

Public Abstract

First Name:Rebecca

Middle Name:May

Last Name:Richardson

Adviser's First Name:Johanna

Adviser's Last Name:Kramer

Co-Adviser's First Name:

Co-Adviser's Last Name:

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The Dream of the Rood is celebrated as one of the most beautiful poems in the Old English corpus, mostly due to its blending of Christian and Germanic heroic traditions. In this dream vision, the cross as the retainer of Christ reveals to the dreamer His brave battle during the Crucifixion. The result of this portrayal is one of duality on several levels: Christ as Germanic hero and Christian Savior, the cross as retainer and lord. These dualities function together to deliver a message of salvation to the Anglo-Saxon community. However, the way in which this spiritual message is brought to the Anglo-Saxon audience holds importance for the temporal, historical, and human-governed institution of the church.

Though many scholars acknowledge the portrayal of Christ in The Dream of the Rood as that of a Germanic warrior, few have addressed the relevance of his silence. As both a warrior and the Christian Savior, Christ should be the one to deliver his message of conquest over sin and death, offering saving Grace. However, it is the cross which appears and addresses the dreamer, becoming the mode of salvation. It is the purpose of this thesis to evaluate the importance of Christ's silence and offer an alternative reading to The Dream of the Rood, which does not focus on the balance of the Germanic and Christian traditions but explores the possibility of the Christian church utilizing traditional framework to assert their importance as an intercessor on man's behalf, especially in its role as vocal educator and interpreter of God's message.