

THE OLD POETIC

A reappraisal of Old English
lyrical and heroic
verse.

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I N T R O D U C T I O N

The rationale behind the selection of poems for this volume is simply that, generally speaking, they are the best Old English poems extant, and are regarded by many as the real core of Anglo-Saxon verse. It is true, of course, that there are some fine passages in the religious verse, and some magnificent ones in Beowulf. The former field however, was not the true stamping-ground of the Old English scop and he was not at his best there, and the latter has been dealt with at great length on numerous occasions.

The contents of this volume, then, revolve around just two volumes of a monumental collection entitled The Anglo-Saxon Poetic Records ^I. These are Volume III, The Exeter Book, from which all but three of the present poems are taken, and Volume VI, The Anglo-Saxon Minor Poems, which accounts for the remainder.

The Exeter Book, largest of the four great collections of Old English poetry, receives its name from Exeter Cathedral, where it is preserved. It seems to have been presented to the cathedral by Leofric, the first bishop of Exeter, who died in 1072.

(I) See Bibliography

The poetical portions in The Exeter Book are written in a single hand which, according to Krapp and Dobbie ^I " is large and attractive and, considering the length of the manuscript, remarkably uniform throughout." It is believed to have been written in the West Country early in the period 970-990. Although well-preserved on the whole, the manuscript has suffered severe damage in places, especially on the last fourteen folios, which have a long diagonal burn through them.

The Old English lyrical and elegiac poems translated here illustrate typical human situations to which they give immediacy by portraying them through the eyes of individuals. In the midst of generalisations, gnomic utterances and formulaic patterns they preserve the deep feeling of the individual. The apparent obscurity of some of the poems is probably largely a result of our remoteness in time and way of life from pre-Norman England. Nevertheless, the poems still maintain a dramatic impact and their literary merit lies precisely in the balance struck between delineation of character or situation on one hand, and the evocation of an elegiac mood on the other. They are sometimes allusive and dense in meaning, but some of their difficulties may stem from a wrong approach on the part of the critics rather than intrinsic

(I) Krapp and Dobbie, The Exeter Book, xiii.

inadequacies. Without the great bulk of brilliant scholarship which has been devoted to Old English poetry our knowledge would still be woolly and imprecise, but equally, it is not impossible that scholarship has occasionally been to blame for some of our confusion, when, for instance, it has failed to recognise the importance of the emotional structure in some of these poems, a structure which may account for the omission of more tangible detail.

The conscious attempt of the Old English scop to produce musical verse is likely to have been far less intense than that, say, of Tennyson, the Romantics, or even Chaucer, for he had the harp to aid his lyricism. In the same way in modern 'pop music' we find the impact coming from the unit sound, not just from the words or just from the music: the more esthetically successful the modern song, the more the hearer is subjected to an inseparable unit. This approach has long been misunderstood. The Romans clearly did not understand what the Germanic bard was trying to do, many a critic has missed the essential connexion between the art and the verse of William Blake, and the intellectuals of the twentieth century have frequently missed the point of modern music.

What I have attempted to do, then, is to render the poems into forms which retain as much of the original as possible, while still reading well both as translations and as poems in their own right. They call for reader participation -

where appropriate you have to hear the lost music of the harp, or at least make allowances for its absence. Further than this, I have attempted to make the translations at once pleasing and informative to the reader who has no Old English, and accurate and substantiated for those acquainted with the language.

It will become clear, I hope, that the Old English poet was a highly accomplished person. More than just a bard, he was historian, priest, and sage and his songs had ritual significance. To aid in the understanding of this, I have included, for the benefit of those with some knowledge of the language, a set of annotations which is quite full for a work of this nature. Line references are to the editions which I have used (and these can be found in the Bibliography) and these will be found almost without exception to match those of The Anglo-Saxon Poetic Records, which has been indispensable. There is also an introduction for each poem translated, and it will be seen that, where possible, I have avoided the usual textual exegesis, which is readily available, and have concentrated on evaluating each poem as a poem, a discipline which I feel has been too seldom applied to Old English verse.

THE WANDERER

The Wanderer is to be found on folios 76b-78a of The Exeter Book and these are completely legible and undamaged.

Most nineteenth century scholars regarded the poem as essentially pagan and concerned themselves with demonstrating that the Christian references were interpolations. There has been a strong reaction against this, however, and the integrity of the text is now generally accepted. It seems probable that the poet deliberately juxtaposed the religious and secular elements to contrast the transience of worldly existence and the permanence of heaven. Before we can establish this however, we must determine the limits of the main monologue and any other speeches.

Some commentators, notably Leslie^I, regard the wanderer's monologue as beginning in the first line of the poem, and see lines 6 and 7 (swa cwæð....) as parenthetical. I regard this interpretation as being unnecessarily strained and can see no reason why the first seven lines should not be the voice of the poet. A general statement such as that in the first five lines is an effective way of setting a situation before introducing the protagonist. In terms of drama, Shakespeare uses this method often. I feel that the poet makes his statement in lines 1-5 and in lines 6 and 7 connects them with the specific situation of the wanderer, who begins his monologue at line 8.

He explains that he has no-one to confide in, no-one to share his misery because all his friends are dead (7, 31).

R.F.Leslie, The Wanderer, 3.

He recognises that silence and forbearance are virtues, but finds small comfort in this. This sentiment, that man should endure his grief silently, probably owes something to both the Germanic and the Christian traditions underlying this poem.

There has been much critical confusion about the closing point of the wanderer's monologue, some editors believing it to close at line 29a and others choosing to carry it further. I agree with Krapp and Dobbie¹ that the change from the use of the first person is an indication that the monologue has finished. Leslie² remarks: "The tendency to generalise personal experience in an impersonal form is characteristic of Old English poetry...." Be this as it may, I feel that if we regard the monologue as beginning at line 8, it is rather more consistent to accept this change in approach as being once again the voice of the poet commenting, just as he introduced, and this is the way I have arranged my translation.

The passage from 29b to 57 typifies the experiences of all lonely voyagers and friendless men: memories, dreams, and illusions. The memories of the wandering man cause him such concern that when he sleeps, he dreams of the happiness of his former situation. He awakens to the stark surroundings of sea-birds and falling snow, and in a state of what seems to amount to sensory deprivation, he hallucinates and sees his

(1) op. cit. xxxix (2) op. cit. 7

kinsmen and companions. This ends the first half of the poem.

The second half broadens the theme to include the whole of man's existence, and despite the body of opinion to the contrary, I feel that this develops the original intention of the poet. He has not set out solely to describe the joyless life of the wanderer, but rather to move from the particular misery of this man to the more general distress of mankind.

I am inclined to view the reintroduction of the first person in line 58 neither as the introduction of a new speaker nor as an extension by the wanderer of lines 8-29a, but as the voice of the poet himself becoming more deeply and personally involved with his theme. He makes his movement from the specific to the general quite clear in 58-62a. He has already spoken of one faithful retainer and shown how little such a man can hope for, and he now makes of this a world-wide application. The clue to the meaning of the poem lies in these lines: the poet is actually preparing the way for an explanation of how peace of mind can be obtained in spite of a loss of worldly fortune. What he says, briefly, is that a wise man will be prepared for the worst. He must understand "how terrifying it will be when all this world's wealth stands waste....." Without the companions dear to a man, the world loses its meaning.

Now, in a manner exactly parallel to that of the first half of the poem, the poet introduces another speaker who fulfils the conditions he has been describing. This speech

develops the conventional ubi sunt treatment and after asking "where are...?" expands the idea and says "in their places here are...." It is a clear contrast between vitality and destruction aimed at reinforcing the notion of transience and preparation. For the sake of the unity it would be nice to suppose that the present speaker is the same man as the wanderer of 8-29a, but basically it does not matter greatly. What is important is to notice the method of the poet, as it is this which explains his purpose and the meaning of the poem. In both halves he introduces, he personalises through the speech of an individual, he comments, and he reaches a conclusion. Recognition of this deliberate form makes interpretation of the poem a less difficult matter than has often been supposed. The poet's approach is complex, and the poem is of careful design. It reveals a concern not only with transience and misery, but also with humility, fortitude, self-discipline, and moderation. The final hypermetrical lines summarize this and point to the essential unity of the poem.

THE SEAFARER

The Seafarer is to be found on folios 81b-83a of The Exeter Book. These pages are clear and undamaged, but of all the poems dealt with in this volume, probably no other has been the object of so much critical and editorial controversy as this one. The problem is, admittedly, a difficult one. As I.L.Gordon remarks in her excellent edition of the poem:

"much Old English poetry is composite in the sense that it draws freely on a common poetic stock, and The Seafarer is no exception. But such use of inherited or borrowed matter is not sufficient ground for assuming that the poem is not a unity ^I." This is a perfectly fair statement for the body of Old English poetry, and indeed for the major part of The Seafarer. Mrs. Gordon proceeds, however, with a statement which I regard as rather damaging to her own viewpoint. She says "there are, in fact, no reasons for denying integrity to the poem except the difficulty of tracing in it a connected theme", and she explains that there have been many diverse interpretations which, despite their differences, prove that the solution to the problem lies not in dismembering the poem but in a clearer understanding of its seeming incomprehensibility. It is on this point that I take issue with her.

Even a brief glance at the elegiac and lyrical poems in this volume will make it quite plain that poets capable of writing such verse were equally capable of sustaining a theme. Confusions, as with Wulf and Eadwacer, arise over a period of time, certainly, but I wonder whether Easter 1916 would be readily understood by a world one thousand years from now with no records of us. Further, it is clear to most that the possibility of interference or interpolation over the period of time that The Seafarer has been written is a real one.

(1) I.L.Gordon, The Seafarer, 2.

Scholars today tend, and I think correctly, to accept original texts as they stand wherever possible. But it is not advisable to carry this to extremes. Several times in the course of translation I have had to resist the temptation to alter the verse to suit my own sensibilities, and I regard it as quite possible that someone in the past has changed this poem in a moment of intensity. The real question to be answered then is how much of the poem does have a unified theme.

The first thirty lines of the poem do exactly what line one promises and tell of the seafarer's experiences and suffering at sea. Line 31 seems to me to be a perfectly adequate link leading into the next section of the poem. The storm reminds the poet of his former hardships at sea and makes him apprehensive about the distress which he feels he is likely to suffer during his coming voyage. In fact he makes this anxiety explicit when he says that there is no man

".....who, before seafaring, is
not always a little anxious as to what
the Lord will bring him to....."

As spring approaches, however, the anxious fretting recedes somewhat...

".....now my heart journeys out
from my breast; my spirit ranges far and wide
over the haunt of the whale, in the ocean tide,
across the expanse of the world, then comes to me
again, full of impatient and eager longing.

The solitary bird cries across the expanse
of ocean, whetting irresistibly the longing of
my heart for the sea, for the joys of the Lord are
warmer to me than this dead transitory life
on land."

At this point some have desired to end the poem ^I, dismissing everything that follows as interpolation. With this attitude I cannot agree. The last couple of lines quoted above show without doubt that the poet is a sensitive Christian. There is, as Mrs. Gordon suggests, a religious aspect to this man's voyaging. Whereas the wanderer found the loneliness of the sea voyage unbearable, even to the extent of having hallucinations, the seafarer seems to regard loneliness as the attraction of the sea. The very tone of the verse and vocabulary contains a whispered romanticism when the sea and spring are being described:

"..... gielleð anfloga,
hweteð on hwælweg hreþer unwearnum
ofer holma gelagu,"

As a consequence, if the poet is the kind of person I suggest, it does not seem difficult to understand the next section of the poem, in which, while the subject matter veers away from seafaring, the theme remains similar. The idea of man opposing "the devil with noble deeds" (76) suggests not the heroic victory but the humble turning of the other cheek.

(1) See I.L.Gordon, op. cit. I

The poet goes on to express clearly his notion that the feudal age has passed out of splendour and that a man's salvation comes not from his outward glory, but rather from something else, something which has already been strongly visualised earlier in the poem - solitude implying a closeness to God.

It is at this point, line 102, that I would end the original poem, and it is here that I differ most with Mrs. Gordon. The remaining lines are quite at odds with the preceding ones. They will be found appended in the annotations in the translation of I.O.S. Anderson. I feel strongly that their tone is one of triumph in the reaffirmation of a strong Christian faith. They provide a kind of hymnal and preceptual hosanna which is quite at variance with the wistful and introspective tone of the rest of the poem, and they strike me as being the addition of some later writer who responded to the wonderful sensitivity which this poem embodies and decided to round it off with his own shout of joy. Mrs. Gordon comments ^I:

"Some editors would end the poem here, assuming that what follows, which is mainly gnomie statement and Christian admonition of a derivative and conventional kind is a later addition. And the fact that line 102 ends at the bottom of a folio might be held to support this view." She maintains, as I do not, however, that regardless of this change in tone (which she seems to recognise), the sentiments of these lines

I.L.Gordon, op. cit. II.

fit in with the whole homiletic theme, and she observes that The Wanderer, which is similar in construction, also concludes with some direct Christian admonition and prayer. What she seems to fail to recognise however, is the total difference in sensibility between the two poems. The Wanderer, to me at least, is a far more formal, juxtaposed work than this highly delicate and intense piece, and lines 94-102 seem to me to do for The Seafarer exactly what lines III-115 do for The Wanderer.

WIDSITH

The text of Widsith is found on folios 84b-87a of The Exeter Book. Widsith is a wandering minstrel of a type apparently well-known in the Germanic heroic age, who tells of the tribes he has visited and the princes he has known. A brief preface (lines I-9) introduces Widsith, after which he takes up the story himself. The poem ends with some general reflections from the poet on the life of the minstrel (lines 135-143).

Oddly enough, the first scholars of this poem regarded it as autobiographical, believing it to be the actual record of the travels of a real scop, and dismissing as later interpolations passages which were chronologically inconsistent. However, as Chambers ^I points out in his definitive edition

(1) R.W.Chambers, Widsith, a study in O/E heroic legend. 5-6.

of the poem, to suppose that the author could have come into contact with the people he mentions "is indeed to misunderstand the spirit of the poem." The tale is an imaginative composition by some man deeply interested in old stories "who depicts an ideal wandering singer, and makes him move hither and thither among the tribes and the heroes whose stories he loves."

