlaf and Guþlaf, // and Hengest sylf / hwearf him on laste"* ("the noble warriors then went to the door, Sigeferð and Eaha drew out their swords, and at the other door Ordlaf and Guþlaf; and Hengest himself followed in their steps", Finn 14-17). It has to be admitted that the phrase used in *The Wanderer* comes closest to the type found in Gen 86b-88; in each case, a structure is left empty by the departure of its inhabitants and the word *"standan"* is used. Even there, though, the original concept may still have been

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retinue", 97-98a). I believe that the last stage of this development may be present in the *"stanhleoðu"* of the scene that immediately follows that latter passage:

> · eorlas fornoman   asca þryþe
> wæpen wælgifru   wyrd seo mære
> ond þas stanhleoþu   stormas cnyssað
> hrið hreosende   <hrusan> bindeð
> wintres woma   þonne won cymeð
> nipeð nihtscua   norþan onsendeð
> hreo hæglfare   hæleþum on andan ·
>
> <div align="right">(Wand 99-105)</div>

["The force of spears, bloodthirsty weapons,
the fate so famous have taken the men
and storms beat the rocks,
driving snowstorm binds the earth;
when darkness comes, the shadow of night deepens,
winter tumult sends from the north
terrible hailstorm in enmity to men."]

I am primarily interested in the second part of this statement which describes the massive onrush of wintery tempest, as presenting a further development of the initial scene of a deserted dwelling subject to the inclemency of weather; but the strange juxtaposition of the two actions

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recognized in the set phrase, as suggested by the last sample that I wish to quote in this discussion: *"Hergas wurdon // feower on fleame, / folccyningas, // leode ræswan. / Him on laste stod // hihtlic heorðwerod, / and hæleð lagon, // on swaðe sæton"* ("Four armies took flight, kings of the people, leaders of men. Behind them remained the joyful retinue, warriors lay, settled in the pathway", Gen 73b-77a). The situation described here may be interpreted as representing a kind of intermediate stage between the dynamic scenes listed above, where *"on laste"* likewise seems to be used in a spatial, rather than temporal, sense, and the passage from *The Wanderer*, with which it shares the static verb *"standan"*. However, it should be realized that it is only the latter part of the second sentence that clearly identifies the nature of the event and resolves the ambiguity of the temporal/spatial reference of *"Him on laste stod // hihtlic heorðwerod"* (which is almost exactly parallel to the construction found in *The Wanderer*) in favour of the latter possibility. Just as the potentially abstract verb *"standan"* [= "to remain"] is specified by its counterparts *"sittan"* and *"licgan"*, so the expression *"on swaðe"*, which represents a unique instance of variation of the phrase in question, activates the literal sense in the otherwise equally abstract *"on laste"*. This seems to open the possibility that, despite the prevailing usage which indicates a substantial weakening of the literal meaning, the expression need not have lost all association with its origin.

makes it necessary to quote in full, as it is rather important both for the interpretation of the passage and of the term in question. The paratactic construction suggests two possible relationships: analogy (the stroke of fate was as violent as the storm that comes to spite men) or temporal sequence, perhaps with an undertone of causal connection (once the men are dead, the forces of the hostile nature have full sway); each of those has a slightly different effect on the understanding of the expression "*stanhleoðu*". In the first case we need not presume any continuity as far as the scene of the action is concerned, in the second the likelihood that the snow and hail cover the same place where the men have once lived is somewhat greater.

The term itself is a compound of "*stan*" – "stony, stone-" and "*hlið*" – "cliff", thus denoting a geological formation; however, if we examine its occurrences in the Anglo-Saxon corpus, we find that the contexts in which it is used are none so univocal. In the majority of cases, it is true, the object thus named is umistakably a feature of a landscape, and a landscape with very unfavourable connotations at that: the precarious passage towards Grendel's mere in *Beowulf* 1408-1411,[330] the vicinity of the Mermedonian city in *Andreas* 1229-1233 – the scenery of the saint's torment,[331] the imaginary setting of the husband's exile in *Wife's Lament* 42-49.[332] The last example also illustrates the association of this term with a) maritime locations, which is likewise visible in *Riddle 3*, in a passage describing a

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[330] "*Ofereode þa / æþelinga bearn // steap stanhliðo / stige nearwe // enge anpaðas / uncuð gelad // neowle næssas / nicorhusa fela*" ["The prince's son then went over steep rocks, along narrow tracks, strait footpaths, unknown ways, by precipitous cliffs populated by water-demons"].

[331] "*Heton þa lædan / ofer landsceare // ðragmælum teon / torngeniðlan // swa hie hit frecnost / findan meahton // drogon <deormodne> / æfter dunscræfum // ymb stanhleoðo / <stærcedferþne>*" ["The angry foes commanded him to be taken through the country / over boundaries, wherever they cound find it most perilous; they dragged the bold, resolute one along mountain caves and rocks"].

[332] "... *sy ful wide fah // feorres folclondes / þæt min freond siteð // under stanhliþe / storme behrimed // wine werigmod / wætre beflowen // on dreorsele*" ["... or whether my friend, weary of spirit, exiled in a far-away land, sits under rocks, storm covers him with frost, water encloses him in a dreary hall"].

tempest at sea;[333] and b) scenes of stormy weather, where we can name, apart from our present text, also *Riddle 3* and two instances from *Andreas*. The first follows on the passage quoted in the footnote and it is especially interesting in that the reference to storm is used figuratively to describe the clamour of the heathen crowds, which might perhaps suggest a certain automaticity of the association, though I would be unwilling to promote this reading against other possible explanations. The second instance opens a new context for the expression, one that seems to conflict with the previously cited usage. The term appears in the account of the flood that is unleashed, at St Andrew's prayer, on the city of the cannibals; the people try to escape into the surrounding countryside but are prevented from leaving the city by an angel who encircles it by fire. When Andrew sees the inhabitants penitent, he stops the outpouring: *"Þa se æðeling het //streamfare stillan / stormas restan // ymbe stanhleoðu"* – "Then the prince commanded the rush of water to stop, the storms to subside around the *stanhleoðu*" (1575b-1577a). In view of the fact that the calamity only rages *within* the city and that the reference to storm may best be viewed as an allusion to the angel's intervention (as the statement *"Þurh lyftgelac / leges blæstas // weallas ymbwurpon / wæter mycladon"* ("Flying through the air, the blasts of fire/lightning surrounded the walls, the waters swelled", 1552-1553) seems to suggest), the *"stanhleoðu"* can hardly be identified with any feature of the landscape outside the urban setting. The use of the expression in *Daniel* presents a similar complication: it appears there in the scene of Nebuchadnesar's sack of Jerusalem. The conquerors, after despoiling Salomon's temple and before thoroughly destroying the city, *"...gestrudan gestreona under stanhliðum"* ("plundered treasures under *stanhliðum*", l. 61). What emerges from the preceding examination is perhaps a more "neutral" sense of the compound, one that refers simply to

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[333] *"bidað stille // stealc stanhleoþu / streamgewinnes // hopgehnastes / þonne heah geþring // on cleofu crydeþ"* (25b-28a) ["The steep rocks abide the clash of waters, dashing of waves, when the mighty commotion presses on the cliffs"].

a structure – barrier-like – of stone, whether of natural or artificial origin; or, if the evidence is interpreted with a greater deal of caution, at least a possibility that the term may refer, figuratively if not literally, to such an object. After all, the already mentioned *Riddle 3* offers an example of such a figure, though reversed: the phrase *"famig winneð // wæg wið wealle"* ("the foamy wave fights against the wall", 19b-20a) describes the scene of the upsurging waters beating against cliffs.

Returning now to the passage from *The Wanderer* we may note another fact that may influence our interpretation, the determination of the substantive *"stanhleoðu"* by the demonstrative *"þas"*; "storms beat *these* rocks" – but this is the first time in the whole poem when such a landmark is mentioned! That, and the conveniently ambiguous associations of the term, lead me to the conclusion that it may represent the last item in the chain where "building" is substituted by "wall" which then progressively loses status until it becomes hardly distinguishable from a natural object;[334] the beginning and end of the sequence would be further interconnected by the repetition of the motif of storm attacking the object in question. Such a progression would certainly provide a powerful illustration of the fragility of human order and the transitoriness of all things which are the leading themes of this part of the text. The conclusion of the poem which offers the only remedy and solution for a soul disquieted by the prospect uses a similar strategy, reinterpreting by an almost subliminal hint the central hall image. In the closing statement *"Wel bið þam þe him are seceð // frofre to fæder on heofonum / þær us eal seo fæstnung stondeð :– : 7"* ["Well for the man who seeks mercy, comfort from

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[334] It may be objected that the average hall was a wooden structure surrounded likewise by a wooden palisade, which makes the substitution of such a building by a structure of stone completely illogical. The fact that the ruin is identified as *"eald enta geweorc"* ["ancient work of giants"], a phrase which evokes, by the impression of grandeur which it conveys if not by its established association with constructions of stone as far as buildings are concerned, a more substantial edifice, provides to my mind an adequate answer.

the Father in heaven where there is safe shelter ready for all of us"] the word *"fæstnung"*, although a term denoting an abstract quality ("safety, security") and, in general terms, the space where it may be found ("shelter"), recalls other nouns derived from the same stem (*"fæsten"*, *"fæstnes"*) which have a much more concrete meaning: stronghold, fortress – in other words, *"ederas"* which will never decay.

