SOME MODES OF SYMBOLISM

IN OLD ENGLISH POEMS

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Abstract

The purpose of this thesis is to investigate the symbolic dimension of some Old English poems with a wide range of forms and styles: Beowulf, The Wanderer, The Seafarer, The Dream of the Rood, Exodus and The Phoenix. In the introduction, a consideration of two approaches to the Anglo-Saxon poetic tradition, the oral and the literary, leads to discussion of the difficulty involved in the definition of a tradition which is neither strictly oral nor literary. It is suggested that a fuller understanding of the symbolic dimension of the poetry could contribute to a more comprehensive definition of that tradition, and resolve at least some of the critical problems of interpretation in individual poems. The following chapters explore, within a general reading, the nature and role of symbolism in each poem. The conclusion sums up, in a form simplified for the purpose of comparison, the relationship of symbol to symbolized in the individual poems, and comment is made on the Anglo-Saxon symbolic sensibility, its poetic language and the language of its critics. The role of didactic tone and direct moral statement in symbolism is considered. It is concluded that traditional, apparently similar diction and imagery can be directed by connotation and structure to produce profoundly different total effects in different poems. Together with structure, ambiguity, non-differentiation of the literal from the figurative, and a sense of identification between subjects, rather than representation of one by another, play a major part in the relationship of symbol to symbolized. Therefore critical terminology should not rely on a vocabulary of discrete classes of meaning.

Contents

Introduction

This thesis presents readings of six Old English poems with close attention to the text of each. None of the poems is considered in isolation, but within the possibilities of the Anglo-Saxon poetic tradition, as far as that can be defined; one of its most notable characteristics is "the amazing variety of its heterogeneous elements - brought about by its extra-ordinary power of creative assimilation,"[1] which makes it difficult to approach as a tradition. Often critical approaches deal with only one set of these elements, to the detriment of the rest. The discussion has been marked by two different views: the oral-formulaic, which maintains that Old English poetry is composed for the most part of prefabricated units, which have been written down in a manner determined by a well-developed native tradition; and the literary, which, as the Anglo-Saxons had no literary tradition of their own, approaches Old English poetry through the conventions and expectations of the Latin one.

However, Old English poetry is neither strictly oral nor formulaic, and studies of this type can offer only indirect (though useful) information. Bede's account of Caedmon implies that Old English oral poetry was often extemporary, but the poetry available to us is no longer in that spontaneous form. Magoun accounts for the oral-formulaic element thus:

> Somewhere in the neighbourhood of 675 St Aldhelm was quite possibly singing religious verse, interspersed with diverting secular songs, in public at Malmesbury in Wiltshire in order to get the local populace to stay on after mass for

> the sermon, and sometime between 658 and 680, the years during which Hild ruled as abbess of Whitby in the North Riding, the unlettered Caedman, farm-hand on the monastic estate, is said on first-rate authority to have been successfully composing all sorts of songs based on Christian story. There is no way of learning more about Aidan's compositions but ... Caedman was probably the father of nothing but his own songs and composed these against the background of a developed tradition.[2]

The idea of a well-developed native tradition has, therefore, some foundation, though the application of the idea requires some caution. The term 'formulaic' has been applied misleadingly to single words, combinations of two words which occur only once elsewhere (that occurrence being in the same poem), and even to the verb 'to be' plus the adverb 'then', on the grounds that this collocation appears elsewhere - which of course it does, although the vital verb is a special case.[3] The assumptions promoted by the apparent presence of a large number of such 'formulae' support a false impression about the fabric of the tradition as we have it in the written poetry.

Latin literature was itself heterogeneous in a different sense, being cross-cultural and developed over centuries of writings with various purposes and styles; consequently its literary terminology had specific classes within such areas as, for example, genre and figure of speech, which, when imposed on poetry which is not 'literary' in the same way, can also lead to a false impression about that poetry. From the literary point of view, Blake comments:

> Yet although Old English is far richer than most other contemporary vernacular literatures, it is abjectly poor in comparison with the output of Latin literature. Even if we could date most Old English poetry to the later three centuries

> of the Old English period, it would be distributed over 250 years; the amount is insufficient to talk seriously of any tradition.[4]
>
> The absence of a literary tradition as we understand it is of the utmost importance in understanding the meaning and use of words in the medieval period. Each work was written in isolation so that the words employed were without those connotations which a word acquires through its use in earlier texts.[5]

While there are no grounds for believing that the preserved 30,000 lines of verse are all that were ever written, or that what has survived is the best, the worst or a true cross-section of the whole, it seems scarcely credible that because of the lack of a literary tradition as we understand it that each poem was composed in isolation. Words like mod, dryhten, wraeclastas, lof, eðel, wyrd and many more must have brought with them wide ranges of connotation, social and religious, from a previous non-literary poetic tradition; otherwise wordplay of any sort would be nearly impossible, and the establishment or development of a theme through an evocative phrase difficult, which does not seem to be so in the poetry. Studies of modern oral poetry ('oral' in the widest sense, not 'oral-formulaic') might provide information about how a non-literary poetic tradition makes use of the individual word or evocative phrase, how performance contributes to depth and the communication of complexities, as well as some indication of the capacities of an illiterate audience for memory and interpretation in conditions of performance suited to them.[6]

Just as it is inappropriate to treat Old English poetry as though it were a recording of oral-formulaic verse, it is also inappropriate to make too close a comparison with literary

works in Latin, as, for example, Bolton does, on the basis of Alcuin's dedication to his two Lives of St Willibrord, in which he states that the one in "plodding prose" is for reading aloud, while the other, in poetic form, is for individual, scholarly contemplation in the cell.

> Public reading gives the audience less time to trace and reflect on literary complexities, and it also assumes an audience unable to read for themselves, that is, an unlettered and basically unsophisticated audience; private study is reserved for the learned reader who can dwell on his book letter by letter... Poetry and elaborate prose are for the scholar in his cell; the simpler sort of prose for the public in the church or hall.[7]

The resulting conclusion, that Beowulf is to be read like the former sort of literature, is based on a false comparison, for Old English poetry does not appear to have been limited to a literate audience of individuals, but could have been read or performed aloud.[8] The fact that Old English poetry is written down does not mean it was subject to the same conventions as literary Latin. It must be acknowledged that

> ...cultural groups vary in how far they make explicit distinctions between various categories of verse and how far they recognise some or all of these categories as specific genres... One also has to accept that the whole idea of a 'genre' is relative and ambiguous, dependent on culturally-accepted canons of differentiation rather than universal criteria.[9]

What the canons of differentiation were to the Anglo-Saxons is not known, and it is too often assumed that the criteria of the classical-Mediterranean tradition were universal. For example, Cross reads The Wanderer as an example of consolatio, in which the poet goes through "a selection of consolatory topoi"[10] as someone familiar with and writing according to the genre

conventions, like Plutarch, Augustine, Seneca and others. "In effect, a Christian or late pagan writer who had received a normal education was amply equipped with arguments to console for death, exile or any other misfortune of this world."[11] Certain Latin conventions may have been adopted during the development of the vernacular literary tradition; however, Cross writes elsewhere in acknowledgement of "certain ideas linked with the unchanging condition of man"[12] in Old English poetry, and resemblances of tone or subject matter do not in themselves imply direct influence. When Cross says of The Wanderer that

> ...the progress of the poem is best explained in terms of a consolatio where the topics of the genre are used first to intensify the lament, to attempt some measure of secular consolation by generalisation which is yet unsatisfactory, in order to emphasize the supreme consolation of security in the next life,[13]

the 'unchanging condition of man' involving misfortune, loneliness and the need for consolation, is not considered except through a Latin literary convention. 'Explain' is not the best choice of words, when the structural abstract presented is so specifically in the terms of another, quite different written tradition.

Classical rhetoric is another area in which critics often operate on the assumption that certain figures of speech in the poetry must have been imported. Figures of speech, however, are just that; they exist in any spoken language and are operative in both the expression of meaning and change of meaning over long periods of time.[14] When examples of interrogatio,

repetitio, etc. can be isolated in an Old English poem, this need not suggest "that the poet had a knowledge of either rhetoric, or of those writings where rhetorical figures abound,"[15] or that if he did, his use of then was derived solely from such writings, since these figures also occur in the oral poetry of such peoples as the Eskimo.[16] Perhaps no explanation as such is needed for the presence of most figures of speech in the poetry; although direct borrowing or influence may occur, in both spoken language and any poetry they are employed in the enhancement of meaning.

Individual word-meaning has also been dealt with as though Old English poetic diction had the same literary background as Latin. Blake notes that "recent scholarship is full of the assimilation of patristic ideas into Old English poetry, usually through the assumption that Old English words which occur only a few times have the same connotations which were attached to equivalent Latin words over centuries of exegesis and commentary."[17] Some Old English poetic words seem to have had other connotations, acquired over centuries of use in a different tradition, which could be directed by context and the overall structure of a particular poem to approach a biblical or patristic idea from an Anglo-Saxon direction (such as the sail-cloud in Exodus; see chapter five). The connotative range provided the ambiguity of much Old English poetic language, which gave the poet access to "a tension which leads to considerable force and resonance. Words gain a traditional, emotional aura for the poet to exploit."[18]

Blake comments, "The meaning of isolated words in medieval poems is likely to be so controversial that we have to interpret

them from the poem rather than the poems from them,"[19] and notes that the boundary between denotative and connotative senses of a word is undefined or non-existent.[20] This non-differentiation between denotation and connotation at the lexical level has a counterpart on the larger scale of all such categorical differentiation of the literal from the figurative, the concrete from the abstract. Stanley has remarked upon this characteristic of Old English poetic language on several planes: "With some aspects of OE. figurative diction...it is not possible to be sure if the figure was not as real to the Anglo-Saxons as the reality that gave rise to the figure."[21] It is this characteristic of Old English poetry that renders it inaccessible to criticism with a vocabulary which has, over the centuries, developed finer and finer differentiations on all levels; and the indefiniteness of the poetic tradition to which this critical language is applied is at the heart of much of the argument about the tradition itself, and how to read the poems composed within it.

"There is one basic theme in modern criticism; it is the disassociation of modern sensibility."[22] The characteristic of Old English poetic diction noted above by Stanley is that of symbolic language generally; ambiguity, "that is, the indeterminacy as to whether the language is to be taken literally or figuratively,"[23] and yet the modern literary sensibility finds it difficult to accept this aspect of Old English poetry without attempts to define clearly the relationship between abstract and concrete in a poem, which can lead to complicated ideas of submerged psychological goings-on,[24] or a forced-fit into

ingenious and detailed scriptural or patristic models.[25] On the other hand, such a sensibility, recognizing the lack of clear differentiation, often criticizes a poem as being inconsistent and inadequate in that area. "Many of the problems of discussing structures of meaning originate in the very fact that words provoke unverbalized processes, such as the apprehension of relationships, and they refer us to objects in real life which as it were express in shorthand the long-stream of our consciousness of process."[26] If we manage to avoid the danger of "the assumption that if we cannot see how a metaphor works, it does not work,"[27] we must also consider the possibility that the poet did not always contrive his effects consciously.

The nature of the relationship between concrete and abstract in a poem has not only to do with the poet's perception of likeness and difference in the elements of each he puts together, but also his self-consciousness in doing so. In a poem, the movement of thought around image, metaphor or symbol can be seen in varying degrees as aware of its own perception. The more aware it is, the easier it is for the critic to trace clear-cut relationships between concrete and abstract. In Old English poetry generally the often-inseparable nature of concrete and abstract attests to a unified sensibility, but one that is less conscious of bringing together <u>disparate</u> elements of experience than that of later poets. While Eliot's remark about Laforgue, Corbière, the school of Donne "and poets more classical than they" describes well the poetic phenomenon of "transmuting ideas into sensations, of transforming an observation

into a state of mind,"[28] the kind and degree of self-consciousness is different in Old English poetry. Though highly structured to the ear, precise structures of meaning are rarely present. In later poetry, for example that of the seventeenth century, metrical structures are often less aurally obvious, sometimes almost inaudible in a flow of sound much more like speech, as in some of Herbert's poems. However, a highly-organized subsurface structure of concrete-abstract relationships is developed by the poet with a full awareness of process and means; such 'wit' can be traced through such a poem as Donne's The Canonization. The above difference is especially noticeable in the Anglo-Saxon expression of biblical material with its accompanying formal traditions of interpretation: exegesis and the medieval understanding of the sensus litteralis, which "includes without distinguishing between, both figurative and literal (in our sense) meanings of words,"[29] and the sensus spiritualis, in which the interpretation of scripture "must be constituted of meanings that are true...in terms of Christian doctrine."[30] While such a tradition of interpretation may be said to be well-defined, the interpretations themselves, both in the Fathers and in later writings such as homilies, often differ from one another; the Old English poetry within the tradition is sometimes highly ambiguous.

> Medieval allegory at its best achieved a balance of rational and intuitive elements, an acceptance of all levels on which the mind functions...[31]

> Where in primitive myth there is no distinction between external form and internal spiritual significance, in allegory we find a deliberate attempt, dependent on both the intuitive and the rational elements of the mind, to reinvest the external world with this lost internal dimension, in order to gain access to and participate in the acquisition of important spiritual truths.[32]

It is the acceptance without the deliberate attempt which makes the narrative element of Old English poetry seem symbolic, and the symbolic impossible to isolate from the narrative. The symbolic dimension of Old English poetic language bears much of the weight of significance which, in later poetry, is carried by more rationalized means, and this dimension has been often at the heart of critical disagreements about the meaning of individual poems. The term 'symbolism' has been employed in many different contexts, with many different overtones of meaning; the definition of the term adopted throughout this thesis is necessarily broad:

> 'Symbolism is in the sphere of things what metaphor is in the sphere of speech.' With metaphor, the poet talks about object X as though it were a Y; he uses Y-terminology to refer to X. With symbolism, he presents an object, X, and without his necessarily mentioning a further object, his way of presenting X makes us think that it is not only X, but also is or stands for something more than itself - some Y or other, or for 'Y's. It is as though, in doing this, the poet were trying to leap out of the medium of language altogether and to make his meaning speak through objects instead of words. Even though he does not tell us what object X stands for, or even that it does stand for anything, he makes us believe that it means, to him at least, something beyond itself.[33]

The heavily nominal, concrete quality of Old English verse lends itself to this kind of expression. It is the purpose of this thesis to investigate the symbolic dimension and some of the critical problems with it in six poems ranging from the more 'narrative' kind through the loosely 'lyrical-elegiac' to the more 'allegorical' (these terms being used as provisionally descriptive, rather than in any generic sense); some of the different modes of Old English poetic symbolism are investigated,

with a view towards gaining a fuller insight into Old English poetic language and its tradition.

Footnotes to Introduction

1. Wrenn, A Study of Old English Literature, p. 1.

2. Magoun, "The Oral-Formulaic Character of Anglo-Saxon Narrative Poetry", pp. 454-55.

3. Diamond, "Theme as Ornament in Anglo-Saxon Poetry", e.g. Elene 111a and note, 143b and note, 123b and note, pp. 462-63. Also, when Diamond speaks of themes, such as 'battle' we find that many of the 'formulae' involved therein occur elsewhere in contexts that have nothing to do with battle (e.g. urigfeðra, Elene 111 - and The Seafarer 25). Underlined as formulae of the theme of 'voyaging' is stundum wraecon, though these words have appeared as supporting evidence under the previous theme of 'battle', and only occur in Elene. The verb coledon is underlined as formulaic within the theme of 'cold weather', though supporting evidence is given from The Dream of the Rood 72, Hraew colode, where the reference is to Christ's body at death, not the weather.

4. Blake, The English Language in Medieval Literature, p. 14.

5. ibid., p. 27.

6. Finnegan, Oral Poetry, especially introduction; Opland, "'Scop' and 'imbongi' - Anglo-Saxon and Bantu Oral Poets," notes that the Bantu tradition offers an idea of the way literate poets educated in another language than their own, with a literary tradition, as well as illiterate poets, work within their native tradition after having been for some time in contact with a literate Christian culture firmly established within their own.

7. Bolton, Alcuin and Beowulf, p. 30.

8. Whitelock, The Audience of Beowulf, pp. 9, 19-20.

9. Finnegan, op. cit., note 6, pp. 14-15.

10. Cross, "On the Genre of The Wanderer", p. 68.

11. ibid., p. 64.

12. Cross, "The Literate Anglo-Saxons - On Sources and Disseminations", pp. 74-75.

13. Cross, "On the Genre of The Wanderer", p. 70.

14. Stern, Meaning and Change of Meaning, With Special Reference to the English Language, pp. 290, 297.

15. Cross, "On the Genre of The Wanderer", pp. 63-64.

16. To go very far afield in order to make a point, see the passages below quoted from the Eskimo poet Orpingalik, whose poetry was written down by K. Rasmussen on an expedition in the early 1920's. These selections contain both these figures of speech, as well as simile:

> Sick I have lain since autumn,
> Helpless I lay, as were I
> My own child.
>
> Sad, I would that my woman
> Were away to another house
> To a husband
> Who can be her refuge,
> Safe and secure as winter ice.
>
> Sad, I would that my woman
> Were gone to a better protector
> Now that I lack strength to rise from my couch.
>
> Dost thou know thyself?
> So little thou knowest of thyself.
> Feeble I lie here on my bench
> And only my memories are strong!
>
> Knowest thou thyself?
> So little thou knowest of thyself!
> While dawn give place to dawn,
> and spring is upon the village.

Quoted in Finnegan, op. cit., note 6, pp. 181-82.

17. Blake, op. cit., note 4, p. 87.

18. Shippey, Old English Verse, p. 100.

19. Blake, op. cit., note 4, p. 86.

20. ibid., p. 80.

21. Stanley, "Old English Poetic Diction and the Interpretation of The Wanderer, The Seafarer and The Penitent's Prayer", p. 414; also, "The modern reader attempts to segregate the factual from the allegorical, and finds it difficult," p. 417; "In some examples of OE. allegory it has proved difficult to be sure if what seems allegory to us was not fact to the Anglo-Saxons. In others, what may have been both fact and figure to them seems only fact to us." p. 428; "In a number of cases the symbolic is so closely interwoven with the factual element in the description that it is not possible to say which is foremost in the poet's mind: the narrative calls for a description of scenery, and the conventions of OE. poetic diction enable the poet to advance out of it and by means of it the symbolic description of a state of mind," p. 439; "This survey of OE. poetic diction

(n. 21 continued)
has shown that the Anglo-Saxons were not reluctant to introduce figurative diction in their poetry. Many of the devices they used may not have been indigenous; but they used them, and understood that what was expressed as a figure was not necessarily capable of factual interpretation too," citing Christ 1327-31, p. 443. This last statement requires comment. It seems inevitable that if something is expressed as a figure, it draws attention to itself as figure, and to the point that it is not necessarily to be taken literally; but there are very many instances of expression without apparent thought regarding the quality of that expression as either 'more literal' or 'more figurative'.

22. Stallman, "The New Critics", p. 496.

23. Nowottny, The Language Poets Use, p. 180.

24. Isaacs, Structural Principles in Old English Poetry, 71-82.

25. Although the work of B.F. Huppé has the reputation of being one-sided in this area, see also particular examples noted in the following chapters.

26. Nowottny, op. cit., note 23, p. 85.

27. Richards, The Philosophy of Rhetoric, p. 118.

28. Eliot, "The Metaphysical Poets", in Selected Prose of T.S. Eliot, p. 66.

29. Rollinson, "Some Kinds of Meaning in Old English Poetry", p. 11.

30. ibid., p. 12.

31. Piehler, The Allegorical Landscape, p. 7.

32. ibid., p. 10.

33. Nowottny, quoting Stephen J. Brown, op. cit., note 23, p. 175.

Chapter One: Beowulf

The question, 'How symbolic is Beowulf?' has produced a wide range of critical opinion. Tolkien outlined the varying answers, giving his own view, and making the charge:

> Nearly all the censure, and most of the praise, that has been bestowed on The Beowulf has been due either to the belief that it was something that it was not - for example, primitive, pagan, Teutonic, an allegory (political or mythical), or, most often, an epic; or to disappointment at the discovery that it was itself and not something that the scholar would have liked better - for example, a heathen heroic lay, a history of Sweden, a manual of Germanic antiquities, or a Nordic Summa Theologica.[1]

Any approach to the poem's symbolism must involve a discussion of its structure; those who find the poem without unity also find it to be without coherent symbolism, such as T.M. Gang, who speaks of the episodes of Grendel, Finnesburh and Ingeld as being structurally unsound and shallow in meaning:

> By introducing the Grendel story into the Geatish court he [the poet] is doing for it much the same as he does for the tales of Finnesburh and of Ingeld, that is, to turn it into a significant 'episode', and by associating it with his prophecy of disaster for Heorot he manages, to some extent, to subordinate it to the pessimistic atmosphere that (in this poem) is associated with Geatland. Yet in spite of this clever piece of suturing, the events of the first part of the poem do not influence those in the second; there is no cumulative effect. The poem may be a balance; it is not a unity.
>
> However it is fairly well established that the Anglo-Saxon poets in general had little idea of form or structure as we understand it.[2]

On the other hand, those critics who find that the poem has a unified structure often posit unacceptable symbolism, usually in the form of allegory.

One quarter-century after Tolkien's lecture, McNamee argued most unconvincingly that Beowulf was a complete allegory of salvation. His article does not deal with most of the poem's text, yet it is claimed, "But at least this much is true: if one were to invent a story whose every detail was designed to allegorize the story of salvation, one could not improve very much on the Beowulf story as it stands."[3] In spite of his desire, Beowulf's people are not saved by their lord's death, and there is no hint of resurrection. In answer to questions involving hints, McNamee says "that to be more explicit would have spoiled the allegory - especially for an Anglo-Saxon audience which had such a taste for obscure allegory and the riddle of runes. All that would have been needed for such an audience is a clue sufficient to suggest the identification."[4] In this and other poems there are indications, from the syntax up to the larger structural patterns, about the kinds of identification a poet had in mind. An identification on the level McNamee suggests is not enough. That the parallel might be seen to be there by a Christian audience cannot be denied, any more than that a Christian audience might see a parallel in Orpheus' descent to the underworld - or even Gandalf's apparent death in Moria in The Lord of the Rings, in spite of the author's insistence that the book is not an allegory. The fact that the Scyldings left the hill at the ninth hour does not suggest the desertion of Christ's disciples, as Beowulf's 'disciples' do not desert him, but stay at the mere. Twelve thanes at the end of the story accompany the hero to the dragon's mound, and run away except for Wiglaf; but he cannot be said to

symbolize St John, although his loyalty is similar, as Wiglaf's most important act is to attempt to intervene in his lord's death. The idea of political allegory was brought up again, in a rather diffuse approach to the poem, by Malone.[5] As will be seen, in this and other poems, Anglo-Saxon symbolism does not involve clues, unless they are part of a unified structure of a different nature than the examples above.

Goldsmith has presented the most complete work on the poem as an allegory of man's life on earth, adding:

> Like the biblical commentators, he [the poet] is content to enlarge single features of a story, paying small regard to possible discord between the allegorical meaning imparted to these features and the drift of the surrounding narrative... It is very difficult in our time to take Beowulf seriously as a historical person or to accept demons as real presences upon earth, but unless the reader's imagination can accept these things as given facts of the created world, their appearance in a religious context seems bizarre, the literal story merges with the allegorical, and the double texture of the poem is not discerned. I believe this to have been the cause of much twentieth-century misunderstanding.[6]

A rift between story and meaning seems to be a necessary product of the allegorical approach. The second of the 'textures' is supplied on the basis of external evidence. Internal evidence of symbolism, via Tolkien's arguments, has been contested by Gang, who finds reasons against it "or at least against the particular symbolism he discerns."[6] This last remark does not contribute anything in place of Tolkien's ideas, and the question of what the internal evidence does suggest is left open. Bonjour replies to the above refutation:

> Now, this charge is capital and devastating; because whatever harvest the study of historical data may yield in the future - and considering the amount of lost literature contemporary with the epic it will prove at best a random harvest - the most valuable and final criterion for an appraisal of the poet's art in Beowulf is, and will remain, internal evidence. According to its capacity or incapacity of standing the actual test of such a criterion, a theory is likely to hold water or sink.
>
> External evidence, on the other hand, is far from decisive, and for the present purpose can be rather briefly dismissed.[8]

The necessity for the consideration of internal evidence of symbolism is supported elsewhere.[9]

Internal evidence of symbolism must, therefore, involve more than a clue; upon it must rest the structure of the poem. That the Anglo-Saxon idea of form and structure is different from ours may well imply that their concept of symbolism was very different also. Elements common to all approaches are the hall and the king, and the hero's relationship to both. Burlin, commenting on the gnomic statement in ll. 997-1010, remarks:

> Such occasions are the prevailing symbol in Old English poetry for human happiness, the health and comfort of human society, and even the best available analogue for eternal bliss. But the feasts of the meadhall receive their intensity from an awareness of what lurks outside, be it monster or man...the gnomic inconsequence reintroduces the alteration of human security and fear, comfort and agony, the inexorable rhythm on which the poet has chosen to organize his narrative.[10]

It is this rhythm, merged with the character and person of the hero, which forms the basic structure of the poem, and with which time and events are interlaced. This has been noted, but investigated within general approaches, or those accompanied by suggestions of allegory, rather than in its most basic form.

The most concise statement is made by Blomfield:

> The setting-out of the material is not in Beowulf an evolution following one main line of connecting thread. Instead, the subject is disposed as a circumscribed field in which the themes are drawn out by a centre of attention - in this case, the character of the good warrior. Far-flung tales and allusions, apparently scattered material and disconnected events are grouped in a wide sweep around the hero's character. In fact these are his character, and their significance in the poem consists in this particular relation; by comparison we are shown Beowulf's nature, by searchlights into the past and future we are to sense the magnitude and true import of his achievements. From this periphery he draws his substance and reality.[11]

This circumscribed field divides the world of the poem into two: what is inside the field and what is outside. This dichotomy embraces other contrasts in the poem, and therefore it can be considered structurally basic. We should then expect it to be the foundation of whatever symbolism pervades the poem.

This inside/outside division has been noted by both Bonjour and Irving.

> It can hardly be denied that the kingly hall and its festivities represent in Beowulf the luminous and social aspect of human life, as opposed to the dark aspect of the "fearsome world outside" with its threatening hostility embodied in the monstrous and solitary night raiders.[12]

The dichotomy is also inherent in the rhythm noted by Burlin, above. Irving, in an investigation of the oððaet...construction in the poem, remarks on the inside/outside division and its relationship to time:

> They lived in joy until... The construction here (perhaps partly because of its semi-formulaic use in similar contexts) points both to human capacities for happy unawareness of the darkness outside and to the nature of the world that sooner or later always brings in on us its merciless "until", where time, change and disaster operate outside man's powers of control.[13]

Inside and outside are neither literal nor figurative, but both:

> The poet combines the idea of being *inne* - inside, warm and secure - with what seems to be suggested by *ondlangne daeg*, namely, the possession of a long space of time for relaxed enjoyment free from interruption, and thrusts against this combination the contrasting image of night (both darkness and time itself) arriving among men as an assailant or intruder.[14]

The modern tendency to distinguish literal and figurative senses is inappropriate. Inside the hall and outside it, the hero's body, armour and his enemies, his soul and its *bona*, his kingdom and the surrounding kingdoms, his life and death, his remembered history and the anonymity time brings - all are contained by the same basic symbolic structure.

Contrast as such is vital to the poem, and many critical approaches deal with antitheses such as joy and sadness, youth and old age, light and dark, foolishness and wisdom, etc.[15] The poet seems to have considered such contrast as meaningful in itself; the hero, leaders and peoples move from one set of conditions to their opposites. It is the strength of Beowulf which stabilizes the fluctuations, stopping them from being deadly; the "circumscribed field" of his character includes his person, the hall in which he is, and, eventually, his kingdom - his entire life. The life of the people is a figure of that of the hero; this life and what threatens it are given in terms of locale, habitable or inhabitable, safe or dangerous, early in the poem. Tension is built up and released during the narrative by invasions of and resistance between the two areas.

The inside is where human life is; it is most fully and significantly alive at its centre. This appears as the hall, with the king at its heart. Goldsmith comments, "Heorot is a monument to Hrothgar's power, success and wealth. He is a good king and generous ruler, and as a social symbol Heorot reflects nothing but the greatness of the king,"[16] adding that the social symbol may be extended into a eschatological one by the fire at Heorot, which represents "the destruction of the cities of earth and the engulfing of the wealth of kings by the devouring fire which was expected to bring the world to an end in some not distant time."[17] Such specificity is not to be found in the text, though the general idea is expressed. In the hall are light, warmth and togetherness, in a familiar and proper order. This condition touches man's relationship to God, since the proper order of existence requires moral values of justice and loyalty on the part of king and retainers. As the people are conscious of right and wrong, so they are aware of God, and their place in Creation. The song of Hrothgar's scop, like Caedmon's Hymn, illustrates this awareness. The existence of the hall is significant in itself, due to its relationship with the surrounding outside, which tends to engulf it.[18] Hrothgar sets its boundary back by building Heorot; Grendel destroys the demarcation between the two areas. The right order is re-established by Beowulf, who then extends it outside the hall and into the source of the chaotic influence at the bottom of the mere. At this time in the poem, a shift occurs in emphasis on the significance of the inside, as the description of approaching troubles in Heorot, along with

the Finnesburh episode, introduce complications and failures from within the society itself. The hall as a centre of attention is replaced by the hero, in whom is developed in a different way the inner/outer duality, as it regards the survival of the people through their hero-king. The human being, with its body and soul, is a centre like the hall. Beowulf is always conscious of his lone strength, which provides a circle of protected space that extends into a kingdom. Hrothgar's speech to Beowulf, of the dangerous susceptibility of a powerful man's soul to evil, underlines the possible threat to his people.

Both the poet's and his characters' awareness of their history, as manifested by the poem itself and individual links with the past and future (such as lineage and a praiseworthy name) is part of their identity in the surrounding vastness of time. History, the memory of hu ða æþelingas ellen fremedon (3), is the human-inhabited region in a darkness which engulfs all human accomplishments. The poem begins and ends with the funeral of a hero-king; Scyld and Beowulf defend their people from time's power by setting boundaries of their praiseworthy lives, over which time cannot step while their memory lives. The reawakening of the dragon that ends the hero's life can be seen as an attack by time, being the result of forgotten historical events and the force of wyrd.

The structural symbolism outlined above is the result of the poet's intuitive arrangement of the material, according to his own and his audience's understanding of the significance of the hero during his lifetime and theirs. Goldsmith's view that

"Beowulf is a Christian allegory of the life of man"[19] defines allegory broadly as "saying one thing in order to mean something beyond that one thing."[20] The implications of the words in order to mean can be misleading. Goldsmith remarks that "a great deal of modern argument about the possible existence of allegorical meaning in Old English secular compositions has developed simply from confusion of terms and failure to accept allegory as a literary mode rather than a form,"[21] but adds elsewhere that allegory in Bede's time is a mode of thought.[22] Of the time which produced Irish monks in oarless coracles and The Seafarer we might also say that allegory was a mode of being. Along this continuum of significance expanding from life itself in the created world it is often impossible to employ correctly terms for specific, consciously developed symbolism. In a society in which allegory (if we can still call it that) is such a pervasive mode, it is unlikely that significance is isolable from material much of the time in the literature. In the cases where this can be done, it must be shown that the material corresponds to that in a secondary source, and actually refers to the same significance.

In the first two fitts, then, being inside or outside certain physical boundaries is inseparable from the meaning of being inside or outside the divine order of creation. Inversions occur in what is perceived as the proper relationship of inner to outer. These two fitts are especially important in setting out this order, showing man and hall in relation to God and the Creation. Scyld establishes a strong house, and founds

the Scylding line; his kingship expands

> oð þaet him aeghwylc ymbsittendra
> ofer hronrade hyran scolde,
> gomban gyldan; þaet waes god cyning! 9-11

The son of Scyld gains a good reputation, which also extends (blaed wide sprang, 18) and saves the people from the fyrenðearfe (14) of being lordless, as they were before Scyld. Hrothgar is cast in the same mould, in that his accomplishment is a peaceful rule, supported by the retainers his heresped (64) has earned him. This gives him the opportunity to exercise his generosity to the full. The hall is created for the purpose of giving:

> ond þaer on innan eall gedaelan
> geongum ond ealdum, swylc him God sealde
> buton folcscare ond feorum gumena. 71-73

Heorot is a warm interior where treasure is given away justly. An awareness of God is present in the king as a moral force (Hrothgar does not give away what does not belong to him - common land and other men's lives - but only what he has from God) and in the people (to whom se Aelmihtiga is the source of life, 90-98). It is part of the usurpation and inversion of kingship that as a result of the hall's invasion Hrothgar ends up sharing out both the lives of men and the common territory to Grendel. The danger of treachery from which the hall will suffer in the future (83-85) is mentioned by way of introduction to the imminent peril from outside it, Grendel:

> Ða se ellengaest earfoðlice
> þrage geþolode, se þe in þystrum bad,
> þaet he dogora gehwam dream gehyrde
> hludne in healle; 86-89

The link between such monstrous creatures to whom God's light is alien, and the evil which can invade a human soul is

developed later in the poem; here the two are only introduced together. The men's and monster's settings and their conditions are contrasted simultaneously. The frumsceaft (45) of the Scylding house, of Heorot (74ff.) and the Creation (90ff., with the emphasis on mankind, frumsceaft fira; leoman to leohte) all blend together in the praise for Hrothgar, Heorot, and the scop's song within the hall itself. The inside, in healle (89), is characterized by dream (88); the outside, in þystrum (87) by þrage (87). The world described by the song is a huge interior, a home for mankind, lit, warmed and adorned, where life is held in the love of a supreme Shaper. Grendel is outside this love, on helle (101); possible wordplay on helle and healle would again stress the contrasting settings and spiritual conditions.

> The first interpolated song (90b-98) effectively interrupts the entrance of Grendel into the poem, providing both the earthly dream [joy] which so offends the monster, and the absolute metaphysical dimension by which he is to be measured - the song of Creation within the hall and the race of Cain without.[23]

The light and music showing man in joy is changed by Grendel's visit into a horrible revelation of the carnage by the morning-light, and lamentation. Hearpan sweg (89), the light imagery of the scop's song and praise for God's works are replaced by micel morgensweg (129) and gyddum geomor (151) after the works of Grendel are revealed; instead of the swutol sang scopes (90) of God's love for man is the sweotolan tacne/ healðegnes hete (141-42). The human hall-thanes are dispersed, seeking their rest elles hwaer (138), the vagueness of the term 'elsewhere' indicating the retainers' lack of solidarity. Deep values at

the heart of the hall have been inverted, replaced by a grim mockery; now it is Hrothgar who suffers (þolode ðryðswyð, 131) in his empty hall, which Grendel previously suffered outside; the outside has moved in.

Instead of defending the hall and their lord, duguþe and geogoþe (160) are snared; the outer darkness is suddenly everywhere.

> ac se aeglaeca ehtende waes,
> deorc deaþscua, duguþe ond geogoþe,
> seomade ond syrede; sinnihte heold
> mistige moras; men ne cunnon,
> hwyder helrunan hwyrftum scriþað. 159-63

The relationship between retainers and their lord is annihilated; Hrothgar cannot reward them with gold for their courage. Sincfage sel, alliteratively opposed to sweartum nihtum (167), stresses this redefinition of the hall, once a home for men and their values: now Grendel lives there, darkness and all it might suggest has intruded into the system. The crux of ll. 168-69 may remain unsolved; possible solutions have been offered.[24] The lines reveal, in any case, the effects of an unapproachable vital centre, here the gift-throne, on the members of a society. If it is Grendel who cannot approach the throne, he still dwells in the hall, and so prevents the values and practices of loyalty, generosity and courage from forming bonds between people and king. If it is Hrothgar who cannot approach his own throne, for shame or because any retainer brave enough to face Grendel is slaughtered and so beyond a reward from his lord, the king's rightful place is empty. If the heavenly throne is referred to, Grendel's presence in the hall keeps the Danes from their previous

awareness of God by the destruction of their values. Finally, if it is the king who is kept from God's throne and the thoughts of God's mind, this is a reflection of his inability to wield his rightful power in the hall. If the lines in question are misplaced from between 110 and 111, and apply to Cain, they describe the cause and prototype of the condition in Grendel, and some of the other characters in the poem who commit crimes which exile them from God's and men's love.

The Danes are now definitely outside their previous order; Grendel's power has entered their souls:

> Hwilum hie geheton aet haergtrafum
> wigweorþunga, wordum baedon,
> þaet him gastbona geoce gefremede
> wiδ þeodþreaum. Swylc waes þeaw hyra,
> haeþenra hyht; helle gemundon
> in modsefan. Metod hie ne cuþon,
> /wuldres Waldend. 175-83

Tolkien's comment is apt here: "Man alien in a hostile world, engaged in a struggle which he cannot win while the world lasts, is assured that his foes are the foes also of Drihten."[25] In the reversal of values, the Danes mistake the enemy of their souls for a source of help. The next five and a half lines, often thought to be an interpolation, may have been an instance of the poet turning to address his audience. The poet's condemnation of the Danes' behaviour, although they were not Christians, has a biblical authority in Romans 1:18-23.[26] It is to be noted that in this instance of direct Christian moralizing there is no suggestion of allegory.

Now the inside/outside dichotomy begins to be expressed and developed in a new way, as the person of Beowulf becomes the centre of attention. A transfer of emphasis occurs, from the

hall to the hero, his soul, body and the space around him in which he has power like a king in a hall. Outside, as before with Heorot, are powers of chaos beyond his control. The flow of forces, however, is reversed: the hero is able to invade the outside.

That Beowulf comes from afar highlights his personal power. His band of retainers are presented, almost a part of their leader, as forming a united body around him. The poet describes the strong, direct movement of the Geat/s' arrival into the world of the Danes, and has the coastguard, Wulfgar and Hrothgar observe the heroic bearing of their leader; suspicions as to Beowulf's motives are easily dispelled by his speech. The war-gear of the Geats is animated by their strength and confidence:

> Eoforlic scionon
> ofer hleorbeor[g]an gehroden golde,
> fah ond fyrheard, - ferhwearde heold
> guþmod grimmon. 303-6

Their solidarity is repeatedly stressed as they approach the unfortunate king in the hall:

> Guman onetton,
> sigon aetsomne, oþ þaet hy [s]ael timbred
> geatolic ond goldfah ongytan mihton;
> 306-8

> Straet waes stanfah, stig wisode
> gumum aetgaedere. Guðbyrne scan
> heard hondlocen, hringiren scir
> song in searwum, þa hie to sele furðum
> in hyra gryregeatwum gangan cwomon.
> 320-24

> garas stodon,
> saemanna searo samod aetgaedere,
> aescholt ufan graeg; waes se irenþreat
> waepnum gewurþad. 328-31

Aras þa se rica, ymb him rinc manig,
þryðlic þegna heap; 399-400

Snyredon aetsomne, þa secg wisode,
under Heþrotes hrof; 402-3

Attributes of the Geats' armour and weapons express the men's inner qualities. Light gleaming from helmets (303), shining from the hall's gold workings in the eyes of the approaching warriors, and from their and Beowulf's war-gear (322, 405), is the only imagery of brightness since the Creation-song, except for the sun rising during the Geats' journey. The last mention of the adornments of Heorot was in the collocation sincfage sel sweartum nihtum, indicating the darkness the monster brings on the hall and the destruction of the values of courage and loyalty associated with treasure. Sound, too, contrasts ominously (for Grendel, that is) with the gyddum geomore which have been sung about Hrothgar's court: the sound of armour, "bright ring-iron" (226, 322-23). Brightness and song approach Heorot once more. Beowulf's armour is closely associated with the life it protects. His initial speech to Hrothgar is introduced by a mention of his mail-coat (on him byrne scan,/ searonet seowed smiþes orþancum, 405-6) and ends with his grim humour concerning his possible death at the hands of Grendel, requiring the byrnie to be returned to Hygelac empty of its hero, who would have been eaten.

Hrothgar describes Grendel's devastating effect on his retainers in Heorot (480-88), but the Geats sit down with the Danes on the previously bloodstained benches, and song is lifted from within the hall, as before:

Þa waes Geatmaecgum geador aetsomne
on beorsele benc gerymed;
þaer swiðferhþe sittan eodon,
þryðum dealle. Þegn nytte beheold,
se þe on handa baer hroden ealowaege,
scencte scir wered. Scop hwilum sang
hador on Heorote. Þaer waes haeleða dream,
duguð unlytel Dena ond Wedera. 491-98

With the entry of Beowulf, the hall-world has been re-created as it should be.

As indicated by the prayers of some of the Danes to idols, darkness has invaded the souls of the hall's inhabitants. The taunt from Unferth manifests another aspect of the incursion of evil into the hall-world which Beowulf must overcome; which, indeed, any king must overcome. Unferth's fratricide links him with Grendel, through the mutual association with Cain. Disloyalty, greed and murder, and the destruction of peace, surface thematically throughout the poem, in Heremod, Ongentheow, Finn and Hengest, as well as general portrayals of broken kinship bonds and fleeing retainers. This world of fragile human character and will is one held together by Beowulf while he lives. The swimming-contest with Breca, which Unferth chooses as a subject of contention, is part of a pattern of the hero's behaviour: the invasion and purging of dark depths. Beowulf's reply shows that his strength was in fact greater than Breca's, since his delay and fight with sea-monsters required more than Breca's earlier arrival on land; it also indicates that his wit is as good as his present opponent's. The immediate problem is brought suddenly to the fore near the end of Beowulf's speech, in which he attacks Unferth's own condition of guilt, cowardice and posturing:

...ðu þinum broðrum to banan wurde,
heafodmaegum; þaes þu in helle scealt
werhðo dreogan, þeah þin wit duge.
Secge ic þe to soðe, sunu Ecglafes,
þaet naefre Gre[n]del swa fela gryra gefremede,
atol aeglaeca ealdre þinum,
hynðo on Heorote, gif þin hige waere,
sefa swa searogrim, swa þu self talast; 587-94

The hero counters this condition with an emphasis on his own ability to fight it and Grendel, ending his reply with the imagery of light, which is transferred to the interior of the hall immediately afterwards, in the form of joy, hope, and the laughter of men in response to Beowulf's passing this test of character:

'... Ac ic him Geata sceal
eafoð ond ellen ungeara nu,
guþe gebeodan. Gaeþ eft se þe mot
to medo monig, siþþan morgenleoht
ofer ylda bearn oþres dogores,
sunne sweglwered suþan scineð!'

Þa waes on salum sinces brytta
gamolfeax ond guðrof; geoce gelyfde
brego Beorht-Dena; gehyrde on Beowulfe
folces hyrde faestraedne geþoht.

Þaer waes haeleþa hleahtor, hlyn swynsode,
word waeron wynsume. 601-12

There is continual contrast and comparison of events in the hall, past, present and possible future. As the poet described the building of Heorot, he referred to its destruction (81-81). Hrothgar's former power as king is set against his condition of age and despair when Beowulf comes to him. The earlier joy in the hall is recalled when the Danes and Geats sit down together. The Danes encounter, for the first time, hope that their persecution will be ended; but Beowulf speaks of the possibility of his death (445-55; 636-38). The past blood-stained mornings are described by Hrothgar (480-88) and

Beowulf (591-601), yet the hero vows that the next morning will see Grendel's defeat (601-6). The words of strength and confidence, and the hope they inspire, are countered by a constant awareness of the degree of power that will be involved in the struggle for the hall. The end of the day is marked by the tension-filled contrast of Beowulf's gilpcwide (640) to Wealhtheow, inside the hall charged with Grendel's past ravages combined with the presence of the hero, and the poet's re-introduction of the monster's actual presence, waiting outside for the sun to go down, followed by the sudden rising of the company to retire as darkness approaches:

> Þa waes eft swa aer inne on healle
> þryðword sprecen, ðeod on saelum,
> sigefolca sweg, oþ þaet semninga
> sunu Healfdenes secean wolde
> aefenraeste; wiste þaem ahlaecan
> to þaem heahsele hilde geþinged,
> siððan hie sunnan leoht geseon meahton,
> oþ ðe nipende niht ofer ealle,
> scaduhelma gesceapu scriðan cwoman
> wan under wolcnum. Werod eall aras. 642-51

The tension continues to grow, as the two settings and their respective antagonists, are drawn nearer and nearer by the poet. Hrothgar makes a point of leaving the hall in Beowulf's charge (652-61); Beowulf accepts the 'best of houses', taking off the bright war-gear the poet has brought to our attention, and the retainers who seemed so much a part of Beowulf's powerful presence are now a group of worried men, each of whom fears that he will never see his homeland again (671-96). The result of this stripping of the hero is a baring of his power, rather than his vulnerability. Grendel's approach, found dull by Klaeber because we are constantly informed of the outcome,[27] is found terrifying by Brodeur.[28] It is true that we are never

in doubt about the identity of the victor; but we are kept much too close to the action by the poet to be aloof from the approaching violence or the actual fight. Inside and outside flash back and forth before the audience as Grendel changes from a shadow out in the dark somewhere, to a purposefully striding figure under the clouds, to an expectant monster on the doorstep, while Beowulf waits, watches and is held firmly within the will of God. Then, as Grendel tears open the door, we see him from inside the hall, and the two points of view coalesce. The sheer physical strength of the monster, combined with his sinister, more mysterious aspects (such as being the kin of Cain and the devil, and untouchable by swords) are immediately demonstrated by his sudden devouring of Hondscio by the door. Suspense is maintained by an awareness of what Beowulf must be to overcome such a creature with his bare hands. The violence of their meeting is shocking because the audience has been under increasing compulsion to brace themselves for it. The seriousness of the fight's location, inside the rightful, usurped home of man, provides a deeper significance to the suspense and shock. As Grendel stands, devouring a man, he is still in possession of the hall - momentarily.