One of the great problems of Widsith is to determine the extent of interpolation in it. It is one of the oldest, if not the oldest, of the poems of the Germanic heroic age which are extant in any Germanic language. Most of its kings and heroes can be dated between the third and sixth centuries, that is, before the proper settlement of England by the Germanic tribes, and certainly before their conversion to Christianity. But the manuscript dates at around 1000, and was probably transcribed by a monk. It seems safe, therefore, to assume that certain passages which are quite alien to the subject-matter, tone, and spirit of the poem are interpolations. Chambers remarks ^I: "The student who reads Widsith for the first time passes.....with a feeling of surprise, from a list of tribes with whose stories any gleeman of the heroic age would be familiar, to a series of supposititious travels among Medes and Persians, Israelites and Hebrews." The arguments as to which passages are interpolated are too lengthy

(I) R.W.Chambers, op. cit. 7.

for inclusion here, but are well dealt with both by Chambers¹ and Malone² who between them, provide us with a fine core to Widsithian scholarship.

The original poem, as mentioned above, appears to have covered a period from about the third century, the time of Ostrogoths, to about the sixth century, the time of Ælfwine³. This, according to Chambers, suggests that the poem must have been written later than 568, although not necessarily much later. Malone⁴ deduces from the language and metre that the date of composition was probably in the latter half of the seventh century.

The credibility of the whole poem has often been doubted, even as an imaginary voyage, because of the great time-span involved, but there is, actually, no reason why the poet should not postulate such longevity for his traveller. The Nornagests-pattr tells of Gestr's three-century life, during which he travelled from the Volsungs to Olaf Tryggvason. In 1818 Müller⁵ commented: "Gest's life was made so long, in order that he might give an account of the most famous of the old kings with the authority of an eye-witness and 300 years

(1) Chambers, op. cit. 7-II. (2) Kemp Malone, Widsith, 5-7.

(3) In 568 Ælfwine (Alboin) conquered Italy, and this is mentioned in the poem. (4) Malone, op. cit. 51-57.

(5) See Malone, op. cit. 103.

seemed a suitable length of time, where chronology was not reckoned with exactitude." This makes it quite clear that the idea of a long-lived minstrel is quite consistent with heroic tradition. But in spite of this, our poet still desired to give his wanderer some identity, to make him an ideal scop with a name, a lord, and ancestral lands. It was important that he should be worthy of respect so that his eye-witness accounts of the great deeds and people he saw would have authority. Accordingly, apart from imputing station to Widsith, the poet has him pronounce words of wisdom and advice to princes.

It remains briefly to consider the place and importance of Widsith within the broad framework of Germanic poetry. First and foremost, we feel the interest and enthusiasm of the poet. He obviously wished to make his character as true to life as his design would permit, and this design was to allow free-play to his love of history and the ethos of the past. This is where the real value of Widsith lies. As Chambers puts it ^I: "It shows up what was the stock-in-trade of the old Anglian bard." The poet's greatest interest was in the character of these heroes and heroines, and it was their passions that stimulated his imagination, just as our imaginations are stimulated today by the idea of Byrhtnoth's widow weaving his deeds into a tapestry, or one of his faith-

(I) Chambers, op. cit. 181.

ful followers recording his heroism in The Battle of Maldon.

Clearly the Widsith poet was skilful. He understood well the exigencies of classical alliterating Old English verse; and it seems that he was also original, as there few credible parallels to this poem.

DEOR

Deor is found on folios 100a-100b of The Exeter Book, and is one of the only two extant Old English poems with stanzaic structure and a refrain. It takes the form of a monologue spoken by Deor, formerly scop of the Heodenings, who has been supplanted by one Heorrenda. To comfort himself Deor recalls several famous misfortunes from Germanic heroic tradition. Though the poem is lyrical and elegiac in form, the autobiographical approach to Old Germanic heroic material makes a comparison with Widsith almost mandatory. Krapp and Dobbie^I remark "there seems to be no doubt that here, as in Widsith, the autobiographical element is purely fictitious, serving only as a pretext for the enumeration of the heroic stories." The first five examples of heroic misfortune come directly from the old tradition and the sixth, Deor's own, is given a heroic setting.

The examples of Weland and Beadohild are based on well-

(1) Krapp and Dobbie, The Exeter Book, liii.

known Scandinavian tales (Völundarkviða and Þiðrikssaga). Briefly, Weland, a leader of the elves and a skilful smith, was discovered to be alone by King Niðhad, who determined to capture him. With a certain amount of cunning the king succeeded, had Weland hamstrung, and forced him to serve as the royal smith. Niðhad stole Weland's sword for himself and a ring for his daughter Beadohild. In revenge, Weland enticed Niðhad's two sons to his smithy, slew them, and made bowls out of their skulls, gems out of their eye-balls, and brooches out of their teeth, all of which he presented to the family. He also recovered the ring from Beadohild and ravished her, finally revealing everything to the king and making his escape.

For the example of Maðhild and the Geat no satisfactory parallel has been found. Nevertheless, we can recognise a situation of unrequited love here, and this makes Deor's point quite clear.

The next section of the poem, concerning Theodoric and the Mærings, is also open to some doubt. It could refer to either of the two great Theodorics, the Ostrogoth (Dietrich von Bern) or the Frank (Wulfdietrich). Further, the identity of the Mærings is not clear ^I.

The Eormanric section differs slightly as we are not given any specific instance of misfortune, but are told rather of Eormanric's tyranny. Malone² suggests that the poet did not

(1) For an account of the possibilities involved here, see Kemp Malone, Deor, 9-13. (2) Malone, op. cit. 14.

know the names or stories of any of his victims.

Now follow a few observations on adversity in general, and then Deor's own situation. Malone regards this situation as fictional and feels it was a brilliant inspiration for Deor to represent himself as the defeated rival of Heorrenda, the most famous of the Old Germanic minstrels. "A poet who was Heorrenda's rival and predecessor must indeed be worth reading!"¹

Structural difficulties have been seen in lines 28-34, which, according to Krapp and Dobbie², "have been quite generally condemned as an interpolation." But there seems no reason to condemn these general observations. Both The Wanderer and The Seafarer show the willingness of the Old English poet to introduce seeming inconsistencies in style and matter, and in this poem, notions of adversity are quite in keeping with the elegiac tone.

W.P.Ker³ seems to have regarded the author of Deor as following a definite literary tradition when he says "the allusive and lyrical manner of referring to heroic legend was kept up in England." But there is no evidence to suggest that the poet was familiar with the two other great examples of this kind of tradition, Widsith and Beowulf. We might perhaps assume that the poet knew something of Old English lyric and epic style, but we have no grounds for assuming that he had heard of either of these poems, or if he had,

(1) Malone, op. cit. 16. (2) Krapp and Dobbie, op. cit. liv.
 (3) W.P.Ker, Epic and Romance, 155.

that they influenced him. The form of the poem seems to depend on the matter of each section, and the emphasis and purpose of the refrain is obvious.

For myself, I remain unconvinced that the poem could not be personal. I can see no real motive for the poem in such a brief summary of five heroic episodes, whereas this summary would serve a definite purpose if the poet had a reason for making it. Possibly circumstances prevented him from mentioning real names and forced him to express his distress through a conventional consolatio. Because the surface details do not appear factual is no reason for assuming the whole to be merely a literary exercise. In any case the number of variables as to identities, dates, and circumstances are too great for any firm pronouncement to be made, and the final interpretation as to the genuineness of the situation must be a matter for the individual imagination.

WULF AND EADWACER

Early scholars took this poem to be a riddle because of its closeness to the first group of riddles in The Exeter Book. It is to be found on folios 100b-101a. Krapp and Dobbie remark ^I: "The initial capitalization of Wulf and Eadwacer, and the end punctuation and spacing after it, are less than we find in the poems immediately preceding it in the manuscript, and are, in fact, no more extensive than the capitalization, end punctuation and spacing which set off the several riddles

(I) Krapp and Dobbie, The Exeter Book, liv.

of The Exeter Book from each other. It is therefore not surprising that the earliest students of this text took it to be the first of the riddles." But in 1888 Henry Bradley^I observed that the poem is probably not a riddle at all, but a "fragment of a dramatic soliloquy." Since Bradley, most scholars have agreed with this, but the majority have seen it as complete in itself rather than as a fragment. In his article Bradley wrote: "The speaker, it should be premised, is shown by the grammar to be a woman. Apparently she is a captive in a foreign land. Wulf is her lover and an outlaw, and Eadwacer (I suspect, though it is not certain) is her tyrant husband." Some scholars, notably Gollancz², have preferred to see Wulf rather than Eadwacer as the woman's husband.

The poem alludes to a situation which scholarship has not been able to identify, but despite its obscurities, the intensity of emotion and the detailed regard for structure have made this poem the object of frequent critical attention. Regardless of the exact references of each line, the emotions of the poem read like a painting. Each image is intimately connected with the picture of the distressed woman - the fen-boung island, the rainy weather, the pleasure of a man's body and the pain of losing it, the rare visits. The last lines seem to crystalize the misery and defiance of the woman;

(1) Bradley, Academy XXXIII, 197f.

(2) Gollancz, Athenaeum 1902, II, 55ff.

the emotional pitch of the simple words "Gehyrest þū Eadwacer?" is extreme. However, it is not impossible that the poet is also implying that, despite her loathing for Eadwacer her husband, the woman still takes pleasure in his physical love.

One of the basic difficulties in the poem is the question of names. Most critics are agreed that a man named Wulf is spoken about, but the meaning of the word Eadwacer is much less certain. It has been interpreted both as a proper name referring to a second man, and as a common noun meaning "watchman of property, guardian". If, in fact, the poem does refer to the eternal triangle of woman, husband, and lover, it is relatively easy to build up a plausible situation around it, perhaps that of a forced or arranged marriage between the woman and Eadwacer in the face of Wulf's love for her. His exile may be the result of his defiance of the marriage, and there is defiance reflected in the woman's words:

"a wolf bears our cowardly whelp to the woods"

This line could be seen as referring metaphorically to the unhappy future of a child born of a miserable marriage. The double meaning of "wulf" is quite in keeping with the bitterness of the emotion. Or on the other hand, the line could be read literally, and mean that the woman's loathing extends to the son she has borne by Eadwacer, and that she rejoices when the child is carried off by a wolf.

Ultimately, I think it must be admitted that although the poem has an indisputable fascination and attractiveness, it does, in fact, border on the incomprehensible. Its greatest

strength lies in the scarcely controlled power of the emotion. The situation seems to be a real one, and while it is somewhat incoherent, the emotions it evokes can be clearly understood.

THE WIFE'S LAMENT

This poem is to be found on folios II5a-II5b of The Exeter Book. It is a difficult piece and has been interpreted in many ways, but it clearly depends on the emotional pattern woven by the woman's feelings, rather than on a time-sequence of events.

The beginning of the poem is straightforward and conventional, indicating what is to follow. In line 6 the woman explains that all her troubles began when her lord went overseas, and lines 12-13 suggest that this was the result of a conspiracy among her husband's kinsmen to separate them. Lines 27ff indicate that they succeeded and ordered the unfortunate woman to live alone in a cave under an oak tree. Lines 15-17 look back to the time when she left her own native land to dwell with her husband in the land where she now grieves so greatly ^I. Lines 18-26 follow line 17. After settling in her husband's land she found that, despite their good compatibility, he was troubled and contemplative about something. He remained cheerful, however, to avoid distressing

(I) This is made clearer if the emendation of the MS heard to eard is accepted. See annotations.

or implicating his wife, with whom he was evidently very much in love. Lines 25-26 ^I indicate that she must suffer as a result of her husband's feud because their parting has been forced, despite their vows. She has attempted to follow her husband (9-10) but has been thwarted by his kinsmen. After line 26 the woman returns to the present. She has been banished to a cave in the woods, and she describes this. The final lines begin with a gnomie formula which is slowly particularized until we see it refers to her husband. She enumerates precepts for the behaviour of a young person, which also apply to herself in her present situation, and she goes on to express her hope that her beloved will be bearing himself like a man, wherever he may be. Her imagined picture of him in "a desolate hall" evokes all over again her own grief of separation and explains the closing lamentation.

This poem has often been connected with The Husband's Message and, of course, the similarity of the themes is tempting enough. But, in fact, although the responses evoked are related, there is no reason for us to assume a connexion. Such situations must have been well-understood by the Anglo-Saxons, if not commonplace. This is made clear by the fact that the woman makes no real attempt to tell her story. She sketches in only a few details, rather roughly, and concerns herself mainly with her emotional responses. The few

(I) See annotations.

details there are seem to be used to reinforce the dramatic expression of her feelings. Throughout the poem she ties in her environment with her emotions, and this is specially evident after line 27. The desolation of her feelings seems to add gloom to her surroundings....

"....The dales
are gloomy, the hills lofty, sharp protective
fences are over-grown with briars, and
the dwelling id devoid of joy....."

As in Wulf and Eadwacer, the emotional coherence of the poem is far clearer than the actual references, although here we do get a reasonably consistent idea of past events.

In intensity and design, this poem is probably more successful than Wulf and Eadwacer, and it is certainly more sustained. Although the theme is perhaps closer in nature to that of The Husband's Message, I think that finally, it is with Wulf and Eadwacer that I would group this poem, and between the two of them they create an informative and sensitive record of an aspect usually neglected in a predominantly masculine society.

THE HUSBAND'S MESSAGE

Compared to The Wife's Lament, The Husband's Message offers few problems of interpretation. Another difficulty arises, however, concerning the starting point of the poem in The Exeter Book manuscript. Following the passage on folio

I22b (Ic was be sonde....) which Krapp and Dobbie call Riddle 60 in their edition, are three passages (folios I23a-I23b) beginning Nu ic onsundran þe, Hwat þec þonne biðan het, and Ongin mere secan. In capitalization and form, each resembles the Ic was be sonde passage. Krapp and Dobbie ¹ comment as follows: ".....in view of the lack of definite stylistic features in so many of the riddles of The Exeter Book, the decision whether the Ic was be sonde passage is to be taken as a riddle, and therefore as a separate poem, or as a part of The Husband's Message must depend upon the subjective judgement of an editor." Nearly all editors, including Krapp and Dobbie, begin The Husband's Message with Nu ic onsundran þe, and I have followed this ².

The overall impression of this poem is one of restraint and aristocracy. Leslie ³ sums this up well: "The man's very real desire for the woman is controlled and set against an exalted social background. His vision of their life together has a social setting. He sees himself and her in the role of lord and lady, dispensing treasure to their retainers. The key word here is genōh (35); he has enough of the wealth which their position in society demands to justify him in sending for her now."