Turning now to Juliana, I would like to start by looking at the supplementary element that may be active in the interaction of the two texts – its use of the heroic register. Unlike *The Wanderer* which is positively dominated by images that can be associated with the *comitatus* lifestyle and culture (most often related to the central image-complex, but not necessarily so), the preceding *Juliana*, as has already been noted, shows a marked indifference to themes and issues that used to hold a position of importance in the native poetic tradition. To be precise, this is an understatement: not only does it make no attempt at accomodating the enduring – to judge from other Old English religious poems – taste for heroic exploits (and what could be more fit for such a treatment than a tale of a saint who managed to subdue Belial himself), it dissociates itself completely from the values of the "heroic" world by employing terms that may be reminiscent of such a setting in its portrayal of the chief human villains, departing in this respect from its source which contents itself with noting their "rank" (senator, emperor) and their persecution of Christians. This is especially true of the introductory section preceding the account of Juliana's martyrdom. The description of Maximian's imperial rule strangely mixes negative characteristics concerning his "spiritual" status (*"arleas cyning"* – "wicked king", l. 4; *"hæþen hildfruma"* – "heathen battle-chief", l. 7) with positive ones relating to his kingly qualities (*"wæs his rice brad // wid ond weorðlic / ofer werþeode"* – "his kingdom was splendid and extended far and wide over [many] nations", 8a-9); similarly, his *"þegnas"* ["nobles"] whom he sends to carry out his commands as regards the

campaign against Christians are nevertheless *"þryðfulle"* ["brave", "glorious"], a concession that might not be readily expected in the context. It would seem that the text here consistently maintains a hint of a double perspective of the action, a gesture that may be seen as a deliberate contrasting of pagan and Christian viewpoints but also as an indirect challenge of the heroic discourse in the association of such laudatory terms with the grisly reality of ruthless extermination of peaceful opponents. Although the dominant note in the characterization of Juliana's would-be husband, Eleusius – Heliseus in Old English – is his wealth (he is *"se weliga"* – "the wealthy one", l. 38, *"æhtwelig"* – "rich in possessions", l. 18, *"goldspedig guma"* – "man rich in gold", l. 39, to quote but a few epithets, disregarding more extensive references to the subject), his high social status is expressed in terms stressing military activity: *"folctoga"* ("commander", l. 225) or *"hererinc"* ("warrior", l. 189). This aspect is most prominent in the scene of his meeting with the saint's father where such qualities are applied to both protagonists alike: *"Reord up astag // siþþan hy togædre / garas hlændon // hildeþremman"* – "Voice was raised when the warriors lowered(?) their spears together" (62b-64a). However, the most explicit evocation of this context together with an impressive gesture of dismissal only comes with the ironic comment on the death at sea of Heliseus and his retinue towards the end of the poem:

> *swylt ealle fornom*
> *secga hloþe   ond hine sylfne mid*
> *ærþon hy to lande   geliden hæfdon*
> *þurh þearlic þrea   þær XXX wæs*
> *ond feowere eac   feores onsohte*
> *þurh wæges wylm   wigena cynnes*
> *heane mid hlaford   hroþra bidæled,*
> *hyhta lease helle sohton*
> *Ne þorftan þa þegnas ·   in þam þystran ham ·*
> *seo geneatscolu   in þam neolan scræfe*
> *to þam frumgare   <feohgestealda>*
> *witedra wenan   þæt hy in winsele*

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ofer <beorsetle>   beagas þegon
æpplede gold ·

<div align="right">(Jul 675-688a)</div>

["In a terrible calamity death took
the whole troop of men and him as well
before they had sailed to land.
In the swelling of waves
thirty-four of the warrior race
had to lay down their lives;
miserable, together with their lord
they entered hell, deprived of joys, without hope.
The retainers, the band of companions,
need not, in that dark home and the deep cave,
hope at all for having riches
from their chief, that in a wine-hall they would
receive rings, embossed gold,
on the beer-bench."]

In the corresponding passage of the Latin original we find a carefully structured expression of the concept of a posthumous "reversal of fortunes", juxtaposing two parallel actions with a contrary outcome: in each case, a boat is diverted from its course by a mighty tempest, but while the one that carries Juliana's embalmed body safely reaches the Campanian shore and the saint is buried in a mausoleum, the one on which Eleusius and company sail to his estate sinks and the corpses are borne on shore in a desert land to be devoured by wild beasts. The Old English reworking preserves this contrast only to the extent that the reverent burial of the saint's body is said to be "*ungelic*" to the fate suffered by Heliseus and his men; on the other hand, it introduces another, missing in its exemplar which does not presume to penetrate so far – while the villains are consigned to hell, Juliana's "*...sawl wearð // alæded of lice to / þam langan gefean // þurh sweordslege*" ("through the sword-blow [her] soul was led from the body to the eternal joy").

This modification, however, need not have disrupted the neat symmetry of the exemplar; judging from the extent of the digression, it

seems to have been sacrificed solely to the objective of associating the villain(s) of the poem firmly and finally with the *comitatus* world. Significantly, the association is established through the negation of their accustomed mode of being. Unlike Kathryn C. Hume, I do not think that the passage primarily describes hell as an "anti-hall",[335] at least not *per se* – it is portrayed as such in relation to Heliseus and his "retainers", as an absence of all that they recognize as proper and desirable. Undoubtedly, to situate the last evocation of the heroic register within the poem in such circumstances represents an effective conclusive distancing gesture.

For the proposed link with *The Wanderer* it appears especially opportune that it is found in the same section of the text as the motif of a dwelling withstanding tempests which is my main concern in the present part of this study and the chief linking element; that, by sealing the list of dismissive references to the *comitatus* culture with the negative hall-image, it establishes a subtle contrast with that motif and thus joins the two strands together; and, last but not least, that both the elements come in close proximity of the poem that follows *Juliana* in the manuscript.

For while in *The Wanderer* the imagery variously modifying the motif of a house (hall) exposed to storms dominates the whole second part of the poem and the prerequisites for its development are already present in the first, in *Juliana* it appears only once, in the saint's exhortatory speech to her fellow citizens preceding her execution. The Old English text has taken it over from the Latin source which has Juliana remind her audience of Jesus' words in the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 7:24-25), bidding them to "[b]uild [their] houses on firm rock, so [they] will not be shattered by the coming fierce winds" (III.20). If we compare the two addresses in their entirety, we will find interesting alterations in the vernacular adaptation. The reference to the Parable of two houses is expanded to include an oblique allusion to Christ as the cornerstone. At the same time, the other

[335] Hume 1974, 68.

addition which identifies the storms threatening the house with sinful impulses represents a reinterpretation of the analogy as found both in the Bible and the Latin *Life*, where the "winds" stand for an ultimate test, whether envisaged as the collective or the individual judgment; through this shift, the image comes closer to that of the fortress of soul attacked by missiles of sin dispatched by the devil, used earlier in the poem (likewise independently of the exemplar, cf. p. 155 of the present study):

> · *Forþon ic leof weorud   læran wille*
> *æfremmende   þæt ge eower hus*
> *gefæstnige   þy læs hit ferblædum*
> *windas toweorpan   weal sceal þy trumra*
> *strong wiþstondan   storma scurum*
> *leahtra gehygdum   ge mid lufan sibbe*
> *leohte geleafan   to þam lifgendan*
> *stane stiðhydge   staþol fæstniað*
> *soðe treowe*

<div align="right">(Jul 647-654)</div>

> ["Therefore I want to advise you,
> beloved, pious company, that you
> secure your house, lest by a sudden blast
> the winds destroy it. The strong wall
> must withstand the more firmly storms' blows,
> sinful thoughts. Fasten the foundation
> resolutely to the living stone
> with love of peace, with bright faith
> and true belief."]

This aspect is also indirectly stressed by the introduction in the vernacular adaptation of another reference to the vigilance of the soul against enemy assaults as the very last item in that part of the speech concerned with the spiritual well-being of the audience (662-665). The remaining modifications are not strictly relevant to this analysis and I will list them only briefly: the Old English poem dispenses with the enumeration of recommended specific ways of solicitating God's mercy and appends, at the beginning of the address, a passage in His praise.

Now the question should be considered of how the development of the biblical motif in *Juliana* relates to the interpretation of *The Wanderer* and, secondarily, how it may be affected by the hostile or at least dismissive attitude towards the "heroic" world which the former text displays. Despite the different pedigree of the image of the "dwelling attacked by storm" in the two texts, the way in which it evolves in *Juliana* from the more "accurate" version (i.e. dependent on the source) to the one that opposes *"weal"* to *"storma scuras"* produces a resonance with the virtually identical pair that dominates the second part of *The Wanderer*. The immediate effect of this confrontation is a sharp contrast. When working with the image-complex, *Juliana* stresses the protective function of the *"weal"*; it acknowledges the possibility of its failure but insists that it may be prevented by securing the foundation (*"to þam lifgendan // stane stiðhydge / staþol fæstniað"*, employing terms referring to construction) and maintaining a constant guard (*"wærlic me þinceð / þæt ge wæccende // wið hettendra hildewoman / wearde healden"* ["It seems prudent to me that you should keep watch, alert against the enemy onrush"], invoking a military context). The second part of *The Wanderer* observes everywhere the opposite development – the loss of this essential protective function. The preceding association of the "positive" version of the motif with the theme of spiritual fortitude provides a contrasting background against which that section of *The Wanderer* can be read and which *from the start* clearly brings out the systemic nature of that failure – the defensive walls that men build must prove ineffectual simply because they are of this world. The saint's appeal on her audience to build a spiritual fastness on the firm foundations of their relation to God thus also foreshadows the resolution of the wanderer's meditations on the fragility of human order: only that protection (or shelter) lasts secure which God offers to those who rely unflinchingly on His mercy.

At the same time, the denouncing of "heroic" values in *Juliana* effectively neutralizes the initial persistent attachment for the *comitatus* world that the protagonist displays in *The Wanderer*, marking it as misguided. As has already been suggested,[336] the influence of this intertextual link on the reading of the latter poem tends to weaken the dynamics of the account of the speaker's spiritual "conversion", making *The Wanderer*, in a sense, a less effective poem. On the other hand, it effaces the disconcerting impression, noted by some scholars,[337] that the fact that the speaker finally embraces the comfort of a hope in an eternal home in heaven is due more to his inability to realize his desire in this world than to any internalized rejection of worldly pleasures; in this way, the link enhances the "political correctness" of the text.

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[336] Cf. p. 243 of this chapter.
[337] So Hume 1974, 72-73.

7. FURTHER SAMPLES

So far the study of intertextual links detectable in the Exeter Book has strictly respected the boundaries drawn by Conner in his theory of the original tripartite structure of the codex. The choice of illustrative samples of the proposed linking types – the echo (based on simple repetition or variation, in two or more texts, of a motif sufficiently distinguished by its prominence within those texts); the immediate linking (referring to affinities between otherwise apparently unrelated neighbouring poems, established through shared imagery and/or formal and structural parallels, which modify the reading of one of the items in such a pair); and, finally, the relations based on the development or variation of one of the central images of Old English poetic tradition – has been limited to those that could be found within the respective booklets.