> Destruction of society and of the individual, tearing open the hall and tearing apart the man, become parallel destructive acts. This murdering demon not only paralyzes the functioning of society by occupying its vital centre, he eats men.[29]

No sooner does Beowulf lay hold of Grendel than the monster wants to escape; as ownership of the hall is suddenly reversed, the tension gives way to relief. As the proper order is restored, the monster is impelled to return to his proper place,

the moors of his exile and spiritual condition:

> Hyge waes him hinfus, wolde on heolstor fleon,
> secan deofla gedraeg;
>
> 755-56

The music, which in the poem so far has taken the form of the song of Creation and ~~those~~ the spreading tales of Grendel's ravages in Heorot, is now varied on the theme of reversal (with the same grim humour as Beowulf's reassurance of Hrothgar regarding the disposal of the hero's remains). While the fight is in progress, and Beowulf's retainers strike Grendel with their useless swords, not touching him, the North-Danes (ironically at this moment outside their own hall) hear the song of its deliverance:

> Sweg up astag
> niwe geneahhe: Norð-Denum stod
> atelic egesa, anra gehwylcum
> þara þe of wealle wop gehyrdon,
> gryreleoð galan Godes andsacan,
> sigeleas sang, sar wanigean
> helle haefton.
>
> 782-88

With no home in the hall, nor even in his own body now (809-12), the monster runs off into the dark, and death. He is a captive of hell now (helle haefton), rather than fyrena hyrde (750), and hell receives him (852). His grip on Heorot and the lives of the Danes is broken; his arm, torn off and pinned under man's roof, expresses this eloquently:

> Þaet waes tacen sweotol,
> syþðan hildedeor hond alegde,
> earm ond eaxle -þaer waes eal geador
> Grendles grape- under geapne hr(of).
>
> 833-36

It is stressed that Beowulf has not won the hall as a possession; he could have been a replacement for Grendel (albeit an initially good one), but the hall is not his rightful possession, either. Instead, he re-establishes the rightful king (862-63). Beowulf,

at this point in his career of fighting battles with the forces of chaos is yet a restorer of natural order, not a holder of it as he later becomes. Goldsmith, drawing a parallel with the Vita S. Antonii, and the overcoming of demons which represents "a temptation repulsed," remarks, "The association of the physical monster with this inner conflict provides, it seems to me, a sufficient hint to an allegorically-minded poet that the death of Grendel could be used as part of an allegory of temptation."[30] Here, surely, the inner conflict is not the hero's, but the hall's, and the hall-world's, as the Finn and Hengest episode is about to illustrate. Later, the inner/outer view changes focus (see below), but even in the dragon episode, Beowulf's inner state is not one of temptation (he could hardly act otherwise and remain the man we know him), but uncertainty.

The Danes emerge from their helplessness into freedom, strolling through Heorot looking up at Grendel's arm, galloping their horses wherever they wish - even up to the mere - and repairing their battered hall. At this point, the music is varied again, leading us into the realms of heroic history, as the scop sings of Beowulf, then Sigemund and the dragon. Such deeds comprise an extension of heroism into the dark region of time. Now Heorot itself is de-emphasized, and the idea of the hall as a centre of organization is developed by a look at complexities arising from the hall-oriented values themselves, in the lay of Finn and Hengest. The feeling of basic security within the hall (newly re-established for the Danes) is now undermined. The kind of kinship-failure of which the monster is a figure, and which has been in the background from the

beginning of the poem (the destruction of Heorot; Unferth's crime) unfolds in a drama. Sharing a hall under the pressure of hatred cannot work; the turbulence of the human spirit prevents it. The building in Finnesburh was constructed to house a mistake, a situation which should never have happened. Treachery to kinsmen and guests brings about treachery to a dead lord, by the retainers who live with his killer rather than avenge him; such a truce can only break down, as tension between the outsiders and the Frisians increases. Within the episode itself, 'inside' and 'outside' are interdeveloped in such a way as to fuse the latent conflict in the hall with the inner state of Hengest, during the winter he keeps the truce. The winter weather which is the cause of his delay also describes his conflict of spirit. Whether one accepts MS elne unflitme (1129) or the emendation to eal unhlitme, Hengest's "utter sincerity" or "total misery" is bent to the breaking point in a struggle of opposite forces. The inward motion towards his homeland, eard gemunde (1129), is forestalled by the weather, ne meahte ... drifan etc. In the landscape itself, an opposition of forces is manifested, in which violent wind and waves are frozen, 'locked':

holm storme weol,
won wiþ winde, winter yþe beleac
isgebinde... 1131-36

Following immediately is a description of the spring break-up, bringing with it an audience expectation of a similar release of tension in the men. Here, simultaneously similarity and difference are expressed, as in the above mind/weather parallel. The release of man and earth from the power of winter occurs, a

natural process; but the glorious brightness, wuldertorhtan weder (1136) has no parallel in the mind of Hengest, whose thoughts are still on the waelfagne winter (1128), and vengeance. The natural order has been twice-broken, transgression of the duties of hospitality and kinship leading to the 'impossible truce' between the enemies; and now vengeance is carried out. Though there is no mention of Grendel by the poet, there is an implicit likeness in the conflict brought about by the presence of 'the stranger' in the hall, and the unnatural assault on a brother kin-group through marriage. The difference is that here, the chaos and darkness is within the human beings; but it attacks their hall-society and their spirits as violently as Grendel.

Leoð waes asungen (1159); the scene moves back to Heorot, where the emphasis is on present solidarity, the trust between kin, and even of Unferth who is known to have killed his brother. This seems uneasy in the light of the audience's awareness of the coming destruction of Heorot by flame through ecghete between father and son-in-law. Many critics have taken this scene as a reminder of the destruction to come; this is no doubt part of its purpose, but it also shows a time of peace, a well-lit moment in history. Since the only harmony possible is momentary, one should not take ultimate destruction as reflecting unfavourably on such moments, but rather as increasing their value. Wealhtheow's speech is poised between warning and appeal, as she strives to keep the present harmony in a natural balance. Having heard that Hrothgar would adopt Beowulf as a son, she compels her lord to be mindful of the present peace, the immense value

of having something to give, and the importance of who receives it:

> Heorot is gefaelsod,
> beahsele beorhta; bruc þenden þu mote
> manigra medo, ond þinum magum laef
> folc ond rice, þonne ðu forð scyle,
> metodsceaft seon. 1176-80

The queen affirms that treasure should reward heroes, but also that a kingdom should be taken up by the king's heirs. Wealhtheow's children would be in danger of the fate suffered by Hildeburh's family in the conflicting loyalties which would result from an heir's passing-over. The uncertainty of life itself increases the value of such moments as the present, as Wealhtheow's words to Hrothgar, bruc þenden þu mote, and Beowulf, Wes, þenden þu lifige,/ aeþeling, eadig! (1224-25) remind the old king and the young warrior. She asks Beowulf to aid her sons in the future, again stressing the present harmony.

The unexpected intrusion of Grendel's mother wrenches the newly-established order from the hall. Her visit is linked to the Finnesburh episode in that it is motivated by vengeance. The phrase wyrd ne cuþon (1233), applied to the men as they all prepare for the night, the retainers in their armour ready to protect their lord at a moment's notice, even at this happy time, is reminiscent of sorg ne cuþon (119), describing the sleeping hall-men before Grendel's first attack. The poet has led his audience and characters into a more complex world of inner good and outer evil than one in which no sorrow has yet entered. Beowulf, who stayed awake and vigilant, met Grendel alone and unarmed, yet defeated him; here, a monster much less powerful than Grendel carries off Hrothgar's dearest counsellor

and friend despite armed vigilance (1243-50). It is Beowulf himself who is needed, with his multiple strengths. The emphasis on his person began with the coastguard's recognition of him as extraordinary in appearance, and was followed by impressive descriptions of the protection provided by his armour and retainers; it was stressed in a different way by the hero's stripping himself of armour and weapons to meet Grendel, where Beowulf was insisting on the right of man to occupy his own hall, and where the hero's personal strength is greater than that provided by weapons. His invasion of the outside is marked by his arrival at the mere, where he resolutely puts on his armour.

The descriptions of the mere by Hrothgar (1345-79) and the poet (1409-41) contribute to the development of the inside/outside pattern. As we have seen above, the hall as a safe 'interior' has been redeemed, but that redemption has been qualified. The invading force of Grendel has been destroyed, but the poet has shown other forces, identified with Grendel, which can destroy the security of the hall through its own inhabitants. Embodying the threatening surroundings and unforeseen danger (like the dragon) is Grendel's mother, who disappears with her victim into the outer region again.

There had been discussion as to whether the mere is meant to be a lake, a sea-arm, the sea-shore or a pool below a waterfall;[31] a resemblance to medieval descriptions of hell has also been noted.[32] A resemblance to hell is entirely in keeping with the nature of the place and its inhabitants. Mephistopheles, in Doctor Faustus, Act II, defines hell as it is illustrated in

Beowulf:

> Within the bowels of these elements,
> Where we are tortured and remain forever.
> Hell hath no limits, nor is circumscribed
> In one self place, for where we are is hell,
> And where hell is there must we ever be...

The point is made in Beowulf that the setting is less important than the presence of the hero in determining the location of the central good, which was before within the hall. Though the description of the mere is detailed, it is difficult to put the details together imagistically into a complete scene (see below, the tree/Cross imagery in The Dream of the Rood, in chapter four). The quantity of certain kinds of details indicates that the poet is more interested in conveying what kind of place the mere is, rather than what it looks like. Perhaps because the picture remains somehow 'impossible', it is recognizable as a place of chaos; the place one dare not explore, of unknown depths (1366-67; 1377-79) and baffling extremes (frosty trees, storms, fire and water). Though it is not frequented by men, all its horrific sights may be recounted. The main impression is one of otherness; its nature is alien to man, the opposite of the hall's. In Hrothgar's description, the difference is drawn clearly in terms of habitation and kind, between the humans (londbuend, leode min,/ seleraedende, 1345-46; foldbuende, 1355) and the monsters (mearcstapan moras healdan,/ ellorgaestas, 1348-49; ides onlicnes... earmsceapen/ on weres waestmum wraeclastas traed, 1350-52; dyrna gasta... dygel lond, 1357). It is perhaps a coincidence that the poet chooses to bring in the hart on the shore, but it is in keeping with the alien nature

of the mere that it is the namesake of the hornreced Heorot, heorot hornum trum (1369) which refuses to enter the water even to save its life, preferring to face the hunting hounds. The mere is not far away in miles, Hrothgar says (1361-62); it is very far away in nature. It shares characteristics with the dragon's cave: nearness to human habitation, yet secret; depth, loneliness, steepness and narrowness of access; the hero passes through an imposing landscape consisting of a great deal of stone, and water of an unnatural kind.

Beowulf declares that he will take up the mission of vengeance; with this he comforts and assures the sorrowing Hrothgar:

> 'Ne sorga, snotor guma! Selre bið aeghwaem,
> þaet he his freond wrece, þonne he fela murne.
> 1384-85

The uncertainty of life, just expressed by Wealhtheow in the context of the feasting after Grendel's defeat, and the security of the hall, is re-expressed by Beowulf:

> Ure aeghwylc sceal ende gebidan
> worulde lifes; wyrce se þe mote
> domes aer deaþe; þaet bið drihtguman
> unlifgendum aefter selest. 1386-89

His advice to Hrothgar directs him outward, into action; Beowulf promises that no obstacle will deter him, and Hrothgar leaps to his feet thanking God. The hero has succeeded in bringing the king out of an inner darkness into hope again.

Upon arrival at the mere, after the shock of finding Aeschere's head on the cliff, there is much noise and confusion as horns are blown, nicors thrash about furiously in the water, and one is killed from the shore and drawn in. They all stare

at it. Such disorganized and relatively unproductive behaviour contrasts with that of the hero. Beowulf is busy putting on his armour, in preparation for his descent into the mere itself in search of bigger game. The protective function of each piece of his gear is described, especially in its relation to the mere:

> scolde herebyrne hondum gebroden,
> sid ond searofah sund cunnian,
> seo ðe bancofan beorgan cuþe,
> þaet him hildegrap hreþe ne mihte,
> eorres inwitfeng aldre gesceþðan;
> ac se hwita helm hafelan werede,
> se þe meregrundas mengan scolde,
> secan sundgebland since geweorðad... 1443ff.

Danger has been stressed in a way it was not when Beowulf faced Grendel in Heorot; then the poet informed us that Metod nolde (706) allow him to be killed. Also there was the hero's own humour and gilpcwide. The tone of his speech (1474-91) is more serious here, and even Unferth, who taunted and criticized him, lends him a sword. Although Heorot was occupied by Grendel, it was still home ground of a sort; here, perhaps, bonds between men are necessary because they are men in an alien environment. Again, talk of treasure has the inevitable clause breac þonne moste (1487) attached, with death possibly imminent.

Beowulf's dramatic disappearance into the water, although a voluntary move, is expressed in terms of the water's action rather than the man's: brimwylm onfeng/ hilderince (1494-95). Though in the hall he could take hold of the forces of death and chaos, here they take hold of him; the sea-creatures assail him and the monster herself seizes him:

Grap þa togeanes, guðrinc gefeng
atolan clommum; no þy aer in gescod
halan lice; hring utan ymbbearh,
þaet heo þone fyrdhom ðurfon ne mihte,
locene leoðosyrcan laþan fingrum.
Baer þa seo brimwyl[f], þa heo to botme com,
hringa þengel to hofe sinum,
swa he ne mihte -no he þaes modig waes-
waepna gewealdan, ac hine wundra þaes fela
swe[n]cte on sunde, saedeor monig
hildetuxum heresyrcan braec,
ehton aglaecan. 1501-12

The person of Beowulf, well and thoughtfully protected, resists invasion by the murderous claws, but he is unable to use his sword, and is dragged down to the alien hall rather than entering it by his own power. Though more protected than when facing Grendel, he is more vulnerable; it is he who is the stranger here.

The difference in patterns behind the two fights manifests the significance of the change which has taken place in setting, and in the nature of the task; this change is essential to the hero's progress in movement from area in his lifetime. When Grendel approaches the human dwelling for the last time, the poet builds up a series of contrasting expectations in the monster, the hero and the audience, creating tension despite the audience's awareness of the successful outcome. Grendel expects a feast of slaughter; Beowulf, to challenge the monster who does not expect him; the audience, tremendous violence, and to experience victory with the hero. In the mere-setting, we are relayed moment-to-moment perceptions by the antagonists of things in the environment; Beowulf, by the time day breaks, sees the bottom (1495-96); the mere-wife discerns an alien being from above, ufan (1500); he perceives that he has been

taken to a kind of hall where water is kept out by a roof (1512-15); sees firelight (1516) and, by it, the monster (1518); finds that his sword will not bite (1522); sees the ealdsweord eotenisc (1557) among the armour; a light shines as though from heaven after he kills the monster, and by it he sees around him (1570-72); the men above see the blood rising from Grendel's body and think that Beowulf is dead (1591-99). Continuous uncertainty is expressed - whether or not the audience has heard the story before and knows the outcome - by the constant arrival of new elements into the scene, the changing viewpoint as Beowulf is momentarily overthrown or gains an advantage. His war-gear continues to protect him, but he is unable to carry out his initial attack, first in the monster's grip, then when his sword fails, and when he finds himself pinned to the floor. He is forced to be on the defensive, to adapt, even to the point of throwing away a weapon unfailing in the world above but useless here. By finding another, too big for a man, and thus using the monster-weapon against one of them, he masters the alien place entirely.

As he chops off Grendel's head, the light changes to that which efne swa of hefene hadre scineð/ rodores candel (1571-72). The setting is naturalized by Beowulf's accomplishment, just as Heorot was gefaelsod (1176). This is also expressed by the melting of the sword:

> Þa þaet sweord ongan
> aefter heaþoswate hildegicelum,
> wigbil wanian; þaet waes wundra sum,
> þaet hit eal gemealt ise gelicost,
> ðonne forstes bend Faeder onlaeteð,
> onwindeð waelrapas, se geweald hafað
> saela ond maela; þaet is soð Metod. 1605-11

The compound hildegicelum describes an interim state between the ealdsweord and the eotenisc powers which hold it in existence. The wonder is that it melts in the same way as a timely, natural event occurs within God's seasonal order. The hall under the water, the alien world with its weapon, has been released from its state of otherness. The simile itself extends beyond wonder at a significant likeness into gnomic statement, which is also timely at this moment (see also Burlin's remark, above, p. 20); such statements, addressed to the audience, generally express commonly held truths about necessity, wyrd or God's will, three factors which are interrelated. The audience has it thus underlined that Beowulf is moving with God's will, in harmony with wyrd, following an order which is not as obvious as that of the seasons, but as sure. There is a notable contrast here with the weather-imagery in the Finnesburh episode. There, discord between the kinds of release in men and in a seasonal change stressed the unnaturalness of their conflict, and how much death was brought about by being out of the right order of existence. The effect of Beowulf's action as expressed in the simile in ll. 1605-11 carries over into the following lines: the waves are gefaelsod (1620), as Heorot was. The alliterative link of lifdagas with laenan (1622), though the adjective modifies gesceaft, puts the uncertainties of the hero's encounter with the mere-wife into the larger perspective of the fate of the entire creation, which can be cleansed or set in order, but not redeemed from the effects of time. This aspect of the inside/outside pattern will be discussed in the section concerning the death of the hero.

The action returns to land. When Beowulf entered the mere, it was an alien element, against which his armour had to protect him (1443ff.); as he leaves it, he is in his own element, the poet using sea-language for the hero and his retainers, and for the trophy of Grendel's head:

> Com þa to lande lidmanna helm
> swiðmod swimman; saelace gefeah,
> maegenbyrþenne þara þe he him mid haefde.
> 1623-25

Instead of being named as one of the fold- or londbuende, as the poet called the race of men when differentiating it from that of the ellorgaestas, Beowulf is a master of one element arriving into another, under his own power this time, with a head and a sword-hilt. His men surround him, thank God for his return, and strip off the now unnecessary armour. The way to the mere was on the enge anpaðas, uncuð gelad (1410); the way back follows the cuþe straete (1634). After Grendel's head is brought to the king, Beowulf assures him that at last, truly, all can sleep in Heorot without fear - at least, without fear from monster, on þa healfe (1675).

Hrothgar looks at the old sword-hilt, the ealde laf (1688) upon which past strife is written. The old king is led to think about the future of the man who brought him this heirloom; there he sees an extension of Beowulf's fame, and how through his wisdom and goodness he will be a comforter and helper of his people (1703-9). In the same breath, the alliteration stresses both haeleðum to helpe and Heremod, who became the opposite, though granted joy and power by God. In the end he was a killer, dreamleas (1720) and alone; he is thus identified

with Grendel. Though Beowulf has just destroyed the invading monsters, the theme of the invasion of a centre of life by death is now expressed in other terms than those of monster and hall. Emphasis on the hero's person and protection has in the last episode underlined his vulnerability, although he triumphs. Heremod turns to waelfealle and deaðcwalum among his own people (1711-12) until

> ...he ana hwearf,
> maere þeoden, mondreamum from,
> 1714-15

> ...him on ferhþe greow
> breosthord blodreow;
> 1718-19

The pattern of his behaviour is the same as that of Grendel, who moves into Heorot, except that it is the king himself who usurps his own function as giver: nalles beagas geaf/ Denum aefter dom (1719-20). Like Grendel, Heremod suffered exile and ignoble death for his crimes.

This pattern is made more explicit, and developed in another way in the next section of Hrothgar's speech (1724-57), in which he describes in detail how a powerful and successful king's interior is destroyed. The poet's word-choice is characterized by division of and movement through space, just as in the earlier part of the poem he described the delineation of the hall, surroundings and movements of Grendel and Beowulf through them. God, says Hrothgar, may give a king both land and the rule over men, eard ond eorlscipe (1727). The blessed and gifted man has great freedom of movement within this domain, as God

on lufan laeteð hworfan
monnes modgeþonc maeran cynnes,
seleð him on eþle eorþan wynne
to healdanne hleoburh wera,
gedeð hiṃ swa gewealdene worolde daelas,
side rice, þaet he his sylfa ne maeg
his unsnyttrum ende geþencean.
1728-34

All the freedom and space has, however, a limit, though it may seem to the man that his own will controls his world, him eal worold/ wendeð on willan (1738-39). Irving here notes the relationship of time to the inside/outside pattern and remarks a difference in this passage from that in the rest of the poem:

> But it is worth observing that the "until" construction here suggests something different from what is suggested by other examples in the poem. There such external forces as death, old age or attack by evil creatures, all aspects of what we call fate and all beyond human control, are seen as arriving from outside to disrupt or destroy human happiness.[33]

He goes on to say that in the sermon, the "until" is an internalized system of moral cause and effect, and that this pattern is "exceptional" in the poem. However, this particular expression of the major symbolic structural pattern of the poem has been gradually introduced by the shift in emphasis from the hall to the hero, and is thus all the more integrated into the total work. Parallels with instances of Grendel's intrusions are evident. The hall before the monster came has an analogue in the unopposed occupation of the God-given domain, the side rice, where the soul's guardian falls asleep, heedless of danger:

he þaet wyrse ne con-,
oð þaet him on innan oferhygda dael
weaxeð ond wridað; þonne se weard swefeð,
sawele hyrde; bið se slaep to faest,
bisgum gebunden, bona swiðe neah,—
1739-43

The keepers of Heorot behaved in the same way. The first time Grendel arrived there, he

> Fand þa ðaer inne aeþelinga gedriht
> swefan aefter symble; sorg ne cuðon,
> wonsceaft wera. 118-20

Again, when he came to Heorot the last time, all except Beowulf were asleep: Sceotend swaefon,/ þa þaet hornreced healdan scolden (703-4). Sleep at a time like this has been seen as a symptom of spiritual weakness or decadence,[34] as it is certainly implied to be in Hrothgar's speech. The killer of the soul is a werga gast (1747) like Grendel (133), who also arrives initially during a period of prosperity and joy. As the poet showed in ll. 178-80, Grendel's power invades souls; since swords could not harm him, great strength of character was required to face and overcome him, as well as physical power. In ll. 1742-47, the imagery is that of an armed attack on the soul, the penetration of weapons under helm where the man does not know how to protect himself, him bebeorgan ne con. Beowulf's wakefulness in Heorot, and his thorough protection when he descends into the mere might indicate a capability to attain a balance between courage and humility in the hero's character, the knowledge of how he is strong or weak in different circumstances.

Hrothgar describes the effect of the growth of pride. The man whose kingdom was so wide now lessens in spirit: he begins to hoard as his property what God granted him to share, þinceð him to lytel, þaet he lange heold (1748). Time destroys his body; he does not control that, as Grendel, too, found (812). Hrothgar cautions Beowulf to protect himself against this kind

of enmity; this would only be a natural extension of the hero's knowledge of his weakness or strength, already demonstrated. Speaking from his own experience, Hrothgar recounts his own history of kingship under wolcnum...geond þysne middangeard (1770ff.), held with spear and sword until he could count no one as an enemy. However, Grendel came, the alliteration of ll. 1774-76 stressing the change. In the king's own successfully defended eþle came an edwenden; the grief after joy, gyrn aefter gomene was Grendel himself. Hrothgar calls him ealdgewinna, ingenga min, personalizing the "in-comer" as his own particular enemy; yet ealdgewinna, "ancient enemy" reminds the audience of the monster's kinship with the devil as well as his long persecution of the king. Grendel, although he invaded Hrothgar's hall, brought despair with him, and thus has enough similarity to the invader of the soul described by the king that the two are implicitly identified. This does not mean that the poet did so with artistic intention, rather that the kingdom and life of the king were felt to be inseparable. The two are fused in a common pattern here, basic and powerful: that of the invasion by evil of the central good of man during sleep.

Hrothgar thanks God, and advises Beowulf to go to the feast, promising more treasure-giving in the morning. Everything in the hall is, at the moment, as good as it could possibly be. The fall of night is redeemed from its sinister connotations of invasion and evil by a break in the previous pattern of its description:

> Nihthelm geswearc
> deorc ofer dryhtgumum. Duguð eal aras;
> wolde blondenfeaxe beddes neosan,
> gamela Scylding. 1789-92

The above lines parallel 649-51; there, however, before Grendel's visit, nipende niht ofer ealle had terrifying implications. Here, Beowulf is present, and has made not only the hall but its surroundings safe. The hero is called rumheort, the adjectival rum- belonging to the language of spaciousness as in Hrothgar's exhortation, with the best connotations. Gaest inne swaef (1800) no longer brings with it an audience-expectation of attack; the gaest is a welcome one, and the sleep deserved. The apparent oddness of the poet's choice of the raven as herald of the morning is thus resolved: a battle-bird which usually cries over the slain, announces instead heofones wynne (1801). Often before, morning was met by a fitting scene for a raven, such as during the ravages of Grendel, his mother, or the sight that met Hildeburh's eyes; but the forces that cause such slaughter have been banished from the hall and the hearts of men at this point. The darkness itself, and the raven as herald of slaughter, have been redeemed as images; the world is, however, momentarily, free of such evil.

Beowulf's return home brings him into the role he plays as king for the next fifty years: "... in the first part of the poem Beowulf has been presented as the ideal retainer and champion; in the second, he is the ideal king."[35] The extension of a kingly, protected space, as exemplified by Scyld and Hrothgar, is first accomplished by the hero at Heorot, before he comes back to the centre of his own world as the retainer of Hygelac. Here, everything is portrayed as being in its proper order, the hall betlic, the king bregorof, the

queen wis welþungen (1925ff.). The queen may also be a threat to her people if she is proud and cruel rather than fulfilling her role as peacemaker; the poet points out that Hygd is no danger to her people. Beowulf's analysis of the political situation at Hrothgar's court shows him in a new light. Where he has previously been the centre of attention himself, or had his own thoughts concentrated on his tests of character and strength, he is here revealed as a perceptive judge of other men and circumstances when he is not the focal point. Hygelac gives him treasure (which he has also given to Hygelac), and a kingly place. The fact that this is given, rather than gained by conquest or the death of the king, sets the style of Beowulf's future reign. After coming home, he gradually becomes the centre of that world, beginning with seven thousand hides of land. Only after the king and his son are dead does he receive the kingship (2207-8). Beowulf is unmarked by the greed and pride Hrothgar warned him against, nor do the tendencies of a Grendel or Heremod (2179-83) grow in him during the next fifty years of his rule, though he is granted prosperity and power. Time and space move around him, a fixed strong point at the centre of his realm, as opposed to the emphasis on his movement, as a mobile hero, between inside and outside. Now, the balanced opposition of ends and beginnings noted by Tolkien[36] begins to make itself felt. The repeating pattern in the weave of history begins again:

> he geheold tela
> fiftig wintra -waes ða frod cyning,
> eald eþelweard-, oð ðaet an ongan
> deorcum nihtum draca rics[i]an, 2208-11

It was just so when Grendel, Hrothgar's ingenga, arrived:

> Swa ða drihtguman dreamum lifdon,
> eadiglice, oð ðaet an ongan
> fyrene frė[m]man feond on helle; 99-101

Grendel, too, reigned in the hall (rixode, 144-46).

The dragon's hall, like the monsters' at the bottom of the mere, is outside ordered, human-inhabited space, though paradoxically within Beowulf's realm. The accidental invasion of the dragon's home by the fleeing slave ironically repeats the pattern in ll. 99-101 and 2208-11; the dragon, too, was sleeping like the men in Heorot and the proud and greedy ruler's conscience:

> Swa se ðeodsceaða þreo hund wintra
> heold on hrusan hordaerna sum
> eacencraeftig, oð ðaet hyne an abealch
> mon on mode; 2278-81

This cross-movement against wyrd sets in motion another balanced opposition in the poem: as Beowulf moved with wyrd in the beginning, this counter-movement draws him into it, and his death. Like forgetting the existence of Grendel's mother, the existence of a sleeping dragon within the realm is a fatal human error which cannot, due to the ultimate power of time over memory, be avoided. And, although the stolen cup is used as a peace offering, it releases chaos into Beowulf's kingdom.

The history of the buried gold is that of a people's death. The story of the last survivor comes like a cold draught out of the underground hall which is their grave, opened again in such a way as to free the forces of death. In ll. 2232-40, alliteration sets the scene first for reminiscence: eorð(hu)se, aergestreona; geardagum, gumena. Then, the alliteration stresses not only the end of this people, but that of the hero,

into whose being, through his kingdom, death makes its way: deore maðmas, deað; lytel faec, longgestreona. The treasure costs the life of the king, and he and his people possess the ancient gold for only a short time. The survivor's speech looks from the past into a future of decay and anonymity. There is, perhaps, a memory of the keepers of Heorot falling asleep, those who should have guarded it against the approaching sceadugenga (703); but here sleep has come to them all, finally, and is associated with decomposition:

> feormynd swefað,
> þa ðe beadogriman bywan sceoldon;
> ge swylce seo herepad, sio aet hilde gebad
> ofer borda gebraec bite irena,
> brosnað aefter beorne. 2256-60

The poet makes the point that armour is of no protection against time. The survivor's speech is, in word-choice, like any of the hall-scenes in the poem, except for the negatives. The eorðhuse is peopled with absences, echoing with stilled movements and silenced sounds. The voice itself, given a momentary life of sorts, dies out. The impression created by the passage is that of the effacing power of time, the oppression weighing heavily on a fragile, shortlived vitality. The dragon occupies the earth-house, and behaves according to his nature: he greedily falls asleep on the treasure, rendering it useless to any of the living who might employ it within the ordered system of generous reward for good deeds. Both mere and dragon-cave are underworlds from which those who descend do not normally rise again. The mere has an alien, lurid atmosphere created by imagery of the bizarre; Beowulf's descent is into a chaotic 'otherwhere'. The barrow, however, is all too familiar: the

hero goes down to the grave-mouth, the final boundary between inside and outside, and calls death out. Though the mere is surrounded by cliffs (steap stanhliðo, stige nearwe, 1409; harne stane, 1415; holmclife, 1421), the mere itself is a fluid boundary crossed by the hero. The outstanding imagery of the barrow and dragon-fight is of stone, cramping and channelling Beowulf to a narrow entrance into the grave. Stan and some related compounds occur twelve times in the poem (320, 887, 1208 1409, 1415, 2213, 2288, 2540, 2545, 2553, 2557, 2718, 2744), eight times in the environment of the dragon's dwelling and the fight there. The other four instances are in the description of the mere, once referring to the paved way to Heorot, and once to the place Sigemund went alone, like Beowulf, to kill the dragon:

> he under harne stan,
> aepelinges bearn ana genedde
> frecne daede, 887-89

The lack of the conspicuous kind of atmosphere-making by the poet as that in Hrothgar's description of the mere here in the barrow-setting (indeed in the entire second half of the poem) contributes to the development of the inside/outside pattern as it concerns the hero's life and death. Irving notes:

> Part II takes place outdoors. The only hall even mentioned is Beowulf's royal hall, and it is mentioned only because the dragon burns it to the ground at the outset. Consequently the characters seem as lonely and exposed as the men on the heath in King Lear.[37]

The atmosphere is not thick with darkness, terror and blood, but thin and cold. Through the only chink in the hero's well-protected being, old age - se pe oft manegum scod (1887) - it penetrates. His hall is burnt, and his spirit deeply troubled,

The forces of chaos have been roused. Goldsmith's interpretation of the hall as symbol does not do justice to the importance of the hall's burning on the hero.[38]

> Þa waes Biowulfe broga gecyðed,
> snude to soðe, þaet his sylfes ham,
> bolda selest brynewylmum mealt,
> gifstol Geata. Þaet ðam godan waes
> hreow on hreðre, hygesorga maest;
> wende se wisa, þaet he Wealdende
> ofer ealde riht ecean Dryhtne
> bitre gebulge; breost innan weoll
> þeostrum geþoncum, swa him geþywe ne waes.
> 2324-32
>
> Him waes geomor sefa,
> waefre ond waelfus, 2419-20

The two passages above show the identification of Beowulf's hall with his own being, and an association of outer and inner conflict (noted by Goldsmith with a different interpretation, above, p. 37), which we would distinguish as physical and psychological here and in the Finnesburh episode. In ll. 2324-32 the poet expresses Beowulf's trouble, in his kingdom and in his spirit, as being on a continuum. In broga gecyðed, the terror of the dragon is made known; the effect on the hall, the hero's sylfes ham, described in brynewylmum mealt. This effect continues inside the hero, who is made hreow on hreðre; Beowulf's own mind perpetuates the dragon's violence against himself by a belief that he has enraged God, bitre gebulge. This does not make him turn from God, as the Danes did when they turned to idols in a similar inner conflict; but the hero has been assailed at the centre of his being by a kind of uncertainty which has never before entered his relationship with God, which has been marked by an awareness that he was behaving correctly, by faith in God's judgement, and a praiseworthy use of God's gifts to him (e.g. 669-70; 685-87; 2181-83).

Now he is outside this contact with his halig Dryhten. All the above turmoil is contained in Beowulf's spirit, linked to the event of the hall-burning by the repetition of words derived from weallan: sylfes ham...brynewylmum mealt...breost innan weoll. The destruction of the hero's hall is an equivalent to the baring of his soul to forces outside both hall and life. He is in fact about to do this: no þon lange waes/ feorh aeþelinges flaesce bewunden (2423-24). The gold-hoard Beowulf seeks for his people is associated with the life of the hero it claims, by the words sawle hord (2422); the exchange is expressed directly in terms of a trade in ll. 2843 and 3012.

Another change concerning Beowulf's person and the setting (both time and place) can be seen in the emphasis on his protection. At the mere, this matter was lingered over by the poet in a description of the hero's weapons and armour, and their part in his expedition into the mere. Here, the poet says,

> Heht him þa gewyrcean wigendra hleo
> eallirenne, eorla dryhten,
> wigbord wraetlic; wisse he gearwe,
> þaet him holtwudu he(lpan) ne meahte,
> lind wiþ lige. Sceolde laendaga
> aeþeling aergod ende gebidan, 2337-42

Under the mere, it was Beowulf's offensive weapon that failed, while his armour sufficed to keep him from the monster's claws and knife; but in the dragon-fight even the special precaution of an iron shield is to be of no avail:

> Scyld wel gebearg
> life ond lice laessan hwile
> mearum þeodne, þonne his myne sohte,
> ðaer he þy fyrste forman dogore
> wealdan moste, swa him wyrd ne gescraf
> hreð aet hilde. 2570-75

The audience is told that when Beowulf sought out the dragon, no he him þa saecce ondred...forðon he aer fela/ nearo neðende niða gedigde (2347-50), then the poet gives an account of the hero's honourable history as retainer and king. The fight with the dragon is referred to, as above, stressing his survival of previous battles:

> Swa he niða gehwane genesen haefde,
> sliðra geslyhta, sunu Ecgðiowes,
> ellenweorca, oð ðone anne daeg,
> þe he wið þam wyrme gewegan sceolde. 2397-2400

Where before, during his approach to Heorot, the description of Beowulf's retainers and his singularly noble appearance gave an impression of well-protected strength and confidence, now the retainers are barely mentioned, with no attention paid to their light-reflecting armour, their singing byrnies; nor is there any solidarity in them as a group. They are simply twelve men, one of whom is unwilling, the slave who took the dragon's cup, ofer willa giong (2409). Beowulf himself is distinctly apart from them here, sitting down on the hill and sending away his heorðgeneatum (2418). Then his memories of Hrethel's and Hygelac's kindness to him, and the family tragedy, are related. Beowulf's description of Hrethel's grief at the accidental killing of one son by another is generalized in the picture of the father mourning his dead son on the gallows, and the inability of the father to help him or find solace for his grief; the final image is that of the empty hall, an appropriate focus for the death-of-a-king motif uniting Hrethel, Beowulf and their peoples here. The death of Hrethel and resulting strife leads Beowulf to remember his fight with Daeghraefne, and the victory of his own powerful

grip rather than a sword. Then he turns to the imminent fight, saying, 'Nu sceall billes ecg,/ hond ond heard sweord ymb hord wigan' (2508-9), and adds that he would fight the dragon without a sword, with his hands, as he did Grendel, if he knew how (2518-21), but the dragon-fire necessitates sword and shield. It is on this note of uncertainty that he declares his intention of fighting alone nevertheless, and winning the treasure for his people.

Having commanded the others to stay out of the fight, he goes forward. His loneliness, strength, rigid fate, will and the stone surroundings, are alliteratively linked. The rock of the setting is fused to the condition and fate of the hero. The setting has been stripped of all else:

> Aras ða bi ronde rof oretta,
> heard under helme, hiorosercean baer
> under stancleofu, strengo getruwode
> anes mannes; ne bið swylc earges sið! 2538-41

The idea of the dragon's cave as grave, and the hero's descent into it, has been emphasized by the repetition of the location of the hoard in the earth: stig under laeg, 2213; þaer on innan, 2214; ðaer inne fealh, 2225; inwlatode, 2226; in ðam eorðhuse, 2232; þaer on innan baer, 2244; hord on hrusan, 2276; on hrusan, 2279; hlaew under hrusan 2411; se waes innan full, 2412; under eorðan, 2415; under stancleofu, 2540, immediately following under helme, with an implicit comment, perhaps, on the inadequacy of the hero's armour. The treasure and the dragon are both old, and underground; Beowulf, too, is old, and going down to them.

The hero moves out of the human circle, as he did when going to and into the mere; but the setting and the creature

in it here are associated with death, rather than the kind of evil embodied by the other monsters. The dragon has been outward-moving since the taking of the cup (2293-97; 2307-9; 2316; 2333), where the other monsters moved in on the hall. The inevitable meeting of dragon and hero has been characterized by a completely different set of expectations than in the Grendel-fight, where Beowulf inside the hall met Grendel, who expected a feast, and was unaware of his approaching death, unlike the audience. During the fight with the mere-wife, in which Beowulf was protected and the monster off-guard, the audience was tense, but confident with the hero, in spite of his difficulties. In the dragon-fight, both assailants are enraged, and the hero grim and uncertain in all but his intention; only the audience is fully informed, this time of the death of both fighters. In this scene, the hero and his opponent are initially equally balanced. This is expressed in their meeting:

> Let ða of breostum, ða he gebolgen waes,
> Weder-Geata leod word ut faran,
> stearcheort styrmde; stefn in becom
> heaðotorht hlynnan under harne stan.
> Hete waes onhrered, hordweard oncniow
> mannes reorde; naes ðaer mara fyrst
> freode to friclan. From aerest cwom
> oruð aglaecan ut of stane,
> hat hildeswat; hruse dynede. 2550-58

The meeting is balanced in terms of mutual rage, the hero's voice coming into the dragon's cave under harne stan, and the dragon's hat hildeswat coming ut of stane.

Swords have never been of the greatest use to the hero (2682-87), and we are told that his armour and shield do not protect his life at this point (2570-75). It is the

ultimately useless shield with which Beowulf strikes the first blow (2559-60), and behind which he waits, on searwum, with his sword drawn. A major emphasis is on the shield and its failure. Goldsmith interprets the significance of the shield as following:

> I have already published the opinion that the great shield represents the strongest human defence a man can make, and its meaning in the allegory is that without spiritual defences (scutum fidei) no man can successfully oppose the Dragon.[39]

The existence of allegory in so specific a sense is a debatable point here. Not only are Beowulf's defences already spiritual throughout the poem - his physical strength, without his courage, integrity and judgement would have made him a Grendel or a Heremod, or a mere ox - but the dragon itself cannot be allegorized neatly (see below). Goldsmith's comment on the sword-hilt Beowulf brings from the mere is much less limiting, in speaking of

> the complex of symbolic meaning given to the giant sword, which is for the Danes a symbol of victorious revenge in the feud, for Beowulf a symbol of God's protective care for those who fight in his battles, and for the audience a symbol of the enduring cosmic war in which Beowulf's contests are brief incidents.[40]

While it is not necessary to demarcate the awareness of the symbolic object this way, as the poet has not done so, "complex of symbolic meaning" describes the kind of significance we are dealing with more accurately than 'allegory'. Not only the verbal style is 'inwrought' or 'interlaced' like the visual art of the time, but the symbolic values tend to twist back on themselves until they are something else, without a break or line between the two. Beowulf's weapons and armour, their

nature and performance, have in various circumstances reflected his courage, adaptability and faith, as well as his relationship with wyrd.

Much critical disagreement has been expressed concerning the psychology behind the dragon and what he represents, whether he has been provoked to justifiable anger by the theft of his cup, or is utterly malignant; whether he is like Grendel, or not. He is, perhaps, so elemental as to defy description. Although both monsters are earmsceapen (1351; 2228), Grendel is so on weres waestmum (1352). He is a manifestation of a deformed human value or principle, brotherhood, as well as a deformed human shape. Because of his murderous behaviour, his kind are driven from human company, deprived of human joy. As such, Grendel is directly related to a destructive force in each man, and in the kinship-based system of organization; his evil is the same kind as that dramatized in the stories of Finn and Hengest, Ingeld, Herebald and Haethcyn, as well as Unferth. The dragon is totally inhuman. Its behaviour is described as animal (2288-2302), and the fact that it both flies and burns keep it separate from the human beings in the poem, although fire destroys halls. Draconitas can be found in human beings as greed for wealth, or jealousy; though the dragon may be a monstrous form of such as these, this aspect of monstrosity is not as significant here as it was in Grendel, at the beginning of the poem and the hero's career. The hero has, by the time of his last fight, overcome such forces in himself. Nor, as in Grendel's case, is there any theology applied to the dragon,

leaving him outside a major system of definition. He has been called evil in "an impersonal, amoral sense; rather as we might think of a disease as evil."[41] While this is a very limited description, it expressed the idea that Beowulf is defeated by an elemental force; the dragon itself is part of a wyrd that involves the hero's age, his sword-breaking strength, his taking on the dragon alone, the cowardly retainers, and the fact that he could not live forever. The dragon is, in the Northern European tradition, associated with the grave-mound,[42] and the inevitable evil of death.[43]

In spite of their differences, Grendel and the dragon are both laþ or laþan cynnes (2305, 2315, 2354), ðeod- or leodsceaða (2093, 2278, 2688); and Grendel's glof is made of dragon-skin (2088). The two share important characteristics of malice towards mankind. Klaeber remarks:

> Nothing could be more natural than that the high-minded slayer of the Grendel kin should appear again, above all else, in the role of a deliverer from distress, a benefactor of men. And when this great deed was added as the crowning event to the record of his long life, what better motivation of his death could have presented itself?[44]

The main difference between the two is at what point in the hero's life they appear. After reading the poem, do we believe that it is because the dragon is a dragon that the hero dies? It is because of wyrd that the creatures mean what they do to the hero, and he to them. While it is a truism to say that wyrd is mentioned most often regarding situations concerning Grendel in the first part of the poem, and those concerning the dragon in the latter part, their connections with wyrd are very different. The first instance

occurs in Beowulf's words to the effect that all will be as wyrd directs (455), and that he is not troubled about Grendel. Next, Hrothgar describes wyrd's effect on his thanes, through Grendles gryre (477-78). Beowulf, when speaking of the swimming match with Breca, says that wyrd often saves an undoomed man if his courage is good (572-73). The next mention concerns Grendel's fate in his imminent meeting with Beowulf (734-36). The poet, in one statement, puts God, wyrd and Beowulf together in effecting Grendel's end: him witig God wyrd forstode/ ond ðaes mannes mod (1056-57), and this is the final mention of wyrd as being with the hero. The next occurrence is in connection with the fate of the necklace given to Beowulf, its owners and final loss upon Hygelac's death on his disastrous expedition among the Frisians (1205-7). The sleeping thanes wyrd ne cuþon (1233) as Grendel's mother approaches Heorot while the hero sleeps elsewhere. The remaining instances are in connection with Beowulf's death, firstly as he sits on the hill before the fight, waefre ond waelfus, wyrd ungemete neah (2420). Wyrd now approaches, to which he commits himself and the dragon (2526), and he is left exposed to it completely when the shield fails:

> Scyld wel gebearg
> life ond lice laessan hwile
> maerum þeodne, þonne his myne sohte,
> ðaer he þy fyrste forman dogore
> wealdan moste, swa him wyrd ne gescraf
> hreð aet hilde. 2570-75

Wyrd and the hero are finally in unmediated opposition, and Beowulf can only be deprived of the territory he has gained and held during his life. The terms of his defeat are those

of departure, giving up ground, being forced to change his dwelling-place:

> Ne waes þaet eðe sið,
> þaet se maera maga Ecgðeowes
> grundwong þone ofgyfan wolde;
> sceolde [ofer] willan wic eardian
> elles hwergen, swa sceal aeghwylc mon
> alaetan laendagas. 2586-91

As Beowulf dies, he speaks to his only surviving kinsman; the name of his family is alliteratively linked to wyrd, so that both Beowulf's blood-links with history and the force which sweeps them out of existence are set against one another in his last words. The only context in which Beowulf and wyrd are linked now is history, and the final occurrence of the word is at the end of the messenger's speech (2900-3027), in which he expresses the fear of attack from every side, and relates the strife caused by Haethcyn and Hygelac's expedition to the Scylfings, when Haethcyn was killed, saying that now the Geats can expect the same. The death of the hero, his laying aside of hall-joys, is directly linked to the exile of his people from their own land (3015-21); the joys of the hall are to be left, and the people to fend for themselves, as for them kinglessness equals homelessness. This is the reported history of Beowulf's death and the expected invasion and downfall of his people, the last instance of wyrd in the poem:

> Swa se secg hwata secgende waes
> laðra spella; he ne leag fela
> wyrda ne worda. 3028-30

Beowulf does not die because he is in any opposition to God; there is no Heremod-like lust after gold for its own sake. None of the adjectives applied to Heremod, Grendel or

the dragon are applied to the hero. "For the poet clearly conceives Beowulf, noble champion and happy warrior unconquerable in personal encounter, as born to fight a losing battle against destiny. He has saved the Danes from the kin of Grendel, and he saves his own people from the dragon; but in each exploit all he has accomplished is the postponement of their destruction."[45] There is no Christian moralistic condemnation of his achievement as reflecting on his worth; indeed in the overtly moralizing poems such as The Wanderer and The Seafarer, such achievements as Beowulf's are praised, in spite of the poet's attitude about the emptiness of worldly things.