The calmness of the poem comes from the formality and

(1) Krapp and Dobbie, op. cit. lix. (2) For a good summary of the arguments involved, see R.F.Leslie, Three Old English Elegies, 13-15. (3) Leslie, op. cit. 20.

courtesy of the messenger. In the first twelve lines he introduces himself, and a new section clearly begins at line 13. He passes on his master's message, and the use of the word sinchroden indicates that he is addressing a lady of rank.

This passage ends at line 25 and the third new section begins:

Go and seek the sea, the home of the gull;
take your place in the ship and go south from here
over the seaway to find your husband, for
your lord is there in expectation of you.

The messenger goes on to tell the lady of her husband's desires and achievements. There is a feeling that he is very fond of his master and wishes to ensure the arrival of his wife and, accordingly, his lord's happiness. As Leslie puts it,^I "there is throughout a deference which indicates that her compliance is not taken for granted." The whole tone of the poem is one of care and persuasion, not distress and misery as in The Wife's Lament.

Some scholars have regarded the entire poem as a runic message, the speaker being a personified rune-stave. While this does not seem likely (the stave would need to be excessively large to accomodate such a message), the fragmented nature of the first dozen lines probably prevents us from ruling out the possibility entirely. However, a better approach seems to be that of regarding the messenger as having

(I) Leslie, op. cit. 21.

just delivered a rune-stave, the trēocyn of line 2. He then proceeds to explain his errand, and seems to take pleasure in it:

I dare to promise that you will find a wonderful
fidelity there.....

The runes in The Husband's Message are S'R'EA'W and M, although the last has sometimes been read as D. However, since it has the same form as the rune in The Ruin 23, which forms the first element of the compound mondrēama (where the alliteration depends on 'm'), it seems reasonable to take it as M.

There have been several attempts to explain the runes in this poem ^I. According to Leslie, Elliott ² demonstrated that if a group of runes like this one does not spell a word it can be interpreted correctly only by giving each rune its name. Four of the runes are sigel sun, rād path, wyn joy, and mann man. The other, ēar, could mean either "ocean, sea, wave" or "earth, soil, gravel".

Elliott combines sigelrād and takes it to refer to the southward journey which the woman will make. He regards the remaining runes separately, and see the whole set as epitomising the main themes of the poem.

(1) A good summary may be found in Leslie, op. cit. 15-18.

(2) R.W.V. Elliott, The Runes in "The Husband's Message"

JEGP, liv (1955) 2,3. See Leslie, loc. cit.

Leslie points out ^I, however, that the rād element of sigelrād "should indicate the element of sigel, the sun, by analogy with the kennings swanrād and hronrād which refer to the sea. Sigelrād is therefore to be interpreted as "sky". " He then postulates that since EA and W are linked by the same punctuation as S and R " they should also be read as a compound, ēarwyn, which means 'the lovely earth'." He explains the meaning of the message as follows: " If these words, along with M for mon, are read in conjunction with gehȳre, then the messenger says of the ancient vows of the husband and wife (49): 'I hear heaven, earth, and the man declare together by oath that he would implement these pledges and those vows of love which you two often voiced in days gone by'The husband's words had probably been put in such a traditional form as 'I call upon heaven and earth to witness that I shall remain true to my vows.....' These are the sacred elemental names, which may be coupled with his own on the rune-stave and names by which they had in all probability both sworn their eald gebēot (49) þe git on ārdagum oft gespræconn (54)."

THE RUIN

The text of The Ruin is found on folios I23b-I24b of

(I) Leslie, loc. cit.

The Exeter Book. The manuscript is damaged irreparably in two places.

Several scholars have inclined to the opinion that the city mentioned is Bath, largely owing to the description of the baths and hot springs. But Krapp and Dobbie^I remark that "there is no evidence to show that Bath was ever completely in ruins and desolate.....The poet may well have had no particular city in mind as the subject of this poem, but may have introduced the mention of hot baths.....to give more concreteness to his picture."

In tone the poem is descriptive and reminiscent, almost the Anglo-Saxon equivalent of The Isles of Greece. The clue to the greatness of the city still exists in its ruins for the poet, and his interests, naturally enough, extend beyond the buildings to the builders. He pictures the life of the heroic age in the city with

much martial sound, many a mead-hall full
of the merriment of men, until mighty fate
changed that.

The evocation of the poet is a romantic one:

.....where long ago many a warrior
happy and gold-bright, adorned in splendour,
proud and flushed with wine, shone in his war-trappings.
And there is no hint of the blood and slaughter which were

(I) Krapp and Dobbie, op. cit. lxxv.

equally a part of the heroic age: according to the poet, the city was not destroyed by battle but by pestilence

The stricken died everywhere...

The poet seems to have found the hot springs and the baths particularly appealing to his imagination, and it is a great pity that the last few lines of the poem, which appear to have been the most exalted, are not intact.

THE FINNSBURG FRAGMENT

The Finnsburg Fragment was discovered in the Lambeth Palace Library towards the end of the seventeenth century, since which time the manuscript has been lost again. Fortunately however, Dr. George Hickes had transcribed it in his Linguarum Veterum Septentrionalium Thesaurus (I, 192ff), and this is now our sole source for the poem. Hickes' text is arranged, not always correctly, by half-lines, each of which is begun with a capital letter and ended with a period.

E.V.K.Dobbie¹ remarks: "Unfortunately, Hickes' reputation for accuracy, according to modern standards, is not very high, and it is likely that many of the corruptions in the extant text are to be imputed to him rather than to the scribe of the original manuscript." Accordingly, editors have been prepared to emend this text more readily than most others.²

(1) E.V.K.Dobbie, The Anglo-Saxon Minor Poems, xiii.

(2) For comparison, a facsimile of Hickes' text may be found in Fr. Klaeber's edition of Beowulf, 247-249.

Apart from the contention over the text, there has been much controversy about the relationship between The Finnsburg Fragment and the Finn episode in Beowulf. The fragment tells of a band of sixty Danes under Hnæf who are attacked before day-break in the hall of Finn, king of the Frisians, whom they are visiting. For five days they fight valiantly and without loss, and here the fragment ends. The episode in Beowulf (1063-1159) begins at this point and concerns the death of Hnæf and the revenge subsequently taken by his men. It is a condensed and allusive passage, but from it we can deduce that Hildeburh, a Danish princess and probably Hnæf's sister (see Beowulf 1076 and Widsith 29), has been married to Finn. During a visit of the Danes to Finn's court there is a fight in which Hnæf is killed, and finally a truce is arranged between Finn and Hengest, leader of the surviving Danes. Finn is to become their protector and they are to share equally in the hall and treasure distribution with the Frisians. Hengest and his men remain with Finn for the winter, but finally, spurred on by Guthlaf and Oslaf, Hengest's duty to avenge his lord takes precedence over his oaths to Finn, and during another battle, the latter is slain. Hildeburh and the royal treasure are taken back by the Danes to their country.

There has been much dispute, which is outside the present scope, as to where exactly the relationship between the fragment and the episode lies. Some scholars believe that Hnæf is still leading the Danes in the hall during the frag-

ment ^I, while others consider Hnæf to have perished already, leaving Hengest as the Danish leader ², although, on the whole, this view seems less likely.

As a piece of poetry in its own right, however, The Finnsburg Fragment is much easier to deal with, despite the absence of a proper beginning and end. In contrast with the episode, it is strongly dramatic and highly evocative, and in spite of the apparent relationship with the Beowulf passage, it compares with The Battle of Maldon more readily than with any other Anglo-Saxon poem. Gordon ³ regards it as "too fragmentary for (its) general scope and quality to be gauged", and this is partly true. Because it is incomplete, we cannot say of this poem, as we can of The Battle of Maldon, that it is a unity; but we can, as does Klæber ⁴, remark that "although a fragment, (it) is in a way the most perfect of the three Old English battle poems. Less polished and rhetorical than The Battle of Brunanburh, at the same time truer to the old form of verse and style than The Battle of Maldon, it shows complete harmony between subject-matter and form."

It has been suggested ⁵ that the original undamaged poem was probably of some two or three hundred lines, and if this is the case, it is a literary tragedy that so little remains.

(1) See Dobbie, *op. cit.* xv ; Klæber, *op. cit.* 232.

(2) See Bruce Dickens, Runic and Heroic Poems of the Old Teutonic Peoples, 44-45.

(3) E.V.Gordon, The Battle of Maldon, 24.

(4) Klæber, *op. cit.* 237. (5) Dobbie, *op. cit.* xviii.

The poem is a thoroughly Germanic one, typical of the heroic ethos. Like The Battle of Maldon, its motives and situations revolve around the heroic spirit and the mutual loyalty of lord and retainer. But The Finnsburg Fragment probably embraces these to a greater extent than the other poem. If our reconstruction of the situation is correct, the poem goes beyond the mere repulsion of foreign invaders, and includes themes concerned with feuds between in-laws, conflict of duty and loyalty, and the bitterness of losing relatives on both sides.

The poetry itself is like the light of a pure and distant star, bringing us just the feeling of the battle:

Hræfen wandrode

sweart and sealobrūn. Swurdlēoma stōd,

swylce eal Finnsburuh fȳrenu wāre.

In this it lacks the wistful restraint of the Maldon poet, but it makes up for this with its jubilant admiration of the heroes and its eloquent expressive language. Of its rhythm, Kløber^I comments that "the jerky C and rousing B varieties hold prominent places." He also observes irregularities of alliteration which he attributes, I think correctly, to the less literary character of the poem "which presupposes a far less strictly regulated oral practice."

All in all, then, despite its incompleteness, I regard

(I) Kløber, loc. cit.

this poem as one of the high-points of extant Anglo-Saxon poetic achievement.

THE BATTLE OF MALDON

By about the beginning of the seventeenth century, the earliest known manuscript of The Battle of Maldon had reached the Cotton Library, where it remained until it was almost completely destroyed by fire in 1731. It has been dated at late eleventh century. Luckily, some years before the fire, a transcript of the poem was made by John Elphinston, under-keeper of the Cottonian Library. Elphinston was a fairly good copyist, and where he did make mistakes, they are usually easy to recognise and correct. Accordingly, it seems likely that we have substantially the same material to work with as was contained in the eleventh century manuscript.

The actual battle of Maldon was fought in 991 when a viking fleet sailed up the estuary of the Blackwater and set up camp near Maldon. The vikings found their advance opposed by Byrhtnoth, the ealdorman of Essex. Historically the battle is of little importance, as it did nothing to halt the increasing wave of Scandinavian invasions which were beginning again at this time, but the piece of literature which resulted from it gives a close and sympathetic insight into the ethos of the Anglo-Saxon warrior. It seems that the English could easily have contained the vikings at the bridge, and it is touching that the poet does not condemn Byrhtnoth for bad tactics, but rather calls him proud, and attributes his

yielding to the "guile" of the "hateful enemy".

The poem appears to be the only detailed account of the battle, and, apart from a brief note in the Chronicle for the year, it is the most trustworthy. Other accounts do corroborate many of the details given by the poet. Byrhtnoth himself seems to have been one of the most prominent and powerful men of his time; he was overbearing in size, strength, and personality, and reputedly commanded much respect. He was made ealdorman of Essex in 956, at which time he is presumed to have been about thirty¹, and married. This would make him sixty-five when he was killed at Maldon. He was married to Alflæd, daughter of Ælfgar who had also been ealdorman of Essex, and through this marriage he acquired great wealth. But his political strength apparently lay as much in the favour of the king and church as in his wealth. He also had powerful friends, and the poem shows him to have been popular as a warrior and leader. He was a very religious man and a dedicated protector and benefactor of the monasteries. The historian of Ely, one of the monasteries most favoured by Byrhtnoth, describes him as "eloquent, robust, of great bodily stature.... and remarkably brave and free from the fear of death. On all occasions he respected Holy Church and the servants of God, and devoted the whole of his patrimony to their use. He devoted his life while it lasted to the defence of his country's freedom".²

(1) See E.V.Gordon, The Battle of Maldon, 16-17.

(2) Ibid 20.

Gordon states bluntly, but probably correctly: "The Battle of Maldon was composed soon after the battle: memory of all that happened was still fresh, and the heroism of individual deeds and speeches still seemed of primary importance, their glory undimmed by the defeat." ¹

It is not clear whether the poet took part in the battle or not, although various phrases in the poem suggest that he did not; but he does seem to have known the personalities involved, and is obviously emotionally associated with their bravery in fighting to the death to avenge their lord and keep their vows to him. Gordon suggests, appealingly, that "possibly he was a member of Byrhtnoth's well-born heorðwerod, who missed the battle and happened to be a practised poet. He composed his poem as a memorial to Byrhtnoth and his noble companions in the same spirit as Byrhtnoth's widow Alflæd wove her husband's deeds into the tapestry which she gave to Ely." ²

The Battle of Maldon and Beowulf are the only two major poems extant in Old English which directly reflect in detail the heroic tradition, and perhaps Maldon is more united in this than Beowulf is. It is certainly a poem which is very much in the mainstream of Germanic tradition, and should be seen as representing Anglo-Saxon England in a Germanic and European setting. The style of the poem is a particularly vivid and immediate one. The poet never digresses, and

(1) Ibid 21.

(2) Ibid 22-23.

constantly prefers understatement to elaboration. He is obviously involved deeply with what he is writing about, but shows restraint and fidelity to his subject comparable with that of the warriors on the field. It is hard to guess at the actual numbers involved in the battle because the poet seems constantly to focus and refocus his attention on a few people at a time. Historically the battle was particularly bloody, and we can sense this in the poem, but mainly by implication. We are not told, for example, how many men were killed by flying arrows and spears, or how effective the shield-wall was, or how many vikings were killed on the causeway before they were allowed safe passage. This subordination of the general in favour of the individual seems to be a definite selection made by the poet for the sake of his style and unity, neither of which collapse anywhere in the poem. The narrative and verse flow without interruption, and the over-all feeling is one of masculinity and discipline. The achievement of this poet can perhaps be summed up in one of his own lines:

He læȝ ðeȝenlice ðeodne ȝehende.

He lay, as befits a retainer, nearby his lord.

WALDERE

In January 1860 two sheets of Old English verse dealing with the legend of Walter of Aquitaine were discovered by Werlauff in the Royal Library at Copenhagen. Each sheet

contains two consecutive pages of text, and they are usually referred to as Fragments I and II. The handwriting has been assigned to about the year 1000.