Yet, if it were not for the combined force of Conner's palaeographical and statistical arguments in favour of that division and the re-adjustment of the sequence of texts according to the order in which they appear to have been recorded (*Azarias* to *Partridge*, *Soul and Body II* to *Riddle 95*, then the Christ and Guthlac poems), I would be inclined, if I relied solely on the evidence afforded by the presence of intertextual links within the codex, to support the more conservative notion that what we now know under the name of Exeter Book is essentially the original form of the collection. Resonances of all the types identified above emerge between poems from different booklets, with the obvious exception of immediate linking that would connect the texts located on either side of the "seams" presumed by Conner, remaining beyond the possibility of reconstruction due to the loss of a gathering in each of these places. Some of the instances that could be used to exemplify the individual linking variants might even make a better case than those that presented

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themselves within the limits of Conner's units. Despite all this, I do find his conclusions convincing; and I will try, towards the end of the present chapter, to outline the possible ways of reconciling the two types of evidence. I can only regret that the following overview of links traceable in the combined collection may not, for reasons of space, supply a thorough analysis of each such item, allowing for comparison with the previously treated instances.

The category of "echo" should certainly include the correspondences between the lists of God's gifts to mankind in *Christ II* and the eponymous poem. One parallel for the latter text, sharing its catalogue form and the theme of God providing for the well-being of mankind, has already been located within Conner's second booklet – the fragmentary *Azarias*.[338] It has to be noted that the affinities with *Christ II* are much more remarkable. Both lists are concerned with enumerating the specific skills with which God furnishes individual people, using a virtually identical form: a sequence of cameos introduced by an initial *"sum"* – "(some)one". In both poems, the series begins with a construction that poses the imaginary person as the recipient of the gift (Christ II 664 – *"Sumum wordlaþe / wise sendeð"* ["To one He sends wise speech"]; Gifts 30 – *"<sumum>[339] her ofer eorþan æhta onlihð"* ["To one He lends riches here on earth"]), the remaining items (with a single exception in *Christ II*) using the active construction *"sum mæg"* – preferred by *Christ II* – or *"sum bið"* ["one can... / one is..."].[340] Even more importantly, perhaps – as such details of structuring may be dictated by the generic form of the list (which, strictly

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[338] See pp. 142-143 in chapter 3 of the present section (*Thematic and formal links*).

[339] The manuscript has the nominative *"sum"*, perhaps on analogy with the rest of the list where that is the form exclusively used; the syntax, however, requires the emendation.

[340] A slight difference may be perceived in the length of the respective units, which is much less varied in *Christ II* (ranging from a single line, enjambed, to the maximum of four and a half lines) while *The Gifts of Men* alternate more detailed descriptions, comparable to those found in the former text, with brief ennumerative statements not extending the space of a half-line.

speaking, makes them none the less conspicuous in terms of their linking potential) – both catalogues agree in naming among the special abilities the gift of speech and song, harping, knowledge of laws, writing, martial skills, seafaring and metalwork. The correspondences do not, as a rule, extend to the level of similar wording, though such instances do occur, most probably as a result of the reliance, in both cases, on formulaic diction; neither should the conceptual coincidences in the description of the various crafts be overestimated (e.g. the association of metalwork with the production of weapons). Yet it should be noted that the shared items belong among the more fully elaborated ones in *The Gifts of Men*. Another feature which the two poems have in common is the explanation of God's purpose in endowing each person with his or her special talent. In *The Gifts of Men* it is first given in the introductory paragraph: no-one is left empty-handed, lest s/he be driven to despair, and no-one can enjoy all the gifts so that pride would not prompt him/her to forget about moderation and despise others. *Christ II* only presents the second part of that statement, in a slightly modified form, as an appendix to the list; significantly, so does the other poem, where the appendix develops into a brief "summary" of the preceding text, repeating the initial argument and introducing a condensed version of the survey of various qualities in which a person can excel before concluding with a word in praise of the great Dispenser. This time, the verbal and conceptual correspondences appear more prominent: Christ II 68-685 declares that "*Nyle he ængum anum / ealle gesyllan // gæstes snyttru / þy læs him gielp sceþþe // þurh his anes cræft / ofer oþre forð :7*" ["He does not wish to give to anyone all wisdom of spirit, lest pride destroy him because of his skill surpassing others"], and Gifts 97-103, though being more verbose, more or less repeat the statement:

> *nis nu ofer eorþan   ænig monna*
> *mode þæs cræftig   ne þæs mægeneacen*

þæt hi æfre anum   ealle weorþen
gegearwade   <u>þy læs him gilp sceððe</u>
oþþe fore þære mærþe   mod astige
gif he hafaþ <u>ana</u>   <u>ofer ealle men</u>
wlite ond wisdom   ond weorca blæd

["On the earth there is no man
so clever of thought or so great in power
that [the skills] would ever be prepared
for one person only, lest pride destroy him
or his mind become haughty because of that glory
if he exceeds all other men
in appearance and wisdom and success in his doings."]

What is perhaps the most interesting aspect of this potential link is the fact that *Christ II* departs significantly from its source in the passage in question. This section of the text follows quite closely Gregory the Great's *Homilia XXIX* from *Homiliae XL in Evangelia*,[341] which offers a typological reading of several Old Testament passages as referring to Christ's ascension. Cynewulf's adaptation duly reproduces the exposition of Job 28:7, Hab. 3:11 and Cant. 2:8, in each case identifying the biblical source by name or at least by an allusion to "the prophet". However, the passage from Gregory where he explains Ps. 68:18 ("Ascending on high, he led captivity captive; He gave gifts to men"[342]) is completely reworked: the biblical text is left unmentioned and Gregory's interpretation of the verse as prefiguring the gifts of the Holy Spirit – which he enumerates according to 1 Cor. 12:8-11[343] – is substituted for by the list of distinctly secular skills and occupations described above. The primary purpose of Gregory's text

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[341] Allen and Calder 1976, 78-81.

[342] In contrast to the previous instance when I quoted the verse I now use the wording of the Authorized Version which reproduces the sense in which it was interpreted by Gregory.

[343] "For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; to another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit; to another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another divers kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues: But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will."

also accounts for his indifference to the theme of the moral dimension of inequality among individuals, although the Letter subsequently treats the subject through analogy with the function and status of individual limbs and organs in the human body[344] – and that lesson is, at least partially, preserved in the explanation for the diversity of skills which God distributed among mankind that is given in the respective passage of *Christ II* as well as in *The Gifts of Men*. It would be pointless to speculate about the history of this modification and the resulting correspondence between the two Exeter Book poems, but I considered it necessary to mention the fact to do full justice to the complexity of the potential link and also to assemble all the data relevant for any future study of the problem.

A similar situation arises in the case of another motif-repetition, this time linking *Christ II* and *Juliana*. Having concluded a passage describing the respective stages of Christ's mission in this world as a series of "leaps" prefigured in Cant. 2:8 ("Behold, He comes leaping upon the mountains and springing across the hills") with an appeal on men to imitate Christ and by mental "leaps" leave behind worldly concerns, the text proceeds to reproduce the next step in Gregory's argument – the injunction "Let us flee from earthly desires". This simple proclamation is transformed into a lengthy discourse (comprising lines 756-782a) on the theme of spiritual battle against temptation, introduced by the variation *"idle lustas"* ["vain desires"] – *"synwunde"* ["wounds of sin"] in the opening sentence. The paragraph devoted to that subject develops the motif of sinful thoughts as the "missiles of the devil" (*"earhfaru"* – "flight of arrows", 762; *"brægdboga"* – "bow of deceit" and *"biter stræl"* –"bitter dart", both 765; *"færscyte"* – "sudden shot", 766; *"deofla strælas"* – "devils' darts", 779; *"gromra garfaru"* – "the enemies' dart-shot", 781) which have to be prevented by constant

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[344] 1 Cor. 12:12-31.

vigilance and countered by prayer as the best and most effective defence. Although the active role in the combat is reserved for God or the guardian angels, who only can protect ("*gescildan*", 761, 775, 781) the endangered soul, in other respects the analogy appears to correspond in its main constitutive elements to that employed in the demon's account of his strategy in tempting Christians as presented in *Juliana* 382-409a, likewise independently of the Latin exemplar. There, too, the missiles are identified with sinful impulses –

> *... ic ærest him*
> *þurh eargfare   in onsende*
> *in breostsefan   bitre geþoncas*
> *þurh mislice   modes willan*
> *þæt him sylfum   selle þynceð*
> *leahtras to fremman   ofer lof godes*
> *lices lustas*

<div align="right">(Jul 403b-409a)</div>

> ["... first I send
> through a flight of arrows
> bitter thoughts into his breast
> through the various desires of his mind,
> so that it seems to him better
> to accomplish sins, the lusts of the flesh,
> than God's praise"],

and determined defence with perseverance in prayer ("*he beald in gebede bidsteal gifeð*" – "he bravely keeps his stand in prayer", l. 388). The fact that both texts have an acronymic runic signature inserted into their closing paragraphs and thus can be ascribed, with a reasonable degree of certitude, to a single author – the poet Cynewulf, permits us to see this correspondence as stemming from a certain presumed consistency of the author's outlook and preferred imagery; however, that argument can be applied only in relation to the analysis of Cynewulf's *oeuvre*; with regard to the nature of the link between the respective passages within the Exeter Book it appears much less relevant.

An instance of a different, more complex, type of echo can be perceived in the relationship of *The Seafarer* to the final paragraph of *Christ II* (850-863) which portrays human presence in this world in terms of analogy with a dangerous voyage over rough and disturbed sea, with heaven as the safe port on the other side, opened by Christ's ascension which also gave the crew the bearings wherewith to reach it. Within the finished collection, this passage – which elaborates on a brief statement in Gregory's *Homily 29* – provides the interpretative context for *The Seafarer* that G. V. Smithers sought and recognized in the homiletic writings of the period:[345] once the Exeter Book had existed more or less in its present form, the potential reader need not have even gone so far for the key that immediately identified the allegorical potential of that poem. The comparison also sets off with special clarity the aspects in which *The Seafarer* differs from this common use of the image of the sea which, as an insecure space *par excellence*, can fittingly translate the vicissitudes of man's life: it is the land and within that, the city with its false security that stand for this world, while the precarious sea-voyage represents the refusal of such illusionary safety and the unconditional acceptance of God's unfathomable will. *The Seafarer* thus offers a radical re-interpretation of the traditional allegory employed in *Christ II* (and, it has to be added, of the more common concept of God) and the link between the two poems can then be classified as the type of echo that functions on the principle of variation.