> Alfred associates Wyrd with the epithets "soð" (II, pr. 8) and "god" (IV, pr. 7), but never with the epithet "divine". For man, Wyrd seems the naked intrusion of absolute power against mere human strength, a reality that is almost unendurable.[46]

Beowulf's final time of uncertainty regarding his relationship to God may be counted as part of the testing of the hero, a trial which he endures with integrity, maintaining his heroic character until death. To proceed without an awareness of God's guiding hand is his final test.

The allegory of temptation seen by Goldsmith is not borne out by the poet's attitude to Beowulf. The hero's desire to win the gold for his people is that of any good king; the curse put on the hoard so many years ago is perhaps an added exoneration. Dying, he thanks God for the wealth it will bring the Geats (2794-801). The poet states that Beowulf's ignorance of the curse is only that of any man, who does not know what his end will be:

Wundur hwar þonne
eorl ellenrof ende gefere
lifgesceafta, þonne leng ne maeg
mon mid his (ma)gum meduseld buan.
Swa waes Biowulfe, þa he biorges weard
sohte searoniðas; seolfa ne cuðe,
þurh hwaet his worulde gedal weorðan sceolde.
3062-68

There is no attribution of sin to Beowulf for the hœard's disturbance, since the curse seems to apply to the initial thief, the secg synbysig (2226), whose taking of the cup awoke and enraged the dragon (2278-83). In spite of its use in appeasing his own angered lord, his own initial crime has brought down an entire people.

Swa hit oð domes daeg diope benemdon
þeodnes maere, þa ðaet þaer dydon,
þaet se secg waere synnum scyldig,
hergum geheaðerod, hellbendum faest,
wommum gewitnad, se ðone wong strude, hæfne goldhwæte geerwor hæfde
Agendes est aer gesceawod. 3069-75

This is surely not the soðfaestra dom (2820) to which Beowulf's soul goes; if the poem were an allegory of temptation to which the hero succumbed, we might expect hell to be his reward. After saying that no one might touch the hœard unless God granted it, the poet tells us the circumstances of its burial and what occurred afterwards on earth; what God's judgement on it will be he does not presume to say.

Ic ðas leode heold
fiftig wintra; naes se folccyning,
ymbsittendra aenig ðara,
þe mec guðwinum gretan dorste,
egesan ðeon. Ic on earde bad
maelgesceafta, heold min tela,
ne sohte searoniðas, ne me swor fela
aða on unriht. Ic ðaes ealles maeg
feorhbennum seoc gefean habban;
forðam me witan ne ðearf Waldend fira
morðorbealo maga, þonne min sceaceð
lif of lice. 2732-43

The dissolution of Beowulf's kingdom and people, dwelled-upon by the poet through the voice of the messenger, indicates what forces the king has kept at bay in a hostile world surrounding his area of influence. Beowulf's space of physical occupation is not differentiated from his moral being. Now that this is no longer with his people, the forces of hatred from old feuds and the greed of other rulers will invade the safe interior he provided.

> Beowulf's qualities of mind and heart, no less than those of body, are established before he is first required to act before our eyes. They are fixed and constant; they govern, and are exhibited with complete consistence in, all that he says and does. This consonance between the man and all his actions, in youth and age, in life or death, establishes the inner unity of his Heldenleben; and it is through the steady exhibition of those qualities in him which impel his actions and speak in his words that the heroic ideal is so admirably illustrated throughout the poem.[47]

Inner unity makes Beowulf what neither hall nor kingship is seen to have so strongly anywhere else in the time the poem covers. Throughout, we are occasionally distanced from the narrative present by a change to the historical perspective, such as that after Beowulf's return to Hygelac's court, when by the words he geheold tela...oððaet we are reminded of the fact that he has died already, become history before the account of his last battle. Always in the poem there is an emphasis on the wearing away of human accomplishment by time, which disintegrates humanity into anonymous voices like the last survivor's, and forgotten peoples. Out of the blurring background, individuals stand forth: Scyld Scefing, Beowulf of the Scyldings, Sigemund. Lineages link present life and its

obligations of heroism, loyalty and kinship bonds with those of the past. Recurring phrases such as "I heard it told..." and "X, son of Y" indicate a historical awareness in poet and audience, as well as in the poem's own characters, which is part of the vitality of their present. "As Vansina's observations showed, traditional oral poetry is one means by which a people preserves its social stability and its cultural ideals."[48] The deeds of heroes, hu ða aeþelingas ellen fremedon, show what has been possible for man - what is and might be possible. As illustrated by the subject-matter of the song of Creation lifted in Heorot, an awareness of history leads back to God; the song of Creation indicated a life-giving, justifying force within the hall, within the inhabitants. Beowulf partakes of and contributes to this force; after his death, his life's accomplishments will continue to exist in poetic form and the memory of his people. Wiglaf is heir to this memory:

> 'Þu eart endelaf usses cynnes,
> Waegmundinga; ealle wyrd forsweop
> mine magas to metodsceafte,
> eorlas on elne; ic him aefter sceal.'
> ... ...
> him of hraeðre gewat
> sawol secean soðfaestra dom. 2813-20

One day he too will go after. Death as a change of place is seen in the ship-burial of Scyld; in elles hwergen (2590), aefter sceal, and the phrase lif of/wiþ lice (733, 2423, 2743). Beowulf has, as far as possible, faced what lies outside normal human limits, from the darkness surrounding Heorot to fear in himself that he has angered God, without losing his integrity; death forces him into the final outside. He has moved, on

earth, into the area of poetic history, where his people may mourn and celebrate him, maintaining one kind of contact:

> woldon (cāre) cwiðan, [ond] kyning maenan,
> wordgyd wrecan, ond ymb w(er) sprecan;
> eahtodon eorlscipe ond his ellenweorc
> duguðum demdon, - swa hit gede(fe) bið,
> þaet mon his winedryhten wordum herge,
> ferhðum freoge, þonne he forð scile
> of lichaman (laeded) weorðan.
> Swa begnornodon Geata leode
> hlafordes (hry)re, heorðgeneatas;
> cwaedon þaet he waere wyruldcyning[a]
> manna mildust ond mon(ðw)aerust,
> leodum liðost ond lofgeornost. 3171-82

The last two lines are the fulfilment of all his efforts, which, though centred in his own character, were only valid in the service of others. The hero's being has had a vast area, within which his heorðgeneatas have lived as though it were the best of halls.

Due to the length of Beowulf, it is beyond the scope of this chapter to investigate symbolism more closely, for example on the syntactic level. The symbolism of the poem is basic, consistent, and without two discrete 'textures' of narrative and meaning. The poem's primary impulse does not appear to be a meaning outside the material; though such secondary symbolism may be expressed, as in the imagery of Hrothgar's speech, or certain biblical associations the monsters have, it has no structural identity in the entire work. The structure, both as it was consciously conceived and as it was a result of an Anglo-Saxon cosmology so deeply assumed as to be imperceptible as such to the poet, patterns the significance of the narrative, though it involves many characters and ranges widely through time and place.

Footnotes to Chapter One

1. Tolkien, "Beowulf: The Monsters and the Critics", p. 6.

2. Gang, "Approaches to Beowulf", p. 9.

3. McNamee, "Beowulf - An Allegory of Salvation?", p. 205.

4. ibid., p. 200.

5. Malone, "Symbolism in Beowulf". Malone's suggestions are based on distinctions which cannot be supported, e.g. "In his picture of the Danish scene he [the poet] is concerned with the retainers whose happy home is invaded and whose happy life is cut short by Grendel. When the poet comes to the land of the Geats he thinks rather of the king, whose long and successful reign is brought to a tragic end by the attack of the dragon." p. 86. Much attention is paid to Hrothgar's grief over his thanes, his ruined kingship and the tragedy of his age; the poet also devotes much of the end of the poem on the plight of Beowulf's people, their grief and vulnerability after his death.

6. Goldsmith, The Mode and Meaning of Beowulf, p. 267.

7. Gang, op. cit., note 2, p. 6.

8. Bonjour, "Monsters Crouching and Critics Rampant: or the Beowulf Dragon Debated", p. 304.

9. Dubois, "The Dragon in Beowulf". Dubois remarks that "... the essential meaning will be determined in the poem itself and must therefore be discovered by the way of internal evidence," p. 821; Fisher also comments, in "The Trials of the Epic Hero in Beowulf": "We have surely become too literal-minded if we suppose that the audience of Beowulf could see no universal significance in the epic story because they accepted the literal truth of the narrative." p. 171.

10. Burlin, "Gnomic Indirection in Beowulf", pp. 46-47.

11. Blomfield, "The Style and Structure of 'Beowulf'", p. 396.

12. Bonjour, op. cit., note 8, p. 311.

13. Irving, A Reading of Beowulf, pp. 36-37.

14. ibid., p. 38.

15. E.g. Wright, "Good and Evil; Light and Darkness; Joy and Sorrow in Beowulf"; Brodeur, The Art of Beowulf, "Anticipation, Contrast and Irony", pp. 220-246.

16. Goldsmith, op. cit., note 6, p. 83.

17. ibid., p. 85.

18. Mircea Eliade, Images et symboles, "Les sociétés archaiques et traditionelles conçoivent le monde comme un microcosme. Aux limites de ce monde clos, commence le domaine de l'inconnu, du non-formé. D'une part il y a l'éspace cosmisé, puisque habité et organisé - d'autre part, il y a la région de l'inconnue et redoutable des démons, des larves, des morts, des étrangers; en un mot, le chaos, le mort, la nuit. Cette image d'un microcosme-monde habité, entouré des régions desertiques assimilées au chaos ou aux royaume des morts, a survecu même dans les civilisations tres evoluées." p. 47, and "Toute microcosme, toute région habitée, a ce qu'on pourrait appeler un 'centre', c'est-à-dire un lieu sacrée par excellence," p. 49.

19. Goldsmith, op. cit., note 6, p. 64.

20. ibid., p. 64 note.

21. ibid., p. 71.

22. ibid., p. 90.

23. Burlin, op. cit., note 10, p. 47.

24. The various possibilities of displacement, interpolation and interpretation are discussed in Beowulf and the Fight Finnesburh, ed. F.G. Klaeber, note to 168f., and Beowulf and the Finnesburh Fragment, ed. C.L. Wrenn, note to 168-69.

25. Tolkien, op. cit., note 1, p. 27.

26. I am grateful to Dr G.C. Britton for drawing my attention to Romans 1:18-23 in connection with these lines.

27. Klaeber, Beowulf, p. lii.

28. Brodeur, "Design for Terror in the Purging of Heorot", pp. 503-13.

29. Irving, op. cit., note 13, p. 105.

30. Goldsmith, op. cit., note 6, p. 260.

31. Klaeber, Beowulf, notes to 1357ff.

32. ibid., and Wrenn, Beowulf, notes to 1357-76, where the relevant passage from the Visio Pauli is quoted with some other analogues.

33. Irving, op. cit., note 13, pp. 41-42.

34. Bandy, "The Defense of Heorot", p. 87.

35. Brodeur, The Art of Beowulf, p. 74.

36. Tolkien, op. cit., note 1, p. 29.

37. Irving, op. cit., note 13, p. 198.

38. "The other royal halls [i.e. other than Heorot] in the poem have no recognizable identity. The Geatish royal hall is burnt down by the dragon without any preliminary description of it, or prophecy of its destruction. These facts make the emphasis on Hrothgar's hall more striking and justify my inclusion of it among the symbols of the poem." Goldsmith, op. cit., p. 86. Heorot is identified as Hrothgar's hall, but is certainly more universal a symbol. As the Creation-hymn sung within, after the description of its construction implies, it is man's rightful home on earth, a God-centred life within a just social and moral order, with the king at its heart. This corrupted order is what Beowulf rights, extends, and later holds himself. His wealth and power are not emphasized as Hrothgar's were, but rather the fact that Beowulf is not acquisitive in nature, and that his strength of character grows. Thus, by the time the dragon appears, Beowulf's hall and kingdom have been seen as part of this growth. The burning of his hall is the first attack on his life, in the larger sense that has acquired, including his people and kingship.

39. Goldsmith, op. cit., note 6, p. 88.

40. ibid., pp. 89-90.

41. Gang, op. cit., note 2, p. 6.

42. In Old English place-names, the dragon is associated with tumuli, hollows and treasure, e.g. Drakedale YN, Drakehill Sr, Drakeholes Nt, Drakelow Bd, Db, Wo., Drakenage Wa, Drake North W, Drake Pits YW; see English Place-Name Elements, vol. xxv, p. 134.

43. Irving, op. cit., note 13, p. 214.

44. Klaeber, Beowulf, p. xxii.

45. Brodeur, The Art of Beowulf, p. 77.

46. Payne, King Alfred and Boethius, p. 99.

47. Brodeur, The Art of Beowulf, pp. 77-78

48. Goldsmith, op. cit., note 13, p. 79.

Chapter Two: The Wanderer

Critical approaches to The Wanderer often deal with the poem from the point of view that it concerns or investigates thought. It is "a poem which focuses almost entirely on the mind",[1] or "an exercise in ratiocination".[2] In this as in other poems of the period, however, it is anachronistic to treat the concept of 'mind' as being altogether different from that of 'soul'; The Wanderer is distant in time and culture from the later rationalist theologians and what we would recognize as an intellectual approach to faith.[3] The poem is more accurately termed 'meditative',[4] and those critics who deal with it in terms of the soul do so with more insight (e.g. Doubleday, Klein and Cross). The poem's imagery and its cultural context are at the same time taken to be subordinate to the thought-process, structurally supportive rather than structurally integral. However, the movement of thought in the poem does not occur at any point without absolute dependency on the values and aspects of Anglo-Saxon society as they are expressed in its poetic diction and imagery. The poem's structure derives from a reinterpretation of values, diction and imagery, in such a way as to resolve paradoxes regarding 'security'.

In Beowulf, the structural unity of the poem was based on the character of the hero, as it was developed in the widest sense. In The Wanderer, consistency of character in the poetic persona or personae has been the source of much critical debate. The point of view expressed in Pope's article,[5] in which he

posited that the anhaga and the snottor on mode were different speakers, was later retracted[6] after further consideration of such criticisms as Greenfield's:

> Insistence on a contemporary standard of "dramatic probability" and consistency of character from a lyric of an age that, so far as we know, possessed no drama, should therefore be tempered. An Anglo-Saxon's "poetically conceived pilgrim" need have, and probably has, nothing to do with the kind of consistency here posited. Indeed, the characterization in the sense that we (including Mr. Pope) use the term today seems an irrelevance in relation to The Wanderer and The Seafarer, or to any of the elegies.[7]

Klein has, in the light of the above consideration, put forward another view, of "an array of ethopoeic fictions corresponding closely to the three traditionally conceived faculties of memory, present perception and volitional futurity" as they "encompass the full range of response possible to human resource alone".[8] Although this approach is in many ways sound, the fictitious speakers, or "ethopoeic fictions", are still like Pope's dramatic voices. They are founded on clear distinctions between the three faculties which are assumed to be in rather than dictated by the text. Klein notes that "discussion of the three faculties is, of course, ubiquitous in medieval literature. The problem is determining the relationship between the distinguishable views".[9] There is also a problem in distinguishing the views themselves; sometimes one faculty may appear to predominate in one area of the poem, and sometimes another; but all three are closely involved most of the time, and certainly not distinguishable enough to indicate three different fictitious characters plus a poetic

speaker. Woolf notes a difference between medieval and seventeenth-century poetry which may shed some light on the question:

> The chief source of difference between medieval and seventeenth-century poetry...lies very precisely in the different meditative theories of the two periods. The Ignatian method required the exercise of the three faculties, memory, reason and will. But the medieval method did not require all three faculties to be used, and, indeed, to make easy the emotional response of love, it largely excluded the activity of reason, for love is not the natural end of intellectual exploration.[10]

Though referring especially to Middle English lyrics, the comment may, with some modifications, apply to Old English poetry: here there is no conscious exclusion of reason for the purpose of facilitating or freeing an emotional response; but there is no definition of reason as such, or of love as an 'emotion'. There seems to be no recognition of boundaries between one and the other.

Discussion of the poem's imagery involves a difficulty similar to that involved in the consideration of speakers or characters, in the question of how literal or figurative the setting may be, an issue which is an extension of that concerning character realism. The fusion of setting and inner human state in the poem makes the assertion of realism in the narrative or dramatic sense out of place here as well.

> Our predisposition to a particular generic classification can lead us to see realism where none is 'intended', as in many early interpretations of The Wanderer and The Seafarer; or it can equally cause us to concoct ingenious allegorical significationes.[11]

The expectations of Christian allegory have not been brought to bear on The Wanderer as often as they have on the other poems

under study here, but those expectations inherent in the terms 'realism' and 'symbolism' in the relationship of inner state and setting. The Wanderer expands a mode of symbolism which was expressed in part of the Finnesburh episode in Beowulf (ll. 1127-41). This mode as expressed in The Wanderer is structurally unsuitable for a poem the length of Beowulf, since it involves play on both words and images at high density. Calder discusses 'real' settings in the poem, but also deals with them as symbols of states of mind; yet he concludes that "...all images, settings and symbols refer directly to the Christian ideas that surround them",[12] while having employed these terms almost interchangeably. This again reflects the difficulty of differentiating them. "The poets had only a limited range of ideas, and poetic motives, and diction. To try and understand one of them in isolation, therefore, is to see it out of perspective."[13] The poets therefore had to work with great sensitivity in order to structure their resources within this limited range into a correspondence with the perception and insight behind all good poetry.

Rosier discusses the poem in terms of what he calls generative composition. Lexical generation involves employing a word again, usually in the same class (noun, verb, etc.) as in the first occurrence, which may but does not necessarily have the exact same meaning or referent.

> The habit of lexical generation itself may in some instances constitute the source of associative composition in which a detail or an idea emerges directly out of another... The generation of a word which has thematic meaning may draw to it other, different words of similar sense or reference (in the same

> class or a different class) and these may in turn generate, creating altogether a unit of multiple generation. In this case it is the 'idea' of a word rather than the word itself which attracts or induces other words, a process which may conveniently be termed conceptual generation.[14]

While this phenomenon is general in poetry, perhaps it is even more common as a structural principle in Anglo-Saxon poetry due to its origin in an oral tradition, in which spontaneity in composition plays a major part.

The poem will be discussed in terms of the heroic tradition in a close reading of the text, from imagery down to the level of individual word-meaning. The structure and symbolism of the poem is based on assumptions about what is meaningful and valuable to man and mankind, and the extension of the traditional poetic language by which this is expressed, by word-play and paradox in both word and image.

As in Beowulf, there is in The Wanderer an awareness of the inner and outer worlds man must move in and deal with, expressed in similar terms: society, especially the relationship between retainer and lord, is a secure 'inside', and outside it life lacks meaning. Dunning and Bliss comment that a primary unifying factor in the poem is

> the milieu, the dominant image or inventum of the poet, which is the life of the gesiþ in the comitatus. Every line of the poem combines with every other to evoke this setting in our minds, and the poet never moves outside it.[15]

The traditional poetic language of this milieu is not an element which could be employed or rejected by the poet according to his needs, but, as has been pointed out, is the only tradition within which the poet could work.[16] Like The Seafarer, The

Wanderer concerns values in the sense of 'worldly, societal' versus 'spiritual, Christian', but does not overtly contrast them. Instead, the poem "investigates fastness as an attribute of mind and existence",[17] necessarily within the Anglo-Saxon poetic tradition and society. Certain aspects of this milieu are dealt with in The Wanderer more as they are in Beowulf: the power of wyrd, and man inside and outside society. In The Seafarer, comitatus and exile are distinguished as two ways of life, and differences between worldly and spiritual life are respectively associated with them. In The Wanderer, there is no question of renouncing the world:

> Medieval Christianity certainly believed, as all good Christians must, that Christianity should permeate all aspects of daily life; but their faith was both realistic and robust. While firmly believing in Christ and his teaching, they distinguished in that teaching between commandments and counsels, and those who chose to live by the latter usually retired from the world.[18]

There is in The Wanderer a correction of notions about the world, necessitating a reorientation in it. The snottor on mode returns to the practicalities of life therein for every man, with the wisdom he has gained. Gordon comments, "the difficulty is to determine just what kind of poetic convention it was by which a stylized poetic theme, still apparently secular in character, should be intended to convey a Christian meaning."[19] The extent of the Christian faith among the Anglo-Saxons by this time must have become an inseparable part of the poetic tradition, both adapting pre-existing poetic diction and adding its own, as illustrated, for example, by the epithets for God in Caedmon's Hymn. Anglo-Saxon poetic themes and diction must have had a

potential dimension beyond the secular for any audience.

Although the poem has been approached for the most part with the emphasis on the thought- or learning-process, reservations have been expressed about the possibility of this, because of the poem's length:

> Though there are in the poems moments of sensitive perception, it is no use searching it for an examination of the long, slow movements of the heart which may bring a man to a certain peace and resignation. The very fact that it would take about ten minutes to read aloud whilst the passage of time within the poem (though past time is recalled) is unchartably long, reveals that the poet is not concerned to show, with any psychological precision, how a person learns: one may contrast it with The Pearl, where the dreamer's slow and zig-zag process towards acceptance of bereavement and submission to God's will strike a familiar chord.[20]

Despite this opinion, the critic feels that some such process is evident in the poem. If the possibility is accepted that gebidan means "wait" in the first line,

> a development has surely taken place, for actively to seek God's mercy [ar seceð, l. 114] must represent a spiritual stage beyond passively awaiting it. Moreover, if the sense is "await", there is probably some hint that the Wanderer at this stage misunderstands the nature of God's mercy, supposing that it will take the form of his finding a new lord. In that case a wider understanding of ar has been reached at the close of the poem.[21]

Although long poems can give more time to the details of human learning, The Wanderer expresses the long, slow movements of the heart - and mind - with great concision. The process, as all seem to agree upon, is contained within the text, and if the turning points are there, little need be lost on us, though the resulting density of meaning requires a greater amount of

attention at the purely verbal level than a very long poem. The poet does stress the importance of time and experience in the acquisition of wisdom, both by implication (in the unspecified long time of joy, deprivation, wandering and suffering) and direct statement (e.g. ll. 64-65). That the poem contains a development towards a wider understanding at the end seems to be agreed upon, but the nature and structure of the development is less certain.

The Anglo-Saxon concept of wyrd in the most general sense could be expressed as 'what happens'. This, of course, has connotations of the unalterable; yet, as Beowulf says, human attitude is a factor in what the course of events brings to the individual, God permitting (though the hero does not add such a qualification here, it is part of his general outlook):

> Wyrd oft nereð
> unfaegne eorl, þonne his ellen deah!
> Beowulf 572-73

In The Wanderer, attitudes to wyrd are part of the investigated idea of fastness. The word appears four times, each time with slightly different connotations dictated by context.

The first instance, in l. 5, has the sense, 'a course of events, what has happened', in particular that which led to the man's wandering in exile: wyrd bið ful araed! The past which brought about the present situation cannot be changed, and there is no indication that the future will be different. Rather than seeming part of a stoic acceptance, this attitude to wyrd contributes to a developing atmosphere of futility. The wanderer's wyrd is expressed as being doomed to remain there.

A few lines later, as we become more familiar with the situation, wyrd is mentioned again, more firmly in the context of the man's inner state, his werig mod, his hreo hyge. In ll. 15-16, the negatives imply that the man is trying to withstand a condition which cannot be withstood. This occurrence of wyrd, though it has a similar sense to the first, is set against conflicting attitudes of resignation, despair, and a desire to alter his circumstances. Mod and hyge are paralleled later in the poem by the standing walls and cliffs - the entire creation - shaken by the forces of wyrd in time and the elements. The paradox is that wyrd is seen as fixed or determined, though it moves against men through time and events. Between this and the next occurrence of the word is the picture and explanation of the eardstapa's place within wyrd, then the world's larger-scale dispersion of men and halls.

In l. 100, wyrd has a more specific sense, modified by the adjective maere: the death warriors aspire to in battle. The wall behind them here brings to mind the code which requires men not to fleon fotes trym (Maldon, l. 247), as though there were a wall at their backs; a 'last stand' is implied. Wyrd seo maere is the culmination of a series of portrayals and laments of the disappearance of men from life, forming an emblematic picture. All have been moved outside the narrow space of individual memory and sorrow into a continuous 'now'; at any given time, wyrd means what this picture means. The tone of maere in the context of a troop of dead warriors is ironic to the modern ear, though "in Old English poetry generally there is no condemnation of warfare as such, or the

life of a warrior."[22] Much of the poetry, however, does express the awareness that a warrior's glorious fate is a grim one, and such a tone is part of the understanding and acceptance of heroic values in meeting wyrd. Such a fate as here depicted may still be glorious - but the implication, after the hwaer cwom series, is that glory does not last long. No names are mentioned, or deeds, as they often are in Beowulf. These warriors are an inseparable part of the processing of the theme, as is the wall-image, the poem's inner and outer 'weather' and the thoughts of eardstapa and snottor on mode; in a sense, the theme is the process itself, from the first to the second.

The imagery of this scene leads up to the poem's final statement concerning wyrd:

> onwendeð wyrda gesceaft weorold under heofonum. 107

The plural here, with gesceaft, has been translated as "the ordered course of events",[23] implying, as in Daniel l.132 "... as ordained by God."[24] In the context of the lists, before and after, of transitory beings, their powers, joys and accomplishments, what they make and use (92-95; the failed warriors; and 107-110), the meaning might be 'the many individual lots of men in life', all ending in death, and all having the same effect on the created world:

> Eall is earfoðlicę eorðan rice:
> onwendeð wyrda gesceaft weorold under heofonum.
> Her bið feoh laene, her bið freond laene,
> her bið mon laene, her bið maeg laene;
> eal þis eorþan gesteal idel weorpeð. 106-110

The condition imposed by wyrd is change to the point where

human beings and their values - the eorþan rice, the kingdom with man at its centre, becomes an empty construct. Individual sorrows or glories become a group of shifting elements in a fixed pattern. The Gnomic Verses and Maxims, with their iteration of such elements within the repeating x sceal y pattern give the same impression, e.g.:

> Earm biþ se þe sceal ana lifgan,
> wineleas wunian hafaþ him wyrd geteod.
> Maxims I, 172-73

In Beowulf, too, wyrd and heroic destiny are placed in a context which may shed some light on the significance of the wall here:

> Nelle ic beorges weard
> oferfleon fotes trem, ac unc (furðer) sceal
> weorðan aet wealle, swa unc wyrd geteoð,
> Metod manna gehwaes. Beowulf 2524-27

The ungiving rock in the imagery of Beowulf in this part of the poem is fused with the wyrd ungemete neah, the hero's death, which is fully fixed as any man's. In The Wanderer, a different emphasis places the all within the category of man-made structures which endure, empty, after their makers' death, but are part of the failing world still in the power of wyrd, both bound and shaken, overcome by darkness and cold:

> ond as stanhleoþu stormas cnyssað;
> hrið hreosende hrusan bindeð;
> wintres woma (þonne won cymeð,
> nipeð, nihtscua) norþan onsendeð
> hreo haeglfare haeleþum on andan. 101-5

The walls offer no protection, and are presented as a futile source of security when the implications of wyrd are fully understood.

The walls in The Wanderer, like those in The Ruin, are described in terms of the care put into their construction,

and the marvel of the accomplishment:

> weal wundrum heah wyrmlicum fah -
> The Wanderer 98
>
> Wraetlic is þes wealstan, wyrde gebraecon;
> The Ruin 1

In both these poems, there is emphasis on the decay of the wall, as human efforts at their own creation of fastness are broken by wyrd, which is manifested in the forces of the elements over a period outside an individual's temporal embrace; care and artistry in craftsmanship invoke the values attributed to or surrounded by their walls. Though they outlast their makers, they are still only a crumbling background for their disappearance in death. In The Ruin, the poet looks into the past; in The Wanderer, the past and present are fused in the image of the wall which has emerged from the development of the idea of fastness within the poem. Alliteration stresses dissolution of the world, linking its future end with its present decay; linking the clear vision of a wise man with the fear inspired by contemplation of eschatological desolation (73-77). The present implied decay of walls extends into a vision of the dead lord lying within the crumbling hall and the death and dispersal of retainers, encompassing them both as a group and singly; it is as though the future vision of the glaew haele has come to pass.

Calder comments extensively on the ruins in the poem:

> The ruins which appear in ll. 75-87 are the second "real" setting. They symbolize both the wanderer's state of mind and the man himself, yet they do so in a manner which calls attention to the variance between the two "real" settings and the psychological milestones which these settings mark off. For the ruins in this section are a cumulative

> symbolic setting. They embody all that was inherent in the visions and symbol of the seascape. The ruins pre-empt the symbolic force of all the other settings... The second presentation of the ruins as a setting [97ff.] demonstrates even more forcefully how the ice-cold seascape becomes fused with the ruins as a symbol of the narrator's expanded comprehension of mutability.[25]
>
> These second ruins, like the first, are psychological symbols; they symbolize the last stage in the inner development of the narrator from which he can see the "fastness" of a faith beyond.[26]

As noted, above, p.79, the terms 'symbol', 'image' and 'setting' are employed as though they are different, with 'symbol' and its verb predominating. Real settings (presumably as opposed to unreal) are said to symbolize states of mind, a human being, turning points in the development of attitudes, everything in the 'visions', and, with another symbol, the seascape, to symbolize an understanding of what they stand for. The attempt to subordinate the literal, the 'real', to the assumedly more meaningful, the figurative or abstract, by means of the term 'symbol' becomes impossible in a poem where every thing, person, process, or combination of them could reasonably be said to be symbolic - itself, yet standing for something beyond itself within the structure of the poem, and, we may gather, within the poetic tradition of the period. Calder's own assertion that the mode produced by the patterns in this poem is thematic rather than allegorical may be of help here.[28] He does not say, 'the mode of <u>symbolism</u>', but if we are to specify this, much is clarified. All images, etc., embody or describe the theme of impermanence, and man within <u>wyrd</u>. But the images cannot be reduced, structuralist-fashion, without utter loss of meaning, for it is <u>how</u> they express meaning thematically, rather than

that they do, which gives the poem its depth and power. The poem is thematically cumulative, in that its images and stages of perception contribute to definition and expansion of the theme, until we are made to feel that the entire creation expresses nothing but the poet's themes of transience and emptiness. The language and imagery of worldly fastness have been emptied of meaning, yet meaning still exists within the final setting, Faeder on heofonum. The first setting is re-invested with meaning when the poet places it within the second rather than leaving it in isolation.

Beside the enclosure of the hall, the enclosure of a man's spiritual pain of isolation is part of the poem's imagery. In the maintenance of the heroic value of reticence (except to a close confidant, i.e. lord or close friend), emphasis is laid on the binding of the unspoken thought. That which gives rise to its expression is held within the ferðlocan, hordcofan, breostcofan; though these do not name any anatomical part, they have physical force. The compounds' second element suggests a coffer or box which can be opened, but is usually kept shut. Even if breost or ferð have abstract connotations at times, the second element carries the major word-meaning, though modified by the first. This illustrates again (see Greenfield's comment, above, p. 77) "how much of what appears factual in Old English verse is not truly factual";[28] or how much of what appears to be concrete is inseparable from involved abstracts, such as, here, the will (to speak or not). Feterum saelan (l. 21) has the same "factual" force, and is linked with an actual physical loss, that of the man's gold-friend.

As the wanderer investigates his hope for a future like the happy past, we see its location is always the meadhall (e.g. ll. 25-29); ll. 32-33 carry the full weight of all that is to be desired, but not had by the wanderer, of the comitatus-milieu. The heroic ideal, though transcending certain physical limitations, as in Byrhtwold's

> Hige sceal þe heardra, heorte þe cenre,
> mod **sceal** þe mare, þe ure maegen lytlað.
> Maldon 312-13

is reliant on others in the society. The atmosphere of its world is one of man-generated warmth within a man-made enclosure. Wyn and dream are dependent on the hall and what is inside it: selesecgas, sincþege, maþþumgyfa, etc. The wyrd of all these, both things and people, is the change of death, wyrda gesceaft, a thought expressed directly in The Ruin:

> medoheall monig .M. dreama ful
> oþþaet onwende wyrde seo swiþe.
> The Ruin, 23-24

The anhaga, fixed in his own particular wyrd awaiting God's mercy, must therefore seek fastness in another direction than the glorious fate of warriors, or the hall. The stillness and calm of the poem's last lines are a product of the reworking of the faest-principle (see below, pp. 95ff.), but also an oblique approach to the nature of God through the previous illustration of the world. The last line describes an inner transcendance of wyrd; the gentle force of its conviction lies not in proof or logic, but in the entire poem before, showing what man is not, and does not have. The underlying assumption of l. 107 is that expressed in Maxims I:

God us ece biþ,
ne wendað hine wyrda ne hine wiht dreceþ.
Maxims I, 8-9

Alfred, too, in his translation of Boethius' De Consolatione Philosophiae, makes this statement in the direct way the Wanderer-poet does not:

> Þu ðe þa unstillan gesceaft to þinum willan astyrast, ond þu self simle stille ond unawendedlic þurhwunast;
> XXXIII, v

> Ac þaet is openlice cuð aet sio godcunde foretiohhung is anfeald ond unawendlic, ond welt aelces þinges endebyrdlice, ond eall þing gehiwað. Sumu þing þonne on þisse weorolde sint underðied þaere wyrde, sume hire nawuht underðied ne sint; ac sio wyrd ond all ða þing þe hire underðied sint, sint underðied ðaem godcundan forþonce. Be ðaem ic ðe maeg sum bispell secgan, þaet þu meaht þy sweotolor ongitan hwilce men bioð underðied þaere wyrde, hwylc ne bioð. Ealle ðios unstille gesceaft ond þios hwearfiende hwearfað on ðaem stillan Gode, ond on ðaem gestaeðegan, ond on ðaem anfaealdan; ond he welt eallra gesceaft swa swa he aet fruman getiohhod haefde ond get haefð.[29]
> XXXIX, vii

As in some of the other poems of the period, in which important facts or ideas are understated, implicit or on the periphery of the action,[30] in The Wanderer the major 'point' or resolution, or conclusion, is made quietly after an entire poem illustrating its opposite.

Although the heroic ideal is firmly embedded in the milieu of the retainer-lord relationship, and the bonds of kinship, set in the hall and on the battlefield, and although the milieu and its values are subject to the destructive forces of wyrd like the rest of the creation, the poet does not reject this world. It is not renounced, but its spirit is retained within a larger, imperishable setting. Taken out of the world in

itself, it is still expressed in the world when received through ar, with faith, by which man can change reality by changing his attitude to it. In this 'setting' there is a fastness which is sustaining, and it matters less hu sio wyrd wandrige, oððe hwaet bio brenge.[31]

> The unhappy man is one for whom discontinuities appear. The most distressing circumstance occurs when a character cannot imagine a future coherent with his past. The happy man, by contrast, is one for whom the complex relation [between what is made present to the mind via the 'three faculties' and motion through the world into an unrealized future] is one of harmonious order. Such harmony results in a unified and coherent career and manifests the dominance of volition, the distinctively human power, over what "simply happens". [In The Wanderer, the poet stresses that will must be towards God before it has any power; ar sece ð.] T.A. Shippey has called this fundamental value "strength of mind" and suggests that it is a persistent concern in Anglo-Saxon poetry.[32]

Klein sees The Wanderer in terms of the development of this value of purpose in the human spirit, based on the finding of three groups of "purpose-words", each of which is related to the name "for the mental faculties of memory, present perception...and volitional futurity".[33] Each invokes both relation and purpose. The first is mynan and its derivatives myne, "love" (relation) and gemynegian, "to remind or admonish" (purpose). The second, þencan, involves making images to the mind present to the senses. Its relational derivative is geþanc, "gratitude", and the purposive, geþeahtian, "to deliberate or take counsel". The third and most complex group is based on "the operation of a mental faculty that combines the present power of constructing in the mind images that will become 'real' only in the future, and the power of

generating motion towards them; in a sense, this faculty involves the power of choosing them."[34] The word-group clusters around willan, and those with what Klein refers to as greater "intensity": hyge, mod and ellen. "Except for the words at the lowest degree of intensity, e.g. willa, the terms associated with this faculty fall into the standard 'heroic' vocabulary so frequently associated with Anglo-Saxon poetry."[35] Klein sees the poem as an investigation of these faculties, one after the other, as they fail purposively. The exploration of memory to l. 48 brings the man nothing which will avail him. Turning to thought is viewed as a failure also, as the thinker succeeds only in emptying the world of present meaning. In ll. 88-110, future vision is exercised. In Klein's opinion this, too, is a failure; he sees the snottor on mode and his stillness as an "echo of the purposive paralysis presented in the poem's prolegomenon... The principle of action in him has been brought to contemplative stasis."[36] Only in the last line and a half is the final active purpose stated.

It does not seem sound, however, to see the glaew haele and snottor on mode as failures in an age "when wisdom was the greatest virtue and the key to salvation."[37] The memory of loss, pain and deprivation which lead to thought and meditation is also seen as being as vital to the development of wisdom and clear vision in the present:

> Forþon ne maeg wearþan wis wer, aer he age
> wintra dael in woruldrice. 64-65

Surely not just the passage of years until a certain age is

reached is meant here, but the kind of experience previously described. Also, the division of the poem into sections corresponding to the three faculties one after the other is rather arbitrary, as memory, thought and will are present throughout in different ways; the wise man has them adjusted in a perspective of past, present and future in which purpose is both still and moving. Nor does such purpose come entirely from within man, for surely the poet's point in mentioning ar again is partly that God's grace has its own purpose, and that man is within it. The final human purpose stated in the last lines, that of seeking grace, does not stand on its own, but redefines the values within the rest of the poem.

The beginning of the poem, though dominated by memory, contains thought about the value of the indryhten beaw and the condition of exile; purpose, too, is expressed as the desire to find another hall, a future like the happy past. When thought becomes more prominent, it is still linked with memory, though in a wider, less individual sense; the will of mankind is considered and seen to be tied to the material world. Purpose is then expressed in the context of wisdom gained from experience, reflection in the knowledge of the futility of a extremes of character or hasty action in the face of wyrd's power over all men:

> swa þes middangeard
> ealra dogra gehwam dreoseð ond fealleþ.
> Forþon ne maeg wearþan wis wer, aer he age
> wintra dael in woruldrice. Wita sceal geþyldig:
> ne sceal no to hatheort, ne to hraedwyrde,
> ne to wac wiga, ne to wanhydig, —
> ne to forht, ne to faegen, ne to feohgifre,
> ne naefre gilpes to georn aer he geare cunne:
> beorn sceal gebidan, þonne he beot sprice ð,
> oþþaet, collenferð, cunne gearwe
> hwider hreþra gehygd hweorfan wille. 62-72

Vision of past, present and future as the wreckage of human accomplishments and values associated with them dissolves the possibility of any "volitional futurity" therein. The poetic thinker cannot conceive of a wordly future "that is not liable/ like the past, to have no destination",[38] unless the will is directed to Faeder on heofonum. This, if part of human existence, endows it with a future in which is the faestnung sought from the beginning of the poem.

Through the milieu and poetic diction of the heroic tradition, purpose in human existence is examined in the light of what occurs in a world subject to wyrd. The only source of purpose is seen as God, whom wyrd neither changes nor touches. The poetic vocabulary of the tradition facilitates the breakdown of worldly values, which are then given new strength.

Experience in The Wanderer is described on many levels at once, involving contrasts and paradoxes which are finally resolved. Relationships between unfulfilled movement and fulfilled stasis, imposed fixity and voluntary reticence, are developed through a shifting of position within a landscape. In the first part of the poem, the landscape is the fixed world of the exile, while the man is tormented in both body and spirit as he wanders through it. A passage of intense thought with a different emphasis then occurs, during which a viewpoint is established from which a larger landscape, the world itself, is seen to change and decay. The first landscape though empty except for one wineleas guma, is dominated by that which is absent: winemaga, goldwine, wynnum, wunden gold, etc. The second landscape is emptied of these things as they pass

through the vision. The two settings are the same middangeard; the eardstapa, glaew haele and snottor on mode may be the same persona without inconsistency. However, the problems of establishing the nature of 'persona' in such a poems are numerous (see above, pp. 76-77); it might be more appropriate to look at points of view within the poem in terms of what they are intended to convey to the audience within the development of the theme and resolution at the end. We are shown kinds of experience which cannot be either lived or presented simultaneously, but must progress from one to the other. The first moves into the next as the tension between movement and fixity begins to be resolved. A progressive integration of experience and thought occurs: they are deadlocked in the suffering eardstapa but begin to work together in ll. 51ff. until they merge and are lifted into a spirituality which overcomes the confusion of contrasts and paradoxes which the poet presents as being part of the fabric of worldly life.

The movement of thought in the poem is "not logical but figurative",[39] which is one of the major difficulties involved in approaching the poem as though it were about the mind, or thought; there are no lines between concept and concrete manifestation. A major system of relationship is developed through "the idea of fastness as an attribute of mind and existence".[40] In the movement of thought through this attribute as manifested in human relationships and achievements, their decay, and natural phenomena, the expansion of awareness is presented. One extremely tangled paradox concerning a positive fastness (security) and negative fastness (imprisonment)

is resolved, the series of relationships appearing thus: security in bondage to a lord and society; upon release from this, a kind of imprisonment; the recognition of constant dissolution of the bonds of human society and all security therein; the release from dependency on such a bond; security in this freedom.

Experience as just that is laid before us, initially concerned with sorrow and the problem of expressing it in a manner conducive to relief. Elegiac questions are asked, and gnomic or homiletic statements made. The elusive abstract thought inherent in the poem is thereby given a familiar form, which also enacts its patterns of movement, much as a good mime artist goes through gestures and facial movements we know, giving recognizable shape to abstracts of feeling and thought; it is how they move from one to another within a given performance which contributes to new and profound realizations in an audience. In The Wanderer, words concerning fastness, immobility, binding and enclosure (necessarily in context the opposites are invoked) move in and out of recognizable situations, turning over paradoxes as they turn different facets of meaning outward. Views of waiting and seeking, passivity and activity, begin and end the poem, running towards one another through it, and eventually speak in one another's terminology.

> When these diffusely-suggested and mixed strains of feeling have been more clearly brought out, and brought to the point where they challenge one another to a verbal duel, the poet devises a peculiar kind of language wherein each strain of feeling, each duellist, as it were fires with the other's pistol... And it is worth noting that the strains of feeling get to the duelling-point because of what has been done with the

> natural particulars...and they swap pistols - talk paradoxically - because the artificial particulars (that is, the extra load of verbal figuration imposes on the natural scene) have been brought to a condition where meaningful paradox is possible.[41]

The fact that this critic is referring to Shakespeare's Sonnet 73 might indicate that the above is a phenomenon of poetic perception rather than a carefully thought-out technique; the limitations imposed by Anglo-Saxon poetic traditions do not prevent such complex imagistic and verbal expression.

The first part of the poem describes individual experience of bondage and security; the second extends, with the first in mind, to a universal view of what is usually thought of as permanence, and undermines the assumptions behind this view. A pattern of reorientation lies behind the different uses of such words as bidan, secan, frofre, fremman, healdan, cunnan and faest.

Tension exists between the connotations of activity or passivity (not in the grammatical sense) in bidan: remain, stay, wait; expect; experience, find attain. In l. 1 it might be taken in the passive sense, as it is set in apposition to movement by þeah in ll. 1-5:

> Oft him anhaga are gebideð,
> Metudes miltse, þeah he modcearig
> geond lagulade longe sceolde
> hreran mid hondum hrimcealde sae,
> wadan wraeclastas: wyrd bið ful araed!

The passive connotation of bidan here stresses the man's helplessness, wherever he moves, within the fixity of wyrd. In any case, his experience of ar, or the attainment of it, if the verb is taken to have the connotation of activity, is not due

to the misdirected seeking described in the lines following. Taking into account Rosier's idea of the principles behind generative composition, the verb with a passive connotation can be seen as the starting-point for the bindan-complex which develops throughout the poem.

Apart from wandering across the lagulade alone, the exile's only other outward activity is to speak out his care. Although the expression of grief is for the most part thought of as appropriate (as in the funeral-pyre scenes in Beowulf) and relief-giving in Old English poetry,[42] the warrior's sadness is hardly abated by it in The Wanderer. There is also, perhaps, a certain moral friction between reticence in certain circumstances and those the exile finds himself in. The expression of grief needs the context of the life the man had with his lord and people; in the absence of this, the only context for expression is one empty of meaning, and therefore of consolation.

The cluster of restraint-words, ferðlocan, faeste binde, healde hordcofan, bindað faeste and feterum saelan in ll. 13-21 indicate the strain to immobilize the mind (the compound nouns fusing "mind" with "bind") since its movement in sorrow and tension with wyrd is too painful. Another enclosure image, goldwine mine/ hrusan heolstre biwrah (l. 23), describing the event which, both literally and figuratively, seems to bury the meaning in the exile's existence, is set against his movement through an atmosphere of cold constriction, wintercearig ofer waþema gebind (l. 24), seeking the 'lost context'. He is not consciously seeking ar or Metudes miltse except in this form, and unable to act with much purpose, reflecting still the

passivity of his waiting.

Words for knowing, witan and cunnan (ll. 11, 29), refer thus far to a narrow confine of knowledge, that of a particular experience, condensed in ll. 32-33:

> Warað hine wraeclast, nalles wunden gold,
> ferðloca freorig, nalles foldan blaed;

Movement and fixity are here apposed on several planes. Warian is a grammatically active verb, translated in Bosworth-Toller as "to take possession of", "to inhabit". Bliss-Dunning note difficulties here, and suggest that "a satisfactory meaning can be obtained if hine is understood as 'his mind' and warað as 'occupies (to the exclusion of everything else)'. This meaning can be brought out by the translation 'exile preoccupies him, etc.'".[43] This lays emphasis on the mind, and the condition of exile as an abstraction:

> ...if we conclude, by various deductions, that The Wanderer as a whole is about 'thought' in one way or another, then it is natural to select, as Bliss-Dunning have done in their recent edition of the poem, such meanings from the semantic ranges of the words gehola, myne and warað (ll. 31, 27, 32 respectively) as 'confidant', 'thought' and 'pre-occupies'; but if we believe on other grounds that 'security' is the thematic horizon of the poem, it is equally natural to interpret these words in context as 'protector', 'love' and 'guards'.[44]

The problem here is one of translation, of finding suitable single words with the same semantic ranges, words which could contain several connotations working together. There is no reason why we should conclude that the poem is about thought or about security, since both combine on the "thematic horizon". We must not exclude certain connotations if they work with others, though we cannot always translate this satisfactorily.