As the text is fragmented in this way, it is difficult to fit the two leaves into their correct places in the story, although comparison with other texts helps with this. The earliest and most complete of the continental forms is the Latin epic of Waltharius by Ekkehard I of St. Gall (ob. 973). In order to make our present fragments easier to understand, I shall give a brief summary of the story.

Hagano, a young Frankish nobleman, Hiltgunt, the only daughter of the Burgundian king Herericus, and Waltharius, son of King Alpharius of Aquitaine, are sent as hostages to Attila, king of the Huns. In Attila's service Waltharius and Hagano, who are sworn brothers, distinguish themselves as warriors. But on the death of the Frankish king Gibicho, his successor, Guntharius, renounces his alliance with Attila, and Hagano flees by night to Worms. Fearing that Waltharius will follow his sworn brother, Attila proposes to marry him to a Hunnish princess, but Waltharius flees with his childhood sweetheart Hiltgunt, and two cases of treasure, to cross the Rhine by Worms. By now Guntharius has heard of their escape and hopes to make good the tribute paid to Attila by his father. He plots to capture their treasure. With twelve warriors, including the unwilling Hagano, he overtakes them. Waltharius refuses Guntharius's demand for Hiltgunt and the treasure, but offers two hundred rings in tribute. Guntharius attacks, but Waltharius is in an im-

pregnable position. He slays eight warriors individually, and then three simultaneously. Finally Hagano, whose nephew is one of the dead, agrees to aid Guntharius, and the next day they attack Waltharius in the open. After a vicious fight, Guntharius loses a leg, Waltharius loses his right hand, and Hagano loses his right eye and six of his teeth. This ends the fight, and Hiltgunt binds the wounds. Finally, Waltharius returns home, marries Hiltgunt, and, after his father's death, rules successfully for thirty years.

It seems probable that our two Old English fragments are the remains of a long Anglo-Saxon epic poem based on the same material as the foregoing. In Ekkehard's poem Walter's father is called Alphere, in the Middle High German fragments which remain ^I, he is called Alker, and in our fragments we read of Alfhere's sunu (I,11). Waldere is described as Atlan ordwyga (I,6), and Guthhere is called wine Burgenda (II,14). Hagano's reluctance to attack Waltharius is echoed in Waldere's words:

"What, did you really believe Hagena's hand had done battle with me, and put an end to my combat on foot?"

We must now attempt to place the Waldere Fragments into their proper positions in the story.

It seems clear that the woman encouraging Waldere in

(I) Known as the Graz Fragment, in which Walther, Hiltegunt, & Hagene are still at the Hunnish court, and the Vienna Fragment, in which Walther and Hiltegunt are being escorted home from Worms by Volker, presumably after the fight with Gunther.

I, 2-32 is Hiltgunt, or Hildegyth as she would be called in Old English; and in II, 14-31 we are told that it is Waldere who is speaking. It remains to identify the speaker whose speech in II, 1-10 is incomplete. E.V.K.Dobbie summarizes opinion as follows ¹: "From Müllenhof's time until comparatively recently, editors and commentators were agreed that Guthhere is the speaker here, lines 14ff (addressed to the wine Burgenda) then being Waldere's reply. But in 1925 Wolff proposed to take II, 1-10 as the concluding lines of Hagen's refusal to take part in the combat. More recently Norman has suggested that Waldere is the speaker of II, 1-10 as well as of what follows, lines 11-13 being merely a reintroduction of the same speaker. The problem presented by this passage is very difficult, but after all is said, probability still favours Guthhere as the speaker of II, 1-10."

It is also far from easy to establish the correct order of the two fragments. Hildegyth's speech in Fragment I clearly comes before Guthhere's rejection of Waldere's offer of tribute. In Fragment II, Waldere says he is weary of battle, which indicates he has already been fighting, and suggests that Hagen was present (although it gives no clue as to whether he was a combatant). Probably then, both fragments describe the early part of the fight, and probably the correct sequence is I, II. Certain scholars have reversed this ², but their arguments are too lengthy to be dealt with here.

(1) E.V.K.Dobbie, The Anglo-Saxon Minor Poems, xxiv-xxv.

(2) For a summary and refs. see Dobbie, op. cit. xix-xxvi.

Dobbie ^I suggests that because of the "rather deliberate manner of the two fragments" the poem is likely to have been an epic of some length, "perhaps even as long as Beowulf."

The language in the fragments is, in the main, late West Saxon, but there are some Northumbrian variants.

(I) Ibid.

THE POEMS

THE WANDERER

The solitary man often waits for help,
for the compassion of God, though sad at heart
he must travel the paths of exile across the
waterways for a long period, must dip his hands
into the frosty-cold sea. Fate is so inexorable!

And so said the wanderer, thinking of hardships,
of the slaughter of fierce warriors, and of the fall
of kinsmen:

 "Often I have to bewail my sorrows
alone, at the dawn of each day. Now there is no-one
alive to whom I dare speak my heart openly.
I know as a truth that it is a noble custom
in a man to bind fast the heart and preserve
the treasure chambers of the mind, let him think
what he will. The weary of heart cannot resist
Fate, and an angry thought is no consolation.
And so it is that those eager for glory often
lock fast a sad thought in the coffer
of their breast;

 so I have had to bind in fetters
my heart, often wretched and sorrowful, sundered
from my homeland and far from noble kinsmen,
since years ago I concealed my generous
lord in the darkness of the earth and went forth
with wintry sadness, abject over the expanse of the
waves seeking near and far the hall of a treasure-giver
wherever I might find someone in the
meadhall who might know my lord, or who
would comfort me in my friendlessness,
and draw me to him with gifts."

 The experienced man
knows how cruel a comrade is sorrow,
he who has few dear and close friends;

it is not the wound gold that falls to his lot
 but exile, not the richness of this earth, but
 a frosty breast. He thinks of the retainers
 and the receiving of treasure, and of how
 in his youth his golden lord accustomed him
 to the feast. All this joy has perished!
 He knows this who must forever forgo the advice
 of his dear lord and friend: together
 sorrow and sleep often bind this poor solitary man.
 His mind dreams of embracing and kissing
 his lord, of laying head and hands upon his knee
 just as he used to in days gone by, when he was
 near the gift throne.

Then the friendless man
 wakes again to see before him the dark waves
 and the sea-birds bathing, spreading their feathers,
 the frost and snow falling, mingled with hail.
 Then, sore for his beloved, the wounds of his breast
 drag more heavily. Sorrow wells up again,
 then the memory of kinsmen pervades his mind;
 he greets them joyfully, gazes
 eagerly at his companion warriors.
 They swim away again! And as they vanish
 their spirits do not bring forth many well-known
 songs. Care wells up again in the one
 who must send his weary mind time and again
 over the waves.

Therefore I cannot think
 why in the world my mind does not despair
 when I contemplate the lives of all the great
 warriors and courageous retainers, and how
 they have suddenly left the halls. And so it is
 that day by day this world diminishes and
 passes away, for a man will not become wise
 without sufficient winters in this world.
 A wise man must be long-suffering, and
 he should not be too passionate or too hasty

in speech; in war he should be neither over-weak nor too rash, neither over-fearful nor too glad, and not avaricious; or over-eager to boast before he has full knowledge. A man must not boast until he knows in his heart his decision is the right one. A wise man must understand how terrifying it will be when all this world's wealth stands waste as now in different places all over the world of men, walls stand, battered by the wind, hung with frost, the dwellings in ruins. Winehalls crumble to pieces, rulers lie bereft of joy, the tried warriors have fallen in their pride by the wall. Some war carried off, bore them on distant paths; one the sea-eagle carried away over the high sea, one was death's share to the grey wolf, and one, sad-faced, buried an earl in a cave in the earth.

Thus the Creator of men destroyed this settlement until, deprived of its inhabitants, its sound of revelry, all the ancient work of giants stood empty.

Then he who has considered wisely these ruins, and, wise in heart, has pondered deeply this dark life, he is often reminded of the past, of many slaughters, and speaks these words: "Where has the horse gone? Where the man? Where has the treasure-giver gone? Where the seats of banquets? Where are the joys of the hall? Alas! the bright cup. Alas! the armed man. Alas! the glory of the prince. How that time has passed away, has grown dark under night's shadows as if it had never been. Now a wall stands in the place of the dear warriors, wondrous high and covered with serpent shapes."

The might of the ashwood spear, the weapon
greedy for slaughter, has carried off the earls,
a glorious fate; and on these stone walls
storms beat; the snow-storm, the terror of winter,
binds the earth; then comes darkness,
the shadow of night grows gloomy, drives a fierce
hailstorm from the north, to the distress
of men. All is fraught with hardship in the kingdom
of the earth, the world under the heavens
is changed by the decree of fate.
Possessions here are ephemeral, friends come and go,
here man is transient, and kinsmen are transient here,
the whole framework of the earth becomes empty."

Thus spoke the wise man in his heart and sat
apart in meditation.
He who holds to his faith is good, and never in his grief
should a man show
the sorrow in his breast with too much haste
unless that earl first knows
how to accomplish, with valour, its cure.

Well it is for the man who seeks mercy and comfort
from the Father in heaven, where all our security stands.

THE SEAFARER

About myself I can sing a true song,
telling of my experiences in days of hardship,
of my frequent suffering in hard times,
of the bitter sorrow of heart I have lived through;
for many a ship has been an abode of sorrow to me
in my venturing, when the anxious night-watch
has kept me at the bow of the boat, where terrible
waves tossed as she drove past cliffs. My feet
were numbed, bound by the frost with fetters of
coldness, and sorrows sent hot flushes round
my heart; hunger from within tore at me, so weary
of the sea. The man whose lot is cast most
happily on land does not know how I have
been on the ice-cold sea winter-long, wretched
and sorrowful, hung with icicles, cut off
from dear kinsmen, in the paths of exile;
hail showers flew. I could hear nothing there
but the roar of the sea, the ice-cold wave.
Sometimes the song of the wild swan served as
entertainment for me, or the cry of the gannet
and the noise of the curlew instead of the laughter
of men, sometimes the mewing of the seagull,
instead of the merry buzz of the meadhall.
Storms battered the sheer cliff, the cry of
the ice-feathered gull responded; repeatedly the
wet-winged sea-eagle screamed back; and
there was no friend or kinsman who could comfort
the despairing spirit. Indeed, for the man who
has lived a pleasant life in the dwellings of men,
free from dangerous adventures, splendid and merry
with wine, it is hard to understand how I, exhausted
often had to remain in the seaway.

Night thickened,

snow drove from the north, frost gripped the ground,
hail, those coldest grains, fell on the earth.
And so thoughts torment my heart
now that I am to venture on the towering
seas, the tumult of the salt waves - my
heart's desire repeatedly urges the spirit to
journey, so that far from here I seek out
a country of aliens - for there is
no man on earth however proud at heart,
generous with gifts, vigorous in youth, or
brave in deeds; (there is no man) however
friendly to his lord who, before seafaring, is
not always a little anxious as to what
the Lord will bring him to. His thoughts
are not on the harp, or on the receiving of rings,
nor in his pleasure in woman, nor his joy in
worldly things; nor are his thoughts on anything,
anything other than the rolling of the waves, for
there is never any peace of mind for the seafarer.

The woods take on their blossoms,
adorning the dwellings and making the meadows
beautiful: the world revives. All these things
urge the heart of a thinking man to voyaging,
urge a man with an eager spirit to venture
far on the paths of the sea. Likewise the cuckoo,
the turn-key of summer, sings with
a melancholy voice, announces sorrow,
a remembrance bitter to the heart. The warrior,
the man blessed with comfort, does not know
what they suffer who travel to the farthest
the paths of exile.

Now my heart journeys out
from my breast; my spirit ranges far and wide
over the haunt of the whale, in the ocean tide,
across the expanse of the world, then comes to me

again, full of impatient and eager longing. The solitary bird cries across the expanse of ocean, whetting irresistibly the longing of my heart for the sea, for the joys of the Lord are warmer to me than this dead transitory life on land.

I do not believe that worldly prosperity endures for ever. One of three things always hangs in the balance until a man's time is up: illness, or age, or the violence of the sword can snatch the life of a man doomed to die.

Therefore the best memorial for every man is the praise of those who live after him and commemorate him; and this he may earn by good actions on earth against the wickedness of enemies, by opposing the devil with noble deeds, so that the children of men will afterwards praise him, and his glory will live then forever among the angels, in the blessedness of eternal life and bliss among the most noble.

The days of all the magnificence of the kingdoms of the world are gone. Kings and emperors and givers of gold are not now as they were of old, when between them they performed the most glorious deeds, and lived in most lordly renown. The whole company of noble warriors has fallen, those joys have passed away; now inferior men live and control the world, occupy it in toil and trouble. Glory is humbled and the nobility of the earth grows old and withers, as does every man now throughout the world of men. Old-age overtakes a man, his face grows pale, he mourns grey-haired, realising his former friends, the sons of princes, have been relinquished to the dust. Then, when life has gone, the body may not taste sweetness or feel pain, move the hand or dream

in the mind. Though for his brother born
a brother will strew the grave with gold, bury
him with various treasures beside the dead,
gold to go with him, it cannot be a help
to the soul that is full of sin in the presence
of the terrible power of God, to the soul of him
who has hoarded it beforehand, while still alive
on earth.

WIDSITH

Widsith spoke, unlocked his store of words,
 he who had wandered among more tribes and peoples
 on earth than any other man: he had often
 received coveted treasure in the hall.
 His line sprang from the Myrgings. It was
 with the gracious lady Balhild that
 he first sought the home of the king of the
 Ostrogoths, Eormanric the hostile treaty-breaker,
 from Angel in the east. He began to speak many
 words then:

" I have heard of
 many men ruling over the nations; each
 chieftain, (one lord after another, ruling his land)
 must live virtuously if he desires his throne
 to flourish! For a time the best of these
 was Hwala, and Alexander, the greatest
 among the race of men, and of all of those whom
 I have heard mentioned around the world,
 he flourished the most.