A simple contrast arises between the complex interplay of the mixed invocation of Christ as the cornerstone (*"weallstan"*) and the master builder who only can reconstruct (*"gebete"*) the decayed (*"gebrosnad"*) hall of mankind in the now first Advent lyric in *Christ I* and the description of the desolate remnants of the once-glorious city in *The Ruin* which echoes

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[345] See Smithers 1957, 1959, 150, 1-5.

the key words listed above.[346] I believe that the confrontation of the two texts may produce an effect similar to that described above in relation to the use of the image of "dwelling attacked by tempest" in *Juliana* and in *The Wanderer*, though operative on a different basis: that is, to juxtapose a spiritual and material significance of a single image and, by comparison with the work of the divine architect to underpin the futility and instability of human accomplishment. Such a gesture would effectively downplay the tone of admiration that may be perceived in the poem when read on its own. If we adopt the hypothesis that the imaginative reconstruction of the fall of the city in *The Ruin* contains hints at the idol-worship of its inhabitants (depending on the reading of the terms *"wigsteal"* – "rampart/altar" and *"hergas"* – "armies/pagan temples or idols"[347]), we might also see dramatic irony in a possible connection of the *"waldend wyrhtan"* who constructed the splendid mansions (Ruin 7a) with the *"wyrhtan"* who refused Christ – the cornerstone (Christ 2). Nevertheless, considering the physical distance that separates the texts in question – much greater that in the previously mentioned cases – and also the fact that when the collection was complete, the Advent lyric certainly did not occupy such a prominent position as it does now, when it opens the codex, and consequently would be proportionately less likely to attract the reader's attention, I remain rather sceptical of the active functioning of the link in either the editing or the reception of Exeter Book.

The list of echoes that emerge within the completed manuscript could go on, although it would hardly produce a sample as conspicuous as, for

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[346] William C. Johnson, Jr. notes the repetitions in "*The Ruin* as Body-City Riddle". *PQ*, 59 (1980), 406-407. I do not share his conviction that both poems deliberately use terms with double architectonic/anatomic connotations to construct a parallel between human body and hall/city, a strategy that is clearly perceptible in *Christ I*; neither I think it possible to interpret *The Ruin* as obliquely developing the theme treated in the first Advent lyric.

347 I examined the problem in depth in Znojemská 1998(b) , 29-30.

example, the affinity between Christ II 664-685 and *The Gifts of Men* treated above; and as the purpose of the present chapter is an illustration of principle, not an enumeration of its realizations, I will now proceed to look at instances of the type of linking that arises when two or more poems agree in their operation with one of the central images of the native poetic tradition.

When I dealt with Patrick W. Conner's description of the original divisions of the Exeter Book according to their ideological and literary-historical affiliation in the first chapter of the present part of this study[348] I also indicated several thematic correspondences between *Christ II* and *Christ III* on the one hand and *The Phoenix* on the other: these include the attention given to the account of the exile of the first pair, the extensive depiction of the conflagration that will destroy the world in the Second Coming (with a special stress on the destruction of amassed treasures) and the portrayal of Christ as the leader of an exemplary *comitatus* of saints and angels. Adjusting the focus, I would now like to examine the vision of heaven which the two poems construct: an aspect intimately connected with that last theme. In both texts the background image that emerges from individual terms employed for the description of heaven is that of a kingly hall where a retinue assembles around the gift-throne of the ruler. In the former poem this setting is evoked in the scene of Christ's triumphant return to heaven after the Harrowing of Hell when the faithful (*"þegnas"* – "retainers", l. 553) gather to feast (*"symbel"*, l. 550) as Christ – characterized as *"folca feorhgiefan · / frætwum ealles waldend // middangeardes ond mægenþrymmes"* ("people's life-giver, the ruler over treasures of all the earth and heaven", 556-557) – ascends the *"heahsetl"* ("throne", l. 555), later identified as *"gæsta giefstol"* ("the gift-seat of souls", l. 572). In *The Phoenix*, the chosen righteous, gathered after Doomsday and presided over by

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[348] Cf. pp. 133-136.

Christ seated on a *"heahseld"* (= *"heahsetl"*, which is the term used some hundred verses earlier), are engaged in an activity more commonly associated with the blessed souls in heaven: singing, in a mighty choir, the praises of God – an element which may perhaps detract from the traditional connotations of the hall-image, diminishing the scene's link with the *comitatus* culture. In the like manner, the term *"sibgedryht"* (l. 618; *"sibb"* – "peace / friendship / (blood)relationship"; *"gedryht"* – "retinue, company"), applied to the company of saints, may represent a certain re-orientation of the semantics of the simplex *"gedryht"*, even though the basic complementary expressions relating to the hierarchical and functional structure of the *comitatus* community – *"brego"* ("protector", l. 620) and *"gedryht"* ("retinue", l. 615) – are preserved.

So far it would then appear that in *Christ II* the interspersed allusions do combine to produce the established hall-image, while *The Phoenix* tends to dilute it through a confrontation with images belonging to a different – religious – tradition. At one point, however, we witness its rather surprising restoration when the saints' halos are replaced by real *"beagas"* ("rings/jewels") that the king distributes among his faithful: [349]

> *þær se beorhta beag   brogden wundrum*
> *eorcnanstanum   eadigra gehwam*
> *hlifað ofer heafde   heafelan lixað*
> *þrymme biþeahte   ðeodnes cynegold*
> *soðfæstra gehwone   sellic glengeð*
> *leohte in life [...]*
> *hy in wlite wuniað   wuldre bitolden*
> *fægrum frætwum   mid fæder engla*
>
> (Phoen 602-610)

["There the bright ring, wondrously interwoven
with precious stones, towers over the head
of each of the blessed; their heads shine,
covered with glory; the regal gold of the Lord

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[349] Or identified with them, considering the way in which the passage alternately uses material and abstract terms.

adorns well all the righteous,
radiant in life [...]
they dwell in splendour, clothed in brigthness,
beautiful treasures, with the Father of angels."]

This scene, together with the following passage describing the life of the blessed in heaven, could be qualified as a certain digression from the primary theme of this part of *The Phoenix* – the allegorical interpretation of individual aspects of the bird's life-course. In the paragraphs directly preceding it, the analogies become over-complex, since the text tries to find a parallel for too many facts mentioned in the initial part based on Lactantius. It identifies the virtuous deeds of the righteous with the plants and spices of the phoenix's nest/funeral pyre from which the bird is reborn; their renewed flesh with the remains of its burnt old body which the phoenix bears to its homeland; and, by a strange shift, it would seem, the company of the blessed with the retinue of birds accompanying the unique phoenix – Christ.

An impulse for the introduction of the verses which represent the saints crowned with jewels may be found in the Latin text that supplied the Old English poem with the firstly mentioned analogy, paragraph 80 of Ambrose's *Hexameron*[350] which advises Christians to build a "phoenix's nest" of faith and virtues against the event of their death, so that they may be reborn in heaven. They are urged to be ready for their dying hour, following the example of St Paul, whose statement on the subject in 2 Tim. 4:7-8 is then cited. Ambrose only reproduces its first part, directly concerning St Paul: "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness". The Old English text appears to draw inspiration from the remaining part, which opens the prospect for all good Christians: "...which

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[350] Identified as one of the direct sources for the Old English poem and reproduced in Allen and Calder 1976, 118-119.

the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day – and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing."[351]

At the same time, the comparison of the passage from *The Phoenix* with the biblical text and its interpretation in Ambrose suggests that the image of the "gift of a crown" relates in each case to a different conceptual context. The term used in the original – *"στέφανος"* – signifies, apart from a crown, also a wreath and, metonymically, a prize;[352] and when we take into account the expression "I have finished the race" and the reference to God as judge (which in this case need not allude exclusively to the expected Doomsday), we may reconstruct the analogy as that of a contest where the winner is rewarded with a visible mark of his victory, be it a crown or a laurel wreath – what matters is the function, not the form of the object. Ambrose seems to understand this when he adds, regarding St Paul, "Like the good phoenix he entered his nest and filled it with the excellent fragrance of martyrdom", thus interpreting the victory in a contest as a special demonstration of faith, despite the fact that St Paul in the end names no specific preconditions for earning the "crown of righteousness" except faith pure and simple.[353] The passage from *The Phoenix* completely disregards this original context, dispensing with the established association of the *στέφανος* with martyrdom (comparable to a

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[351] In contrast to the previously established usage, I quote this biblical passage according to New International Version, as it brings out the underlying analogy slightly more clearly than the Authorised Version.

[352] This is the reason why the new Czech ecumenic version translates the word as "laurel".

[353] That the association was a common one is attested by mosaics in several 5th and 6th century churches in Ravenna, which show the martyr saints bearing bejewelled circlets in their hands, normally in the shape of laurel wreaths (San Apollinare Nuovo, the Arian baptistery) but sometimes resembling rather crowns set with precious stones (so-called Orthodox baptistery). The two representations most relevant for the discussion of the texts in question are the depiction of St Vitalis receiving a martyr's crown from the hand of Christ sitting in majesty in the apsis of San Vitale, an image that closely corresponds to the scene evoked in 2 Tim. 4:7-8, and the portrait of St Ursus from the apsis of San Apollinare in Classe, where the gem-adorned golden coronet replaces the more usual halo as it "hovers" over the saint's head, suspended from a rail that holds the ornamental curtains – which is a visual image similar to that developed in the Old English poem.

similar but much later use of the palm branch – the "palm of victory"– for identifying, in paintings or sculptures, the saints who died for their faith and distinguishing them from those whose sanctity was based on other qualities or achievements). If Ambrose is solely interested in the first part of St Paul's statement, the Old English text focuses exclusively on its final portion; the στέφανος as a prize awarded by a judge who presides over the race is replaced by *"beag"* as a manifestation of the lord's acknowledgment of the loyalty of his follower, a step that reinforces those aspects in the poem's portrayal of heaven that draw on the familiar hall-image. The reference to *"giefstol"* in *Christ II* seems to be paralleled in *The Phoenix* by an allusion to the treasure-giving ritual implicit in the phrase *"þeodnes cynegold"* ("lord's regal gold", l. 605). Despite the differences in intensity of the association, both texts agree in depicting the life of saints in heaven in terms invoking the social relations and transactions of the *comitatus* culture, with heaven itself thus assuming the characteristics of its ideal space – the hall.