In l. 27, for example, we must take into consideration the depth of the duguð - bond, and thereby see that love and knowing each others' mind must be part of that bond - both on the battlefield and in the hall. Similarly, in l. 31, the lord is invoked as both protector and confidant; as one, he is no doubt the other, if a good lord. In l. 32, 'holds' is an intermediate word containing both suggested meanings of warað, including it in the associative complex of healdan. The one word has connotations both concrete and abstract, which play an important part in the literal-figurative 'texture' of the poem.

In ll. 32-33, the subject/s and negative object/s of the verb also carry concrete and abstract 'charges' which inter-animate one another. Wraeclast is the sea, gold the material of adornment; ferðloca freorig varies with wraeclast on a literal level, with a sense of irony in voice. Gold is generally held by a warrior, but the wanderer is held by the empty, cold "spirit-lock". So foldan blaed varies with wunden gold: as he himself does not hold gold, the prosperity of earth does not hold him to it (which later in the poem has a positive aspect). The attributes of the above vary as well. The condition of exile involves vulnerability, deprivation, cold and loneliness; being held by these (in the sense of 'preoccupied by') is bitterly ironic next to wunden gold, the currency of courage and fidelity between retainer and lord, with the connotations (both in its gold-ness and wunden-ness) of the bonds of a precious friendship. Half-echoing goldwine, it brings to mind protection and a place in the hall. As

treasure, carrying with it the imagery of hall-enclosed warmth, it contrasts ironically with the empty, cold enclosure of ferðloca freorig. Attributes of ferðloca freorig as a place then contrasts with the connotations of fullness in foldan blaed. The symmetry of these lines contributes to their power. Each half-line is an image of experience with sensual and summative (of ideas in the poem so far) force. Empty movement is set against fulfilled stasis, and the spiritual bondage of misery against the freely entered bond of love and friendship.

The state of waiting for mercy in a fixed wyrd has so far been characterized by verbs of action, hreran, wadan, wod, sohte, emphasizing the tension in the exile's predicament. Memory takes him from this present tense, and the binding-imagery becomes more subtle and sinister in the transformation of one kind of embrace into another. From the passively-accepted grip of sorrow and sleep, he dreams of moving to embrace his lord, as in the days when his movement had a meaningful object:

> Þinceð him on mode þaet he his mondryhten
> clyppe ond cysse, ond on cneo lecge
> honda ond heafod, swa he hwilum aer
> in geardagum gifstolas breac.
>
> 41-44

He wakes, the full, warm embrace becomes that of his cold surroundings again as he sees the sea before him, and sorrow fills it with images. But here, a cluster of words containing geond marks the beginning of a train of thought which rejects illusion, and, with it, bondage. At first, this process is elementary: the man wakes up, and sees through the fleotendra ferð (l. 54) - an unwelcome clarity of vision which renews

sorrow and sends his weary spirit back to the state of turbulence-in-fixity of the exile's life. Geond is picked up, and, coupled with contemplation and meditation as general principles, begins to free the themes of the first part of the poem from the limited view imposed by the confines of individual pain.

The first instance of geond (ll. 51-52) leads into a waking state in surroundings that will not support the continuation of a dream. Suddenly the poet returns to the first person, which moved into the third after the generalization,

> Wat se þe cunnað
> hu sliþen bið sorg to geferan
> þam þe lyt hafað leofra geholena. 29-31

The change of voice may indicate (or help to stress a change in) the approach to a different point of view. Exile has been spoken of both in the first person and from the point of view of a third person who understands (se þe cunnað); but now the view is that of one who understands something beyond the experience of exile, whose spirit is not darkened by that experience. In geond þas woruld and eorla lif eal geondþence, geond- means 'throughout'; it leads into the idea of 'beyond' and so to Faeder on heofonum, in which non-darkness of spirit has its source.

Ll. 65-72 invest þidan with more action than before, in the purposeful and controlled waiting of geþyldig and gebidan. Cunnan gains a practical application rather than the comfortless knowledge of the indryhten þeaw, and the understanding but unhelpful Wat se þe cunnað...se þe sceal... The sensation of loosening bindings is inherent in the poem's language here.

What was in the first part taken up in the individual sphere by the word bindan and its conceptual variants is placed in the context of human relationships and achievements in general, through standan and its derivatives, also with connotations of fixity, referring to the world mankind builds to withstand time and the elements. (Perhaps there is an echo of l. 13 here, with a wider scope.) Imagery of paradoxical restriction of spiritual movement in an open setting changes to that of the movement of time against the closed setting: the hall and all it contains. The foundations of man's achievements are undermined by factual statement and elegaic lament, but also by appositions in which noun and verb point to ironies of position in the objects in the setting:

> woruld wela weste stondeð,
> ...weallas stondaþ
> ...waldend licgað
> ...duguð eal gecrong
> wlonc bi wealle. 74-80

The binding of man into illusion is overcome by the effect of a larger perspective, seeing the whole break down and disperse. Stodon becomes ironic in another way - the enta geweorc still stand, but are empty:

> oþþaet, burgwara breahtma lease,
> eald enta geweorc idlu stodon. 86-87

The wealsteal (l. 88) is a conscious starting-point for meditation, again underlining the freer employment of the will. The lament following puts together similar aspects of experience as can be found in the first part of the poem (departure and death of loved ones, bitter weather), but directs them towards a progression, as opposed to back into the same experience, as

before in ll. 55-57:

Cearo bið geniwad
þam þe ġendan sceal swiþe geneahhe
ofer waþema ġebind werigne sefan.

The work of giants stand empty, idlu; through meditation on wealsteal we are led to that on eorþan gesteal (l. 110), where idel has gained its abstract sense of 'vain, useless': eall þis eorþan gesteal idel weorþeð. The verb makes plain an understanding of the continuous renewal of emptiness in worldly things, no matter what is accomplished. The emptying-out process is complete.

The solitary at the end of the poem is different from the eardstapa in the effect his own thought has on him. The first ties the man to a deluded belief and hope in security formed by attachments to earthly things in themselves. The other frees, by distancing the realm of individual sorrow. In the last line, the movement of meaning through concepts and illustrations of binding, holding, fastness, waiting and seeking, stops. Ideas coalesce into practical applications within the system of worldly values, achievements and hopes. Setting is put into this perspective: weorold under heofonum and Faeder on heofonum. The poet implicitly concludes that involvement in the first should not, cannot satisfactorily be without direction to the second.

The first setting and its awareness of the world is developed by the retrospective re-use of healdan, cunnan,

gefremman, secan, frofre, stondan and faest. The original force behind heald hordcofan (l. 14) was the indryhten þeaw, a custom seen as imposed by an absent society; the custom was without meaning or effect without its worldly props. Treowe gehealdeþ (l. 112) refers to the reticence and fastness which are products of a knowledge which is not imposed, but which springs from inner strength. Such a bond of faith has a positive effect within the transient world. Cunnan and gefremman, to know and to act, are similarly changed in their references. Through the imagistic stripping-away of all that will ultimately disappear for every man, reaching out and speaking out have become directed by calm rather than despair. Knowledge of the type,

> Ic to soþe wat
> þaet bið in eorle indryhten þeaw
> þaet he his ferðlocan faeste binde 11ff.

and wat se þe cunnað..., wat se þe sceal... go with an inability to act in the spirit:

> Ne maeg werig mod wyrde wiðstondan,
> ne se hreo hyge helpe gefremman, 15-16

At the end of the poem, se hreo hyge has been replaced with elne in its position before gefremman. The possibility of action is accompanied by acceptance of limitations imposed by wyrd, and an 'unless - ' clause has been added (nemþe, l. 113). Before, the expression of sorrow only served to release it to ravage a man within, fixing the condition in him. The conclusion is that expression should never begin thus, motivated by despair about what a man cannot change; but courage is required even when a bote is known to exist:

ne sceal naefre his torn to rycene,
beorn of his breostum acyþan, nemþe he aer þa bote cunne,
eorl, mid elne gefremman.
112-114

Secan and frofre are the action and desired object which lead the movement of the poem. Ar, as the deep source of comfort, is approached in two different ways. The first is a helpless waiting (are gebideð, l. 1) while restlessly in search of the evaporating ideal of worldly comfort:

sohte seledreorig sinces bryttan,
hwaer ic feor oþþe neah findan meahte
þone þe in meoduhealle minne myne wisse,
oþþe mec freondleasne frefran wolde.
25-28

By the end of the poem, this restless activity has come to an end, while a state of spiritual activity is seen to enable the reaching out to a permanent source of frofre, with which, in the stillness of the snottor on mode, there is some contact:

Wel bið þam þe him are seceð,
frofre to Faeder on heofonum, þaer us eal seo
faestnung stondeð.
114-115

Þam þe him and us eal bring together the individual and total human possibilities for the experience of grace and fastness, investigated separately in the rest of the poem. In the replacement of gebidan by seceð before are, the two terms have "swapped pistols". Passivity towards grace, and the inability to receive it was in movement; then, a strong seeking for grace is found in stillness. The last half-line opens up the previous imagery of the poem, of the paradox security/bondage, in the reverberating words faestnung (found in the first part of the poem in faeste binde and variations) and stondeð (in the second part, meditation on the wall) in the

expression of a positive awareness of the principle of fastness. The abstraction of this conclusion has power, although - or perhaps because - the conclusion itself is imageless, an antitype (not in the exegetical sense) of the poem's imagery of failing fastness. Outside the limitations imposed by wyrd, faestnung could not be expressed imagistically.

In The Wanderer, although there is a complex balance of concrete and abstract, it is not possible to conclude that the poet distinguished them as such. Rather, a constant awareness of one in the other seems to have been necessary to keep paradoxes on both planes in mind in order to develop them to a conclusion, in which a negative terminology has been re-defined in a positive sense.

Footnotes to Chapter Two

1. Calder, "Setting and Mode in 'The Seafarer and The Wanderer'," p. 270.
2. Rosier, "The Literal-Figurative Identity of The Wanderer", p. 376.
3. See chapter five, Exodus, p. 178, note 16.
4. Doubleday, "The Three Faculties of the Soul in The Wanderer", p. 188.
5. Pope, "Dramatic Voices in The Wanderer and The Seafarer", pp. 164-93.
6. Pope, "Second thoughts on the interpretation of The Seafarer", pp. 75-86.
7. Greenfield, "Min., Sylf., and Dramatic Voices in The Wanderer and The Seafarer", p. 214.
8. Klein, "Purpose and the 'Poetics' of The Wanderer and The Seafarer", p. 231.
9. ibid., p. 210, note 9.
10. Woolf, The English Religious Lyric in the Middle Ages, p. 9.
11. Greenfield, The Interpretation of Old English Poems, p. 134.
12. Calder, op. cit., note 1, p. 275.
13. Gordon, "Traditional Themes in The Wanderer and The Seafarer", p. 1.
14. Rosier, op. cit., note 2, p. 367.
15. Dunning and Bliss, The Wanderer, p. 94.
16. ibid., pp. 94-95.
17. Rosier, op. cit., note 2, p. 366.
18. Dunning and Bliss, The Wanderer, p. 96.
19. Gordon, op. cit., note 13, p. 11.
20. Woolf, "The Wanderer, The Seafarer, and the Genre of Planctus", pp. 197-98.
21. ibid., p. 198.

22. Dunning and Bliss, The Wanderer, p. 94.

23. ibid., note to l. 107; see also p. 73.

24. The plural occurs fairly often in the poetry: in connection with God's power over events, in the collocation wyrda waldend (Andreas 1056; Exodus 433; Resignation 44) and foreknowledge (Andreas 629-31, "Hwaet frinest ðu me, frea leofesta... þe wyrda gehwaere... soð oncnawest?"). The plural also occurs in a context where it might have applied equally to events leading up to the eardstapa's condition, and which supports the idea that wyrd can refer to one particular condition among others, ned bið wyrda heardost, Solomon and Saturn 312.

25. Calder, op. cit., note 1, p. 273.

26. ibid., p. 274.

27. ibid., p. 275.

28. Stanley, "Old English Poetic Diction and the Interpretation of The Wanderer, The Seafarer and The Penitent's Prayer", p. 432.

29. King Alfred's Version of Boethius' De Consolatione Philosophiae, edited by W.J. Sedgefield.

30. Shippey, Old English Verse, p. 21.

31. King Alfred's Version of Boethius, op. cit., note 29, 130:15-18.

32. Klein, op. cit., note 8, p. 212.

33. ibid., p. 210.

34. ibid., p. 211.

35. ibid.

36. ibid., p. 218.

37. Shippey, op. cit., note 30, p. 67.

38. T.S. Eliot, Four Quartets, "The Dry Salvages", II, 23-24.

39. Rosier, op. cit., note 2, p. 366.

40. ibid., p. 367.

41. Nowottny, The Language Poets Use, p. 81.

42. Shippey, op. cit., note 30, pp. 55-56.

43. Dunning and Bliss, The Wanderer, pp. 69-70.

44. Greenfield, op. cit., note 11, pp. 134-135.

Chapter Three: The Seafarer

Although The Wanderer and The Seafarer are generally treated as companion pieces, the expectations of allegory have been brought to bear most strongly on The Seafarer, and are at the centre of much critical discussion. The debate turns on the question of whether the poem was written with the intention of portraying an actual experience, or as an allegory of man's exile on earth. Whitelock sees the poem as an autobiographical account of a voluntary pilgrim-exile on a symbolic journey to the heavenly homeland:

> I contend that the poet has shown us that for him the way lies through pilgrimage, with renunciation of worldly pleasures. He is not going seafaring for its own sake, but, as an islander, he cannot reach the land of foreigners except across the sea, and when we remember the conditions of early voyaging we need not wonder that this part of the journey should occupy so much of his thought.[1]

However, the poem's imagery is so structured that land-life and the life of the exile on the sea become symbolic of an existence without Christian commitment and one of spirituality and devotion. The nature of this contrast has directed Smithers to the opposite pole of interpretation:

> It remains conceivable that the actual practice of peregrination (in the sense illustrated by Prof. Whitelock from records) encouraged the choice of 'seafaring' as an allegorical device. But the prime impulse was clearly the purely doctrinal or literary topos of man's peregrinatio on earth after Adam's exile from paradise; and the peregrinus of real life is probably to be ruled out even in a limited role.[2]

Whitelock accepts the emendation of MS waelweg to hwaelweg in l. 63,[3] while Smithers takes the original waelweg as "a reference

to the journey of the soul after death."[4] While it is true that the poem changes in tone and leaves the descriptions of seafaring and life on land behind when the subject of death is reached, the poet speaks of kinds of death: death to God in an unchristian life, the death of the body, and death to the claims of a worldly existence on the soul which is directed to God. It is not, therefore, necessary to conclude that such a specific meaning is intended here (see discussion, below).

The opinion that the two interpretations cannot be reconciled is expressed thus:

> The theme becomes somewhat complicated...if we are to regard the seafarer as 'real', a Christian peregrinus, and his experiences as symbolic. Moreover, there is nothing in the poems [i.e. The Wanderer and The Seafarer] themselves to indicate that the exile's lament is intended to be anything but the 'real' or personal theme - the soðgiedd - it purports to be. And it seems improbable that symbolism would be used at so early a stage of literary development with ho explicit exposition of its meaning. In other Anglo-Saxon symbolic poems, The Phoenix, The Whale, and The Panther, the symbolic meaning is carefully expounded.
>
> It seems more in accordance with what we know of early Anglo-Saxon poetry, and of literary origins generally, to accept these poems more simply at their face value, with all their structural weaknesses.[5]

In Gordon's edition, 'realism' is seen as a barrier even to a literal reading of the exile's situation, because the peregrinus does not behave according to the rules of genre (although the genre referred to is that of the Irish hermit-poems). "Instead, it is the sea-journey itself, as a physical experience, that dominates the theme."[6] Cross, in his review of this edition, feels that no conclusion is made here regarding either the

literal or allegorical view because of "limiting the inclusiveness of the term allegory in the medieval period and not realizing its common use as a genus of figures."[7] There is also a tendency to limit the inclusiveness of the term 'reality' on the part of many, and to assume that the poet did so.

> For once the 'homeless wanderer' of elegy is seen also as a symbolic figure of the peregrinus or 'alien' in this world, journeying to seek his heavenly home, his journeying becomes more purposeful. And it is not a far cry from the metaphorical peregrinus to the 'real' peregrinus making his real journey for the same purpose. But whether the poet made the connexion is difficult to determine, since the theme is cast so firmly in the mould of the conventional lament of the 'homeless wanderer'.[8]

It is possible to accept the poems simply, without relegating the real and the symbolic to such different spheres, hence requiring the poet to make connexions between them. It does not appear that the poet made a distinction of this order, and so wrote his poem in either an autobiographical or allegorical genre.

Stanley notes the extensive use of simile in Old English poetry; "this gives some justification to the belief that much of what might appear realistic in their poems was capable of figurative interpretation."[9] In an investigation of the metaphor of the arrows of the devil and charms like that wið faerstice, he remarks:

> The diseases of the body are directly related to the sins of the flesh. In the medical allegory by which the arrows of the devil can blind the eye, pierce the body, and torment the spirit, there is no scientific neatness; and the modern reader accustomed to scientific precision is in danger of importing the neat distinction of fact and figure into an age that did not know it or need it.[10]

If we were to say 'figurative perception' rather than 'figurative thought', it would be clear that the non-distinction of fact and figure is initially a feature of the poet's awareness, rather than being a phenomenon of early literary development resulting in unintentional obscurity and structural weaknesses; we would have to accept that a certain kind of mental process is altogether bypassed in much Old English poetry. To approach any poem as though such a process is concealed in the text, or ought to be, is not going to be helpful. In some modern poetry, such as the French symbolists' or Dylan Thomas's, a similar bypassing of a certain kind of thought process is accomplished, but only by purposely frustrating the expectations of logic.

The Wanderer and The Seafarer are similar in landscape and seascape imagery, together with a portrayed situation of exile; they share an outwardly similar organization of the materials of the description of an individual's experience, elegiac lament and poetic homily. However, situation, imagery and tone are directed differently in The Seafarer, where ambiguity is cultivated in all three on a larger scale, and with another end that the redefinition of worldly values in the light of experience.

> In The Wanderer the movement from the narrator's attainment of wisdom is not toward a specific place, but only toward a greater recognition of the meaning of mutability until he reaches an eschatological vision at the end of the poem. Heaven is ham in The Seafarer; it is only a place where faestnung is in The Wanderer, and the difference in specificity helps explain why The Seafarer is an allegory and The Wanderer is not.[11]

This difference in specificity is not a feature of the entire poem, but grows out of a series of contrasts, so that sign and

signified are on a continuum. The contrast between life on the sea in exile and life on land, i.e. at home, is extended into the contrast between a life in which the spirit is consciously directed towards God and one directed towards worldly security. This, in the poet's Christian view, makes the difference between life and death. There is an assumption in the poet that all life is symbolic, with the background of man as an exile on earth after leaving paradise; he exhorts his audience to lead the appropriate symbolic life in the world, one which does not end in the death of the body. Smithers quotes a number of homilies implying a widespread acceptance of the idea that man is elþeodige in his life on earth, e.g. Nis þeos woruld na ure eðel, ac is ure wraecsið;[12] We send on þisse woruld elþeodignesse.[13]

The use of the first person in the first halves of both The Wanderer and The Seafarer is also similar; in The Wanderer, however, the poet moves back and forth into the third person, and so the audience is encouraged both to identify with and objectively view the experience of exile before the poem moves into the third person entirely. There is in The Wanderer no ambiguity of attitude in the first-person expression except in ll. 58-59. Forþon ic geþencan ne maeg geond þas woruld/ forhwan modsefa min ne gesweorce is ambiguous until the resolution seen to be brought about by wisdom, experience and faith. In The Seafarer, ambiguity of attitude is heightened as the contrast between two qualities of life widens in scope; it is only the landsman with whom the poet does not let us identify. Stanley's remark that the use of the first person

in these poems is "non-literal"[14] can be elaborated: the first person does not exist on one concrete level, while action or meaning progresses on another, but is integrated without a dividing line into the movement of meaning in the entire work.

Like The Wanderer, The Seafarer has been approached from the angle that landscape is symbolic of state of mind; but in both poems, the soul is a concept not contained in that of the modern one of mind, and an overemphasis on the psychology of the narrator is misplaced. The first-person speaker's attitude provides a different context for the imagery, and hence a different relationship to the elegiac and homiletic material. In The Wanderer, attitudes to the outside world the exile finds himself in and the inside world of the hall directed the latter relationship; in The Seafarer, the context of the contrast between land- and seascape directs a reinterpretation not of worldly values, but of exile itself, and there is thus an implicit reference to a particular Christian belief. This again is a contributing factor to the difference in specificity between the two poems. Calder discusses the imagery largely in terms of itself and the psychology of the seafarer, so that the larger context and therefore the point of contrast is somewhat lost. In Calder's view, the land in the first part of the poem symbolizes "the vanished joys of the narrator's human happiness"[15] and the sea is a "symbol of the despairing spirit",[16] but both land and sea later change symbolic 'reference':

> ...land and sea seem to symbolize joy and sorrow in the seafarer's mind, but actually both symbolize aspects of the sadness of human existence... A final reduction of the pattern to its simplest

> terms would have the important contrast between the two symbolic meanings for land - one a land of transience and the other, because it has Dryhtnes dreamas, a land of permanence. The sea, then, is identified with the land in two ways - as eventually identified with it in section one, but as the pathway to the new land in section two. When the personal voice of the narrator drifts away, the settings fade as well, though the image of the land, which is repeated twice, underscores the double symbolism of land as both transience and stability.[17]

The attempt to impose such internally figurative specificity on the imagery overburdens it, and implies that it has a very complicated relationship to the elegiac and homiletic elements. If the poem is indeed an allegory, a further clarification of terms is required.

> Maeg ic be me sylfum soðgied wrecan,
> siþas secgan...
>
> 1-2

The poem opens with the promise of the teller to relate a true story about his own siþas. The range of connotations for sið is wide: going, journeying; course, expedition (i.e. travelling with an object in mind); coming, arrival; way of conduct; what befalls a person.

> The allegorical progress may first of all be understood in the narrow sense of a questing journey. There is usually a paradoxical suggestion that by leaving home the hero can return to another better "home"... Sometimes, having made the journey, the hero comes back to his original home so much changed that he cannot any longer hold his former position.[18]

> But there is always a material description of travel from a home to some distant place, and then either a return, or a continuation of the voyage ad infinitum. Usually, as the story moves the hero farther from his home, the imagination of the author is fired by his freedom from the requirements of plausibility...[19]

The Seafarer contains all the elements of an allegorical progress,

yet there is not unqualified agreement as to whether the term allegory can be applied to the poem at all. The intention of the poet has been difficult to isolate from the critical approaches themselves, weighing plausibility against implausibility, 'realism' against 'symbolism', explicit against implicit. It would be productive at this point to dispense with the idea that the poet wrote with the same kind of allegorical intention as Prudentius, Langland or Bunyan. Much of the problem of determining authorial intention in this area is merely a reflection of the possible latitude therein, and the fact that many different sets of criteria have been developed as a result.

The poem does require a certain amount of interpretation, but the requirement is in the area of perceiving analogies between complexes of spiritual state, location and action, rather than, as in The Faerie Queene, between externalized, concretized abstracts. Events of the sīþas and the situation of exile are interpreted by the mood of the first-person subject, to about l. 57. Then, a declaration of faith, together with the flight of the anfloga, interprets mood. Finally, the wisdom gained by the experience is combined with faith into exhortation; and the poetic homily is interpretative in a different style of both faith and experience.

The progress behind the above interpretative structure, marked by the movement from the description of experience into exhortation, is uninterrupted. The apparently paradoxical moods of the seafarer are resolved in the paradoxical language of deade lif/ laene on londe (65-66). This clarification of

the meanings of and attitudes to exile leads directly into the subjects of death and morality, since human exile from paradise is by definition into a world involving death and sin. The imagery has also led the audience into a discussion concerning the soul (see below). The part of the poem which contains descriptions of subjective experience is brought into focus so that certain analogies have been implicitly established as the audience's understanding of 'journeying into exile' broadens in scope.

In an allegory, the reader or audience is made to feel that two or more levels of meaning exist and correspond to one another in some portrayed situation, i.e. are analogous; "but the effect of allegory is to keep the two levels of being very distinct in your mind, though they interpenetrate one another in so many details."[20] In The Seafarer, an analogical relation may be seen to exist, without ever having been overtly drawn or explained, between a journey in voluntary exile towards an elþeodigra eard (38), the impulse of the soul towards God, and human life on earth as it moves towards death to the fate of the soul. The analogues are not easy to distinguish; it is not possible to determine where one ends and another begins. Nor does the poem examine the possibilities of each in relation to the other in detail. Finally,

> ...by definition there is no such thing as the end of any analogy; all analogies are incomplete and incompletable, and the allegory simply regards this analogical relation in a narrative or dramatic form.[21]

If we are to call The Seafarer allegory, the above analogical relation should not be limited to narrative or dramatic form,

as the homiletic section of the poem must be included.

> Yet the primary function of the analogical or of any symbolic system is not properly to get at a philosophical truth but to employ the symbol in its simultaneous progressive and retrogressive directions, thereby making history and experience meaningful.[22]

Certainly in a medieval context the above could be rephrased 'revealing how history and experience are meaningful', since that assumption is inherent in the poet's religion (as expressed in John 1-18; Romans 19-20) - and, because it is an assumption, a certain amount of conscious striving for definition will be felt to be unnecessary by the poet; he will be more likely to let the material speak for itself than to carefully expound a symbolic meaning, especially if he has not narrowed his subject with the intent to focus on a particular aspect or meaning. If he does expound, it can be gathered that he perceived there to be a specific symbolic meaning; however, as The Phoenix illustrates, even a particular symbolic meaning tends to lose its identifying characteristics in a host of others similar to it in part, and not always less important to the poet.

The development of the bird-imagery into soul-imagery helps to establish a relation between the three analogues above (p. 119), linking the sea and exile with the soul and liberation. Another directing force in the analogy is the tension in these parallels and oppositions: a seemingly negative experience, voyaging on the sea in winter, is followed by the expression of a desire to voyage again; similarly, a seemingly positive experience, that of comfort and springtime on land, is accompanied by distress and dissatisfaction.

However, the presence of analogy does not necessarily make a work an allegory. Honig outlines the ways in which the use of analogy can indicate allegorical intentions in the author:[23] through nomenclature, a name that attributes a quality to someone, designating him in terms of something outside the immediate story; through the comparison of a state of nature with a state of mind, drawing "realistic instances together in a single deal...human transcendance over environmental limits"; "states of mind elucidated by appropriate actions"; "the correspondence of an action with an extrafictional event, which the action enlarges upon"; and the analogy evolved through correspondences within the story itself, such as coincidences and foreshadowing.[24]

While there is nothing so obvious as a Bunyanesque 'Christian' designation for the seafarer, two aspects of who and what he is are similar in effect to such a name. He is one who goes the ways of the exile (14-15; 29-30), and also one who intends a voyage (37-38; and, including himself in a group of others, 47, 51-52). The intention to voyage, stated after a description of voyaging in terms of loneliness and pain, forces the audience to reconsider the designation 'exile'.

The nature/mind analogy in the poem has been remarked upon by most critics, notably Calder; but while the mirror-imagery of what seems to be setting with state of mind is a common feature of Old English poetry, in The Seafarer there is enough distance between them to reveal a structural purpose in parallelism and contrast. Land and sea have their different

human inhabitants and ways of life. Within this basic contrast are the seabirds, the cuckoo and the anfloga, each of which belongs in its particular setting, each of which has a particular voice. All play a part in the identification of the seafarer as a voluntary exile, and the means by which the background of this volition, the awareness of man as exile on earth and the desire for God, is brought into focus. It is the flight of the anfloga as the image of transcendance over "environmental limits" which is at the centre of the poem, and which both looks back to the seafarer's refusal to be bound by the security of land, and forward to the desire for ham and the means of getting there. In the latter part of the poem, imagery of land- or seascape has a parallel in the description of the dying earth; instead of a 'state of mind', it illustrates the Christian's dying affection for bis deade lif/ laene on londe. By the end of the poem, the contrasting qualities of life on land and sea have become two ways of living in the world in relation to God. The process of development is carried through in the statement of a desire to voyage, continued in the contrast between heroic and Christian values in the temporal dryhten/ heavenly Dryhten apposition (39-43), and completed in ll. 103ff., the homiletic directions of Christian behaviour.

Honig's third kind of analogical indication of allegorical intention is the elucidation of states of mind by appropriate actions, as illustrated in The Faerie Queene when Redcrosse interacts with characters embodying illusion, pride, despair etc. The appropriate actions of the seafarer are not in

regard to embodied concepts with an identifying name, but with the state of his own mind and soul, not altogether externalized, and with a non-fantasy world of values. His actions are voluntarily undertaking a voyage to elþeodigra eard; the elaboration of the reason why and the exhortation at the end of the poem can also be considered appropriate actions. If there is a 'hero', he is a composite one, made up of ic, mon and we.

The process of elucidation is cumulative: each state of mind and each action clarifies those previous to it. Initially (to l. 33), the description of the winter sea-voyage is in terms of hardship and misery, as in The Wanderer, and is what we would expect from a seagoing exile.[25] The emptiness of the exile's world is emphasized by the ironic placing of the sea-birds in place of the human company and joys of the hall. (This emphasis on emptiness is later transformed into an emphasis on the emptiness of the world in which man, as exile, must live and die in.) His willingness to embrace such a life is at first startling, and seemingly out of context. The peculiarity and complexity of this mood, be it a mixture of trepidation and desire, or wistfulness for worldly fortune and comfort mingled with contempt,[26] is clarified by the departure and return of the anfloga, inciting the man to follow, and the direct statement of belief linked with it (58-67). The vitality of the anfloga as both soul and desire redefines and gives another context for the hunger, pain and longing expressed by the seafarer first as an exile, then an exile on land:

þaer þa ceare seofedun
hat' ymb heortan; hungor innan slat
merewerges mod. 10-12

monað mǫdes lust maela gehwylce
ferð to feran, þaet ic feor heonan
elþeodigra eard gesece - 36-38

Ne biþ him to hearpan hyge...
ac a hafað longunge se þe on lagu fundað.
44-47

For þon nu min hyge hweorfeð ofer hreðerlocan,
min modsefa mid meȝreflode,
ofer hwaeles eþel ↑ cymeð eft to me
gifre ond graedig; gielleð anfloga,
hweteð on hwaelweg hreþer unwearnum
ofer holma gelagu; for þon me hatran sind
Dryhtnes dreamas þonne þis deade lif
laene on londe.
Ic gelyfe no
þaet him eorðwelan ece stondað. 58-67

The anonymous 'I' of the exile disappears into a voice of elegiac lament, conviction and exhortation, eventually using the plural 'we'; the invited identification of the audience with an individual experience becomes that of each individual in the audience with a group. Next, hunger, pain and longing are seen in the context of body and soul meeting death, next to which taste, feeling and wealth-giving gold are all empty:

Ne maeg him þonne se flaeschoma, þonne him
þaet feorg losað,
ne swete forswelgan ne sar gefelan
ne hond onhreran ne mid hyge þencan...
ne maeg þaere sawle þe biþ synna ful
gold to geoce for Godes egsan, 94-101

An analogue corresponding to an 'extrafictional event' is implied by the above development of hunger in relation to soul and action: the notion of human exile from paradise, and the journey to heaven through life and death. N.F. Blake sees also in the poem a reference to resurrection and judgement in the description of winter and spring, again corresponding to

a wide body of patristic and Christian Latin writings.[27]

There is a system of analogues structuring the poem, but they are implicit, and the effect is one of gradually disclosed, balanced movement in several dimensions at once, rather than a sense of correspondence on different levels. The analogies are intuitive and derive from deeply-held assumptions; they do not have the sharpness of relationships which have been rationalized.

> The literary allegory does not oppose a realistic account of the universe. Its very power lies in its giving proof to the physical and ethical realities of life objectively conceived. This it does typically in the narrative course by moving progressively backward, forward and upward in a three-dimensional continuum. Thus the progression of an allegory is spiral - virtually simultaneous in all three directions: backward to the thing represented (the story, the literal depiction of reality) which is itself symbolic, pregnant with signification, and forward and upward to the consummation of its meaning in the whole work. The symbolic nature of the literal dimension evokes in the reader the recognition that his own experience parallels the expanding implications of the symbolic material in the narrative. The resolution of the symbol in the transumptive meaning of the whole work confirms the reader's understanding of his own experience by showing how its gradually perceived potentialities are eventually fulfilled.
>
> As a conceptual instrument allegory makes possible a cosmic view of the intrinsic relationships of all objects and beings, each of which, by attitude or action, discloses in respect to itself the typical likeness and unlikeness every other object and being. Thus as a concept allegory serves to define or devise states of separateness and togetherness, oppositions and unities. But in the practical completion of its design, the allegorical work dispenses with the concept of allegory, as something preconceived, in order to achieve the fullest fictional manifestation of life. Allegory, which is symbolic in method, is realistic in the content of its perception.[28]

Rather than having dispensed with the concept of allegory, the Seafarer poet has not employed a particular allegory of man's exile from paradise within a literary genre. The kind of symbolism investigated in the preceding pages was too much a part of his cosmology to be extracted, considered and formalized. The difference in self-consciousness between medieval poetry and, for example, that of the seventeenth century has been noted as being respectively anonymous (or, later, self-effacing) and "conscious of being watched" as an author.[29] This too was no doubt a factor contributing to the difficulty in determining authorial intention, which may not have been literary in the manner we have come to recognize in later poetry. An analysis of the text and the internal structure of the imagery may not necessarily reveal such an intention, but will certainly illuminate something of the poet's sense of symbolism.

Although Gordon's edition of The Seafarer has conscientious footnotes concerning the habits of the whooper swan and gannet, the bird-imagery has not been dealt with as being structurally important. As objects of the exile's attention, at sea (19-25) and on land (53-55), and as being the inspiration for the imagery of the soul (59-66), birds and their cries within particular landscapes aid in the transition from the more imagistic part of the poem with its elements of narrative into the elegiac and homiletic sections. The bird-motif fuses the physical voyage in exile from human company with the desire for God, in whose direction a voyage is to be taken; this motif leads

directly to the discussion involving the nature of life and death, the soul and its fate after death.

In their first appearance (19-25), birds are seen in the place of what is most absent from the scene; it is their presence which sharply outlines the isolation of the exile, emphasizing his distance from the hall. Then in ll. 53-55, the cuckoo's voice forebodes sorg: care, anxiety; accidia, tedium; sorrow, affliction - all within the range of possibility for someone who is preparing a voyage from home involving deprivation and pain, upon which he is nevertheless resolved and eager to go. The cuckoo's voice is an image of a different kind of unfulfilled need from the yfelte song, ganetes hleoþor, huilpan sweg or maew singende; instead, it is identified with the need to depart from land and human company. The last appearance is less a bird than a selection of the birdlike characteristics which have been stressed thus far (detachment from land, crying out), and is linked again with the hunger of the spirit and the voyage. In this third instance of such imagery, a change has taken place in the cry. The voices of the seabirds stressed the seafarer's isolation, and the cuckoo's the difficulty and danger of the voyage. The voice of the anfloga, however, belongs to the man. Gordon disagrees completely, stating that

> anfloga is almost certainly, as Sieper suggests, the cuckoo. Some have understood it to be the spirit (hyge) sweeping over the sea like a bird; but the emphasis on the cries, which could have little or no metaphorical significance, would make such an image almost absurd. --Others have understood it to be a seagull; but the seagull is not a 'lone-flier' as the cuckoo almost always is, and there has been no previous mention of a

> sea-bird to connect with the anfloga, whereas the cuckoo earlier incited him to the journey as the anfloga incites him now. Probably the passage is intended to mark the return to reality:' when his spirit comes back to him again the Seafarer awakes to consciousness of his surroundings and hears the cuckoo's cry.[30]

The experience of the spirit as a being, not bound to earth, with a will of its own, described as something which can direct him towards Dryhtnes dreamas seems more likely in this context than the cuckoo.

> For þon nu min hyge hweorfeð ofer hreþerlocan,
> min modsefa mid mereflode,
> ofer hwaeles eþel hweorfeð wide,
> eorþan sceatas, cymeð eft to me
> gifre ond graedig; gielleð anfloga,
> hweteð on hwaelweg hreþer unwearnum
> ofer holma gelagu, for þon me hatran sind
> Dryhtnes dreamas þonne þis deade lif
> laene on londe.
> Ic gelyfe no
> þaet him eorðwelan ece stondað. 58-67

That this conclusion can be reached at this point in the poem relies on the identification of the spirit with a flying creature.

> In keeping with its original wind-nature, spirit is always an active, winged, swift-moving being as well as that which vivifies, stimulates, incites, fires and inspires. To put it in modern language, spirit is the dynamic principle, forming for that very reason the classical antithesis of matter - the antithesis, that is, of stasis and inertia. Basically it is the contrast between life and death. The subsequent differentiation of this contrast leads to the actually very remarkable opposition of spirit and nature. Even though spirit is regarded as alive and enlivening, one cannot really feel nature as unspiritual and dead. We must therefore be dealing with the (Christian) postulate of a spirit whose life is so vastly superior to the life of nature that in comparison with it the latter is no better than death.[31]

The bird-motif is the vehicle for the investigation of the Christian vocation as the difference between life and death,

as the direction towards 'home'.

A three-part pattern emerges in the structure of the poem around this imagery. There is the contrast between land and sea, then a remark on the landsman's ignorance of the exile's suffering, after which the desire to voyage is expressed. Building on this pattern, the poet proceeds to the general Christian exhortation (general in the sense that there is no further specific development of corresponding soul-imagery, e.g. the Paraclete, and no more reference to the soul as flying or calling).

In the first instance, the yfelte song, ganetes hleoþor, huilpan sweg and maew singende are in place of human company and protection on land, which are by implication here valuable but unavailable. The only communication is between birds who belong in the sea-setting:

> Stormas þaer stanclifu beotan, þaer him stearn oncwaeð
> isigfeþera; ful oft þaet earn bigeal,
> urigfeþra; naenig hleomaega
> feasceaftig ferð frefran meahte. 23-26

The seafarer remarks that the townsman, who has what the exile does not, scarcely believes that such hardship exists, and therefore has no understanding of exile (27-30). Yet, now the seafarer announces that he is urged by his own spirit to venture out on the sea again. Sylf cunnige has offered some difficulty in interpretation. "The use of sylf implies that, though he has had experience of seafaring, he has not himself before made such a journey across the ocean."[32] P.L. Henry's translation of the line, as "of my own accord shall venture..."[33] implies that the seafarer may indeed have made such a voyage,

but that the difference now lies in his volition to place himself in such circumstances. Greenfield supports this interpretation.[34] It is also possible that sylf is emphatic, giving the sense, "even myself, who have suffered so much, am impelled to go..." Cnyssað would parallel monað in l. 36, with the sense 'urged'.[35]

The pattern is now reworked, in the light of this volition. The land-life is valueless in the urgency of the seafarer's desire and the uncertainty of what such a voyage will bring, so that no joy or hope in the world holds his attention (44-47). Instead of the sea-birds calling to one another, the cuckoo's voice speaks to him directly, perhaps reflecting the conflict of one extraordinary mood with the brightness and beauty of spring: a 'changed tune', a state of exile, and the foreboding of sorg. The cuckoo is a changeling, an 'exile' left in a nest not its own; its voice changes to a gloomy note at the end of summer (it is sumeres weard) before migration.[36] This complex mood is referred to by Greenfield as "one of hesitancy and trepidation. Here is a resurrection of the anguish which the seafarer suffered in the past, intensified now by the thought of a new and more irrevocable exile from earthly felicity."[37] The tension expressed between settings, land and sea, has become a tension between values; both settings have acquired a significance they did not previously have, and are charged with ambiguity as a result of the paradoxical attitude expressed towards them.

The second element in the pattern, a statement concerning the landsman's ignorance of suffering and exile, is now given

in the context of another kind of suffering (with the implication not far away of another kind of exile), that of the previous mood of distress, the heaviness of spirit in the exile on land.

> Þaet se beorn ne wat,
> sefteadig secg, hwaet þa sume dreogað
> þe þa wraeclastas widost lecgað. 55-57

The alliterative link of wraeclastas with widost may well stress the fact that the peregrinus is aware that the land of his exile is the whole earth, while the landsman thinks of it in the limited sense of exclusion from human company; but the journey the seafarer is about to take is in the form of renunciation rather than deprivation, and its terms are not those of worldly values.

The third part of the pattern, the desire to set to sea, is now expressed as liberation from the drag of worldly existence as contained in the image of life on land, and from anxiety about the voyage. Faith is described as an experience which clarifies and strengthens purpose beyond doubt or fear. The attention which has been drawn to birds and their voices is now focussed on the anfloga. Apart from the naturalness and suitability of this image of the soul, momentarily freed by faith from its worldly bonds, other factors conflict with the 'cuckoo-hypothesis'. The Bosworth-Toller definition of giellan is more in line with 'cry' or 'shout' than with any sound a cuckoo might make. The poet has given names to all the other birds (yfelte, ganet, huilpe, maew, stearn, earn, geac), but the anfloga has only a cryptic designation describing its attributes and actions; it is more like the fleotendra

ferð of The Wanderer (54) than any particular species. Salmon has noted that the element -floga nowhere occurs in reference to a bird.[38] The verb hweorfan is frequently collocated with words for the soul and its departure at death, "so that one might expect hyge hweorfað to indicate the departure rather than the restlessness of the soul."[39] The phoenix of the Old English poem is certainly an image of the soul, but its flight contains all of man's exile-life on earth, historically and individually, not merely his death. The departure of the soul from the body, and its return with inspiration, belongs to mystical experience.[40]

Clemoes has investigated patristic and Old English ideas on the nature of "mental activity", giving two passages which he feels might have influenced both The Wanderer, and The Seafarer, from Alcuin's De Animae rationae and Boethius' De Consolatione philosophiae, citing also Augustine's De Genesi ad litteram (Lib. XII, PL xxiv, 458) and Ambrose's Hexameron (Lib. VI.C. VIII, PL xiv, 275). Of De Animae rationae Clemoes says,

> The correspondence plainest between the two poems does not consist merely of sharing the same general view of mental activity; there are more definite likenesses than that: in both cases no particular object of thought is specified, distance is conceived of spatially, not temporally, and the means used to represent the mental processes are the same.[41]

The relevant lines of Alcuin's poem are:

> Quae [scil. anima sagax] mare, quae terras, coelum quae pervolat altum,
> Quamvis sit carnis carcere clausa suae.

Alcuin's use of the striking verb prompts Clemoes' deduction as to its influence on The Seafarer:

> What is more likely than that this poet should actualize pervolare as a calling bird to depict a disturbed, urgent state of mind in the context of his poem? Both the unique word anfloga and the strikingly realistic verb gielleð suggest that his imagination was keenly engaged.[42]

He feels that the basic bird-symbols of Christianity (e.g. the dove at Christ's baptism, the eagle of St John) and Christianized pagan thought may have "helped associatively", along with the many saints' lives in which the soul leaves the body in the form of a bird at death.

> Still more relevant, since it associates bird-imagery with a process of development in the mind's conscious thought, is a passage in Boethius' De Consolatione philosophiae, in which Philosophy says: Pennas etiam tuae menti, quibus se in altum tollere possit, adfigam, ut perturbatione depulsa sospes in patriam meo ductu, mea semita, mens etiam vehiculas revertaris...
>
> Sunt etenim pennae volucres mihi,
> quae celsa conscendant poli;
> quas sibi cum velox mens induit,
> terras perosa despicit,
> nubesque postergum videt...[43]

Although Clemoes has spoken of mental activity, spiritual activity must be included, or at least considered to be an extension of the same thing, or the Christian associations are not relevant.[44] The Seafarer is not philosophical, but the above Latin writings do indicate a common background of belief that the faculty mind/soul is capable of leaving the body and returning to it. Such emphasis on the freedom-potential of the spirit and its separation from the body underlines the importance of the movement from one place to another in the poem's entire conception. It is a definite indication that the poet is employing the familiar theme of exile in a double sense, so that 'place' and 'direction' can be developed in the elegiac-homiletic section.

Within the pattern of bird-imagery leading up to the flight of the anfloga is a similarly three-part pattern of land/sea contrasts, consisting of an anticipation of suffering, the fortune of the land-dweller, and the location of the exile-paths:

> ceare seofedun/ hat' ymb heortan; hungor innan slat/
> merewerges mod
> þaet se mon ne wat/ þe him on foldan faegrost limpeð/
> hu ic earmcearig iscealdne sae/ winter wunade wraeccan lastum,
> 10-15
>
> naenig hleomaga/ feasceaftig ferð frefran meahte
> For þon him gelyfeð lyt, se þe ah lifes wyn/ gebiden in
> burgum...
> hu ic werig oft/ in brimlade bidan sceolde.
> 25-30
>
> ...sorge beodeð/ bitter' in breosthord
> Þaet se beorn ne wat, sefteadig secg,
> hwaet þa sume dreogað/ þe þa wraeclastas widost lecgað.
> 54-57

Through the increasingly complex moods associated with land and sea, their figurative charges increase as well, until the final elements in the above pattern culminate in a non-imagistic paradox. After the expectations imposed by the ordering of the three elements, the final exile-setting is surprising: "I am urged over the sea because x is dearer to me than this dead, transitory life on land." Dryhtnes dreamas is in place of iscealdne sae, brimlade or wraeclastas, which have been elements in the sequential build-up of contrasts between certain settings and mentalities with others. The symbolic ground covered by such a handling of our expectations is that of the Christian making his way through a transient life, voluntarily setting aside life lived for the sake of eorðwelan (67); the poet has now made it plain that 'place' and 'direction' have wider implications within a life of

spiritual devotion.