Attila ruled the Huns,
 Eormanric the Goths, Becca the Banings,
 Gifica the Burgundians, Cæsar the Greeks,
 and Cælic the Finns, Hagena the island Rugians
 and Heoden the Glommas. Witta ruled the Swæfe,
 Wada the Hælsings, Meaca the Myrgings,
 Mearchealf the Hundings. Theodoric,
 counsellor of the Rondings, ruled the Franks,
 Breca the Brondings, Billing the Werns.
 Oswine ruled the Eowan and Gefwulf the Jutes,
 Fin Folcwalding the Frisian line.
 Sigehere ruled the Sea-Danes longest,
 Hnæf the Hocings, Helm the Wulfings,
 Wald the Woings, Wod the Thydings,
 Sæferth the Secgan, Ongendtheow the Swedes,

Sceafthere the Ymbran, Sceafa the Lombards,
 Hun the Hætware and Holen the Wrosnas.
 The king of the Herefaran was called Hringweald.
 Offa ruled Angel, Alewih the Danes:
 he was the boldest of all these men;
 but still he did not surpass Offa, in his
 deeds of valour; for Offa, while still a boy,
 gained in battle the greatest of kingdoms, ahead
 of all men. No-one of his age accomplished
 greater deeds of valour. With a single sword
 he fixed the boundary against the Myrgings
 at Fifeldor. The Angles and the Swæfe
 held it afterwards as Offa struck it out.
 For a very long time Hrothwulf and Hrothgar,
 uncle and nephew, kept the peace intact,
 after they had driven away the race of Vikings,
 humbled the array of Ingeld, and hewn down
 the army of the Heathobards at Heorot.
 I fared in such wise through many strange lands
 all over this wide world; there, separated from
 my kindred, far from my people, I experienced
 good and evil and served far and wide.
 And so I can sing and tell my tale, relate
 to the company in the meadhall how noble men
 were generous to me with gifts.

I have been

among the Huns and among the Hreth-Goths,
 among the Swedes, and the Geats, and the South-Danes.
 I have accompanied the Wendels and the Wærne, and the Vikings,
 I have been with the Gefthas, the Wends, and the Gefflegas.
 I was with the Angles and the Swæfe and the Anenas.
 I have been among the Saxons, the Sycgan, and the Sweord-
 weras.
 I have accompanied the Hrons and the Deanas and the Heatho-
 Ræmes.
 I have been among the Thrings and the Throwends,

and I have been among the Burgundians - there I received
armlets: Guthere gave me a goodly treasure there to
reward my song; he was no niggardly king!

I was with the Franks and the Frisians and the Frumtings.
I accompanied the Rugians, the Glommas, and the Romans.

Likewise I was in Italy with Elfwine: he had
the readiest hand of all the men I know for achieving
praise, and the most liberal heart in the giving of
rings, of shining armlets - the son of Eadwine!

I was among the Saracens and the Serings.

I was with the Greeks and the Finns, and with Cæsar,
he who held sway over the Roman Empire,
and the towns of revelry, riches, and pleasures.

I have been among the Scots and the Picts and the Scride-
finns.

I have accompanied the Lidwicings, the Leonas, and the
Lombards,

the Hæthnas and Herethas, and the Hundings.

I was with the Israelites and with the Assyrians,
with the Hebrews and with the Hindus and with the Egypt-
ians.

I have been with the Medes and with the Persians and
with the Myrgings

and the Mofdings, and I have been against the Myrgings,
and with the Amothings. I have been among the East-

Thyrings,

the Eolas and Istas, and the Idumings.

And I was with Eormanric constantly. The king
of the Goths was generous with me - he gave me
an armlet, this lord of cities and their people, in which
there was estimated to be six hundred pieces
of refined gold, counted in shillings; this I gave
into the possession of my lord, Eadgils, when
I came home, a gift to my beloved prince, because
he, this lord of the Myrgings, gave me land,
my father's home.

And Ealhild gave me another,
 the noble queen of the retainers, the daughter of Eadwine.
 And when I had to recount in song the whereabouts
 under the heavens best known to me of a gold-adorned
 queen giving forth treasure, her praise
 was spread through many lands. When
 Scilling and I raised the song with clear voice
 before our noble lord (loud to the harp the song
 rang out) many men proud in spirit,
 those who well-understood, proclaimed that
 they had never heard a better song.

From there I wandered all through the land of the Goths;
 I always sought the best companionship,
 which was the house of Eormanric.
 I sought Hethea and Beadeca, and the Harlungs,
 I sought Emercea, and Fridla, and East-Gota
 the wise and good father of Unwen.
 I sought Secca and Becca, Seafola and Theodric,
 Heathoric and Sifeca, Hlitha and Ingentheow.
 I sought Eadwine and Elsa, Agelmund and Hungar,
 and the proud company of the With-Myrgings.
 I sought Wulfhere and Wyrnhere; and war
 was not at all infrequent there when the Gothic army
 with sharp swords had to defend their ancient seat
 against the people of Atla by the forest of the Wistlas.
 I sought Rædhere and Rondhere, Runstan and Gislhere,
 Withergield and Freotheric, Wudga and Hama.
 They were not the worst of comrades, although
 I mention them last. The spear very often flew
 from that company, whistling and shrieking against
 hostile folk. With wound gold the adventurers
 Wudga and Hama ruled there over men and women.
 And I have always found it true in my journeying
 that the man who is loved most by the people in the land

is the one to whom God gives dominion over men
to hold it while he lives in this world.

So the singers
of men are destined to go wandering throughout
many lands; they state their need, and show
their thanks in words; north and south
they always meet someone appreciative of songs,
bounteous in gifts, who desires to exalt his fame
before his retainers, to do deeds of honour,
until all is gone, light and life departed together.
He gains glory, and under the heavens, has
an honour which does not pass away.

DEOR

Weland knew very well the feeling of exile,
Oppressed with hardships, the steadfast man
had for companions sorrow and longing,
wintry-cold exile; he was often miserable
after Nithhad laid bonds on him, slashed
the sinews of a nobler man.

That passed away, so may this also.

Her brother's death
did not wound the heart of Beadohild
as much as her own state when
she realised clearly that she was
with child. She did not dare
think of the upshot of this.

That passed away, so may this also.

Many have heard that the Geat's love
for Mæthilde grew so boundless that
this sad love completely deprived him of sleep.

That passed away, so may this also.

For thirty winters Theodoric was exiled
from the city of the Mæringas; many knew this.

That passed away, so may this also.

We have heard of the wolfish thoughts of
Eormanric; far and wide he held the
Gothic kingdom. He was a savage king.
Many a warrior sat bound by sorrows,

expecting the worst, and constantly wishing for the downfall of the kingdom.

That passed away, so may this also.

The sorrowful man sits deprived of happiness, troubled in heart; his portion of hardships seems to him endless. But then he may reflect that the wise Lord works in many ways throughout this world, granting to many a man honour and certain glory, but to some a miserable portion.

About myself I will say that

I was once singer of the Heodenings

and dear to my lord. Deor was my name.

For many winters I had a useful position

and a gracious lord; but now Heorrenda,

a skilful minstrel, has received the estate

that the protector of men once gave to me.

That passed away, so may this also.

WULF AND EADWACER

To my people
it is as if they were given a present:
they will take him if he comes
with a company of warriors.

Our lives are not alike.

Wulf is on one island, I
on another. That island is
fen-bound, surrounded past access;
there are cruel men there on the island.
They will take him if he comes
with a company of warriors.

Our lives are not alike.

My Wulf wandered distant
and I waited with desire;
it was rainy weather then,
and I sat tearful.

Ready for battle, the man embraced me.
In his arms I felt pleasure, but it was
hateful to me also. Wulf, my Wulf,
desire of you makes me sick, not a lack
of food; your rare visits, my mourning heart.

Do you hear, Eadwacer ?
a wolf bears our cowardly whelp
to the woods.

It is easy to split
what was never joined, our
song together.

THE WIFE'S LAMENT

Of my own undertaking I utter this tale
with great sadness. I can relate
the hardships I have endured since
I grew up, both in recent times and long ago,
and never have they been worse than now.
I suffer continual torment from my miseries.

First my lord went away, away from
our people here, over the rolling waves;
I grieved for my lord before dawn -
which land was he in ? Then I departed
on a journey into friendless exile to seek
his service because of my desperate need.
That began when the man's kinsmen decided,
in a secret council, to part the two of us
so that we might live in a most wretched fashion,
as far apart as possible in this great world.

My lord had commanded me to dwell here;
I had no-one close to me in this country,
no devoted friends, therefore my heart is sad.

Then I met the ideal husband for me;
he was ill-starred, sad at heart, thinking
of murder and concealing his feelings,
under a cheerful bearing. Very often
we vowed, the two of us, that nothing would
part us but death alone, nothing else.
That has changed now, now that our friendship
is (taken away) as if it had never been:
far and near I must suffer from the feud
of my beloved.

I have been ordered to dwell
in a grove in a wood, under an oak tree,

in the cave; this cavern is ancient,
I am completely seized with longing. The dales
are gloomy, the hills lofty, sharp protective
fences are overgrown with briars, and the
dwelling is devoid of joy. Again and again
my lord's departure fiercely seizes me.

There are lovers on earth living in love:
they occupy their beds while I walk at dawn,
alone, through this earth-cave under the oak tree
where I may sit in the long summer's day,
where I can weep from my miseries, my many
hardships, because I cannot ever rest from
the grief of my heart, or all this longing
which has laid hold of me in this life.

A young man must always be sober-minded,
steadfast in thought; likewise he should have
a cheerful bearing; moreover he should have
care in his breast, a multitude of constant
sorrows. Let him depend on himself for all
his worldly joy, let it be as an outcast
in a far country that my lover sits beneath
a cliff, covered with rime by the storm;
a disconsolate man marooned by water
in a desolate hall, my lover suffers much
grief of heart; too often he remembers
the more friendly abode. It is woeful for one
who must await a loved-one with longing.

THE HUSBAND'S MESSAGE

Now I am apart from you I will tell you
stave. I grew up from childhood;
 me of men.....must
 set forth for other lands.....
 salt streams.....
 Many a time have I, in the boat's.....sought,
 where me my liege lord.....
 over the high seas; I have come here now
 on the deck of a ship, and now you shall know
 how you may understand for yourself the love of my lord.
 I dare to promise that you will find a wonderful
 fidelity there.

Ah! the carver of this piece
 of wood bade me ask you, lady adorned
 with jewels, to call to mind the pledges
 which you two often sealed in former days
 while you dwelt in the mead cities, lived
 in the same land. A feud drove him away from
 the victorious people. But now he himself bade me
 joyfully tell you to set sail as soon as
 you hear the cuckoo singing sadly in the wood
 at the edge of the hill. Do not let any living man
 divert you from the journey or hinder your going.
 Go and seek the sea, the home of the gull;
 take your place in the ship and go south from here
 over the seaway to find your husband, for
 your lord is there in expectation of you.
 He wishes for nothing more to happen in the world,
 he told me himself, than for mighty God
 to grant that the two of you together may
 once again distribute bright treasure,
 studded bracelets, to warriors and retainers.
 He has enough burnished gold.....
 though he has his home among foreign people

in a fair land.....
of devoted men, although here my friend
.....
forced by necessity, he launched his boat,
and alone on the expanse of the waves he had
to voyage across the sea, eager to depart and
stir up the ocean currents. Now the man
has overcome his misfortune; he has no lack
of what he desires in horses or treasure,
mead-joys or noble treasure on earth, if only
he enjoys you, O prince's daughter.
About the old promise between the two
of you, I heard that he would swear by
S'R'EA'W and M together that
he would carry out the vow
and the troth which you two often
sealed in former days, for the rest of his life.

THE RUIN

Splendid is this wall of stone, broken by
 events; the city crumbled; the work of giants decays.
 Roofs have fallen in, towers lie in ruins,
 the barred gates have been plundered, hoar frost
 is on the cement, the ruined roofs undermined
 by age, are no shield from the rain.

The earth has the master-builder in its grip,
 perished and gone, the hard grip of the ground,
 until a hundred generations of men depart.

Often the wall endured, lichen-grey and
 rusty-red, from kingdom to kingdom,
 remained standing under storms; the high
 arch perished. The wall still.....

collapsed in a heap; fell.....

fiercely cut.....

.....shone it.....

.....monument of skill, ancient work.....

.....to the mud fell.

The mind....encouraged swift purpose;
 ingenious with rings, resolutely bound
 the foundations wondrously together with wire.
 The city dwellings were beautiful, the bath-houses
 numerous, with a profusion of high gables,
 much martial sound, many a meadhall full
 of the merriment of men, until mighty fate
 changed that.

Days of pestilence came,
 the stricken died everywhere; death took
 its plunder of valiant swordsmen; their
 fortress became a wasteland. The city crumbled;
 the builders died, the warriors returned to the earth.
 Thus those buildings decayed and the curved red
 tiles fell from the vaulted roof. The ruins
 have crumbled to the plain, broken into piles

of stone, where long ago many a warrior
happy and goldbright, adorned in splendour,
proud and flushed with wine, shone in his war-trappings;
he used to gaze at his treasure - the silver, the
precious gems, at prosperity and possessions, at the
jewelry, at the bright dwelling in the broad kingdom.
Stone houses used to stand, a hot spring once gushed,
surging across the ground; the wall clasped everything
to its bright bosom; the baths used to be there,
giving warmth to the heart; that was convenient.
Was allowed to stream.....
over grey stone, the scalding water
.....
into the circular pool. Hot.....
.....where the baths were.
Then is.....
.....; that is a noble thing,
how the.....city. (.....)

THE FINNSBURG FRAGMENT

.....the gables are burning."
 Then Hnæf, the king young in war, spoke out:
 "That is not the dawn in the east, nor does a dragon
 fly here, and the gables of this hall are not burning;
 but here men bear forth arms, birds cry out,
 the grey-coated one howls, the spear resounds,
 shield answers shaft.

Now the moon shines,
 wandering amongst the clouds; now deeds of woe
 rise up to be enacted by the hostility of this people.
 So awake now, my warriors! grasp your linden
 shields and think of valour; strive in the fight's
 front and be of good courage!"

Then arose many a thane adorned in gold,
 girded on his sword; the noble champions
 Sigferth and Esha drew their swords and
 went to the door, and to the other door went
 Ordlaf and Guthlaf, followed by Hengest himself.

Meanwhile, Guthhere restrained Garulf from bearing
 so excellent a life and armour to the door of the
 hall at the first onslaught, now that one so hardy
 in battle was waiting to take it.

But the brave warrior
 who held the door shouted clearly above the tumult,
 "It is I, Sigferth," he said, "a warrior of the Secgan
 and a hero widely known: I have endured many
 woes and fierce battles. Now is your appointed
 hour to find your destiny with me, win or lose."

Then the din of slaughter broke out within the hall,
 the bossed shield in the hands of the brave was made
 to smash the bone-helmet, so that the hall floor resounded,-

Until Garulf, the son of Guthlaf, fell in that battle,
the first of all the men, and round him fell
many a good warrior with active body.