One other link of this type has already been touched upon in the first chapter of part I of this study and, as the relevant passages have been discussed there in detail,[354] I will only recapitulate it briefly at this point. The concept of tempest as a model representative of the forces of the dangerous space outside the human settlement, expressly perceived as hostile to men and their efforts at appropriating the world which find their metonymic expressions in the images of the hall and the city, is shared by *The Wanderer*[355] and the "storm" riddles opening the third booklet (Rid 1, l. 5b-6a and Rid 3, l. 8b providing the central statement in this respect), with allusions to this scheme appearing throughout the Exeter Book (the description of the blessed plain in *The Phoenix*, the initial part of *The*

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[354] Cf. pages 34-36.
[355] As that poem has been analysed in the immediately preceding chapter, I deem it unnecessary to quote the respective passages again here.

Seafarer). The dichotomy is also employed, among other, more "orthodox", motives, in the account of the final destruction of the world in *Christ III* (lines 972-991). In all the texts that operate with the motif in a more extensive manner (*The Wanderer*, *Christ III*, the riddles), the tempest is also staged as a force that has the power to obliterate boundaries – between the inside/outside world (also envisaged in terms of culture/nature or order/chaos, dissolving the former in the latter) or between the land and the sea (as two opposed territories which, strictly speaking, may be seen as different realizations of the more abstract principles referred to above, cf. the discussion of *The Seafarer* and *The Whale* on pp. 156-159).

As the survey of the various links that emerge within the finished collection has shown, many of the strands of motivic correspondences that run throughout the Exeter Book have their beginning in one of the major religious texts of the first booklet, most frequently in the Christ poems (e.g. the motif of sea-journey developing from *Christ II* through *The Seafarer* to *The Whale*, the figure of the "missiles of the devil" used in *Christ II*, *Juliana* and *Vainglory*, the theme of skills distributed by God appearing in *Christ II*, *The Gifts of Men* and *The Fortunes of Men*, etc.). The readiest explanation for this fact, consonant also with the hypothesis of a gradual growth of the collection advanced in the second chapter of this part of my study[356] (with newly arrived or selected poems being appended to the existing portion of the manuscript on the basis of their affinity with a text or texts included there), would be to presume that they formed the initial core of the "compilation in progress" and that the rest of the poems followed the clues which these texts contained. This interpretation is, however, incompatible with the palaeographical and codicological evidence assembled by Conner, which suggests that they were indeed the very last contributions to the collection. Whether they did or did not exist

[356] "Mapping the field".

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for some time as a separate unit it is impossible to determine due to the loss of leaves at both the beginning and the end of this portion of the manuscript, which alone could provide that information according to the intensity of soiling which they would display; and even that might not prove a dependable criterion if, for example, the presumed booklet had been bound in a hard cover. If we are to reconcile Conner's findings with the indications afforded by the presence of intertextual links in the collection, we must assume a greater degree of continuity in the editing of the Exeter Book than he proposes when he argues for the existence of three wholly independent booklets only subsequently bound into the present codex. After all, what has been said about his first unit also holds for the third; the truth is that there is no way to find out which of the missing leaves or gatherings were lost before and which after the collection achieved its final form. Thus the only "hard fact" that can be used for speculations about the original make-up of the Exeter Book is the darker tone of the mutilated first page of the extant text of *Azarias* and of that section of the following sheet which was left exposed as a consequence of that damage, suggesting that this specific loss would have occurred before the final binding of the manuscript and that the page in question would have served, for an unspecified period of time, as the outer, most vulnerable leaf of a manuscript. This would indicate, and the palaeographical data support that conclusion, that *Azarias* indeed was the original starting point of the compilation and that Conner's theory concerning the re-adjustment of the order of texts is correct. However, no solid evidence exists for the presumption that the second and third booklets were intended as separate units, as Conner would have it: it is equally possible that the latter was designed to complement the former. It may be objected that its special focus on riddles designates it as an independent collection with a clear purpose; yet its content remains mixed and a number of the texts included there can be seen as reiterating themes

and motives which have already appeared within the second booklet – the group of elegies, though a modern invention, may serve as an example. Even the initial items in the first cluster of riddles do not strike a note yet unheard; as argued above, a significant motivic link emerges between them and *The Wanderer*. The paradox of the first booklet may be solved, with due respect for all types of evidence relevant for the determining of its position in relation to the rest of the Exeter Book, by viewing it as the real core of the final collection – but not as its starting point: in other words, as a supplement that, by being prefixed to the existing manuscript, may function as the key to which the rest appears attuned. Such a step would only represent a "reverse" application of the principle of linear addition, the editing method that may perhaps best account for the ostensible absence of a clearly identifiable structure in the Exeter Book.

8. THE EXETER BOOK: AN OPEN STRUCTURE

THE sequence of texts in the Exeter Book as we have it is far too random, showing apparent inconsequentiality in the distribution of poems related on both thematic and generic basis, to admit of the existence of a premeditated design governing the composition of the collection. At the same time, it is equally difficult to accept the concept of a codex formed by a mindless heaping of vernacular poems with the aim to preserve the precious legacy of native tradition, especially in an environment known to prefer the authority of Latin literary culture mediating biblical, patristic and Classical tradition. The system of compilation consisting in more or less continuous tagging on of individual poems based on the grounds of their relatedness to the previously copied material allows for some element of chance (immediate availability of texts) as well as deliberate editorial choice (selection and, to a limited extent, also the mutual positioning of texts) and can be thus perceived as a viable compromise between the options outlined above. The greater portion of the present part of my study has been devoted to identifying and describing possibilities of linking other than the readily visible ones, thematic and generic, and to examining the potential of those links in integrating into the mainstream of the codex the poems that by themselves clearly represent a different, even contrary, value-system.

Now it remains to discuss the last aspects of the problem: how does the application of this loose organizing principle influence the reading of the collection as a whole? To answer this question, I have to start with an apparently trivial, tautological proposition: the intertextual links establish mutual relations between poems. The implications of this fact, however, are rather more intriguing. In effect, what appears at first sight as a series of separate tunes, each in a different key, is thus transformed into a

polyphony of voices, the resulting sound emerging from their interaction. As with consonance in chords based on different intervals, a variety of reading strategies is produced by this juxtaposition of individual texts: a "bracketing" of otherwise "inconvenient" statements, a modifying commentary, an illustration etc. In a number of cases, this results in a noticeable weakening of the authority or attractivity of the value-system bound with secular aristocratic culture, which finds its expression in several poems included in the collection. The perspective of the more openly religious texts is thereby established as the leading voice of the whole composition. In one respect, however, the musical analogy proves misleading: we certainly cannot identify one major theme that would be varied and reiterated throughout the Exeter Book; the truth is that the plurality of voices simply cannot be reduced to a single coherent argument.

A certain parallel to this type of organization, albeit on the lower level of an individual poem, may be found in the text that, precisely for the reason of the apparently random manner in which it introduces comments on widely differing themes, remains in many ways a mystery for the modern reader – *Maxims I*. I do not presume to present here a consistent interpretation of the text; the space required for this task would not be proportionate to the final outcome, since I, too, am at a loss what to make of many of the unexpected associations of themes ostensibly totally unrelated. However, I will illustrate my point by listing some of the more readily intelligible combinations. The juxtaposition of the statements *"beam sceal on eorðan // leafum liþan / leomu gnornian"* ("A tree must lose leaves on the earth, lament its limbs", 25b-26) and *"fus sceal feran / fæge sweltan // ond dogra gehwam / ymb gedal sacan // middangeardes"* ("One who is ready must go, a doomed man must die, each day rage against his parting from this world", 27-29a) can best be resolved as an implicit analogy and the same interpretation seems to fit the passage which starts with an

injunction to control the impulses of one's mind, proceeds to claim that a storm often disturbs the ocean, the rising waves testing the firmness of the land, and concludes by likening the sea when still to agreement among men (50-58a). In this case the relationship is slightly more complex: there is a double analogy and, moreover, a logical link is implied between the self-restraint of an individual and the harmonious functioning of a wider community. These instances belong among the juxtapositions that can be readily interpreted. With others, the precise nature of the emerging association is more difficult to determine. In the concluding passage of the poem, we may perceive a hint at a causal connection between the story of the first murder that brought violence into the world (drawing on biblical tradition) and the following comment on the readiness of weapons (which could be understood, within the context of the native poetic tradition, as a "positive" instruction); and in its light we may be prompted to read the last sentence – *"ond a þæs heanan hyge hord unginnost"* ("the mean spirit/poor mind gets the smallest treasure", l. 204) – in a figurative way, as a challenge for the reader to apply his/her wit and gather as much wisdom as possible from the preceding verses and the poem as a whole. The presence of spiritual advice among verses concerned with more practical aspects of life may open the possibility that at least some of the latter should also be applied to the spiritual sphere.