The contrast is now in regard to life and death, 'life' in the sense of eternal life, stressed by the apposition between ece and eorðwelan's uncertainty in everything but its end:

> Simle þreora sum þinga gehwylce
> aer his tiddege to tweon weorþeð:
> adl oþþe yldo oþþe ecghete
> faegum fromweardum feorh oðþringeð.
> 68-71

The only possible earthly afterlife is that which overlaps with the reward for works against the devil, the praise of those who live on merging with the eternal praise in heaven:

> þaet hine aelda bearn aefter hergen,
> ond his lof siþþan lifge mid englum
> awa to ealdre, ecan lifes blaed, 77-79

Now, not only the space of one man's life is considered, but that of mankind; the eternal duguð alliterates with dagas... gewitene stressing the contrast of human history with the containment of that history. Gedroren is þeos duguð eal, dreamas sind gewitene (86) looks back to ll. 80-81, but also to the Dryhtnes dreamas/ deade lif (65-66) contrast which united the land/sea opposition with the earthly/heavenly one. The descriptions of physical and spiritual suffering in the first part of the poem are now balanced by an emphasis on the loss of all senses and powers in death.

Life on earth is viewed in terms of its limitations, and the inability of man to care for his soul by worldly means (94-102). The poet then outlines man's place in regard to his creator within the creation:

Micel biþ se Meotudes egsa, for þon hi seo
molde oncyrreð;
se gestaþelade stiþe grundas,
eorþan sceatas ond uprodor. 103-4

Life is now spoken of in terms of a quality of spirit, rather than specifically eternal life and reward. The usual translation of l. 109, "Man should curb an excessive spirit", is awkward in context. As the MS mod has been here emended to mon, suggested by l. 50 of the Exeter Gnomic Verses,[45] the translation, "Man should steer with a strong spirit, and hold that (i.e. courage) firmly, and guide men, pure in his ways (i.e. by setting an example)" fits the Seafarer-context, and is not out of keeping with the sense in the Exeter Gnomic Verses.[46] Bosworth-Toller has many examples of steoran in the context of seagoing, and the substantive steora, helmsman; such a choice of verbs may not indicate a reference as such to the sea-imagery in the first part of the poem, so much as the growth of a vocabulary around the notion of elþeodignesse during man's life on earth through the appropriate and familiar imagery of seafaring. Although ll. 111-15a are corrupt, and interpretation is therefore difficult, the passage seems to express the idea that human power is limited in regard to others; perhaps in a qualification to the above exhortation to influence others, the poet stresses that ultimately no man has any power to aid or destroy the soul of another, that wyrd is beyond conceiving. The homiletic section is also still within the common area of meaning where seafaring and elþeodignesse on earth overlap, as the land/sea contrast is initially one of home and homelessness.[47] The contrasts have now disappeared in the poet's choice for himself and his

audience of one direction and purpose, and he thanks God for man's creation within that purpose:

> Uton we hycgan hwaer we ham agen,
> ond þonne geþencan hu we þider cumen;
> ond we eac tilien þaet we to moten
> in þa ecan eadignesse
> þaer is lif gelong in lufan Dryhtes,
> hyht in heofonum. Þaes sy þam Halgan þonc
> þaet he usic geweorþade, wuldres Ealdor
> ece Dryhten, in ealle tid.
> Amen. 117-end

Although the poet had, in a sense, ready-made material in the lyric-elegiac mode, the figure of the homeless wanderer, and an abundance of ecclesiastical metaphor and homily, it is the patterning of this, and not the material itself, through which The Seafarer tends toward allegory. Gordon's question of whether the poet "made the connexion" between the wanderer-exile and the Christian peregrinus could be answered by both yes and no: yes, in that the analogies of the poem lead from the first to the second; and no, in that the two figures were not different enough from one another in the poet's mind to require a connexion as such. What would in a much later allegory have existed as separate levels, which touched or merged in many details, cannot have been such to the Seafarer-poet. Though he interpreted, he did not analyse; our critical vocabulary derives from analysis rather than interpretation, so that the term 'allegory' applies to the poem, but only with a sense of definition lacking.

Footnotes to Chapter Three

1. Whitelock, "The Interpretation of The Seafarer", p. 267.
2. Smithers, "The Meaning of The Seafarer and The Wanderer", p. 151.
3. Whitelock, op. cit., note 1, p. 264. The emendation seems more suitable than the compound with wael-, which, as the editors point out, usually refers to the slain (see Gordon's edition of The Seafarer, note to l. 63).
4. Smithers, op. cit., note 2, p. 151.
5. Gordon, "Traditional Themes in The Seafarer and The Wanderer", pp. 11-12.
6. Gordon, The Seafarer, p. 6.
7. Cross, Review of The Seafarer, p. 548.
8. Gordon, The Seafarer, p. 22.
9. Stanley, "Old English poetic diction and the interpretation of The Wanderer, The Seafarer and The Penitent's Prayer", p. 415.
10. ibid., p. 422.
11. Calder, "Setting and Mode in The Seafarer and The Wanderer", p. 273.
12. Aelfric's Shrove Sunday Homily, Homilies of Aelfric, ed. B. Thorpe, I, 162.
13. Blickling Homily II, ed. W. Morris, EETS: 1874, p. 23, l.2.
14. Stanley, op.cit., note 9, p. 448.
15. Calder, op. cit., note 11, p. 266.
16. ibid.
17. ibid., p. 269.
18. Fletcher, Allegory, pp. 151-52.
19. ibid., p. 153.
20. William Empson, quoted in Fletcher, op. cit., note 18, p. 70, note 1.
21. ibid., p. 177.

22. Honig, Dark Conceit, p. 61.

23. ibid., pp. 118-25.

24. ibid., p. 118.

25. Stanley maintains that it is the nature of Old English poetic diction to express the misery of exile in concrete terms, whether the anguish thus portrayed is intended to be real in a dramatic sense, or invoked. Stanley, op. cit., note 9, pp. 453-54.

26. Greenfield, "Attitudes and Values in The Seafarer", pp. 18-19.

27. "The topos of the reawakening of plant life in spring when winter is past is found frequently in patristic and Christian Latin writings. It is used in these works as a symbol for the resurrection of man at the Day of Judgement. As the seed dies in the ground and thus by its own death brings forth a new plant, so will man rise again from the grave with a new body." Blake, "The Seafarer, ll. 48-49", p. 163. "The descriptions of winter and spring would then symbolize respectively the death of man together with the period of waiting in the grave and the resurrection of man at the Day of Judgement. This resurrection implies also that Judgement which follows immediately upon it. Together these symbols form an irresistible goad to such men as the seafarer; the thought of death and the even more impressive thought of resurrection and judgement each in their turn incite the seafarer to begin his voyage... The thought of death, resurrection and judgement is thereby brought vividly before those men who think as the seafarer does and it encourages them to seek salvation on earth while there is still time." p. 164. The above is an extension far beyond any symbolism ~~far beyond what is~~ in the text, a mention of spring with no reference to seeds, in a poem with no reference to the resurrection of the body. Such an analysis as Blake's implies that the Pauline imagery as found in later Christian writings is being overtly alluded to, rather than being part of a general religious background; it would be inappropriate on textual grounds to elaborate further here.

28. Honig, op. cit., note 22, pp. 179-80.

29. Woolf, The English Religious Lyric in the Middle Ages, p. 7.

30. Gordon, The Seafarer, note to l. 62b.

31. C.G. Jung, Collected Works, Volume 9, part I, chapter 5, p. 210.

32. Gordon, The Seafarer, p. 3.

33. P.L. Henry, The Early English and Celtic Lyric, p. 154.

34. Greenfield, "Min., sylf. and dramatic voices in The Wanderer and The Seafarer", pp. 218-19.

35. See also Gordon, The Seafarer, p. 3 note 1.

36. In folklore, the cuckoo is associated with "insanity: extreme foolishness", "the melancholy of ecclesiastical chant: sometimes the cuckoo's song, being in a minor key, is linked with the 'plain songs' of the church." de Vries, Dictionary of Symbols and Imagery, under cuckoo. See also Riddle 9 of the Exeter Book, Mec on þissum dagum deadne ofgeafun/ faeder ond moder, etc. While Riddle 9 seems to have no allegorical intention behind it, the cuckoo in the context of the Christian, elþeodige in this world, may have been linked through folklore surrounding its nature as a changeling with that idea as expressed in the Gospels, e.g. Luke 21: 16-19, "You will be delivered up even by parents and brothers and kinsmen, and some of you they will put to death; you will be hated for my name's sake. But not a hair of your head will perish. By your endurance you will gain your lives." See also Mt. 10: 21-22, 37-39. Such a chain of associations is only suggested here because of its apparent oddness in the context of the poem due to its more recent associations with spring; however, as the sea-birds and the anfloga both have particular significance within and appropriateness to their setting, the cuckoo probably does as well.

37. Greenfield, "Attitudes and Values in The Seafarer", p. 18.

38. Salmon, "The Wander, The Seafarer, and the Old English conception of the soul", p. 2.

39. ibid., pp. 1-2.

40. For example, a Greek mystic, Symeon (970-1040) writes: "And questing after it, my spirit sought to comprehend the splendour it had seen, but found it not as a creature, and could not get away from created things, that it might embrace the uncreated and uncomprehended splendour. Nevertheless it wandered everywhere and strove to behold it. It searched through the air, it wandered over the heavens, it crossed the abysses, it searched, so it seemed, to the ends of the world... But in all that it found nothing, for all was created. And I lamented and was sorrowful, and my heart burned, and I lived as one distraught in mind. But it came as it was wont, and descending like a luminous cloud, seemed to envelop my own head, so that I cried out dismayed. But flying away again it left me alone. And when I wearily sought it, I realized suddenly that it was within me, and in the midst of my heart it shone like the light of a spherical sun." From Ekstatische Konfessionen, ed. Martin Buber, Jena: 1909, pp. 40-49, quote from p. 45; the above translation from Jung, Collected Works, vol. 5, pp. 92-94. See also St John of the Cross, Tras de un amoroso lance, poem.

41. Clemoes, "Mens absentia cogitans in The Seafarer and The Wanderer", pp. 64-65.

42. ibid., p. 68.

43. ibid., p. 69.

44. Roberts notes: "The distinction between anima and spiritus...is not a constant feature in stories of the soul journey convention. It is not found in the Old English Soul and Body poems, nor in the sermons based on the exemplum of the three utterances." Jane Roberts, The Guthlac Poems of the Exeter Book, Clarendon Press, Oxford: 1979. pp. 23-24.

45. See Select Translations from Old English Poetry, revised edition, eds Cook and Tinker, Ginn & Co., Boston: 1926, p. 49: "One should check a strong will, and should govern it firmly..."; also Gordon, in Anglo-Saxon Poetry, J.M. Dent & Sons, London: 1954, p. 54: "One must check a violent mind and control it with firmness..." Kennedy, in An Anthology of Old English Poetry, Oxford University Press: 1960, and Crossley-Holland, The Battle of Maldon and Other Poems, Macmillan, N.Y.: 1967, translate with similar meaning.

46. Of the Exeter Maxims, ll. 50-58, Stanley says, "It is an example of the processes of nature being used as the symbols of moods, and the simile contained in the passage makes it certain that the processes of nature are to be interpreted symbolically." op. cit., note 9, p. 444 - as long as we do not read into such symbolism a literary intention, for in the Maxims even more than The Seafarer or The Wanderer, the elements are structured intuitively in relation to one another, by psychological association rather than literary design.

Chapter Four: The Dream of the Rood

It is difficult to deal with the symbolic elements and motifs of The Dream of the Rood without being either too specific or too general about the poet's use of them. Authorial intentions are often presumed rather than based on the text, and while historical background can provide an idea of the climate in which the poem was written, it offers little help with the internal structure the poet himself created. Complicated structural schemes from sources outside the poem, while providing neat explanations or analyses, often leave out much of what makes the poem alive. Because of the work's subject, it is difficult to read without being influenced by more familiar, later treatments of the cross in which certain traditions are more obviously relied upon, such as that in which the wood of the cross is the wood of the original Tree of Life, or that of the Crucifixion taking place over Adam's grave.

Readings of the poem in terms of Latin poetic traditions also tend to distance the meaning from the text. For example, while it is true that a speaking object is present, the poem is not subject to all the generic conventions of prosopopoeia. When Schlauch says, "The Rood solicits pity for the crucified Christ whom it bore,"[1] this view of the portrayed pain is supported more by the conventions of the genre than by any direct solicitation in the text. It has also been stated that The Dream of the Rood is "generically a dream-vision using the diction of Anglo-Saxon dryht poetry."[2] While it

concerns a dream-vision, the literary genre as such seems to have developed fully during the late-medieval period.[3] The dangers of an overly literary approach are illustrated by the above critic:

> Since the Dream of the Rood is based in part on the crucial tragic episode in Christian myth - the crucifixion of Christ - any attempt to understand it critically as a poem will have to deal with the fact that, as a literary structure, the story of the Passion is a tragedy.[4]

It is anachronistic to imply that the poem was written through an approach to the Passion as a literary tragedy, and there is no need to treat it as such to deal with the poem. The dream-vision of Caedmon, as reported by Bede, is described as an experience productive of verbal truth in the vernacular about the history of God; The Dream of the Rood seems to have had a similar genesis, whether actual or fictional:

> Nu ic þe hate, haeleð min se leofa,
> þaet ðu þas gesyhðe secge mannum,
> onwreoh wordum þaet hit is wuldres beam,
> se ðe aelmihtig God on þrowode
> for moncynnes manegum synnum
> ond Adomes ealdgewyrhtum. 95-100

The poet has done just that; whether reporting his own experience or conveying an imagined one, "the result would be much the same."[5] Although a nucleus containing the speech of the cross or the first part of the vision may have been added to at a later date, the poem as we have it is highly organized, and a unified work; however, "we are dealing with a period in which literary structure and unity derived from the unified and prevailing world-view, rather than from an individual and thus inaccessible philosophy"[6] - or from a concept of literary unity as we now recognize it.

The generic placement above mentioned the poem's diction as being that of Anglo-Saxon 'dryht' poetry; however, the poet had only one vernacular poetic tradition within which to compose, and hence he employed heroic diction.

> It must be apparent at the outset that this heroic language is strangely out of place in a poem about the crucifixion of the Lord. When the poet describes Christ as a bold hero hastening courageously to the mighty struggle, he directly contradicts the story of the crucifixion as related in the gospels; but, more important, he does a kind of violence to the spirit and doctrines of Christianity. The central paradox of Christianity is the everlasting victory through the apparent momentary worldly defeat and humiliation.[7]

If there is defeat and victory, there has by definition been a battle; the medieval church militant would have seen no contradiction in speaking in such terms of the Passion or the Christian faith, as the first verse of Pange, lingua illustrates well:

> Pange, lingua, gloriosi
> praelium certaminis,
> et super crucis tropaeum
> dic triumphum nobilem,
> qualiter redempto orbis
> inmolatus vincerit.[8]

Also, as Vexilla regis shows, the crucifixion was the triumphant fulfilment of prophecy, and Christ was conceived of as victorious and reigning from the cross, and the apparent defeat does not obscure this image:

> inpleta sunt, quae concinit
> David fideli carmine,
> dicendo nationibus
> 'Regnavit a ligno Deus.'[9]

The heroic diction of Old English poetry is neither out of place nor incompatible with the spirit and doctrines of the faith of the medieval church.

> The pattern established by the mortal Christ must be imitated by each individual who would be a true Christian: as Christ is a 'haeleð' who overcomes sin and death in the battle of the crucifixion, so must the dreamer become a 'haeleð' and conquer his own sin... The appellative 'haeleð' for both Christ and dreamer thus has ecclesiological as well as moral significance: each is a soldier in the service of the church militant.[10]

Such a deduction is possible, though the Bosworth-Toller definition of haeleð indicates that the word is part of the general poetic stock for 'man, warrior' as well, and the connotations are not necessarily those of the modern 'hero', as seen, for example, in Judith 56 and The Wanderer 105. However, haeleð could easily be another element in the general style of the poem, which exploits wide ranges of connotation; Christ is 'man', 'warrior' and 'hero', and the dreamer is identified with him through the cross. The paradox of victory in defeat stands out in relief through the poem's heroic diction. A major aspect of the Passion stressed here is the willingness of the sacrifice: the momentary defeat and humiliation is not ignored by the poet. The cross is made into a waefersyne (31), a gealgan heanne (40), insulted along with Christ (48), and long held to be hateful in itself because of the pain and humiliation it wrought (87-88). The jousting in Piers Plowman is much more 'violent' an image than that of a brave man/hero who is God almighty going to struggle with death and sin. The poet's world-view and his understanding of the nature of Christ tends to load his language with ambiguities, ironies and paradoxes. Swanton has investigated the ranges of connotation of words such as fah, womm,[11] etc., and concludes that in the poem's diction a "close interplay of physical and abstract is

maintained",[12] that at times "a physical statement conceals abstract significance."[13] When a word in speech or poetry has a range of connotations, context usually eliminates those which are inapplicable. However, when context engages rather then eliminates different connotations, it is not as though the poet is presenting one section of the range, concrete or abstract, so that we might deduce the existence of another, which is also applicable, or that we might uncover a meaning behind an object; it is rather that wherever on the continuum of object/significance we begin, the rest of that continuum is activated by context. As has been demonstrated in The Wanderer and The Seafarer, the diction of what must at one time have been secular exile poetry, secular elegy and gnomic verse releases another range of connotations in the context of Christianity, and within Christianity's homiletic mode. This is not to say that everything in the poem was initiated from, or operates on an unconscious level, but that an intuitive balancing of elements as the poem develops, a setting of ranges of connotations with or against others, is expressed as a structure through verbal echo, through the foiling and redirection of certain expectations on the levels of imagery and sound.[14]

Allegorically, The Dream of the Rood has been said to present "a figurative statement of the main principles of early Benedictine asceticism and a typically monastic view of salvation."[15] This view is held on the grounds that behind the heroic diction, which is said to give the poem "its peculiar and often misleading heroic and Teutonic ring"[16] are

ironies in the social background of the comitatus, in the situation that the cross, as a loyal retainer, kills its own lord in violation of the code of loyalty in order to be faithful to him. Exile from paradise and union with the Holy Spirit, "the twin concerns of early Benedictine thought... are the concerns as well of the poet of The Dream of the Rood: the 'lordless man' and comitatus, the exile and the society for which he yearns."[17] On other grounds, Fleming claims that The Dream of the Rood is different from The Wanderer and The Seafarer in that it is

> overtly and obviously Christian, full of a wide range of specifically Christian allusions. It is also clearly allegorical, set in the allegorical framework par excellence of the dream vision. Secondly, it differs from the elegies in the nature of its philosophical resolution, for it provides an explicit answer for the 'lordless man' which goes beyond Boethian fortitude.[18]

- implying that the elegies do not. The differences have been exaggerated. The heroic diction has been commented on above; exile is much less in the foreground of awareness in this poem than in the three previously considered. While even Beowulf is overtly and obviously Christian at times, the fullest range of Christian allusion so far is indeed present in The Dream of the Rood. But while we may deduce from this a learned author behind the poem, it cannot be concluded that it is an allegory of the monastic life, and while the poem is about a dream-vision, it is not necessarily in that literary genre. Of ll. 110-114, Fleming remarks:

> Such an invitation to martyrdom may seem a jarring note in a poem I maintain is about the monastic life... Yet the passage becomes

> less startling when examined from the point of view of the metaphoric vocabulary of the early monastic writers, both Celtic and Benedictine[19]

in which 'daily martyrdom' is a metaphor for the monastic life. But martyrdom is unmetaphorical as well, and there is no direction given that Christ's question, 'Where is the man who would taste bitter death for me as I have done for him?' is limited to the figurative. Of ll. 122-129, Fleming says,

> To 'go to the Cross' was a common penitential practice in early monasteries. It reflects the same mental habit linking penance with the 'Cross' which partially explains the widespread custom, even among the laity, of praying standing or prostrate, with the arms outspread in the form of a cross.[20]

In speaking directly to the dreamer, the cross does not exhort him to an ascetic life, but to a Christian one, which is not necessarily the same thing. Preaching the dream and its meaning is the main directive; "penitence is less dominant than faith and joy at this point in the poem."[21] To restrict the idea of 'going to the cross' to asceticism and penance seems unnecessarily confining; in the wider sense, it could refer to any Christian's turning to the cross for guidance through life, and a way to heaven. This indeed is what the dreamer says in ll. 129-31 and 135ff.

Burlin places the poem in a monastic context, within which it was probably written, though not necessarily allegorically expressing that life:

> To gain salvation one must be prepared, like the Cross, to participate totally in the death of Christ, to taste bitter death in the name of the Lord. Death here may mean literal martyrdom or the symbolic martyrdom of the ascetic life - renunciation of all that is conducive to sin. In any case, the key to salvation is found in the perfect identification of man with the Cross.[22]

The analogical relationship of cross to dreamer, cross to Christ, and dreamer to Christ does not produce a specific allegory; "the symbolic significance of this set of analogies accumulates as the poem progresses",[23] but this significance seems to be that identification in itself, and its effect on the dreamer.

An exegetical structure has also been suggested for the poem:

> The structure, imagery and meaning of the first part are tropological; of the second part, allegorical and historical; of the third part, anagogical.[24]

Such levels can be discovered in the poem, although it would be possible to find them in a different order than above. For example, in ll. 1-10a, the imagery is that of the 'risen', exalted, heavenly cross, the anagogical; in ll. 122ff. the dreamer's aspirations and means towards a Christian life are presented (with overtones of the tropological sense). The dreamer at this point is looking ahead to the journey before him through life and death to heaven (with overtones of the allegory of man's exile on earth). In the Passion itself it is possible to see elements of all three, e.g. each Christian must be crucified with Christ, and the 'old man' must die to be born with Christ, tropologically; allegorically and historically, the birth of the church[25] and the creation of the eucharistic sacrifice; the theme of raising Christ on the cross in order to raise Christ in the sense of 'exaltation' in heaven could be seen as the anagogical element. There is no discrete structure based on these exegetical levels,

however, because, like the literal/figurative aspects of the cross itself, they are continuous with some verbally inexpressible total significance of the Passion.

The exegetical approach tends to go too far in the insistence that veiled allusions and correspondences are to be discovered, i.e. that they have been concealed by the poet in the fabric of the text. "The aim of the poem is to express a religious truth indirectly, by means of symbol and figure, so that through the intellectual exertion necessary to discover it, the reader will be more aware of its value and convinced of its truth."[26] The perception of the four senses would not require any great intellectual effort by an audience of clerics especially concerning so central an event as the Passion; and an audience of non-clerics would probably not have been expected to discover them.[27] It seems likely that the poet was some sort of cleric, as accustomed to viewing biblical events in the light of exegesis as he was accustomed to viewing them within the liturgy. Written work was no doubt influenced by habitual modes of thought; but it is not proven that The Dream of the Rood is structured on the four senses, only that they are interwoven with many other elements. There is nothing indirect in the religious truth expressed by the cross as it reveals itself to the dreamer, although it is by indirect means that the four senses are to be seen, especially when this involves the tracing of supposed allusions.

Typological allusion has been seen, for example, in l. 56:

> Literally, fyll refers to the disobedience and fall of Adam, the connotation needed at this juncture to link the death of warrior-Christ in

> the present drama with the fall of Adam in the old chaos of the Garden, the effect of which is still evident in the felled tree and prostrate speaker. The metaphorical fyll, aheawan, licgende and Þa us man onfyllan ongan/ ealle to eorðan (73b-74a) of the singer fuse Adam, Cross, tree and Dreamer in one perpetually repeated drama of loss and redemption... Singing of the cyninges fyll, the poet could quite naturally depend on his audience's hearing 'fall', automatically recalling Adam, remembering the Dreamer - and making the proper identification.[28]

This very cumbersome process is based on an association which the Anglo-Saxon audience may have made (although the fyll of man is not mentioned in the Old English Genesis poetry), but which for modern ears has been reinforced by centuries of usage in liturgy, homilies, sermons and literature. In The Dream of the Rood there is no evidence of an intended allusion in fyll to Adomes ealdgewyrhtum in l. 100. A similarly specific allusion is supposedly made in l. 32b:

> The Rood poet strengthens his Adam-Christ identification by recourse to the legend that Adam or his skull or both were buried on Mt. Calvary. He alludes to it when he uses beorg in hie me on beorg asetton (32b). The word primarily denotes a mountain or hill, yet by its secondary meaning, 'barrow' or 'burial place', it may direct our attention to the iconographical image of Adam's skull at the foot of the Cross... [Leiter here quotes Ezekiel 37:1-5]... Because of Christ's supreme compassion, Golgotha, that place of the skull and hill of bones, along with the fallen world, the sinful Adam and the Dreamer lying beneath the towering Cross, shall be redeemed.[29]

These inferences lead us far from hie me on beorg asetton; a possible reading-in of a meaning by an audience should not be taken as an allusion by the poet. Such interpretations of action and imagery are not part of the poem's structure or symbolism unless they can be traced in the text. There is

always a problem in determining the difference between what are basic elements of Anglo-Saxon religious assumptions and habits of thought, and what is intended by the poet on a conscious level.

> The Anglo-Saxons, like other Western Europeans of the first millenium, had no theology in the strict sense of the word. Their scholarly activities in religion were concerned with scriptural exegesis in the light of what we would regard as their mythological assumptions.[30]

The time-sense as expressed in the poem might be seen as 'exegetical' in the broadest sense, in that the simultaneity of the significance of the cross in the past, present and future is obviously intended to be expressed.

The 'theology' inherent in the poem has been investigated also from the point of view of Christology.[31] While certain historical information regarding the portrayal of Christ iconographically and the paradox of 'fully God and fully man' must be considered, the issue must not obscure the fact that there is apparently no problem in the text - which does not necessarily mean that the poet has succeeded in resolving a problem. Nor does the fact that attention is directed to the cross rather than the person of Christ imply that the person of Christ presented a difficulty to the poet. On Woolf's hypothesis that The Dream of the Rood is a refutation of Monophysitism, Fleming comments:

> In the first place, there seems implicit in her argument the curious notion that the statement of orthodoxy is invariably a rebuttal to heresy, in this case that 'Chalcedonian' Christology predicates an urgent concern with Monophysitism ... Generally speaking, orthodoxy is, after all, the rule, not the exception.[32]

The cross itself is capable of bearing Christ as both God and man, as well as being the medium of identification between the dreamer (with the 'everyman' in the audience) and Christ. There is more to the poem than a thoughtful presentation of the person of Christ "without the reasonable and insoluble bewilderment of how impassibility and passibility could exist in one consciousness."[33] The presentation of Christ expresses both awe and tenderness, but there is no indication that the poet is thereby resolving a paradox; he appears to be accepting it with wonder and joy through the significance of the cross. "The poem exploits the cross as a symbol central to, and capable of expressing, all the levels of meaning which Christianity comprehends."[34]

The poem's structure develops within the frame of different possibilities of human identification with the cross before, during and after the Passion, as uninvolved, suffering, then redeemed and risen. Human participation in the Crucifixion is one of the recurring themes of the New Testament, especially the Pauline epistles, and is implied even in such indirect statements as that in Gal. 6:17, "...for I bear on my body the marks of Jesus."[35] This identification is a means towards the end of 'opening up' the symbol of the cross into an area of boundless significance to the dreamer and his audience.

> The poem, then, is concerned with religious experience, but not in the form of belief, or of conversion, or of revelation, or of the nature of any of these, but religion in the sense of change - human transformation.[36]

To suggest that the poem could concern such transformation without also concerning belief, conversion or revelation

severely limits the possibilities of the cross as a symbol central to Christianity. In modern analytical terms, the poem in the broadest sense is about the relationship between the concrete and the abstract, about what we would refer to as abstracts - beliefs, hopes, fears and concepts of the cross - as they are engaged with the cross as concrete, originally and historically in worship. In the poem we are presented with the two as simultaneously present in one another; the symbol mediates between them and is always both of them. As a creature, it is cut off from its simple life as a tree because of the sins of mankind (both the enemies who cut it down and mankind in general, for whom the divine sacrifice is necessary); yet it grows into a tree which stretches to the corners of the earth by helping Christ - both crucifying and being crucified with him - in the struggle for redemption. It has the power to give life to those who turn to it, those who, in the widest possible sense, pay attention to its meaning. Growth in meaning is equal to growth into new and everlasting life for both tree and dreamer. This experience of growing is conveyed to the dreamer, not so much through his understanding, but through his involvement with the symbol.

> The poem is not merely itself a vision; it is "about" vision; it dwells upon the fact of seeing - by the Dreamer, by the Cross, by Joseph and Nicodemus, by all creation terrestrial and celestial - and upon the consequences of such action, as the vision becomes a way to Life and a way of life as well.[37]

All aspects of the cross alternately fuse, and flow from one to another. The tree is a jewelled, gold-covered object of light, yet 'a tree of the forest' (17) seen in the sky in a

dream; it is also a liturgical cross whose familiar characteristics become strange. From an ordinary tree at the edge of a wood (29) it is changed into an instrument of torture; from a felled, buried cross it is changed into both an honoured object covered with gold and silver, and a risen, living tree with healing powers. The dreamer's identification with it and Christ, and his resulting transformation are brought about by the symbol's fresh contact with the touchstone of belief as it exists in the dreamer. Revelation is involved, for all that the dreamer had of belief is transformed by the revelation of a living truth, and perhaps there is an implied conversion from a state of 'speculative' faith to 'saving' or 'justifying' faith, as the dreamer's fear and wounds of sin are imbued with courage and hope.

In the first section (1-27), the densely charged imagery sets the frame of meaning for the entire poem, revealing a familiar object in the material world, the wooden cross, normally with a continuous but fixed existence, as being alive and changing. In the second section, the event which made the tree into a cross and which endowed the cross with this special quality of life is related by the tree, without much explanation until it addresses the dreamer in l. 78. In the final section (122-end), meaning is expressed in terms of its effect on the dreamer's life after his vision. The significance of the cross in this poem is primarily in an evangelical context, as it concerns this individual, or any individual 'awakening'. The Ruthwell Cross supports this view of the cross's purpose:

> It is clearly a preaching cross. Its message is evangelical, stating the role of Christ in the world of men both historically and eternally. In particular, it links the symbol of Christ's death with the Christ of Judgement, and Nature's recognition of his majesty.[38]

The iconography of the Ruthwell Cross suggests how the carver read the poem, or, at the very least, the speech of the cross which is inscribed on the stone: the ordinary tree has become the Tree of Life. Referring to the inhabited vine-scroll on the stone shaft, Swanton says:

> The use of this 'Tree of Life' motif is as rare in Celtic sculpture as it is common in North-umbrian. Referring to the words Ego sum vitis vera... (John xv. 1-7), and conflated by the Psalmist's account of the 'trees of the Lord' being the refuge of birds and beasts (Psalm CIV), it is generally recognised as a symbol of Christ in union with his church and the harmonious co-existence of transformed nature in the living God. Appropriately it is the margins of these panels that bear the text of the Dream of the Rood.[39]

The Ruthwell Cross, however, carries none of the liturgical imagery of the poem, in which the tree is changing, not only presented in its changed form.

The richly adorned and clothed icon seen at first by the dreamer is described in terms which make it impossible to visualize all at once. Though called a tree, it is covered with gold, and has gems aet foldan sceatum (7) and on an eaxlegespanne (9). These aspects of the historically evolved cross combine with those derived from Constantine's vision, with overtones of Vexilla regis, the banner or sign of victory: beacen (6) and sigebeam (13). Waedum (15) suggests cloth, both the royal banner and purple Lenten covering of the cross. The tree as a living thing is now somewhat obscure, and the

Crucifixion itself is a distant event. It is through the coverings that the events as seen and experienced by the tree begin to emerge from the tree-imagery and iconography, and are made accessible to the dreamer.

The pre-speech section of the poem is an ambiguous presentation of aspects of the cross. Many of these are iconographically and liturgically familiar, or known through the tradition of the emperor's dream; but many are strongly contrastive. The object of the vision is so close to the dreamer that what would be, in an intellectual response, questions arising as to the meaning of the contrasts, remain impressions, sensuous and mental. More shock than understanding is involved. The emerging nature of the cross is structurally assisted by the content of alliterative pairs. The dreamer realises that the tree's glorious brightness contrasts with his own state of sin, yet that he has an affinity with it. Reordberend/reste wunedon introduces the silent suspense in which the vision is to take place, both in the surroundings and in the man himself. The picture is one of transcendent power, beauty and unity: lyft/leoht, beama/beorhtast, golde/gimmas, faeger/foldan sceatum; the centre of sight is the eaxlegespanne, linked with engel and ealle, the focus of the creation's regard. The verb begoten (7) introduces a note of strangeness, as 'sprinkled' describes something applied in a haphazard rather than artistically exact manner. This gold was not artistically wrought, but is part of a transformed event, for later in the poem this representation of value is seen to turn into the actual blood of Christ. Stodon, in

the same line though unstressed by alliteration, has the same literal-figurative density. Swanton notes the various usages of the verb elsewhere, meaning "to remain, be fixed", "to gleam or shine in a beam", but also referring to moisture standing out,[40] again containing connotations of both the original event and its transformation.[41] It seems unlikely that the engel (9) is Christ,[42] as it is the rood who fills the role of engel as translated 'messenger'.

The alliteration of l. 10 carries a sharp jolt in the linking of faeger and forðgesceaft with fracodes gealga. So far, there would seem to be no need to defend the holy, bright vision from having anything to do with criminality. Nor would there be any need to distinguish it from the two thieves' crosses.[43] An object which is 'beautiful throughout creation' linked with a defence against its being shameful or painful creates a gap between the impression of transcendence made by the vision and its meaning.

The entire creation is looking at the tree (11-12). Included is the dreamer, although he seems to be the opposite of what he beholds, alliteration again stressing the contrast:

> Syllic waes se sigebeam, ond ic synnum fah,
> forwunded mid wommum.
>
> 13-14

The tree appears to be unrelated to sin and pain, and the man's condition wounds and excludes him from his own vision at this point. The image of 'the stain of sin' carries with it the sense of moral taint and possibly physical corruption; fah has a visual connotation, perhaps anticipating the changing

colours of the tree. Forwundan is a fairly common verb, although here the sense is imprecise: Swanton glosses wommum as the dative plural of wom, 'sin, stain', while it could also be that of woma, 'noise, harbinger of terror'. The connotations of sound and turmoil are fitting:

> Not only is this [i.e. woma] considered to be in some way appropriate to dreams (cf. Daniel 110, Elene 71, etc.), it is a feature of war, winter, Doomsday and Hell (cf. Andreas 1355; Christ 834, 998; Christ and Satan 332; Exodus 102, 202; Juliana 576; The Wanderer 103)[44]

The poet is using sensually provoking words in contexts which make it difficult to grasp them merely as such.

The dreamer at this point is still regarding the tree, covered with cloth, gold and jewelled ornamentation. This, in the next few lines, turns suddenly transparent to him. The physical material, presenting a glorious spectacle, represents its opposite: a shameful spectacle, to which the tree refers in l. 31, waefersyne. The tree begins to bleed; then it changes waedum ond bleom (22), in what seems to be a clear allusion to the changing style of the cross from Lent to Easter,[45] a blood-red cross of wood to a jewelled one. It is significant that here the change is reversed, for while the changing styles derive from the experience of the dreamer, they are not presented in the context of the liturgy, or even the church. Rather than being symbolically manipulated, they are independent; they are original.

In reply to the man's perception of himself as being stained with sin, wounded, the tree presents itself as being stained and wounded also, and the bright vision, the unity of

angels, men and all creation, has expanded to include the dreamer, through sin and pain. A temporal ambiguity is introduced in ll. 18-20, which is vital to the poem's symbolism, since it concerns the revelation of the symbol in time as part of its present meaning. Earmra and aergewinn indicate a previous time, yet they are combined with the verbs ongan and swaetan in the present tense. Aerest refers to the actual time of the wounding; but across the time-gap during which the tree was transformed, and through the resulting treasure on it, the dreamer sees it bleed now. The alliterative link of swaetan and swiðran on the tree's part with the sorgum of the dreamer reinforces the sense of identification between them. Forht and faegran (21) is another alliteratively linked pair like faeger and fracodes, which is mysterious and demands a meaning. The bleeding tree is fus, implying that it has will and purpose; it has altered considerably from the initial tree which was raised in the sky, which shone and was beheld. Both it and its beholder are now 'moving' within a common area of experience.

The dreamer beholds in pain the changing tree lange hwile, during which time he is in both his own present and the tree's, with a sense of some meaning between the two missing. Although the man knows exactly what he is looking at, the Haelendes treow (25), the once-familiar object has become something causing confusion and pain as to its meaning. The mute changes of the tree, recalling mankind's account of it as related symbolically in the liturgy, are ready to be illuminated by its account of itself. In l. 1, the human reordberend were said to be at rest;

a piece of wood can now speak and be heard. The blunt word wudu emphasizes the original character of the tree which begins to speak, rather than that of the evolved symbol. The time is now (as well as the present) before the crucifixion, and the tree speaks as a naive, created being.

The first alliterative pair draws attention to the rood's continuity: geara iu, gyta geman (28). It relate how it was cut down to raise criminals, or to be raised by them (the object of hebban in l. 31 is indeterminate). Lifting or being lifted is here expressed in another sense than in l. 5, where the tree was raised in the sky; it is now lifted on earth. As Christ approaches, the importance of the tree within his intent is alliteratively emphasized, the preposition on unusually carrying a full stress (and again in l. 98), linked with the courage and readiness of the act:

> efstan elne mycle þaet he me wolde on gestigan.
> 34

The verb gestigan is employed again in l. 40 as the intent is accomplished, and echoed by astag in l. 103 as the act is fulfilled. Here, however, the verb is part of the waefersyne of the crucifixion, and the cross wishes not to lift the Lord in this way, trembling and wanting to bend down, not daring to do so against God's command. The raising is completed in ll. 44-45:

> Rod waes ic araered. Ahof ic ricne Cyning,
> heofona Hlaford; hyldan me ne dorste.

The rood's function is expressed in stark terms, without the literal-figurative density of the first section, although the action itself, and such motifs as lifting are always within

that initially-set frame. The cross here, however, has no idea of what it is doing in the sense of raising Christ to exalt him; although heanne can mean either 'shameful, vile' or 'lofty, towering', both could apply to the gallows without the second's sense of glorification at this moment in the action, when the opposite of glorification seems to be taking place:

Weop eal gesceaft,
cwiðdon Cyninges fyll. Crist waes on rode.
55-56

When Christ is taken down and a grave made, the rood is still suffering, not knowing what is happening except in a present sense. It, too, is taken down with its companion crosses and buried.

The crucifixion is described in terms of its appearance in the world at a particular time, a spectacle of torture and humiliation for both crucified and crucifier. What the cross is seen as, and sees, contrasts with its initial appearance to the dreamer. Parallels are drawn for this purpose of contrast by the repetition of ic geseah in both sections. In the first part, the dreamer says,

Þuhte me þaet ic gesawe syllicre treow,
4

Geseah ic wuldres treow,
14

and even when the changes are apparent, the bleeding alternates with gold and jewels (22-23). In the tree's speech, it relates seeing Christ:

Geseah ic þa Frēan mancynnes
33

modig on manigra gesyhðe, þa he wolde mancyn lysan.
41

Geseah ic weruda God
þearle þenian.
52

Ic þaet eall beheold.
58

Ongunnon him þa moldaern wyrcan,
beornas on banan gesyhðe;
66

The sensation of painful turbulence also has parallels in both sections. The dreamer's sense of his own sin, his difference from the tree (13-14), along with the strangeness of the emerging opposition in ll. 18ff., brings about this sensation in him. The rood is in the grip of conflicting forces, its own will with Christ's intention, God's will (35-43). The repetition of phrases beginning with eall traces the development of the seeming difference of the tree from the man to its similarity, as its adornments are traced backwards:

Eall þaet beacen waes
begoten mid golde; gimmas stodon...
6-7

Eall ic waes mid s[o]rgum gedrefed.
20

Eall ic waes mid blode bestemed,
begoten of þaes guman sidan,
48-49

eall ic waes mid straelum forwundod.
62

In the re-use of begoten and forwundod (from l. 14), the gold of the syllicre treow (4) has become the blood of Christ in the unique event, and the cross has been wounded like him and like the dreamer. Two hwaeðre-phrases in particular contribute to the pattern of identification:

Hwaeðre ic þaer licgende lange hwile
beheold hreowcearig Haelendes treow,
24-25

Hwaeðere we ðaer [h]reotende gode hwile
stodon on staðole, 70-71

At the same time, the above parallels draw attention to the difference between the dreamer's and the rood's proximity to Christ. The dreamer's, through the visionary tree and familiar iconographical and liturgical aspects of the cross, is second-hand. His own apprehensions, visual, sensual and mental, are relayed back to him in parallels of sight, feeling and thought, but much closer to the Passion than his own experience would allow. He sees the cross, but the cross sees Frean mancynnes; both dreamer and tree are wounded, the man by his human condition and the tree innocently with Christ, because of the human condition. The man feels sorrow at his own state and in his lack of understanding, but the cross also takes part in a creation-wide lament at the cyninges fyll. The cross's limited understanding does not prevent it from sharing Christ's suffering directly. A major effect of its narration of the Passion is that of bringing the dreamer into its proximity to Christ. The last lines of this section,

Bedealf us man on deopan seaþe. Hwaeðre me þaer
Dryhtnes þegnas,
freondas gefrunon, ...
gyredon me golde ond seolfre. 75-77

link the dreamer's initial vision of the tree across the time-gap, with its beginning as a symbol of the crucifixion - and resurrection.

In both the previous sections, there has been an emphasis on how things appeared to the narrators, with the limitations imposed on their understanding by time. The last two sections deal with the fuller understanding of first the rood, then the

dreamer. In the final part of the rood's speech, it expresses its 'risen' awareness through comparison of the past with its eternal present. Nu is repeated three times in ll. 78-84. The first stresses the effect of the rood's endurance of its past trials: now it can speak to the man, and be heard in the present. The second nu indicates what experience has wrought for the tree. In ll. 83-84, the past suffering of Christ is balanced by the rood's present power, again in the context of lifting and being lifted, a theme now developed in the sense of exaltation. Initially, the dreamer felt unworthy before the tree lifted in the sky; when raised on earth, it felt similarly unworthy. The third nu concerns its lifting in the sense of being glorified, and its condition as a healing link between heaven and earth, which is emphasized by the echo of gebiden (79) by gebiddaþ (83). The poet may or may not have intended a play on words here: the rood's endurance of suffering with Christ gives it the power to heal those who pray to it. In the first view the dreamer had of the glorified tree, it was silently beheld by men ofer moldan ond eall þeos maere gesceaft; now it is prayed to by them (80-83). A similar change in attitude, from beholding to praying, occurs later in l. 122. Hlifige under heofonum (85) and lifiaþ nu on heofonum (134) may be coincidental verbal echoes, but the two verbs contain the association of being glorified and raised up with that of eternal life in heaven, and may be seen as part of the identification of humanity with the cross. The repetition of reordberend (89) recalls the sleeping men at the beginning of the poem (3), perhaps with overtones of

the reawakening of mankind now. A major element of the rood's message so far is that it was not always as the dreamer first saw it, but that it has been lifted above its first nature through Christ. The link with Mary may be the fact that both Mary and cross bore Christ into life, respectively human and risen.

The cross finally delivers a verbal command. The nu of l. 95 is filled with evangelical urgency: the man must tell his dream to others as he can in words, onwreoh wordum (97). The silence of the speech-bearers at the beginning of the poem, in which the words of a tree were heard, is now ready to be broken by a human's new understanding and fresh contact with the living tree. The message gains momentum and scope as it extends to the individual everyman rather than the individual dreamer, and into the future of the Last Day, out of the past and present. The crucifixion is referred to, but the situation is reversed in ll. 110-116: Christ was modig on manigra gesyhðe (41), but who may be courageous in the sight of Christ? The emphasis is now on individual choice and effort in seeking eternal life through the cross. The value of man's words in answer to Christ's question is small; but the cross can protect him against fear itself.

> Ne þearf ðaer þonne aenig unforht wesan
> þe him aer in breostum bereð beacna selest.
> Ac ðurh ða rode sceal rice gesecan
> of eorðwege aeghwylc sawl,
> seo þe mid Wealdende wunian þenceð.
> 117-121

Ll. 117-118 present (like fah) what, to modern ears, is an ambiguity with both abstract and concrete qualities. To bear

the cross in the breast may refer to a ministerial sign at baptism, or the wearing of a cross, but the pure abstract of faith is also contained in the sense here. Breost usually brings with it a concrete aspect; it is the physical house of emotion and words, a place where abstracts are kept or emanate from.[46] The cross of the initial part of the vision, high and distant in kind from man, has become an indwelling faith, a way of life which has its outward expression in Christian words and deeds, a means from earth to heaven, and a protection from fear.

In the last lines of the rood's speech, ll. 119-121, are the words echoed by the dreamer in the final section of the poem: gesecan, of eorðweg and wunian. In the dreamer's second speech, the effect of his vision of the symbol as the cross is revealed: the continued momentum of his contact with the rood. The previous section has been marked by a transition from concrete imagery and narrative to the more conceptual. The result is a wholeness in the presentation of the cross in all dimensions, in wordum (97). The urgency of the repeated nu of the cross has been relayed to the dreamer, and the idea of actively seeking a dwelling-place through the cross, expressed in its final words to him, is echoed by the formulation of his own desire:

> Waes modsefa
> afysed on forðwege; fealа ealra gebad
> langung-hwila. Is me nu lifes hyht
> þaet ic þone sigebeam secan mote,
> 124-27

The lifes weg indicated by the rood (88) is ultimately of eorðwege (120); the dreamer's spirit is now impelled on

forðwege. Wunian is repeated with variations in tense, indicating the temporal embrace of the heavenly kingdom. The dreamer's friends have departed, seeking God (as the dreamer in life seeks the cross, 126-29); they wuniaþ on wuldre (135).[47] The man, inspired by hope, looks for the day when he will be fetched from life by the cross, so that he might wunian on wuldre (143) evermore. The Harrowing of Hell refers back to the time when Christ himself came home, bringing those who had suffered in hell to be united with those in heaven who aer/wunedon on wuldre (154-55). While the last part of the poem is forward-looking, this picture of the kingdom of heaven as having existed as a homeland for the blessed before, and Christ's return there after the crucifixion with formerly doomed souls, is the consummation of man's hope for eternal life. While the entry to heaven for the dreamer, his friends, and Christ with the redeemed souls are particular events in time, the glory itself is seen as eternal.