The raven circled, black and dark-brown.
Swordlight gleamed as if all Finnsburg
were in flames. Never have I heard of sixty
victorious warriors bearing themselves better
or more worthily in the battles of men, and never
did young men make better return for the white mead
than these young retainers repaid Hnæf.

The warriors fought for five days, but none
of them fell, and they held the door.

Then a wounded warrior departed from them,
said that his corselet was broken,
his armour useless, and that, moreover, his helmet
was pierced through. Then the guardian of
the people asked him at once how their
warriors had survived their wounds, or
which of these young men.....

THE BATTLE OF MALDON

.....was broken,
Then he ordered the young man as to when
to abandon the horses, to drive them afar
and go forth, intent upon his arms and
his good spirit.

When he saw that
the earl would not tolerate cowardice, Offa's
kinsman allowed his beloved hawk to fly from
his hand to the wood, and strode to the battle;
from that it could be seen that the warrior would
not weaken in the battle when he grasped weapons.
Eadric also wished to obey his leader and win
in battle for his lord; he proceeded to bear
his spear into battle. And while he could
still hold his shield and broad-sword in his hand
his mind was valiant; he carried out his boast
that he would fight before his lord.

Then Byrhtnoth began to call up his warriors,
rode and instructed, told the men how
they had to stand and keep their ground, and
bade them hold their shields firmly in their hands
and have no fear. When he had them organised well
he dismounted among the people where he loved best
to be, where his most loyal and familiar retainers were.

Then on the bank stood a messenger from
the vikings, who called out sternly and spoke
these words, announcing threateningly the message
of the pirates to the earl where he stood on the shore.
"Bold seamen have sent me to you with orders
to say that you must quickly send bracelets
for your own protection, and that it will be
better for you to buy off this battle with tribute

than for us to join in bitter conflict.
We need not destroy each other if you are
wealthy enough to meet our demand.
We wish to establish a truce in return for the gold.
If you determine upon that, you who are in command
here, you will ransom your people by giving
the seamen wealth in exchange for friendship,
according to their stipulation, and receive
peace from us; then we shall go to the ship
with the tribute, put to sea, and keep peace with you."

Byrhtnoth lifted up his shield and spoke.
Brandishing his slender ash-spear he spoke
angry and resolute words, answering him:
"Do you hear, seaman, what this people says?
They will give you spears as tribute, and the deadly
spear-point and ancient swords. But the
war-gear will be of no use to you in battle.
Messenger of the seamen, take word back
and tell your people news far more hateful.
Tell them that the brave and noble earl who
will protect this country, the land of Ethelred
my lord, the people and the place, stands firm
here with his troops. The heathens shall fall
in the battle. It seems too humiliating to me
that you should go unopposed to your ship
with our treasure now that you have come so far
into our land. Nor shall you carry off treasure
so easily: the spear and the sword's edge shall
decide the terms between us in fierce battle
before we shall give tribute."

He ordered the warriors
to bear their shields forth so that they all stood
on the river-bank. But because of the water, one army
could not reach the other; after the ebb

the high-tide came flowing in and the tidal streams joined up.

It seemed an age to them
that they bore spears together.

By Panta Stream
they stood in an array, the battle-line of
the East Saxons and the viking force.
No man could injure another unless someone
were to meet death from the flight of an arrow.

The tide went out. The seamen stood ready,
many vikings were eager for battle.
The protector of the warriors ordered a stern
fighter - he was called Wulfstan - to hold
the causeway. He came from valiant stock.
It was the son of Ceola who felled with his javelin
the first man to step boldly there on the causeway.
Two bold and fearless warriors, Alfere and Maccus,
stood with Wulfstan; they would not take
to flight at the ford but defended themselves
vigorously against the enemy for as long as
they could wield their weapons. And when
they understood and saw clearly that they faced
fierce guardians on that causeway, the hateful
enemy proceeded to use guile and begged for
a landing, for a passage over the ford with their troops.

Then in his pride the earl began to yield
too much land to the hostile people. Byrhtelm's son
began to shout over the cold water - the warriors
listened:

"The way is open to you now:
come quickly to us, warriors, God alone
knows who may have control of the battle-field."

The wolfish force of viking warriors advanced,

untroubled by the water; west over the shining water of Panta went the men from the ship, bearing their linden shields to land. There, ready for the enemy, stood Byrhtnoth with his warriors. He ordered the troop to form the shield-wall and to hold fast against the enemy. The fighting and the glory of battle was at hand. The time had come when the doomed men should fall. Clamour was raised up there, Ravens circled, the eagle was eager for carrion. The earth was in an uproar.

They let fly from their hands spears hard as files, cruelly ground spears. Bows were busy, shield received spear-point. The onslaught was a bitter one. Warriors fell on both sides, young men lay dead.

Wulfmar was wounded, Byrhtnoth's kinsman chose death on the battle-field: his sister's son was cruelly hewn down with swords. Requital was given to the vikings there: I have heard that Eadweard slew one of them cruelly with his sword, and did not withhold the blow, so that a doomed warrior fell at his feet; and his prince thanked the thane for this when he had the opportunity.

Thus the stout-hearted warriors stood firm in the battle, eagerly intent upon who could first win the life of an armed warrior with a spear, a fated man there. The dying fell to the earth. They stood steadfast, Byrhtnoth exhorted them, and bade each young warrior who wished to win glory fighting against the Danes to think of battle.

Then a battle-hard Dane raised up his weapon, and shielding himself,

stepped forth against the warrior.
Just as resolutely the earl went for the churl:
each intended harm to the other. The sea-warrior
threw a southern spear so that the warriors' lord was
wounded. But he thrust his shield down onto the spear
so that the shaft broke and the spear-head fell away
from him. The warrior was enraged: with his spear
he pierced the proud viking who had inflicted the wound.
The warrior was wise; he drove his Frankish spear
through the neck of this young warrior, guiding
his hand so that he pierced the viking fatally.
Then he speedily lunged at another and burst
his corselet: he was wounded in the breast
through his ringed corselet; the deadly spear-point
stood in his heart. The earl was the better pleased;
he laughed courageously and gave thanks to God
the Creator for the day's work He had granted him.

Then one of the viking warriors let fly a spear
from his hand which penetrated too far into
the noble warrior of Ethelred. Beside him
stood a stripling warrior, the son of Wulfstan,
Wulfmar the younger, a youth in battle,
who very boldly drew the bloody spear out of
the fighting-man; he flung it back again
exceedingly hard. The point went in, so that
the one who had just struck his lord fell to
the ground. Then an armed warrior made for
the earl; he wished to carry off the warrior's
bracelets, treasure, rings, and decorated sword.
But Byrhtnoth drew his sword from its sheath,
with its broad gleaming blade, and struck him
on the corselet. All too swiftly one of the seamen
prevented him, and wounded the earl's arm.
The golden-hilted sword fell to the ground:

he could not hold the hard sword, or wield the weapon. But still the old and grey warrior spoke, encouraging the young warriors, urging his good comrades forward. He could no longer stand firmly on his feet; he looked up to heaven:

"I thank you, Lord of Hosts,
for all the joys I have experienced in the world.
But now, gentle Lord, I need most that
you grant grace to my spirit, that my soul
may journey to you, into your dominion,
Lord of the angels, may depart in peace;
I beseech you that devils may not harm it."
Then the heathen warriors killed him, and both
the men who stood by him; Ælfnoth and Wulfmar
lay slain, gave up their lives close by their lord.

Then those who did not wish to be there
fled from the battle: the sons of Odda were
the first to flee. Godric ran from the battle
deserting him who had given him many horses.
He leapt onto his lord's war-horse, onto those trappings
which it was not right for him to mount upon,
and both his brothers galloped with him,
Godwin and Godwig, and not caring for battle,
turned from the fight and sought the woods,
fled to safety and saved their lives, and more men
did this than was fitting if they remembered
all the kindness and benefits he had accorded them.
It was just as Offa had told him once before
at the meeting-place, when he was holding a council,
that many were speaking proudly there who, later,
in a time of need, would not endure.

Thus fell the lord of the people, Ethelred's earl.
All his hearth-companions saw that their lord
lay dead. Then proudly the retainers went forth,

the undaunted men hastened eagerly: all had just two wishes - to lay down their lives, or to avenge their dear lord.

Alfwine, the son of Alfric, a young warrior, shouted words of encouragement, exhorted them valiantly:

"Remember the speeches we often gave over the mead, when, heroes in the hall, we shouted boasts at the bench about fierce battle. Now we shall see who is valiant. I shall declare my line to one and all, for I belong to a great Mercian family: my grandfather was called Balhelm, a wise earl, prosperous in worldly riches. No thane in this company shall reproach me for desiring to desert this army, to seek my home, now that my lord lies cut down in battle. This is my greatest sorrow: he was both my kinsman and my lord."

Then, remembering the fight, he went forward and pierced one of the seamen with his sword, so that he fell to the ground, killed by his weapon. Again he urged his friends and companions to go forward. Offa spoke, brandishing his spear:

"Alfwine!

you have urged all the retainers in our best interest. Now that our prince, the earl, lies dead on the ground each and every warrior must encourage the others to fight for as long as he can use his weapons, his spear and his good hard sword. Godric, the cowardly son of Odda, has betrayed us all. When he rode off on horseback, on that proud steed, many men thought that it was our lord himself. Because of that, people on the field here were divided, and the shield-wall was broken. May he be cursed for this, for putting so many men here to flight."

Leofsunu spoke,
and raised up his linden-shield for protection;
he replied to that warrior:

"I swear to you
that I will not retreat one step, but will
advance to avenge my lord in battle.
No steadfast warrior from Sturmere need
reproach me, now my friend has perished,
that I came home lordless, having turned from
the battle; but weapons shall take me -
the spear and the iron blade." He advanced
in a fury, fighting resolutely and scorning flight.
Then Dunnere spoke, brandishing his spear;
a simple yeoman, he shouted above all, calling
on every warrior to avenge Byrhtnoth:
"Whoever in the company intends to avenge our prince
must not flinch or care about his own life."
Then they advanced, heedless of their lives.
The retainers proceeded to fight ferociously,
the fierce spear-wielding warriors, and they
prayed to God that they might avenge their dear lord
by doing to death all his enemies.
The hostage helped them eagerly, the son of Ecglaf.
He belonged to the bold line of Northumbria.
His name was Aschferth. He did not flinch in the
battle-play, but fired arrow after arrow; sometimes
he penetrated a shield, sometimes he maimed a warrior,
time after time he inflicted wounds for as long
as he could draw his bow.

Constantly at the forefront
of the battle stood the tall, alert, and eager Eadweard;
he boasted that he would not flee or retreat
so much as a foot now that his lord lay dead.
He smashed through the shield-wall and grappled
with the seamen, and he avenged worthily the death
of his treasure-giver on those seafarers before

he was cut down.

And so too did Atheric
the noble retainer and brother of Sibyrht, eager to
advance and fight in earnest, and many others as well,
split the bossed shield and defended themselves valiantly.
The rim of the shield was smashed, and the corselet
sang a terrible song. Offa struck a seafarer
in the fight and he fell to the ground, but
the kinsman of Gadd was also laid low: Offa
was quickly cut down in that battle. Yet he carried
out his sworn promise to his lord and ring-giver
that they would both ride home unscathed
to the settlement, or perish in combat,
die from their wounds on the battle-field. He lay,
as befits a retainer, nearby his lord.
Then shields were shattered. The seamen, enraged
by the slaughter, advanced. The spear plunged
into many a fated body. Then Wistan, the son
of Thurstan advanced to fight the vikings
and killed three of them before the son of Wigelm
succumbed. That was a savage fight. The warriors
stood fast in the struggle. Fighting-men collapsed,
exhausted by their wounds. The slain dropped
to the ground.

The brothers Oswald and Eadwold
both encouraged the warriors, constantly urging
their beloved kinsmen that they must endure in the
conflict and wield their weapons without weakening.

Byrhtwold, a companion of long-standing,
raised his shield, brandished his spear, and spoke.
He exhorted the warriors very boldly:
"Our pride shall be the fiercer and our hearts braver,
as our power decreases our courage shall grow.
Here, chopped to pieces, our good lord lies on
the earth. Anyone who thinks of leaving this battle now

will feel eternal shame. I am an old man,
but I shall not go, for I intend to fall at the side
of my lord, the man so dear to me."

Likewise Godric, the son of Æthelgar,
gave them all courage to go on fighting.
He drove spear after deadly spear at the vikings,
killing and injuring, as he led the way among
that army, until he was killed in battle.
That was not the Godric who fled from the fight.

WALDERE

I

.....eagerly she encouraged him:
 Truly, Weland's work will not fail any man
 who can handle the sharp Mimring; often
 warrior has fallen in battle, blood-stained
 and sword-slashed.

Champion of Attila, do not
 let your courage decline now, at this day,
 your bravery.....
the day has now come
 when, son of Ælfhere, you shall certainly either
 lose your life or win lasting fame among men!
 Never, my lover, shall I blame you with words
 that I saw you ignominiously avoid the onset
 of any man in the clash of swords, or flee
 to the wall to save your life though many
 a hated foe struck at your corselet with his sword;
 but you always tried to fight on, sought battle
 beyond the limits; therefore I feared for your
 fate because too fiercely you sought to fight in
 the hostile encounter, in the battle with
 another man.

Win honour for yourself
 by noble deeds, while God protects you! Have no
 misgivings about that sword; a precious treasure
 without equal has been given to you to help us;
 with it you will humble the boasts of Guthere
 because he set out to seek battle
 against you unjustly. He refused the sword,
 and the precious vessel, and the many rings;
 now shall the lord þurn from this battle ringless
 to seek his own homeland, or die here first
 if he.....

II

.....a better sword
 except for one which I also have,
 laid at rest in its jewelled sheath.
 I know that Theodoric had thought
 of sending it to Widia himself, and
 in addition to the sword, much precious
 treasure, and many other things decked with gold;
 Nithhad's kinsman, Widia the son of Weland,
 received the reward long due for rescuing
 Theodoric from captivity so that he hastened
 forth through the kingdom of the giants.