EXETER BOOK: THE DIALOGUE

The dialogic structure in the context of Old English poetry

THE final paragraph of the previous chapter concluded the foregoing analysis by arguing that the intertextual links detectable in the Exeter Book establish a polyphonic structure based on juxtaposition of individual texts or statements. Such a type of interconnection, however, does not define the semantics of the relation between the statements. The most serious objection against the hypothesis that postulates it as the sole organizing principle of the collection is precisely the openness of the system: nothing guarantees that the mutual relations between texts will be interpreted uniformly. Can it be assumed that the monks who produced the codex would depend on such unreliable means of integrating poems that must have been perceived as disconcerting with respect to the views prevailing in that environment and especially at that period? The means which this culture commonly used for the integration or justification of problematic texts, problematic knowledge, was commentary. It would expressly declare the appropriate way of reading for such texts and their status. When Ælfric refers to Germanic myths in his homily *De falsis diis*, they are interpreted in the euhemeric tradition and, moreover, related to their Classical "counterparts"; and so their inferior value as source of valid information (in Ælfric's eyes) is clearly indicated.[357] In a different time and different place, but in a similar situation, Snorri Sturluson chose a parallel strategy when he "neutralized" the mythological tales of *Gylfaginning* by a narrative frame in which they were connected first with the widely popular "matter of Troy" and then placed within the larger context of scriptural history.[358] But the technique of commentary, however succesful and sanctified by the example of literary authorities, was not used in the

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[357] Pope 1968, p. 676-712.
[358] *Snorri Sturluson. Edda.* Anthony Faulkes, trans. London: Everyman, 1987.

Exeter Book, unless we wish to presuppose an explanatory preface to the whole collection, destroyed together with the beginning of *Christ I* when the codex lost its binding and several initial pages as well. This possibility can neither be discounted nor confirmed, but in the absence of clear evidence in this matter it should not be relied on.

However, the analyses of Fred C. Robinson, Gillian R. Overing and Carol Braun Pasternack summarized in the introductory chapter of this study, whether focused on specific texts or on the general characteristics of Old English poetry, unanimously point to the fact that it is precisely this technique of simple juxtaposition of individual elements that functions as the prevalent compositional principle in the poetry, operative on virtually all levels of the text: lexis (represented by the central position of the compound in the poetic vocabulary[359]), syntax and style (variation, i.e. apposition, being the main stylistic device of Old English poetic language[360]) and, finally, the management of larger textual units (Pasternack's "movements"). The recipients of Old English poetry must have been accustomed to resolving such open structures. And as features of Old English poetic language inform even the prosaic works in the vernacular of authors whose writings were significantly influenced by their Latin learning (Ælfric or Wulfstan, both important representatives of

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[359] Robinson comments on the frequent ambiguity of meaning arising from the unstated syntactical relationship of the constituents, as well as on instances when a compound can actually be construed as a condensed variation (= apposition), as its elements have the same referent and differ from each other in meaning only insofar as they represent diverse aspects of the same phenomenon; e.g. *"freawine"* = "lord-friend", where both simplices can be used to refer to a lord, or *"wældeað"* = "slaughter-death". Cf. Robinson 1985, 14-17.

[360] The same effect of semantic ambiguity, or, more precisely, an indeterminacy of sense, though based on a different principle, is produced by the relatively frequent use of *apo koinou*, clauses or clause elements that can be construed in two ways at once: with what precedes and with what follows. Robinson quotes Mitchell, Bruce. "The Dangers of Disguise: Old English Texts in Modern Punctuation". *RES*, n.s. 31 (1980), 385-413. The construction is analysed and its use documented in detail in Mitchell, Bruce. *Old English Syntax*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985, 903-913. Further discussion of the phenomenon may be found in Mitchell, Bruce. "'Apo Koinou' in Old English Poetry?". *NM*, 100 (1999), 477-497.

the monastic revival), it seems reasonable to suppose that the technique could be taken yet one level further and applied as the ordering principle for a collection of poetry.[361]

The Exeter Book: positions in the dialogue

Of the three theoretical formulations of the use of juxtaposition as a way of suggesting a relationship between items thus posited yet simultaneously avoiding its semantic specification, I prefer Pasternack's concept of "polyphony" or "dialogue", as it manages to do without the almost unbounded extension of the meaning and application of an originally very specific term, a quality that characterizes both Robinson's "apposition" and Overing's "metonymy". Though I respect the strategy, I find it difficult to dissociate completely from the limitations present in the syntactical construction and the rhetorical figure: in the former case, the objective that the apposed statements should be interrelated by virtue of having a common referent, in the latter, the rather restricted scale of relationships on which the figure is based. In this respect, "dialogue" appears as a conveniently neutral term that may describe a freer range of formal and semantic relations.[362]

If I read the Exeter Book as a dialogic structure arising from the interaction of poems connected by intertextual links, is it possible to identify some "basic positions" in this dialogue? Can there be found any

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[361] One might even venture to speculate that such an organization, precisely as it was just an extension of the poetic technique, could have been perceived as appropriate for a document of this kind. The comparison of manuscripts produced in the period of the monastic reform shows that there existed a tendency to establish different norms for presenting Latin ("canonical") and vernacular ("supplementary") texts, such as the preference for Caroline minuscule in the former and retention of the older insular script for the latter. It is therefore possible that a model for the arrangement of texts in a manuscript suggested by the way in which the poetry itself was composed might have been perhaps but another aspect of the same phenomenon, further distinguishing a document of a "secondary" status. But this is a conjecture that is not really relevant for the argument of my study and I do not wish to pursue it beyond this very tentative and cautious outline.

[362] Cf. pp. 10-16 of the introductory chapter.

dominant notes, dominant attitudes in the spectrum of perspectives determined, on the one hand, by the ascetic *Guthlac I* and, on the other, by *Widsið* preoccupied with the theme of earthly glory, a spectrum that comprises a pious statement of praise for God's kindness to men in giving them skills that enable them to gain a respectable position in this life (*The Gifts of Men*) as well as a wholly secular lament for the passing of love and happiness (*Wulf and Eadwacer, The Wife's Lament*)? It would be wrong, I think, to describe the Exeter Book as an uneasy combination of religious and "heroic" pieces, although the portrayal of this world, especially in the more earthly oriented poems, rarely reaches beyond the scope delimited by the concerns and activities of the aristocratic *comitatus* (and despite the fact that I have accepted that same division as a convenient starting point of my study and will invoke it again before the end). It is more accurate to view the collection as presenting a (less pointed) continuous contrasting of two perspectives, which more or less correspond to those proposed by Conner: "monastic", which understands the propositions of Christian faith in a radical way, as demanding a rigorous dissociation from the bonds and attractions of this world, and which is also characterized by a strong admixture of apocalyptic vision; and the more accommodating secular[363], which can reconcile faith with accepting the claims of human society and appreciating whatever good life brings. If we reformulate this division in terms offered by the verse from *Maxims I* – "*[God] us æt frymþe geteode // lif ond lænne willan*" ("God created for us at the beginning life and passing joys", 5-6) – then the first view would read "*ond*" as dissociative: we can have either "*lif*" (eternal) or "*lænne willan*" (with the stress on "*lænne*" = "transitory"), but never both; the second perspective would construe

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[363] Conner uses the term "clerical" to reflect the presumed dependence of the poems thus labelled on models afforded by (secular) Latin poetry as cultivated at the court of Charlemagne, which could supposedly only be appreciated and emulated by a person of appropriate schooling. Since I do not agree with the choice of texts that he places within this category (cf. p. 133), I cannot avail of his nomenclature.

"ond" as copulative and emphasize *"willan"*: we can do right by this world and yet look forward to that which is to come.

In the case of *Maxims I*, this double reading is an arbitrary construction designed to provide a maximally condensed illustration of the two perspectives, for which the verse provides a perfect material; the context of the poem makes permissible only the latter interpretation. But elsewhere the dilemma is real. The list of skills and abilities in *The Gifts of Men* contains also the following statement: *"Sum her geornlice / gæstes þearfe // mode bewindeþ / ond him metudes est // ofer eorðwelan / ealne geceoseð"* ("Someone grasps in mind eagerly the needs of the soul and chooses God's grace over all the riches of the earth", 86-88). It would seem that it voices a plainly "monastic" sentiment, but here it is the context that makes the perspective ambiguous. On the one hand, the fact that it conforms to the previously established pattern, when each *"sum"* introduces a specific option of "what a man may do in life", suggests that it is placed on the same level as all the various secular occupations and skills; it is also not the first reference to spiritual qualities in the poem (it is preceded by the reference to one *"arfæst ond ælmesgeorn"* – "pious and charitable" – in l. 67). On the other, it constitutes a perceptible rift in the text, as the remainder of the list after this verse is devoted wholly to occupations connected with religious life; this could indicate a hierarchical ordering of items in the catalogue, which would then progress from the less valued secular sphere to the superior religious one. The ambiguity is produced precisely by the structure that places the elements in a free sequence without defining their mutual relationship; and it depends wholly on the reader's decision whether the poem is interpreted as representative of the monastic or the secular perspective.

We could stop the discussion here, satisfied with determining the fundamental positions juxtaposed in the Exeter Book and presuming the possibility of their unproblematic coexistence – a peaceful dialogue of

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equals. We could conclude, with Carol Braun Pasternack,[364] that the collection was meant, from the start, to cater for both courtly and monastic interests; that a part of its purpose was to provide access to important Latin texts (such as the exegetical writings adapted in the *Christ* poems) to those only versed in the vernacular, and that it recorded items that would be appreciated by those who "valued their native poetic traditions". The codex, or at least some of its constituent booklets (Pasternack here refers both to Conner's booklet theory as summarized in the first chapter of part I (*The manuscript and its historical background*)[365] and to the older hypothesis that connects the Exeter Book project with the activities of Ealdorman Æthelweard, an eager supporter of the monastic reform[366]) would be written to appeal to a mixed monastic / aristocratic audience with a variety of reading experience. If we admitted the likelihood of this dual orientation of the collection, we might rest content with interpreting the intertextual links analysed in part III of this study (e.g. those between *Vainglory* and *Widsið* or *Deor* and *Wulf and Eadwacer*) as simply capable of subduing the most dangerous "alternative voices"; this would render the Exeter Book acceptable to everybody – the lay recipients, who would presumably not be ready to disengage themselves from all worldly interests, would be gratified and the monastic community would be spared the worst shock. This has to be recognized as a real, and perhaps the most likely, possibility; after all, the survey presented in the second chapter of this study has shown that the production of a monastic scriptorium, even in reformed houses, could be influenced by such factors as the endeavour to oblige an aristocratic benefactor or the association of the monastery with one of the diverging streams within the reformist movement itself.

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[364] Pasternack 1995, 58.
[365] Cf. p. 54 of this study.
[366] Chambers, Förster and Flower 1933, 85-90.