The last section contains verbal echoes from the rest of the poem, contributing to the impression that though the vision is over, and the man is awake, his life has retained a visionary quality. He saw the rood impersonally honoured, waedum geweorðode (15), bewrigene weorðlice (17); now he wishes to honour it himself, well weorþian (129). He lay for a time, watching, lange hwile (24); now he is still watching and waiting in spiritual vigilance, enduring langung-hwila for the fulfilment of his hope. Although he is not directly identified with Christ, as with the cross, the dreamer is left maete werede (124) like him (69), and is courageous in spirit.

Gebidan and gebiddan are picked up again, with the same emphasis as in l. 79 and 80-83. Christ redeemed mankind, efstan elne mycle (34); the cross released him eaðmod elne mycle (60); the man is courageous in his prayer,[48] his seeking, while enduring times of longing, apathy, anxiety (all possible meanings for langung, with the glosses accidie, tedium):

> Gebaed ic me to þan beame blíðe mode,
> elne mycle, þaer ic ana waes
> maete werede. Waes modsefa
> afysed on forðwege; feala ealra gebad
> langung-hwila.
>
> 122-26

His courage is supported by his strong will, in turn supported by his protector, the cross (129-31); all courage, will and seeking, and all divine help therein, are directed to the heofonlicne ham (148). The comparatively large number of epithets for God in this final section are all in the context of life in Christ's eðel.

The rood, by the end of the poem, has revealed the process of becoming what the dreamer first sees it as: something glorious and in heaven. The dreamer himself has been included in this process. The poem is highly structured at the verbal level, and it is through the engagement of a wide range of connotations that the initial imagery of the cross ultimately embraces the dreamer and mankind. The rood's commandment to reveal that it is the tree of glory, the same tree Christ suffered on, and that which for the descendants of Adam became a tree of life, has necessitated the poetic reconciliation of opposites: glory, life, joy and eternity with shame, death, grief and the limitations imposed by time. This reconciliation

is accomplished through exploiting potential verbal meaning, and potential human grasp of that meaning through a familiar non-verbal symbol.

Footnotes to Chapter Four

1. Schlauch, "The Dream of the Rood as Prosopopoeia", p. 432.

2. Lee, Alvin A., "Toward a Critique of The Dream of the Rood", p. 163.

3. Daniel, which contains a dream of a tree and an interpretation longer than its biblical source, cannot be placed in the genre; Elene contains a long dream-vision by Constantine of the rood, which is often close to The Dream of the Rood in diction and imagery, but the vision is a part of the story which leads to the discovery of the True Cross, rather than an introduction to an allegory.

4. Lee, op. cit., note 2, ibid.

5. Burlin, "The Ruthwell Cross, The Dream of the Rood and the Vita Contemplativa", p. 38.

6. Patten, "Structure and Meaning in The Dream of the Rood", p. 385 note 1.

7. Diamond, "Heroic Diction in The Dream of the Rood", pp. 3-4.

8. Hymns Ancient and Modern, no.97. See Historical Companion to Hymns Ancient and Modern, and Szorverfy, Joseph, "Crux Fidelis, Prolegomena to a History of the Holy Cross Hymns".

9. Hymns Ancient and Modern no.96. "Fortunatus (and the patristic sources) also created a new poetic diction which permeated many Holy Cross hymns and which retained its popularity to the end of the Middle Ages", Szoverfy, op. cit., p. 39. If the liturgy influenced imagery, there is no reason to suppose that its most important hymns did not influence poetic diction on occasion.

10. Patten, op. cit., note 6, pp. 394-395.

11. Swanton, "Ambiguity and Anticipation in The Dream of the Rood", pp. 402-25.

12. ibid., p. 409.

13. ibid., p. 411.

14. The redirection of expectations, especially on the level of sound, is discussed by Swanton, op. cit., note 11; I have only dealt with sound here where it involves 'verbal' symbolism, structure based on wordplay.

15. Fleming, "The Dream of the Rood and Anglo-Saxon Monasticism", pp. 43-44. The trouble with claiming that the poem expresses a typically monastic view of salvation is that we have little idea of what a typically non-monastic view might have been.

16. ibid., p. 44.

17. ibid.

18. ibid., p. 47.

19. ibid., pp. 57-58.

20. ibid., p. 67.

21. Swanton, The Dream of the Rood, note to l. 127.

22. Burlin, op. cit., note 5, pp. 31-32.

23. Patten, op. cit., note 6, p. 387.

24. ibid., p. 394.

25. As referred to, for example, in Aelfric's Palm Sunday Homily, Thorpe, pp. 260-62.

26. Patten, op. cit., note 6, p. 401.

27. About the spiritual sense of scripture and laymen, Aelfric on St Mary's Day says little of St Mary 'lest he be in error,' adding, in reference to the interpretation of the day's gospel, that it "is swiðe earfoðe laewedum mannum to understandenne; hit is eal maest mid haligra manna naman geset, and hi habbað swiðe langsume trahtunge, aefter ðam gastlicum andgite; ði we hit laeteð unsaed." Thorpe, p. 467.

28. Leiter, "The Dream of the Rood: Patterns of Transformation", p. 98.

29. ibid., pp. 101-2.

30. Shepherd, G., "Scriptural Poetry", p. 6.

31. E.g. Woolf, "Doctrinal Influences in The Dream of the Rood"; Burrow, "An Approach to The Dream of the Rood", pp. 128-29; and Swanton, The Dream of the Rood, pp. 56-58.

32. Fleming, op. cit., note 15, p. 51.

33. Woolf, op. cit., note 31, p. 149. In Christ III, Christ speaks freely of his own suffering, and there appears to be no difficulty of presentation (1344-1361; 1379-1514).

34. Patten, op. cit., note 6, p. 399.

35. See also Matt. 10:38, 16:24, etc.; Rom. 6:14, Gal. 6:14; Phil. 2:3ff.

36. Leiter, op. cit., note 28, p. 94.

37. Burlin, op. cit., note 5, p. 33.

38. Swanton, The Dream of the Rood, p. 13.

39. ibid.

40. ibid., note to l. 7.

41. Patch, in "Liturgical Influence in The Dream of the Rood", discusses the symbolism of the ornamentation, quoting Aelfric: "Þurh þaet gold we understandað geleafan and god in gehygd; þurh þaet seolfor riht lice spraece and getingnysse on Godes lare; ðurh þa deorwurðan gymstanes halige mihte." p. 244. The similarity of the first phrase with the poem's ic þurh þaet gold ongytan meahte (18) may imply that the poet was employing a common homiletic manner of speaking about the meaning of the gemmed cross in a startling way. The most common symbolism of the gems was that of the wounds of Christ; that interpretation is unchanging, while that of the virtues changes.

42. Bolton, "The Dream of the Rood 9b: 'Engel' = 'Nuntius'?" Stevens also discusses the unfamiliarity of the crucifix: "...plain altar-crosses, rather than crucifixes, prevailed in Christian Europe generally till as late as the sixteenth century...among the Anglo-Saxons...the altar cross was always plain." Stevens, The Cross in the Life and Literature of the Anglo-Saxons, p. 18.

43. Patch, op. cit., note 41, p. 245.

44. Swanton, "Ambiguity and Anticipation in The Dream of the Rood", p. 409.

45. Patch, op. cit., note 41, pp. 250-51.

46. Bosworth-Toller gives the definition for breost as follows: "The breast as the seat of the vital powers, of the feelings, and of the affections...The heart, mind, thought: pectus, cor, mens." Most examples given indicate a place rather than what emanates from it.

47. "The motif of secular elegy - the loss of one's earthly protectors - is here transformed into an affirmation of the sanctity of one's spiritual companions whose lives have been a model for all who seek the ascetic road to salvation," Burlin, op. cit., note 5, p. 40. The qualification 'ascetic' is perhaps unnecessary.

48. St Ambrose, on belief in the Resurrection, says: "We are signed with the sign of His death, when we show forth His death when we pray..." Some of the Principal Works of St Ambrose, pp. 180-81. The poet may have had in mind a similar association of prayer and the cross.

Chapter Five: Exodus

The most recent edition of Exodus lists some of the comments made on the poem during its critical history: Greenfield remarked on its "epic tone and quality", Kennedy on the "highly conscious striving for effect," Wrenn on a "unique use of metaphor" and individual vocabulary, Mitchell on its "dramatic power, descriptive ability, bold imagery, and daring use of words."[1] While critics are not in complete agreement as to the effect produced by the Exodus poet's style (Brodeur, for example, finds some of the imagery "far-fetched" and "grotesque"[2]), that style has often been at the heart of discussion regarding the nature of the poem's symbolism. Stanley classes Exodus with the other biblical poems, finding these relatively uncomplicated:

> The Old English biblical poems are for the most part little more than the biblical narrative, paraphrased and amplified to fit the requirements of metre, alliteration and variation. No attempt is made to provide, as Otfrid did, formal exegesis. Like an unglossed bible the Old English biblical paraphrases supply the text only: they are factual.[3]

Formal exegesis is certainly not a feature of the poem; but the need to consider the possibilities of figural interpretation and allegory has been felt by many critics on the grounds that much of the imagery requires explanation. Irving bases his deduction of an early date for Exodus on his reservations about any allegorical intention on the part of the author:

> There is very little explicit Christian phraseology and thought in Exodus, which resembles Genesis A and Daniel in that respect. They are all to be contrasted in style and psychological atmosphere with the liturgical lyrics and saints' lives of the Cynewulfian "school". There is reason to believe that a poet of the ninth century would have made far more of the traditional Christian allegorization which overlaid the story of the exodus as interpreted by the fathers of the Church.[4]

Huppé, speaking from the point of view that the poem has been highly influenced by the Church Fathers, finds many correspondences with patristic writings and concludes that the poet had a "thematic intention" in this area, which "should be sufficient to suggest the relevance of exegetical symbolism to an understanding of the poem."[5]

The text itself, however, gives little (if any) indication that the poet intended it to be read as allegory on a particular level; the thematic intention deduced by Huppé may not have been as purposefully developed as his commentary on the poem implies, especially if we acknowledge Irving's historical-stylistic evaluation. The story itself, however, traditionally subjected to typological and allegorical interpretation, carries with it an enormous body of implicit 'commentary'. Any loosely paraphrased version of it could be read symbolically, without any intention, or, given the intention, indication by the poet that he wished it to be read that way.

The main problem presented by the poem seems to be a density of symbolism which is only with great difficulty approached through the critical expectations and language of scholarly exegesis and allusion. Lucas is critical of the poet's imagery at one point on the grounds that there is "an attempt to force

the poetry to do too much";[6] but such a charge would be more appropriately be levelled at critics who 'find' a scriptural allusion in every half-line. Cross and Tucker comment on the Anglo-Saxon poet's familiarity with and acceptance of the tradition of scriptural exegesis, quoting Aelfric on the Pentateuch:

> ...Moyses hi awrat, to steore and to lare ðam ealdan folce Israhel, ond eac us on gastlicum andgite. Þa bec waeron awritene be Criste, ac þaet gastlice andgit waes þam folce digle, oð þaet Crist sylf com to mannum, and geopenade þaera boca digelnysse, aefter gastlicum andgite.[7]

The context of the above quote is a symbolic reading of the miracle of the feeding of the five thousand, with a spiritual interpretation of everything from the five loaves to the grass the people sat on; there is no similar kind of interpretation in Exodus, and it must be concluded that though traditions of scriptural exegesis influenced the poem, the result was not a tendency to interpret in the manner of the sermon or homily, although that mode of exhortation is sometimes present in Old English poetry. When, for example, Lucas says of the image of the cloud-as-tent, "Hence the phrase feldhusa maest (85) denotes the Tabernacle,"[8] he is allowing the tradition of interpretation of the sermon or homily, which makes statements of the sort

> Þa fif hlafas ðe se cnapa baer getacniað þa fif bec ðe Moyses se heretoga sette on ðaere ae[9]

to define his judgement of the poem's imagery, which, whatever it may suggest, is not denotative.

The other major approach to the poem has been through the Holy Saturday liturgy, which has been considered a source of

its imagery and the structure of its material.[10] Liturgical influence as such is more difficult to trace in Exodus than in The Dream of the Rood or in the Old English Advent. Exodus has no central object, such as the Cross, which the liturgy shares; the main narrative and the incorporated stories do not have obvious structural or verbal parallels with the readings of the Easter Vigil, as the Advent does with the Advent antiphons. Readings of the poem in terms of liturgical influence involve both typology and allegory,[11] both in the imagery (e.g., seeing the pillars of cloud and fire as types of the cross, as represented by the Paschal Candle) and in its theme of bondage and release (e.g. seeing the release from the captivity of Egypt as the release from the bondage of sin and death).

There are several shifting foci in the poem: Moses, the pillars of fire and cloud, Noah, Abraham and Isaac, the Egyptians and the sea, all of which are to be found in the Easter Vigil readings. Yet the idea that the poem is based on the liturgy (or rather, the Holy Saturday setting of the liturgy) is perhaps because through the readings, hymns, Exultet, etc., Christian typology and allegory have a regular and concentrated expression surrounding the exodus-story (although in Exodus the Old Testament material remains unbalanced by New Testament material as such). That the poem has a definite source or structure derived from the liturgical setting itself is no more evident than its relation to specific patristic writings. The atmosphere of the last few days of Holy Week might possibly be related to the poem, though it could not be

called a source; perhaps the biblical associations, the ritualistic journey of the catechumens, the destruction of God's enemy in the baptismal water, with the Paschal candle prominent in the darkness coloured the poem's imagery. Exodus has an undeniable relationship with the Easter setting of the liturgy and patristic traditions of scriptural interpretation; but a widespread cultural awareness or practice of a tradition cannot be referred to as a 'source'. Burlin's remark about the Advent poet is more applicable to Exodus than other approaches requiring complex differentiations between type and antitype, 'abstract allegory' and concrete narrative: "The Advent poet makes no distinction among his images, bringing 'historical type' and 'allegory' together in a single imaginative continuum."[12] It must be emphasized (as Burlin's choice of the word 'bringing' does not) that these images probably existed already on such a continuum for the poet, although they were brought together in this particular way in this poem.

The assumption that the poet consciously 'built' his images with an intellectual concern for their symbolism is a difficult one to abandon, as Lucas' well-annotated edition indicates in such statements as "...the allegorical dimension remains a chain of associated notions rather than a fully developed structural element. This allegorical dimension is also carefully integrated into the poem."[13] Such a chain of associations would not be carefully integrated into the poem unless they were, for the poet, divorced from what they are figured by; and the assumption that an imaginative intellect has linked them with the Old Testament story keeps colouring critical terminology.

The expression of an awareness of Christian significance in Old Testament events in Exodus is different in character from that in patristic writings. In his study of figura, Auerbach observes that figural interpretation

> changed the Old Testament from a book of laws and a history of the people of Israel into a series of figures of Christ and the Redemption, such as we find later in the procession of prophets in the medieval theatre and in the cyclic representation of medieval sculpture. In this form and in its context, from which the Jewish history and national character had vanished, the Celtic and Germanic peoples, for example, could accept the Old Testament; it was a part of the universal religion of salvation and a necessary component of the equally magnificent and universal view of history that was conveyed to them along with this religion.[14]

The sense of history as figure does not express itself in the poem in such clearly-delineated patristic terms as, for example, 'shadow', 'image' and 'truth'.[15] The so-called insular mode of Christianity in the seventh and eighth centuries in Ireland and Anglo-Saxon England is characterized by

> Christian teaching...without the use of conscious dialectic. In such a world there are no doctrinal cores...early medieval theology in general is usually spoken of as 'symbolic' as opposed to the scholastic and hence dialectical theology of the high Middle Ages. Patristic theology, however, while clearly more historical and more 'symbolic' than scholastic theology, has none the less a strong dialectic element, as is apparent in the great doctrinal discussions and definitions... Consequently, the theology of insular Christianity tended to be a symbolic theology, employing concrete images or historical events rather than abstractions.[16]

In view of the above comments, it would seem unjustified to assume that the poet could write about these particular Old Testament events without his awareness of them as figural

entering his 'paraphrase'. It is possible to read the poem as one would read the biblical story, and understand the events as figuring their fulfilments - 'like an unglossed bible'. This approach, however, involves the assumption that there was an implicit 'subtext' of correspondences which the poet expected his audience to provide. This may have been true to an extent, but such an approach leads us far from the poetic text and into the correspondences, many and varied, found in formal exegesis and allegory; these often have quite different emphases, e.g. catechetical, liturgical, eschatological.[17] In Exodus, "the delicate hints as to how the audience are to understand the significance of what is described"[18] are for the most part general rather than specific, and are changeable in emphasis.

If the audience and poet shared a common mode of Christianity, perhaps they did not need even delicate hints about 'how to understand' the theology behind the imagery and historical events of the poem. What they probably did need, like any audience or reader, was that the material be presented in a structure which was coherent to them. The concept of leadership which unites the poem from beginning to end provides a solid base from which to examine the symbolism.

Exodus is undeniably in the Germanic-heroic style as much as Beowulf, Andreas or Elene; but in almost every Old English poem, leadership and lordship of a people, or the relationship between lord and retainer has some importance. This relationship is important in the unification of the material and the Exodus poet's major themes, on whatever level of meaning, literal or figurative: movement through exile, the testing of

loyalty and courage, the destruction of enemies of the lord and his people, the continuity of that people in the maintenance of their bond - such threads have run through the other poems looked at so far.

In the place a hero like Beowulf, Andreas or Judith might occupy, in Exodus there is an ambiguity. God is not clearly differentiated from the manifestations of His will, such as the destruction of the Egyptian first-born, the pillars of cloud and fire, and the sea. There are many instances where the poet might be referring to either God or Moses; sometimes the syntax informs the reader after a moment's doubt, but sometimes it does not. The two patriarchs, Noah and Abraham, are focused on, rather suddenly in the middle of the action, as direct links with God, through whom the nation was founded, continued and led.

Such ambiguity contributes support for a typological-allegorical reading of a sort: typological in that it allows for terminology applied to characters and events in the Old Testament story to suggest that of its New Testament fulfilment. This extends naturally towards allegory in that the promise of fulfilment inspires and commands the progress of the soul through earthly 'exile'. Leading and following are therefore important in an abstract sense, verging on the symbolic.

Both literal and typological-allegorical readings of the poem involve analogy and irony. For example, in a literal reading, the crossing of the desert is a version of the crossing of the sea, which in turn is a figure of the entire exodus. The poet's description is occasionally ironic, for example, the

dead Egyptians are called drihtfolca maest (590); Pharaoh's anticipation of the slaughter of his enemies (146ff.), like Grendel's, is set against the audience's knowledge that this will not take place. In a typological-allegorical reading, the audience must be aware of the relation between Old Testament types and New Testament antitypes, and the ironic discrepancy between the understanding of the audience and that of the characters in the poem of certain events. The Israelites do not know they will not have to fight the Egyptians; Abraham is not aware, in a way that the audience is, of what God's covenant burh His sylfes lif (434) entails.

While analogy and irony are involved in either kind of reading, it is when they result in certain kinds of transformation that a more figurative approach becomes not only possible, but necessary: "analogy, irony and dialectic transfer are distinctive verbal modes in allegory."[19] Instead of a transformation of identity, there is the shifting focus on leadership and ambiguity of identity in the Old Testament episode, with its inevitable Christian overtones. If, for example, only the verbs laedan, gelaedan are traced through the poem, their subjects are Moses (54, 62), the pillar (77, 568), the Egyptians (194), Noah (367), Abraham (384, 397), Drihten (544), and in 555, where se seems to refer to God.

The poem's introductory lines (1-7) give the frame within which the idea and practice of leadership in the poem will be here investigated: Old Testament law, the words of God to Israel through Moses, the completion of a difficult journey, and the enduring value of a resulting raed (the understanding or

advantage gained by the Israelites, with their salvation; and/or the understanding or advantageous counsel the audience gains through the Exodus story).

> Hwaet, we feor ond neah gefrigen habbað
> ofer middangeard Moyses domas,
> wraeclico wordriht, wera cneorissum -
> in uprodor eadigra gehwam
> aefter bealusiðe bote lifes,
> lifigendra gehwam langsumne raed -
> haeleðum secgan. Gehyre se ðe wille! 1-7 .

Ll. 8-14 involve Moses in God's battle against the devil, manifested by Pharaoh and his people, Godes andsacan (15). In ll. 19-22 Moses is given power for this battle. Handlean (19) is one of the many instances in the poem where the hand or power therein is a point of divine and human contact: a reward from God's hand, into Moses'. The secrets of Creation and the name of God are revealed to him. By this knowledge of truth he is both exalted and strengthened for the journey:

> Ða waes forma sið
> þaet hine weroda God wordum naegde: ...
> Haefde He þa geswiðed soðum craeftum
> ond gewurðodne werodes aldor,
> Faraones feond, on forðwegas. 22-32

The waepna geweald (20) given by God is expressed by the poet as being the journey itself, the forðwegas taken by the Israelites out of Egypt's power. The going forth of Israel is simultaneous with the striking down and affliction of the enemy (33-53), and the alliterative links in ll. 41 and 45 stress the connection. In l. 41, dugoð may be taken as referring to either or both the first-born of the Egyptians, and the Israelites, as one means the 'departure' of the other. The same is emphasized less ambiguously in l. 45, where the folc ferende is Israel; the feond waes bereafod of both its

own children and the people it held in slavery. The power behind the Israelites' movement and the enemy's loss is unexpressed until ll. 46-48, where the connection between the exodus and the death of the firstborn is again thrown into relief by the alliteration of opposites, helle and heofon:

> Hergas on helle (heofon þider becom)
> druron deofolgyld. Daeg waes maere
> ofer middangeard þa seo mengeo for.
> 46-48

This apposition and the phrase daeg waes maere...,[21] with its eschatological connotations, do not seem to draw a correspondence between two sets of scriptural events so much as to indicate a common understanding between poet and audience of one in the other, the universal vision of 'heaven' at the head of the multitude, in the defeat of hell, and on Doomsday.

The focus is again on Moses (ll. 54-62) as the people move away from Egypt through an inhospitable exile-landscape, the envelope-pattern[22] helping to express both the difficulty and Moses' resolute progress through it with his army:

> Fyrd waes gefysed, from se ðe laedde,
> modig magoraeswa, maegburh heora.
> Oferfor he mid þy folce faestena worn,
> land ond leodgeard laðra manna,
> enge anpaðas, uncuð gelad,
> oðþaet hie on guðmyrce gearwe baeron:
> waeron land heora lyfthelme beþeahte.
> Meachofu mor heald - Moyses ofer þa,
> fela meringa, fyrde gelaedde.
> 54-62

There is some disagreement about the first sentence of the next fitt (XLIII), as to the subject of heht (63): Lucas emends the object of the verb, MS tirfaestne haeleð, to the nominative, "because Moses must be the subject of the sentence" (edition, 63b note). As Roberts points out, however, "The sentence begins

a new fitt, so why should there not be a new subject? Then the MS tirfaestne haeleð can apply to Moses."[23] Such sudden shifts in who is leading or commanding occur often in the poem, unifying the events within the introduction's frame.

In the development of the idea of God as protector,[24] the location "provides exactly the right kind of exotic setting in which to describe the cloud-cover which merges into the cloud-pillar," (edition, 69 note). The strange, barren setting of exile alters in favour of the travellers: firstly, God creates the baelce (73) to shield the people from the hatwendne lyft (74). Then, this simple relation becomes complicated; the cloud becomes something more than a cloud, a sail. Eventually the Israelites perceive the presence of God there, and this has the effect of inspiring their voyage. The image is complex because it moves; the cloud, put there by God for their protection and guidance, becomes in some way the presence of God. The nautical imagery follows the statement that God had covered the sun's course with a sail (80ff.). This is not meant to be metaphor, in that the Israelites, and not just the poet and audience, see it as a sail. While seglrode (83) may bring the Cross to mind for the audience, there is no indication, as Lucas claims (edition, 88-90 note) that the Israelites see the Cross, which would be an unwarranted supposition (especially in the light of Aelfric's remarks on how the meaning of the events was digle to the Israelites); indeed, the poet informs us that

> ...þa maestrapas men ne cuðon,
> ne ða seglrode geseon meahton
> eorðbuende ealle craefte,
> hu afaestnod waes feldhusa maest, 82-85

Lyftwundor leoht is an appropriate epithet for a cloud-sail, especially if leoht is taken in the sense 'light, not heavy', as well as 'bright', since the people cannot see by what means the sails are held up. Hlifedon is also suitable in that the phenomenon is sky-high:

> Fyrd eall geseah
> hu þaer hlifedon halige seglas,
> lyftwundor leoht; leode ongeton,
> dugoð Israhela, þaet þaer Drihten cwom,
> weroda Drihten, wicsteal metan.
> 88-92

The variation drives home the point that though the people cannot see any support for this wonder, they understand that 'the Lord came there', showing them where to rest as well as where to go. The repetition of Drihten, latterly modified by weroda, emphasizes God's particular place and power at the head of the multitude. The pillars of cloud and fire are, even at the time of the exodus, seen by the poet as being 'in the high services of the Holy Spirit', as the exodus could not, at the poet's time be seen as an event in the history of Israel, but inseparable from those in and attended in the New Dispensation. Ambiguities such as the use of the word seglrode, 'sail-rood', and the towering and light qualities of the cloud which are shared in Anglo-Saxon poetic terminology with the Cross, are part of the vision of history in which two events or sets of events cease to be separate in time, united by a significance revealed only by both of them together. The imagery here is not merely on the narrative level, but nor is it specifically liturgical or typological. The pillars of cloud and fire, the Paschal candle, the Holy Spirit and the Cross would all be seen by the poet as leading God's people in fulfilling His

purpose for them; all might have been visible or understood in one another's attributes as a matter of course.[25]

The focus is again on Moses as leader when the Israelites rise in the morning (98-103), but it returns almost immediately to the guiding pillar:

> Forð gesawon
> lifes latþeow lifweg metan;
> segl siðe weold, saemen aefter
> foron flodwege. 103-106

Lifes latþeow is used elsewhere for God, and Christ (e.g. Elene 520, 898; The Gloria 1:9). No allegorical possibilities are exploited, but are perhaps assumed: The 'way of (or to) life' for the Israelites is that which poet and audience might understand as 'following' lifes latþeow in its different forms through the Christian journey.

The poet then turns to the ambivalent fiery aspect of the oðer wundor which appears at night. Its power of protection is manifested as light shining in the darkness,[26] the presence of God amidst the uncertainty of the voyage reflected from the warrior's own shields:

> scinon scyldhreoðan; sceado swiðredon,
> neowle nihtscuwan neah ne mihton
> heolstor ahydan. Heofoncandel barn;
> niwe nihtweard nyde sceolde
> wician ofer weredum, þy laes him westengryre,
> har haeðbroga, holmegum wederum
> on ferclamme ferhð getwaefde. 113-119

Ferhð getwaefde could refer to the kind of death the Israelites would suffer if their fear in the wilderness caused them to turn back (the poet may have slightly modified the idea in Ex. 13:17). The Beowulf-poet expresses a similar notion in Beowulf 175-188, when fear causes some of Hrothgar's people to turn to the gastbona

for help, and the poet laments, warning those who would not suffer eternal damnation in death. This idea is enlarged upon in the next few lines of Exodus: repetition in the description of the pillar's appearance highlights its very different 'attitudes'.

> lige scinon,
> byrnende beam. Blace stodon
> ofer sceotendum scire leoman,
> scinon scyldhreoðan...
> wician ofer weredum, þy laes him westengryre...
> 110-117

> blace beamas, belegsan hweop
> in þam hereþreate, hatan lige,
> þaet he on westenne werod forbaernde,
> nymðe hie modhwate Moyses hyrde,
> scean scirwerod- scyldas lixton. 121-125

Lucas notes the ambiguity of he (edition, 123 note) - referring grammatically to the foregenga (120) as a phenomenon, 'it', or personally as God. Foregenga, he and Moyses in the same sentence all support the same command; threatened by the pillar of fire, the presence of God, and commanded by their human leader, the people obey. Through this multiple guidance in a single purpose, they see the rihte straete, gesawon (126) possibly giving the additional connotation 'they understood the right course of action'. Because of this, the people are again fus on forðweg, and, though weary, recover their courage (129-131). Their relationship to their leaders is fused with their relationship with God, just as the leaders themselves fuse in the narrative.

Having thus unified the purpose and power of God and Israel, the poet suddenly turns to the approaching enemy. Of the four pages missing between 148 and 149, it can only be

surmised that the poet recapitulates, or perhaps expands Ex. 14:5ff., or goes over the origins of the feud between the two peoples' (edition, 135-141 note). The differences between the causes of the leaders, the righteousness of their respective actions, and the conditions of their peoples emerge in the seaman/landsman contrast (also explored in The Seafarer). If the Israelites are flotan (133), wraecmon (137), this is not only part of the nautical imagery of the voyage, but a direct contrast in nature to the Egyptians, who are an oht inlende (136), ingefolca (142). While the contrast is aptly geographical at this point, the location of the threat is soon identified with kind. Egypt is attempting to extend its long efforts at keeping the nation of Israel eðelleasum (139) into murder and robbery in ll. 142-146. As sailor-exiles, the Israelites are affirming their covenant with their Lord. As landsmen, Pharaoh and his army are troth-breakers (147), defying God's command through Moses to let the people go. Reference to past events reinforces the contrast in the nature and purpose of the two peoples: the Egyptians are as treacherous in the present as they were in the past, while God directs the Israelites through Moses out of the power of that treachery. Opposing purposes and the different outcomes for the opponents are expressed again as the result of the Israelite leadership:

> woldon hie þaet feorhlean facne gyldan,
> þaette hie þaet daegweorc dreore gebohte,
> Moyses leode, þaer him mihtig God
> on ðam spildsiðe spede forgefe.
>
> 150-153

Lucas remarks, in his note to l. 150, "With admirable concision the line both makes a statement about what the Egyptians intended

to do and compares that action with what they ought to have done, given a proper reward." This contrast in causes is picked up in ll. 186 and 211, after the seaman/landsman apposition. The Egyptians come on þaet ealde riht, aeðelum deore;[27] seeing them approach, the Israelites are orwenan eðelrihtes.

The preparation for battle has been read as a conventional scene, "an example of what have been called beast-of-battle 'type scenes'...such scenes conventionally anticipate battle" (edition, 161-169 note). The poet has devoted ll. 154-199 to a description of the Egyptians' terrifying swell of strength as they approach the Israelite camp; suspense grows as the Israelites watch and their fear grows (168-9; 200-203; 211-213), in spite of just having regained their courage (129-131). "The doom-laden atmosphere indicates what might have happened to the Israelites without God to direct events in their favour" (edition, 161-169 note). Then suspense is abruptly cut by the intervention of the angel:

> Feond waes anmod,
> werud waes wigblac, oðþaet wlance forsceaf
> mihtig engel, se ða menigeo beheold,
> þaet þaer gelaðe mid him leng ne mihton
> geseon tosomne: sið waes gedaeled.
> 203-207

Lucas sees in 207b "perhaps...the indication that from now on the Israelites and Egyptians will each go their separate ways. The time for a moral distinction has come (edition, 207b, note). But surely the moral distinction has already been made clear: He (Moses) waes leof Gode, leoda aldor versus Faraones cyn/ Godes andsacan (12-15), and Haefde He (God) geswiðed...werodes

aldor, / Faraones feond, on forðwegas (30-32). The distinction has also been made in terms of what the God-willed voyage is to each side: to the Egyptians a laðsið- (44), spildsiðe (153), and to the Israelites leofes siðes (53), deormodra sið (97); the landsman/seaman contrast is an extension of this.

The conventional evocation of atmosphere, suddenly broken by the intervention of the angel between the two armies, is the first direct indication that such a battle cannot take place in a conventional sense. The Israelites wait anxiously till morning when they, too, muster their forces for what they believe will be an ordinary battle. A similarly conventional description of their preparation, directed by Moses, in terms of bearing bright armour, rousing their courage, etc., is not cut off, but redirected:

> ...in leodscipe laestan wolde
> mod mid aran, eac þan maegnes craeft
> garbeamas feng gretan mihte.
> Þa waes handrofa here aetgaedere,
> fus forðwegas. 244-248

The army is aetgaedere,/ fus forðwegas; the 'war-effort' is synonymous with the continuation of their journey, just as in 19ff., where overcoming the enemy consists in beginning the exodus, though spoken of as waepna geweald (20), and also in 30-32, in which the power given to Moses as God's chosen, Pharaoh's enemy, strengthens him on forðwegas. The Israelites are fus on forðweg (129) after having been led and pushed to the sea by the fire-pillar, called a "segn: the pillar...seen as a labarum, a battle-standard incorporating the Cross..." (edition, 127, note). There has been, therefore, a continuous indirect indication that 'battle' does not mean battle in the

ordinary sense. This view of following God in a 'militant' faith stems no doubt from the same Anglo-Saxon inheritance of such a tradition as is reflected in The Dream of the Rood. The battle-standard itself, the pillar, is also 'the messenger of the journey', siðboda:

> Fana up gerad,
> beama beorhtost; bidon ealle þa gen
> hwonne siðboda saestreamum neah
> leoht ofer lindum lyftedoras braec.
> 248-251

At the same time as the motif of the standard/messenger is being developed, the discrepant awareness of the Israelites, the Egyptians and the audience interact in such a way as to indicate that the poet is beginning to approach his subject from another direction. A similar kind of suspense to that of Beowulf's fight with Grendel is provided; there, terror inspired by Grendel's approach, his own expectation of slaughter, the previous fears of the Geats bedding down for what they think might be the last night, and the watching, waiting hero's expectation of a fight are balanced for the audience by the reassurance that God will control the battle through Beowulf's selfes mihtum (700). The Exodus audience is aware of the outcome of Pharaoh's pursuit, and have been reminded of it in l. 153. The main effect of this on the Israelites is fear (168-9; 200-203; 211-213). This fear itself is presented by the poet as a danger, in that 'the faithful' are laid low by it (gehnaeged, 169). Their cries of terror are dangerous (an alternative reading to the accepted "bold speeches fled", "they fled fearful tidings", "fatal tidings flew abroad", edition, 203, note); their fear, their limited knowledge,

makes them despair of their homeland (211), a sentiment which would indeed be dangerous if it were up to them to make their own way to it. At this point in the poem, a balance of audience awareness with the suspense of two enemies meeting furthers the poet's purpose within a larger context than the battlefield: the outcome of the Israelite-Egyptian conflict and its fused historical-typological significance. The conventional atmosphere of expectation has been evoked for the purpose of redirection, underlining the unconventionality of the armies, leaders and conflict itself, and strengthening the poet's unifying motif: the ultimate leadership of God.

The Israelite army prepares to go forth; the 'messenger of the journey' moved forward to the sea, apparently breaking open the cloud-cover which has been shielding the voyagers from the burning sun; light is reflected from shields. The Israelites are poised for the 'fight', and the person who leaps up before them is a hildecalla (252), a war-herald, a beodohata (253), announcer of battle (see edition, 253a, note). However, the words Moses speaks indicate more about the nature of the conflict and the victorious strength behind them than the previous play of traditional themes and expectations.

Moses is called rices hyrde, according to the editor "rather loosely...without regard for the fact that the Israelites are eðelleasse," (edition, 256, note); yet this is a suitable epithet, for as leader to the Promised Land, Moses is its guardian. Only through his guidance can they reach it. As the words rices hyrde also fittingly describe God and Christ, the understanding of the Christian journey in the Old Testament

one, and the one kingdom in the other, is affirmed by the poet. Alliteration sets hereciste, the waiting army, against halgan, the quality of their leader's voice (257), again stressing that Moses' power is not military in the common sense of the word.

In the Old Testament image of the hand of God, ambiguity of identity expresses the mysterious link between the human leader and the divine one. The forces of Egypt are in the power of this mutual hand, the alliteration of l. 261 emphasizing the totality of its control:

> 'Ne beoð ge þy forhtran, þeah þe Faraon brohte
> sweordwigendra side hergas,
> eorla unrim. Him eallum wile
> mihtig Drihten þurh mine hand
> to daege þissum daedlean gyfan, 259-263

In l. 262, alliteration stresses the possessive: the hand is Moses'; yet it is Drihten who is mihtig. Thus the hand is both human and divine, and its requittal for the Egyptians' deeds will be - is - death:

> þaet hie lifigende leng ne moton
> aegnian mid yrmðum Israhela cyn.
> Ne willað eow andraedan daede feðan,
> faege ferðlocan, fyrste is aet ende
> laenes lifes. 264-268

The Egyptians are already dead; as Israel's enemy, they are also God's, and Israel's departure has already meant the stroke of death from heaven on the first-born (see also drihtneum, 163). Faege ferhðlocan could refer to both the Egyptians and the Israelites: the power of the Egyptians is merely physical, of the body, subject to death; the Israelites need not fear such death because they are going to be saved, but the implication for the audience is that those who follow

God need not fear earthly death, the end of laenes lifes, because through their faith they may have eternal life (as in The Seafarer 64-80).

Moses' next statement is a criticism of the people's state of mind, that their fear of a fight with the enemy has been a result of lar Godes/ abroden of breostum (268-269) - a rejection of divine lordship and wisdom. As one who is leof Gode (12), hold Frea (19) and geswiðed soðum craeftum/ ond gewurðodne (by God, 30-31), he himself can advise them:

> Ic, on beteran raed,
> þaet ge gewurðien wuldres Aldor,
> ond eow Liffrean lissa bidde,
> sigora gesynto, þaer ge siðien.
> Þis is se ecea Abrahames God,
> frumsceafta Frea, se ðas fyrd wereð,
> modig ond maegenrof, mid þaere miclan hand.'
> 269-275

The last three lines bring past and present together with the eternity and will of God: ecea is alliteratively linked with Abraham, patriarch-leader and founder, and frumsceaft Frea with fyrd, the descendants of Abraham. Creation, the Israelites' human leader, and God's purpose were previously linked in ll. 22-29 ("an addition to the biblical narrative", edition, 25-27, note). The emphatic use of þis as well as se, and þaere rather than either possessive, is part of the effective ambiguity at this climactic point in the poem. The next epithet for Moses, lifigendra þeoden (277), is "equally applicable" (edition, 277, note) to both God and Moses; it would also be apt for Christ,[28] just as beama beorhtost (249) would be for the Cross. Here, as before in the poem, figure and figured, event and significance seem to be undifferentiated as such.

The power of God expressed by the image of the hand is now manifested by the sea it commanded:

> faerwundra sum
> nu ic sylfa sloh ond þeos swiðre hand
> grene tacne garsecges deop.
> Yð up faereð, ofstum wyrceð
> waeter on wealfaesten. Wegas syndon dryge...
> 279-283

Sea-imagery takes over completely for some lines; the effect is of violent movement on a massive scale, brightness (edition, 284, 287, notes; on Anglo-Saxon colour classification), and the uniqueness of the event. God's power made so concretely evident is seen as mercy and protection to the people:

> Ic wat soð gere
> þaet eow mihtig God miltse gecyðde,
> eorlas aerglade. Ofest is selost
> þaet ge of feonda faeðme weorðen
> nu se Agend up araerde
> reade streamas in randgebeorh... 291ff.
>
> Saeweall astah,/...yðholmes [hleo]
> 302-304

The people's unity of belief and purpose (305-306) again 'rings true' in the ears of the audience as Christians, like the terminology of the pillars of fire and cloud, and human/divine leaders.

The people take over now, fighting their way across the sea. An allegorical interpretation of this part of the poem has been both strongly favoured and utterly rejected (see above, introduction, and edition). Lucas, agreeing with Krapp, points out that the adjective grenne (312) is improbable, "in that it would hardly be 'realistic' for the sea to reveal a green grassy path", and the word is therefore "probably a deliberate pointer to an allegorical interpretation," (edition, 312a, note).

As grass is nowhere mentioned in the text, it could be argued that 'green' perfectly describes the sea-bottom as it sometimes appears when the tide has gone out, leaving the ground coated with algae and weed; but visual realism is not the issue. If the word 'green' has other visual connotations, this need not necessarily mean that it is being employed allegorically. Perhaps the most that can be said is that the sea-floor's greenness is in the same spirit of description as the redness of the sea, later on: the realism is that of spiritual perception without consciousness of a gap between it and concrete reality.

However, there remains the unbiblical and logically inexplicable fight as the Israelites go into the sea. Lucas observes that "as Cross & Tucker point out...citing Augustine and Gregory, this mode of description is to be explained only by reference to the exegetical tradition of interpreting the Crossing of the Red Sea as an allegory for Baptism," (edition, 310-346, note).[29] We have already been alerted to the poet's employment of the 'battle theme', and the presentation of battle-as-journey, that fighting is not to take place in Exodus as it does, for example, in The Battle of Maldon, or the Finnesburh Fragment.

If this part of the poem is to be taken as part of the exodus journey, in the sense that Lucas defines as "an abstract journey, one that is outside historical tine",[30] we are forced to leave out the events in The Book of Revelations which coalesce in the poem with those in the Old Testament. Ll. 310-346 seem to contain, on a single narrative level, two biblical events. "The strangeness of the medieval view of

reality has prevented modern scholars from distinguishing between figure and allegory and led them for the most part to perceive only the latter," says Auerbach re Dante and his contemporaries.[31] In this poem we cannot easily distinguish figure from allegory - and there is no indication that the Exodus-poet did. While the voyage may exist outside (as well as inside) history, to conclude that the battle in these lines takes place on a level not within historical times is to pass over a vital relationship between the Old and New Testaments:

> The two poles of the figure are separate in time, but both, being real events or figures, are within time, within the stream of historical life. Only the understanding of the two persons or events is a spiritual act, but this spiritual act deals with concrete events, whether past, present, or future, and not with concepts or abstractions; these are quite secondary, since promise and event are real historical events, which have either happened in the Incarnation of the Word, or will happen in the second coming.[32]

Lucas notes that Judah's precedence over Reuben, the first-born, stems from Gen. 49:8-12, rather than Exodus; but this precedence is recorded in Rev. 7:4-8 when the tribes are sealed. There, the Lion of Judah is the Lamb of God:

> The Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has conquered, so that he can open the scroll and its seals...and...I saw a Lamb standing, as though it had been slain...and he went and took the scroll... Rev. 5:5-7

The redeemed one hundred and forty-four thousand of the tribes "sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb," while standing beside "what appeared to be a sea of glass mingled with fire" (Rev. 15:2-3). The war in heaven fought in the last days is perhaps understood by the poet as being on a continuum of significance with the echoed events

and forces at work in Exodus. Since the pre-eminence of Judah is not mentioned in the biblical Exodus, its occurrence here, along with the Lion as a segne (319), and the general atmosphere of war on a divine-demonic scale may, again, be a result of that fusion of Old and New Testament events in their significance which is a feature of Anglo-Saxon Christianity.

In ll. 323-330, ambiguity of identity is again evident.

> Be þam herewisan hynðo ne woldon
> be him lifigendum lange þolian,
> þonne hie to guðe garwudu raerdon,
> ðeoda aenigre. Þraca waes on ore,
> heard handplega, haegsteald modige,
> weapna waelslihtes, wigend unforhte,
> bilswaðu blodige, beadumaegnes raes,
> grimhelma gegrind, þaer Iudas for.

After a long reference to Judah, herewisan causes a momentary uncertainty as to referent. Also, be him lifigendum, while appropriate to the comitatus-ethic in the context of retainers going into battle with their lord,[33] is also applicable to the chosen people following their leader on the exodus and the Christian following Christ. The 'lord' has been an amalgam of God and Moses, now with an emphasis on Judah. As noted above, lifigendra þeoden (277) comes directly after the statement that it is the God of Abraham who will repay the Egyptians for their evil deeds (261-265), who protects the army with His/Moses' hand (273-275); there, too, 'living' as an adjective is applicable to both Moses and God.

The eschatological implications of the exodus now begin to colour the narrative, leading up to the scene of destruction of God's enemies and salvation of the chosen. After the references to Moses and the different leaders of the tribes,

all leaders, past and present, are gathered together within the immediate action. The significance of their leadership is expressed through the repeating pattern of its relationship with God and fulfilment of divine purpose.

> Þa þaer folcmaegen for aefter oðrum
> isernhergum (an wisode
> maegenþrymmum maest, þy he maere wearð)
> on forðwegas, folc aefter wolcne,
> cynn aefter cynne. Cuðe aeghwylc
> maegburga riht, swa him Moises bead
> eorla aeðelo. Him waes an faeder...
> 347-353

The an who directs (348), thereby becoming great, could again refer to either Moses or God (see Ex. 14:17-18; the Song of Moses; and below, on l. 542). The an faeder of l. 353 seems momentarily to refer to God,[34] but the subject turns out to be Abraham. He is not mentioned by name, but referred to in terms of the founding and justification of the race, and the covenant involving the Promises Land. Verbal repetition and linkage of ideas confirms the unity of the material in the poet's mind. Abraham's progeny, (cneowsibbe, maegburge maest, frumcyn) are now crossing the Red Sea, (cynn aefter cynne, halge þeode, Israela cyn,/ onriht Godes) on their way to that land - they are, in a sense, seen as arriving in it. There is an emphasis on the rights and justification of the people, associated by the repetition of -riht in connection with their special relationship to God: maegburga riht (which may imply more than Lucas, edition, 352, note, "the correct position for each tribe"; possibly 'the right of each tribe to be there', as in Revelations, is meant), landriht, onriht Godes. The repetition of maeg- in different compounds contributes to the

growing awareness of the enduring pattern of power, kinship and justification (346, 347, 349, 352, 355, 360).