Waldere spoke, the daring warrior -
 he had a comfort in battle, grasping
 a sword in his hand - he spoke aloud:
 "What, friend of the Burgundians, did you really
 believe that Hagen's hand had done battle
 with me, and put an end to my combat on foot?
 I am weary from fighting, but fetch, if
 you dare, the grey corselet from me!
 Here it lies on my shoulders, Alfhere's heirloom,
 good and broad-bossed, adorned with gold,
 in every way a glorious garment for a prince
 to wear, when his hand protects his life from
 his foes; and it will not be hostile to me
 when treacherous kinsmen attack again, beleaguer
 me as you have done.

Yet victory may
 be given by the one who is always wise and swift
 to perform what is right, for he who trusts
 in the Holy God for help and succour, finds
 it ready if first he is determined to deserve it.
 Then the proud can distribute their riches,
 rule their possessions; that is.....

ANNOTATIONS

All line references in the following notes are to the Old English texts as found in Krapp and Dobbie, The Exeter Book, and Dobbie, The Anglo-Saxon Minor Poems, which make up Volumes III and VI of The Anglo-Saxon Poetic Records.

THE WANDERER

- 23 In English Studies xxxix 195-6 Elliott interprets hēan as "disgraced, humiliated." Leslie, The Wanderer, 69/23, on the other hand, points out that the basic meaning of the word is "abject" especially when, as here, "the adjective is part of a stereotyped exile image, namely hēan followed by an adjective denoting sadness and a verb of departure." cf. Guthlac 1353-4.
- 24 ofer waþema gebind: some editors hold gebind to mean "frozen", but I follow Leslie, op. cit. 70/24, in his suggestion that a more likely sense in this context is "expanse." See O.E.D p867: Bind 6 - glossed as "capacity, measure, limit, size."
- 28 MS freond lease emended by Thorpe to frēondlēasne.
- 31 geholena: following Krapp and Dobbie, EB 289/31, and Leslie, op. cit. 71/31, I accept geholena as a genitive of gehola.
- 32 warað hine wreclāst: Although I prefer Leslie's interpretation of this phrase, op. cit. 71-2/32, I have followed the translation pattern of Ekwall, Anglia Beiblatt, xxxv 134-5, for the sake of continuity in translation. The essential meaning is unaffected as it is only a matter of whether the transitive form can be retained.

36 wenede tō wiste: Leslie, op. cit. 72/36: "Thorpe's translation 'trained to the feast' seems preferable to those which suggest that the wanderer's lord spoiled him. We are not justified in assuming that his lord singled him out for special attention, but rather that he accustomed the now exiled man to high-living, as he would all his young nobles."

44 giefstōlas brēac: Klæber, in Anglia Beiblatt xvii, 300, argues that giefstōlas is a genitive singular, especially since it seems unlikely that a lord would have more than one giefstōl. A genitive singular in -as does occur occasionally in late W/S MSS.

8Ib-82a Krapp and Dobbie, EB 290/8I, seem to accept an early suggestion by Thorpe that fugel is a poetic term for 'ship'. I am inclined to accept Leslie's interpretation that the word refers either to the raven or the sea-eagle, the O/E birds of battle. Since the passage concerns the sea, I have translated as 'sea-eagle.'

82b-83a gedālan: I accept Leslie's contention that the use of gedālan here is parallel to Beowulf 7I, and translate as "one was death's share to the grey wolf." Leslie, op. cit. 84/82b-83a.

85 I translate eardgeard as referring not to the whole

world, but to the settlement whose fate the poet has just been describing. cf Christ 55.

Næfre wommes tacn
in þam eardgearde eawed weorðeþ....

90 frōd in ferðe: Leslie sees frōd as implying the wisdom of the old, so "the speaker is 'wise from experience'." I consider the notion of experience to be implicit in the modern phrase "wise in heart" and accordingly, translate this way.

102 hrūsan: MS hruse emended by Thorpe to become the object of bindeð - hrūsan. EB 290/102.

104 May be compared with The Seafarer 31-32:

Nap nihtscua, norþan sniwde,
hrim hrusan bond, hægl feol on eorþan

and Beowulf 547:

Nipende niht.....

Nihtscūa is the subject of both nipeð and onsendeð.

THE SEAFARER

5 cearselda: This word has been variously emended, but both I.L.Gordon, The Seafarer 33, and Krapp and Dobbie, EB 295, are prepared to retain the MS reading. I.L.Gordon glosses it as "abodes of sorrow" and defends it as an ironic metaphor. Kløber, J.E.G.Ph. XXIII, 124, feels this is too far-fetched, but Krapp and Dobbie, although admitting that some alternatives (such as Kløber's and Ettmüller's) are plausible, maintain that "perhaps cearselda is no more figurative than we might expect here."

8 cnossað: Editors have been bothered by the tense of this verb and have changed it to cnossade, but Holthausen, Anglia XLVI, 55 rejects this on metrical grounds. He points out that line 1923 of Beowulf has a comparable structure. I.L.Gordon, op. cit. 33, asserts that the intransitive cnossian probably has a different meaning from the transitive cnyssan and would translate as "dashed by..." rather than "strikes on..."

II hat: Some editors (Sweet, Mackie) emend hat to hate to agree with ceare. I.L.Gordon, op. cit. 34, says this is unnecessary since the final -e could be omitted through elision before ymb. She renders the half-line in her text with an apostrophe:

hat' ymb heortan.

- 14 earncearig: this is an unusual compound since it consists of two adjectives instead of noun & adjective. I have followed Mrs Gordon's suggestion that its force approximates to "wretched and sorrowful."
- 22 medodrince: This is usually translated as "drinking of mead" and I have taken this as being intended to evoke the picture, and more especially the sound, of a celebration in the meadhall.
- 23 stanclifu: this line has three beats, and was emended by Imelmann to stanclif. I have translated it as a singular.
- 25 Line 25 in the MS has no alliteration. Thorpe, Wülker, and Sedgefield believe two half-lines to have been lost between 25a and 25b, and Grein reads ne ænig for nænig to provide a vocalic alliteration with urigfeþra.
I.L.Gordon suspects urigfeþra on the ground that it is always applied to eagles, and may have been substituted by a copyist to replace a less familiar epithet. She also draws attention to what she calls "the unfortunate echoing" of isigfeþra in line 24. Her text, however, unlike that of Krapp and Dobbie (who follow Grein), retains the MS reading.
- 26 Grein emends MS feran to frefran, Germania X, 422. Krapp and Dobbie and Mrs Gordon follow this.

- 53 "The turn-key" of summer: although anachronistic, this phrase captures well the feeling of the Anglo-Saxon, and fits the poem with an irresistible prettiness.
- 56 MS eft eadig has been variously emended. Thorpe suggested reading esteadig and was followed by Ettmüller, Wilker, Imelmann and Mackie. Sweet and Sedgefield read seeg esteadig to improve alliteration, while Grein, Rieger, Kluge, Schücking, and Holthausen read sefteadig. Krapp and Dobbie adopt esteadig and feel sefteadig to be doubtful. I.L.Gordon, whose reading I have followed, accepts Grein's sefteadig metri causa.
- 62b anfloga probably refers to the cuckoo (see I.L.Gordon, op. cit. 4I/62b). Although many have interpreted it as "seagull" this bird is not a "lone-flier" as the cuckoo usually is. Further, the cuckoo has already incited the man to voyaging.
- 67 As Mrs Gordon says "there is no clear antecedent to him". I have taken it as having a reflexive meaning in conjunction with stondað, to give a sense of "endure".
- 68-69 MS tide ge. I have followed Krapp and Dobbie who emend to ær his tid aga and translate as "before his life depart." I have modernised this, but prefer it to Mrs Gordon's tidgege.

74b ar he on weg scyle: "before his departure". I have omitted this line as it appears tautological in translation. Its place in the text, must, however, be noted.

97-I02 This is a passage which has caused much trouble to editors and which has been widely disputed. For the purposes of the present translation I have chosen to follow Dr. Sisam's sensible interpretation (R.E.S xxi, 316) almost literally, changing it only where necessary for the tone and consistency of my own.

I here append O.S Anderson's translation of lines IO3 - I24 (see Introduction, p. 14) as a reference for those who wish to consider the entire text regardless of theories of interpolation.

"Great is the fear of God, from which the earth turns away in panic. He created the firm ground, the face of the earth, and the sky above. A fool is he who does not fear his Lord: death will take him unawares. Blessed is he who lives humbly: grace will come to him from heaven. God will sustain his soul, because he believes in his power. A strong mind must be curbed and kept in check, kept faithful to men and pure in its ways. Every man should in due measure keep friendship with him whom he loves, and fight against his enemy, even though he shall heap with fire the friend he has made, and burn him on the funeral pyre. Fate is stronger, the Lord mightier, than any man can think. Let us consider where we have

our home, and then think of how we are to get there:
and let us then also endeavour to arrive there, in the
eternal bliss where life is found in the love of God, joy
in heaven! For this be thanks to the Holy One that he
exalted us, the Prince of glory, the Lord everlasting,
world without end. Amen."

Translation by O.S. Anderson, The Seafarer, an interpret-
ation, 37.

WIDSITH

I cf. Beowulf I. Wordhord onleac was probably a stock metaphor in heroic verse.

24 pyle: Malone, Widsith 192, regards this word as a proper name and says "the pyle of Widsith is most simply explained as the eponym of the pilir, a well-known Norwegian tribe, the inhabitants of pelamork." Chambers, Widsith 115, on the other hand sees the word as referring to the class of retainer in O/E society, the professional orator and counsellor. He remarks however, admitting the doubt, "Thyle as a proper name is in any case strange enough: can we interpret it as referring to the faithful counsellor of the Thuringian war?"
cf. Beowulf, 1165, 1456.

34 hereferan means literally "warriors, pirates."

37 eorlscipe: this has two senses (1) deed of valour
(2) dominion, authority.

I take eorlscipe fremede to mean "he performed deeds of valour" cf. Beowulf 2622. It has often been assumed, however, that this line means "Alewih could not exercise dominion over Offa." Chambers, Holthausen, and Malone recognise both versions as possible.

41 Chambers reads on orette, but acknowledges that this is not supported in the MS. Malone reads onorette which he glosses as "accomplish by fighting" and it is this interpretation which I have followed.

46 suhtorfæðran: cf. Beowulf II64, suhtergefæðeran. This word, meaning "uncle and nephew" is an old compound, intimately associated with the ethos of the heroic era, when uncle and nephew were often recognised as a partnership in deeds of valour because of their close blood tie. See also note to The Battle of Maldon, II5.

50 Malone argues that swa here is intended to have a temporal sense "during the time that" - Widsith 74. Chambers suggests that if we do not accept the passage as faulty through omission or interpolation, we should refer swa to what follows, and translate as "in such wise." I have accepted this.

78 Wala rices: Malone I30: "These Walas were, no doubt, the inhabitants of the Roman Empire as a whole and their ruler was of course the Casere of line 76, ie, the Eastern Emperor."

81 Hæpnum ond Halepum: As the capitalisation of these words has been queried, it is worth noting that literally translated they mean "heathens and heroes."

85 Chambers, 215/85, takes ongend as a preposition and translates "I was with the Myrgings,.....and against the Myrgings." On page 163 however, he lists the tribe as the Ongend-Myrgings. Malone, 83-84, gives several possibilities but makes no firm commitment.

95 Chambers notes that this does not mean that the land had been forfeited in any way, but that it simply refers to the observance of a custom by which the prince would ratify the inheritance.

103-105 It has been suggested by C.L.Wrenn, Studies in Old English Literature in honour of Arthur G.Brodeur, 120, that Scilling may be the name of Widsith's harp, rather than that of a companion scop.

129 Malone 94/129: "Chambers wrongly translated wundnan golde with "by wunden gold"; the construction is instrumental because wealdan takes the instrumental case, and golde, werum, and wifum are three parallel direct objects of weoldan. If one prefers to consider the three objects as datives, the parallelism remains. The poet thought of Wudga and Hama as exercising control over hoard and subjects alike, not as keeping their subjects faithful by means of valuable presents given at suitable intervals."

DEOR

- I be wurman: This is difficult of interpretation and has been variously explained and emended. For present purposes I follow Rieger, Wülker, and Sedgefield in interpreting it as "in abundance, to the full". Notable is Tupper's suggestion that it refers to the Vermar, the people of Vermaland. The O/E form corresponding to O/N Vermar would be Weormas, a different form of which could be Wurmas. Kläber, however, observes that if this was so, mid would be more likely than be. (JEGPh XXIII, 123).
- 14 There have been several suggestions for this line, most of which fall into one of two main groups. The line is read as mæð Hilde or a variant, or as Mæðhilde. Many editors have followed the second reading, originally Thorpe's, including Dickens and Ettmüller. I follow Dickens in taking Mæðhilde directly with Geates frige, his rendering being "many of us have heard that the Geat's affection for Mæðhilde passed all bounds."
- 28ff Schücking, followed by Malone, takes Siteð sorgcearig with the inverted word-order as a conditional sentence: "if a sorrowful man sits..." and places a comma instead of a full-stop at the end of line 30. Following Holt-hausen and Sedgefield, I prefer to regard the word-order as normal, and supply a subject. This reading, of course, demands a full-stop at the end of line 30, which Krapp

and Dobbie adopt in their edition of The Exeter Book.
Malone, in his edition of the poem, supplies a comma.

30 MS reads earfoda, which was emended by Conybeare and
is nearly always accepted as earfoða.

WULF AND EADWACER

I Unless a line is missing before this, the construction here is impersonal. There has been much argument over the meaning of this line. I see it as indicating that the woman and Wulf once lived on the same island. He can now visit her island only rarely, and at risk of capture. This interpretation depends on his exile being from her, rather than from his own people. It could easily be reversed by seeing him as a native of Eadwacer's island, exiled because of his love for the woman, but received and loved by her people. Others have seen it as the woman's complaint that her husband has left her among her family, in which case there would be a clear parallel with The Wife's Lament, or that her lover has not accepted the responsibilities of a husband.

2,7 þreat: Malone, "Two English Frauenlieder" in Studies in Old English Literature in honour of Arthur G. Brodeur, 108-109, makes a good point when he notes that this word is glossed in two ways in the N.E.D :

(1) throng, press, crowd, multitude of people; troop, band, body of men.

(2) painful pressure, oppression, compulsion; vexation, torment; affliction, distress, misery; danger, peril.

Malone observes: "Both these groups go back to Old English times; the modern meaning grew out of the second group. Compare Icelandic þraut 'hard labour, hardship'

Grein-Köhler, Sieper, Toller, Sedgefield, and Mackie all take þreat here in some such sense as 'group or band.' But Schücking takes it as 'Not', reviving the old comparison with O/N at þrotum koma, which he translates as 'in Not geraten.' "Malone translates the half-line in both instances as "if he comes into peril."