Nevertheless, there remains one aspect to be considered that leads to a less open, less accommodating reading: the theme – touched upon in the process of identifying the two basic perspectives present in the Exeter Book – of the necessity to *choose* between *"lif"* and *"lænne willan"* or *"metudes est"* and *"eorðwelan"* which is integral to the monastic position. It forms a substantial part of the argument of *Guthlac I* (where the saint's life represents a series of such choices in the face of various temptations) and is reiterated in *Phoenix, Juliana, The Seafarer, The Order of the World, The Judgment Day* and other poems. If we think of the matter in all its consequences, it will appear that the imperative to decide for the one or the other applies in effect also to the two alternative positions, the monastic and the secular. In other words, the monastic perspective, if applied consistently, requires a closure of the open dialogic structure; and it is the conditions that can make such a closure possible that must now be investigated.

Possibilities of closure

While the previous part of my study focused on establishing the existence of intertextual links between particular poems, suggesting the potential bearing of such a connection on the reading of items thus related, the present consideration outlines the range of relationships between the basic positions (monastic / secular) to which the individual texts seem to be aligned. As the following observations show, the query will have to return again to the issues of the interaction of the heroic poetic tradition with the discourse of religious poetry.

It has been remarked above that the texts that can be classified as representing the less rigid secular perspective in the Exeter Book use the world of the *comitatus* as their predominant or exclusive frame of

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reference.[367] The claims of the human society that these poems acknowledge can be summarized into a single imperative: *"þeawum lifgan"* – "to live according to custom" (Wid 11) – a central theme in *Widsið* (which focuses on the established duties of a respected ruler) and *Maxims I*[368] (which are preoccuppied, to a large extent, with describing the proper functioning of individual members in a community). The *"þeawas"* are chiefly those associated with the "heroic ethos" governing the conduct of both lord and retainer. If the poem widens its focus beyond this core, for example to remark on the useful and respected skills a person may possess, it usually does not go very far – most often to activities more or less closely connected with this aristocratic environment (e.g. weapon-making, gold-smithery, falconry, minstrelsy – cf. *The Gifts of Men, The Fortunes of Men*). The same holds for the pleasures of life; the foremost is, precisely, to be able or allowed to *"þeawum lifgan"* – to enjoy what one's position in the society properly brings: as a princely pair, to distribute rings and jewels among followers (*The Husband's Message*), as a lady, to stand by the side of one's lord (*The Wife's Lament*), as a retainer, to partake in the rituals of treasure-giving and feasting (the first section of *The Wanderer*). In less specific contexts, the aspects stressed are the joyful company of men, feasting and treasure; this combination appears, for instance, in *The Fortunes of Men* (the man to whom it is given to overcome hardships in youth will *"wunian wyndagum / ond welan þicgan // maþmas ond meoduful / mægburge on"* – "live his days in joy and enjoy prosperity,

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[367] The instances when a poem looks beyond this sphere are rather exceptional: several passages in *Maxims I*, some items in *The Gifts of Men* and *The Fortunes of Men*, a number of riddles and *Wulf and Eadwacer*.

[368] The grouping of *Maxims I* with the secular poems does not represent a revocation of what I have written of their acceptability in part III of this study (87-89). The fact that their mixture of spiritual and "practical" advice finds a precedent in biblical wisdom literature makes them an uncontested part of the Exeter Book "mainstream" (unlike, for example, *Wulf and Eadwacer*, which, as I argue in chapter 5 of Part III, can only be integrated through the link with the immediately preceding *Deor*), but I am now concerned with determining the individual strands within that mainstream and their positioning as preferred and tolerated, superior and inferior.

treasure and mead-cup among his people", 61-62) and further examples could be quoted from *The Husband's Message*, *The Ruin* or *Widsið*, as previously given analyses of the poems may show.[369]

Nor can the more radically religious ("monastic") texts dissociate themselves completely from this conceptual complex. If the lay society applies these terms to define its aspirations and ideals, it is only logical that the description of the "*lænne willan*" to be dismissed (when it is not limited to a mere general reference to "*eorðwela*" – "earthly prosperity", "*woruldgestreon*" – "worldly riches" and so on, which is the more frequent case) will have foregrounded more or less the same elements that have been identified in *The Fortunes of Men*, *The Ruin* or *Widsið*. Thus *The Seafarer* claims that those who set out to sea, refusing the illusory security of the ordered world of human community, "will have no thought for the harp, the receiving of rings, the joy of a woman's love, the hopes of this world".[370] Other texts (focusing undoubtedly on the morally most questionable activity associated with "good life") assign prominent position to feasting of the "*wlonce*" (magnificent/proud) of this world – cf. the analysis of *Vainglory* in chapter 5 of part III (pp. 182-186), the phrase "*wines glæd / wilna bruceð*" (gladdened by wine partakes of pleasures) in *The Judgment Day* l. 78, "*wiste wlonc / ond wines sæd*" ("feasting proudly, satiated by wine") in *Soul and Body* l. 36 or, back in *The Seafarer*, l. 27-29, the reference to one who "*ah lifes wyn [...] wlonc ond wingal*" ("possesses the joys of life, proud and flushed with wine"). Treasures are burnt in the conflagration preceding the Second Coming in *Christ II*, *III* and *The Phoenix*; they are also dismissed in *The Seafarer* and *Soul and Body*. It is

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[369] Cf. the chapters devoted to these texts in part III of this study.

[370] "*Ne biþ him to hearpan hyge / ne to hringþege // ne to wife wyn / ne to worulde hyht*", Sea 44-45. Admittedly, in linear reading those verses undoubtedly refer to the hardships of the sea-journey: the misery and insecurity occupy the speaker's mind to the exclusion of all thought of the pleasures of settled life. However, in retrospective, as the journey comes to be reinterpreted as the unconditional submission to God's mysterious will, willingly undertaken, the statement assumes an overtone of deliberate refusal.

obviously possible to view such statements as merely voicing a Christian commonplace that does not depend in any way on the native concepts of what is desirable in life; but the two notions become associated, in the Exeter Book at least, when the positive and the negative image of *"eorþan wynne"* ("earthly joys") is contrasted through juxtaposition. On the other hand, the "monastic" poems also borrow some of the especially potent images of the heroic poetic tradition to portray the life to come, as the reading of the *Christ* poems and their brief comparison with *The Phoenix* in chapter 7 of part III makes evident.

Therefore it appears that the examination of the ways in which the monastic position relates to the secular one in the Exeter Book cannot be separated from the more fundamental question of how the heroic poetic tradition was appropriated, adapted and staged for the specific purposes of religous discourse. The moment that opened this process, that made it possible, may not have been the one that Bede postulates in his account of the poet Cædmon – for all we know (or Bede knew), there may have been other poets before him who attempted the same – but it is with Bede's Cædmon that the practice of rendering scriptural (or, more generally, religious) narratives into vernacular verse achieves legitimacy. Although Bede is characteristically reticent as to the identity of the man who visited Cædmon in his dream, he makes it clear that only heavenly intervention could transform a shepherd totally incompetent in producing even the simplest song into an accomplished poet. But the most important implication of the tale concerns the status of the native poetic form as a "divinely authorized" medium for Christian instruction.

Cædmon's Hymn may be read as exemplifying perhaps the least problematic aspect of this translation of new content into established form (and vice versa, of the traditional verse into a new cultural context) – the adaptation of set formulae to accommodate Christian concepts: thus Bruce Mitchell and Fred C. Robinson relate the expression *"wuldorfæder"*

("Father of Glory") to the pattern of the Eddic *"herja-faðir"* (Father of battles), an epithet for Oðin, and similarly *"heofonrices weard"* (Guardian of the heavenly kingdom) to an epithet for earthly rulers (*"rices weard"*, *"Brytenrices weard"*).[371] However, as the poetic tradition was inextricably linked with a specific culture and its codes for the perception and ordering of the world, adopting the form inevitably also meant tapping other aspects that could prove potentially subversive. It was not difficult to get rid of Ingeld and other pagan heroes, the subjects of heroic song, where they were not welcome; but their world, the world of the *comitatus*, could not simply be erased from the verse. Obviously, that legacy could also be embraced, as when, for example, the lord – retainer relationship with most of its constituent elements was used to describe the relationship of God and his faithful (as suggested previously), or *"ellen"* – "courage" revalued as the typical saintly virtue of persistence in tribulations; in this way, the religious discourse could harness the established positive appeal of such terms. But the same concepts continued to function in secular poetry, in what could be labelled the primary, "realistic" context; and while such sharing was perfectly suited for the more tolerant secular position that accepted the possibility of having the most of this world and the next, the monastic perspective that insisted on choosing between the one and the other would have to seek strategies that would enable it to retain the powerful imagery of the heroic culture and yet express its distance from and devaluation of that very source.[372]

So, in the attempt to determine the range of relations between the monastic and the secular position juxtaposed in the Exeter Book I will in fact examine the range of relations, specific for the collection, through which the monastic discourse approaches the heroic poetic tradition (and,

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[371] Mitchell and Robinson 1992, 220.

[372] Cf. Frantzen, A.J. "The *Norton Anthology* Cædmon" in *Desire for Origins: New Language, Old English and Teaching the Tradition*. New Brunswick and London: Rutgers University Press, 1990, 137-144.

by extension, the order which produces it and which it helps to uphold), the particular links between individual poems analysed previously being a part of this larger picture. However, my aim here is not to supply an exhaustive analysis of the instances in which the various relations may be seen to operate (such a purpose would require a separate study of substantial length); I propose merely to outline and briefly illustrate the major strategies.