This movement in time, with the eternal pattern of covenant and generation emerging and becoming clear, is now extended further into the past. Abraham, recognizable by his singular fatherhood of the Israelites, gives way to Noah and his story. Then, ninth from Noah is faeder Abrahames (379), and the pattern focusses back into the story of Abraham and Isaac. Again, verbal parallels link story and inseparable Christian significance with the exodus.

As maegburga riht (352) was tied to maegburge maest gefrunon (360), so maðmhorda maest, mine gefraege (368) is tied to that by a combination of sound and sense impossible to translate. Epithets for Abraham and Noah are similar to those for Moses: leof leodfruma (354), þrymfaest þeoden (363), as compared to leoda aldor (12), lifigendra þeoden (277), etc. Cynn aefter cynne (351), and Israela cyn (358) crossing the Red Sea, and Abraham's cneowsibbe (356), frumcyn (361), are linked with their common origin: eallum eorðcynne ece lafe (370) and frumcneow (371). The importance of the idea of an 'eternal people' to the Anglo-Saxons (at least as indicated by the poetry) is discussed in chapter I, Beowulf, but in this poem the inherited cultural importance of continuous survival as a recognizable people is an element within the narrative context of the Old Testament, and the audience's awareness of the New. In ll. 305-306, the Israelites were described as being ready to cross the sea anes modes,/ faestum faeðmum freoðowaere heold. Noah haefde him on hreðre halige treowa (366) when he made his

voyage; Abraham and Isaac found the covenant where they journeyed on Sion, wuldor gesawon - / halige heah treowe (387-388).[35] Hálige treo (e.g. Elene 840) is an epithet for the Cross, and the associations of freoðowaere, treowa and treowe with halige may have been a play on words intended to suggest the Cross, with the poet's eye for the 'unity of things'; the idea of bearing the covenant of faith/Cross in the breast is found in The Dream of the Rood 117-118, and may have been a common concept.

Because of his halige treowe, Noah gelaedde ofer lagustreamas (367) the 'eternal' ancestors of Israel; a snottor saeleoda (374). Abraham, who lived on wraece (383), gelaedde leofost feora/ Haliges haesum (384-385), magan gelaedde (397). The Israelites, like Noah and Abraham together, are both sailors (saemen, 105; flotan, 133, 223, 331; saewicingas, 333) and exiles (wraecmon, 137; eðelleasum, 139 and see below on l. 534), led by Moses: from se þe laedde/...maegburh heora (54-55), fyrde gelaedde (62). The pillar of cloud, also, laedde leodwerod (77) (and see also 544, 555, 568, below).

The pattern of covenant and generation becomes clearer, with wider dimensions, in the story of Abraham and Isaac, as more detail here helps to define further the relationship of God to mankind, through a leader divinely chosen. The thematic correlation with the other leaders in the text, and in the Christian awareness of poet and audience is expressed in terms of a special relationship to the creation as a God-given kingdom.[36] Again, verbal and thematic parallels knit this story and its leader to the others in the narrative.

Noah preserved ece lafe (370) of all races, a 'remnant' which grows beyond all reckoning of man:

> frumcneow gehwaes, faeder ond moder
> tuddorteondra, geteled rime,
> missenlicra þonne men cunnon, 371-373

Similar language describes God's promise of descendants and inheritance to Abraham, after the offering of his own yrfelafe (403):

> ...þines cynnes ond cneowmaga,
> randwiggendra, rim ne cunnon
> yldo ofer eorðan ealle craefte
> to gesecgenne soðum wordum,
> nymðe hwylc þaes snottor in sefan weorðe
> þaet he ana maege ealle geriman
> stanas on eorðan, steorran on heofonum,
> saebeorga sand, sealte yða; 435-442

The strengthening of Moses to lead the exodus has already been expressed in terms like the above: the creation, victory, kingdom, and knowledge beyond that of wise men:

> Ða waes forma sið
> þaet hine weroda God wordum naegde:
> þaer He him gesaegde soðwundra fela,
> hu þas woruld worhte witig Drihten,
> eorðan ymbhwyrft ond uprodor,
> gesette sigerice, ond His sylfes naman,
> ðone yldo bearn aer ne cuðon,
> frod faedera cyn, þeah hie fela wiston.
> 22-29

The Creation is described as a 'victory-kingdom' (taking sigerice substantively), and the revelation of His sylfes naman prepares Moses to take God's people to the Promised Land, while in the Abraham and Isaac story figure and figured, Isaac and Christ, merge in the terminology:

> his swaesne sunu to sigetibre,
> angan ofer eorðan yrfelafe,
> feores frofre, ða he swa forð gebad,
> leodum to lafe, langsumne hiht. 402-405[37]

Mannes sunu (420) could refer to Abraham, accepting the pledge of God, or Christ, accepting the pledge of man (see Christ 126, where the dual nature of Christ is expressed mihtig meotudes bearn ond se monnes sunu); or both, understanding them simultaneously within the idea of a covenant between God and man. This seems to be supported by the following lines, in which God's wuldres word (suggesting Christ), described as uncontainable by earth, sea and heavens, precedes the promise þurh His sylfes lif (434) of life and homeland, a kingdom. The idea of kingdom and Kingdom is developed later in the poem, but here it is implied that the audience understands that in one (sigerice, 27; land Cananea, 445) another may be understood.

As we have seen, certain ambiguities of identity, whether only momentary and due to syntax (e.g. 353ff.; 415ff.; and edition, 446, note), or unresolved (as in l. 446) involve fusion of a particular lord or guide with the ultimate leader of the exodus and all spiritual journeys, within the carrying out of God's will. Beorht faeder (415) could be Abraham or God, if translated with the sense, "But the noble Father had no will to bereave him of his child in holy sacrifice".[38] Freobearn faeder (446), too, "could refer either to Abraham or God... The Lord considered the nation of Israel as his first-born son" (edition, 446, note).

The seriousness of Abraham's willingness to sacrifice his only son is thus simultaneously stressed and counter-balanced by the poet's and audience's awareness of the seriousness of God's willingness to sacrifice His own son, His own life as mannes sunu. Abraham's will to carry out God's command (wolde

bone lastweard lige gesyllan, 400; wolde se eorl slean eaferan sinne, 412), is set against its prevention by God's will (ne wolde him beorht faeder bearn aetniman/ halig tiber, ac mid handa befeng, 415-416) and oath through His sylfes lif. Noah's keeping of the treowa preserved life; but Abraham's is turned into the everlasting freode (423) of God.[39]

The Abraham and Isaac section of the poem describes a relationship of God to man and the creation: through faith and obedience to God's will, the poet expresses the belief that the people are exalted, given an everlasting continuity of life (awa to aldre, 425; also The Seafarer 79; Order of the World 32). The language of the praise-song and creation-hymn brings to mind the Promised Land, and end of the exodus in a divinely-established place for man. In this context, leadership has acquired a wider significance, both within the narrative structure of the poem and within the Christian poet's and audience's awareness, working on the Old Testament material: the theme of God leading and preserving mankind eternally through a covenant made by certain men, a certain monnes sunu, on behalf of others. God and the chosen ones can be seen as father and child, as well as lord and retainer. The 'nation' of the faithful is the creation, with which the language of leadership is concerned above.

Although because of the lacuna (fitt XLVII), there is none of the interlace of verbal parallel which has previously tied episode to episode, some structural links to the poem so far can still be found in the description of the overwhelming of the Egyptians by the sea. God and God 'in' the creation

have so far been presented as responsible for guiding and protecting the journeying Israelites: the cloud, the pillars, the sea raised in a shielding wall, a randgebeorh (296). Now the poet focusses on the sea again; it becomes God's weapon in the battle against His own enemies.

Lucas notes that it is implied that the sea is animate (edition, 458-460, note); it is not, however, in any sense animate of itself. A comparable Anglo-Saxon view of natural phenomena is presented in Riddles 1-3, in which storm-forces are described in their violence. The wind is God's retainer or servant:

> Sundhelme ne maeg
> losian aer mec latte se þe min latteow bið
> on siþa gehwam, 2: 10-12
> Hwilum mec min frea faeste genearweð.
> 3: 1

In Exodus, it is the Israelites who follow lifes latþeow (104), in which God is present in heahþegnunga Haliges Gastes. In Elene 520, 898 and The Gloria 1:9, lifes latteow refers to Christ and God.

Now the ambiguity of identity concerning God, the cloud, and Moses includes the sea:

> Brim berstende blodegesan hweop
> saemanna sið, oðþaet soð Metod
> þurh Moyses hand mod gerymde,
> wide waeðde, waelfaeðmum sweop,
> flod famgode (faege crungon),
> lagu land gefeol- lyft waes onhrered.
> 478-483

Lucas remarks "that, although the subject of sweop is Metod, the action of the verb is one very appropriate for flod, and thus the Metod and the flod, the agent of destruction He wills,

become difficult to distinguish" (edition, 480, note). A similar identification is present in

> Wicon weallfaesten, waegas burston,
> multon meretorras, þa se Mihtiga sloh
> mid halige hand, heofonrices Weard,
> waldend werbeamas, wlance ðeode. 484-487

While it is se Mihtiga who strikes through Moses' hand (480), the 'holy hand' above seems to refer to the entire manifestation of God's will in these and the above lines. In ll. 488-490, the helpendra það/ merestreamas mod are acting upon the Egyptians, but He is the subject of gesceod, and "though it could just conceivably refer to það...almost certainly refers to God," (edition, 489, note).

> garsecg wedde,
> up teah, on sleap (egesan stodon,
> weollon waelbenna), witrod gefeol
> heah of heofonum handweorc Godes,
> famigbosma; 490-494

Garsecg is the subject of wedde, handweorc Godes of gefeol, equating the sea itself and its own action with the action of God's hand or its handiwork, the walls of water. Also, "if famigbosma nom. sg. m. is not for famigbosme, the use of the masc. form of the adj. with a neut. noun is a further indication of the tendency towards identifying God with the sea, the agent of destruction with the means of it." (edition, 494a, note).

The particular presentation of the destruction of the Egyptians by the sea has been remarked upon for its correspondences with "traditional depictions of Doomsday"[40] but even without similar elements in the details of description, the final destruction of those who do not follow God, but Godes

andsaca (503) would have such connotations. Throughout the poem, the Israelites have been contrasted with the Egyptians as being essentially different because they do follow God.

One means of contrast was a description of the Egyptians as land-folk, while the Israelites were seamen and exiles. Now the Egyptians are homeless, while the Israelites have, in a sense, arrived:

> Waeron Egypte eft oncyrde,
> flugon forhtigende, faer ongeton,
> woldon herebleaðe hamas findan -
> gylp wearð gnornra. Him ongen genap
> atol yða gewealc, ne ðaer aenig becwom
> herges to hame, 452-457

As opposed to the Israelites as saemén (105), flotan (133) etc., the Egyptians prove to be very unseaworthy seamen (478-479). Within the description of the Egyptians as being cut off from their home is another contrast, picking up the idea of Israel as laf, as part of God's plan of salvation for the faithful: Noah's ece laf (370) and Abraham's yrfelafe (403) and to lafe (405) (see also below, ll. 585, 586; and Ps. 77.70 and Israhela yrfelafe:

> Egyptum wearð
> þaes daegweorces deop lean gesceod,
> forðam þaes heriges ham eft ne com
> ealles ungrundes aenig to lafe, 506-509

The Israelites have not used their shields in battle (113, 125, 159, 228, 251, 253, 301, 332), but have lifted them in their advance; four times this gesture is associated with light or brightness. All protection has been provided by God, the cloud and the sea. The Egyptian shields are useless in this battle, ironically gleaming:

Modige swulton,
cyningas on corðre. Cyrm swiðrode
waeges aet ende; wigbord scinon. 465-467

The Israelites wéar armour they never need, while the Egyptians are sealed into theirs as they are destroyed:

Maegen waes on cwealme
faeste gefeterod, forðganges nep,
searwum asaeled. 469-471

It may be a fortuitous poetic connection, the references being so far apart, that the Israelites' siðboda (250), the presence of God in the cloud, is lifesaving, while the nydboda (475), the power of God in the sea, brings death to the enemy. A similar contrast, also reaching far back in the poem for a verbal echo, would be

Flodweard gesloh,
unhleowan waeg alde mece,
þaet þy deaðdrepe drihte swaefon,
synfullra sweot. 494-497

God as warrior strikes with a part of the natural creation, as unhleowan to the enemy as it was protective of the Israelites. Finally, after leading up to the strange battle for so long, and after the final defeat of the Egyptians, the poet makes explicit the level on which the battle was fought, and the reason for its outcome: Hie wið God wunnon (515; see also Genesis 292-302).

In the last section of the poem, Moses' speech is introduced as ece raedas (516), halige spraece (518); however the poet prefaces it with mention of the revelation of truth through law on þam siðfate (522) by the Lord, then "the Pauline distinction between the Letter and the Spirit (2. Cor. 3:6), a distinction which became a patristic and medieval commonplace,"

(edition, 523-526, note). In Beowulf 1760, ece raedas does not seem to have a specific religious meaning, but something like 'a course of action, after deliberation, with everlasting, beneficial results.' In Exodus 516 the term is used in the context of divine law and the Christian meaning indicated by the poet's stress on the value of a spiritual understanding of the law, and scripture. The poet has not been pointing out or elucidating "the correspondence between two sets of information," (edition, 523, note) so much as taking them completely for granted in his poem.

> Gif onlucan wile lifes wealhstod,
> beorht in breostum, banhuses weard,
> ginfaesten god Gastes caegon,
> run bið gerecenod, raed forð gaeð;
> hafað wislicu word on faeðme,
> wile meagollice modum taecan,
> þaet we gesne ne syn Godes þeodscipes,
> Metodes miltsa. 523-530

The poem has been more 'about' Godes þeodscipes than the mediation or translation between Letter and Spirit provided by the "mediator" (wealhstod) which Lucas translates over-specifically and anachronistically as "intellect" (edition, 523, note). Þeodscipe has many shades of meaning: "a people; connexion, association, fellowship; teaching, instruction; testimony; a collection of regulations, law, religion; discipline; learning, knowledge, understanding" (Bosworth-Toller). Like the word faestnung in The Wanderer (115), Godes þeodscipes is something which has been expressed rather than explained, via many images, motifs and relationships in the narrative. In Exodus, the poet puts his subject into words only after he has expressed what it means. God's

fellowship has been portrayed as a relationship between divine guidance and authority and human reception of it in the form of faith and action. The poet now emphasizes the importance of the spirit/Spirit (wealhstod/Gastes) in this for his audience in the present life. Þeodscipe as teaching and understanding is reflected, the poet says, through the boceras (531), Evangelists or Fathers, who have spoken further, ma perhaps meaning 'further than the (Old) Law', i.e. of salvation and eternal life, lengran lyftwynna (532). The fellowship of God has been much concerned with new revelation of truth; Moses received it (22-29), Noah and Abraham; the poet reminds his audience that they, too, have been given access to divine truth through holy writings.

The poet then expresses a contemporary view of following God as Christ:[41]

> Þis is laene dream
> wommum awyrged, wreccum alyfed,
> earma anbid. Eðellease
> þysne gystsele gihðum healdeð,
> murnað on mode, manhus witon
> faest under foldan, þaer bið fyr ond wyrm,
> open ece scraef yfela gehwylces,
> swa nu regnþeofas rice daelað,
> yldo oðde aerdeað. Eftwyrd cymeð,
> maegenþrymma maest, ofer middangeard,
> daeg daedum fah. Drihten sylfa
> on þam meðelstede manegum demeð,
> þonne He soðfaestra sawla laedeð,
> eadige gastas, on uprodor,
> þaer bið leoht ond lif, eac þon lissa blaed.
> Dugoð on dreame Drihten herigað,
> weroda Wuldorcyning, to widan feore.
> 532-548

The Israelites, too, were exiles, though the poet shows that they were not lacking the fellowship of God because they followed their Lord.

The above lines are the nearest to an overt "correspondence between two sets of information, in this context the correspondence between literal and allegorical and the typological connections between historically separate events or personages" (edition, 523, note), i.e. rather than a diction-suggested equivalence of pillar of fire and Paschal candle, or pillar of cloud and Cross. The above lines are in what is usually called the homiletic mode, found in exhortative poems or sections of poems. Earthly life is spoken of in terms of its mutability, or looked at through the eyes of an exile seeking God; here, earthly life is exile and sorrow, awareness of hell; the earthly rice is held by the evil, old age or untimely death, while heaven and its lengran lyftwynna (532) are light, life and the dugoð together with their Drihten forever. However, the section being placed in the Exodus story with its inevitable Christian meaning for the audience would seem to be purposeful considering the poem's theme of God's leadership out of exile with divine judgement visited on the evil. Yet, the correspondence is undeveloped allegorically. In these few lines out of 590, the literal and allegorical, typological and historical, are implied or assumed through thematic parallel, or thematic equivalence, and are nothing like the patristic allegories which worked on a large and continuous scale, often point-by-point.[42]

Moses' speech, introduced in 516ff., begins at 554, and ties together the principles of the people's and God's relationship to one another: the greatness of the multitude is supported by the strength of its support by se ðas fare laedeð;

the granting of a prosperous homeland, a realm (557); the fulfilment of their oaths, lord and followers, to each other:

> wile nu gelaestan þaet He lange gehet
> mid aðsware, engla Drihten,
> in fyrndagum faederyncynne,
> gif ge gehealdað halige lare,
> þaet ge feonda gehwone forð oferganga ,
> gesittað sigerice be saem tweonum,
> beorselas beorna: bið eower blaed micel.
> 558-564

By the placing of ll. 523-548 before Moses' speech, the poet has prepared his audience to hear the above as also addressed to themselves: they too must keep their covenant of faith, to overcome the enemy of God and inherit the victory-kingdom of heaven.

The poem's introduction, the parallel mention in ll. 2-6 of

> Moyses domas,
> wraeclico wordriht, wera cneorissum

and

> in uprodor eadigra gehwam
> aefter bealusiðe bote lifes,
> lifigendra gehwam lansumne raed

is 'fulfilled' by the poet's description after the bealusið by the Israelites of the souls' journey to heaven after their life lived on earth in exile, in the rice held by many evils: eadige gastas, on uprodor,/þaer bið leoht ond lif (545-546). Sigerice has occurred twice, firstly describing God's creation (27), secondly the Promised Land (563). Sigor- is an often-used element in Old English Christian poetry in reference to God and Christ (see also Exodus 16, sigora Waldend), and is a part of the human relation to God which the poet sees as being shared in through salvation.

The poet turns again to the Israelites on the shore. There is a general sense of fulfilment, completion and clarity.

haefde wuldres beam werud gelaeded,
halige heapas, on hild Godes. 568-569

For the audience, hild Godes continues in their own lives till Doomsday. It seems unlikely, in view of the frequency of beam and -beam in the terminology of the Cross, that some connection is not intended by the poet. This connection would be a fusion in the significant context of God-leading-mankind-in-His-battle, rather than a logical relationship such as 'the pillar of cloud represents the Cross'.

The sea, recently the centre of attention, subsides into the background. The Israelites, still clad in battle gear (perhaps reminding the audience of the continuity of hild Godes), look back. Instead of the vividness of holm heolfre spaw (450) or flod blod gewod (463),

Gesawon hie þaer weallas standan,
ealle him brimu blodige þuhton, þurh þa heora
beadusearo waegon,
572-573

'...the sea seemed all bloody to them...' Attention is abruptly turned to the subject of praise for God, whose presence is now felt in the victory of the Israelites itself, as they sing in joy and awe:

Hreðdon hildespelle, siððan hie þam herge wiðforon;
hofon hereþreatas hlude stefne -
for þam daedweorce Drihten heredon -
weras wuldres sang. Wif on oðrum,
folcsweota maest, fyrdleoð golan
aclum stefnum, eallwundra fela. 574-579

The focus is on the plunder of the dead enemies, as an expression of the Israelites' understanding that they are finally released

from bondage; again the relative seaworthiness of the two sides is noted in saelafe and yðlafe:

> bliðe waeron, bote gesawon,
> heddon herereafas - haeft waes onsaeled.
> Ongunnon saelafe segnum daelan
> on yðlafe ealde maðmas,
> reaf ond randas; heo on riht sceodon
> gold ond godweb, Iosepes gestreon,
> wera wuldorgesteald. Werigend lagon
> on deaðstede, drihtfolca maest. 584-590

The poet has turned from the subject of God's leadership in motion and purpose to the result for the faithful followers. His earlier 'homiletic' lines with their description of light, life and heavenly bliss are completed with a concrete picture of victory. The bote lifes of l. 5 is expressed in both the homiletic section and here as victory and release from the enemy's power.

The primary factors which determine the poem's typological/allegorical nature seem to be the redirection of 'straight' poetic themes and language, and the ambiguity of identity which unites the digressions and homiletic section within the poet's contemporary Christianity through the concept of 'following God'. The redirection is brought about by incongruities in the narrative, inner references back and forth, balances, parallels and antithetical relationships within the entire text, some of whose elements are not in the exodus-story, or the Bible.

Greenfield discusses the language of exile in terms of, among other things, movement away from a beloved or a homeland.[43] This would be 'straight' use of traditional theme-language. The Exodus-poet, like the Seafarer-poet, reinterprets the idea:

movement is towards the homeland, and towards God. The 'exile-landscape of the spirit' was perhaps a newer traditional poetic setting for exiles who develop their faith through certain kinds of deprivation and painful experience.

The traditional imagistic weight of battle, too, has been shifted towards the abstract: the understanding of faith as hild Godes. The sea-fight with the Egyptians is of a similar nature to the drowning of the Mermedonians in Andreas, in which an act of God, the flood, is baptismal, the dead enemies being resurrected as Christians; in Exodus, the baptismal rite, the Harrowing of Hell, and Doomsday are suggested by the destruction. There are no biblical war-leaders mentioned, David only in brief reference to the building of the temple, an omission which supports the idea that battle has more abstract connotations (e.g. Moses is not a slayer, though portrayed as a warrior-chieftain) than the depiction and appreciation of military might sheerly for its own sake.

I have tried not to bring in too much material with which I presume the audience was quite familiar, in an attempt to avoid a dialectic, cross-referencing approach which would be unauthentic and which can diffuse a very coherent poem into a large number of biblical allusions and patristic approaches to the story. The Exodus-poet was no doubt well-acquainted with both - but his approach is different from that of the Fathers. The material has spiritual coherence within the constant theme of God's protection, guidance and authority, which remains indefinable in itself.

Footnotes to Chapter Five

1. Lucas, Exodus, pp. 43-44. References to Lucas' edition will be incorporated into the text by page number or, in the case of notes, line number.

2. Brodeur, "A Study of Diction and Style in Three Anglo-Saxon Narrative Poems", p. 111.

3. Stanley, "Old English Poetic Diction and the Interpretation of The Wanderer, The Seafarer and The Penitent's Prayer", p. 418.

4. Irving, Exodus, p. 23.

5. Huppé, Doctrine and Poetry, p. 223.

6. Lucas, "Old English Poetry: The Cross in Exodus", p. 201.

7. Cross and Tucker, "Allegorical Tradition in the Old English Exodus", p. 123.

8. Lucas, "Old English Poetry: The Cross in Exodus", pp. 201-2.

9. Aelfric's Mid-lent Sermon, Homilies of the Anglo-Saxon Church, ed. Thorpe, p. 186.

10. See, e.g. Bright, McLoughlin and Earl.

11. Huppé criticizes Bright's "failure to use scriptural commentary directly; for such commentary provides the conceptual source of the poem. The striking resemblances that Bright noted between liturgy and poem testify not to one as source of the other, but to a common source." op. cit., p. 218. This deduction, based on the assumption that the poem is based on one specific source rather than another, also appears to contain the assumption that the liturgy has its source in specific patristic commentary alone, an unfounded assumption; see Dix, The Shape of the Liturgy, p. 39, note 2; p. 325; and especially pp. 338-39.

12. Burlin, The Old English Advent, p. 18.

13. Lucas, edition, p. 68; Lucas' terminology generally expresses this difficulty in reconciling the fact that the imagery is non-specific with the assumption of specific allusions by the poet, both biblical and patristic.

14. Auerbach, "Figura", p. 53.

15. See, e.g. Origène: Homélies sur L'Exode, ed. H. de Lubac, p. 32.

16. Donahue, "Beowulf and Christian Tradition: a Celtic Stance", pp. 65-66.

17. Daniélou, Primitive Christian Symbols, p. 60.

18. Lucas, "Old English Poetry: The Cross in Exodus", p. 193.

19. Honig, Dark Conceit, p. 114.

20. ibid., p. 137.

21. This phrase occurs often in an eschatological context, emphasizing the magnitude of the events. A Christian Anglo-Saxon audience would have learned about the destruction of the first-born of Egypt in this context. See below, footnote 40, and e.g. Soul and Body 1, 147; Christ 1054.

22. Bartlett, The Larger Rhetorical Patterns in Anglo-Saxon Poetry, pp. 9-29.

23. Roberts, Review of Exodus, p. 58.

24. For other instances of the idea of God as scyld, as in folc gescylde (Exodus 72), see e.g. Christ 761, 775; Guthlac 242, 457; Andreas 434. The idea appears to have become part of the traditional poetic language.

25. The MS has eade. Lucas, in his note to 186, claims that "emendation is necessary as there is evidently no such adj. as ead," in spite of the entry in Bosworth-Toller of ead as an adjective. If left unemended, eade could be an ironic comment on a particularly valued privilege of the Egyptian nobles as commanders of what is now a doomed force.

26. Lucas documents probable 'sources': The Exultet of the Paschal vigil, and the Cross, but does not mention the possibly influential John 1:1-5 and its view of God, the Word, time, the Old and New Testament covenants.

27. See above, footnote 25.

28. See also the similar-sounding lifgende God: Andreas 459; Christ 273, 755; Azarias 78; Resignation 19. L. 6 of the introduction of Exodus gave us lifgendra gehwam longsumne raed. God is 'Prince of the living' as He is not of the Egyptians, who are 'dead' (drihtneum, 163; deade feðan, 256). Lifigendum is used again, cryptically, in 324 (see below).

29. There is no need to refer to the Fathers, here, as the tradition is scriptural; see e.g. Matt. 2:15, 18, 20; 26:20, 27-28; 1 Cor. 10:1-2.

30. Lucas, "Old English Poetry: The Cross in Exodus", p. 195.

31. Auerbach, op. cit., note 14, p. 74.

32. ibid., p. 53.

33. Bright, "On the Old English Poem Exodus", p. 17. Bright mentions the comitatus-ethic in regard to segne.

34. For an Anglo-Saxon poetic affirmation of the oneness of God, see Maxims 2: 8-11:

> An is geleafa, an lifgende,
> an is fulwiht, an faeder ece,
> an is folces fruma, se þas foldan gesceop,
> duguð ond dreamas.

35. Noah and Abraham are also linked by the repetition of niwe in two instances which might, together, suggest baptism in this context:

> Niwe flodas Noe oferlað (362)
> Þaet is se Abraham se him engla God
> naman niwan asceop (380-81).

36. Bessinger, "Homage to Caedmon and Others: A Beowulfian Praise Song", pp. 99-106.

37. Hiht and hyht occur, more ofteh than not in the poetry, in the sense or context of heavenly hope, hope for God, hope renewed through Christ, etc.

38. W. Savage Johnson, "Translation of the Old English Exodus", pp. 44-47.

39. For freode in a specifically Christian, and possibly liturgical sense, see The Creed:

> and ða his rice began,
> þone uplican eðel secan,
> cwaeð þaet he nolde naenne forlaetan
> þe him forð ofer þaet fyllian wolde
> and mid faestum sefan freode gelaestan.
> 36-41

40. Trask, "Doomsday Imagery in the Old English Exodus", pp. 295-97. Several similarities to Judgement Day are noted: "The sea turns to blood...the tumult reaches the heavens... Structures (the metaphor of shield-walls or sea-walls) collapse... Wounds are manifest (implying the metaphorical wounds of the soul evident at Judgement)" and to Hell: "The multitude is bound and hemmed in (as in the fettering and constriction of Hell) by this destruction and by the trappings of their own malice (i.e. by their own evilness)... The chosen ones...though likewise threatened...are saved through the intercession (paralleling the preservation of the righteous through Christ) despite the rigors of Doomsday..."

41. In the light of *maegenþrymma maest* in 541, also in *Christ* 1008 and *The Descent into Hell* 22 in connection with the Resurrection and Judgement, the term previously occurring in *Exodus* 349 may have had such appropriate connotations in the migration of the faithful to the Promised Land, their Lord leading, and the Judgement about to be visited on the Egyptians at this point in the poem.

42. E.g. Clement's letter to James at the beginning of the *Homilies*: a detailed, lengthy allegory of the Ship of the Church, with God as the ship's owner, Christ as pilot, bishop as lookout, deacons as leading oarsmen; or the description in Hippolytus' *Treatise on the Antichrist*, down to the ship's rigging and rudder (see Daniélou, *op. cit.*, note 17, pp. 58-60).

43. Greenfield, "The Formulaic Expression of the Theme of Exile in Anglo-Saxon Poetry", pp. 203ff.

Chapter Six: The Phoenix

Like the Exodus story, that of the phoenix carries with it a body of traditional interpretation concerning rebirth from both very ancient and Christian sources. In the Old English Phoenix there is no question as to whether the bird is symbolic, but only in what way the symbolism is dealt with by the poet. However, critical approaches to this subject range from the straightforward but undeveloped statement by E.G. Stanley that the poem culminates in an extended simile explaining the allegory[1] to J.E. Cross's detailed treatment of the poem as a homily in which source material and tradition "were elaborated to provide distinguishable tropological, anagogical and typological explanations, so as to provide a fourfold interpretation of a real and scriptural bird."[2]

While a detailed investigation of the poem's symbolism is required, several exegetical approaches[3] arrive at different conclusions as to the ordering of and by what elements the three spiritual levels are expressed. It is possible to read the poem in this structured manner, but the differences of opinion indicate that it was not written to conform to such a particular model. Pamela Gradon, although allowing that "a knowledge of biblical typology penetrated vernacular writing" finds it "highly debatable how far the famous four senses are ever to be found in vernacular writings [italics mine]. The literary significance of the typological method lies rather in its derivative, the figura",[4] and we are referred back to Auerbach.[5]

As pointed out in the last chapter, a figural approach to Exodus unified disparate material, and patterned the narrative according to significance. The structure which emerges from a figural approach can provide a particular pattern of extended meanings without the clear differentiations and preconceived model necessary to a four-fold interpretation by a poet.

> Typology, then, extended far beyond the limits suggested by the New Testament. It came to involve almost any person or place, animal or object, in the Old Testament. It may be said also to incorporate much of the paraphernalia of what is commonly called allegory. Indeed, in many minds, medieval and modern, it is indistinguishable from allegory, or, at least, a distinction is drawn between 'historical' and 'symbolic' typology. Such differences, however, were seldom sharply felt after the early patristic period.[6]

The phoenix being, as Cross points out, both real and scriptural, the poet has no need to distinguish between historical and typological interpretations. From the earliest times, the life-cycle of what was believed to be an existing bird 'meant' regeneration or resurrection,[7] and this appears to be true in Anglo-Saxon times; the panther, the whale and the 'partridge' as well as the phoenix were all both non-fictional exemplum and allegorical creature.[8] So, while the poem is undoubtedly symbolic, we have the same difficulty with modern critical distinctions as in the other poems previously considered. However, as in these other poems, a structural framework emerges from The Phoenix which helps to indicate what distinctions might be made, by looking at which elements of the material were differentiated enough from their significance to require overt relation of one to another by the poet. Rollinson,

reviewing critical work on the influence of Christian doctrine and exegesis on Old English poetry, notes that poets may indicate allegorical implications "by establishing a special framework of Christian analogies which will determine and limit the potential Christian significance of other images alluded to but not interpreted."[9] Such a framework is evident in The Phoenix in two ways: analogies between the bird and elements of Christian theology (e.g. that concerning the Fall) are implicitly and overtly made, and all analogies are figures of the 'great analogy' summed up in 11. 646-49:

> Swa fenix beacnaþ,
> geong in geardum, godbearnes meaht,
> þonne he of ascan eft onwaecneþ
> in lifes lif, leomum geþungen.[10]

The possible refinements of Christian meaning involved in such a statement are practically limitless; but the poet has previously provided a substantial body of figurae in relation to the phoenix which have dealt with particular aspects of the above. We take Rollinson's notion of 'limitation' in, perhaps, a looser sense: certain areas of significance are defined, which are starting-points rather than final statements. Verbal and thematic parallels in succession are often turning points for an analogy, giving impetus to a new direction, or a new approach to the subject of godbearnes meaht.

The poem's structure is derived from the congruence of the phoenix-cycle and the resurrection as paradoxes of death-in-life. The descriptions of the phoenix-cycle contain references to the life-cycle of the world, seasonally and historically. The sun is the centre of the bird's devotional song, but also lights the

pyre on which it dies; the tree in which its nest is built is also the location of its death. Both the tree from which the phoenix sings in paradise, and the tree on earth are described in terminology which brings the cross to mind, giving the phoenix-cycle another dimensional overlap with the resurrection. After the initial narrative of the bird's life, aspects of this are repeated in summary or in part, alternating with subject matter which has no relation to it except through the major analogy of the poem. This repetition is appropriate to a subject with so many implications for poet and audience, in that it allows a many-faceted but structured treatment, emphasizes a didactic purpose, and is suited to oral delivery.

Other areas of congruence between the phoenix, Christ and mankind are not paradoxical at all, but naturally harmonious relationships of created to Creator, e.g. the song of the bird to the sun, torht tacen godes (96) and the doxology at the end of the poem. There are also many elements in the poem which do not relate analogically, and this ensures that repetition and analogy do not become rigid, lifeless and thus ineffective in the expression of the mystery of the divine subject. The poet's treatment of analogy and interpretation has been criticized as inadequate:

> The poet has failed to select and arrange his material satisfactorily, for the overlapping interpretations sometimes confuse the reader... though the poet has chosen to present the entire phoenix story, he has used only individual scenes from that story to illustrate the various Christian themes which he wished to exemplify. The allegory is fragmentary and this tends to prevent a proper fusion of the two halves, as they are not satisfactorily balanced against one another... The poet is

> never able to suggest that the phoenix story symbolises all these Christian themes at one and the same time.[11]

However, by the time the poet is introducing biblical material from Genesis, Job, St John's Gospel and 1 Corinthians (see below), he is emphasizing the relationship of the phoenix and certain scriptural analogies to the greater theme, rather than attempting to make the mere story of the phoenix symbolize the resurrection and redemption of man in a complete manner. The phoenix is not the same kind of transcendant symbol as the cross in The Dream of the Rood, which is developed by that poet as a vehicle to eternal life in every way. Blake himself mentions that "the bird is merely a symbol of a divine truth";[12] we could not use 'merely' when referring to the cross. The "natural symbol"[13] of the bird is as such incapable of the same fullness of expression, but this fact is recognized by the poet, who expands and develops aspects of the bird's life-cycle through scriptural material and its implications.

That the poet approaches divine truths from different directions need not confuse the reader; the author's return to his original analogy in the course of expanding its significance serves to harmonize scenes from the phoenix-cycle and those from the history of mankind in relation to God, past, present and future. The terminology which applies initially to the phoenix and its home is, after the narration of its life-story, the language of one finite analogy employed to begin an approach to spiritual understanding, rather than to limit or define it. The topic is 'limited' to resurrection, but its potential significance is opened rather than closed.

However, while the poet was no doubt familiar with allegory as a genre of writing and an approach to scripture, and while in The Phoenix he comes closer to differentiating story and significance than in the other poems considered, he turns to the more condensed and open-ended Old English style when dealing with some of the most important areas of congruence: the life of the faithful, their journey to eternal life, and Christ are in complex relationships to the phoenix and one another. A strict allegorical intention in the poet such as that proposed by Cross would involve a rational, point-to-point ordering throughout. Although the poet's style sometimes suggests this (e.g. ll. 381-92), the correspondences are thought-provoking rather than precise, such as saying that the bird's nature shows very much concerning Christ and the chosen ones, how they might obtain joy and glory through the Father's help in the dangerous time (ll. 387-92). Conscious symbolism of the sort Blake describes, e.g. "The fire of the phoenix symbolizes the fire of judgement in which the souls are tested and the good souls purified, and the rebirth of the phoenix symbolizes the resurrection of man on the fatal day"[14] is not at all rationalized at many points, especially in the part of the poem following l. 380.

For example, in Blake's note to l. 90, he speaks of the bird's dependency on the sun, adding, "The poet has kept this relationship between the phoenix and the sun because of the allegorical interpretation, for Christ is symbolized by the sun and the blessed by the phoenix."[15] This statement, while not untrue, is misleading, in that we must conclude that if this

was the poet's intention, he failed; but the symbolic order Blake outlines is an abstraction from the poem, and leaves much unaccounted for. The sun is not symbolic at all in the sense Blake describes in ll. 17, 120, 305 or 532. In the section on paradise and the phoenix-song, the sun is _godes condelle_ (91), _torht tacen godes_ (96); in that on harvest and the seed, it is _lifes tacen_ (254). Accepting without question MS _þegn_ (288),[16] the reborn bird is a 'servant, officer, minister, soldier' of the sun, which is indeed analogous to the relationship of the faithful to Christ, _þaere soþfaeste sunne_ (587); Blake there notes that "the sun is Christ, whom the blessed (the phoenix) serve. The allegory is carried on in line 589 where Christ is said to 'shine' on the souls."[17] This suggests that 'shine' is metaphorical, i.e. that the poet did not mean that Christ actually _did_ shine, except in some abstract sense. In _Christ_, ll. 694-95, the poet asks, ... _sunne ond mona. Hwaet sindon þa/ gimmas swa scyne buton god sylfa?_ We cannot say that the sun is a symbol of itself; and the sun as itself is never seen as separate from the power, generosity, wisdom or truth of God. The semantics of _sunne_ range freely between what we would define as the phenomenological and the ontological.[18] Any relationship to the sun by any creature, in a poem in which the meaning of the word is never only one or only the other, cannot be to the sun as symbol in one instance and to the sun as purely meteorological in another. There is nowhere a dividing line can be drawn; the poet describes overlapping aspects of 'the sun' for himself and his audience.

The poet's language is such that, as he moves from the phoenix to the resurrection of Christ and man, the two become so strongly identified that the phoenix's nature is complicated. At first, the bird's urge to die is said to be a result of its age (147-58). It is king of all the birds in the world, who are beneath it in rank; the phoenix is se claena (167), 'pure'. However, later on in the poem, the nature of the phoenix and man are expressed in the same physical and moral terms:

Þonne fyr þigeð
laenne lichoman; lif bið on siðe,
faeges feorhhord... 219-21

Þonne braed weorþeð
eal edniwe eft acenned,
synnum asundrad... 240-42

laenan lifes leahtras dwaesceþ,
mirce mandaede, 456-57

laene lichoman, þaer hi longe beoð
oð fyres cyme foldan biþeahte. 489-90

Ðaer þa lichoman, leahtra claene,
gongað glaedmode, 518-19

A question arises as to whether the poet is speaking of the bird in these same terms on the assumption that the audience will perceive the discrepancy - that the bird is not a sinner, but that a metaphor is being employed to construct a parallel with man, and so by artifice enrich the poem - or whether the audience is to understand the bird literally as a created being, and so subject to the divine judgement by fire, and as such, a symbol of Christ and the righteous: as itself, standing for something else.

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created world, having been untouched by the flood and not subject to seasonal change; the bird can die, but not in its home (88-89), and paradise itself will be destroyed by fire at the end of time (39-41; 47-49). Though the phoenix is not of the world of man, it is spoken of in anthropomorphic terms (wise, noble, a great prince). In ll. 230-64, the poet's ambivalent symbolism is illustrated: the bird's re-birth overlaps with the section culminating in the image of the seed. The surface analogy is that the bird is like a seed, in that it is regenerated through its own kind, in death; yet the whole sequence has so many areas of contact with resurrection and redemption that the 'natural' symbols, which occur in great density, are filled out with biblical information, simile and suggestion. After the bird's and nest's purification by fire (226-29), the apple with the worm in it which grows into the resurrected phoenix suggests the redeemed fruit, the redeemed Adam; wyrm is most often employed in Old English poetry (except Beowulf) for the devourer of man in the grave, but in Genesis 899 refers to the serpent through whom man fell. The phoenix must be identified with both Christ and man through this imagery.[19] Swylc he aet frymðe waes (239; also 280) is reminiscent of sicut erat in principio, and establishes a background identification with God the Father. Synnum asundrad (242) is alliteratively linked with sumes onlice/ swa mon to ondleofne and the story of the seed, which, via scriptural imagery, brings in Christian resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:35-50), the spiritual body, and also the idea of dying to the world while living in it, from the same image in John 12:24-26.

in: feor heonan...afyrred/ þurh meotudes meaht manfremmendum (1-6).

The elements of scent and song together have poetic associations with sanctity and victory over death, such as in Guthlac 1314-25, and The Panther, with its riddling identity with Christ.[22] A metaphor along these lines is found in 2 Corinthians 2:14-16.

> But thanks be to God, who in Christ always leads us in triumph, and through us spreads the fragrance of the knowledge of him everywhere. For we are the aroma of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing, to one a fragrance from death to death, to the other a fragrance from life to life.

The scent of the land is mentioned before flowers are; just as the kind of realm Grendel inhabits indicates his nature in body, monstrous, and soul, damned (se þe in þystrum bad, Beowulf 87, and feond on helle, 101), in The Phoenix the earthly paradise blurs into the heavenly, and the phoenix's nature is exalted. In ll. 9-10, there is a syntactic parallel of the created land and the Creator[23] which prepares for the ambiguity of ll. 11-12. The location of the phoenix's home must be close to heaven, because it is not of the world, though it has access to the world; it has close contact with the other world, while sharing a human nature, that of a created being. A proximity is described, rather than an equation. Considered in the light of examples from The Panther and Guthlac (footnote 22), and taking onhliden in its intransitive sense, hleoþra wyn and heofonrices duru (12) are appropriate parallels, rich in associations, which help establish a setting for the resurrection-analogy, and which is balanced by the setting in heaven at the

end of the poem.

In ll. 37-49, this land which is higher in location/ nature than any of our mountains (28-32) is placed in time: it was spared from the Flood through the grace of God, and is therefore a place of virginal purity - eadig, unwemmed - and will stand thus until Judgement Day. Cross remarks that the Latin past tense in the Carmen is changed to that of the present and future in the Old English:

> Relevantly, this seemingly slight change would also raise an awkward difficulty for the Christian interpretation. As we realize both from the general interpretation and the sequence of negative clauses usin in The Phoenix to describe both the Earthly Paradise and the good Christian's heaven (14b-18, 50-61, 611-14a), these two sequences are meant to be equated in the poem. But now, by the change of tense, the Old English poet has posited an end to the Earthly Paradise (and, if interpreted, to the Christian heaven), an idea that Lactantius had avoided.[24]

As stated before, regarding ll. 11-12, 'equation' is not an accurate description of this relationship between the creation and the Creator. An identity between them, however, is the natural presupposition of the idea that the world is the open book of the Word, the idea which makes specific terminology regarding symbolism difficult to apply to medieval literature. The terminology of analogy and identity is less misleading; Cross's explanation for the placing of the earthly paradise in time as the historical aspect of the four-fold exegetical interpretation does not clarify the immediate relationship of the setting to the bird, and both of these to the audience - the sense of identity through the analogies must work for the audience, there being no central experience or persona.

The phoenix appears only when the setting has been well-established, and the bird is described in terms similar to the land; both are subject only to God's time: in approaching what is beyond human comprehension (in the example below, God) in religious language, Ramsay remarks that "attribute words like 'immutable' and 'impassible'...give a kind of technique for meditation; their main merit is evocative."[26]

So far in the poem, the phoenix's home and middangeard have been contrasted; it is only the flight of the phoenix which brings them into contact, and the reason for the bird's departure is given simply in terms of its age, and the completion of a cycle of a thousand years. Its natural supremacy gives it lordship over a flock of retainers on its way to Syria. Blake notes the difference between the Carmen and The Phoenix here,[27] that the Old English poet has the bird fly to an uninhabited wasteland on the earth, before turning to Syria. Possible patristic allusion of this point has been noted:

> 'Syria' in this period is a generic term for the Holy Land...the pattern is a familiar one which accords with both the itinerary of Adam and his descendants and Christ. Adam (and implicitly the entire human race) left the terrestrial paradise to go to the desert of this world; and the progress of the human race involved the movement out of the desert to the promised land, and, because of the consequences of the Passion, from there to Paradise. Similarly, Christ left heaven to come to the 'desert' of the world of ordinary experience, and came out of the desert quite literally to begin his ministry in Israel and Judaea.[28]

Again, however, the analogical appropriateness of the phoenix's actions to Christ and mankind are not in any way pointed out, though the poet's way of describing the remaining stages of the cycle become more and more suggestive of this.

An earthly counterpart to the heanne beam (112) from which the phoenix sang to the sun in paradise now appears, in the form of a tree named after the bird,

> aefre to ealdre, þaet onwended ne bið
> frod fyrngeweorc aerþon endige
> se hit on frymþe gescop. 82-84
>
> on þam willwonge, naefre him deaþ sceþeð
> þenden woruld stondeþ. 88-89

The phoenix is barely mentioned when the poet turns to the sun. The relationship between the two is not indicated as being representative of anything else.

The names for the sun are part of the common poetic stock, and the phoenix's behaviour is not, in context, odd: praise is natural in such a setting by such a creature (even the raven in Beowulf 1801-2 announces dawn, heofones wynne/ bliðheort). The poet portrays the perfect relationship of created being to Creator;[23] the immense number of examples of the sun as a manifestation of God, shining on mankind, and the human response, praise, often in song, in many different kinds of poems, illustrate such an idea. The doxology has an important place in Old English poetry.