- I3 Wulf, mīn Wulf: the shortness of this half-line has bothered some, but according to Krapp and Dobbie "the half-line as it stands in the MS seems to be genuine and certainly cannot be emended without loss of effectiveness." Suggestions have been:

Mīn Wulf, mīn Wulf - Bülbring

Wulf, mīn Wulf, la! - Holthausen

Wulf se mīn Wulf - Imelmann

- I6 earne: Bradley explained this as the accusative singular of earg, earh - "cowardly." Holthausen suggested earnne, "miserable, wretched" and this is quite plausible, but I agree with Krapp and Dobbie, EB, 320-1/I6, that "in view of the obscurity of the reference here, it seems best not to emend."

- I9 "The word gād gives a somewhat more probable reading - fellowship - but improbability is no argument against the MS record of this text." Krapp and Dobbie, loc.cit/I9. I feel, however, that in view of the possibility of taking

parts of the poem as emotionally charged metaphors (see Introduction, 22-25), the idea of the lives of Wulf and the woman being joined as a 'song' is more than acceptable. It has a genuine ring which is consistent with the tone of the poem as I see it. The word could, however, also mean 'story.'

THE WIFE'S LAMENT

- 3 Since the second half-line is metrically deficient in the MS, most editors emend weox to aweox, to add the lightly-stressed syllable required.
- 7 uhtceare: Leslie, The Wife's Lament, 53/7, explains that this refers to the period just before dawn rather than to dawn itself, and he adds "early morning appears to have been a time of special misery."
- 9 folgað seems to mean "service due to a lord." cf. Deor, 38
Ahte ic fela wintra folzað tilne....
- 15 hēr eard niman: MS reads hēr heard niman. There have been many interpretations of this half-line, including interpretations of heard as adjective and adverb. Leslie, op. cit. 53-4/15, regards most of these as strained and comments as follows: "Probably the best solution is emendation of heard to eard. Scribal error resulting from the influence of the preceding word would account for the intrusive h, or else the phenomenon whereby h is often inserted without etymological justification before words beginning with a vowel.....The idiomatic phrase eard niman, 'to take up one's abode' occurs in Psalm 131, 15.3..... and in Christ 61-3.....The metrical structure of this half-line is similar to that in Maxims II, 64... where hēr carries the alliteration even in the presence of a noun

in the same half-line. There is no justification, therefore, in passing over hēr in favour of heard as the alliterating word, especially as hēr is also the first stressed syllable in the half-line. Consequently, emendation of heard to eard is desirable on metrical, as on other grounds, in order to avoid double alliteration in the second half-line, contrary to the established practice of Old English poets."

17 forþon refers to the preceeding lines and indicates that the woman's sadness is caused by her lack of friends.

24a Krapp and Dobbie, EB 352/24a, state: "That the greater part of line 24a has been lost is evident; but a confident reconstruction is hardly possible." True as this may be, it is essential for a translation to include something here, and I have inserted the words (taken away). Because there is no clue towards reconstruction, I have quite arbitrarily accepted Leslie's postulated fornumez.

26 mines felaleofan fæðu dreogan: Leslie, op. cit. 55/26, points out that since fæðu is a technical term describing a state of feud, the line cannot refer to the hostility of the husband towards his wife, and that accordingly "felaleofan must be taken as an objective genitive, indicating that the woman must suffer the consequences of her husband's feud with a third party."

- 31 Burgtunas seem to refer to an enclosure round a fortification: burg - fortification, tun - fence.
- 37 Because of the difficulty of deciding whether or not sumorlangne dæg is a figurative use meaning that the woman has troubles enough to keep her busy throughout the longest day, I have chosen to read the text literally. The kind of figurative use occurs in an opposite way in Genesis B, 370 where winterstund means 'a short time.'
- 52 The gnomic formula here may be compared to Beowulf 183-5,
- Wā bið þām ðe sceal
 þurh sliðne nið sǣwle bescūfan
 in fýres fæþm.....

THE HUSBAND'S MESSAGE

2-7, 36, 38, 40

In this damaged text I have refrained from accepting reconstructions of missing lines on the grounds that while these are often favoured by probability, they are nevertheless uncertain. In such circumstances, it is probably better for a translation that they be omitted.

- 8 Despite Krapp and Dobbie, EB 362, I accept the emendation of Sievers and Sedgefield of MS hofu to hafu, since the meaning 'buildings' is hardly suitable to a context of voyaging.
- 13 Hwæt is frequently used as an exclamation to introduce a change of interest or tone in a speech. I have rendered it, somewhat clumsily, as 'Ah!' since we have no exact equivalent in modern English. Some translators alter the sense by translating as "O lady adorned with jewels," but this simple vocative use fails to reproduce the sense of the text. Accordingly, I have preferred the awkwardness of 'Ah!' to the inaccuracy of 'O'.
cf. Beowulf 942
- 17 meoduburgum: Leslie, The Husband's Message, 60/17, says "the use of metonymy, ie 'mead' for 'meadhall', may well have led to the formation of new compounds; cf. the similar formations in Beowulf: meodustig (924) 'path

near the meadhall' and meodowong (I643) 'plain beside the meadhall'.

5I The Runes: for a discussion of their meaning see Introduction 30-31.

• 𐌺 • 𐌷 • geador
 • 𐌾 • 𐌿 • ond • 𐌸 •

These represent S'R'EA'W and either M or D. The last is written ambiguously and is sometimes read as D.

THE RUIN

- 4a hrungeat berofen: the MS reading of hrim geat torras berofen is generally considered to be corrupt. Removal of torras, which is probably an inadvertent repetition from 3b, completes the half-line metrically. However, hrim makes no sense here, and I follow Grein's emendation (Germania, X,422) to hrungeat.
- 5 scūrbeorge: According to Leslie, The Ruin 68/5, this word occurs only here, means 'protections against storms', and is usually seen as a figure of speech for 'roofs'. Leslie also points out that Schücking glosses the word as a metonymy for 'buildings'.
- 8-9 I agree with Leslie that there is no reason to assume that the op clause here should be interpreted in the past tense. Hafað in the main clause is a present, and gewītan is a present infinitive. Sculan must be understood. Leslie parallels Phoenix 363-4.
- I2 MS geheapen: Krapp and Dobbie, EB 365/I2, argue that this line is too incomplete to justify Schücking's emendation to geheawen. Leslie, op. cit. 70/I2, attributes the emendation to Etmüller, and accepts it on the grounds of possible confusion between the similar Old English representation of the letters p and w.

- 22 horngestreon: I follow Leslie in translating this simple half-line as "a profusion of high [Leslie, 'lofty'] gables."
- 26 secgrofra: Again I follow Leslie, in interpreting this word as a compound meaning 'sword-valiant'. I translate the whole half-line as "valiant swordsmen."
- 31 hrostbeages hrof: Arguing against the retention of MS hrost beages rof, Leslie says "...rōf cannot be an adjective in this context for it always refers to a personal quality, 'brave', 'valiant'. Grein, Germania X, 422, emended to hrōf."

THE FINNSBURG FRAGMENT

- I The fragment opens in the middle of a word. Grein re-constructs [hor]nas.....and this seems acceptable.
- 2b Most editors emend hearogeong to heapogeong. See Klæber, Beowulf and The Fight at Finnsburg, 245/2b.
- 5 forþ berað: Klæber justifies this MS reading on the grounds that "the war-equipments specified afterwards are the object of berað (see eg. Beowulf 291, Exodus 219, Maldon 12) which the poet had in mind but did not take the time to express." op. cit. 250/5b.
- 6 gylleð græghama: I read græghama as 'grey-coated one' referring to the wolf, but Klæber points out that it could equally well refer to a 'coat of mail or corselet.'
- 16 æt oþrum durum: the plural durum has singular meaning.
- 18 Ða gyt.....: This marks the progress of the narrative and seems best rendered in Modern English as 'meanwhile' since it involves a change in location from inside the hall to outside the door.
- Garulf: We are told in lines 31-33 that Garulf is the son of Guthhere, but there is no reason to assume that this is the Guthhere mentioned in line 18, and that father and son were fighting on opposite sides.

- 27 swæper: "which one of two things..." ie, either victory or death, win or loss.
- 29 MS celas: This word has never been satisfactorily explained or emended. Klæber, following Grein, emends to celloð and notes that this "rests entirely on Maldon 283: celloð bord, but the meaning of this nonce word is unknown." It may mean 'bossed' or 'beaked'.
- 30 banhelm berstan: I take berstan as attransitive verb, and translate banhelm as 'bone helmet'. This passage is most uncertain and any translation must admit to a certain amount of speculation.
- 43 It seems probable that the warrior who departs is a Frisian....see Introduction.

THE BATTLE OF MALDON

- 3 feor afysan: I take afysan in a transitive sense as meaning "drive them (the horses) afar."
- I2 ongan: E.V.Gordon, The Battle of Maldon, 42/I2, says "used of complicated action which was rather a process than a simple act." It is roughly equivalent to the modern French en train de faire q.c. The idea is that the subject was in the process of doing something which in fact he did do.
- I7ff I have used the word 'familiar' in 24 in an attempt to render the sense of heorðwerod. These are the men of Byrhtnoð's household, those retainers to whom he is closest, and there is a distinction to be made between these and the men mentioned in I7ff.
- 20 randas: I accept Gordon's emendation of randan to randas.
- 29ff It is impossible to render in Modern English the number alternation of the pronouns in the viking's speech. He is probably addressing all the English when he speaks in the plural, and Byrhtnoð specifically when he uses the singular. In line 36 he uses the singular to indicate that Byrhtnoð, as leader, must decide about the ultimatum.

- 34 spedaþ to þam: As this idiom is unique, the sense is uncertain. It seems to mean "if you have enough money" or something similar. See Gordon, op. cit. 44/34.
- 66 For an explanation of this see Gordon, op. cit. 3-4, and Laborde, English Historical Review xl, 161f [1925].
- 74-8 The punctuation of my translation here is a slight modification of that of Gordon in his text, and keeps the same sense.
- Het þa hæleða hleo healdan þa bricge
wigan wigheardne - se was haten Wulfstan -
caþe mid his cynne: þæt was Ceolan sunu,
þe ðone forman man mid his francan ofsceat
þe þar baldlicost on þa bricge stop.
- 98 scir water: Gordon, op. cit. 49/98, notes: "scir applied to water usually means 'clear', but the waters of the Blackwater are dull and muddy. Still or slow-moving water however, reflects light even more readily when muddy than clear, and the epithet probably refers to this surface sheen."
- 108 feolhearde: "hard as a file! A file was used to test the temper of a blade.
- 109 grimme gegrundene: I accept Gordon's emendation adding grimme. "Gegrundene alone cannot make a complete half-line, and it is evident that a word has fallen out of

the text. grimme is supplied as the only word which alliterates and makes sense in the context."

II5 his swustersunu: cf. Widsith 46 suhtorfædran, and Beowulf II64 suhtergefæderan. There was a specially close tie between a man and his sister's son.

I83 This line does not alliterate and is probably corrupt. Grein emends begen to bewegen and interprets it as 'slain'. Gordon feels that wegen can take this sense when prefixed with for- and suggests that the copyist's eye probably caught begen earlier in the sentence, and repeated it instead of the correct word, which is now irrecoverable.

242 abreoðe his angin: Literally, 'may his conduct have an evil end.'

256 unorne ceorl: unorne has sometimes been taken to mean 'old', but Gordon notes (57/28) that "the positive form or(e)ne means 'excessive' and has no reference to youth or age.....and etymologically the word is probably composed of or & hiene 'not mean'. Hence the earlier sense of unorne is probably 'mean' or 'humble', passing into 'plain, simple'."

266 It is not clear why Byrhtnoð should have a Northumbrian hostage, but in accordance with heroic tradition he

would be treated as a retainer and would, accordingly, act as one.

283 cellod bord: see note to Finnsburg 29. As there, I translate as 'bossed shield.'

284 lærig: Gordon glosses this word as "rim (of shield)", op. cit. 74, and provides a long note on it (q.v. op. cit. 59/284) suggesting that this is probably the way to take it.

297-300 This is a difficult passage to interpret. I take Wistan as being Thurstan's son, and the son of Wigelm as Offa. This means that after Offa was felled and lay wounded, Wistan killed three vikings before Offa succumbed to death or was finished off by one of the enemy.

315 Since mæg is never used in an optative sense in Old English, a mæg gnornian means 'he has cause to mourn' rather than 'may he mourn.'

WALDERE

(I)

1 hyrde: probably from hyrdan 'to encourage' although possibly from hyran 'to hear.'

2 Weland was the most celebrated smith of Germanic legend and was mentioned repeatedly in the literature of the middle ages. Any weapon of special excellence was nearly always ascribed to Weland.

Beowulf 454-5:

þæt is Hrædlan laf

Welandes geweorc.

Mimring in line 3 of Waldere was Weland's most famous sword.

4 Dickens, Runic and Heroic Poems of the Old Teutonic Peoples, 57/44, interprets hearne as a phonetic spelling of heardne. Klæber, Beowulf, 283, emends to heardne.

8 At the end of MS 7 there is an illegible mark which both Dickens and Klæber accept as a possible nu.

Nu is se dæg cumen.

18 Dickens makes a comparison between the expression sohtest mæl and the Icelandic legal term sœkjamál, "to press a suit."

25 unc is sometimes read as mid. eg Klæber.

(II)

- I The interpretation of this passage is very doubtful. Guthhere seems to be saying that he has the best of all swords, save one which is also in his possession but which he is not using at the moment. On the other hand, it is possible that he is acknowledging the superiority of Mimming, but claiming that he has a better sword, namely the one at rest in his scabbard. These interpretations depend to a certain extent on the meaning of stanfet which can be used to mean a 'stone chest or receptacle'. If it is translated as 'sheath', however, the latter explanation seems the more probable, and this is the interpretation I have placed on it.
- 4 Klæber emends to hit and I accept this as referring to the sword of which Guthhere has been speaking. Dickens follows Trautmann in emending to hine, meaning, presumably, Mimming.
- 10 Both Dickens and Klæber emend the unparalleled gefeald to geweald.
- 19 geapneb has long posed problems of translation and for a discussion of this see Dickens, op. cit. 61/B23. I have accepted his suggestion of 'broad-bossed.'

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