The first alternative has already been alluded to several times: this is the simple **"taking over"** of highly charged images developed in the native tradition, which in fact initiates the whole problem outlined above. We can speak of this relation in situations when, for example, the *Christ* poems or *The Phoenix* speak of the *comitatus* of saints and/or angels without adding any qualifying elements to this picture. As this subject has been treated in full in the previous chapter, I deem it unnecessary to repeat the evidence here. The dangers of such direct appropriation show plainly in the passage in *Christ II* which presents Christ returning with the souls liberated in the Harrowing of Hell as a victorious hero carrying off *"huþa mæste"* ("great booty") and in a related account of that event in *The Descent into Hell* which speaks of Christ as the "fiercest of kings" plundering the "glory of the city" (*"[wolde] þære burge þrym // onginnan reafian / reþust ealra cyninga"*, 35-36). Such a use of the heroic register seems to activate wholly inappropriate connotations, as the expressions recall the picture of a "wild warrior", not unlike the *"wræcmecgas"* ("outcasts") that, in *Guthlac I*, *"...ne bimurnað / monnes feore // þæs þe him to honda / huþe gelædeð // butan hy þy reafe / rædan motan"* (130-132) – "do not care for a man's life, if he brings booty in their hands, provided that they can wield the plunder". In cases like these, the substratum of the heroic poetic tradition may well represent an irreducible problem for the integrity of the monastic discourse; but the less immediately apparent problems resulting

from adopting the language of this tradition may be countered in various ways.

The monastic discourse may **confront** the order of heroic poetry through an implicit criticism: by portraying the proud of this world, those that are consigned to eternal torment, as either enjoying those things that, within that order, are seen as most desirable (cf. the discussion on p. 284 of the present chapter), or as occupying a prominent position within its structures and possessing the qualities that it requires. This is the case of the emphasis put on warlike qualities and the ironic reference to rituals binding the *comitatus* in relation to the chief villain in the otherwise strictly "non-heroic" *Juliana*, again analysed in the sixth chapter of part III (pp. 252-253).

Some of the combinations of texts in the manuscript could be interpreted to result in a subtle **undermining** of the authority and positive appeal of poems in which the heroic order asserts itself most strongly, such as *Widsið* and *The Husband's Message*; in the former case, by juxtaposing the self-confident, even boastful "autobiographical" passages of the narrative of the fictitious "ideal *scop*" with the immediately preceding exposition and condemnation of the sin of pride and self-importance in *Vainglory* (a link investigated at length in the fifth chapter of part III), in the latter, by confronting the hopes for the succesful realization of the ideal of princely life by the reunited pair with the following account of the destruction of the "...*beorhtan burh / bradan rices*" ("splendid city of a great kingdom"), as a setting for such life-style, in *The Ruin* (cf. p. 193).

The Ruin itself can serve as an example of a wholly secular text that could easily be staged as a reminder that all the joys of this world are indeed "*lænne*". As the imaginary reconstruction of the past splendour of the now decayed city employs terms that can again be related to the more "material" values typically stressed in heroic poetry, such a reading, apart from expressing a general scepticism of any human endeavour in this

world, can become specifically directed against that culture, albeit only implicitly. *The Wife's Lament* lends itself to a similar interpretative strategy, with the difference that in this text any positive aspects are missing or they are *"swa hit no wære"* – "as if it never has been". In a way, the view of the world presented in *The Wife's Lament* and *Wulf and Eadwacer* is synonymous with that of the "propositional" part of *The Wanderer* and *The Seafarer*, where the heroic order gradually, obliquely demonstrates its flaws and ineffectualities; at the point in which the secular elegies end, the Christian resolution in the religious ones starts. However, the possible indirect devaluation of the heroic order represents at most a secondary effect in such cases, as the moral is primarily that of universal transitoriness of the good things of this world.

The last, and perhaps the most significant way in which the monastic discourse defines its relation to the culture from which it borrows is a **reinterpretation** or, as it were, correction of the powerful images that it takes over. In *Christ II*, Jesus is portrayed, on a literal, "realistic" level, as the *"sincgiefa"* ("treasure-giver", l. 21) of the apostles who form his retinue (*"þegna gedryht"*, l. 18). This basic frame of reference is preserved throughout the narrative of Christ's descent into hell and ascension: He is still perceived as the lord of a company that comprises angels, saints and (potentially) all mankind, but instead of material treasure, what is dispensed from *"gæsta giefstol"* ("gift-seat of souls", l. 133) is – life itself, as Christ is referred to as *"feorhgiefa"* (l. 117). This substitution within the established, formulaic term inevitably preserves the trace of its original usage and its context; in other words, *"sinc"* remains in the background as the displaced term. Christ is both *"sincgiefa"* and *"feorhgiefa"*; retrospectively, we are led to revalue the "realistic" application of the term as prefiguring the spiritual one and to identify eternal life as the true, "real" treasure that only the divine king can divide among His followers. Such a juxtaposition of a literal usage and a

figurative modification of this specific concept, where both have the same referent, is unique to *Christ II*; however, it can be argued that whenever a reinterpreted version of such set phrase appears in a text (e.g. *"lifes brytta"* – "dispenser of life", *Christ I*, l. 334[373]) it activates an implicit contrast with its model employed in secular contexts, which may be resolved in the same way. A similar correction may be found in *The Seafarer*, where the heroic endeavours through which a man can earn lasting fame are immediately specified as "brave deeds against the devil" (72-80), while the reputation gained in this way lives forever in heaven (unlike that which *Widsið* can provide for its heroes, as that is limited to the world *"under heofonum"*). *The Wanderer* analogically confronts aposes the failing halls and lords of this world with the only real protection of the Lord in heaven. The effect of this juxtaposition of the "realistic" – heroic, wordly – and the figurative – religious, spiritual – version of the same concept is a complete inversion of their mutual relationship: the former appears to represent an insubstantial phenomenon, while the latter achieves a superior status in representing the only true reality. The monastic discourse thus in fact manages to displace the source from which it draws from the position of the "origin".[374]

The dialogic structure of the Exeter Book permits the activation of the strategies outlined above as one possibility of resolving the mutual relationship of individual poems as well as the two major positions (monastic / secular) identified in the collection. In them we may see the missing commentary that would assign proper status to the texts which speak in voices that may have been viewed as potentially subversive or at least irrelevant in the reformist environment that presumably produced the codex. This does not mean that they would necessarily transform the

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[373] As *"brytta"* evokes the very material act of breaking valuable objects so that their pieces can be distributed as a reward to the retinue, the trace of the original concept is even stronger there.

[374] Cf. Frantzen 1990, 143.

dialogue into a triumphant monologue of one voice; rather, they could reinforce the authority of the monastic position, so that its propositions would outweigh those of the "opposite party"; just as, in the real dialogic poem *Salomon and Saturn* the latter speaker possesses certain amount of knowledge which, nevertheless, is inferior to the wisdom of the sage king.

Conclusions

The investigation that resulted in the present study was prompted, in the very beginning, by a certain feeling of uneasiness vis-à-vis the variety of statements placed without a recognizable order in a manuscript that originated in an environment distinctly disinclined to accomodate any rival views and placing a great emphasis on discipline. To my knowledge, no one has attempted to deal with this problem in its entirety;[375] and so I decided to meet the challenge.

I soon realized that it meant addressing not one, but several interrelated issues. First was the question of the organization of the collection. This study has aimed to provide evidence for the argument that a collection of vernacular poetry, especially if it was assembled over a period of time, could use a manner of ordering which represents an extension of the structural principle operative in the composition of Old English poetry: a free juxtaposition of discrete units that are interrelated through affinities of theme, imagery and form and in that way can be construed into a polyphonic whole. Such a structure also allows for the coexistence of what appear to be, at first sight, dissonant statements.

The second question concerns the position and reception of the codex in the historical situation it which it functioned. Could the open dialogue of texts that it presents be resolved in a way that would be consonant with the outlook of the Benedictine reformers? My purpose was

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[375] Admittedly, there did exist studies that attempted to provide some of the more worldly poems with a reading that would be perfectly acceptable even for the least tolerant monastic community; but none concerning the Exeter Book as a whole.

to document the existence in the Exeter Book of strategies that would not only subdue the impact of individual "dissenting" poems but, more importantly, undermine the authority of the order for which they speak, an order represented in what could be perceived as the rival discourse – the heroic poetry. Through such strategies, the dialogue could be read so as to confirm the exclusive position of the monastic perspective. Even semantically open structures may be closed in interpretation, though we may dispute the degree of violence that such a closure requires. I tried to test my hypothesis concerning the structure of the Exeter Book against the least favourable conditions imaginable within the given historical context. In a more tolerant environment the links could be construed in a different way, which could well be the case; but the principle on which the reading operates remains the same.

Though my analysis has concentrated on a single document, its conclusions have a bearing on many important issues that arise in the study of Old English literature in general. It shows that the consideration of manuscript context is indeed indispensable for the interpretation of individual poems; outlines alternative possibilities in the organization of vernacular collections which can prove productive in the discussion of the structuring of other mixed codices; and finally, addresses the central problem of Old English poetry – the complex relationship of the religious discourse to the native poetic tradition, simultaneously appropriated and dispossessed.

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APPENDIX: THE MAKE-UP OF THE EXETER BOOK

MS units /quires	Poems	Detected losses
Booklet I (orig. III) quires 1 to 6	*Christ I* *Christ II* *Christ III* *Guthlac I* *Guthlac II*	1st folio, quire 1 2nd folio, quire 2 1st folio, quire 5 whole quire(?) missing**
Booklet II (orig. I) quires 7 to 12	*Azarias* (incomplete) *Phoenix* *Juliana* *The Wanderer* *The Gifts of Men* *Precepts* *The Seafarer* *Vainglory* *Widsið* *The Fortunes of Men* *Maxims I (Exeter)* *The Order of the World* *The Riming Poem* *The Panther* *The Whale* *The Partridge(?)*	top of the 1st folio (7 cm) 2nd and 7th folio, quire 9 8th folio, quire 12
Booklet III (orig. II) quires 13-17	*The Partridge(?)** *Soul and Body II (Exeter)* *Deor* *Wulf and Eadwacer* *Riddles 1-59* *The Wife's Lament* *The Judgment Day I (Exeter)* *Resignation A* *Resignation B(?)** *The Descent into Hell* *Alms-giving* *Pharaoh* *The Lord's Prayer* *Homiletic Fragment II (Exeter)* *Riddle 30b* *Riddle 60* *The Husband's Message* *Riddles 61-95*	whole quire(?) missing** 1st and 8th folio, quire 14 10th folio, quire 15 10th folio, quire 16 1st, 7th, 8th folio, quire 17**

* The outline uses ASPR titles throughout. The asterisks indicate situations in which the ASPR edition did not recognize a lacuna in the MS and consequently combined two poems into one.

** Provisional reconstruction of the MS by Patrick W. Conner.