The negative construction in which paradise was described is employed again in ll. 131-39, when the song of the phoenix is contrasted with all beautiful and musical sounds available to human ears. Here, as above, the negative language serves its purpose in approaching what is beyond human experience, but here the result is an arrangement of the most beautiful sounds on earth in a symphonic range from the song of a wren to the

Insert on following page after "description":

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sounds of harps, horns, voices and the whistle of swan's feathers in flight. The effect is an aural image of great beauty and variation. In a discussion of negative description, (see insert) 1 which has the same characteristics as paradise and the phoenix: it is deathless, exalted and blessed þenden woruld stondeð (181; and, similar, 39-41, 47-49, 82-84). Alliteration stresses the stability of the bird's new dwelling-place: heanne beam on holtwuda/ wunað ond weardað, wyrtum faestne (171-72). It is described in language reminiscent of the cross, although it is not 'representative':

> Hafað þam treowe forgiefen tirmeahtig cyning,
> meotud moncynnes, mine gefraege,
> þaet se ana is ealra beama
> on eorðwege uplaedendra
> beorhtast geblowen; ne maeg him bitres whit
> scyldum sceððan, ac gescylded a
> wunað ungewyrded, þenden woruld stondeð.
> 175-81

There are similarities to The Dream of the Rood here: the exalting of the tree over all others (Dream 90-91); beama beorhtost (Dream 6) and se ana is ealra beama...beorhtast geblowen (The Phoenix 177-79); on lyft laeden (Dream 5) and uplaedendra (The Phoenix 178). The point of the cross-terminology is to bring certain elements into the poem to begin expansion of some of the analogies the poet wishes to develop. The heanne beam is an important area of contact between the earthly paradise and the world; a tree in both places is fused in Christianity with the tree of victory over death, towering in the heavens on Judgement Day. An identity between the phoenix, Christ and mankind is built up without ever defining the terms of the identity. Now that the

suggestive language has brought the cross to mind, the tree's central function in the phoenix's life-giving death opens certain areas of Christian significance; the fire brings in the human analogy and the idea of the purification of mankind's sins.

The fair weather (182ff.) and the building of the nest of sweet-smelling plants continues the imagery of paradise, and maintains the contact between the higher world and middle-earth; also, the human yearning for God is suggested. In The Seafarer, beautiful spring weather intensifies the man's spiritual longing, inciting him on a sea-journey and Christian death to the world.[29] Here, in a more tranquil picture in keeping with the phoenix's peaceful, devotional life in paradise, a bright stillness is described, in which hlüttor heofones gim halig scineð (183). The bird's special relationship to the sun in paradise is brought to earth, and the phoenix, like the seafarer, is eager for its new life:

> Bið him neod micel
> þaet he þa yldu ofestum mote
> þurh gewittes wylm wendan to life,
> feorg geong onfon. 189-192

When its perfumed nest is built of the wyrta wynsume which God shaped as a blessing for man (192-99) in the tree, the phoenix waits on it sibes fus. The relationship of sun to creation is extended further into what we would call the more metaphysical meaning by the use of the verb 'to shine' in ll. 208-11:

> Þonne swegles gim
> on sumeres tid, sunne hatest,
> ofer sceadu scineð ond gesceapu dreogeð,
> woruld geondwliteð ...

Geondwliteð is the word which slants the meaning in this direction;

the verb is elsewhere employed for the shining of God everywhere at once, which the sun cannot:

> his agen weorc eall geondwliteð,
> endemes þurhsyhð ealla gesceafta.
> Meters of Boethius 30:15-16

The imagery of the next and 'odour of sanctity' is extended later in the poem.

The burning of the phoenix is written in the Old English with a different interest from that in the Carmen, in which more is made of the mechanics of the process: the bird's death itself produces heat, which ignites the body in conjunction with the sun's rays. Here, in keeping with the Anglo-Saxon vision of the sun, it is the sun alone, which woruld geondwliteð, and heats the nest to a flame. Fyres feng (215) is an Old English collocation which may or may not have associations with hell (as in Elene 1287); here, perhaps it occurs in preparation for the description of Judgement Day, just as the imagery of scent and song is repeated in the description of heaven. The range of meanings for heorodreorges (217) has been investigated, and here 'fated to die' is most fitting, in the sense of a divinely-ordered event, in anticipation of the human analogy:

> All of Christ's faithful thanes are heorodreorig in the sense of 'fated to die'; but the message conveyed by the allegory is that they can face death with the same neod micel and gewittes wylm that characterize the phoenix.[30]

Þaenne lichoman, lif bið on siðe (220), picked up in ll. 456, 481, 489 (and possibly 505) has a verbal ring which associates it with those poems or parts of poems concerning the transience of earthly life. There are many examples of the alliterative

linking of laene and lif or lichoma in this elegiac tone. Siδ has a wide range of connotations;[31] this range may have existed prior to Christianity, or been extended by the Christian view of worldly life as a journey or pilgrimage to eternal life. In this poem, as in Exodus and Genesis, the word is thematic in this sense, contributing to the development of the theme of a journey through death to life.

Eft cymeδ (222) is another collocation which in its first instance may be taken only in the sense the immediate context demands, applying to the bird, while in the second (366) has wider implications (see below). The process of cumulative suggestion continues. The burnt nest is claene, 'pure' (although it may be taken in the adverbial sense, 'entirely'). The appearance of the apple and the worm out of the ashes at this point will be developed in ll. 393-423 in the story of the Fall and Redemption.[32] It is possible that the worm and its inevitable poetic associations with the grave (e.g. Soul and Body 1:112, 116), hell (Exodus 537) and the devil (Genesis 899) are being inverted within the poet's typological imagination so that the worm becomes an 'antitype' through the phoenix-analogue of Christ and Christ's gecornum (388).

The recreated bird is described in terms reminiscent of its home, beorht geblowen (240; 21, 27), which is what both bird and paradise were aet frymδe (239; 82-84). This is one of the areas in the poem which has great density of association and evocation. Much that is at this point 'outside' the text is brought to mind by rapid changes of reference; ideas overlap and suggest extensions into aspects of Christian theology.

As in The Wanderer and The Seafarer, concrete images are followed by similar ones with different emphases or subjects, but with some underlying analogical relationship to those which have gone before. Where in ll. 240ff. we are told about the phoenix in language which plainly applies to human resurrection,

> Þonne braed weorþeð
> eal edniwe eft acenned,
> synnum asundrad, sumes onlice...

we might expect some overt comparison to Christ, the resurrection of mankind or Doomsday, there follows instead a description of harvest, winter use of harvest, the growth of the seed in spring, then a comparison of that to the phoenix. The words beorht geblowen likened the bird to a plant; but the superficially decorative metaphor refers simultaneously back to paradise (21, 27) and forward to Redemption and the Resurrection. The usual biblical passage here alluded to is 1 Corinthians 15:35-38, but John 12:23-26 is also applicable and probably contributed to the analogy:

> The hour has come for the Son of man to be glorified. Truly, truly I say unto you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. He who loves his life loses it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. If anyone serves me, he must follow me; and where I am, there shall my servant be also; if anyone serves me, the Father will honour him.

The subjects of the verses on either side of the mention of the seed concerning the glorification of Christ, the dedication of Christ's servants on earth and their reunion in eternal life are those towards which the poem is moving. This text and almost all of the Pauline one, mentioning "the first fruits of

those who have fallen asleep... For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive..." (1 Corinthians 15:20ff.) are at the heart of the imagery which leads to fusion of the phoenix-cycle and its Christian analogues. The seed in the poem comes to life in response to the sun:

> Þonne sunnan glaem
> on lenctenne lifes tacen,
> weceð woruldgestreon, þaet þa waestmas beoð
> þurh agne gecynde eft acende,
> foldan fraetwe. 253-57

The most basic association of Easter and resurrection with spring and the sprouting of seeds, is made; the natural link is reinforced by the repetition of eft acenned (241) ... eft acende (256). Blake, in his note to l. 263, finds in fyrngesetu an allegorical intent on the part of the poet, a reference to the regaining of paradise. There has as yet been no overt allusion to the Fall, but perhaps the initial contrast of the phoenix's home and middle-earth, and the uniqueness of the compound fyrngesetu (although fyrn- is a common element) could be understood as a contribution to the growing sense of engagement in a larger theme, in preparation for the story of the Fall in ll. 393ff.

Wyrtum (265) extends the plant imagery, as the poet returns from spring renewal to the subject of the bird's new body. Of greote...ban gebrosnad (267-70) need not be understood as "a curious mixture of cremation and inhumation",[33] as of greote can be thought of as referring generally to the ground, the earth, the dust - from which seeds and resurrected bodies rise up - and gebrosnad does not necessarily mean 'putrefied', but can also mean 'ruined'. Waelreaf (273) is ironic in a positive

sense, as it usually concerns stripping the dead on a battle-field, and here the dead is the victor. The variation of ll. 274-82 emphasizes the bird's longing for its home: afysed ...agenne eard; cyþþu; gesetu; eþellond; swa he aet frymðe waes sigorfaest sette, the language of spiritual longing for the eternal home. Sigorfaeste occurs elsewhere in connection with victory over death (e.g. Dream 150; Guthlac 965, 1244), and the context here brings out this connection. The sun shines on the new bird when it returns with its ashes; there is no need to emend MS þegn to segn, as the phoenix is more a servant than a sign of the sun.

In the phoenix's appearance, the poet stresses the wonder of the created being, its wrought beauty, as in The Panther: wraetlic, fraetwe, wundrum, scyne, and there follows in both poems a similar praise/blessing for God as Creator and Redeemer. Throughout The Phoenix the poet thus balances the idea of God as Creator with that of God as Redeemer of the phoenix, a created being who suffers death; of fallen mankind. Whether there is any Christian moralistic tone to ll. 314-18 is not, by this point in the poem, in doubt; but the process of building up the analogy with Christian life has been by the accumulation of implicit understandings of certain kinds of language. By this language the event of the phoenix-cycle comes to be related to the history of the world and mankind through their mutual Creator and Redeemer. There are no points where it is necessary to 'interpret' one as the other. The phoenix's characteristics of lightness, speed, brightness and being wuldre gemearcad (318) are equally those of Christ (as

in the reference to the Song of Songs in Christ, 712ff.).

The phoenix's return flight is enveloped by contrasts between the two worlds (320-1; 348-9). There is no consistency in, and no possibility of interpretation of the poet's choice of words here. He could have used eðel- to mean 'homeland', i.e. paradise/heaven, and eorþan to mean 'world'; what is important to the poet, however, is that the two worlds are contrasting, and that the rebirth of the phoenix unites them. The manifestation of the bird to mankind does not contain the same charged language as some of the other areas in the poem, although the situation parallels the manifestation of Christ on Doomsday. The analogy would, perhaps, be so obvious at this point that no especially 'loaded' language would be required. An allegorical interpretation such as Blake gives[34] of the sadness of the birds left behind by the phoenix seems unnecessary; but the possibilities for interpretation of such passages may have been as open-ended for the Anglo-Saxon audience as for us.

The next summary of the phoenix-cycle is suggestive through its repetition of certain information within the context of accumulated nuances of the resurrection analogue and its implications. Aefter swylthwile (350) is to be echoed in l. 369 (sare swyltcwale) and repeated much later in l. 566; in this part of the poem the emphasis is on the bird's return, its unique ability to engender itself, and the thousand-year cycle, a reminder of the approaching end of the world.[35] God alone knows the bird's gecynde (356); this statement is extended in ll. 374-76:

Bið him self gehwaeðer
sunu ond swaes faeder, ond symle eac
eft yrfeweard ealdre lafe.

The relationships described are immediately recognizable as those within the larger theme: the identity of God the Father, God the Son, and the 'chosen ones' is brought to mind, an identity which is about to be developed further in ll. 381-423.[36] Ll. 377-79 are momentarily ambiguous; like some lines in Exodus, in which the subject could have been either God or Moses until clarified by a following phrase, these lines momentarily fuse the identity of one of the poem's subjects with another. Feþrum bifongen, þeah hine fyr nime (380) reveals the grammatical subject to be the phoenix; but with a lead into another subject thus provided, the phoenix disappears almost completely for forty-two lines. The swa of l. 381 has no specific referent, nor does it link what follows to any system of interpretation. Swa introduces the cycle of individual human life, its painful 'journey' and choices involved in the kind of earthly life which leads to eternal life. Gecynd (387) is usually translated 'nature', but, considering the importance of resurrection in the poem, the connotations 'generation' and 'offspring' are probably felt, here as in ll. 374-76, 252 and 256. Individuals both choose and are chosen by God (þam gecornum, 388), the poet expressing without commentary the difficult theology of freewill and predestination in ll. 387-92. The poet emphasizes the similarity of how Christ's chosen attain their beorhtne gefean rather than a similarity between what they and the phoenix attain, by the explanation þurh faeder fultum. The origin and failure of

human choice is then told. The placing of the story where it is leads naturally out of the phoenix as subject, then back in: in l. 392 the creation of the earthly paradise for Adam and Eve is recognizably analogous to that of the phoenix's home (selestan foldan sceatta, 395ff.). The short life-cycle of the individual is set within that of mankind, and that of Christ as man (420-423).

The beorhtne gefean (389) and heanne blaed (391) open to Cristes þegnum (388) is punningly contrasted with Adam and Eve's niwan gefean and beames blede (402); these two conditions of mankind, one joy lost by Adam and Eve and the other granted to the faithful, were reconciled by Christ's coming, moncynnes gefea (422) and se anga hyht (423). Parallels between the phoenix and Adam and Eve are implicit: a tree of death and an apple are involved,[37] in the case of the bird resulting in resurrection and a return to paradise, sunbeorht gesetu (278, 436), but for Adam and Eve the outcome was the fall of all mankind and exile into the worlda deaðdene (416), sorgfulran gesetu (417). The wyrm wundrum faeger (232) in which the phoenix returns to life is contrasted by the naedran niþ (413) by which came death.[38]

Is þon gelicost... (424-27), like swa þaet ece lif... (381-86) is an open statement; it refers to the Fall and the Redemption, but what the Fall and Redemption are 'most like' is not given any definition. The bird's life-cycle and that of mankind are contrasted and compared in their mutual condition before death: geomormode (412), meþra (422), gebysgad, werigmod (428); but the phoenix is eager in spirit for its journey (189,

208) and the faithful are eager to extinguish their sins by good deeds (456, 462) and depart from earthly life (475-81). The bird's journey and death are summarized again, this time with the emphasis on the building of the nest.[39] The statement following, Swa ða foregengan... (437-42), is not an exact parallel, though swa seems to indicate a connection. The pattern of interlocking or interlacing parts is becoming more complex, more intuitive; the areas of contact between the phoenix-cycle and its analogues are becoming less obvious than the areas of extension. Here, the life-cycle of the phoenix and particularly the building of the nest in which it dies and is reborn, is set against ll. 437-42, the loss of paradise and exile of man in the world, in the same form as ll. 377-80 (the phoenix's power of resurrection, a gift of God) and ll. 381-86 (the gift of God to man, resurrection, through Christ, and man's righteous life). The audience is taken far beyond the simple analogy of mankind returning to paradise through death, like the phoenix. Now, the previously introduced elements of the heanne beam of the phoenix, in its home and on earth, the tree of death in Eden, þam gecornum Cristes þegnum and man's exile on earth are all fused in the image of the nest in the tree.

Ll. 443-53 are crucial in determining the kind of symbolism in The Phoenix; widely differing critical responses to the poem at this point indicate the difficulty. Cross's analysis is explicit and detailed, concerning an extra dimension provided by these lines:

> The extra meaning is indicated by a double interpretation of the Phoenix nest...as a 'shelter' for the good Christian on earth and as a place to live in heaven. On earth þaer him ńest wyrceð.../daedum domlicum dryhtnes cempa 'the warrior of the Lord makes a nest for himself by glorious deeds' (451-52) in the lofty tree of the favor of God in this world (446-47), in þam halge nu/wic weardiað 'in which the holy now have their dwelling' (447b-48a); but also Beoð him of þam wyrtum wic gestaþelad/ in wuldres byrig 'a dwelling shall be built for them [meotudes cempan 'the warriors of the Lord' (471b)] from the plants in the city of glory' (474-75a). The indication of a dividing line here in the good man's journey home is, of course, strengthened by a general observation that death for a Christian ends the continuous present but begins the everlasting future.
>
> When the different interpretations are distinguished and enumerated in this way, every medievalist will recognize that these are the three spiritual senses of Scripture, familiar in patristic exegesis and transmitted in the Old English homily. At the risk of boring, it may be said that the representation of the Phoenix as the good Christian in his earthly nest is a moral or tropological interpretation, the bird as Christian in his heavenly dwelling is an anagogical interpretation, the bird as Christ is a typical or allegorical interpretation.[40]

Greenfield, however, says of ll. 443-53 that he finds "no clear line of demarcation between an earthly nest in þam halge nu/ wic weardiað... and a heavenly nest, the dwelling in the city of glory, wuldres byrig."[41] He takes waeron hwaeþre monge to refer to the holy departed now living; hence the nest must be in heaven. The hea beam cannot, he feels, be equated with "the favour of the Lord on earth":

> For, as Blake points out in his comparison of the poet's allegorical interpretation with his probable source, in Ambrose's Hexameron V 79-80, although Ambrose likens Christ to the nest the phoenix builds, the Phoenix poet likens Christ to the tree. In other words, the favor of God to those who did his holy works, glorious deeds, was the 'high tree' (i.e. Christ) in which the holy ones now have their habitation.[42]

The identification of the tree with Christ, and a human being with the tree is a vital structural principle of The Dream of the Rood; in Exodus, it has been demonstrated what importance identification and ambiguity of identity has for the expression of what we would see as abstract or figural relationships. Such kinds of identification may have been inherent in Anglo-Saxon Christian awareness; in The Phoenix, the tree on earth is analogous to the tree in paradise, from which the bird sang to the sun; the terminology of the cross is employed in the description, without comment or development. In ll. 175-81, the emphasis is on the glory of the tree, its stability and protected status. Here, the stress is on the human protection provided by the tree itself:

> Ðaet is se hea beam in þam halge nu
> wic weardiað, þaer him wihte ne maeg
> ealdfeonda nan atre sceþþan,
> facnes tacne, on þas frecnan tid. 447-450

These lines parallel 400ff. While niþ (400) is not specific, naedran niþ (413) suggests the serpent's poison (ealdfeonda... atre, 449), evil, and perhaps also, to an iconographic imagination, the picture of the serpent coiled round the tree of death.[43] The above lines point back to this picture; they draw upon the idea of the cross as antitype, a tree of life, while referring to the phoenix-tree of death and life, with counterparts in paradise and on earth. As in The Dream of the Rood, the follower of Christ who seeks eternal life both embraces and is embraced by the cross (again, possibly expressing the simultaneity of freewill and predestination). While the phoenix-tree was described fully in ll. 175-81, here it is not evoked in concrete terms, except as se hea beam: a place where holy

and life-giving nests are built, which is instrumental in resurrection and eternal life, which receives a bird, analogous to Christ, and the holy ones, as both a tree and a way of salvation. By the placing of the tree at this point in the poem, where it receives action on so many levels, there is no need to systematize logically the relationships between bird and nest; righteous men and good deeds; righteous men, earth, heaven and Christ, etc., a process which is capable of complicating the poem indefinitely, and which diffuses the density of the imagery until its effects are lost.

A description of the righteous man follows. Forð onetteð,/ laenan lifes leahtras dwaesceþ,/ mirce mandaede (455-57) brings to mind the phoenix's desire for death and the result of the flames: siþes fus (208), hreoh onetteð (217), synnum asundrad (242). In ll. 465ff., the poet's rapid changing from one subject to another, a feature of the poem's style which has been increasing in importance, results in a transference of attributes from one analogue to another: the righteous man builds a nest in the tree (mysterious as to nature and location, seemingly with and in many at once) with his good deeds on earth; he will be protected from evil there; then, however, the poet turns back to the bird, saying, "These are the plants, the crop of fruit, which the wild bird gathers...to his dwelling-place, where he works a wondrously fast nest against each evil," (465-69). The behaviour of the righteous man, his life on earth, his reward, and Christ, seem to be simultaneously evoked. 1 Corinthians 15:20ff. expresses a similar unity (see above, p. 238). It is neither possible nor desirable to distinguish the

analogues from one another too closely, as the poet is doing his best to fuse them at this point to provide a complete picture of all the elements and relationships so far. Similar kinds of relationships are expressed in The Dream of the Rood ll. 117-21, in which the location of 'the cross' is at once inside and outside the man, which protects him on earth, and will do so on Judgement Day. On þas frecnan tid (450) here suggests that day (as in Juliana 724, and by extension, Exodus 571); while, previously (390) it referred to the danger of the temptations and sin the faithful are exposed to in the world, before the account of the Fall. Glaedmod gyrneð... daeda gefremme...scyld (462-65) parallels the phoenix's eagerness to build its nest and die. Now, from the rapid back-and-forth transference of subject and attributes from the phoenix to mankind, the poet turns to Judgement Day. Poetic language and the theme of death/rebirth, earlier regarding the phoenix, though bringing to mind the human condition and Christian possibilities of faith and eternal life, now refers specifically to what was suggested: e.g. Bael bið onaeled (216) and ade onaeled (503); on swole byrneð (214) and in scome byrneð (502); and to the phoenix again, fyre byrneð (531).

Throughout the poem, time and death have been united in the creation. Even the phoenix, who lived in an ageless paradise, was subject to the thousand-year cycle; the implication of the millennium's approach and its results for mankind is more obvious here, near the end of the poem. The phoenix's world and man's world were linked by the bird's death in one and resurrection into the other at one point in the

cycle; in the divine cycle, the hope for resurrection was extended to man (420-22) and will be fulfilled (482-490). At this time, all death, and all cycles will be ended:

> Bið se deorca deað dryhtnes meahtum
> eadgum geendad. 499-500

The poet now speaks in 'open' language; he no longer moves from one subject (phoenix) to another (Christ, the blessed; the seed) while using the same, or similar language for all of them. In the rest of the poem, the fused images expand until the pattern has opened like a flower:

> Þonne on leoht cymeð
> aeldum þisses in þa openan tid
> faeger ond gefealic fugles tacen,
> þonne anwald eal up astelleð
> of byrgenum, ban gegaedrað,
> leomu lic somod, ond lifes gaest,
> fore Cristes cneo. 508-514

Parallels with the phoenix are obvious (~~512-14~~; 267-72), but the story of the bird's life-cycle has been revealed by the poet as the smaller truth within the larger. Where the phoenix in paradise and on earth was the servant of the sun, indistinguishable from the light of God, the final picture in the history of the creation is now drawn, one of revealing light and judgement:

> Cyning þrymlice
> of his heahsetle halgum scineð,
> wlitig wuldres gim. Wel bið þam þe mot
> in þa geomran tid gode lician. 514-17

So too the destruction of the phoenix's body and resurrection was <u>inevitably</u> in language which suggested that of man: burning, gathering up of ashes and ruined bones, their raising <u>synnum asundrad</u> (242).

Þaer þa lichoman, leahtra claene,
gongaþ glaedmode, gastas hweorfaþ
in banfatu, þonne bryne stigeþ
heah to heofonum. 518-21

The phoenix, however, is not to disappear, as though it were unimportant, "merely a symbol of a divine truth",[44] for this divine truth has exalted the bird's home, its life, its journey, the tree in which it builds its nest and its death. In re-iterating the fate of the righteous, the poet returns to the same way of speaking as in ll. 465ff., as though the phoenix is the main subject of his present discourse. Edgeong and edniwe are frequent adjectives throughout the poem, and have (with edniwinge, 534) been applied to the phoenix for the most part (77, 223, 241, 258, 287, 370, 373, 435, 534, 558, 581), although the poet thus describes the blessed in ll. 536 and 608. Similarities are highlighted by such re-use of adjectives; by the blessed lifting a song to praise cyninges þrym (541) as the phoenix did the sun; by having the blessed perfumed with plants, their weldaedum (543), extending the plant-imagery from nest to garland. Whole correspondences are not intended by the poet as certain areas of difference indicate: the phoenix sang to the sun before its flight, not after resurrection; the plants adorn the dead remains the phoenix carries back to paradise, not its risen body.

It is only at this point that the poet turns to his scriptural authority, based on a reading of the Greek phoinix as the bird rather than the tree. It would be over-ingenious, perhaps, to suggest that the poet was playing on an awareness of both Latin and Greek, tree and bird respectively, to give

extra force to his own elaboration of both tree and bird in his own poem. Although he must have been aware of both (like the Christ poet), he would not expect his audience to be. The interpretive paraphrase of Job's words stresses the clarity of the sign (where, to make a different point, the Christ poet emphasizes the 'darkness' of the sign), and Job, through his hope and faith in the future life, provides a human example of the righteous man, and an authoritative analogue of the phoenix. The use, in this passage, of several key words helps to clarify the sign by linking the authority implicitly with the poem: neste (553), longne sið (555), greotes faeðme (556), leofne lofiað (561), moldaerne...wyrmum (564-65), in wuldor aweceð (567; 255, 367). Clarification is appropriate at this point, as the rest of the poem is devoted to þa openan tid (509). Language of the grave, purgatorial flame and resurrection is placed in a biblical context, in which the phoenix is a recognized Old Testament type. Job's song, says the poet, was for our benefit,

> þaet we þy geornor ongietan meahten
> tirfaest tacen þaet se torhta fugel
> þurh bryne beacnað. 573-75

Grammatically, the connection between the bird and what it 'beacons' is þurh bryne, which is fairly specific in one sense, the funeral pyre of the phoenix being parallel to the flames of purgatory for man; since þurh can have connotations of motion, the sense might include the journeys of bird and man through the fire, bryne being parallel to aeriste (572).

The poet's choice of words for the phoenix's home when it returns there differs from the previous aeþelast londa (2),

willwong (89), referring instead to frean geardum sunnan togeanes (578). This draws the parallels closer together, since frean geardum could refer equally to heaven, and the sun and its light are closely associated with divine understanding. Blake's explanation of the plural hi in l. 579 is satisfactory, although it is necessary to take 'allegorical' in a wider sense than Blake: "The emendation of hi wuniað to he wunað suggested by Thorpe is unnecessary, for the poet had both the literal and allegorical levels in mind here."[45] As with the cryptic language concerning the tree in ll. 447ff., there are times when the poet does not overtly compare his analogues, but speaks within language patterns which embrace two or more of them. An overt comparison only comes afterwards: Swa nu aefter deaðe... (583). L. 585 includes the fourteenth instance of fraetwe or -fraetwian, thematically associated with the work of God's hand, "a rendering of the relationship between beauty and salvation that unites all differing allegorical perspectives in one symbolic vision".[46]

The poem has been moving from the earthly journey to death, death itself, then judgement. The last subject is the final home, heaven, and the blessed souls there with Christ. Heaven is suggested by ll. 581-82, a place where no harm may be done, although it is uncertain as to whether the phoenix's home is being referred to only. The use of negative description, as in the first part of the poem, is not so extensive here. Imagery of beauty, perfume and light (ll. 585ff.), introduced earlier in descriptions of the phoenix's home, its appearance and behaviour, now introduces another area in which the density

of the imagery fuses analogical subjects:

> faegre gefraetwed, fugle gelicast,
> in eadwelum ... aeþelum stencum,
> þaer seo soþfaeste sunne lihteð
> wlitig ofer weoredum in wuldres byrig.
>
> Þonne soðfaestum sawlum scineð
> heah ofer hrofas haelende Crist.
> Him folgiað fuglas scyne,
> beorhte gebredade, blissum hremige,
> in þam gladan ham, gæstas gecorene,
> ece to ealdre, 585-94

The phoenix has been identified with Christ, and the blessed with the phoenix; here, all three fuse. Blake's criticism of these lines would only apply to allegory in which relationships were logical, systematic and without paradox (which could hardly suit Christian allegory). It seems inconsistent to allow that the poet could have in mind and express 'literal' and 'allegorical' levels simultaneously, and yet to make the comment

allegorically by the sun, but at line 591

> A slight harshness is caused here by the shift in the allegory. In ll. 587-88 Christ is represented by the phoenix, who is followed by the other birds (i.e. the blessed). Previously the phoenix had stood for the blessed who worshipped Christ the sun... But, because the poet changed his allegory at line 591...this has meant that the birds following the phoenix, who here stand for the blessed, are also by implication said to have undergone a resurrection of the flesh. This of course does not figure in the phoenix story in the first half. At line 594 the allegory shifts again and the blessed are once more represented by the phoenix.[47]

'Identification' rather than 'representation' is the poet's form of expression, and probably his perception.

> For in 'fuglas scyne' (591) the comparison made in 'fugle gelicast' (585) gives way to a firm albeit momentary identification of the souls of the blessed following Christ. This identification is the culmination of one of the images which have been in the poet's mind...unconscious perhaps and incongruous when over-analyzed, but spontaneous and poetically effective when accepted 'with a gladsome mind'.[48]

The blessed shine (scineð, 589; scyne, 591; bliceð, 599) like the sun (601), and are so now identified with Christ. Their description is similar to that of the risen phoenix, in that divine 'craftsmanship' is implied: for the phoenix, wraetlice (294), searolice (297), swa glas oþþe gim (300), stane gelicast/ ... þonne in goldfate.../ biseted (302-4), swylce sunnan hring/ beaga beorhtast brogden feðrum (305-6) etc.; for the blessed, beorhta beag, brogden wundrum/ eorcnanstanum (602-3), Þeodnes cynegold (605), wuldre bitolden/ faegrum fraetwum (609-10). This is the final occurrence of -fraetwe, and in this context cynegold may be the scriptural image of the faithful as refined gold or silver, or as refined through the fire of suffering.[49]

The final instance of gefea is also in the description of heaven: se longa gefea,/ ece ond edgeong, aefre ne swebrað (607-8). In l. 248, gefean is what the harvest provides in the form of fodorþege during winter, and what is resurrected through seed in the spring, bringing to mind the biblical parallel and metaphor of human resurrection; beorht gefean (389) is given to þam niwan gefean (400), and was lost by Adam and Eve, bringing death to mankind; moncynnes gefea (422) was revealed again by wuldorcyning/ þurh his hidercyme (420-21); forweardne gefean (569) was held by Job in his faith that we would rise like the phoenix to life after death; the final gefea (607-9) is longa, ece like God and edgeong like the phoenix (373, 435, 536; also edniwe, the fruit of the trees in the trees in the phoenix's home, and the phoenix after rebirth, 223, 241, 287, ~~and mankind after resurrection, 536~~). The sanctus-like song (625-29), now

sung from the divine light, is beyond the original song of praise to the divine light, the bird's devotional song, as it is now beyond all cyclic movement. From the phoenix-paradise, such song was heard (11-12), testifying to its timelessness; but while the earthly paradise is removed from evil-doers, feor heonan folcagendra...afyrred is/ þurh meotudes meaht manfremmendum (1-6), man in heaven is ryhtfremmende,/ manes amerede (632-3).

The end of all cycles in God is summed up in the final movement, ll. 632ff.; syntactically, the cycle of Christ's life on earth (637-40) is enveloped by the praise of those in heaven after Judgement Day, ece weorðmynd/ forð butan ende (636-67) and hwaeþre his meahta sped/ heah ofer heofonum halig wunade/ dom unbryce (640-42). The patterns of reiteration of various aspects of the phoenix's life and death now merge with a reiteration of Christ's death and resurrection:

> Þeah he deaþes cwealm
> on rode treow raefnan sceolde,
> þearlic wite, he þy þriddan daege
> aefter lices hryre lif eft onfeng
> þurh faeder fultum. Swa fenix beacnað,
> geong in geardum, godbearnes meaht,
> þonne he of ascan eft onwaecneð
> in lifes lif, leomum geþungen. 642-49

The following simile is as impenetrable by logical analysis as any in the poem; relationships between the two elements are implied rather than expressed, and our initial expectation foiled:

> Swa se haelend us helpe gefremede
> þurh his lices gedal, life butan ende,
> swa se fugel swetum his fiþru tu-
> ond wynsumum wyrtum gefylleð,
> faegrum foldwaestmum, þonne afysed bið.
> 650-54

The ear waits for a parallel or correspondence to lices gedal, another reiteration of the bird's resurrection. Instead there is a return to the scent-imagery prevalent in the early part of the poem, perhaps the implicit link being the idea, as expressed in 2 Corinthians 2:14-16: the triumph of God, the knowledge of Christ "a fragrance from life to life" for the faithful. The second thought in the scriptural passage is that the faithful, by their works, spread the knowledge of Christ to God like a fragrance; ll. 655-61 express this idea finally in the poem:

> þaet sindon þa word, swa us gewritu secgað,
> hleoþor haligra, þe him to heofonum bið,
> to þam mildan gode, mod afysed,
> in dreama dream, þaer hi dryhtne to giefe
> worda ond weorca wynsumne stenc
> in þa maeran gesceaft meotude bringað,
> in þaet leohte lif.

Þonne afysed bið (654) and mod afysed (657) bring to mind again the phoenix's urge to return to its homeland through the building of its nest (Bið him neod micel etc., 189ff.), waiting eagerly to pass through the fire (Sitеð siðes fus, 208), and then returning to its home with the remains of its old body gathered up as a battle-trophy and adorned with plants (waelreaf wyrtum biteldeð,/ faegre gefraetwed. Þonne afysed bið/ agenne eard eft to secan, 273-75). The plant imagery at the beginning of the poem, expressive of the nature of the phoenix's land (blostmum geblowen, 21; wynnum geblowen, 27) has, like the phoenix's life-cycle, expanded and merged with the larger pattern whose centre is lifes lif (649), leohte lif (661).

There follows a short praise in the vernacular, then a macaronic address about what the audience may hope to attain

in heaven through our good works; a suitably artistic ending to a poem in which divinely-wrought beauty plays such an important part in the subject of resurrection: the purifying, reuniting and adorning with eternal life the old life of man, through his faith and good works.

Footnotes to Chapter Six

1. Stanley, "Old English Poetic Diction and the Interpretation of The Wanderer, The Seafarer and The Penitent's Prayer", p. 416.

2. Cross, "The Conception of the Old English Phoenix", p. 145.

3. Three exegetical approaches which disagree significantly are those of Cross, Trahern and Smith; for a summary of their inconsistencies, see Marilyn K. Nellis, "The Dimensions of Space: a Structuralist Study of The Phoenix", pp. 367-68.

4. Gradon, Form and Style in Early English Literature, p. 39.

5. See Auerbach, "Figura", p. 33; also chapter 5 above, Exodus, p. 5; notes 28 & 29; p. 24.

6. Burlin, The Old English Advent: A Typological Commentary, p. 22.

7. The Phoenix, ed. Blake, Introduction, "The Development of the Phoenix Story", pp. 8-13.

8. Gradon, op. cit.: "...it is, I think, doubtful whether it is consonant with medieval ways of thinking to divide what we should call allegory from other didactic modes of writing. The allegory and exemplum in fact overlap in medieval practice in a way which calls in question our rigid distinctions between allegorical and non-allegorical writing." p. 90.

9. Rollinson, "The influence of Christian doctrine and exegesis on Old English poetry: an estimate of the current state of scholarship", pp. 283, 284.

10. All textual references are from the Anglo-Saxon Poetic Records III, The Exeter Book

11. Blake, The Phoenix, pp. 33-34.

12. ibid., p. 28.

13. ibid.

14. ibid.

15. ibid., note to l. 90.

16. ibid., note to l. 288.

17. ibid., note to l. 587.

18. See The Meters of Boethius, generally; nos 5, 24, 29, 30 especially; also Christ 1651ff.

19. Peake's Commentary on the Bible, p. 964.

20. Blake, The Phoenix, p. 28.

21. ibid., p. 26.

22.
Engla þreatas
sigeleoð sungon, sweg waes on lyfte
gehyred under heofonum, haligra dream.
Swa se burgstede waes blissum gefylled,
swetum stencum ond sweglwundrum,
eadges yrfestol, engla hleoðres,
eal innanweard. Þaer waes aenlicra
ond wynsumra þonne hit in worulde maege
stefn areccan, hu se stenc ond se sweg,
heofonlic hleoþor ond se halga song,
gehyred waes, heahþrym godes,
breahtem aefter breahtme.

Guthlac 1313-25

Sweghleoþor cymeð,
woþa wynsumast þurh þaes wildres muð.
Aefter þaere stefne stenc ut cymeð
of þam wongstede, wynsumra steam,
swettra ond swiþra swaecca gehwylcum,
wyrta blostmum ond wudubledum,
eallum aeþelicra eorþan fraetwum.

The Panther 42-48

23. Calder, "The Vision of Paradise: A Symbolic Reading of the Old English Phoenix", p. 169. Calder, speaking generally about the poet's approach, cites Augustine DCE PL 41: Deus autem ita est artifex magnus in magnis, ut minor non sit in parvis: quae parva non sua grandite (nam nulla est) sed artificis sapientia metienda sunt, and comments, "The vision of Paradise contains implicitly the foundation for a Christian aesthetic in the importance given to beauty, and this importance relates directly to the contemplation of the divine being, himself the source of all beauty."

24. Cross, op. cit., note 2, p. 24.

25. The words heanne beam in l. 112 are undoubtedly the terminology of the cross; but here they only introduce the bird's relationship-to-be with the tree on earth, its later identity with Christ and mankind, and the redeemed relationship between creation and Creator. For other instances of cross-terminology, see Elene 424, Christ 1446, Juliana 228, 309; The Dream of the Rood 40.

(note 25 continued)

The cross is often referred to as beam where the more specific rod does not appear: se blaca beam, Elene 91; beama beorhtost, The Dream of the Rood 6, etc.; bone beam, Christ 729; on ful blacne beame, Judgement Day 1:66; aebelust beama, Menologium 84; me on bæame, he on beam astah, Christ and Satan 508, 547.

26. Ramsey, Religious Language, p. 53.

27. Blake, The Phoenix, note to ll. 158ff.

28. Thomas D. Hill, "The Syrwarena lond and the Itinerary of the Phoenix: a Note on Typological Allusion in the Old English Phoenix", pp. 483-84.

29. The Seafarer, ll. 48-51:

Bearwas blostmum nimað, byrig faegriað,
wongas wlitig[i]að, woruld onetteð;
ealle þa gemoniað modes fusne,
sefan to siþe...

30. Wentersdorf, "On the Meaning of Old English heorodreorig in The Phoenix and other poems", p. 38.

31. Bosworth-Toller gives, as some of the meanings for sið: I "going, journeying, travel"; II "the journey of the spirit from this world," III "coming, arrival," IV "a proceeding, course of action," V "the course of events in the case of a person," VI "a path, way," VII "a time".

32. Kantrowitz, "The Anglo-Saxon Phoenix and Tradition", pp. 10-12. Possible biblical sources of the story of the Fall and the Redemption are investigated.

33. Blake, The Phoenix, note to l. 267.

34. ibid., note to l. 352ff.

35. St Ambrose, trans. H. De Romestin, Some of the Principal Works of St Ambrose, "On Belief in the Resurrection", p. 183: "So to the bird the five hundredth the year of resurrection, but to us the thousandth: it has its resurrection in this world, we have ours at the end of the world."

36. There is much meaningful ambivalence around compounds with -laf and yrfe- concerning the relationship between Father and Son to Israel and the Christian faithful. See chapter 6, Exodus.

37. Blake, The Phoenix, note to l. 230: "As early as Herodotus the ashes are said to have been moulded into a shape like a ball, but the comparison of this with an apple may well have been due to the Old English poet." For possible biblical background and Anglo-Saxon traditions concerning the apple and apple-tree, see Kantrowitz, op. cit., note 32, pp. 9-12.

38. For the interpretation of ll. 407-8, see Cassidy, "The Edged Teeth", pp. 227-36. Cassidy cites scriptural passages containing the idea of the teeth being set on edge, and finds a linking of the Fall and the bitter apple with the setting on edge of Adam and Eve's children's teeth in Sedulius' Carmen Paschale.

39. In The Fortunes of Men ll. 21-32 there is a transition from one thought concerning hea beame to one concerning nest; both are strongly metaphorical and cryptic. In Maxims 1, ll. 37-38, nest is also metaphorical; pilgrimage is brought to mind, and man as changeling, as in The Seafarer.

40. Cross, op. cit., note 2, pp. 135-36.

41. Greenfield, The Interpretation of Old English Poems, pp. 142-43.

42. ibid., pp. 143-44.

43. Bailey, Viking Age Sculpture in Northern England, plate 47.

44. Blake, The Phoenix, p. 28.

45. ibid., note to ll. 579-80.

46. Calder, op. cit., note 23, p. 168.

47. Blake, The Phoenix, notes to ll. 591 and 592.

48. Bruce Mitchell, "The 'fuglas scyne' of The Phoenix, line 591," Old English Studies in Honour of John C. Pope, p. 260.

49. For the imagery of refining, see Job 23:10, Isaiah 48:10, Zechariah 13:9, Malachi 3:2, 3.

Conclusion

Employing the working definition of the term 'symbolism' adopted in the introduction, as a relationship between an X and a Y such that X in some way stands for Y, the following reduction for the purpose of comparison outlines some of the different modes of expression of this relationship as they have been discovered in the above readings of six poems.

In Beowulf, there is a pattern of moving elements from beginning to end; the pattern of elements X gradually becomes the same pattern of elements Y, without direct statement or explanation. The movement of the forces of good and evil, or life and death, shifts its setting from the hall to the society to the person of the hero, then into time.

In The Wanderer, a pattern of elements around a concept becomes a different pattern around that concept; X's relationship to it becomes Y's. A view of imprisonment in loss, pain and uncertainty, decay and inevitable death concerning the concept of binding and fastness in love and human life becomes one of security, peace, wisdom and a positive way of life.

In The Seafarer, the mode is similar to that above, with the change of X's relationship to a concept to Y's dependent on and directed by a particular understanding of the concept of exile through the ideology and practice of Christian pilgrimage. Secular exile and the lack of comfort and company, with negative connotations, becomes a kind of freedom, directed by the will of the human soul towards God, and life rather

than death.

In The Dream of the Rood, X changes its relationship to Y so that they are identified; both X and Y undergo change until the grounds of their identification is revealed as their united significance, which transcends either of them. The cross and the dreamer are at first apparent opposites, and then identified with each other; then this point of meeting is developed in terms of Christ and redemption.

In Exodus, set of elements X is associated with a wide body of historical events, Christian tradition and writings, in both the bible and the Fathers, as well as homilies and hymns and a particular setting of the liturgy. While X is primarily one biblical story, it is also a collection of other events from the beginning to the end of history, which can be seen as its Y aspect. The poem illuminates this identification, which is typological in nature, of a historical event and its total significance.

In The Phoenix, the mode is similar to that in Beowulf, with conscious elaboration of the relationship of X to Y through Christian tradition, as in Exodus, and overtones of the same understanding of man's life on earth as in The Seafarer. The relationship of X to Y does not emerge from the narrative action so much as from the descriptions of the same cyclic action recurring with expanding significance.

These modes are nothing like genres, but are instead functions of the particular structure of each poem; nevertheless, the schematization indicates that some modes involve elaboration or variation of others. For example, the

repeating pattern with changing or elaborated elements is common to both Beowulf and The Phoenix; the pattern of elements changing around a concept structures both The Wanderer and The Seafarer; the importance of ambiguity of identity and the identification of X with Y characterizes both The Dream of the Rood and Exodus. It is suggested that in the above modes can be seen a basic ground of symbolic expression which in later stages of English literature exhibited further differentiations and rationalization of form.

All six poems contain, at some point, didactic statement, which has often been taken by critics to mean that a poem is meant to be interpreted in the same terms of Christian morality as that statement. This has led to much disagreement about the particular Christian significance of persons, landscapes, etc.; yet while these elements and many more have been taken by some critics as representing something in particular, other critics have insisted that the same must be taken quite literally. The first kind of critic sometimes criticizes a poet for having been lax in making a particular significance clear, and the second for apparent structural incongruities. In these Old English poems, as in later works, the symbolic value of a person, landscape, object, action, etc. is not summed up by any statement 'X represents Y'. Its only completeness is, for both poet and audience, the poem itself. Didactic tone or statement in the six poems above can only be called a part of the poetic vision, and not a statement of the symbolic value of what precedes or follows it; Anglo-Saxon poetic vision seems to have had an ever-present moral dimension.

In all the above modes, 'identification with' rather than 'representation by' is a more appropriate way of describing the relationship between a given X and Y (or set of them) which structures the poem's symbolism. Ambiguity is also important in the context or presentation of the elements, so that terms could apply to more than one at a time, and in the moving back and forth from one referent to another, so that they cease to be definable as totally different from one another. The structure of a given poem is responsible for the particular direction of such symbolism inherent in themes of exile or leadership, or in elegaic statement such as lif is laene. Realism is treated as a function of significance rather than existence in concrete terms only or on the plane of plausible narrative action.

The imagery, diction and structure of the six poems above has not been totally rationalized by the poet, nor does it need to be by critics. When Anglo-Saxon poets wished to make direct figurative statement, they appear to have done so; but what seems to have been a common ground of Old English poetry, which makes it symbolic in the widest possible meaning of that term, is an assumption of significant relationship in all things, a perceivable though not intellectually-worked understanding of things as extending their significance beyond themselves. Persons, things, scenes, events - anything of importance in a poem is rarely if ever without its symbolic dimension, and as this differs in each poem it demands a different kind of attention in each poem. Critical language must be capable of describing processes of development and

relationships between poetic elements without reliance upon an unqualified terminology of discrete classes and structures of meaning.

List of Abbreviations

Anglia		
ASE	-	Anglo-Saxon England
AnM	-	Annuale Mediaevale
C&M	-	Classica et Mediaevala
CL	-	Comparative Literature
ES	-	English Studies
ESA	-	English Studies in Africa
JEGP	-	Journal of English and Germanic Philology
MÆ	-	Medium Ævum
MLN	-	Modern Language Review
MP	-	Modern Philology
MLR	-	Modern Language Review
Neophil	-	Neophilologus
NLH	-	New Literary History
NM	-	Neuphilologische Mitteilungen
N&Q	-	Notes and Queries
PBA	-	Proceedings of the British Academy
PMLA	-	Publications of the Modern Language Association of America
PQ	-	Philological Quarterly
RES	-	Review of English Studies
Speculum		
SN	-	Studia Neophilologische
SP	-	Studies in Philology
Studies in Biblical Theology		
Traditio		
YSE	-	Yale Studies in English

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